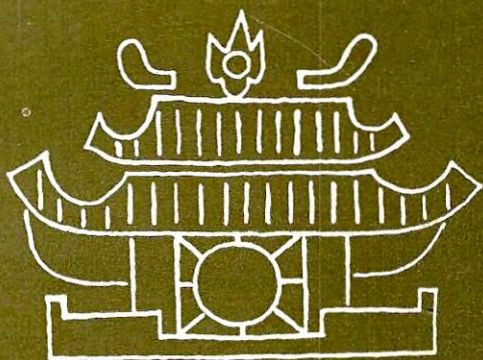


48

6 FEB. 1978

Vietnamese Studies



Hanoi

(Vol. 1)

*From the origins
to the 19th century*

13th Year

No. 48

Vietnamese
Studies

1977

Director : NGUYEN KHAC VIEN

Editorial Office :

46, TRAN HUNG DAO, HANOI

Distributor : XUNHASABA

32, HAI BA TRUNG, HANOI

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	5
Hanoi : From Prehistory to the 19th Century	9
Thang Long : The City and Its People	58
The Temple of Literature and the National Academy	113

APPENDICES

Royal Edict on the Transfer of the Capital	131
Giao Chi Ancient Viet Nam	133
Spring in the Royal City	138
Excerpts from Miscellany of Things Seen and Heard	141
In Praise of the West Lake	146
The Guitar Player of Long Thanh	159
Hanoi : Impressions	162
Old Hanoi Evoked by a 19th Century Poetess	163
Hanoi's Old Quarter	168
The Tourist's Old Hanoi	173
Notes	178
Bibliography	179

Introduction

Viet Nam won back her independence and was reunified after a bitter struggle lasting one hundred and seventeen years. On July 2, 1976 she proclaimed herself a socialist republic, and reaffirmed the choice of Hanoi as capital of the country right from the beginning.

The history of Hanoi goes back a thousand years. In 1010, under the name of Thang Long (Soaring Dragon), it was chosen as capital of a centralized feudal state, of a nation which had proved its maturity with some brilliance in putting an end to ten centuries of foreign domination. From then on, it remained the political and cultural centre of our country, the soul and inspiration of all our movements for liberation and national resistance. Witness to the rise and fall of many royal dynasties, their gaudy palaces and solid citadels of which only rare vestiges remain, it was also the scene of many glorious battles against foreign aggressors: the Mongols in the 13th century, the Ming in the 15th century, the French and Americans in the contemporary period.

In this issue of *Vietnamese Studies* we try to give a picture of Hanoi from its origin to the French conquest in the 19th century. Besides recounting military and political events, we shall try to evoke the life of different strata of the population, especially of the labouring masses, who through the centuries have moulded the face of the city, with its streets, markets, temples and pagodas, and who have created the manners, customs and traditions typical of Hanoi.

Such work does involve many difficulties, since social and economic information is scarce; official records made through the years recorded only political events and palace squabbles. Moreover, the relatively early formation of a centralized feudal state meant that the studies and observations of our scholars were inclined to take on more of a national than a regional character.

As sources, we have relied chiefly on the works by Nguyen Trai (1380-1442): *Du dia chi* (Treatise on Geography), by Le Quy Don (1726-1783): *Kien Van Tieu Luc* (Miscellany of Things Seen and Heard), Van Dai Loai Ngu (Miscellaneous Texts Written While Clearing out My Library) by Phan Huy Chu (1782-1840): *Lich trieu hien chuong loai chi* (Chronology of Dynasties) and Hoang Viet du dia chi (Geography of the Kingdom of Viet Nam). Many literary works have supplied us with concrete and detailed information on the daily life in old Hanoi: *Thuong kinh ky su* (Journey to the Capital) by

Le Huu Trac (18th century), *Hoang Le nhat thong chi* (National Reunification under the Le Dynasty) work of scholars of the Ngo family (18th century), the *Tung Tay Ho phu* (In Praise of the West Lake by *Nguyen Huy Luong* (18th century), *Vu Trung Tuy But* (Essays Written on Rainy Days) by *Pham Dinh Ho* (19th century), *Tang Thuong Ngau Luc* (Note Written at Random on the Ups and Downs of this World) by *Pham Dinh Ho* and *Nguyen An* (19th century)... We have also consulted old legends and myths which, despite their fantastic character, are no less valuable for their historical foundation. Finally, there are texts written by foreigners: Chinese administrators and ambassadors during feudal domination, merchants and missionaries who came from the West from the 17th century onwards. These are of great help to us, as are the testimonies of old people who knew old Hanoi.

The articles have been compiled after reference to old literary texts, historical testimonies and tourist information about our ancient capital.

We hope that the first of this series of Vietnamese Studies on Hanoi will be of some interest to our readers and that they will be as pleased with it as they have been with previous numbers, on Hue (No. 37) and Saigon (Vol. I, No. 45)

Hanoi From Prehistory to the 19th Century

By TRAN QUOC VUONG
and NGUYEN VINH LONG

The history of Hanoi goes back thousands of years. It was under the name of Thang Long (City of the Soaring Dragon) that it was chosen in 1010 as the capital of a centralized feudal state, of a nation which had asserted its maturity by putting an end to foreign domination.

This article retraces the history of the capital of Viet Nam from prehistoric times to the 19th century when the French started their conquest of Viet Nam.

I — Pre-Thang Long Period (from the first settlement to the 11th century).

1. What Archaeological Excavations Reveal.

Hanoi is located to the east of the confluence of the Red River and the Duong river, a small waterway which formerly united the Red River and the

Nhue River. Its topography did not differ much from that of present Hanoi: it was bordered to the north by the West Lake (Ho Tay), to the east by the Red River, to the west by the Nhue river and the To Lich river which ran right through the capital. Hanoi is much larger now, with an area of 600 sq kilometres, 4 city districts and 4 suburban districts. It borders on Vinh Phu province to the north-west, Ha Bac province to the north-east, Ha Son Binh province to the south-west, and Hai Hung province to the south.

From the geological point of view, the site of Hanoi appeared when the Red River delta appeared. Some tens of millions of years ago, that is during the tertiary period, the area was a thousand-metre-deep depression. It gradually filled up from the Neocene period (about 25 million years ago) to the Quaternary period (1-2 million years ago), with the products of the erosion of the surrounding hills.

At the confluence of the Red River and the Duong River there was a gulf into which the two rivers poured their waters. Geologists have discovered the traces of ancient waterways there—tributaries of the Red River—which gradually formed a delta. Geological surveys carried out in the east of Hanoi, 2.5 km from the Red River, have revealed sedimentary strata 50 m thick. Others have been found which are 20 m thick and composed of mud and sand. All this testifies to the capacity of the Red River to shift alluvial deposits throughout the centuries.

The sea receded, the alluvions piled up and the big lagoon dried up leaving a swampy area with dense forests, channels, and lakes, many of which have now dissappeared but whose memories have been kept alive by the old names of a certain number of places: the Bo De (benjamin) landing-stage, Mai Lam (forest of apricot-trees), Gia Lam

(forest of lime-trees), Du Lam (forest of elm-trees). Other names referring to forest included Van Lam, Truong Lam and Dong Ngan. *Lam* and *ngan* mean forest or jungle. In these forests there were elephants, tigers, leopards, deer and wild boars. This was brought to light during excavations carried out in the south of Hanoi when 3000-4000-year-old fossils of tusks, fangs and wood were dug up. The lakes and ponds were filled with tortoises and crocodiles, the existence of which has been mentioned in many folk tales and legends. These ancient forests have left many peatbogs in the subsoil of Hanoi, which are 4 metres thick in some places.

Thus before the first man appeared in Hanoi, the area was a gulf, then a lagoon and finally a vast swamp.

Not many excavations have been carried out and little research work in archaeology has been done during the last two decades. But what has been done gives us useful information about the life of the people who lived in this area at the beginning of history.

The place was already inhabited in the New Stone Age, witness the axes of polished stone discovered in the old Hippodrome and the approaches of Bay Mau lake, in Hanoi.

From the period from the post-neolithic age to the iron age, including the bronze age, archaeologists have discovered artifacts corresponding to different periods of cultural development on the territory of Viet Nam.

3500-4000-year-old bronze age artifacts, for instance, have been discovered at Dong Vong (Dong Anh district), at Cay Tao (jujube tree) mound and at Van Dien (Thanh Tri district). Like those of Phung Nguyen (Vinh Phu), they belonged to a period known by archaeologists as the *Phung Nguyen culture*.

Other artifacts from the middle of the bronze age (3000-3500 years ago) have been discovered in the lower layers of the archaeological sites of Tien Hoi, Bai Men and Dinh Chang (Dong Anh district), they belong to the cultural period discovered at Dong Dan (Vinh Phu).

Artifacts belonging to the end of the bronze age, i.e, 2500-3000 years old, have been discovered in the upper layers of the Dinh Chang archaeological site (Dong Anh district), in the lower layers of that of Chua Thong (Thanh Tri district), and have been assimilated to the developed period of the *Go Mun* culture (Vinh Phu).

So far as the iron age is concerned (2000-2500 years ago) many artifacts dating from this period have been discovered in Hanoi: in the upper layers of the Chua Thong archaeological site (Thanh Tri district) in ancient tombs and the upper layers of Trung Mau archaeological site (Gia Lam district), in the ancient tombs of Dinh Chang, the excavations at Duong May (Dong Anh district) and chiefly at the vast archaeological site of the ancient citadel of Co Loa (Dong Anh district). Bronze drums which fall into Category I (Heger's classification) have also been found at Ngoc Ha, Trung Mau. They are vestiges of the famous *Dong Son* culture (Thanh Hoa).

These discoveries lead us to affirm that under the dynasty of the Hung Kings, the Hanoi area was inhabited by people leading a sedentary life in the villages set up on hills on the banks of the To Lich, Nhue and Hoang rivers.

Paddy husks found at Dinh Chang and Duong May, bits of broken pots at Tien Hoi, thousands of pieces of earthenware debris discovered in other excavations, the three bronze ploughshares of Co Loa, a bronze sickle at Chua Thong, scenes of rice pounding engraved on the bronze drums as ornamental motifs etc., show that the ancient inhabitants

of Hanoi were engaged in agriculture for their livelihood. Besides rice and vegetables, they grew fruit-trees, witness the *tram* nuts (*tram* = canary fruit) found at Tien Hoi, Dinh Chang and Duong May.

They were also livestock breeders, as has been proved by the bones of pigs and oxen found at Dinh Chang, Duong May and by the terracotta heads of oxen found at Tien Hoi, the buffalo heads carved in stone at Dinh Chan, the hounds engraved on the bronze axes of Trung Mau. The great amount of elephant bones found at Dong Vong, Chua Thong, Dinh Chang leads us to believe that the elephant was used at the time both as a beast of burden and for transport.

The wooded lands, dotted with lakes and rivers, were good fishing and hunting grounds. Bronze hooks have been found at Tien Hoi, Dinh Chang, and Chua Thong, and many stone and terracotta sinkers for fishing nets at Dong Vong. Excavations have revealed bones of both domestic and wild animals (wild boar, stags, deer, foxes, tigers and others) and these were undoubtedly hunted. The bronze arrow-heads found at Tien Hoi, Dinh Chang and Duong May were both fighting and hunting instruments.

Sedentary life allowed for the development of handicrafts. Skilfully cut and polished bracelets, necklaces, earrings testify to fairly advanced techniques. Some excavations have revealed many shuttles which prove that the people of the time wove cotton cloth. Pottery came into common usage. Bits of pottery discovered at Dong Vong are greatly diversified: pots, jars, vats, all turned on a lathe and with various motifs. Those found at Dinh Chang, Chua Thong are hard and well-shaped and are well baked. Big pieces of copper slag have been found at Dong Vong, and of iron at Duong May. This testifies

to the fact that copper was smelted and iron wrought here, and this has been confirmed by the discovery of tens of thousands of arrow-heads at Co Loà, of many bronze drums at Ngoc Ha and Trung Mau, and of iron axes and picks at Duong May.

From the figures engraved on the drums and other objects made of bronze, one can get an idea of life in that period: people lived in houses built on stilts the roofs of which were turned up like swallow-tailed pirogues, and in which the staircase was in the middle. Boat transport on rivers and lakes was wide-spread. So far as dress is concerned, bronze objects unearthed at Trung Mau show human figures wearing a kind of poncho and head-dress adorned with feathers; men wore loin-cloths and women wore short skirts.

The great amount of weapons of all kinds discovered in the excavations (lance and arrow-heads, battle-axes, bronze daggers) testifies to quite advanced military art among the ancient Viets.

2. From a Small River-Side Village.

The Viet tribes settled first in Bach Hac area, Viet Tri (Vinh Phu province), where the Red and the Clear rivers (Lo river) meet, at the top of the triangle which the Red river delta formed at the time. When the top of this triangle moved to the confluence of the Red and the Duong rivers, the Viets started to emigrate southwards, and eventually settled on the fertile river banks where they grew rice.

From the 3rd century BC, after a ten-year long battle against Tsin invaders, Thuc Phan set up the Au Lac State, the main agglomeration of which was transferred to Ke Chu, at the confluence of the Red and the Duong rivers. Ke Chu was chosen as capital because of its dominating position in an area between the plains and the mountain area.

The Co Loa citadel built on this site was surrounded by mounds and hills which made up strong natural defence works. Through remains and ancient documents, we know that the citadel consisted of triple earth ramparts: the outside wall had a perimeter of about 8 km, the middle wall, 6.5 km, and the inside wall 1.6 km. They were 4-5 metres high on average, and 8-12 metres high at some places; the walls were 20-30 m thick at the base and 6-12 m thick at the top. Along the walls stretched bamboo fences, around the outer rampart was a deep wide moat on which large boats could sail.

At that time the centre of present Hanoi was only a small village located on the confluence of the To Lich and the Red rivers. Nobody knows its original name. It was referred to in a later period as Bon Do or Long Do village. But these words were probably borrowed from Chinese to transcribe ancient Vietnamese names. The village was situated on both banks of the To Lich river, which was spanned by a bamboo bridge (according to Tay Ho Chi). The main occupation of the village was rice growing and fishing. Near the river there was a hillock which the legend says was linked with the centre of the earth through a deep hole. Hence its name Long Do (the dragon's navel); but in common parlance it was called Mount Nung. A temple was erected in the middle of the mount at which the cult of the Long Do God was practised. But according to other annals, the temple was dedicated to the God of the To Lich river, the village god, the product of the merger of the god of the mountain and the god of the river. The concept of the "dragon's navel" might have been created to embellish the image and enhance the prestige of the god of the village after he had been promoted to the rank of defender of the capital.

Some historians have mistaken the Hanoi area for the Long Bien area and wrongly stated that the Lang Bac lake—where the two Trung Sisters drowned themselves after their failure in the 40-43 insurrection—was the present West Lake. After referring to ancient annals and geographical studies Vietnamese historians recently proved that Long Bien, the seat of the Han rulers, was located at Yen Phong district, Ha Bac province, and that Lang Bac lake was within the confines of Tien Son district of the same province.

The site of Hanoi was occupied by the villages of the Tay Vu tribe under the reigns of the Hung kings and king Thuc. After the invasion by the Hans in 207 BC, it belonged to Tay Vu district and subsequently to Phong Khe district. Under the rules of the Chinese Wu and Tsin (from 264 to 420 AD) it was called first Vu An and then Nam Dinh.

Not until the rule of the Chinese Lin—Sing (420-479) did Hanoi become a separate district called Tong Binh—a name bearing the hallmark of the Sung rule. It was subsequently enlarged to become a *quan* (prefecture) comprising three districts and stretching from Dong Anh, north of the Red River, to Hoai Duc, south of the river. During the same period, the Khai Quoc (Founding the country) pagoda, was built on the bank of the Red River, to be transferred later to the peninsula in the West Lake in the 17th century and renamed the Tran Quoc (Defending the country) pagoda. In 607, after invading the Viet State again, the Chinese Tsin dynasty shifted the administrative centre from Long Bien in the north to the district capital of Tong Binh. From then on the place was the seat of the ruling administration. New citadels and fortifications were built, such as Tu Thanh (small citadel) in 621. It was situated on a bank of the To Lich, and had a perimeter of 900 “bo” (more than 1,600 metres).

Following the Vietnamese people's repeated insurrections, the rulers had to build another citadel called La Thanh around the old one in 757. La Thanh was further fortified in 791 and in 801. It was repaired in 808 and renamed An Nam La Thanh. It was 7 metres high and had three entrances. The eastern and western entrances had three gates and a mirador with three compartments. The southern, main entrance had five gates and a mirador with five compartments. There were ten buildings inside the citadel. This was the first large-scale citadel in ancient Hanoi. It had a perimeter of 6 km and was situated on the southern bank of the To Lich river, with the Red River to the east.

At the end of the 9th century Cao Bien was sent by the Tang Emperor as governor of Viet Nam. He started to enlarge and re-inforce La Thanh with a view to strengthening the machinery of oppression. According to old annals, the citadel was about 8 metres high and a smaller citadel about 1.5 metres high was built on the site of the main one. Altogether there were 55 watch towers, 5 miradors on 5 gates, 6 arcades, 3 canals and 34 roads. A dyke about 8 km long and 4 m high surrounded the citadel, which boasted 5000 compartments for the mandarins and troops. From then on the citadel was called *Dai La*.

Dai La is neither a proper noun nor the old name of Hanoi as was wrongly affirmed by some historians in the past. It was a big citadel surrounding a smaller one. The *Dai La* citadel under Cao Bien was larger in the 11th century when the country regained independence.

The Tong Binh area was rather densely populated. The whole Red river delta, i.e. Giao Chau, consisted of 55 *huong*, and Tong Binh alone covered 11 *huong*. According to the census made by Chinese mandarins

of the Tang dynasty, Tong Binh had 50,000 inhabitants, not including the garrisoned Chinese troops and the Chinese administrators. The citadel was typical of the period: not so much a town as a fortress.

In the second half of the 10th century, Tong Binh temporarily lost its political and military supremacy. When the country regained independence, the Dinh and the early Le kings chose Hoa Lu as capital. Hoa Lu is far from the delta and better sheltered (about 100 km south of Hanoi, in the present Ha Nam Ninh province).

At the end of the 10th century, at the beginning of the Ly dynasty, the development of society led to the setting up of a centralized feudal state. Meanwhile, the many centuries of struggle against the invaders to regain independence had strengthened the faith and power of the Vietnamese people.

In the spring of 1010, King Ly Thai To left the capital, Hoa Lu, to pay a visit to his native village, Dinh Bang (Tien Son district, Ha Bac province). He stopped to visit the Dai La citadel. The site, landscape and population enchanted him, and he decided to transfer his capital to Dai La. According to the legend, a golden dragon was seen ascending from the citadel, hence the name Thang Long (the Soaring Dragon) given to the new capital.

A passage from the *Royal Edict on the Transfer of the Capital* (Thien do chieu), which was promulgated by Ly Thai To in the autumn of 1010, reads:

"It has topographical features resembling a coiled dragon or a crouching tiger. The capital is laid out on a North-South East-West axis, and is favourably situated with regard to the mountains and rivers.

The site is large and flat, the fields high and well enough exposed. The population is protected against high water and floods. Everything there flourishes

and prospers. It is a most beautiful site where men and riches from the four cardinal points converge."

II — The Thang Long Period

1. The First Thang Long

As it was transformed from a small village into a capital, Thang Long rapidly changed character.

On the alluvial plain of the Red River which was lowlying and relatively flat, the Ly Kings ordered several man-made mountains banked up. In ancient Vietnamese cosmogony every area must have a mountain god and a river god. The term "*son ha*" (mountain and river) has been used to designate "fatherland". Thang Long already had its mountain god: the genius of Mount Tan Vien. Although it is 30 km north-west of Thang Long Mount Tan Vien was looked upon as the "back" of the capital, while the Red river which runs through it was its "belt". But as the god of the Red River and the god of Mount Tan Vien were national gods, Thang Long had to have its own gods. The To Lich river already had a god of its own. So to complete the picture mountains had to be thrown up in Thang Long. About ten mounts of this kind are found in Hanoi now: they are mounds of earth 30 to 50 m high and a 700-800m base perimeter. Most noteworthy among them is Mount Nung (as mentioned above). A temple called *Kinh Thien* (Respect for Heaven) was built there.

Another event of great importance was the building of dykes in Thang Long. From being a rampart built before the 10th century for military purposes, La Thanh was turned into a dyke to prevent floods under the Ly dynasty. As Thang Long lay below river-level during the rainy season, the construction

of dykes was imperative. It was a huge undertaking for the system of dykes which protected Thang Long, over 30 km long, was wider than that which bordered the river from its source down to the sea. Through many successive dynasties these dykes were constantly re-inforced; they were the frontiers of the city for nearly 10 centuries. They were 7-8 metres high in some places, and were over 10 metres across the top. Thus "horse carts could move along them easily" (*Journey to the Capital* by Le Huu Trac, 18th century).

Until the 15th century there were still many forests and marshes in Thang Long. Beyond the Red River, to the north-west (present Gia Lam), these were dense forests of "lim" (*erythrophlaeum fordii* Oliv) "sen" (*bassia pasquieri*) and "tau"... To the south, just outside the citadel, lakes and marshes covered an area of hundreds of hectares.

Even inside the city, to the north of the West Lake which had recently been cut off from the Red River, and whose approaches were uninhabited, there was a jungle of bamboo and other trees where elephants, tigers and panthers lived. Crocodiles and iguanas appeared from time to time.

Thus Thang Long kept its rural character as a capital, and looked like an ancient Oriental city. On the banks of the To Lich there were orchards which provided grape-fruit, longanes, coconuts, apricots, peaches and kakis, and farms which produced agricultural products. The To Lich was spanned by five bridges, four of which were made of bamboo and trunks of coconut trees, only one was made of stone and brick. All was bustle at the mouth of the river with boats of all kinds, including gun boats, sailing back and forth. One could also watch fishing boats from the floating villages on the Red River.

2. Thang Long under the Ly and Tran Dynasty
(1010 — 1400).

a) The royal city: In the autumn of 1010, following the promulgation of the Royal Edict on the Transfer of the Capital, the population of Thang Long started the work of construction with great enthusiasm. Even the students of the National Academy, upper-class children, took part in the digging and building (according to *Tang Thuong Ngau Luc* by Pham Dinh Ho and Nguyen An).

Thang Long was divided in two parts: the Royal City (Hoang Thanh) and the commoner's City (Kinh Thanh).

Located inside the commoners' City, the Royal City was surrounded by walls made first of earth and subsequently of brick, and was the area reserved for the king and his court; in the middle of the Royal City was the Forbidden City (Cam Thanh) where the king lived with his queens and the concubines, whose protection was ensured by a solid wall and the royal guard. The wall was surrounded by a deep ditch filled with water which was linked to the To Lich by a network of canals.

The Royal City was baptized *Long Phuong* (Dragon and Phoenix)¹ Access to the Royal City was by four gates which we shall deal with later. In front of each gate was a vast square on which the biggest markets of the capital square were held: this is a very familiar urban lay-out in the east, namely "city inside, market outside."

Let us now return to the Forbidden City with its numerous palaces and pavilions. According to Van Hien Thong Khao, a book by Ma Doan Lam, a

1. The dragon and the phoenix, together with the tortoise and the lion, are the 4 sacred animals in Vietnamese mythology.

Chinese historian of the 12th century, it consisted of one large four-storey palace made of vermilion lacquered wood, with columns adorned with gold painted dragons, dancing fairies and engraved ibises, and a series of smaller palaces — Long Sa, Long Thuy, Thuy Hoa. The Kinh passed his time there surrounded by hundreds of concubines.

This quarter was sacred and access was forbidden to everybody, even to the highest courtiers and the crown prince, without a specific order from the King.

Inside the Forbidden city, other palaces were used as Court meeting-places. The *Can Nguyen* palace, later re-baptized *Thien An* (Heavenly Peace) with its large court, was most favoured by the King, who gave his audiences and discussed state affairs with the mandarins there. This was where newly appointed mandarins were sworn in and martial games and other entertainments held.

Many palaces and other magnificent buildings were built in the Royal City after the 11th century. One can cite as example the Pavilion of Fairies (*Dai Chung Tien*) which was built in 1161 (according to *Viet Su Luoc*, volume 3, p.7). "The upper storey was covered with gold tiles, the lower storey with silver." ¹

All around the Royal City were pools of water with man-made hillocks covered with lotus whose flowers scented the air in summer.

The Royal Garden was thus described in the *Viet Su thong giam cuong muc* (original text Vol. 10): "In the vast royal garden, a small man-made hillock made of piled up stones stood in the middle of the large lake, the banks of which were adorned

1. It is not known whether these tiles were in precious metal or were only painted gold and silver.

with pines, bamboo and other trees, with innumerable flowers, precious plants, rare animals and birds."

The Ly kings, who were known for being fervent Buddhists, had many large pagodas built including *Huong Thien Ngu Tu* (1010), *Thang Nghiem* (1010) and *Chau Giao* (1024). King Ly Thai To contributed as much as 310 taels of gold to the smelting of the bell in the *Huong Thien Ngu Tu* pagoda.

The bricks and tiles used to build the edifices of the Royal City in the 11th and 12th centuries were of the best quality. Like the wooden beams, the sculptures and engravings on them were of a high artistic level. Rectangular bricks (30 cm long, 25 cm wide and 7 cm thick) were decorated on one side with geometrical figures: circles, pyramids or rhombuses. The corners of the buildings were engraved with dragons drifting among the clouds. As for the tiles, they were mostly cylindrical and engraved with roses, dragons or pheonixes. The ordinary flat ones, like those used nowadays, were covered with white enamel, gold or silver¹. At the beginning of the 20th century, many of the bricks and tiles of this kind have been dug up around the West Lake, within a four-sided area of tens of square kilometres, bounded by the present Hung Vuong Avenue, the Botanical Garden, Yen Thai village and the Van Phuc — Kim Ma road. They are made of baked earth, and the baking temperature was so high that they turned violet, almost black. The dates of the different dynasties engraved on them cover the period between 1010 and 1057. 34-year old Mr Nguyen Van Thanh living at Ngoc Ha (present Ba Dinh district) told one of our historians in 1960:

1. Or perhaps painted gold and silver. The ancient annals lack in precision about this.

"Sixty years ago, a rich and influential citizen of Hanoi excavated near Doi Can Street : many bricks and foundation stones were found two metres down, and there were sculptures of dragons and phoenixes on the blocks of stone — vestiges of an ancient royal palace. The bricks were dug up and cleaned and taken to Van Phuc where they were used in the building of a large communal house. Other families living in the quarter started digging in search of bricks and finally turned the area into a large lake."

Besides the bricks and tiles, other things were found, including pottery, porcelain and articles made of gold. In 1932, near the Hippodrome a small round box 6 cm in diameter, engraved with ornamental motifs from the Ly and Tran times was discovered at the depth of about two metres. In the middle of the lid there were three holes large enough for areca nuts to be slipped through. Near the box there was a knife-handle, engraved in a very expressive manner and shaped like a parrot. Both articles were made of gold. At the same place, tens of thousands of bits of baked earth, pottery debris, and household utensils engraved with dragons and phoenixes were found.

b) *The Commoners' City (or the City proper)* : lay around the Royal City and was inhabited by mandarins, officers, soldiers and the people. Under the Ly and Tran dynasties, it lay within the confines of Dai La, and occupied quite a large area, more than 30 km in perimeter. There must have been many large constructions there, but none are mentioned in the official annals. There are most remains of the pagodas, temples, towers and a certain number of palaces reserved for great mandarins or the King himself.

In the 11th and 12th centuries the Ly kings had four palaces built one after the other on the right bank of the Red River, from where they could watch

the regattas. The Ly and Tran kings also had many summer palaces around the West Lake. The Tran Kings even had *Quan Ngu* built (floating houses on the lake from which to watch fishermen at work).

Around Luc Thuy lake (now Hoan Kiem or Restored Sword lake) there were many monuments commemorating the victories gained in the national liberation struggles from the 11th to the 15th centuries. The *Bao Thien* tower, near the pagoda of the same name, was erected by the Ly Kings to commemorate the victory over the Cham in the 11th century. Under the Tran dynasty a temple on the Ngoc Son hillock (north of Luc Thuy lake) was dedicated to the heroes who had fallen on the field of honour during the three wars of resistance against the Mongols at the end of the 13th century.

Near the centre of the city was the fairly large *Thai Ho* lake, near which the Ly kings ordered the building of the Temple of Literature (Van Mieu). This temple was dedicated to Confucius and became the School of "the children of the Nation" (*Quoc Tu Giam*), or the National Academy.

South of the capital was the imposing *Thang Nghiem* pagoda, which was built in 1010 on the orders of King Ly Thai To. The smelting of the bell cost him 800 taels of silver. A century later, in 1114, the Ly kings ordered the restoration of the pagoda and the construction of a new tower (*Thien Phat*) which housed as many as a thousand statues of Buddha.

Another quarter of the capital which is noteworthy despite its being outside the Dai La citadel, is the *Hoa Vien* post, a guest house centre for foreign ambassadors and chieftains of ethnic minorities who came to ask for an audience with the King. All these buildings were on the left bank of the Red River, within the territory of the present district of Gia Lam.

c) Architecture: As mentioned above, access to the Royal city was by four gates; in the north-south east and west of the city. To the south, it was the *Dai Hung* gate, the main gate, the symbol of the country's prosperity, to the north, the *Dien Duc* (Wonderful Virtue) defended the city against the "northern darkness", to the east, the *Tuong Phu* (Good Omen) received the light coming from the Orient; to the west, the *Quang Phuc* gate (Great Felicity) welcomed the benediction of Buddha.

According to Chinese geomancy, constructions and particularly large buildings should face South. This should not be regarded as simple superstition: it was from the North that invasions by the Huns and the cold came. Thus the North was the symbol of enemy forces, evil forces. The Vietnamese adopted this conception and applied it to the geographical conditions of their country, which is situated in the tropical zone and where the South is the beneficent direction. A popular injunction went: "Marry a gentle woman and build your house facing the South."

The South gate was the one used by the Court dignitaries when they came to attend royal audiences. They arrived on horse back or on elephants along a wide road which went through a large market (the present Cua Nam — South Gate — market). Prisoners were set to feed the animals, and the fodder they piled along both sides of the road gave the road its name *Hang Co* (rows of piles of grass). *Hang Co* now runs in front of the main Hanoi railway station.

As to the East Gate, it opened onto the Eastern market (present *Sail Street* — *Hang Buom*). This is the most populated quarter and its widest street led to *Dong Bo Dan* port, the largest military post of the capital on the Red River. The street was lined with *Sophora Japonica* (hoe), hence its name: *Hoe Nhai*.

Beyond the West Gate was a large square where the Ly Kings used to hold celebrations. The road which started from this gate was lined with willows, hence its name Lieu Giai (The willow steps).

There is an interesting legend connected with the construction of Thang Long : King Ly had already settled in Thang Long, his new capital, when he decided to enlarge his palace. He had the temple dedicated to the Long Do Genius at Nung Mount inside the Royal City transferred beyond the East Gate, but the walls tumbled down during the building. The King ordered an altar to be erected to solicit the help of the genius ; during the ceremony a white horse suddenly came out of the Long Do temple, broke into a gallop in a due West direction, turned and galloped back to the temple. The walls were erected, this time, without any problem, along the traces left by the horse's hoofs. To thank the genius, the King made him guardian genius of Thang Long ; and he was worshipped at the *Bach Ma* (White Horse) temple.

In the legends of many Asian peoples the white horse is the symbol of the sun, and the above legend is without any doubt associated with the cult of the sun. In ancient Viet Nam, the horse running from the East to the West was symbolic for the course of the sun across the heavens.

For two centuries under the reign of the Ly Kings, Thang Long grew steadily. In 1108, the Court mobilised the population to build the Co Xa dyke along the Red river. In 1192, this dyke was reinforced with stone against erosion. There was rarely a year that passed without large-scale constructions being undertaken by the State apparatus.

From the year 1010 onwards, the King had a series of palaces built : *"In front, is the Can Nguyen palace for royal audiences, on the left, the Tap Hien palace, on the right the Giang Vu temple ; the Phi Long*

(Flying Dragon) gate gives access to Ngenh Xuan palace; the Dan Phuong (Purple Phoenix) and the Uy Vien gates communicate. In the south, a flight of steps decorated with sculpted stone dragons leads up to Can Minh palace; over the palace is a roof with corners; and all around it are galleries. Behind the Can Nguyen palace were two other buildings; Long An and Long Thuy, the King's resting-places; on the left, the Nhat Quang palace, on the right, the Nguyet Minh palace, and behind them are the Thuy Hoa and Long Thuy pavilions where the concubines live" (Toan Thu).

In 1029, new still larger palaces were built. On the debris of the Can Nguyen palace which had been demolished during a rebellion, the Thien An (Heavenly Peace) palace was built; on the left and the right were the Tuyen Duc and Phuc palaces. In front, there were the Long Tri steps with the Van Minh and Quang Vu palaces on both sides. The Long Tri stairway had two bell-towers which all who considered themselves victims of injustices might come and ring and lodge their complaints. Above the steps and surrounding them was a wide balcony where court dignitaries waited for their audiences with the King. In front of Long Tri was the Phung Thien palace surmounted by the Chinh Duong tower, which was used as an observation post. Behind the Thien An palace, was the Truong Xuan palace, in which one storey was called Long Do, and which was the resting-place for the King and the princes.

In 1023 "new palaces were built to the west of the main palace: in the middle, the Thien Thuy palace; on the left, the Luong Minh palace; on the right, the Thieu Quang palace, and in front, the Chinh Nghi palace with the Kinh Thien palace on top of it. The Thang Tho palace with the Thanh Tho palace on top is in the central position; it is flanked by the Nhat Kim palace on the left, the Nguyet

Bao palace on the right, and is surrounded by long galleries, and before it is the Kim Tinh stairway. To the left of the Nguyet Bao palace is the Luong Thach pavilion ; in the west are the Duc Duong bath-houses, behind which is the two-storeyed Phu Quoc palace with the Phuong Tien stairway, a gate (Thau Vien) and a pond used for fish-breeding (Duong Ngu) ; the latter was connected to the river, and it is in its neighbourhood that the Ngoan Y pavilion was built, the three sides of which were adorned with flowers and rare plants. All these constructions, made of wood or earth, are beautifully decorated" (Viet Su luoc).

The pagodas and temples of Thang Long are worthy of special mention.

In the 11th century, Buddhism was the prevailing belief of the people and the ruling classes. For administrative reasons Confucianism was to gain influence gradually ; Buddhism, however, remained the predominant religion for another 3 or 4 centuries ; this helps to explain the large number of pagodas and towers built by the Ly and Tran Kings in addition to the royal palaces and residences. Among the most famous, one can cite the *Dien Huu* pagoda (one-pillar pagoda) at the West gate. The *Bao Thien* pagoda next to Luc Thuy (Hoan Kiem) Lake : the *Chau Giao* pagoda built in 1173 on Van Bao hillock inside the royal city ; the *Khai Quoc* pagoda (today's *Tran Quoc*) which was built in 544-546 and became the Buddhist centre of the capital under the Ly dynasty. Bonzes of great renown, advisors to the royal court, lived there.

The one-pillar pagoda was built in 1049 and restored in 1105. The following is a description of the construction work : "To restore the *Dien Huu* pagoda of the West Garden following the instruction given by higher authorities, and keeping within present limits : Dig up the *Linh Chieu* perfumed lake, in the

middle of which stands a stone column topped with a lotus flower in full bloom showing a thousand petals. On the flower, build a vermilion-coloured pagoda which shelters a golden statue. Many galleries are to be built around the lake; outside them stretches the Bich Tri lake spanned by an arched bridge. At the entrance of the bridge, on both sides of a small yard, stand the Luu Ly towers" (Stele of the Sung Thien Dien Linh Tower).

Some Vietnamese historians estimate that the column supporting the pagoda might have been between 20 to 40 m high. The present One-Pillar Pagoda is a reduced version of the original.

In 1080 a bell was cast for the pagoda. This bell, which was later called *Quy Dien* (Tortoise rice-field) was classified among the four Great works of the Ly dynasty. A square bell-tower, made of stone, 8 "truong" (about 26 m) high was built in front of the pagoda. But the bell was found to have no resonance and was thrown into a rice-field. Tortoises took refuge in it, hence the name "Tortoise rice-field".

The *Bao Thien* pagoda was reflected in the water of Luc Thuy lake (present Restored Sword Lake). The upper storeys of this 12-storey tower tens of "truong" high (around 70 m) were made of bronze. A famous poet of the Tran dynasty sang of it as a gigantic column supporting the vault of heaven:

"Symbolizing pacification of the East and the West, mounting the guard for the royal capital, the tower rises in its stateliness like a fabulous column supporting the vault of heaven, for preserving calm in the country, a point which will never blunt." (Pham Su Manh).

Among the monuments with a religious character, one should also cite the many temples dedicated to national heroes such as the Trung sisters, Phung Hung and Ly Thuong Kiet or to such genii like

those on Mounts Tan Vien, Tran Vu and Long Do. There were also taoist temples named "quan", dedicated to the cult of Taoist gods, in the rites of which elements of witchcraft and black magic were found. Although smaller in size than the pagodas, these temples testified to the diversity of architectural styles.

The capital Thang Long reached the climax of its development after four centuries of construction and became the political, economic and cultural centre of the country. The Tran dynasty perpetuated the division of society into classes : aristocrats and serfs. The nobles divided the land up between themselves into large estates and each had hundreds of serfs and personal servants. The pagodas had their own serfs. But there were a large number of free peasants as well. This system made it easy to mobilize the man power and wealth necessary for great building works.

Under the Ly and Tran dynasties construction was characterized by large complexes of buildings. In 1010, there were 8 palaces and 3 pavilions in the centre of the Royal City. In 1029, this complex was repaired and 8 new palaces were added to it. In 1203, the Royal City was endowed with another architectural group composed of 15 edifices of different sizes: palaces, pavilions, houses of more than one storey, bath-houses, ponds for fish-breeding.

With the development of copper casting, stone and wood chiselling, of brick and tile baking, architects had solid, varied material which they used with good taste, witness the remains which have been discovered : bricks 36 cm-40 cm long, tiles of different shapes (cylindrical, flat, concave), tiles covered with white or coloured enamel. The decorations on many of these tiles and bricks testify to the high level of handicrafts at the time.

Another characteristic of the building-works of that time is that they were arranged symmetrically on a flat surface and converged towards the centre. In the middle of the palaces and pagodas there was always a central edifice, a tower for example, around which other buildings stood in a harmonious pattern. This style is best observed in the plan of the Dien Huu pagoda: the one-pillar pagoda, where the golden statue of a Buddha seated on a lotus flower, occupied the central position, while all around were lakes and ponds spanned by bridges in whose water towers were reflected. This style was still widely used under the Tran, especially in tomb sites.

It is noteworthy that in this architectural category, the constructions are always aligned along a longitudinal axis, except some towers built under the Ly dynasty. Some historians of art believe that this is the synthesis of two styles. On the one hand, the Indian, reflecting its own conception of the universe, the main temple being the symbol of the sacred Mount (Yeru) — the centre of the world — surrounded by a quadrilateral-shaped yard (the Earth) with converging architectural groups (mountains) and ditches, canals (the Ocean). On the other hand that called *Than dao*¹ by Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese architects: symmetrical constructions arranged in many rows along the axis. The latter prevailed in subsequent centuries.

d) *The Court and mandarin society*. It was in Thang Long where the King, the Court and all leading organisms of the feudal state were, that the contrast between the life of the powerful and the

1. According to *Doanh tao phap thuc* (written in the Ming dynasty in China), the *Than dao* (Shen Dao) is the axis dividing an architectural block into two equal parts longitudinally. This architectural conception was not only popular in China, but also found its expression in Viet Nam, Japan and other countries in the Extreme East.

rich on the one hand, and that of the toiling people — craftsmen, merchants and peasants — on the other was most striking.

The Court was in the Royal City, dignitaries came here to attend the Kings' audiences and discuss State affairs. After audiences they retired to their special hotels in the commoners' City (the City proper). However the Kinh needed a certain number of mandarins as private personal aides, chamberlains and eunuchs, not to mention guards and pages.

Thang Long was at all times ruled over by mandarins responsible for administration and security. Thus, the Tran founded in 1230 the post of Binh Lac¹, an officer who was responsible for the security of the capital and presided over court activities.

The Tran kings attached great importance to the post of governor of the capital: appointment to this post was only possible when one had gone through the different echelons of the administration (district, province), and then passed a competitive examination. It is no wonder there were many men of great talent and virtue among those mandarins.

For the defence of the Royal City and the Forbidden City, the Ly Kings founded the royal guard at the beginning of their reign. This guard (*cam quan*) was composed of 10 "*quan*" (companies) of 200 men each. King Ly Thanh Ton (12th century) added another 6 "*quan*", raising the total number of guards to 3,200. All had the three letters "*Thien tu quan*" (soldiers of His Majesty the Son of Heaven) tattooed on their foreheads.

In 1230, under the Tran, four formations of "*Tuong quan*" were founded. This ensured the

1. His functions became known as *Dai an phu su* in 1265, as *Kinh su dai doan* in 1341, then as *Trung Do Doan* at the beginning of 1394.

guard of the other gates of the Royal City as well as order and public security in the people's quarters.

Many garrisons were quartered in the capital, for Thang Long was the regroupment centre of the main body of the country's armed forces. These garrisons assumed the defence of the capital and were always ready to go to the front in the event of war.

There were still other special troops assigned to serve the dignitaries; and according to regulations established by the Tran Kings, mandarins of 5th degree and above (5th of 9 degrees) had at least 100 and at most 1000 soldiers supplied by the King at their disposal.

e) *Outstanding political events* (from the 11th to the 14th century).

Ever since the Ly dynasty's ascension to the throne there was a bitter struggle for power within the feudal class. Ly Thai To, the first King of the dynasty, died in 1028. At the head of their respective armies, his three younger sons attacked the heir to usurp the throne, but they were defeated. Revolts broke out in 1035, 1041, 1048, 1208 and 1369, led by mandarins or officers who wanted to proclaim themselves kings in place of the Ly or the Tran, but they were all repressed.

Towards the end of 1142 a big trial was held in Thang Long to judge the rebels. Their chief, Than Loi, and 20 of his acolytes, were beheaded. The number of accused put on trial rose to more than 2000, but they were pardoned and put under house arrest. The rebellion had lasted for three years, the insurgents had occupied many districts in Thai Nguyen and were about to launch an attack on the capital when they were wiped out by troops loyal to the King.

Another 12th century revolt worthy of mention was the work of the peasants of Quoc Oai, Ha Son Binh province, led by bonze Pham Su On. They

attacked Thang Long, and took control of the capital for three days; the Tran King and his Court had to flee to Bac Giang. The rebels then withdrew to Quoc Oai, but were massacred in an ambush by royal troops. Pham Su On was captured and put to an atrocious death.

In the course of four centuries (from the 11th to the 15th century), Thang Long witnessed a succession of three dynasties: the Ly, the Ho and the Tran.

The Ly dynasty lasted 216 years, from 1009 to 1225. Toward the end of their reign, they were no longer strong enough to face the peasants' uprisings and cope with the conflicts within the feudal class. In 1224, a high dignitary at court named Tran Thu Do usurped all the power and forced King Ly Hue Ton to abdicate in favour of his daughter, only 7 years old, the next year, Tran Thu Do forced the young queen to marry his nephew Tran Canh, who mounted the throne and founded the Tran dynasty (1225).

The Tran dynasty was to last 175 years (1225-1400). It was overthrown by the Ho in 1400. Ho Qui Ly, a high dignitary of the Tran, nurtured the ambition of taking hold of the crown. As early as in 1388, he put three Tran Kings and 370 members of the royal family and dignitaries of the Court to death. Finally, he proclaimed himself king in 1400 and settled his capital in Thanh Hoa, at a place named Tay Do (capital of the west). Thang Long was renamed Dong Do (capital of the East).

The reign of the Ho ended seven years later, in 1407, when the army of the Ming overran the country. The Ho, father and son, were captured and taken to China.

During the occupation by the Ming, Thang Long (i.e. Dong Do) had its name changed again and was

called Dong Quan¹. After 400 years of independence the Vietnamese people came under the yoke of foreign domination once again. It was Le Loi who put an end to this domination after 10 years of bitter struggle. Having defeated the Ming, Le Loi founded the Le dynasty (1428-1768).

f) *Victories over the invaders.* During the four centuries under the Ly and Tran dynasties, relations between Viet Nam and her neighbouring countries were generally good. However conflicts flared up now and then, especially with the Chinese feudal class and the Cham. The Chinese feudalists continued to nurture designs on Viet Nam. As for the Cham to the South, although they regularly paid tribute to the Court of Thang Long, they went out of their way to cause unending trouble at the frontier, even trying to intrude into the territory of Viet Nam. This, however, was not a big problem: Thang Long defeated them many times.

In 1044, Cham prisoners of war were brought back to the capital; the Cham kings themselves — Che Ca in 1069 and Che Chi en 1312 — were taken prisoner and brought to Thang Long together with their defeated troops.

The three great victories over the Mongols in the 13th century and the liberation of Thang Long from Ming domination in the 15th century were among the most memorable feats of arms.

The Mongols attacked Viet Nam three times in 30 years (1257-1288). In 1257 they set off from Yunnan, and in no time reached the Dong Bo Dau port, near the capital. King Tran Thai Ton had to leave Thang Long and fell back to Nam Dinh in the South. The Mongols entered Thang Long and found the capital empty, without food and population. As they

1. Phonetic deformation by Western missionaries will lead to the appellation Tonquin, Tonkin.

had no operational base, they could not attack the neighbouring areas.

In their fury, they devastated Thang Long. Early in 1258 Tran Thai Ton launched a great counter-offensive against the enemy and defeated them at Dong Bo Dau. The Mongols fled to Yunnan. This victory is referred to in many histories and poems written at that time.

This was followed by a period of struggle at the diplomatic level, which was at once delicate and bitter. In the 1260's the Chinese Emperors of Mongolian descent sent their ambassadors to Thang Long to dictate their terms: either the king of Viet Nam went in person to pay homage to the Court of China, or he was to send a prince of the blood to live in China as a hostage; he had, moreover, to make up lists of the population, pay taxes to China and supply men for military service in the Chinese army.

As they wanted to buy time and make preparations for an inevitable war, the Tran kings adopted a very flexible policy. The well-known text by the eminent general Tran Hung Dao reflected the resentment of the population of Thang Long. "The enemy emissaries are real highwaymen who parade arrogantly in our public places. With their stinking tongues of vulture and owl, they openly insult the Court. Goats and dogs though they are, they dare hold our great dignitaries in contempt."

(*Proclamation to Officers and Soldiers*). Meanwhile, the population had to tighten their belts to supply the Mongols with the required tributes: boxes of precious wood inlaid with gold and bordered with silver; lotus leaf-shaped boxes or golden water-melon-shaped boxes, horns of rhinoceros inlaid with gold and silver, gold chopsticks and bowls, silks and brocades...

The situation was explosive. War might break out at any moment. King Tran Thanh Tong summoned the old men of the whole country to the Dien Hong palace, in Thang Long, for consultations. They were asked to decide on the question of war and peace, and the conference voted unanimously for armed resistance.

The following year, the army of Omar — one of the best Mongol generals — invaded the northern provinces of Viet Nam. Once again, the king left the capital and retreated to the south. The Mongols occupied an empty city. Towards the middle of 1285, in concerted action with regional armies under the command of men of talent, the royal army launched a big road and sea offensive against the capital. A Chinese history book wrote: "Vietnamese land forces and men-of-war mounted an assault against the general headquarters and encircled the City with two or three lines of soldiers, they suffered many losses, but reinforcements kept on coming. Our men (the Mongols) found themselves in a difficult situation; everything was lacking; weapons and ammunition were running out." (Kinh The Dai Dien Tu Luc, volume 41).

For the second time, in June 1285, the Mongols suffered a heavy defeat and had to retreat. The Court returned to Thang Long in an atmosphere of general jubilation:

*At the port of Chuong Duong, lances and spears
we seized*

*At the estuary of Ham Tu, thousands of enemy
troops we captured*

*Peace has returned, let's redouble our efforts
To preserve, for ever, our beloved fatherland.*

(Accompanying the King on his return to the Capital — Tran Quang Khai, 1241-1294).

Two years later, in 1287, a Mongol army of 200,000 men under the command of Thoat Hoan, the son of Khublai Khan, returned to Viet Nam. The Tran king left the capital again for the south. The population hid their food supplies and encircled enemy posts to isolate them. Guerilla warfare flared up wherever the enemy showed up, even in Thang Long. Thoat Hoan decided to abandon the city and destroy it. The strong Vietnamese offensive put an end to the Mongol aggression with the great victory at the Bach Dang river mouth in 1288.

Towards the end of the 13th century, the Tran experienced a general crisis: serfs, peasants and farmers rose against the system of fiefs; a number of mandarins rebelled against the aristocracy; Confucianism clashed with Buddhism. The Ho who overthrew the Tran and seized the throne, did not succeed in solving these contradictions. The Chinese Ming dynasty took the opportunity to invade Viet Nam and rule the country from 1407 to 1427.

This time Le Loi, a peasant leader from Lam Son (Thanh Hoa), led a 10-year long struggle (1418-1428) against the Ming, in which he was assisted by Nguyen Trai, a strategist of genius and eminent man of letters. Tens of thousands of peasants rallied to him, and Le Loi's troops swiftly grew in strength and took all the provinces from the south to the north one by one. In 1426, Le Loi laid siege to Thang Long, which was called Dong Quan then. The main enemy forces were mustered there, and fierce fighting went on for more than one year. Le Loi's men showed great courage and won brilliant victories. After their initial setbacks, the Ming kings sent an army of 50,000 men to Viet Nam as reinforcements. This army, in turn, besieged Thang Long. 50,000 enemy troops were put out of action and two enemy generals were killed, during the great battles which took place at Cong Moc and Tot Dong, near Thang

Long. The commander-in-chief of the Chinese troops, Vuong Thong, asked for negotiations. This was only a subterfuge, for two months later two enemy columns totalling 100,000 men came to their rescue. They were both intercepted and routed. When Vuong Thong, who had fallen back on Thang Long, heard the news, he hastened to surrender. Le Loi accepted this capitulation but demanded that the enemy generals come to read their pledges south of the capital. He also fixed a deadline for the complete withdrawal of Chinese troops. However, he granted amnesty to 20,000 prisoners of war and even gave the Chinese 20,000 horses and 500 vessels for their repatriation.

3. Thang Long During the Period under the Le and the Tay Son (from the 15th to the 19th century).

a) *The Royal City.* In 1428, Le Loi mounted the throne and gave Dong Do the name of Dong Kinh. However, Thang Long was the name used to designate the capital during all the period from the 15th century to the end of the 19th century.

At the beginning of the Le's reign, the Royal City was not much different from that it was under the Ly and Tran dynasties. The destroyed palaces were restored, but it was not until 1490 that Thang Long really changed its face.

According to the oldest map preserved (the Hong Duc map in 1490), the Royal City included both the Royal City under the Ly and Tran and commoners' City of Hanoi such as it was subsequently under the Nguyen dynasty (19th century) that is to say, twice as large as the old royal city of the Ly and Tran and three times as large as the City of Hanoi under the Nguyen dynasty.

In their general positioning, the constructions looked much like those of the Ly and Tran, except

for the palaces reserved for the heir to the throne called *Dong Cung*. In this quarter of the royal city, a large lake was dug, and in the middle a temple dedicated to the cult of the King's ancestors (*Thai Mieu*) was erected. To the west of the royal city, there were lakes and ponds, hillocks, many-storied pavilions and a geological garden named *Thuong Lam* (royal forest).

In 1512, a spendthrift king — Le Tuong Duc — had one hundred palaces and residences built at the same time. The most sumptuous and costly, the "Cuu Trung Dai", was not finished due to a palace revolution in 1561.

The Le were overthrown in 1527. Mac Dang Dung seized power and undertook to re-arrange the royal city with a view to protecting himself against the royalist forces who, with the assistance of the Trinh lords, were attempting to re-install the Le on the throne.

In 1585, Mac Mau Hop mobilized his troops and the population of the four provinces of Son Nam, Kinh Bac, Hai Duong and Son Tay for the building of three earth walls around Dai La citadel (Thang Long). The new walls were 7m higher than the old citadel; bamboo and other trees were planted on them, and around each wall there was a wide ditch. The total width of this fortification system was 25 truong (about 100m), their length was more than 10 km¹. Inside the royal city, the palaces were restored and the lakes and gardens enlarged on the orders of Mac Mau Hop.

This was the last large-scale construction in Thang Long. For after the Mac disappeared from the political scene and the Le returned to the throne with the help of the powerful Trinh lords, no new edifice

1. *Viet Su Thong Giam Cuong Muc*, (volume XXVI), page 23.

was built in the royal city. This period of Viet Nam's history is called "period of the Le kings and the Trinh lords". The Le kings were only figure heads, while the Trinh lords were the real masters of the country¹. The latter had their own palaces built outside the royal city, which was thus forsaken and fell into ruin.

The palaces of the royal city which survived the trials of time none the less retained their splendour and magnificence in the 17th and 18th centuries.

From the 18th century onwards, due to neglect by the kings, the state of the edifices in the Royal city worsened. When the Tay Son settled in Thang Long towards the end of the century, some gates of the old citadel were already in ruins. The Tay Son kings had a number of palaces repaired and some new ones built; but these were not great works.

In 1802, the Nguyen defeated the Tay Son. They attached little importance to the old capital Thang Long, considering it as a provincial capital. Their capital was in Hue.

b) *The Commoners' City* (city proper)

The lay-out of civilian Thang Long was the same as in the previous period. However, the living quarters were enlarged and became more lively and populated. According to the Italian missionary Marini, there were already two-storied houses in the city, the additional storeys built to provide refuge against floods. In the merchant quarters there lived a number of foreign nationals, Dutch, British and others. Thang Long owed its popular name of *Ke Cho* (market) to its atmosphere of humming trading activity.

The wall surrounding the capital, the Dai La citadel that is, was strengthened in the 18th century.

1. Similar to the shoguns in Japan.

The Le Kings and the Trinh lords mobilized the population of the neighbouring districts for this work. Of the eight gates of this period only one remains today, that of *Thanh Ha*. (O Quan Truong: in present day Mat Street). The gates were closed at night; a permit was required for exit and entry.

The mandarins' quarters were in the southern part of the capital.

In 1497, King Le Thanh Ton had a large pavilion built near Dai Hung gate which was used as reception centre (*Vien Dai lau*); dignitaries rested there before attending royal audiences. Nearby was the *Quang Van* pavilion where the royal decrees were posted.

The Trinh lords ordered 52 palaces built at the beginning of the 17th century, all to face Luc Thuy lake (present-day Hoan Kiem Lake) which was then very large. The portion of the lake which remains today was named *Ta Vong* (Look to the left) and the one which has been filled up since then, to the southeast was named *Huu Vong* (Look to the right). On the banks of the lake, the Trinh had many beautiful pavilions built from which to enjoy the view, especially on moon-lit nights. As this large lake was near their palaces, the Trinh often organized naval manoeuvres on it; hence the name Lake of the Navy (*Ho Thuy quan*) given it. In the vicinity of the lake, at the beginning of the 18th century, The Trinh had a high many-storeyed house, adorned with 5 dragons in mosaic. It was called the Five-Dragon Palace. In the 19th century the edifice was destroyed and on its foundations the *Lien Tri* pagoda (Lotus lake) was built.

To the south of Luc Thuy lake lord Trinh Giang built an underground palace called *Thuong Tri Cung* in 1727.

The Temple of Literature was enlarged and large temples dedicated to Taoist genii and two auxiliary

buildings dedicated to Confucius and eminent scholars were built there. Plenty of room was reserved for classes inside the Temple, which was known as *Thai hoc* House. Vast auditoria were set out there as well as a library, where books and engraved texts were kept on small wooden tables. Near the *Thai hoc* House, there was a boarding house with room for about 300 students. Another part of the Temple was known as the House of Stelae.

As the previous dynasties had done, the Le kings and Trinh lords had many pagodas and temples built: Kim Lien, Tran Quoc, Tien Tich, Tran Vu, Ngoc Son and Ba Kieu. The Tien Tich pagoda, for example, in the south of the capital, was built at the beginning of the 18th century, and was described by Pham Dinh Ho and Nguyen An, two scholars of the time, as follows:

"... The pagoda is large, it has superposed roofs and double doors. In the yard there were eight square blocks of stone 0.8 metres (2 thuoc) across, which support vases of orchids whose perfume carried by the cajoling breeze scents the air. The pagoda backs onto the road and opens on to a limpid river; the tower to the right has 9 storeys, bells in the four corners, and is adorned with sumptuous golden and blue motifs..." (Tang Thuong Ngau Luc).

Another of the new constructions was a whole quarter built specially for the Trinh around the West Lake for their entertainment. In 1620, the population of the three villages Yen Phu, Yen Quang and Truc Yen were mobilized to build a dyke which divided the West Lake; and created a new lake — Truc Bach Lake.

In his book *Thuong Kinh Ky Su* (Journey to the Capital), Le Huu Trac describes the West Lake as follows:

...“The boat emerges from below a small mountain and enters the lake. There before your eyes is a vast expanse of blue sky and rippling green water. Groups of white storks wheel over the lake, teals scud the waves in couples near the opposite bank; on the side of the dyke, the thick foliage of the *Ly Cung* palace sways in the wind, back and forth, flattening and straightening. On the small islands in the middle of the lake is a row of palaces.”

The number of administrative sectors in Thang Long was reduced to 36, but they were larger than before. Thang Long was no smaller than it had been under the *Ly* and *Tran* when it had 61 sectors.

Handicraft production was in full swing, and many sectors of the city were organised in guilds, each specializing in a different craft. Commerce flourished. Convenient waterway transport meant that the city was visited by many boats from the upland areas, and others from the south (*Nam Dinh*, *Thai Binh*, *Thanh Hoa* and *Nghe Tinh*) The markets of Thang Long were enormously affluent.

c) *Architecture.*

During the war years, the Commoners' City was completely destroyed and the walls of the Royal City fell partially into ruin. In 1473, the Royal City was restored and extended to eight leagues in perimeter in 1490, and new buildings went up. In 1514, it was again enlarged, and its area was doubled compared with the Royal City of the *Ly* and *Tran*.

The *Kinh Thien* palace—centre of the Royal City—was built in 1428 on Nung Mount. This was where the King discussed State affairs with his dignitaries. To the right was the *Chi Kinh* palace, and to the left the *Van Tho* palace. In front was the *Tri Thien* palace where the King gave audiences.

To the east stood the *Dong Cung* palace, residence of the royal heir. The *Thai Mieu*, dedicated to the King's ancestors, faced the *Dong Cung*.

In 1512, King Le charged Vu Nhu To, a well-known architect from Hai Duong, with the task of directing the construction of 100 new edifices, one of which was the Cuu Trung Dai, a large, sumptuous palace which was to remain unfinished. The King's prodigality, his love of luxury and his unlimited taxation and spending were to lead the Le dynasty to ruin and the capital to chaotic disorder.

In 1527 the Mac usurped the throne and from then on, Thang Long was constantly threatened by the war between the Mac, and the Le who received assistance from the Trinh. To strengthen the defences of the capital, the Mac started to rebuild the royal city in 1585: the work was to last one year and determined the future lay-out and look of the royal city, for after that time there was no major construction.

The following is a passage from "A description of the Kingdom of Tonking" (Paris 1752), written by an English merchant in 1680:

"The ruins of the triple wall of the old city and the old palace give a good idea of what they contained in the height of their splendour. The Palace alone enclosed an area of six to seven miles in circumference. Its yards were paved with marble, its gates and the remains of its apartments testify to its former magnificence and make one regret the destruction of one of the most beautiful buildings of Asia."

The Italian priest Marini was also astonished by the monuments of the capital: "The number of sentries, officers, workmen and people of all nationalities who work there; the order, the clothes, the gardens, elephants, horses, the weapons and other munitions are astonishing, beyond imagination. Although the King's apartments are built of wood, the gold and embroidered ornaments, the fine mats of different colours as well as the rich carpets,

render them incomparable. In the palace in which the Bua (King) lives there are also large stone arcades and extraordinarily thick walls. It is built on a forest of solid stilts, and a flight of steps leads to its one storey. The framework is much more beautiful than that of any other building anywhere. The rooms are spacious, the galleries are covered and the large court yards stretch out endlessly." (Curious and Natural History of the Kingdoms of Tonking and Laos, Paris, 1666, in RI, 1910).

During this period the pagodas and temples were also restored. Some others were built, but they were on a smaller scale than those built under the Ly and Tran. According to historians of Vietnamese art, it was not until the 17th century that the style of architecture called "Cong inside, Quoc outside" made its first appearance: the main part of the pagoda was shaped like the character *cong* (I in Chinese) and included the altar to Buddha (sometimes it had the shape of a mallet — character T in Chinese) and believers said their prayers there. The outer part was shaped like the character *quoc* (口 in Chinese), and was a rectangle encompassing the main part and composed of a succession of compartments — hence the name *one hundred-compartment pagoda*, the figure 100 being entirely symbolic. In front of the pagoda there was a porch with three entrances, topped with a bell tower, and with altars of arhats on both sides. A small pagoda behind was dedicated to the bonzes who founded the pagoda.

Unlike the construction work done under the Ly and Tran, which mostly followed the architectural style of convergence on a central point, from the 15th century onwards buildings followed a longitudinal axis which divided the whole block into two symmetrical parts. Once through the three-entrance porch one entered a courtyard, then an anterior pavilion, another courtyard, another pavilion, and so on,

according to the size of the complex. The foundations of each successive edifice rose gradually in steps until the main altar, the highest place, was reached. For this reason hillsides were considered the best place for such construction. In the capital, as the terrain was flat, the foundations of such edifices had to be built up and were paved with marble tiles. On both sides of the longitudinal axis were two rows of symmetrically arranged annexes (galleries, towers, many-storeyed houses...)

From the technical point of view, the tendency was towards higher building. During the period of the Ly and the Tran, the roofs were vast, heavy constructions. Complicated interlocking structures proved unnecessary, as the various parts were supported by the pressure of their own weight against each other. Under the Le lighter roofs were preferred, and the different sections which fitted together by interlocking required a more elaborate technique.

In the field of ornamentation, sculpture and engraving were more refined and more accomplished, but they fell into the rigid conformism of Chinese style. This tendency was more pronounced under the Nguyen dynasty in the 19th century. Take for example the dragon motifs: one notices that during the Le period sculpted dragons had a more ferocious look than before, with crests, horns, claws and scales, symbolizing the King's power and authority, which made them look like those of the Chinese palaces of the Ming dynasty. However, under the Ly, there was more suppleness in their bodies, which undulated like snakes, and had a smoother and more benevolent gait, as ascribed them in folk tales. In the Tran period, the dragon became somewhat simpler and more rigid; however it remained the fabulous animal created by Vietnamese mythology. It can be said that from the reign of the Le Kings

onwards the influence of Chinese culture was more strongly felt in architecture, particularly in the architecture of royal palaces.

d) *Outstanding political events.*

Political life in Thang Long from the 15th to the 18th century remained essentially the same as that of the previous dynasties. However, it was more complex, more confused and eventful.

After a century of prosperity and relative calm, the feudal system went through a period of crisis from the 16th century onwards, which grew more and more serious. There was a succession of bloody conflicts between kings and lords, peasants' uprisings, mandarins' and generals' rebellions and protracted wars between different feudal factions.

Having put an end to the 20-year long rule by the Chinese, the first Le Kings were anxious to preserve the peace. But it was not to last very long. Following the liquidation of mandarins of great talent and integrity (such as Nguyen Trai) and as a result of the discontent of the people who suffered under the burden of taxation and levies the political situation deteriorated rapidly. Revolts led by malcontents among the mandarins broke out one after another, even in the capital. The most typical revolt was the one led by Nghi Dan, the eldest brother of King Le Nhan Tong. In 1459 Nghi Dan and his followers managed to climb over the walls of the Royal City at night, killed the King and the queen-mother, and Nghi Dan usurped the throne.

The Le Kings' corruption made it easier for the Mac to overthrow them in 1527, and subsequently rule the country until 1592.

But the Mac were no more successful in their attempt to improve the situation. The people still suffered from famine and misery, and civil war

continued. Under the slogan "Wipe out the Mac and restore the Le", the Trinh lords succeeded in driving the Mac out of the capital in 1592.

The territory of Viet Nam was extended southwards from the sixteenth century onwards. Rudimentary means of communications ensured only precarious liaison between the central government and the outlying provinces, and this favoured separatist tendencies. The class struggle over the land question intensified, and the internal contradictions within the ruling classes became more acute.

The Trinh lords, who held the real power in Thang Long, became more and more arbitrary and tyrannical. The scramble for power between the Trinh — whose rule in the North extended south to the Ngang Pass — and the Nguyen lords who reigned *de facto* in the southern zone, was to lead to bloody civil war which would last almost two centuries.

There was an almost permanent state of alert in Thang Long due to the revolts. Nguyen Huu Cau, a peasant leader, occupied Kinh Bac (present-day Ha Bac) in 1744. The capital was panic stricken, and Lord Trinh Doanh had to order his personal guard to take charge of order and surveillance of the population of the capital, which was then divided into 36 military sub-sectors.

Among the most outstanding events during the "period of the Le Kings and Trinh lords" were the four mutinies by the guards of the Royal City. They were recruited by the Trinh in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An, and were nicknamed Kieu Binh (the arrogant military). During one of the mutinies, in 1784, the Kieu Binh made an assault on the Palace of the Trinh, killed a number of high dignitaries and forced Trinh Can to meet their demands.

The deteriorating situation was to greatly facilitate the victory of the Tay Son who overthrew the

Le and Trinh and install the Tay Son dynasty on the throne. King Le Chieu Thong, weak and faint-hearted, took refuge in China and begged the Ching Emperor for aid. In 1788, under the pretext of helping the Le to gain the throne, 200,000 Ching troops invaded Viet Nam and occupied Thang Long.

The Tay Son King, Quang Trung, was then in Hue. He mustered a force of 100,000 men and, thanks to forced marches, reached the North in record time. The 4th day of the first lunar month (Tet) of the year 1789, the Tay Son army arrived in front of the Hanoi and Ngoc Hoi posts, the biggest defence-works of the Chinese feudalists south of the capital, and captured them. Ton Si Nghi, the Commander-in-chief of the invading Chinese army, left Thang Long hurriedly, the enemy garrison fled in panic, the floating bridges on the Red river broke under their massed weight, and many Chinese soldiers were drowned.

This defeat put an end to the invasions by the Chinese feudalists.

e) *Administration of the Commoners' City* (City proper)

Two mandarins — Phu Doan and Thieu Doan — ruled the capital. Their orders were effected by two *Huyen uy* who headed the two districts of Vinh Xuong and Quang Duc. Each district was composed of 18 quarters each headed by a mandarin in charge of administrative affairs.

Two senior officers — the military governor and his deputy (Chanh de linh and Pho de linh) — were responsible for public security and defence in the capital. From 1435 onwards, "passes" (lo dan) for moving about in the city were compulsory.

At the beginning of the 18th century, in view of the worsening political situation, more stringent measures were taken by the Trinh to ensure strict control of the capital. The two districts of Vinh

Xuong and Quang Duc were divided into 8 sub-districts, and each was headed by a chief administrator and his deputy. In the quarters, 5 houses made up a "ty", 2 "ty" made up a "lu" and 4 "lu", a "doan". Officials were appointed to take charge of "lu" and "doan".

The decline of absolute monarchy in Viet Nam started at the beginning of the 15th century. The ranks of the mandarins swelled with the development of the feudal state, which held many competitive examinations to recruit officials for the government apparatus. Under the Le, the system of examinations was more liberal: members of families of soldiers, singers and songstresses were allowed to sit for the examinations, whereas they had been forbidden to do so under the Ly and Tran. In addition to the examinations, the Le used other ways to recruit their officials: they promoted the sons of the gentry, of families who had served the royalty well; and they auctioned some of the posts thus enabling the rich to become mandarins. For example, in 1460, a post of 9th grade (last echelon of the mandarinat) could be bought for 70 "hoc" of paddy; and 8th grade post cost 200 "hoc", and so on. In 1736, cash payment for a post of district chief was 1800 "quan" (string of coins); that of prefecture chief was worth 2800 "quan".

This state of affairs naturally gave rise to abuse of power, further aggravated the corruption of the Court, the misery of the people and exacerbated social contradictions.

4. Thang Long under the Reign of the Nguyen Kings.

a) *The Royal City.*

The Tay Son had won a resounding victory over the Chinese Tsing, but they did not prove equal to the task of rebuilding the country. They in turn

were removed from the political scene 14 years later. In 1802, with the aid of western capitalists, Nguyen Anh set out from the south and rapidly conquered the whole country and established the Nguyen dynasty which lasted until 1945.

In anticipation of revolt by the people of the North, Gia Long (Nguyen Anh) neglected Thang Long and chose Hue as his capital. Even the name of Thang Long was changed, the word "thinh" replacing "long" which meant "dragon" symbol of royalty; the use of "long" in the name of the city was forbidden. The old capital was soon reduced to no more than a simple citadel, and subsequently, to a simple provincial capital. The old Royal City became the governor's residence, its size was reduced as it was not to be larger than the Royal capital in Hue.

Drawing his inspiration from the military works of Vauban, a well-known French military engineer, Gia Long had Thang Long turned into a citadel one kilometre square. Its perimeter was much smaller than that of the royal cities under previous dynasties. Its walls built with huge bricks and big quarry-stones were used in the foundations which were about 5 m high and 16 m thick. The citadel had five gates: the east, the west, the south-east, the north and the south-west. Note that no gate faced directly south. This was perhaps to prevent all malevolent gazing towards the royal court of Hue.

Around the citadel there was a strip of land 6 to 7 m wide bordered by a ditch 15-16 m wide and 5 m deep. The water there was never deeper than 1 m. A second wall called *Duong Ma Thanh* was built around the ditch to protect the gates of the citadel. Smaller gates called *Nhan Mon* were bored through the walls, and people had to go through those "Nhan mon" before getting to the main gates. The purpose of this was stricter control.

The inside of the citadel was arranged as shown in the plan.

The *Kinh Thiên* temple on Nung Mount was restored. Its columns, made of iron wood, were so big that a man could not reach around them. Its steps were adorned with finely carved stone-dragons. Near the temple stood the royal residence where the Nguyen Kings lived when they came to Thang Long.

To the east of the citadel were residences of the high mandarins of the province (Tong Doc, Tuan Phu, An Sat, De Doc). This was an unprecedented development, for the mandarins had never either worked or lived inside what used to be the Royal City.

In 1812, the Nguyen King had the Flag Tower erected south of the citadel. This monument made of bricks still stands (on present-day Dien Bien Phu street). It is 60 m high, hexagonal, and is built on a square pedestal with three stairways. Each side of the pedestal is 42 m long, and the side of the upper stair-head measures 15 m.

In 1831, in accordance with a decree issued by King Minh Mang, Thang Long and the neighbouring districts merged and became the province of Hanoi, of which the capital was Thang Long. This was the first appearance of the word Hanoi.

In 1935, the same King ordered that the walls of the citadel be lowered again, for they were still higher than those of the royal capital Hue. They were to be reduced to about 4 m high judging by the remains visible today.

In 1848, King Tu Duc ordered the demolition of the remaining palaces and the transfer to Hue of all wooden and stone articles of art, with a view to decorating the new capital.

b) *The Commoners' city* (the city proper)

While the old Royal city was shrinking and falling into ruin, the city proper (Commoners' city) remained as it had always been, and some quarters were even enlarged.

No change was made in the Dai La dyke surrounding the city, except for constructing its gates of brick and occasional work aimed at strengthening it in time of floods.

The living quarters grew a little in size, and many mandarins moved out south of the city to live in the old royal city, while others settled in Hue, leaving more room for new buildings.

The Nguyen did not so much build as destroy in Hanoi. Still, new edifices did appear in the city proper. In 1865, a noted man of letters Nguyen Sieu, a native of Hanoi, raised funds to restore the Ngoc Son temple on Hoan Kiem lake. He had an arched wooden bridge built — the The Huc bridge — to link the temple with the bank. Pen Tower and Inkslab Mound were erected in front of the temple gate, testifying to the respect of the population of the old capital for education.

Another mandarin from Hanoi — Nguyen Dang Giai — also subscribed in 1842 to the building of the Bao An pagoda near Hoan Kiem lake, on the very foundations of the old Ngu Long pagoda (built under the Le and Trinh, and already mentioned in this chapter). The construction of the pagoda was to take nearly four years. The pagoda occupied an area of 30 hectares and it faced the Red river. It consisted of 180 compartments containing numerous finely-carved statues of Buddha.

For fear of offending the population, the Nguyen did not dare lay hand on such edifices as had a specifically character, the *Van Mieu* (Temple of Literature) for example, and the *Truong Thi* quarter (Camp of the candidates).

The Temple of Literature (Van Mieu) was restored. In 1802 Gia Long had the Pavilion of the Pleiades (Khue Van Cac) built there and sessions of literary criticism and poem recitals took place there. In 1883, a wall was erected around the temple and its columns, as well as those of the classrooms, were coated with a paint of excellent quality which lasted a very long time.

If Hanoi no longer sheltered the leading organs of the feudal state, it was no less important politically.

Chinese ambassadors who visited the country on the occasion of the coronations of Kings of Viet Nam, or on diplomatic missions, did not go farther south than Hanoi. The Nguyen Kings and the Court dignitaries had to come Hanoi to meet them.

c) *Architecture.*

In the 19th century the architecture of Thang Long followed the same principles formulated under the Ly dynasty, but never attained the splendour and magnificence of former times. However the popular architects were able to adapt themselves to reduced dimensions, and gave their buildings a lightness and elegance which reflected the landscape and expressed harmony between man and his environment.

The streets in Hanoi continued to be widened. Almost all of them were paved. Markets were held once every six days. The already large population swelled on market days, when the city looked like a big fair.

Towards the end of the 19th century the Nguyen took less and less interest in Hanoi. The capture

of the city in 1882 may be considered as the completion of the conquest of Viet Nam by the colonialists.¹

As soon as the Nguyen King had officially handed Hanoi over to the French colonialists, the latter started to destroy the ancient city. The walls of the citadel were almost completely demolished, so were the gates: only the North gate still exists. The old streets, pagodas, and dwelling houses were also destroyed. The Bao Thien pagoda was razed to make room for a catholic cathedral (the present-day Hanoi Cathedral). The Bao An pagoda was also demolished, and the Post Office was built in its place.

For 10 centuries, Thang Long with its many sumptuous palaces, and its splendid, ancient pagodas, had been constantly restored and endowed with new buildings, despite the damage caused by wars and invasions. But the images of the past were to be completely wiped out at the end the 19th century. The French colonialists, with the complicity of the servile and traitorous Nguyen Kings, were to build a typically colonial city on the rubble.

1. This will be the subject for another issue of *Vietnamese Studies*.

Thang Long

The City and its People

Since 1010, when the city officially entered history as capital of a centralized State and the Vietnamese nation progressed along the road to independence and unity, Thang Long has always been the political and cultural centre of the whole country and the promoter of liberation struggles for the preservation of national independence.

The capital city of Thang Long — Hanoi had housed a succession of feudal regimes whose palaces and citadels are now only reminders of the past. It has seen many victories in wars of resistance against foreign aggression that have filled glorious pages in our history: the Mongol Yuan armies were defeated three times, the Ming troops encircled, the Tsing troops routed, and in our days, two great powers defeated — the French and the American imperialists.

But the history of the capital city is not one of political upheavals only, of the rise and decline of dynasties. It is also that of the labouring people who built the palaces and temples, who have given to city life its own atmosphere with their customs and habits, the modesty and industriousness which mark

the citizens with a traditional character that Vietnamese call the "Thang Long spirit".

To describe life in old Thang Long is no easy task. Vietnamese books of the time recorded only political events and changes at the royal courts, and neglected social and economic accounts and events. With the early appearance of a centralized feudal state, the scholars in those days often had only a general view of the situation in the country, and paid little attention to local conditions and places including Thang Long.

Most noteworthy among the old records were the works of Nguyen Trai (1380-1442), such as *Dia du chi*; of Le Qui Don (1726-1783), such as *Kien Van Tieu Luc*, *Van Dai Loai Ngu*; of Phan Huy Chu (1782-1840), such as *Lich Trieu Hien Chuong Loai Chi* and *Hoang Viet Du Dia Chi*. In the 18th century several literary works describing scenes of life in the capital appeared, giving us more lively and concrete image. There was *Thuong Kinh Ky Su* by Le Huu Trac (18th century), *Hoang Le Nhat Thong Chi* by scholars of the Ngo family (18th century), *Tung Tay Ho Phu* by Nguyen Huy Luong (18th century), *Vu Trung Tuy* but by Pham Dinh Ho (19th Century) and *Tang thuong ngau luc* by Pham Dinh Ho and Nguyen An (19th century). Further back, we come across tales and legends which, despite their occult, mystical character, do reflect, if indirectly, historical events in the capital. We also have the stories about Thang Long written by Chinese envoys and administrators during the lengthy relations between the two countries, and the very interesting accounts by European traders and missionaries who came to Tonkin from the 17th century onwards. And there are the stories told by the old people about events they have heard of or witnessed in the capital in the early years of this century, and

which reflect the glory and decadence of a city with a history of almost a thousand years.

The rivers and lakes and their stories

When the first king of the Ly dynasty transferred the capital from Hoa Lu to the better site of Thang Long, the site was low lying land with many rivers and lakes. The Red River, still connected with the West Lake which marked the northern city limit, ran from northwest to southeast, marking the eastern boundary. A small river flowing southwest from the West Lake marked the western boundary. This was the To Lich river which channelled water from the Red River to the Nhue River running through Ha Dong province. The To Lich river had a branch flowing northward which met the Red River at a point near Cho Gao Street, south of the present Long Bien bridge. The southern city limit might have been Kim Nguu river, another branch of the To Lich.

This topography meant that the rivers constituted the principal means of communication between the capital and the surrounding areas. A dyke had been built along the Red River, but during the period of high waters, the river still flooded, and the streets swarmed with boats. The city was surrounded with lush vegetation and the left bank of the Red River was covered with thick forests. Old records mention the king watching elephant hunting near the West Lake; black tigers and boa-constrictors appeared in the heart of the city, crocodiles, iguanas and octopuses constituted a serious threat to the population living along the rivers. It is quite clear that Thang Long was a newly reclaimed area.

The centre of the capital was most probably in the thickly-populated area where the To Lich joined the Red River. The To Lich helped regulate the flow of the Red River during the flood season. It was the

most important communications artery in the old capital, linking handicraft production areas with busy trading quarters. This river was highly praised in many poems :

*The To river water is pure and cool.
I bring my sampan close to yours,
Trying to show my feeling with my oars
Like the To Lich water my love flow deep.*

Legend has it that Cao Bien who was appointed governor of the Viet country in 866 A.D. was sailing on the To Lich river one day examining the land on the banks when the river god, appearing in the form of a snowy-haired old man, summoned up a heavy storm. Cao Bien tried to use magic against the god, but in vain. Terrified, he sighed "In this country there is a very powerful god, it is not safe to stay here long" (*Linh Nam Chich Quai*). When the Ly King set foot on the soil of Thang Long, he made the To Lich river god the protecting god of the capital.

When the Red River changed its course, its confluence with the West Lake was filled up, and when the To Lich river was no longer watered from the lake the confluence south of the city also gradually silted up. Early in the 20th century, the adjoining area was filled in to extend the city. Nowadays, all that remains of the To Lich river is a small stream several sections of which have been filled in leaving only the dykes, six metres high in some places, running along what was formerly the river banks.

North of the city is the West Lake with an area of 500 hectares. It too was formerly connected with the Red River ; legends about the formation of the lake have been handed down to us from the early periods of our history.

According to one legend, the place was formerly covered with forests and rocks where a nine-tailed white fox lived. The fox did great harm to the population and Lac Long Quan, the founder King of the Viet country, raised the waters of the lake to destroy the lair of the wicked animal. The forests and rocks sank into a big lake called the Dead Fox Lake. On the shore of the lake there is still a village called Ho Thon, or Fox Village (*Linh Nam Chich Quai*).

Another legend tells of bonze Khong Lo who was sent to China under the Ly dynasty to work for the emperor. The latter decided to give him a big reward for his services before he returned to the native land. The bonze asked only for a bag of copper to cast a bell after returning to his country. But the bag he was given became wondrously big it was full only when all the copper in China had been put into it. A gigantic bell was made of the metal and its ringing was heard by the golden buffalo in the celestial empire. Thinking it was the call of its mother, the animal dashed to Thang Long trampling down the ground into a lake which submerged everything including the big bell. That is why the West Lake has also been called Kim Nguu, or golden Buffalo.

Such legends which link historical figures with imaginary events reflect our people's national pride in their history.

The West Lake, being one of the most beautiful spots in the capital, was the place where kings and princes came to relax and enjoy themselves, and where scholars came to recite poems. Its beauty has been sung by famous poets.

Beside the West Lake is the Truc Bach Lake severed from the former when the Co Ngu dyke was built in 1620. (Co Ngu means dam). The name was recently changed into Thanh Nien Road (Youth

Road). By the lake lived craftsmen who made bamboo screens. In the 18th century, convicts sent to camps engaged in the silk weaving trade, and the white silk often seen left to dry in the sun around the lake explains the name "Bach" which means "White".

South of Thang Long was another famous lake called Ho Guom (Sword Lake), once part of the Red River. It was a pretty large lake, extending from Hang Dao (Silk) Street to Hang Chuoi (Banana) Street, names still used today. The lake was linked with the Red River by a channel spanned by a wooden bridge. Hence the name of Cau Co (Wooden Bridge) given to a street now lying north of the lake. During the Ly-Tran period the lake was called *Luc Thuy* because of its dark green water, and under the Le, *Thuy Quan* (Navy) because it was the place where naval force held manoeuvres and boat-races were organized.

The lake was given the name of *Hoan Kiem* in the 15th century. According to legend, Le Loi who led a national insurrection, received from Heaven a sacred sword with which to drive out the enemy and save the country. Le Loi was victorious and became king. One day, as he was sailing on the lake, a golden tortoise emerged by his boat. He dipped the point of his sword into the water, the tortoise snapped the weapon away and disappeared. The sacred sword, its mission fulfilled, was returned to Heaven. This legend may be a reflection of an agricultural ceremony practised in Viet Nam and many other countries of Southeast Asia: the sword represents fire and lightning, the symbol of power, and the dipping of a sword into water, symbolizes the relationship between fire and water, and a traditional gesture made by national leaders during ceremonies, the idea being to ward off floods. Annual boat-races were held to invoke rain.

In the late 16th century, many constructions sprang up in the Sword Lake area. It later became the centre of the city with many busy streets, and the lake, with its small tower on the Tortoise Islet, is now the symbol of the capital.

When describing the topography of the capital city it is not enough to enumerate its rivers and lakes. Their significance must also be explained. In the ancient Vietnamese view of the universe, each community had a river god and a mountain god who were protectors of its population. This indicates that a composite idea of mountains, rivers and the land had become the image of home, the native place, and in a broader sense, of the Fatherland. In the case of Thang Long, as national capital, the Tan Vien mountain (also called Ba Vi) 30 kilometres north west of the city was like a royal seat, and the Nhi river (Red River) surrounded the site like a ceremonial belt. The gods of the Tan mountain and of the Red River were the protectors both of the capital city and the whole country. The To Lich was considered as a local river. And in the middle of the Tonkin silt plain, a hill was put up to serve as a link between Heaven and Earth. An elevation by the To Lich river, in the heart of the city, had been raised and become known as the Nung hill, a second symbol of the capital. The hill was also called Long Do (Dragon's Navel), being considered an opening into the bowels of the earth. When Thang Long became the capital, the Long Do hill god was made protector of the city.

Inside the city, other small hills were made, such as Sua hill, planted with Sua trees (*Dalbergia Tonkinensis* Prain), Khan hill, where troops were reviewed by the King, Ox hill, Bow hill and others, which varied the landscape, and provided refuge during the flood season.

These features figure in the praise of Thang Long in the royal edict on the transfer of the capital in 1010:

"It is situated in the heart of the country. It has topographical features resembling a coiled dragon or a crouching tiger. The capital is laid out on a North-South East-West axis and is favourably situated with regard to the mountains and rivers.

The site is large and flat, the fields high and well enough exposed. The population is protected against high water and floods. Everything there flourishes and prospers. It is a most beautiful site.

The Land of Great Memories

As early as in the 11th century, Thang Long already had the look of an Eastern city, with two main features — the wall and the market. At the centre was the Imperial City, a rectangular citadel built first of mud, then of brick. The citadel was surrounded by a deep moat connected with the To Lich river, and this allowed boats from different regions to reach the Imperial City itself. In the Imperial City were many palaces and the Forbidden City where the king lived with his queen and concubines.

Around the Imperial City was the Commoners' City where the mandarins and the population lived. The Ly were fervent Buddhists, and during this dynasty, the kings and mandarins built a large number of pagodas and temples in the capital and other places. This waste of the population's energy was one of the reasons for the deficit in the national budget, and the ensuing decadence of the Ly dynasty.

After the Ly dynasty was replaced by the Tran (13th century), the Commoners' city was not enlarged, but the existing constructions merely repaired.

Under the Tran, Dai Viet had to fight three times against the Mongol aggressors and the capital city was heavily damaged, but only minor repair work was done.

During the last period of the Tran dynasty, Thang Long suffered heavy damage during attacks by Champa troops and peasant insurrections. The Ho then overthrew the Tran dynasty and transferred the capital to Thanh Hoa. In 1397, the palaces in Thang Long were dismantled and taken to Tay Do, the new capital, Thang Long being given the new name of Dong Do.

In 1428, after defeating the Ming aggressors, Le Loi again made Thang Long the capital of the Le dynasty. The area of the city was extended southward and doubled in comparison with what it had been under the Tran. But all the new constructions were destroyed during the insurrections in the late 18th century. When Nguyen Hue, the brilliant leader of the Tay Son insurrection who brought his army to the North, had defeated the Tsing aggressor, Thang Long was a city in ruins.

Early in the 19th century, the Nguyen gained power and established the capital at Phu Xuan (Hue). Dong Do was now called Bac Thanh.. In 1831, Bac Thanh was annexed to Hanoi province, and since then the city has been called Hanoi. The palaces and the citadel built in the past were gone, causing one poet to complain :

"The soul of autumn grass hovers over the tracks
of carriages and horses of bygone days,
A waning light from the setting sun catches the
foundations of former palaces."

In its heyday, the capital had many busy streets and markets around the Imperial City. There was a big market at each of the four city gates : the East

gate market (Hang Buom Street area), West gate market (present Ngoc Ha market area), South gate market (present Cua Nam market area), and North gate market on the To Lich river bank (present Cua Bac area).

The capital city was surrounded by an irregular mud wall. With the growth of the population, the wall was built further out, but its perimeter never exceeded 30 kilometres. The name of the wall was Dai La. La means a surrounding net, and the wall was a defence work as well as a dyke against flood-water. Similar constructions were also found around a number of cities in the plain, such as Nam Dinh and Son Tay. A number of historians have held that Thang Long was built on an area previously occupied by a citadel called Dai La, built by Cao Bien under, the Tang dynasty. And they spoke of a "Dai La art" presumably from China, under the Tang rule. However, Dai La was only the name given to the dyke around the capital, city.

The Dai La wall ran along the right bank of the Red River, bordering the capital. In the north, it rounded the West Lake, then ran along the To Lich river, from Yen Thai to Cau Giay, stretching southward until it reached the Kim Nguu river and then turned eastward to rejoin the Red River dyke. The wall separated the city itself from the outskirts, and the city dwellers were called *Ke Cho* (market people) by those who lived outside. In the city wall were gates, the sites of which were changed several times, and occupied positions of varying importance. At night, the gates were usually kept closed and guarded by troops. People from the outskirts had to bribe the guards to get permission to bring their goods into the city.

The most strongly-guarded gates were those in the east, where the city was bordered by the Red

River, a most important communication line with northern regions. They were the An Hoa gate (renamed Yen Phu gate in the mid-19th century), the Trieu Dong gate (south of the present Long Bien bridge), the Van Xuan gate (later renamed Dong Mac gate). The southern part of the city was a very busy place, being the starting point of military expeditions during the 16th and 17th centuries.

In *Thuong Kinh Ky Su*, a city gate was described as a "not very tall" structure and built of earth. Beside it was a low wall on top of which was a carriage way. The wall was protected by a thick bamboo hedge and a deep moat planted with pikes. There were three watch-towers where soldiers stood guard with sparkling swords.

Under the Nguyen dynasty, Hanoi had sixteen gates: only six remain to day. At the site of each gate there is now a market where peasants from the outlying area sell their produce. And the city proper is surrounded by a suburban area.

*

* *

The city was divided into *phuong* (guilds) and *pho* (streets). The *phuong* was the administrative unit of the city corresponding to the commune in the countryside. Thang Long was

"The capital city of unequalled prosperity,
Criss-crossed with countless streets"

These lines give the idea of old Thang Long being laid out like a chessboard. A *phuong* was probably a square area where craftsmen of the same trade and often from the same rural area lived. A distinction must be made between the words *phuong* and *phuong hoi*, the latter meaning a corporation like those existing in Western Europe in the Middle Ages. A *phuong* was not a professional organization. Not

all its members were craftsmen, and the city comprised *phuong* whose members engaged in silkworm rearing and vegetable growing among other things. A number of *phuong* had streets with shops where goods produced in the *phuong* were sold.

Phuong and *pho* were found in other urban areas besides the capital. According to *An nam chi nguyen* (17th century), *Giao chau* district town had 29 *phuong*, 4 *pho*, *Lang Son* district town 4 *phuong*, 3 *pho*. It is not recorded how many *phuong* *Thang Long* comprised under the *Ly* dynasty, but it is known that under the *Tran* dynasty (13th-14th century) the capital had 61 *phuong*. According to *Vu Trung Tuy But*, under the *Le* (15th century), "The capital city of *Thang Long* was divided into 36 *phuong*, each *phuong* being headed by a *phuong truong* (*phuong* chief). The *Phung Thien Phu* (a larger district) had been created, it was placed under two mandarins, the *Phu Doan* and the *Thieu Doan*, who were responsible for the administration and police and had authority over the two districts of *Tho Xuong* and *Quang Duc*, each of which had 18 *phuong* and was headed by a district chief. Late in the 16th century, the *tong* (village group) was created. The *Tho Xuong* district had 8 *tong*."

Thang Long streets were concentrated outside the East Gate, South Gate, North Gate and around the West Lake. *Co Xa phuong* was the oldest in the capital. It covered a fertile silt area stretching many kilometres along the Red River. Its population had been transferred from *An Xa* village which the *Ly* King had chosen as the site of his palace.

The name of a *phuong* was related to the trade of the greater part of its population. Thus, in the *Tich Ma phuong* (*Ma* = hemp), north of the West Lake there were many people engaged in hemp weaving. The area was later given the name of *Nghi Tam* (*tam* = silkworm) because many of its inhabitants

reared silkworms. On the shore of the lake were the Trich Sai (sai = firewood) phuong whose inhabitants collected firewood to sell and the Vong Thi (fishing net market) phuong where many people engaged in fishing and net making. During and after the Le dynasty the number of phuong and pho named according to the trades of their populations increased rapidly: Hang Dao Street where silk was brought to be dyed red, Hang Lam Street (now Hang Ngang street) where silk was dyed blue and To Tich Street (tich = reed mats) where reed mats were made.

A number of phuong were named according to their geographical positions, such as the Giang Khau (River Mouth) phuong situated in the area where the To Lich joined the Red River, the Dong (East) phuong on the eastern bank of the river, the Lien Tri (Lotus Pond) phuong near a large lotus pond.

Other districts were given the names of architectural landmarks or historic places such as the Bao Thien phuong where a famous tower of the same name, built under the Ly dynasty, stood, the Thuy Chuong phuong near the Thuy Chuong palace built under the Tran dynasty, the Doi Ma (changing horses) where the king stopped to put on ceremonial dress and change horses before proceeding to the site of the Nam Giao rites of Heaven worship.

The leading city government organ had the main responsibility for police supervision and the administration of justice. The phuong, like the village with its autonomous status, managed its own affairs. It had its own organization for fire prevention and fighting, a most important task. There have been many great fires in the capital. Records tell us that one night in 1278, the Tran King left the Imperial city to watch a raging fire. When the fire had been extinguished, the king ordered a check to find out who arrived on the scene of the fire to help first.

The attendant mandarin, Doan Khung, told everybody to sit down, touched each person's head, then told the king: "This man came first, then this one... then that one..." When the king asked him how he knew, Khang said: "The men who came first were those whose hair is wet with sweat and covered with ash, and those who came last have dry hair with little ash". The King approved his explanation.

Under the rule of Prince Trinh Cuong (1709-1729), "The two districts were divided into eight *Khu* each of which was headed by a *Khu* head assisted by a deputy head; five houses made up a *ti*, two *ti* made up a *lu* headed by a *lu* head; four *lu* constituted a *doan* which had one *quan giam* and two *quan diem* who were subordinate to the *Khu* head and were directly responsible to the *De linh* (the mandarin responsible for law and order in the capital). This was in accordance with the old tradition of mutual protection and assistance. Prevention of fire and theft and particularly tax collection were entrusted to the *Khu* and *doan* heads."

What contributions were required of the city population? "According to old usage, the population did not have to pay labour tax or land tax. But each family, mandarin or commoner, had to provide one man every year for the work of maintaining the chessground, weeding around the royal palace, working at royal construction sites. The requisitioned labour had to take turns at the guard posts which were equipped with ropes, fire-fighting hooks, bamboo ladders, buckets and torches, and were to obey the *De linh*'s command, should the necessity arise. It was an exacting task" (*Vu Trung Tuy But*).

Besides the *phuong* and streets, whose inhabitants mostly engaged in handicrafts and other trades, Thang Long also had areas where people whose

main occupation was farming or fishing lived. There was the *Thap tam trai* (Thirteen Farms) area west of the city, comprising several farms and villages. While the villages had a long past, the farms were of relatively recent date, and their population were peasants from other areas who had come to reclaim land outside the Dai La wall, stretching along the To Lich river, between the present Buoi and Cau Giay areas. All thirteen farms belonged to the Noi canton of Quang Duc district.

Lich Trieu Hien Chuong Loai Chi records a legend about the creation of Thap Tam Trai: one day in the reign of Ly Thai Tong (1028-1054), a princess was sailing on the Thien Duc river (now Duong river) when her boat sank and the princess was drowned. The king was deeply grieved and ordered that his daughter's body be recovered at all costs. But several divers lost their lives as they plunged into the turbulent octopus-infested river. The King promised a handsome reward to anyone who recovered the princess's body. A young fisherman whose family name was Hoang, living in the Le Mat village (in Gia Lam district, north of Hanoi), undertook the dangerous task, and succeeded. Keeping his promise, the king offered a noble title and a reward, but the young man refused, asking only that poor people in his village and the neighbouring villages be allowed to reclaim the land west of the capital. Thus the prosperous farming area southwest of the West Lake came into being, and the ancestor of the Hoang family was made its protecting god. Nowadays, the population of that area still consider that they have two places of origin: one in the capital and the other, at Le Mat, the ancestral village. And every year, on the anniversary of the death of the Hoangs' ancestor, old folk representing the thirteen farms cross the Red River to return to

the ancestral village and pay homage to the forefathers and the founders of Thap Tam Trai.

Wars, and especially the successive political upheavals during the last period of the Le dynasty, caused many fluctuations in the population of the capital. From the late 18th century, with the development of the merchant economy and the normalization of life in the capital, more and more people came from rural areas to Thang Long. As in the countryside, the new comers in the capital were considered as *ngu cu* (temporary residents). They had to pay taxes as the *chinh ngach* citizens (citizens with full rights), but did not enjoy the same rights as the latter. Only after a very long time, usually three generations, were the *ngu cu* residents allowed to take part in the administration of phuong affairs.

Those who had settled in the capital city maintained ties with their former villages for a long time, continuing to make contributions to and participate in a number of activities. Those who were living in different phuong of Thang Long, but had come from the same village, were still bound by close ties, they had built a number of dinh (communal houses) in the capital city where the protecting gods of their former villages were worshipped. There are still the vestiges in Hang Dao Street of the Hoa Loc Thi communal house built by former inhabitants of the Dan Loan village, the Phu My communal house built by former inhabitants of Phu My village, Hai Duong province, in the Hang Tien street the communal house built by former inhabitants of Nhi Khe village in Ha Dong province still stands.

Thus, close ties remain between the capital city and the rural areas as the merchant economy was not strong enough to end the deep-rooted attachment of Vietnamese peasants and craftsmen to their former villages. However, the way of life and working in the city created a community with a special

measle epidemic or when there was a sudden change in the weather, the farm was a very busy place, as people from the capital came to buy medicinal herbs in addition to the fragrant leaves used as soap and shampoo.

The Nghi Tam village north of the West Lake and the Vong Thi village south of it supplied flowers and ornamental plants to the court and the population of the capital city during the Ly dynasty. There is still a place called Dong Hoa (Flower Field) famed for its peach blossom and ornamental plants sold in the capital during the Tet season. On market days in Hanoi, besides the flowers and plants, there are birds, goldfish and miniature rocks from Dong Hoa sold in large quantities.

It seems that most of the land in the capital belonged to the State. As early as the Ly dynasty, large pieces of land around the capital were given by the king to his mandarins. In 1096, a fisherman who had saved the king when the latter had a mishap on the West Lake, was awarded land near the lake. Besides the land given to the phuong for cultivation, the royal household kept pieces of land for its own use, and these were cultivated by serfs. In 1362, the Tran King had a *mau* of land planted with vegetables, onion and garlic for the royal family's use and also for sale to the population. The place later became Toan Vien (Garlic garden) and was maintained until the Le dynasty.

An outlying area of Thang Long that was closely connected with the capital was Cao Xa (now Nhat Tao village, a Hanoi suburb). It was a hard labour camp where convicts worked like slaves on royal land. The rent exacted from them was exorbitant. For a *mau* of high-quality land, 680 *thang*¹ of paddy,

1. Former unit of volume, measured in a wooden bowl.

for a *mau* of average quality, 400 *thang*, for a low-quality *mau*, 100 *thang*. Only 3 to 5 *thang* for a *mau* were changed to free peasants).

Under the Ly and Tran dynasties, the king usually went to areas outside the capital to take part in the annual ceremony marking the beginning of the planting season. Under the Le, there was a ceremony in spring when the king ploughed a field at Hong Mai (now Bach Mai). On a field which belonged to him the king ploughed a few furrows as a symbolic gesture to encourage agriculture.

At the Co Xa phuong, on the bank of the Red River, the population engaged in silkworm rearing and fishing. Many inhabitants of phuong around the West Lake also made a living from fishing. West Lake fish received high praise from the great scholar Le Qui Don "Big and fat are West Lake fish with delicious, firm meat. Dried or fresh, they make offerings appreciated by the gods. At royal banquets, they are relished by the king and the mandarins." The West Lake was also known for its flocks of migratory *sam cam*¹. Also according to Le Qui Don, these birds are smaller than turtle-doves, but have longer tails. China is their place of origin. Being very fond of ginseng, they are very fat. Flocks of *sam cam* periodically migrate to Viet Nam. They are often found on the West Lake where they are caught with nets. This game is extremely nourishing. The local population was required to catch *sam cam* for the king. Under the early Nguyen dynasty, every year in the migrating season, the precious birds had to be caught and sent to the king in Hue. The mandarins availed themselves of the occasion

1. *Sam Cam* (*Fulica atra* Liune), a snipe-like bird, is found in Viet Nam from early September to late April — Flocks of 500-1000 birds are seen on water rice fields. They feed chiefly on seeds, green parts of aquatic plants, and small fish, shrimps and snails.

to exact heavy taxes from the population. After a bitter struggle, the Nghi Tam population succeeded in having the *sam cam* tribute abolished by the Court of Hue.

*
* *

Due to lack of detailed records, we do not know exactly what the crafts in Thang Long were, what quantity of goods was produced or what the production organization and the distribution of goods was. In general there were three categories of craftsmen. Those employed in *quan xuong* (state workshops) worked like slaves, making hammocks, sedan chairs, boats and weapons for the king and the mandarins. There were royal workshops such as the silk embroidery workshop, which employed royal concubines in the 11th century, and the fan-making workshop in the 14th century. Skilled craftsmen in different regions were ordered to come and work in the capital, and were forcibly recruited for state workshops. When these left the community without craftsmen the villages had to train new skilled workers. Craftsmen who left a state workshop before their term of service was over were severely punished.

A second category was that of free craftsmen who produced goods and sold them to consumers directly. Most of them belonged to groups from the same villages and living in the same *phuong* of the capital where they continued the work they had been doing in their former villages. At the Ngu Xa *phuong*, on the shore of the Truc Bach lake, lived people from five villages of Bac Ninh province who were specialized in bronze casting and who came to the capital

to work at the royal mint in the 16th century. Later, Ngu Xa became known for its bronze statues and cult objects.

Other craftsmen who came to the capital to work did not live in the same *phuong*, but they nevertheless maintained relations in the same way as when they lived in their villages. Sometimes they contributed money to the building of a communal house where every year they took part in a ceremony paying tribute to the founding ancestors of their trade. That was the case with the fanmakers and shoemakers from Hai Duong province. On the old stele at the Hoa Hoc Thi communal house (still visible in Hang Dao street) an inscription states that members of the Vu and of seven other families from the Dong area in Hai Duong province, skilled in dyeing cloth in a rose colour, had come to the capital toward the end of the T'ang dynasty and founded the Thai Cuc *phuong* later renamed Hang Dao *phuong*.

We should mention the Bat Trang potteries lying outside Thang Long proper, which played an important role in the building and development of the capital city. Situated in the Gia Lam area, on the left bank of the Red River, Bat Trang had been famed for its pottery and chinaware since the 14th century. As early as the 15th century, every time a tribute had to be sent to China, Bat Trang was required to supply 70 sets of porcelain. This testified to the high quality of its goods, presented to the ruler of a country whose chinaware was world-famous. Under the Tran, most construction materials such as enamelled tiles, ornamental bricks were produced at Bat Trang.

Du Dia Chi mentions "the Tang Kiem *phuong* where sedanchairs, armour and weapons cult objects, hammocks, chairs, satin, umbrellas were all made; the Yen Thai *phuong* and its paper-mills; the Thuy Chuong and Nghi *phuong* where fine cloth

and silk were woven, the Ha Tan phuong with its lime kilns; the Hang Dao phuong known for its red dye, the fan-making Ta Nhat phuong..." About fans, it is well-known that under the Ming rule (1407-1427), the Giao Chau region including Thang Long had to pay the ruler of the Celestial Empire a yearly tribute of 1500 fans. A foreigner who came to Thang Long toward the end of the 17th century found in the capital city "shoeing-smiths, carpenters, sawyers, cabinet-makers, turners, weavers, tailors, potters, painters, money changers, papermakers, bell varnishers..."¹

According to the Italian missionary Marini who lived in Thang Long in the early 17th century, a phuong of the capital city in those days was as large as a medium-sized Italian city. Each phuong produced or sold one category of goods, and at the phuong gate there was a board indicating which articles were sold at the phuong and the quality of the goods.²

Roving craftsmen constituted a third category. They came to the capital when their services were required by the government or the population. They were employed in the construction of most palaces and temples in the capital, and in the casting of bells and statues. These craftsmen, who often came from the same village and worshipped the same trade patron, also organized themselves into phuong or corporations. Craft phuong were founded for sentimental, not professional reasons in Viet Nam, more in accordance with the village tradition of unity than from any other consideration. Regulations on

1. Dampier W. *Un voyage au Tonkin en 1688*, in RI 1909 — 1910.

2. Marini, J.P. de — *Histoire naturelle et curieuse des royaumes du Tunquin et le Lao*, Paris, 1966, in RI, 1910.

such things as the division of labour, technical standard, safeguard of professional secrets appeared only later. Relations between craftsmen of the same *phuong* were those of cooperation on equal terms between free men.

Carpenters' *phuong* were the most highly organized. At the head of each *phuong* was the *pho ca* (chief craftsman), who was the oldest and most experienced sometime assisted by *tho pho* (deputy chief handicraftsman.) The other members of the *phuong* were called *tho ban* (companions,) an appellation indicative of the kind of relations between the *phuong* members. Another group of handicraftsmen who often came to the capital was the *pho coi*, makers of rice husking mills. Most of them were from Binh Da village in Ha Dong province, and they stayed at villages near the South gate of the capital. Each group usually had a *pho ca*, a *pho hai*, about 20 companions and a number of young apprentices. The *pho ca* bought materials in the city which he distributed to the companions. Every morning, the craftsmen went into the city to work for hire; and at night they went home and ate a meal prepared by the apprentices.

Although handicrafts were relatively well developed, Viet Nam's economy from the Ly and Tran dynasties to the early period of the Le dynasty still had an autarkic character. The cloth that was woven by many families was chiefly for their own use or for paying taxes with, only a relatively small quantity was to be sold. Craftsmen's direct sale of the goods they produced was also a factor limiting the development of merchant economy. It hampered the growth of trade, limited production, and prevented the organization of workshops with specialized workers. In many cases, a *phuong* in Thang Long

could not be classed either as a handicraft or a trading *phuong* as it engaged in both production and commercial activities.

Situated in the heart of the Red River delta and linked with other regions by many communication lines, Thang Long soon became an important commercial centre nevertheless. As early as the 11th century, trade flourished in areas along the To Lich river. Boats from the north sailed down the Red River and entered the To Lich river at the Ha Khau confluence. Boats from the south could reach the capital by the Day, the Nhue, then the To Lich river.

Under the Ly, Tran dynasties, Thang Long was linked with other regions by many roads. In 1282, the Tran King used a carriage to go from the capital to Binh Than in the mountainous region north of Hai Duong to inspect his troops. This indicates that the roads were then fairly good and wide.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, trade flourished in Thang Long. Accounts by European traders and missionaries give us an idea of the busy streets in the capital:

"The city is 6,000 feet long and 6,000 feet wide, and its streets are so wide that from ten to twelve horsemen can easily ride along them abreast. But twice a month, at the new moon and full moon, there are so many people coming and going, crowding all the streets, that one is continuously jostled and pushed, and it takes much time to get very little way." ¹

Besides locally produced goods, Thang Long needed many products from the provinces: cattle from the mountainous region, pepper and salt from Nghe An, rice, fish-sauce from Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, and some provinces in the South, cloth and silk

1. Rhodes A. (de) — *Histoire du royaume du Tunquin*, Lyon, 1651.

from Son Nam, Son Tay, pottery from Bac Ninh, Thanh Hoa, paper from Hung Ha. There were also silk and porcelain from China and household articles from Europe.

Thang Long may be said to have been the centre of the raw silk and polished lacquer trades. The streets were particularly busy on silk market-days. Embroidered, satin and silk of different kinds were brought to the capital to be sold to shops in Hang Dao street. Apart from embroidered satin made from dyed silk thread, there was silk of different kinds sold to shops in the city woven with the yellow or white coloured raw silk thread. It had to be dyed or bleached with an acid substance before it was resold to clients in the city or merchants from the provinces. At first, Hang Dao street was the only place where silk was brought for dyeing; but later, as the volume of goods increased, silk dyeing was also done at other places, chiefly in villages north of the capital. Silk shops opening on to the streets were often run by women.

Since its early days the capital had been visited by traders from Java, Siam, Champa and especially China, and there were many Chinese living in the *phuong*. In 1075, during the war of aggression against Dai Viet, the Sung prime minister called home Chinese residents in Thang Long to get information about our country.

Under the Tran dynasty, Uigur traders from Yunnan frequently came to the capital. In 1267, Kublai-Khan required the Viet Kinh to repatriate Uigur Traders, for the purpose of obtaining information before attacking Dai Viet. But the Tran King refused and put the Uigur under surveillance, to prevent them from engaging in espionage activities for the Mongols. During this period, a number of Sung personalities who opposed the Mongolian invasion came to Thang Long together with their

families and their troops to seek asylum in the capital. A number of them were allowed to establish phuong in the city.

For a long time, foreign trade remained in the hands of the State, private citizens being forbidden to do business with foreign tradesmen. Export goods chiefly comprised agricultural products, and products such as gold and silver, santal-wood, ivory, rhinoceros horn, pearls and salt.

European traders had been coming to Thang Long since the early 17th century, mostly from Holland, Portugal, Britain, Spain and France. In 1648 and 1683, British and Dutch trading firms were established at Ha Khau.

The Thang Long river port was described thus by a foreign missionary: "The number of boats is so prodigious that it is very difficult to approach the river banks. There is nothing like the movement and the population of the Ke cho river in our rivers and our busiest ports, including Venice with all its gondolas and boats."¹

The prosperous foreign trade tempted a number of high officials to enter into illicit relations with foreigners and some of them were punished for engaging in trading activities with foreigners. In those days, there were no native traders in Thang Long who could go abroad to do business or who could engage in import and export trade.

Trade in Thang Long from the 15th to the 18th century was more prosperous than during the previous period, but it was still limited in many respects. Foreign trade was strictly controlled by heavy taxation and complicated regulations, and many tradesmen had to give up or limit their business. A 1746

1. Richard J. (Ab.) *Histoire naturelle, civile et politique du Tunquin*, Paris, 1778.

law forbade foreign traders to stay overnight in the capital. Two tax collecting stations were set up to enforce regulations.

Commerce was hampered by the restrictions, and handicrafts could not develop vigorously. Goods bought by foreign traders in Thang Long during the 17th and 18th centuries were chiefly agricultural products such as silk, thread, sugar, rice. Heavy taxes imposed on commerce and handicraft, and the authoritarian character of feudal rule put severe restrictions on the merchant economy. There were strict regulations for each social class as to the use of valuable handicraft goods such as embroidered silk and jewels, as well as housing and dress. A 1448 law forbade the common people to wear yellow clothes or shoes, and to use ornaments of dragons and phoenixes. Another law issued in 1461 forbade peasants to give up farming to engage in trade or handicrafts.

Thang Long had become an important economic centre with prosperous business quarters. But because of the restrictions mentioned above, its economy remained a feudal one until the 19th century. Thang Long did not become a capitalist city.

The People of Thang Long

To know how the population of a city lived we must study the life of people of different social strata, from the nobility to the common people. Old Vietnamese books describe only the life of the upper class. However, through the regulations about what was forbidden to commoners we can appreciate the difference between the life of the nobles and mandarins and that of the greater part of the population.

Accounts by foreigners also give us an idea of people in the capital city in different periods.

Kien Van Tieu Luc cites a passage written by a historian of the Yuan period (late 13th century): "Under the Tran dynasty, it was the custom of the people to shave their heads, as mentioned in the book *Su Giao Chau Thi Tap* written by Tran Cuong Trung of the Yuan period: "The male population have shaven heads like bonzes, and those who have official titles wear blue hats." This hair shaving custom was forbidden during the rule of Hoang Phuc of the Ming dynasty...

Su Giao Chau Thi Tap tells us that "Most people walk barefoot, and only a few wear shoes, which they take off when entering the royal palace. At a reception, there will be hundreds of people in ceremonial dress, but barefooted. Their feet are thick-skinned and they climb hills most nimbly, not minding the thorns; they wear dark 32 inch-high green hats made of painted silk which falls back on the neck and is kept in place by ribbons; the hats are topped by metal hooks, those worn by officials have ribbons tied to the hooks. A man wears a hat only when he receives a guest, and when he goes on a journey his hat is carried by a servant. Only the king has a chignon which looks from a distance like the silk hat of a priest. The national dress of black silk consists of a wide-collared, flower-patterned coat and thin trousers. Women also wear black silk dresses, but their coats have white linings which fold 6 inches over the collars. They wear no colours such as blue, red, yellow, pink.

The Viet people are extremely agile. In their black dress, they look like crows. A Viet woman has a 5 inch-long tuft of hair on the top of her head which is tied into a chignon, the rest of the head being shaven. She uses no cosmetics. Ear rings of rich women are made of tortoise shell while those worn

by poorer women are made of bone or horn. There are no gold or silver jewelry. The practice of tattooing is general. Most tattoos look like ancient bronze incense burners. Some people have Chinese characters tattooed on their breasts.

I think that was the custom prevailing under the Tran dynasty. Under the present dynasty (of Le), people no longer wear blue hats, black dresses, and no longer shave their hair or tattoo their bodies."

This passage gives us an idea of the dress of Thang Long inhabitants during the Tran period, and probably also the Ly period. A law passed in 1396 regulated the dress of mandarins thus: for mandarins of 3rd class and higher, various shades of red (pink for 1st class, darker pink for 2nd class, light pink for 3rd class); and shades of blue and green for 4th class, light green for 5th, 6th and 7th classes, blue for 8th and 9th classes. Yellow was reserved for the king. Commoners and low-class people such as servants could only wear white clothes.

In the 15th century, the life of the population of the capital began to change visibly. This was due partly to the ruthless assimilation policy carried out under the Ming (1407-1427), and partly to the predominance of Confucianism during the Le period when the nobles and mandarins became servile imitations of the Chinese ruling class. It may be said without exaggeration that the Vietnamese feudal class tried to make their country a miniature Chinese Kingdom. But this policy had no influence on the age-old national traits of the Vietnamese people. Our people, particularly the population of Thang Long, kept to their own way of life, adopting other customs only when they suited their own conditions.

In the later part of the Le dynasty, the inhabitants of Thang Long, particularly the labouring people, began to wear brown clothes as in the countryside. Cotton cloth dyed with *cu nau* tubers was harder

wearing, and its brown colour slow to fade. *Cu nau* brown can be given different shades, from deep to reddish brown. Formerly, *cu nau* was also used to dye *the*, a kind of silk gauze, and *dui*, a coarse strong silk material.

Middle class people wore white and black dress. Men wore white cotton or silk trousers and flowing gowns covering the knees. Over a white gown, a black silk gauze gown was often worn, which softened the bright white colour. Women wore black shirts made of silk or *linh*, a fine, shiny material like satin. Under the Ming rule, the occupation authorities tried to force local women to wear trousers like Chinese women, but the attempt failed. It was not until the early 19th century that the Nguyen rulers gradually forced women in the North to wear trousers like their sisters in the south. The event was sarcastically commented in a song:

In June a royal decree is issued,
Forbidding women to wear bottomless trousers,
And great is our embarrassment:
If we stay at home, there will be few people at

the market

But how can we strip our husbands of their trousers
to put them on and go out?

Smart girls usually wore a sky-blue, green or light blue inner gown. Rose was regarded as an indecent colour as only songstresses used it. The simplest outer gown had four flaps, and the back flaps were sewn together, while the two front flaps were held in place by a dark or light green silk belt, which enhanced the grace and charm of the girls. Well-dressed women wore a silver chain hanging from the silk belt, to which were attached, besides a bunch of keys, a tiny lime box, a heart-shaped tobacco container, a pocket-knife, all these things — indispensable for betel chewing — being made of engraved silver.

In summer, women and men alike wore white clothes. White was not formerly the colour of mourning. The bereaved wore plain clothes made of raw cotton material — of a whitish colour: according to *Vu Trung Tuy But*, on days of national mourning, the king, princes and mandarins wear dark brown clothes... According to an old custom, people wear mourning clothes made of a coarse material and when going out, they put on a conical hat and cover their mouths with their hair. They wear dark brown clothes only when they go to a government office.

During the Le period, men and women alike wore their hair long. Women plaited their hair and wound it round their heads, wrapped in a turban which was kept in place by a pin. In winter they put a black kerchief over their heads. Labouring women wore a "crow-beak's kerchief" the front part of which was pointed like a beak. A woman's turban was made of cotton cloth, of thick, rough silk material called *nhieu* or thick, smooth soft silk called *luot*.

Men wore a chignon on the nape. The common people wore a "dog's ear turban" — a strip of cloth wound around the head, the ends of which were left hanging. Educated people wore a turban made of a long piece of silk wound round the head four times, and showing four pleats, the first and lowest of which formed an angle pointing upwards where it crossed the first layer. In the 20th century a ready-made, stiff turban of the same shape appeared.

We do not know much about the houses of the common people in Thang Long, as we find only descriptions of palaces in books.

In 1084, a decree of the Ly King permitted the population to build brick houses, but the permission was withdrawn soon after. Thus in the streets of the capital the houses were mostly thatched ones,

as in the countryside. The size of the houses was also subject to restrictions, depending on the social status of their owners.

The houses were grouped into *phuong*, each of which was surrounded by a wall or a hedge and had an access gate to a main road, and this gate was closed at night. Within the *phuong* the houses were connected along lanes. Gradually, with the development of trade, all houses had doors opening on to the streets, and the *phuong* were no longer separated from one another. In the late 13th century, the Tran King who liked drinking and going out at night often left his palace after dark, accompanied by scores of guards, to visit different places in the capital, returning only at dawn. This indicates that Thang Long was then fairly prosperous, with trade activities carried on at night and free movement between the different *phuong*. Under the late Le dynasty, because of frequent disturbances, the *phuong* were again surrounded by hedges and guarded at night.

The oldest houses in Hanoi were built in the late 19th century or the early 20th century. In general, a house was built along a line at a right angle to the street. It was one-storied or had a second story in its rear part. The front of the house had walls of sliding panels which were taken off and used as shop stands in the day-time. A large shop had two rows of stands with a passage between them, a small one had only one row along the passage. The shop was 3 to 6 metres wide, and 4 to 5 metres long. It was separated by panels from a rear area where guests were received. This area often had an upper floor which was so near the roof that one could not stand straight on it. This second storey had one or two small windows looking onto the street, and was often used to store goods.

In front of the house there was a small yard, in the middle of which there was often a bamboo grove, a pine or a peach-tree, a golden fish-pond and miniature landscape garden. There was also a pool or a rain-water reservoir. The house of a rich man would have a large courtyard, a flower garden and a fish pond. A large house often had several courtyards in between the constructions. Its owner usually lived in the second group of constructions. Finally, there were the annexes and the back door. The houses bordered on streets which had no pavement and were not straight.

A European missionary remarked: "The streets of Ke Cho are wide and beautiful, they have paved parts or paved strips, the unpaved path being reserved for horses, elephants, the king's carriages and for cattle."

What kind of food did the population have in those days? People in Thang Long, as in the rest of the country, liked plain food.

'Banquets in the village or in the family were attended only by middle-aged and old people; young men would not participate even if they were invited... When there is a ceremony in the village, in spring or in autumn, plain food is served, and the girls hired to sing songs in praise of the gods are given little money. A costly ceremony is regarded as contrary to tradition. Friends or relatives are not treated to chicken or duck unless they are important people or some festival is being celebrated. Tea is very cheap, but as a rule, only the upper class drinks it. Wine is offered to guests in tiny cups, and those who drink more than two or three cups are considered drunkards.' (*Vu Trung Tuy But*).

Thang Long was well known for its different kinds of cakes: the *com* cake with a coat of green sticky rice enveloping strongly sweetened green bean in paste; enveloped in green banana leaves

held together by red bamboo strips and given a square shape, the cake makes a nice gift; the *su se* cake made of yellow bean paste in a coat of tuber flour containing a few filaments of coconut; *su se* may be a deformation of the word *phu the* (husband and wife) as the cake is often made on wedding occasions; the *dau* cake made of finely ground dried green beans, with Chinese characters on its square surface, quickly melts in the mouth; the *khao* cake made of snow-white sticky rice flour fried and mixed with sugar. The lotus leaves seen on lakes in summer make one think of Hanoi's special delicacy: *com*, made of unripe paddy fried, and husked. The green rice grains obtained are most fragrant and savoury, the traditional method of *com*-making with all its secrets has been handed down for many generations. The best *com* is made at Vong village, near the capital and during the *com* season, pretty girls take the delicacy to the city in baskets hanging from a bamboo yoke with curved ends particular to Vong village.

During the first centuries of independence from China, the feudal class reflected the people's indomitable spirit of struggle and looked after the people's welfare, thus continuing and developing fine national traditions. Under the first kings of the Ly dynasty, the crown princes did not live in the Forbidden City with the royal family, but outside it, in order to know more about the life of the population. The first Tran kings often went out to see how the people worked and lived. They wanted to see fishing, even fire-fighting with their own eyes. King Thanh Ton of the Le dynasty liked to mix with the population and listen to their opinions.

The mid-18th century saw the beginning of a prolonged crisis of the feudal regime in Viet Nam. The nobles and mandarins were corrupt and depraved, palace conflicts broke out one after the other.

The population suffered from frequent disturbances, old traditions went by the board. Many people were forced to leave the capital. Under the rule of Trinh Sam (1767-1782), money was spent lavishly for the building of temples. Three or four times a month, the prince came to his Thuy Lien palace on the shore of the West Lake. All around the lake were soldiers and the Prince's attendants disguised as vendors.

Wherever the prince's boat stopped, the mandarins would go ashore and buy things up as at a market. From time to time, musicians sitting on the bell tower of the Tran Quoc pagoda or in the shade of trees at some landing stage, played a few pieces of music.

One such day, the Prince seized everything: rare birds and animals, old wood, precious stones, flower pots and ornamental plants... The eunuchs availed themselves of the occasion to molest the population. They put a special mark on every rare plant or bird they could find. At night, soldiers were sent to seize the plants and birds and their owners had to offer bribes if they did not want to be accused of stealing presents to the Prince... Rich people who were falsely accused of this had to offer large sums of money and sometimes had to destroy their miniature landscape gardens or ornamental plants to avoid further trouble. (*Vu Trung Tuy But*).

With the peasant insurrection in the late 18th century, a healthy atmosphere was restored to Thang Long. But after a century of stability, new upheavals were again to completely change the face of the capital city.

Cultural Life

We shall deal first with the schools and the pupils. Under the old traditional system of education,

a class might comprise pupils of all ages, from children to men in their late sixties. Both the pupils and the graduates who had become mandarins, belonged to the scholar class.

Under the Ly dynasty, education was based on Confucian ideas. Confucius and the founders of Confucianism were worshipped, and princes and the sons of mandarins were educated at *Van Mieu* (Temple of Literature) in the capital, which was built in 1070.

In 1076, the Quoc Tu Giam, a school for mandarins' sons, was built beside the Van Mieu. In 1253, under the Tran dynasty, it became the Quoc Hoc Vien (National College), where learned men from all parts of the country could come to study. The same year, the Giang Vo Institute (Military Academy) was founded.

Besides the educational institutions established by the State, there were private schools in Thang Long founded by famous scholars and well-known personalities. In the mid-13th century, King Tran's second son, a talented writer, built a school near his residence where scholars from different parts of the country studied together and were provided with free board and lodging.

Under the Le dynasty, monthly meetings were held when literary compositions were read in the presence of high-ranking mandarins in charge of education: on those days, there was a most lively literary atmosphere in the Quoc Hoc Vien. Sitting on bamboo mats in the central compartment were the mandarins presiding over the meeting: there were usually scholarly men with high diplomas. On the right were the readers of the works: men with good voices whose reading was clear and pleasing to the ear. On the left were well-known scholars who were to appraise the presented works. The courtyard was full of students. The best compositions by

students of the college on the subject given the month before were read in turn. After a piece had been read, the teachers commented on them, but the final judgement was reserved for the presiding mandarin. At noon, there was a recess for lunch. Most of the expenses of the meeting were met by *tao le* citizens, *tao le* being a system according to which the population of villages near the capital provided labour to the State, in exchange for being exempted from taxation and other contributions. The expenses were partly covered by rents collected for the use of lakes in the Quoc Hoc Viên area for fish rearing.

Basic education was provided by an extensive system of private schools. Rich people often hired private teachers for their children and those of neighbouring houses. The only way for poor students who had no diploma or who had repeatedly failed examinations to make a living was to become a teacher. That was why the capital was always full of students; and they not only gave the capital a cultural atmosphere, but also played an important role in political events. These young men gave the Thang Long population a special spirit with their love of fun and jokes, the reason for the common saying "Most terrible are the monsters, then come ghosts, then the students".

With the foundation of the Quoc Hoc Vien came the institution of holding examinations. At the first examination, which took place in 1075 in the capital, the candidates were granted academic degrees. Under the Ly dynasty, *Tam giao* (Three religions — Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism) examinations were held to recruit monks and priests for the Court. There were also *Thai Hoc Sinh* examinations for members of aristocratic families only, and *tien si* (doctorate) examinations open to all scholars. Up to then it was the authorities who usually proposed

that talented persons in their area be made mandarins. This recruiting method continued under the Tran dynasty but the *tien si* examinations became increasingly important. From the Le dynasty onwards, the recruiting of mandarins was done chiefly through examinations. The Court paid great attention to the organization of examinations and the number of candidates increased rapidly.

The *tien si* examinations were the highest level of State examination. They comprised two stages: those who passed the first stage, the *thi hoi* would be accepted for the *thi dinh*, an examination which took place at the royal palace and the subjects for literary composition in the examination were chosen by the king and princes. The three candidates who got the best marks (Tam Khoi) were given the titles of Trang Nguyen, Bang Nhan, Tham Hoa, while the other successful candidates were called *tien si* (popularly ong Nghe). In 1484, under the Le dynasty, stelae were erected in the grounds of the Van Mieu, on which the names of all *tien si* were inscribed. The first stele bore the names of scholars who had become *tien si* in 1442. The last examination took place under the Le dynasty (1787) and was the 117th. According to a royal decree issued under the Le, 117 stelae should have been erected. But there are now only 82 stelae at the Van Mieu.

Before entering for the *tien si* examination, the candidates had to have passed the *thi huong* examination. This examination was held in the capital and a number of important centres. The number of official *thi huong* examination sites, which was 14 in 1678, was reduced to 7 in the 19th century. Successful candidates became *tu tai* or *cu nhan*. A *tu tai* could not be made a mandarin: he had to continue to study and get a higher degree to qualify. Most teachers were *tu tai*.

Scholars with a *cu nhan* degree could be given a post in the administration and were allowed to enter for a higher-level examination. Many scholars who had only a *cu nhan* degree held very high positions at the royal court. Some of them continued to study and tried to get higher academic degrees. On the other hand, there were scholars with a *cu nhan* or *tien si* degree who did not want to become mandarins and preferred to teach and to live a simple life.

The candidates who passed the *thi dinh* examination were awarded a ceremonial dress by the king, and after a ceremony at the Thai Mieu temple, there was a royal banquet at the Ministry of Ceremonies. They made a tour of the royal garden and the streets of the capital before they were led back to their villages in procession, where they reported their success to their ancestors and to the population. *Thi Huong* candidates who passed the *cu nhan* degree examination were also led in procession through the capital, by the local authorities. On such occasions, the population poured into the streets to have a look at the successful candidates. Mandarins and rich people with marriageable daughters were particularly interested: the first thing they wanted to know was which of the bright young men were still bachelors!

In Thang Long, the *thi huong* examinations were held at first in Quang Ba phuong, near the West Lake, then at a site south of the Hoan Kiem Lake (the present site of the National Library), where there is now a street called Trang Thi (examination camp). *Thi Hoi* examinations took place in the courtyard of the Giang Vo palace. Under the Le dynasty, the *thi huong* and *thi hoi* examinations were held in consecutive years, both being triennial.

On thi huong examination days, the streets of the capital were extremely busy, full of scholars arriving from different places. Boarding-houses, shops and theatres were crowded. The candidates were treated most courteously, not only because they might become mandarins, but also because they brought to the capital an atmosphere of culture and scholarly emulation.

The examination camp was set up on a vast ground surrounded by two thick fences, a moat and rows of pikes. It was divided into four equal parts by two paths at right angles. Each part was separated from the others by fences and had a gate surmounted by a watch-tower. In the middle of the camp was the office where examination papers were stamped, examination subjects announced and the candidates' compositions collected. The local authorities were responsible for keeping watch around the examination camp.

The examinations were organized by the Ministry of Ceremonies, but the inspector and deputy inspector of an examination as well as the mandarins in charge of supervision and control were appointed by the king. The list of examiners was announced ten days before the examination, after which the appointed mandarins had to stay within the examination camp guarded by soldiers. They had to remain there until the end of the examination, and could have no contact with people outside.

Each candidate had to write four literary pieces. A candidate who made a serious mistake in one piece was immediately failed. One day was allowed for the writing of each composition, and the interval between the first and the last examination day did not exceed twenty days. (*Lich Trieu Hien Chuong Loai Chi*).

The candidates waited for hours often at night outside the examination camp before they were let in. Each man had to find out to which of the four parts of the camp he had to go, then he waited until his name was called. Each had a bamboo bench, a tent made of lacquered cloth, a mat, a cylindrical wooden box containing examination papers, a water canteen, and a box containing paper, pens and the midday meal which was also used as a writing desk. Such cumbersome equipment meant that there was much pushing and shoving at the entrance to the camp. Soldiers carefully searched each man, examining the water canteens, rice packages and clothes he had brought with him. When all the candidates had been let in, the gate was closed and locked.

Each man had to find a place to put his bench and set up his tent before he went to receive and copy down the examination subject and returned to his tent to write his composition. The examination book had to be of the prescribed size and shape, and the first two pages were stamped at the examination camp to make sure that the writing had not been brought from outside. Finished pieces of writing were handed over to soldiers at the office in the middle of the camp who put them into trunks. Near the time when the papers were to be collected, the candidates were warned by rolls of drums. From early in the morning to late in the evening, thousands of men were absorbed in writing their essays.

The number of candidates dwindled as the days went by, and there was less crush in the camp. When the examination was over, some of the candidates returned to their villages, and some remained in the capital to wait for the announcement of the results. While they waited, the young scholars relaxed in cabarets and theatres or took boat rides on the lakes

and composed and recited verses. The whole population of Thang Long lived in an atmosphere of expectation.

Each village and town had a quota of candidates that could enter for the thi hoi examination. Candidates did not have to bring along their tents and benches: there were tents and benches available in the examination camp and on each was a piece of bamboo bearing the name of the occupant. Order was kept by guards from the royal palace. Each candidate was searched three times before he was let in.

Just as the pen and the inkslab symbolize scholarship, so the tent and the bamboo bench evoke examinations of olden days. Every time a scholar put the tent and the bench on his shoulders, he began hoping that his life had come to a turning point. The women waiting for them yearned for the same:

*We do not envy the wide fields and big ponds,
But the pen brush and inkslab of the young scholar.*

*
* *

Closely linked with education were the book printing and book-selling trades. The practice of using engraved boards for printing dates from the 11th century. According to old records, by the beginning of the 12th century, several generations of bonze Tin Hoe's ancestors had been engaged in the printing trade. But under the Ly and Tran dynasties, the printing of books was still limited. Books were mostly of Buddhist literature and as a rule were printed and stored at pagodas.

Under the Le dynasty, with the development of education, the demand for books increased and could no longer be met by hand written copies. The printing trade probably appeared rather late in Thang Long, this being the reason why no street in the city has a name related to the printing and selling of books. All that is known in this connection is that more and more printing-houses and bookshops appeared in Hang Gai (Hemp Street), taking over premises from the shops selling goods made of hemp, such as ropes, hammocks, which moved to Ban Dan Street (Bowl Street.)

Printings-houses were mostly run by scholars. A book to be printed had to be well written, and the hand-written manuscript was usually checked by well-known scholars. Then workers from Lieu Chang village were hired for the engraving. It was said that the inhabitants of this village of Hai Duong province learnt the printing trade as early as the 17th century, and were highly skilled in engraving Chinese characters. In Thang Long, the workers from Lieu Chang stayed in pagodas and worked in organized teams.

All engraving workers were men. A kind of soft, durable wood with a fine texture was used for the engraving. Both faces of the board to be engraved were first carefully polished. The manuscript was pasted face down on the board and the paper was rubbed thin until the characters became visible. They were then engraved in the wood with a pointed knife. Corrections were made by cutting away the character and inserting a new piece of wood for engraving.

The printing was done by women workers. The engraved boards were placed on a straw mat, beside a tub of ink. Small brushes were used to dab ink on the characters, then paper was placed over the engraved board, and grease smeared on the paper with

small brushes. Four 16x20 or 20x30 pages could be printed on each board. A skilled worker could print one thousand sheets of paper in a day. Only a few hundred of each book were printed at a time. The paper was made at the Yen Thai phuong, near the West Lake.

Books printed in Thang Long were sold all over the country. There were villages near the capital whose inhabitants engaged in an auxiliary trade to farming; exchanging books for waste paper which they sold to paper makers in the capital. After a harvest, they would go to Thang Long with their baskets, to buy city books of all kinds — readers, poetry-writing manuals, novels in verse such as *Truyen Kieu*, *Hoa Tien Ky*, *Nhi Do Mai*, and classical Chinese novels such as *Tam Quoc*, *Thuy Hu*, *Hong Lau Mong*. Teachers and pupils in the villages waited eagerly for the roving booksellers who would bring them the cultural atmosphere of the capital.

Hang Gai Street with its printing-houses and bookshops was also known for its many inhabitants with academic degrees who preferred teaching and writing to becoming mandarins. It was in this part of the capital that Confucian culture was best preserved.

Literature had always been highly appreciated in Thang Long. Many famous teachers were natives of the capital city. In the mid-14th century, the famed scholar Chu Van An taught there. Many of his pupils later became high-ranking mandarins, but he continued to reprimand them when they did something wrong. Hearing of his virtues, King Tran invited him to take charge of education at the Quoc Tu Giam. He resigned after some time and returned to his teaching work, as he could not bear the corruption of the mandarins who won great honours and privileges by flattering the king.

At the end of the 17th century, Vu Thach who lived in Bao Thien phuong opened a school after resigning office. Among his pupils were young men who had come from remote parts of the country. The classroom faced the Bay Mau lake, and as it was too small, many pupils sat on boats moored in front of it to listen to his lectures. Many of Vu Thach's pupils later did very well in high academic degree examinations and acceded to important positions (*Viet Su Thong Giam Cuong Muc*).

At the end of the 18th century, poetess Ho Xuan Huong lived and taught in Kham Xuan phuong, on the shore of the West Lake. Her satirical poems with different layers of meaning, mostly written in *nom* characters, won her the name of Nom Poetry Queen. Another famous poetess, Nguyen Thi Hinh (wife of the Thanh Quan district head), was born in Nghi Tam village, lived and taught in the capital the mid-19th century. She wrote most delicate poetry deploring the changes occurring in Thang Long.

Trang Quynh and Trang Lon were two characters that appeared in Thang Long in the 18th century. Trang was what the best graduates of the examinations were called. Quynh and Lon never sat for an examination but were considered just. It was Thang Long that produced these men as examination candidates by the population, and therefore also called Trang who expressed the feelings of the population toward the decaying feudal regime in stinging satire. Trang Quynh's laughter echoed the mocking laughter of the Thang Long people who dared to play jokes on the King, tease the Prince, and who commanded the respect of the Chinese Envoy. Trang Lon was a good-humoured butcher who was awarded the title of Trang Nguyen for his tall stories by the King. He was sent to China as an envoy, and

there he won the admiration of the Chinese Emperor who made him a Trang Nguyen of two countries !

In the 19th century two other famous personages appeared : Ba Giai and Tu Xuat. Ba Giai whose full name was Nguyen Van Giai, was a well-known scholar who lived in Ho Khau phuong after the surrender of the feudal court and the occupation of Hanoi by the French colonialists. He did not want to sit for any examination, preferring to live an independent life and to write poems attacking the foreign administration. A famous work of Ba Giai, the long poem entitled *Ha Thanh That Thu Chinh Khi Ca*, was written in praise of Hoang Dieu who had sacrificed his life for his country, and in condemnation of cowards who had surrendered to the enemy quickly.

Ba Giai turned his pen to popular literature with the creativeness of the Thang Long people. Together with Tu Xuat, Ba Giai became well-known as the author of stories ridiculing the feudalists and the opportunists who had surrendered to the enemy. His mocking and unflinching attitude was typical of Thang Long people.

Thang Long has produced many talented men — writers, poets, politicians and soldiers — who added to its glory, making it the heart and the soul of the country.

Legacy of the Past

In the heart of the capital city, a small temple on the bank of the To Lich river for the worship of *Dong Co Son Than* (Bronze drum mountain god) can still be seen. There are a number of legends about the Dong Co god, and all of them tell of a king who was advised by the god to launch an attack against

the enemy, and whose troops were stimulated by the beating of bronze drums to fight furiously, and they won a brilliant victory. In gratitude to the Dong Co god, the king built a temple in honour of his benefactor. The Dong Co temple in Thang Long was built in 1028, but before that date temples for the worship of bronze drum gods had been built in other places. The king and his mandarins participated every year in an oath-taking ceremony at the temple in the capital.

"Every year, on the 4th day of the 4th month of the lunar calendar, the prime minister and other mandarins came to the royal palace at dawn; when the king appeared in the passage at the right side of the Dai Minh palace, the mandarins, all in ceremonial dress, kowtowed twice, then withdrew to form the head of a procession through the West Gate, toward the Dong Co temple. At the temple they took part in an oath-taking ceremony involving blood drinking¹. A mandarin read out the oath "We vow complete loyalty to the king, and integrity in the discharge of our duties. If we break this oath, we will be damned by the gods." Then the prime minister closed the door and had a check made on who was absent. The mandarins who did not come on that day were fined five *quan*. The oath-taking ceremony was considered to be very important and the temple was thronged with spectators." (*Lich Trieu Hien Chuong Loai Chi*).

1. Blood drinking was often part of oath-taking ceremonies and the blood of a white horse was used for the purpose. Until recently, many ethnic minorities in the North drank cock's blood mixed with alcohol when an oath was sworn. This custom probably originates from the rite practised by primitive communities when the blood of a sacrificed animal was drunk. It is still practised by a number of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands.

Under the Ly and the following dynasties, the Dong Co celebrations constituted one of the most important festive occasions of the year.

Ethnologists believe that the Dong Co festivities may have originated from a primitive agricultural ceremony. For ancient Vietnamese the bronze drum was a "sacred object" representing the leader's authority. It was used ceremonially to invoke rain or a good harvest, as well as in battles. The bronze drum was later made a sacred object by the feudalists, and the primitive agricultural ceremony was given a new content in keeping with the consolidation of the feudal regime. New legends about the bronze drum were propagated. The 4th day of the 4th month is an important point of time in the agricultural production cycle, marking the beginning of summer, the rainy season, when land is ploughed in preparation for the planting of the main crop.

The Dong Co ceremony was kept up for a relatively long time. With the development and consolidation of the feudal regime, many traditional ceremonies were abolished or neglected. The feudal class who had adopted Confucianism as their ideology servilely copied feudal Chinese customs and rites as their own orthodox ones.

Among the rites introduced from China since the Ly dynasty, we must first mention the rites invoking a good harvest. The altar for Heaven worship was a round one for the winter solstice rites, and a square one for the summer solstice rites. We know that a round altar was built for Heaven worship in 1153 but no details of the ceremony were recorded. No rain-invoking rites under the Tran dynasty are on record. Under the Le dynasty, the altar built by King Ly was restored to be used in a ceremony for the worship of Heaven and Earth, called Te Giao. The Te Giao altar was a four-metre high structure built on an earthen base, surrounded with a finely

sculptured stone balustrade. The rites of Heaven and Earth worship took place on one of the first three days of the year, when the king in his sedan-chair, preceded by mandarins on foot and followed by guards, left the royal palace through the south gate. Arriving at the temple, the monarch alighted from his sedan-chair and walked to the altar to perform the rites. It was a festive day in the capital and the streets were thronged with people.

Early in the spring, the king also attended a ceremony for the worship of *Coc Than* (Rice God) to request a good harvest. Under the Ly dynasty, the ceremony took place simultaneously with the Te Giao rites, but it is not known whether it was practised under the Tran dynasty. In 1484, king Le built the Tien Nong altar for the worship of *Coc Than* at Hong Mai (now Bach Mai) village, south of the capital. The structure was 3 metres high and 12 metres wide. Every year, after the ceremony, the king ploughed a few furrows on a rice-field: this symbolic act, called *tich dien*, inaugurated the new planting season. In the late 16th century, the custom was abolished by Prince Trinh, who had usurped King Le's power. For farmers, the *Coc Than* ceremony heralded a new period of work on the fields.

The most important festive days for all Vietnamese are those which take place during the first days of the lunar year—the Tet festival. It marks the beginning of Spring, the weather becomes warmer and everything seems to be infused with new life.

Between the 23rd and the 30th day of the 12th month of the lunar calendar, a *cay neu* is set up before the communal houses and pagodas and in front of each home. This is the trunk of a tall bamboo tree topped by a tuft of cock feathers or *thien tue* palm leaves, below which is a bamboo hoop covered in red paper or decorated with a piece of

red silk. According to a legend of Buddhist inspiration, the *cay neu* marks the boundary between the land of men and that of ghosts. But research has shown that it may originate from the cult of the Sun. The *cay neu* may be a kind of cosmic tree set up to greet the returning sun which drives away the cold weather. And at zero hour of the first day of the year, firecrackers were set off to scare away the forces of evil and greet the new spring.

On New Year's Day, the crown prince and the mandarins came to convey good wishes to the king. They took part in a banquet and watched games at the royal palace. The troops received gifts of money and silk. Games were organized many places in the capital : swinging, shuttle-cock, tug-of-war, and there were song and poetry recitals... On the third day of the first month, from the tower surmounting the South Gate, the king watched a ball game the princes and mandarins took part in. This game was particularly popular with the young people : it was played on a ground in the middle of which stood a tall bamboo pole topped by a disc of red paper about 50cm in diameter. A fist-size ball made of cloth, stuffed with sand and with a tail of twenty strips or different coloured silk was thrown from one side of the pole, where the young men were, to the other, where the girls were lined up. The players tried to throw the ball through the disc on its way to the other side of the ground. The first player who managed it would receive a prize and this augured that luck in love and marriage. Is it possible that the red paper disc represented the hymen ? Games and activities such as ball-throwing, swinging and singing were occasions for boys and girls to meet and get acquainted in the first spring days.

There were also cock-fights and buffalo fights. As buffalo fights could affect agricultural production,

a decree was issued by the Ly court in 1048 subjecting these games to strict regulations.

Living in a country with many rivers and lakes, our people were very fond of boat races, and these usually took place in the 7th or 8th month of the lunar calendar. Under the Ly dynasty, boat races in Thang Long were organized on the 3rd day of the 8th month, and were followed by other autumn festivals. On the festive day, the king watched thousands of racing boats bedecked with flags from the bank of the Red River. Each *phuong* of Thang Long and each village in the vicinity of the capital had a boat participating in the race. Inscriptions on a stele set up in 1121 in the *Sung Thien Dien Linh* tower of the Doi pagoda (Ha Nam province) describe a boat race thus:

"Thousands of boats move down on the river with
lightning speed

Drums resound like thunder...

The King gives a banquet attended by dignitaries
Then hears reports by mandarins."

Under the following dynasties, boat races were organized on the Hoan Kiem Lake and the West Lake.

Many ethnologists hold that boat races originate from an old tradition related to the cult of the sun which was practised by many peoples of Southeast-Asia: the circular course followed by the racing boats was supposed to represent the sun's path: while Indo-European peoples formerly believed that the sun was carried in a golden chariot through the skies, Polynesian peoples believed that the heavenly body was carried in a boat sailing from west to east across an ocean. The boats engraved on ancient Vietnamese bronze drums give an idea of the legendary boat.

The Thang Long population had other distractions besides boat race, such as tight rope-walking and

puppet-shows. Water-puppet shows are peculiar to Viet Nam. The stage was the surface of a river or lake, and the wooden puppets floating on the surface of the water were moved by strings concealed under the water. There is a description of a puppet-show on the stele mentioned above:

"The golden tortoise emerges from the waves, carrying three hills on its back. Moving slowly, it turns its eyes toward the shore. It looks with awe at the royal attire, then turns away. Then music is heard and the grotto gate opens: the gods are coming..."

Under the Le dynasty, puppet shows were also performed on the Hoan Kiem Lake and the Thien Quang Lake. They represented scenes of the people's life: Ngu, Tieu, Canh, Doc (The fisherman, the woodcutter, the farmer, the scholar) and of historical events, like Le Loi's insurrection.

The Mid-Autumn Festival takes place on the 15th day of the 8th month. Under the Ly dynasty, it was called Quang Chieu (Spreading Light) Festival. The celebrations lasted for seven days and seven nights and were held outside the East gate of the Imperial City. In front of the gate, the Quang Chieu lantern was placed "at the top of a tall pole. It was decorated with images of dragons, and made brighter by a lamp-shade. Machinery concealed underground makes the lantern turn like a wheel. There are also puppets dressed in gowns like bonzes, flowers and a bronze bell in a tower. Machinery makes the puppets strike at the bell, or turn round on hearing the sound of a flute when the king appears, the puppets bow." (From inscriptions on the stele in *Sung Thien Dien Linh* Tower).

We do not know how big the Quang Chieu lantern during the Ly period was, and how it could be set in motion. A smaller replica of it is found in the *den keo quan*, the paper lanterns which decorate every

family home during the Mid-Autumn Festival. The heat rising from a candle makes a disc from which cut-paper figures are hanging rotate, and their shadows move across the panels of the lantern, as in a galanty show.

The Mid-Autumn Festival was a children's festival then as now. Little boys and girls carrying lanterns shaped like carps, rabbits and toads took part in processions through the city. Girls of marriageable age strove to make cakes, carve fruits into various figures to impress guests.

During the festivals there were always artistic performances: singing, music, dancing, popular drama and classical drama. There was a mandarin in charge of music in the royal palace and in 1035, under the Ly dynasty, there was a women's choir of 100 voices which gave performances in the royal palace. A Chinese envoy of the Yuan period thus described a banquet given by a Tran King:

"... A group of ten men sit on the floor facing a group of ten women. Among the musical instruments are mandolins and one-stringed guitars. To the accompaniment of these instruments, the men and women first vocalize then sing. Outside the palace, various games are played: shuttle-cock kicking, greasy pole-climbing, puppet-shows. There are also half-naked men jumping and shouting in the courtyard, barefooted women dancing with spread fingers, and around them, a dozen half-naked young men singing and trampling on the ground. They all raise or lower their hands at the same time. The banquet was given in a hall of the palace; the orchestra is in the next room. Every time a round of drinks is poured, a man shouts "Tau nhac" (music) and the orchestra begins playing..." (*Kien van tieu luc*)

A *Dao* singing was also popular. The singers called *co dao*, might be young or middle-aged

women. They lived in a group in the same house and were headed by an elderly man called *quan ca* (song-group chief). A *Dao* singing had its own tunes, but the repertoire also comprised *cheo* tunes and folk songs. A singer sitting on a mat sang to the accompaniment of a guitar played by a man. She herself beat the rhythm out on a piece of wood. Whoever in the audience was best acquainted with a *dao* singing was asked to beat a drum called *trong chau*. With a stick, he would beat either the surface of the drum or its side to stress on some words of the song, and this both indicated the satisfaction of the audience and gave encouragement to the singer. Sometimes, the man who was offered the *trong chau* was only an important personage, or a rich man, not a connoisseur, and in this case, the drum-beats were often out of place, causing the singer to remark sneeringly that they were singing for men "with buffaloes' ear".

Under the Tran dynasty, a *co dao* singer from Dao Xa village, in Hai Duong province, had achieved brilliant exploits during the war of resistance against the Yuan aggressors and was highly commended by the king. The *a dao* of Thang Long regarded her as the patron's of their profession and built a temple in her honour. For several days before the name-day of their patron, the *a dao* trained hard for the recital held on the commemorative day. The best singers were chosen for these celebrations which were attended by a large number of people from different parts of the capital. The singers sang one by one before the altar and the ceremony went on until late at night.

There were many in literary circles who loved a *dao* singing. Talented poets wrote the words of many songs which are still appreciated in our days. Famous *a dao* singers have had their praises sung by writers and poets. The great Nguyen Du in his

poem *Long Than cam gia ca* related his meeting with a talented singer at a banquet in the capital. Twenty years later, after many upheavals in the capital, the poet attended another banquet where a woman caught his attention strangely. He suddenly realised that she was the woman he had met and been struck by long before.

*
* *

Almost one thousand years have elapsed since these times. Many traditions are gone, some replaced by new ones; but the new things are closely linked with the old.

Thang Long was renamed Hanoi—the city within rivers—in 1831. The Nguyen dynasty did not want Thang Long to be the capital, and records from 1888, under French occupation, tell us that Hanoi comprised only business districts. Rivalries among the different feudal cliques and aggression by foreign armies have been the cause of destruction in the city. However many vestiges of the past remain in different parts of Hanoi.

The vestiges most highly valued by the Hanoi people are those which testify to the indomitable spirit of struggle, love of life, plain living and sense of humour of the Vietnamese.

Even while Hanoi was not the capital, or when it had become a colonial town, it remained the main economic and political centre of the country. The Hanoi accent is considered standard Vietnamese, despite the mispronunciation of a few words. Most national liberation movements have originated in Hanoi, spreading rapidly to other parts of the country. Hanoi will always be the heart of Viet Nam.

A Cultural Centre in Thang Long.

The Temple of Literature and the National Academy

by HOA BANG

The Temple of Literature (Van Mieu) in Hanoi is also known as *Giam*, short for *Quoc Tu Giam*, or National Academy. Originally dedicated to the cult of Confucius and the most eminent of his disciples, it became the first centre of higher education of feudal Viet Nam, hence its double appellation which has remained throughout the centuries.

The Temple of Literature was founded in 1070, more precisely in the 8th month of the second year of the Than Vu era, during the reign of Ly Thanh Tong (1054-1071). The new capital Thang Long had been founded six decades before, and Viet Nam was experiencing unprecedented prosperity and development. The foundation of the Temple, and six years later of the Academy (1076), testified to the power of the centralized feudal state under the Ly, the third national dynasty (1010-1225). There is no doubt that it, in its turn, helped strengthen the regime

and contributed to the development of national culture. To consolidate the monarchy meant at the time to safeguard the country's national independence, gained through a hard and bitter struggle, and constantly threatened by expansionism by the feudalists to the North. This was thus a matter of historical necessity.

The Temple was located south-west of the city, in Thinh Hao village, An Ha canton, Hoan Long district, Ha Dong province. It now belongs to Van Mieu quarter, Dong Da district, Hanoi, bordered on two sides by tram-lines Hanoi — Ha Dong (Hanoi's satellite town) and Bo Ho (Restored Sword Lake) — Cau Giay (Paper Bridge), by Nguyen Thai Hoc Street in the north and Quoc Tu Giam Street in the south, Van Mieu Street in the east and Hang Bot Street in the west. The Temple is surrounded by a wall covered with moss and climbing plants, hidden under the greenness of the trees and is among the most frequented sites of the capital.

The Site

As already stated, the Temple of Literature is dedicated to the eminent Chinese philosopher Confucius, considered as the Master of Studies, and his 72 best disciples, who devoted their lives to the study and propagation of the Great Master's doctrine.

Confucius (551-479 BC), whose real name was Kong Qiu, was also addressed respectfully as Master K'ong by the scholars of the old school. He was a poor nobleman from the Chinese Lu state in the Spring and Autumn period. He started his career as a mandarin and later became a high dignitary. Political intrigues resulted in his resignation from office. After thirteen years of wandering through various neighbouring states he returned in his 68th

year to his native state, where he taught the ruling princes his political and moral doctrines. From then on he devoted himself to teaching, and educated about 3,000 disciples. His doctrines were honoured in China and other countries of the Far-East, and were to govern the social and familial structures of feudal Viet Nam where they were adopted as State ideology.

The Temple of Literature covers an oblong area of nine *mau* (1 *mau* equals 3,600 sq metres), or more than three hectares. The temple itself is about 350 m long, 60 m wide on the southern side and across the front and 75 m wide on the northern side. The main gate faces south and looks on to Van Ho lake. There was an islet there on which, according to the poems engraved on a stele, apricot, orange and lemon trees, pomegranates, willows, thin bamboos, pines, palisander, frangipans and peonies were still growing in the 17th century. Later the lake gradually silted up with mud, and sand and become overgrown with shrubs. Le Huu Thanh and Dang Ta, two noted scholars and mandarins, had the lake restored in 1883, one year before the French established their colonial rule in the whole of Viet Nam. Part of the lake can still be seen along Quoc Tu Giam street.

The buildings have a row of four stone columns in front of them, and are entered through a portico with three passages, the Van Mieu Mon, literally the Gate of the Temple of Literature. It is composed of many brick-and-wood constructions built separately down through the centuries. The whole temple is divided longitudinally into five parts by walls and linked by covered gates, with supplementery openings on both sides.

A central path, paved with large terracotta tiles and starting from the main gate, crosses the first two sections of the temple, which are linked together by the Dai Trung gate or the gate of the Great Middle. These parts, where century-old trees grow,

together with two rectangular ponds stretching along the wall, are a unit, serving as a shade garden and giving access to the main quarters.

The third part is entered through an impressive gate topped by a wooden pavilion endowed with a two-storey roof composed of eight small roofs with four windows shaped like the sun with rays which open onto the four cardinal points. This pavilion, which dates from the early 19th century, is called Khue Van Cac, or Mirador of the Khue, which presided over literary life according to old Chinese and Far Eastern beliefs. The central path ends a promenade which goes round a square lake called Thien Quang Tinh or Well of Heavenly Light. The ornamental railings around it have openings to steps leading down to the water. On both sides of the lake are 82 monolithic stelae placed on 82 stone tortoise pedestals.

Each of the stele is dedicated to one of the triennial examinations of doctors of literature. A brief account and commentary of the examination in classical Chinese is followed by a list of graduates¹. The first registered examination took place in 1779,

1. "Each stele bears a long text relating the circumstances under which the examination took place and advice and encouragement to students in the study of letters. Then come the names of graduates in order of precedence. The following passage inscribed on the first stele reveals the intentions of the authors: "...At present, the examinations offer scenes of opulence and prosperity. But though their brightness may shine in our century, they are not bright enough to perpetuate the worth of our graduates in future centuries. Therefore, stone stelae have been set up at the entrance of the Temple of the Sages on which to engrave their names. The students who come to behold them will be filled with admiration and they will arouse in them noble sentiments of emulation which will help them regulate their own behaviour and serve their country." *Le Thuoc*, in the Van Mieu or Temple of Literature, *Viet Nam Advances* No. 1, 1958.

the first year of the Bao Dai era, during the reign of Le Hien Tong. Thus the stelae cover a period of 337 years, during which 110 triennial examinations for the master's degree took place. About thirty of them have disappeared in the course of history and in all probability, there is one less today than in the reign of Quang Trung at the end of the 18th century.

In 1484, during the reign of Le Thai Tong, the Vietnamese Maecenas, ten porches were erected to shelter the stelae, but they were demolished in 1768, a year of great ferment, by vandals who also uprooted the stone monuments. Nearly a century later, in 1863 (the 16th year of Tu Duc's reign) the manager of the Hanoi tax administration, Le Huu Thanh, mentioned above, used money subscribed by scholars, personalities, and part of the population of Hanoi to restore the damaged constructions. The stelae numbered 82 then and remain today. The rebuilt porches fell into ruin later, and two others were built between 1889 and 1907, under the French rule.

The fourth part is the Temple proper, consecrated to Confucius and his disciples. One enters the Dai Thanh (Great Success) Gate, and across a broad paved yard is a large building of traditional style, with nine bays separated from one another by rows of steel-wood columns. The latter support a tiled roof which has gracefully curved corners and is adorned on top with two symmetric dragons facing a lunar disc. This is the Bai Duong, or House of Ceremonies. Officers and high dignitaries came there twice a year, in the second and tenth month of the lunar calendar, when Spring and Autumn sacrifices were offered in honour of Confucius and his eminent disciples on behalf of the King. Over the central bay hangs a lacquered plaque upon which are inscribed the words "Van The Su Bieu", which means "the Teachers' Model for ten thousand generations", or

"the Model for Teachers for all times". Among the objects of worship kept here, one can cite the great bronze bell, cast in 1768 at the initiative of eminent men of letters such as Nguyen Nghiem (father of the national poet Nguyen Du), Vu Mien and Nguyen Le.

The House of Ceremonies has a twin-building identical to it in size and architecture, the Thuong Cung or High Sanctuary. The altar to Confucius was placed in the central bay with his statue in lacquered wood in the middle. On one side were others dedicated to the group of Four Apostles (Tu Phuoc). These were: Nhan Tu (Yanzi), Tu tu (Zisi), Tang Tu (Zengzi) and Manh Tu (Mengsi). On the other side they were dedicated to the group of Ten Sages (Thap Triet) namely Tu Truong (Zizhang), Man Tu Khiem (Manziqian), Nhiem Ba Nguu (Ran Bonin), Trong Cung (Zhong-gong), Te Ngu (Qi Wu), Tu Cong (Zi gong), Nhiem Huu (Ranyou), Qui Lo (Quilu), Tu Du (Ziyou), Tu Ha (Zixia).

The other disciples, the Great Master's 72 best, were worshipped in the two buildings on either side of the large paved yard in front of the House of Ceremonies. They were called Ta Vu (left wing) and Huu Vu (right wing). Here tribute was also paid to the spirits of eminent Vietnamese scholars such as Chu Van An and Truong Han Sieu. The lateral buildings have seven bays each. They were destroyed by French troops in late 1946, at the beginning of the First Indochina war and were restored in 1954.

The fifth and last part of the grounds is situated along Nguyen Thai Hoc Street. It was made up of the Khai Thanh sanctuary (sanctuary of the Saints founders of the line) which was dedicated to the parents of Confucius.

This place of worship was the last addition to the Temple of Literature, at the beginning of the 19th century. It was built in the site of the National

Academy which Gia Long had transferred to Hue, the new capital of Viet Nam, when he came to power in 1802, establishing the Nguyen dynasty. Many buildings were destroyed by French troops in late 1946. Some vestiges still remain, however, namely the four large stone inkstands bearing the inscription "Thai Hoc Duong Nghien", or Instand of the Great School.

The First National Centre of Advanced Studies

The above-mentioned Quoc Tu Giam or National Academy was added to the Temple of Literature in 1076.

From then on it was an integral part of the latter, occupying the back, extreme north part of the edifice. It had to change name many times before becoming *Quoc Tu Vien* or National Academy in 1236, in the reign of Tran Thai Tong, then Thai Hoc Duong or School of Higher Studies in the reign of Le Thai To. The people nevertheless still called *Nha Giam*, literally The School House, or simply *Giam*, The School. Residential quarters were built around it and were called *Tien Giam* (Front Giam) *Hau Giam* (Back Giam) and *Van Ho*, names which appear in geography books and accounts of Thang Long and Hanoi. Later prominent figures of the literary community such as Nguyen Nghiem, Ngo Thi Si, Phan Huy Ich and others built their houses close to the Academy, and this area became the "Quartier Latin" of Hanoi.

In the year the Academy was founded, the first year of the Anh Vu Chieu Thang period, during the reign of Ly Nhan Tong, a wave of Chinese aggression in the form of 100,000 troops (the Song dynasty) swept over Viet Nam. The hardships imposed by the

war did not prevent the King and his court from developing education and carrying out the training of an intellectual elite to serve the court. They saw in Confucianism an ideology well suited to the interests of their regime and gave it preference, and then made it a kind of State religion.

Under the previous dynasties, the Dinh (968-980) and the early Le (980-1009) scholars had been trained in pagodas where Buddhist monks taught them in classical Chinese. According to old history books, these monks played a predominant role in the education system of the period. Before examinations were established under the Ly, the career of mandarin could only be attained by passing via Buddhism or Taoism, whatever the educational level and talent of the scholar. This state of affairs continued under the first Ly Kings, at the beginning of the 11th century, who went on choosing their mandarins and secretaries from among the Buddhist monks.

The Quoc Tu Giam, literally School for Sons of the State, was originally aimed at educating princes and giving "refresher courses" to civilian mandarins. It was given a new name, Quoc Tu Vien, literally Institute for Children of the State, in the reign of Tran Thai Tong. It was managed by a high dignitary appointed by the King and its students were the sons of great mandarins. Admission to this institution remained a prerogative of the high gentry.

Reforms which favoured the children of the people were carried out by Le Loi who became King Le Thai To in 1428. The country had just got rid of the Chinese feudalist yoke of the Ming dynasty after a 10-year war of resistance, and the new king was aware of the role played by the people in the long and arduous war of national liberation. In 1433 he decided to open the school to the first students originating from among the common people, of the two provinces of Quoc Oai and Bac Giang. From 1434

onwards, the new measure was applied to the whole country and the two best graduates from the provincial examinations were admitted to the institution.

The school became known as Thai Hoc Duong under the reign of Le Thanh Tong and in 1483 it was enlarged and new buildings were added to it: the Minh Luan building, the Dong Giang Duong and Tay Giang Duong, Eastern and Western conference halls respectively, a stone house to hold wooden printing blocks. Six boarding houses for students each with 25 double-bed rooms were arranged in three rows, on both sides of main building. The last architectural work which was added to the site seems to have been the Sung Nho Palace (devotion to the Confucian doctrine) which was built early in the 16th century.

The organization of the school, which remained simple until the end of the 14th century, reached a high level in the second half of the 15th century, when the power of the Le Dynasty reached its climax (1448 — 1497).

The students, 300 in number, were classified according to ability into three categories, each living as member of a "boarding school" composed of two dwelling houses, hence the name Tam Xa Sinh, "Students of the three boarding schools". The Thuong Xa Sinh, Students of the Higher Boarding School, had to pass all three series of tests of the competitive examinations in which graduates from provincial examinations took part. They were awarded a three-month scholarship worth a string of coins¹. The Trung Xa Sinh, Students of the

1. The price of a pig, according to a royal ordinance in the second year of the Vinh Thinh era (1654), (Dao Duy Anh, *Viet Nam Van Hoa Su Cuong*, Hue, 1938) Ed.

Middle Boarding-School, and the Ha Xa Sinh, Students of the Lower Boarding-School, were candidates to the third and second series of tests of the competitive examinations respectively; they received 9 and 8 *tien* each trimester respectively. One *tien* is worth one-tenth of a string of coins.

Also under the Le, the Academy (called Thai Hoc Duong or School of Higher Studies) was placed under the authority of Bac Si, literally Scholar-scientist, assisted by a Tu Nghiep, Director of Studies. With the Te Tuu, Minister of Cults, responsible for the Temple of Literature, these had the rank of An Phu Su, or chief of province. The teaching staff was composed of Giao Thu, professors, Truc Giang, lecturers, and Tro Ly, assistant professors. King Le Thanh Tong strictly prohibited the transfer of the institution's teaching staff to administrative functions, because, in his opinion, they played a great role in the training of a national elite and long seniority was necessary for them to accumulate teaching experience and give them authority among the students.

Little is known about the curriculum, particularly what was taught in the initial periods. As far as we can learn from fragments of material available to us from old annuals, it consisted mainly in the teaching of four classical works: the *Dai Hoc* (the Great Study), the *Trung Dung* (the Middle and unchanging course), the *Luan Ngu* (Teachings of Confucius) and the *Manh Tu* (Mencius' writings) and the five Canonical Books: the *Kinh Thi* (Book of Poetry), the *Kinh Thu* (Book of History), the *Kinh Dich* (Book of changes) the *Kinh Le* (Book of Rites) and the *Kinh Xuan Thu* (Chronicle of the Principality of Lu). The students practised various literary genres, namely *thi* (poetry), *phu* (rhythmical and rhymed prose), *chieu* (royal ordinance), *bieu* (report to the King), *Kinh Nghia* (exegesis) and *van sach* (historical)

and political commentary). The school paid special attention to ethical training, especially under the Ly, Tran and Le; in general the scholars of this epoch were distinguished by their uprightness and integrity; and their behaviour was far more dignified than that of later dynasties.

The main subsidy granted by the Crown to the institution was the *hoc dien*. These were rice-fields the income from which was used to cover the cost of running the college. In 1723, under the dynasty of Le Trung Hung, when the feudal system had begun to decline, they comprised 60 *mau*, that is a little more than 20 hectares.

Even in this period, the Temple of Literature and the National Academy still exerted an influence on the intellectual life of the country of which they were the greatest intellectual centre. However, the studies there became more and more formal. They concentrated on the humanities and whenever a recital session was held, the number of scholars attending was so great that there was not enough room for everybody. There were still classical studies in the Chinese style, but the purpose of these was purely utilitarian: the students were less interested in studying the doctrine of Confucius than in gaining some position through the literary examinations.

The feudal regime started disintegrating in the second half of the 18th century. Peasant revolts broke out one after another all over the country. The Trinh lords, who ruled over the North, made enormous military efforts to defend the Nguyen, their rivals in the South, and suppress the people by anti-insurrectional operations. Education was neglected. The roof and walls of the School of Higher Studies fell into disrepair. The great scholar and high dignitary Bui Huy Bich attempted to remedy the situation by coming to give lectures towards 1789, but to no avail.

The national hero Nguyen Hue defeated the Chinese Tsing invaders at Dong Da (in the outskirts of the capital) in 1789, proclaimed himself King, and reunified the long divided country. As King Quang Trung he ordered that education be restored to its former level and status, first and foremost in the Temple of Literature and the National Academy. But hardly had his plans been drawn up for execution when he suddenly died in 1792. His son Quang Toan succeeded him to the throne and came in person to the Academy in 1802 to meet the students, determined to continue the work of his father. However, he was defeated in the same year by Nguyen Phuc Anh, the founder of the Nguyen dynasty which was the last dynasty to rule over Viet Nam before the establishment of the French domination.

In 1802 Nguyen Phuc Anh, under the title of Gia Long, transferred the capital to Hue, where a new National Academy was established in 1807. The Temple of Literature and the National Academy of the old capital Thang Long were degraded to become sites for regional examinations. Under the French rule, they were removed from the jurisdiction of the municipality of Hanoi and placed under the provincial authorities of Ha Dong. This was an attempt by the colonial administration to erase associations with a long glorious past, evidence of a bright national culture, from the memory of the population of Hanoi.

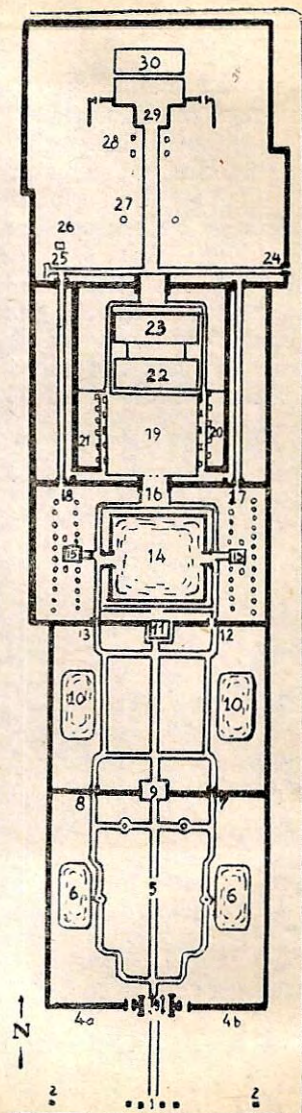
*

* *

For a long time the Temple of Literature and the National Academy in Hanoi were the symbol of an intellectual life carefully fostered in feudal Viet

Nam. Eminent figures of our national history were trained there. On October 10, 1954, soon after the liberation of the capital from the French colonialists, the people's power started the restoration of the historical site with a view to perpetuating the memory of the fine national traditions linked to them. In 1962 President Ho Chi Minh came to the Temple in person to attend the traditional recital of poems organized at Tet by old scholars of Hanoi. The Temple, which is visited by pilgrims from all parts of the country, has become a museum under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and the Institute of History.

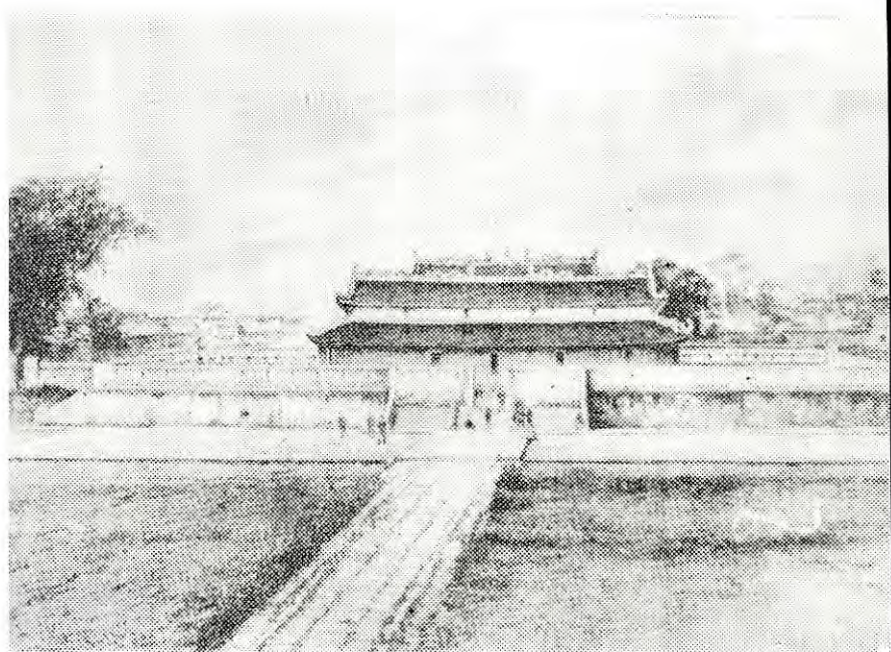
PLAN
OF THE TEMPLE
OF LITERATURE



PLAN OF THE TEMPLE OF LITERATURE

1. Entrance.
2. Stelae inviting horse-men to dismount (as a mark of respect to gods of the Temple).
3. Van Mieu Gate, main gate of the Temple.
- 4a. Left portal.
- 4b. Right portal.
5. Paved path.
6. Rectangular-shaped ponds.
7. The Dat Tai portal.
8. The Thanh Duc portal.
9. The Dai Trung (Great Middle) portal.
10. Pavements.
11. The Khue Van Cac, Mirador of the Khue Constellation
12. The Cuc Can portal.
13. The Bi Van portal.
14. Thien Quang (Heavenly Glory) Pond.
15. Stelae site.
16. The Dai Thanh (Great Success) Gate.
17. The Kim Thanh portal.
18. The Ngoc Thanh portal.
19. Large paved court-yard.
20. Ta Vu (left wing).
21. Huu Vu (right wing).
22. Bai Duong, or House of Ceremonies
23. Dai Thanh (Great Success) sanctuary, dedicated to Confucius and his four Apostles.
24. Eastern Gate.
25. Stelae bearing graduates' names.
26. Remains of the sanctuary of the Genius of the Earth.
27. Century-old trees.
28. Stone inkstands.
29. Site of the old National Academy.
30. Remains of the Khai Thanh sanctuary, dedicated to the parents of Confucius.

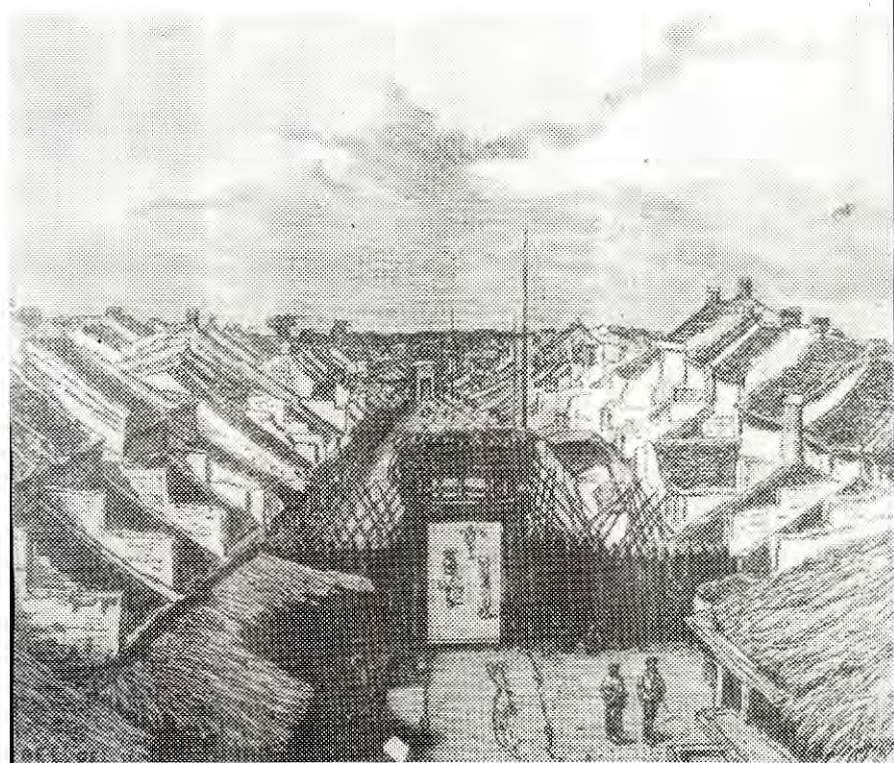
(Compiled by Phan An and Hoang Hung).



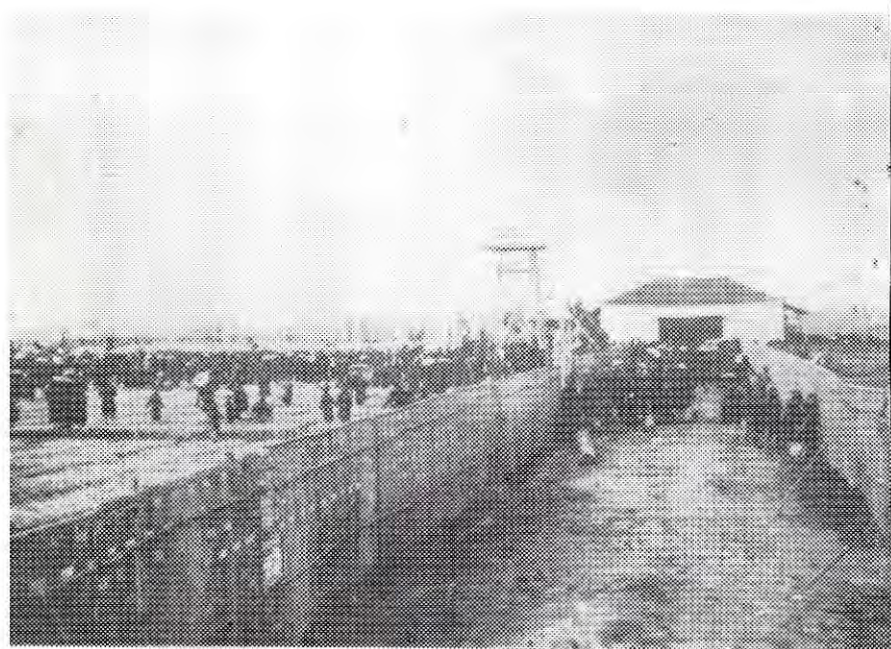
Old Palace of Kinh Thien.
(of which there are only some remains left now).



Transversal Street (Hang Ngang) in the past.



A Thang Long Street in the 18th century.

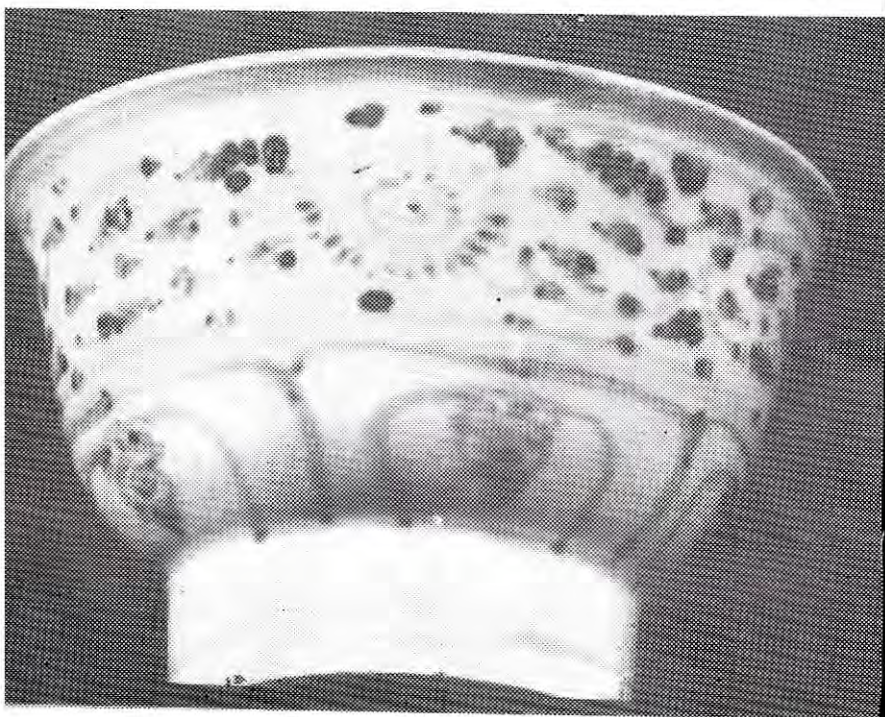


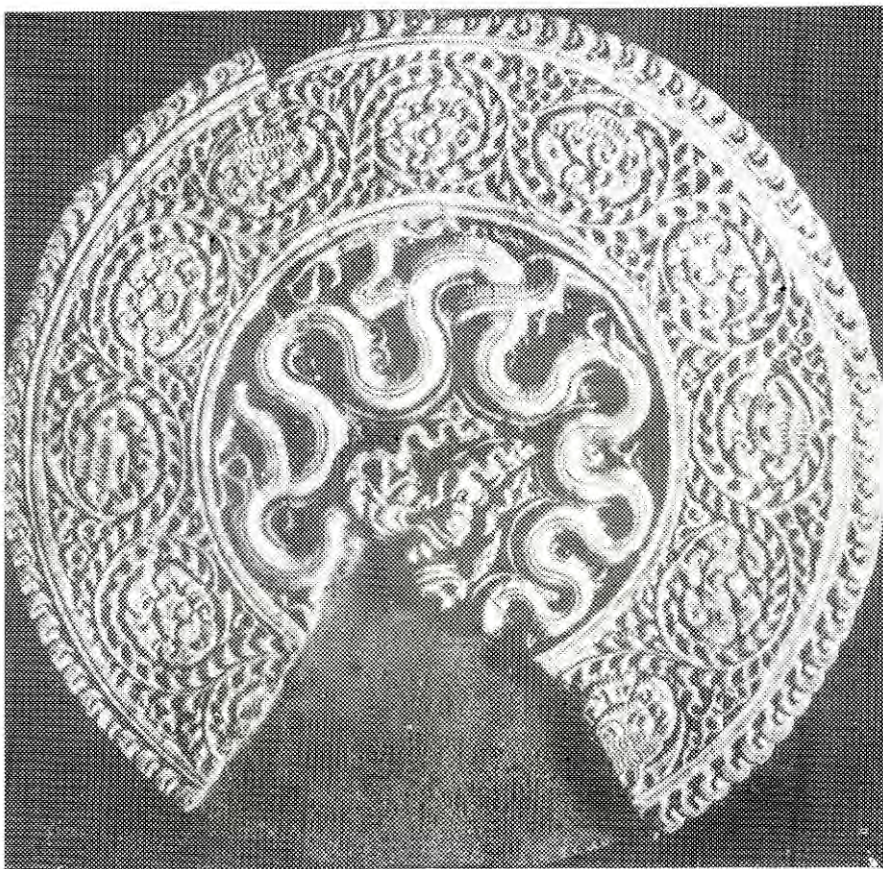
The camp of candidate scholars (Truong Thi).

The Temple of Literature (Van Mieu).

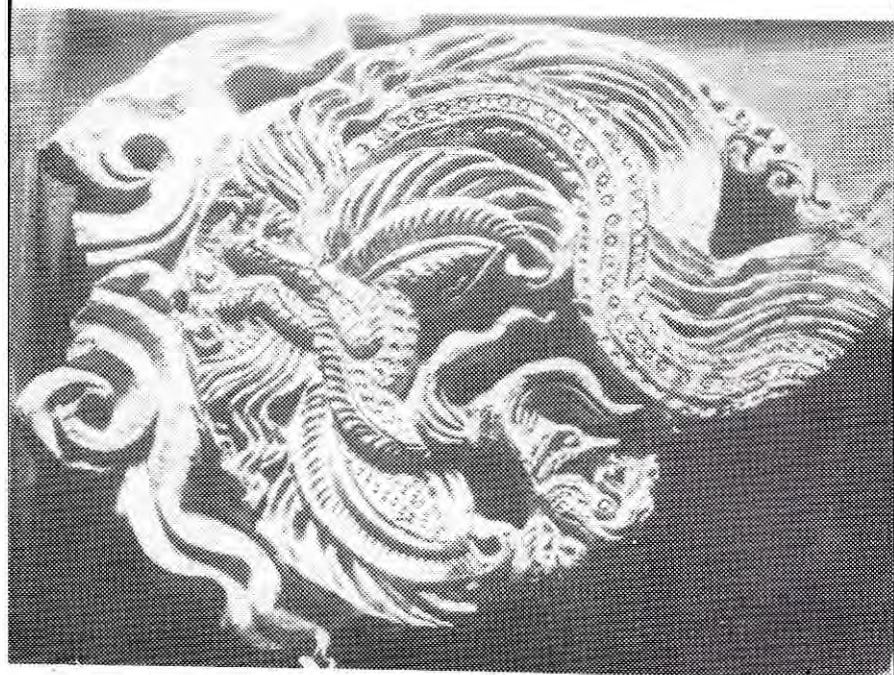


China bowl: white enamel, cobalt decoration (15th-16th century).





Enameled ceramic with vermiform dragon (11th-12th century).



Terra-cotta ornament (11th-12th century).

APPENDICES

ROYAL EDICT ON THE TRANSFER OF THE CAPITAL

(Thiên đô chiếu)

King Ly Thai To, founder of the Ly Dynasty (1009-1225), felt that the ancient capital of Hoa Lu in the mountainous regions of Ninh Binh was too isolated, and in 1010 he decided to transfer it to Dai La (where Hanoi now stands). Dai La was later named Thang Long (Soaring Dragon) because the king imagined he saw a golden dragon rise from the town and fly into the sky.

Before transferring the capital Ly Thai To asked the advice of the mandarins.

(The writer of the text is unknown).

A long time ago the Thuong Dynasty¹ up to the reign of Ban Canh changed the side of its capital five times, and the Chu Dynasty¹ up to the reign of Thanh Vuong changed three times.

Was changing their capital sheer unjustifiable whimsicality on the part of the Three Dynasties²?

No, they were simply looking for a suitable site on which to put up great buildings which would last for ten thousand generations to come.

1. *Thuong, Chu*: Chinese dynasties. *Thuong* (Shang): 16th to the 11th century B.C. *Chu*: (Chou) 11th to 3rd century B.C.

2. *Three Chinese Dynasties*: Hsia (21st to 16th century B.C.), Shang and Chou.

They bowed to the will of Heaven and gratified the desires of the people, changing their capital every time they judged it necessary, in this way ensuring the country's future, its wealth and prosperity.

The two dynasties of the Dinh³ and the Le⁴, however, followed not the example of the Chu but only the dictates of pleasure, ignoring the will of Heaven. They stubbornly remained in this place.⁵ Their dynasties were short-lived, their fate tenuous. The one hundred families⁶ were ruined while the millions of resources remained scarcely utilized. This causes the great suffering and I feel obliged to transfer the capital. Even more so because Dai La, the ancient capital of His Highness Cao⁷, is situated in the heart of our country. It has topographical features resembling a coiled dragon or a crouching tiger. The capital is laid out on a North — South East — West axis, and is favourably situated with regard to the mountains and rivers.

The site is large and flat, the fields high and well enough exposed. The population is protected against high water and floods. Everything there flourishes and prospers. It is a most beautiful site, where men and riches from the four points of the compass converge, and it is an excellent capital for royal dynasty of ten thousand generations. I wish therefore to take advantage of this favourable terrain and establish the capital there.

What do you think, mandarins of the Court ?

3. *Dinh Dynasty* : 968 — 980.

4. *Le Dynasty* (preceded the *Ly Dynasty*) : 980 — 1009.

5. *Hoa Lu* : today in Gia Vien District, Ninh Binh province.

6. *The hundred families* : the people.

7. *Cao Bien* (Kao Pien), proconsul of the Chinese Tang Dynasty, who built the Dai La citadel (c. 866) traces of which can still be seen in the outskirts of Hanoi.

GIAO CHI, ANCIENT VIET NAM¹

... Pham Thach Ho writes in his *Que hai ngu hanh chi*² "Present-day An Nam borders on the Cuu Chan and Nhat Nam districts under the Tang dynasty³. To the east it borders on the sea, and to the south on the kingdom of Champa. If one goes eastwards by sea one comes to the Kham and Liem districts⁴. If one goes westwards one finds the barbarous tribes. The Ung district⁵ is in the northwest of An Nam, which is not far from the mountain

1. These are excerpts from a book entitled *Wen Xian Tung Kao* (General Research on Doctrines and Institutions) by Ma Duan-lin, a writer of the Yuan Dynasty (13-14th century), dealing with the documents and institutions of China under various dynasties, especially the Song dynasty. The book consists of 348 juans (volumes). Part of it has been translated into French by Hervey Saint-Denys and published in a book entitled *Ethnography of peoples outside China*, Geneva, 1876-1883.

2. *Gui Hai We Xing Zhi* (Geographical description of a country called Gui Hai), a book written by Fan Sheng-da of the Song dynasty, a monograph on Guang Xi (completed towards 1160)

3. Cuu Chan was the name of Thanh Hoa and Nghe An provinces under the Han dynasty. Under the same dynasty, the part of the country which stretches from the Ngang Pass, (Ha Tinh) to the southern border was called Nhat Nam. Under the Tang dynasty, present-day Thanh Hoa was called Chau Ai and present-day Nghe An, Chau Hoan.

4. Chau Kham (Qin Zhou) and Chau Liem (Lin Zhou) are two coastal districts of Guan Dong province (China), bordering on the North East of Viet Nam.

5. Ung district (Young Zhou) was in Guang xi, the centre of which being the Nam Ning — Gui lin area.

village of Thai Binh, in Ta Giang⁶. It takes four days' walk to reach Quang Lang Hoa Bo⁷ from there after crossing the Phu Luong and Bach Dang rivers. And it takes six days' walk if one goes in a south-east direction, crossing the small river Dan Dai La which comes from Lang Chau. It is a long way from there to the mountain village of On Nhuan in Huu Giang⁸. It takes one day to get there from the Kham district by sea. Under the present (Song) dynasty it is a separate state. It has been controlled by a succession of dynasties, namely the Dinh, the Le, the Ly (...)

... Official correspondence sent from this state to the authorities of Quang Xi and of the Ung district is placed between two black lacquered wooden slats and tied to another plank with engraved characters. This is called a *moc giap van thu*.

... Return mail from the border district is sent in the same way. The case used by the Governor of Gui Lin until the time of the Hi Ninh and Nguyen Huu, to hold documents sent by the Giao Chi people, looked like the one used nowadays. One can read the words *Nam Viet Quoc An* on the stamp. Not until recently were they changed to *Trung thu mon ha chi an* (Seal of the very humble Minister of the Interior).

... The heads of that state proclaim themselves *Vuong*. Members of the royal family are called *Thien vuong ban*; the common people are called *Thua tu* or *chi tu*. In their court there are also man-

6. Ta giang and Huu giang, two tributaries of the Tay Giang (Xi giang), flowing from the Viet Nam border through Quang xi province.

7. Quang Lang, a border district in northern Viet Nam, now called On district, present-day Cao Lang province.

8. Hy Ninh (Xi ning), name of one of the Song kings (1968-1077) Nguyen Huu (Yuan you), name of one of the Song Kings (1086-1903).

darins responsible for civilian and military affairs (noi chuc and ngoai chuc). Noi chuc mandarins are responsible for civilian affairs and include the prime minister, the ministers, the minister in charge of the royal residence, and the chiefs of section. Ngoai chuc mandarins are responsible for military affairs and include army commanders at central and provincial levels.

One can become a mandarin through examinations, by inheritance or by paying a certain sum of money. The most noble way to become a mandarin is through examinations. Children of singers, songstresses, slaves and servants are not allowed to sit for examinations. He who buys a position can only become a *lai* (clerk) to start with. With more money he can be appointed *lang*, a mandarin of low degree. He can be gradually promoted to the ranks of a district chief. Mandarins receive no salary. They are only given the right to control the people of a certain locality who are forced to till the land and catch fish for them.

Military units (*quan*) are organized into wings — the "right wing" and the "left wing". Each unit consists of 200 men. Every man has three characters *Thien tu quan* (Soldier of the Son of Heaven) tattooed on his forehead. There are other units which are well equipped and used as special guards. The soldiers serve for a month at a time. In their leisure time they till the land, are engaged in handicrafts for their own use. On the seventh day of the lunar year every soldier receives 300 coins, a length of crude silk, a length of cloth and a cotton-padded blanket. Every month a soldier receives ten sheaves of paddy. On the first days of the lunar year troops are given copious meals, at which, in years of bumper crops, fish is served. In a country which relies mainly on ricegrowing, nothing is more precious than a bumper crop. On the 4th day of the 1st month,

the king orders many oxen to be slaughtered and entertains his dignitaries and mandarins to a banquet.

The 5th day of the seventh month is a great festive day on which gifts are exchanged. The mandarins present the King with slaves. The next day, in his turn, the King offers a banquet in their honour. The King lives in a four-storeyed palace. The 4th storey is reserved for the king; the second storey for the *ngu tru* (eunuchs); the third storey for the guards; the first for officers and soldiers.

They also build the Water Palace and the Heaven Temple. Their names are borrowed from our country. At the entrance of the royal palace there is a pavilion with a signboard bearing the words *An nam do ho phu* (Office of the Governor of An Nam). The storeys are painted red and on the columns there are drawings of dragons, cranes and goddesses.

The Giao Chi people wear their hair curled up into chignons; they go bare-foot, irrespective of their walks of life. So does the king, except on festive days when he wears gold necklaces, a yellow robe and crimson trousers, which distinguishes him from the common people. Women wear sarongs turned four times round the waist and black coats without belts. Men wear trousers under their tunics. As ornaments, they also wear iron or silver necklaces, and hide slippers. In their hands they hold crane-feather fans and on their heads conical hats. The sole of the slipper is a piece of hide; a little stem is planted on the fore-part of the sole. When walking one has only to put the stem between the big toe and the next toe. The fan made of crane feathers is used to scare away snakes. The hat is made of bamboo sticks joined together by thread. It has the shape of a shell and looks very beautiful.

Women have a white complexion which distinguished them from men. They wear high-collared

blue coats with broad sleeves, their skirts are black. The king uses carts drawn by men. Mandarins travel in palankeens made of linen, carried by two men by means of bamboo poles.

The cult of ancestors is not practised on Tet holiday. Medicines are not used against illnesses. At night there are no lamps. On the third day of the third month (huong ty) young men and young girls gather in two lines. While singing the young men throw balls made of many-coloured cotton to the girls. When a girl catches the ball thrown by a young man, their marriage is decided.

Outside the King's palace, near the gate, there is a pavilion where a big bell is hung. Any person victim of injustice can come and strike the bell when he wants to lodge a complaint. Convicts with death sentences are handed over to their enemies for execution, Thieves and pirates have their fore-fingers and fore-toes cut off. Those who leave their home land for a foreign country are considered as traitors, and when their corpses are brought home they are slashed.

The natural resources consist of crude gold and silver, copper, cinnabar, tortoise shell, ivory, rhinoceros horn, kingfisher feathers, mother-of-pearl, spices, salt, lacquer, kapok, etc. They also have oranges, mandarins, medicinal lemons, areca nuts and betel. In the old Tan Dang district, beyond a small river, people produce spices. Tan Chau, which belonged to Chan Lap state, has been invaded by the Giao Chi people. The people here can make neither paper nor pens, and have to import these articles from China. They can read and understand books and writings a little.

Excerpts from
Wen Xian Tung Kao by Ma
Duan lin
(330th juan, chapter 4, paragraph 7)

SPRING IN THE ROYAL CITY

NGUYEN GIAN THANH

Composed in 1508

The universe was created,
And the royal city was built.
Here gather mandarins in gorgeous dress,
Court music resound,
Culture and honour blossom.
The sky is filled with spring air, the whole universe
gleams,
Like a solid pillar amidst the affluent nation stands
the capital.
Since ancient times
We have been at the heart of the land.
At the summit of the country,
To the Southwest Tan mountain raises its peak to
the roar of wild beasts,
To the Northeast, the dragon frolicks in the waters
of the Red River.
For a thousand miles stretch the hills and waters
making ours a key position.
The four seasons are as many springs, when each
one's flowers shine in all their brightness.
Everywhere proud edifices
And wondrous spots,
Nine-walled palaces of jade

Brightened by thousands of brocade robes
Everywhere, markets among the houses, like an
immense fresco.
No end of busy quarters, where purple jostles
vermilion.
Inside cavernous, austere palaces.
Golden doors bar the way.
Weeping willows waft like clouds,
Peaches in royal gardens redden like the cheeks of
pretty girls.
The sound of flutes springing from a palace makes
the moonlight tremble,
The drums in watch-towers urge the flowers to
open.
The markets are more and more animated,
The streets rival one another in beauty,
Young men tuck up their tunics and play-
shuttlecock,
Blushing lasses arrange their breast-covers and
trousers,
Noblemen on horseback admire flowers along the
avenues,
Young people ride in carriages with open parasols,
displaying their nobility
What joy to be in an era of peace!
Tributes from every corner pour in,
The palace brightens up in spring
Men can now look forward to happy longevity,
From distant provinces carriages bring the people's
homage
To a throne as unshakable as the Thai Son mountain.
The nation, firmly installed on golden ground

Like the royal city, is blessed with abundance.
And indeed it is
A rich, wonderful royal city
Where spring shines in all its beauty
Can one dissociate spring colours from the splendour
of the capital ?
From the four points of the compass everything
converges on the heart of the land.
Every corner is a capital in miniature
However it is the city which makes the beautiful
spring.
It is better to rely on human virtues than on advantages of terrain.
Many a country has built their power on citadels,
Let us rather make justice and humanity our
fortresses,
So that generation after generation, spring after
spring, our children may hand down our fine traditions for ten thousand years.

EXCERPTS FROM MISCELLANY OF THINGS SEEN AND HEARD

Kieu van Tieu luc

by LE QUY DON (written in 1777)

Our sacrificial mounds, subject to regulations under and since the reign of Hong Duc (15th century)), comprise :

The *Nam Giao* (for sacrifices to Heaven and Earth). There one finds : the *Chieu su* (Pavilion of sacrifices) which consists of 3 bays flanked by 2 wings. To the east and west of the mound are 2 rows of buildings each with one bay and 2 wings, then 2 other rows with 7 bays each, the portico in front of the Pavilion of Sacrifices consists of 3 bays ; the Cloak-pavilion and the Fast pavilion for the king, one bay and 2 wings each ; the kitchen, 3 bays ; the fast-house for mandarins, 1 bay ; the storehouse for objects of worship, 3 bays ; the 1st main portico, 3 bays, one bay each in the left-hand and right-hand porticos ; and finally the two external porticos with 3 bays each ; and a wall surrounding the four sides of the mound.

The *Xa Tac* (for sacrifices to guardian genii of the country) has an esplanade ; an interior portico with 3 bays ; a small porch with 2 bays ; an earth wall surrounding the mound on all 4 sides ; cloak pavilion with 1 bay and 4 wings ; a guest-house with 5 bays and 4 wings ; a store house for objects of worship with 3 bays ; a kitchen with 3 bays ; an outside porch with 3 bays and an earthen wall surrounding the mound on all 4 sides.

The *Phong Van* (for sacrifices to the Wind and Clouds) has an esplanade ; a pavilion for sacrifices

with 3 bays and 2 wings; an internal portico with one bay; a guest-house with 3 rows of single bays and 2 wings each; a store-house for objects of worship; a kitchen with 3 bays each; an outside portico with one bay; and an earthen wall surrounding the mound on all 4 sides.

The *Tien Nong* (for sacrifices to the genius of Agriculture) A 7-*thuoc* wide and 36-*thuoc* long esplanade, with an earthen wall surrounding the mound on 4 sides; and a gate for horsemen.

The *Tich Dien* (for sacrifices on the occasion of the ceremony of the First Furrow of the Year) has a pavilion for sacrifices of 5 bays: a kitchen with 3 bays; and a 5-*thuoc* high-plaform¹ in the middle whose circumference is 10 *thuoc*.

*

* *

In the *Van Mieu* (Temple of Literature) the portico of the larger courtyard has 3 bays and 2 wings covered with bronze tiles; 2 rows of 7 bays each in the east and west; behind the temple there is a small one-bay portico; the cloak-pavilion has 3 bays and 2 wings; the kitchen has 2 bays; a store house for objects of worship with 3 bays and 2 wings; Thai Hoa (great knowledge) portico has 3 bays separated by walls and covered with bronze tiles. The stela houses on the eastern side and western side of the temple have 12 bays each; the ware-house where woodcuts for book-printing are kept, has 4 bays; the outside portico has 1 bay; and an earth wall surrounds the temple; the gate for horsemen has 3 bays; the Minh Luan pavilion (Pure Morals) has 3 bays and two wings; and on the right and left are small porticos with 1 bay each and side

1. Reserved for distinguished guests.

walls; the school rooms have two rows of 14 bays each, and are in the East and the West, and include 3 bays to the east of Minh Luan; studies for the 3-degree scholars (Tam Xa) are in 3 rows in the East and 3 rows in the West, with 25 bays in each row and 2 students in each bay.

There were eight temples in the capital dedicated to the higher genii and they included temples dedicated to Bach Ma (White horse) genius; Do Dai guardian genius, Bo Cai (people's father and mother) genius, and Son Minh genius. These temples were laid out in the form of the character 1 with 3 bays and 2 wings in the front and back buildings, 2 bays for the corridor linking them together, 3 bays for the kitchen and 1 bay for the portico of honour. The temples dedicated to the Chan Tuoc genius and to the "soul" of Marshal Ly also had the shape of the character 1, but have no kitchen, and are surrounded by a wall. The temple dedicated to the old guardian genii of the communes has an esplanade.

... The buildings which housed public offices were regulated under the reign of Hong Duc, and were as follows:

— *Protocol Office, Office of Institutions, Police Office, Palace Office, Treasury*: 1 row of 3 bays and 2 wings, 1 portico of honour with one bay for each office.

— *Ministry of the Interior* — The Interior Service had 1 row of 5 bays with a guard door at the back; the portico of honour had 1 bay; the registers of the Personnel Service had a row of 7 bays; and the Exterior Service a row of 3 bays and 2 wings. The court-room had 1 bay, its portico 3 bays; and there was a wall surrounding the whole building.

— *Ministry of Finance*: also laid out like the character 1. These were 3 bays and 2 wings in the front row, and the same in the back row, 3 bays for the corridor, one for the audience-room, a row of

7 bays for the store-house for taxes paid in kind, 3 bays and 2 wings for the registry; 2 rows each of 17 bays, on the right and the left a portico of 3 bays; and a wall surrounding the whole.

— *Ministry of Public Works* — Also laid out like the character I: there were 3 bays and 2 wings in the front and back buildings; 3 bays for the corridor; an audience-room of 1 bay; a registry composed of a row of 12 bays; a portico of 3 bays; and an enclosing wall.

— *Ministry of Justice* — Its lay-out was also in the form of the character I: 5 bays and 2 wings for the front and back buildings and 3 for the corridor. The audience room had 1 bay; offices for the 5 services were in 5 rows of 3 bays and 2 wings each; the portico had 2 bays; and there was an enclosing wall.

— *Eastern Palace* — Also built in the character I; Front and back buildings: 3 bays and 2 wings each; corridor: 3 bays; gallery between two walls: 9 bays.

— *Academy* — Laid out like the character I. Front and back buildings: 3 bays and 2 wings each; corridor: 3 bays, galleries: 2 rows on the right and the left of 5 bays each, portico: 1 bay with 2 lateral walls.

— *Palace of Censors* — Composed of an audience room of 5 bays and 2 wings; temporary detention centre of the service of criminal affairs with 3 bays, criminal court for the 12 provinces composed of 7 rows of 5 bays each; a portico with 3 bays; and rectangular enclosing wall.

— *Palace of the Six Institutes* — Offices: 3 rows of 8 bays each; Institute of the Interior, Institute of Works, Institute of Tax; Institute of History: 2 bays each; Institute of Military Art: 6 bays; Institute of Finances: 3 bays; Institute of Rites: 2 bays; Registry: 8 bays; portico: 1 bay.

— *Palace of External Relations* — Audience room: 1 bay and 2 wings; portico of honour: 1 bay; rectangular enclosing wall.

— *Supreme Court* — Audience room: row of 3 bays and 2 wings; large room: 3 bays and 2 wings; portico: 4 bays; rectangular enclosing wall.

— *Hong Lo Institute* — Audience room: 3 bays and 2 wings; guest room: 1 bay and 2 wings; portico 1 bay; rectangular enclosing wall.

— *Observation* — Interior pavilion: 1 bay and 2 wings; exterior pavilion: 1 bay and 2 wings; internal observation room: 3 bays and 2 wings; external observation room: 2 bays and 2 wings; outbuildings; 9 rows of 3 bays and 2 wings each, internal portico: 1 bay; external portico: 1 bay, double enclosure on four sides; sun-dial pavilion 8 *thuoc* high and 4 *thuoc* wide, built in accordance with the regulations of the five palaces. Another sun-dial pavilion belonging to the Ministry of Public Works is beyond the Nam Huan gate.

— *Medical Institute*: Conference hall: 3 bays; portico: 1 bay; Dispensary and offices: 3 bays and 2 wings; portico: 1 bay.

— *Embassy of China* — Laid out in the form of the character I; Front and back buildings: 3 bays and 2 wings each; corridor: 3 bays; right-hand and left-hand galleries: 2 rows of 7 bays and 2 wings each; back gallery: 5 bays and 2 wings; portico: 3 bays. rectangular enclosing wall.

— *Palace of the Throne* — Row of buildings of 1 bay and 2 wings.

— *Meeting Hall* — Laid out in the form of the character I. Front and back buildings: 3 bays and 2 wings each; corridor: 3 bays; right-hand and left-hand galleries: 2 rows of 9 bays each; portico: 3 bays; rectangular enclosing wall.

IN PRAISE OF THE WEST LAKE
(*Tung Tay Ho Phu*)

NGUYEN HUY LUONG
(18th century)

Nguyen Huu Long was a native of Phu Thi village (now part of Gia Lam district in the suburbs of Hanoi and was awarded the huong cong (bachelor of arts) degree under the Le dynasty. He served the king put on the throne by the Tay Son and was given the title of Chuong Linh Hau (Marquess of Chuong Linh).

This Phu¹ was composed in 1802, on the occasion of a ceremony conducted by Nguyen Quang Toan, the Tay Son king, on the shore of the West Lake north of capital city. It sings both of the beauty of the landscape and of the Tay Son king who has restored peace and prosperity in the country after defeating the Tsing aggressors and putting an end to internal strife.

What a wonderful spot the West Lake is!
There used to be a rocky mound here
In the days when the land was divided into nine
zones,

1. Text in rhythmic prose.

And under it the White Fox had its lair before the
Dragon king created an immense lake²
The Golden Buffalo's³ arrival on the spot turned it
into an abyss, made still deeper, by Lord Cao's⁴
attempts to destroy the life force of a would-be
capital.
The lake was first called Dam Dam, then Lang Bac⁵
The landscape evoked a starry beach or a crystal
basin,
The blue waters seem to have sprung from the
Sapphire Grotto.
The crescent-shaped lake looks like a fragment of
the Milky Way.
Over more than one thousand *mau*⁶ water and sky
mix and merge.
On the shores seasons display their different blossoms
and verdure in succession.

2. According to a legend, there was a mountain on the present site of the West Lake where a White Fox, a nine-tail devil, lived. The Dragon King led the aquatic animals in a violent attack on the area unleashing high waves. The White Fox was captured, and the mountain collapsed, leaving a deep lake.

3. Golden Buffalo: according to another legend, as recompense for curing the Sung crown prince of a deadly disease Khong Minh (Nguyen Chi Thanh) was allowed to take as much as he could carry from the imperial treasure. He carried away to Viet Nam all the bronze objects in his magic conical hat. He melted down the metal and cast a bell whose sound could be heard as far away as in China. When the Golden Buffalo there heard it he thought that it was its mother calling, and rushed towards Viet Nam, where it hollowed out the West Lake by its trampling.

4. Cao Pien, proconsul of the Chinese Sung court in the 9th century. He was a geomancer and he carried out excavations in order to sever the life-giving breath at places where the terrain might be the birth place of a royal dynasty in Viet Nam, thinking that in this way he could perpetuate Chinese domination.

5. Dam Dam: Lake of the Rains. Lang Bac troubled-water Pool.

6. 1 mau = 3,600 sq. m.

A promontory juts out like a phoenix' beak — a
platform where the moon landed, say some,
Not even a dragon could drink up all its waters.
An amphora always filled with milk, say many.
Here a stone tower sheltering fairies' treasures,
There a hillock concealing some talisman ⁷.
In the temple dedicated to young Muc, a flame and
incense burn day and night in commemoration of
the miraculous net which captured the tiger ⁸
The Tran Vu temple stands firm as a rock, in sun
and rain, the sacred sword raised over the Tortoise
of the North ⁹,
The roofs of the Thien Nien temple rise tier upon
tier by a landing — stage.
Beyond the woods, the waters of the Van Bao rapids
gurgles.
Fragrant waves lap around the Golden Lotus,
The Tran Quoc pagoda is pervaded by Buddha's
serenity.
The breeze gently stirs the blue shadows of ancient
trees,
The grounds of Phung Thien ¹⁰ offer cool air and
the pleasures of bathing,
The temple of King Bo Cai ¹¹ is covered with moss,
The pagoda of princess Ba Danh ¹² is wrapped in a
curtain of flowers.

7. Literally talisman of the Chinese.

8. A tiger attacked King Ly Anh Tong as he was boating on the lake. A young fisherman Muc netted the wild beast, which was no other than a creature into which an intriguing magician had transformed himself.

9. The god Tran Vu held the evil spirits of the North, the tortoise and the snake, in check.

10. Grounds reserved for examinations in the Phung Thien district (Ha Noi)

11. Phung Hung, hero of the 8th century struggle for national liberation.

12. A princess of the Ly dynasty.

The Mount of Buddha seems to rise there, as jays
chirp in their nests in the village.
There must be a fairy grotto here somewhere, as a
few cocks crow at a farm
Thick smoke spiral up from the Thach Khoi lime
kilns
At the Nhat Thien rapids, the waves roll and rumble,
The sails of merchant junks floating off the Duoi
Nheo sand-bank look like butterfly wings.
The Great Bonze tower stands alone on the Co Ngua
Lake promontory, with its curved, portal ajar.
In Yen Thai village, the nocturnal mist trembles
with the pounding of pestle
The fishing nets near Nghi Tam village get in the
way of the winding current
On the opposite shore the willows wave their green
silk threads and the orioles flutter like shuttles,
teasing brocade women weavers of the two corpora-
tions¹³
Round green lotus leaves stretch over the surface,
glowworms eye the brightness of kilns at the five
villages with envy.
The zither of cicadas vibrates before the Reading
Tower.
The rattling of moor-hens is heard near the Prayer
Hall.
The wind blows past the Chau Long hillock, and a
watch drum resounds on the shore of the Truc lake,
As the moon appears over the Kneeling Elephant
rise, linen is heard being rythmically struck against
washing stones by the To river.
The walker contemplates the landscape feeling a
vague sadness,
In the calm one's heart fills with emotion
Wearing a palm-leaf coat like Ninh, a buffalo-herd

13. Tich Sai and Bai An silk-weaving corporations (under the Le).

grazes his cattle, singing the Song of Green
Prairies ¹⁴
The Thuong Luong River ¹⁵ tune rises from a bam-
boo craft rocking in the wind and the woodcutter
walks in time with it just like Chu ¹⁶
Anyone can enjoy retirement and choose a trace,
When seeking pleasure, one has any of the four
instruments at one's disposal
On the Khan Son ¹⁷ hillock, no sooner has the chess
game ended when the moon appears to inspire the
poet,
At the Vong Thi village ¹⁸ the merry-making and
drinking are in full swing when dusk comes to draw
melancholy notes from the guitar
Foreign traders throng the West Market,
Folk as simple as in the days of Hy Emperor ¹⁹ snore
in their sleep at the North gate,
Women wash late in the night in the river and col-
lect in their palms the silvery image of the moon.
In the gardens, young girls go picking flowers at
day-break and drop full baskets which scent their
feet.
Near the city, the landscape still presents the charms
of clouds ²⁰ and mist, the moon and the wind sow
their treasures in the village streets,
A light breeze from the Red River cools bamboo
groves and blossoming bushes.

14. Children's song at the end of the Eastern Han dynasty Minh Thich (Chien quoc period), a buffalo-herd who became a mandarin.

15. Fisherman's song in So country.

16. Chu Ma Than : a scholar of the Han dynasty who made a living by gathering firewood before he became a mandarin.

17. Traces of it are still found in Hanoi Botanical Garden.

18. Renowned for its distilling (distilleries).

19. Emperor during the Chinese Golden Age.

20. Charms of retired life.

From the top of the Three-peak hill the moon
spreads a silvery light on the waves which the
egrets and the fish vie with each other to catch.
The lake abounds in picturesque old monuments,
vestiges of many peaceful and prosperous reigns.
In the reign of Hung Khanh²¹ the "Fish Contem-
plation" tower erected amidst blossoming trees ;
In the reign of Kien Phu²² the dykes rising higher
than the waves carried convoys of elephants,
In the Tran period²³ carriages and horses thronged
the roads,
The Le dynasty²⁴ saw even more parasols and cano-
pies on the thoroughfares.
The eight poems singing the splendour of the lake
in such a pure manner still run through one's mind.
And stanzas on the beauty of moonlit nights during
open-hearted conversations.
The stones are still engraved with poems exchanged,
And the waves seem to raise to your lips the cups
of wine drunk in the company of friends.

*
* *

In the years when the dust of internal wars²⁵ was
rising, not even water three metres deep could pre-
serve the purity of the lake.
This spot is marked by the vicissitudes of history :
devastations and ruins for six autumns !

21. Reign of Tran Duc Tong.

22. Ly Thai Tong.

23. Tran dynasty (1225-1400)

24. Later Le dynasty.

25. Rivalries between Dang Thi Hue, Lord Trinh's favour-
ite, and his eldest son, Trinh Khai.

Trees and stones were battered by the wind, swept
away by the rains!
Flowers and birds had their hues tarnished by the
mist and the clouds;
The pure water of the lake was polluted by swarms
of tadpoles,
Cobwebs hanging all around darkened the interior
of pagodas,
Incense sticks stood half-burnt in old temples.
In distant hamlets, smoking lamps flickered,
The currents vanished into the sands in the middle
of the lake, the morning wind tormented the towers
where birds were nesting.
The lotus all sought refuge in the land of Buddha²⁶
the moon no longer shone over the beaches with
their scintillating fish,
The moor-hen was writhed, lamenting
The bullfrog croaked tirelessly lost peace — who
knows whether in the public interest or for its own
sake²⁷
Under the clouds ploughmen dreamt of a rainbow
heralding the rains and commiserated with the lesser
buffalo-herds on the fate of the dynasty,
Fishermen forgot the fish and discussed the nation's
affairs with woodcutters in the moonlight.
Flies buzzed everywhere in the hamlets,
Mussels and egrets appear in the rapids.
Chess players gave up their games; lovers of lakes
and flowers no longer seneraded the moon with
their guitars,
The landscape no longer invited drinking, indiffer-
ent to the charms of autumn, the poet in his tower
let his pen lie idle.

26. By the end of Le Hien Tong's reign, the lotus had disappeared from the West Lake.

27. Emperor Hue De of the Tsin asked his courtiers: "Does a frog's croaking express its concern about public or private affairs?"

Charm and delicacy in pleasures seemed to have
disappeared,
Good writing vanished.
Under the bridge where horses passed, the river
continued its endless journey,
A fortress studded with stones now stood at the site
of the former landing-stage where one used to wait
for the boats,
Over the old palace where a broken phoenix
mirror²⁸ hung a half-moon appears.
Behind the ancient pagoda warriors' corpses wrapped
in horse skin lay buried under the grass.
So many upheavals, and where now are the men of
yester year?
Everywhere nothing but desolation.
In prosperity, nature endeavours to please man, in
adversity, she shares his sufferings,
In peace time man appreciates beautiful landscapes,
pure water bright moon light cannot leave him
unmoved.



The moon waxes then wanes,
The waves flow and ebb.
The year Mau Than²⁹ saw propitious clouds shine
with great brightness,
Hills and rivers³⁰ rejoice over the fruits of victory.
In the year Canh Tuat³¹, a beneficial rain impreg-
nated grass and plants.

28. Lovers' mirror : evocation of deserted harems.

29. Where Nguyen Hue proclaimed himself King under the name of Quang Trung.

30. The fatherland.

31. End of the pacification of the country by Nguyen Hue.

The sources of humanity and virtue are inexhaust-
ible,
Ancient citadels are restored in peace and tranquil-
lity and restore the nation's might,
Piled up stones and pillars reinforce the damaged
dykes,
This place may appear small beside vast cities con-
centrating honours and riches,
But among the famed spots whose rivers and moun-
tains attract men of great hearts and minds, this
one is unequalled.
For many autumns it has been part of the universal
scenery in the shade of green parasols.
A thousand miles away from the purple throne³⁶, it
helps beautify peaceful frontiers,
Picturesque charms are displayed before our eyes,
And yet its beauty must be further enhanced.

*
* *

Let us rejoice
That Heaven favours the legitimate dynasty³⁷,
Making the country great again.
Man equals the Creator with his action.
Heaven and earth breathe and bring peace and
prosperity into being.
The royal capital standing in Long Bien³⁸ attracts
all eyes, like the pole-star.
The North land³⁹ near the Golden Buffalo landing-
stage settles more firmly and the West Lake once
again displays its great beauty,
Glow-worms hover over withered grass.

36. of the Emperor.

37. The Tay Son.

38. Present Hanoi.

39. The North of the country.

Propitious clouds are already chasing the Pleiad⁴⁰
The moon reveals the approach of the 5th month,
Climatic variations explain the round of seasons.
Things appear and disappear, warmth returns after
cold,
According to the law of compensation, fullness
follows emptiness.
When warmth begins to spring from the depths of
the earth again, all beings in Creation are gratified,
When across Heaven's heights the stars follow their
normal course, the four seasons follow one
another regularly.
The fragrance of incense from the altars to Heaven⁴¹
perfume the air,
The aroma of sacrificial wine penetrates the dark
world of the dead.
Five-coloured clouds line up along two rows of jade
and silk, the grass and the plants sing the
blessings of the Thang and Vu⁴² reigns
Melodious tunes rise from the throne, the birds and
all other animal dance in praise of the virtues of
the Duong and Ngu Kings⁴³.
The flowers' fine colours match the flags,
The lances' three ribbons are reflected in the water.
Sweet music accompanies the wholesome wind from
the South, and the waves also bow five times to
the throne,
In the blazing midday sun, the flutes echo and the
farthest mountains flatten in homage to the King.
Seldom have such rites been seen.
The beauty of this spot has had no equal for
centuries.
The sovereign among his subjects is like the dragon
among the clouds, like a fish in water. The royal

40. After the 4th lunar month.

41. Ceremony of Heaven worship.

42. Emperors during the Chinese Golden Age.

43. China.

favour, like the rain and the dew, waters the land
over which Uyen and Lo birds fly ⁴⁴,
Near and distant lands are subject to the same
sceptre, and the sovereign's generosity reaches
even woodcutters and vegetable growers.
Evil spirits vanish at the sight of the liberation flag,
A happy brightness spread by the flames in the
royal hearth,
Along the river bends people rebuild their houses,
like swallows returning to their nests.
By the ponds villagers sing of the free life of wild
geese.
Hymns to the glory of the reign evoke the peaceful
and prosperous Chu period ⁴⁵
Poems recall Emperor Nghieu's time when old folk
hummed songs on the roads,
People are happily engaged in farm work; every-
where the old sing and the young dance,
Plants, animals, men, all rejoice after the devils
and vicious foxes have disappeared.
This propitious time begins an era of great Peace.
Let this sovereign serve as a model for his vassals,
whenever he walks and jokes with them.
The divine lamp over the rapids, lighting the depths,
makes it possible to distinguish clean from
troubled currents ⁴⁶,
Near the temples, the drums which open the
flowers ⁴⁷ divide fragrant herbs from ill-smelling
grasses.
One can say whether the peasant is industrious or
idle by looking at the fields,

44. Mythological birds.

45. Literally: one seems to hear the poems of Dai Nha and Tien Nha (Ode Book) of the Chu singing the praises of a reign of peace and prosperity.

46. Good and bad people.

47. When Emperor Minh Hoang of the Tang ordered the drums to be beaten the flowers opened immediately.

Landscape reflects the purity or impurity of beings
and things.
In the lakes and royal palaces, watching frisking
fish and fluttering birds helps the sovereign decide
his policy towards the scholars.
Let the song of birds and the crowing of cocks in
humble villages tell him whether prosperity or
poverty prevails,
Let him look and listen to know the people's inner-
most feelings.
Order and peace in the nation are dependent on good
administration and the kings rightmindedness
The fields being worked ensure the people abundant
food, and the rats⁴⁸ find no refuge even in the
most out-of-the-way corners.
The dykes⁴⁹, when reinforced and planted with
willows can resist white ants' burrowing even
during the flood season⁵⁰.
All beauty is concentrated in this small area,
But peace will extend to the four seas.
As for me,
I am ashamed of my narrow-mindedness
And of my poor intelligence.
For over ten years I have held public office and
I have been living a modest life, content with my lot.
Now in my fifties, I blush at the thought of growing
old — like a mulberry field when daylight wanes.
Before the royal stand, standing among the phoe-
nixes, I contemplate the lake and humbly dedicate
this rustic poem to the king
When the sun illuminates the royal road,
I look to the green mountains and make a wish that
the present dynasty may last forever.

48. The bandits

49. The canals

50. Image praising the strength of the Tay Son dynasty.

THE GUITAR-PLAYER OF LONG THANH

NGUYEN DU
(19th century)

Long Thanh, or Thang Long, was the name of the old capital city of Hanoi where Nguyen Du lived in his younger years under the Le dynasty. The Le as well as the Trinh and Nguyen lordly families were overthrown by the great insurrection of the Tay Son who unified the country from north to south. Unfortunately the Tay Son were in turn defeated by the Nguyen who restored the former feudal order and established the capital in Hue, in the south, after having destroyed the Le palaces. Nguyen Du, compelled to serve the new dynasty against his will, left the old capital to live in Hue for long years.

She was a beauty of Long Thanh
Whose name I don't remember.
She was excellent at playing the guitar,
The whole town called her the guitar-player.
In the palace of former kings, she had played the
King's Praise,
One of the finest pieces ever heard in this world.
In my young days, on the shore of Lake Giam
I remember seeing her on a festive evening.

In her early twenties, the prime of youth,
Dressed in pink, radiant like a peach-flower,
Dreamy, candid and irresistibly charming.
The five tones danced in her fingers ¹
Like the breeze caressing a pine wood,
Like limpid cries of birds in the night,
Like peals of thunder striking at Tien Phuc stele,
Or, at times, like Trang Tich humming tunes of his
native soil ²

Plunged in ecstasy, everyone listened
To these tunes once reserved for king's palaces.
The Tay Son officers were there, enchanted
And carried away by the music through the night,
From all sides rewards poured down,
Money counted less than grass or dirt.
These men surpassed dukes and marquises by their
haughty looks

And outshone the capital's gilded youth.
The thirty-six tunes on her finger-board
Were valued as a priceless jewel in Trang An
Twenty years have passed since then
The Tay Son defeated, to the south I went,
And have not seen Long Thanh and its festivities.
This time in my honour, a feast is given by the
governor.

1. The five main tones of the Vietnamese musical scale.

2. Trang Tich, a native of the land of Viet, was serving the king of So, away from his country, when he fell ill. The king of So asked his courtiers, "Trang Tich was an ordinary man in his country; he is a mandarin here; does he still remember his own country?" Someone answered: "It is during illness that a man appears to think of his country or not. If he is home-sick, he will talk in his mother tongue. If not, he will speak the So language." The King then sent out an envoy who heard Trang Tich humming tunes of his native land.

Among singers and musicians of extreme youth
Alone, at the end of the stage, sits a grey-haired
woman,
Her complexion pale, her features withered and her
figure slender.
Carelessly dressed, with no make-up on her face,
Who would think she had once been the toast of the
town?
These new voices singing old tunes to my eyes
bring tears,
My heart is rent at each sound which fills my ears.
I think of how it was twenty years before
When I saw her at Lake Giam's shore.
The town, the ramparts and people have changed.
The sea is roaring where mulberries were verdant¹
The Tay Son's work has disappeared,
Alone a musician remains.
Years have gone by like a dream,
My tunic is wet with tears when I think of bygone
days,
I have come back from the south, my hair all white,
No wonder her beauty has withered.
With eyes wide-opened, I dream of the olden time
Face to face, alas, we do not recognise each other.

1. In the Far-East, frequent floods, typhoons and deposits of alluvial soil often turn rivers from their courses, inundate vast stretches of cultivated land or help form polders by the sea. The image of the sea flooding mulberry-fields or vice versa was used as a symbol of deep changes in history which man often witnessed powerlessly.

OLD HANOI EVOKED
BY A 19TH CENTURY POETESS

Her maiden name was Nguyen Thi Hinh, but she is commonly known as the "wife of the Thanh Quan district chief". For she married a scholar — Luu Nghi, who received the "bachelor of arts" degree at the triennial examination in 1821 and was subsequently made chief of the Thanh Xuan district.

No women in her time could take part in any examination or assume any official function. Cut off from public life, this talented woman recorded salient characteristics of her time in beautiful poems. Only six of her poems are known to us, and they are eight-line verses with seven feet in each line, in the Chinese Tang style. A poem in this form is much more concise than a sonnet. As a rule, each line will evoke a past historical event or contain a classical famous quotation. European readers might compare them to Horace's Latin odes or the more recent sonnets of Jose Maria de Heredia in which a whole period of ancient history is often evoked in a single line, as "the heavy tread of marching legions" or "an immense sea with fleeing galleys".

Of the six poems, which are exquisitely chiselled jewels of Vietnamese literature, the most frequently mentioned are: "Crossing the Hoanh Son Pass", a pass through the mountain range commonly known as the Annamite chain, between the Quang Binh and Ha Tinh provinces. "The Tran Quoc Pagoda", a pagoda situated on a promontory jutting out into the West Lake in Hanoi — and "Reminiscences of

old Thang Long City". A translation of and comments on the latter appear below.

*
* *

The capital of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, Hanoi was formerly called Thang Long — City of the Soaring Dragon. It was the royal capital under the Ly, Tran and Le dynasties. In the city archives there is a plan of the city in the Hong Duc period (1490) under the reign of Le Thanh Ton. The city was very large and had double ramparts: a stone wall running along the Red River and the To Lich river and bordered on two sides by a water-filled moat, like castles in medieval Europe. Inside were beautiful buildings — temples, pagodas, and palaces of the king and feudal lords... Samuel Baron visited Thang Long in 1863 and compared it to the biggest cities of Asia. The crowd which thronged the thoroughfares on market days, on the 1st and 15th days of the lunar month, was so dense that it could take half an hour to go about one hundred paces.

But Thang Long — for Europeans the capital of the East or Tonkin — also had its trials. It was destroyed twice in the space of fifty years, the first time in 1786 when, following an old quarrel between feudal lords, the last king of the Le dynasty, Le Chieu Thong, gave orders to burn down all palaces belonging to the Trinh lords, Vietnamese Shoguns who for two hundred years had been providing the Le Kings with military support. Five magnificent palaces and other buildings burned for several days and nights, until they were completely destroyed. Only blackened stones and ashes remained on the sites of century-old constructions which had been the admiration of foreign visitors.

The second destruction took place in 1820 — a vile act of revenge by king Minh Mang, son of Gia Long. He was the founder of the Nguyen dynasty and had crushed the Tay Son popular insurrection with the assistance of the Bishop of Adran and with arms, ammunition and military technicians provided by the the French bourgeoisie.

Frightened by the movement of Tonkin scholars and peasants in whose memories the Le Kings remained dear, Gia Long transferred the capital to Hue, 700 kilometres to the south. When he died in 1819, his son Minh Mang asked for investiture by his suzerain, the Emperor of China. The latter sent an envoy to Viet Nam who would go no further than Thang Long saying that, as far as he knew, this city was the only capital of Viet Nam. Minh Mang was forced to make the long journey to Thang Long to receive his title of King, but he took his revenge on the city by reducing it to the status of a simple province called Hanoi — the province on this side of the river. He either removed to Hue or destroyed on the spot all royal buildings: the Royal Palace, the temple to Royal Ancestors, the temple of Heaven, the mound for worship of Heaven and Earth, and many more.

Our poetess was probably born in the first decade of the 19th century at Nghi Tam village, Hoan Long district, now a suburb of Hanoi. She must have witnessed the second destruction when the city was shorn of all that remained of old monuments and art treasures. Later, her father, her husband and she herself — as scholars who still felt great attachment to the Le dynasty — were often the targets of Ming Mang's reprimands. That is why her poem "Reminiscences of old Thang Long City" expresses not only her nostalgia of the past, but also a hardly

veiled reprobation of the vandal king who had retired to Hue, away from popular discontent.

*
* *
*

The first line is a reproach to the creator, not to the King, as any complaint against the sovereign would be a capital offence.

"Why has the Creator paraded so many varied scenes across the stage of life."

The second line fixes the time when the poem was written:

"Since days of old, countless starry nights and dewy mornings have passed".

The third and fourth lines depict the martyred city as seen by the poetess:

"The soul of autumn grass hovers over the tracks of carriages and horses of bygone days"

"A waning light from the setting sun catches the foundations of former palaces".

Even the stones — vestiges of past glories — and the water in the lakes are moved by the sad spectacle. This is the content of the fifth and sixth lines:

"The stones brave the inclement weather to preserve the memories of past glories" Literally: "The stones persistently remain through the months and years".

"The lake waters grimace before the vicissitudes of fate" Literally: "The water in lakes makes grimaces in face of the upheavals: the sea is changed into a mulberry field and vice versa."

The seventh line evokes the memories of other martyred cities in feudal times:

"In the mirror of the centuries, let us look at the past and the present."

This is the attitude of the scholar who wants to remain impassively objective, like the stone of ancient foundations. But suddenly, in the eighth and last line, the personality of the poetess — the woman — appears:

"The painful spectacle tears my innards.

*
* *

The poetess is sometimes reproached for always harking back to the past and for expressing only sad and unproductive resignation in her poems. But considering the time when and the place where the poems were written, to express attachment to things of the past was for the poetess only a way to show her dislike of the present and her reprobation of the Nguyen kings who after smashing the Tay Son peasant insurrection had set up a much more authoritarian and repressive regime than that of the preceding dynasties. "Reminiscences of old Thang Long City" reflects the state of mind of many patriotic scholars of Viet Nam in the mid-19th century.

The poem remains popular as the melody of its verses revives memories of ancient palaces and art treasures, the apanage of the feudal lords which, nevertheless, was the fruit of the people's labour and part of the nation's great cultural heritage.

HANOI'S OLD QUARTER

DO XUAN SANG

Take the emerald spot of the Lake of the Restored Sword as a landmark. It can serve as a fairly exact boundary between the two main quarters of Hanoi: on the one side is the New Quarter with its large boulevards and its European-style buildings, on the other is the Old Quarter with its narrow streets, filled with traders' and handicraftsmen's shops. To make acquaintance with this Old Quarter, walk up Silk Street which opens into a public square facing the Lake. Follow the tramway track through Silk Street, "Cantonese" Street, Sugar Street to the Dong-xuan market and the water-tower. From this main artery, radiate many streets, which, to the right, reach to the embankment of the Red River, and to the left, to the axis composed of Bamboo-plaiters' Street, Fowl-dealers' Street, Water-pipes Street and the end part of Citadel Street. You can get back to Silk Street by following another tramway track through Cotton Street and Hemp Street. By then, you will have completed a tour of Hanoi's Old Quarter. It has the shape of an irregular polygon inside which are interlaced narrow streets with evocative names: Sail Street, Brine Street, Jewellers' Street, Basket-weavers' Street, Tinsmiths' Street, Medicine Street, Pen-Brush Street and the famous Fishgrillers' Street.

It is true that Hanoi has incurred many changes since the period when it was called the City-with-thirty-six guilds, and when the members of each guild lived in a street bearing its name. Thus, no bamboo-baskets are now sold in Basket Street. In Pen-brush Street, one now finds only up-to-date fountain-pens. As to the fish-grillers, in the street bearing this name one can hardly find two or three restaurants serving this famous course whose flavour in the old times attracted the students of the "Golden Dragon" city¹! Like their French counterparts in the Middle Ages who used to stand kicking their heels before the grill-rooms of the Latin quarter, these always-short-of-cash scholars enjoyed the smell from the fish-grillers' shops when they could not afford to pay for the meal itself.

During the last twenty years, new buildings have replaced old ones almost everywhere in the city. Only in a few places does one catch the sight of houses in the last century style: one-storied buildings with double curved roofs. More often are to be seen houses built at the beginning of this century: timber and brickwork, with a tiny upper floor. Pagodas and temples are lost among a host of shops with motley signboards. Still, how rich in souvenirs of all sorts are these time-honoured monuments!

The Pagoda of the White Horse, in what is now Sail Street, appeared in a city map drawn in 1490. The traders' and handicraftsmen's quarter was not marked but one can easily locate it between the Citadel of the Le kings which had the shape of a pistol pointed at the Red River, and this river itself. In the North was the To Lich river — now filled

1. In the 11th century, Hanoi was called Thang Long (city of the Soaring Dragon) by king Ly Thai To who one day saw a gold dragon emerge from the city and rise into the air.

up — which connected the West Lake with the Red River. In the South was the Lake of the Restored Sword which had an elongated shape and whose southern part, communicating with the Red River, was called the Lake of the Navy. On festival days, war-junks came there from the River, to be reviewed by the Trinh warlords — the Vietnamese Shoguns. The business quarter was then called Ke Cho — the market-town — in opposition to the royal fortified town. It owed its prosperity to its exceptionally favourable geographic situation: surrounded by waterways on three sides, it served as a market-place and a store-house not only for the capital city, but for the whole country.

Handicrafts soon became an important branch of national activity, concentrated at Ke Cho and getting encouragement from the king and the mandarins. Many of the latter were "patrons" of handicraftsmen's guilds. Thus in the 6th century, Tran Hoa, Tran Zien, Tran Dien, — three brothers learned the technique of jewellery-making during a trip to China and trained many apprentices when they returned home. Tran-Tuong-Cong, who was ambassador to China during the reign of King Le-Nhan-Ton (1443-1460) brought home the technique of lacquer painting of the Chinese province of Hunan. The monk Khong Lo, who went to China in the 13th century to learn the technique of bronze-melting, was the patron of the bronzists...

Later, there appeared techniques such as mother-of-pearl inlaying, whose initiator was Nguyen Kim who lived in the reign of King Le-Hien-Ton (1740-1787). Under the Nguyen dynasty, beside independent handicraftsmen, real state workshops were organized, grouping embroiderers, mother-of-pearl inlayers, niello-workers, lacquer painters, sculptors,

ivory-workers and jewellers. These men worked by the job and often received a mandarin's diploma as the reward for a long career.

In spite of two great devastations which occurred in 1786 and towards 1820, Hanoi was a picturesque city of the Far East at the time when the French colonialists arrived in the country. To build their "European" quarter and barracks, the French indiscriminately demolished many ancient monuments, such as the *Kinh Thien* terrace (the Throne Room) and the *Bao An* pagoda, which has 180 bays. The *To Lich* river was entirely filled up and the Lake of the Navy also disappeared under a newly built street, *Hue Street*. Massive imports of foreign goods brought ruin to Vietnamese handicrafts. The guild of mother-of-pearl inlayers had to move out of its business place and colonial traders built there *Paul Bert Street* with department stores in the image of those in their metropolis.

The "soul" of old Hanoi — to use a word of *Thanh Quan*, a famous Vietnamese poetess of the 19th century — took refuge in the traditional quarter. It was there that at the beginning of this century, a great revolutionary cultural movement, the so-called *Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc* movement was organized and led by such scholars as *Luong Van Can*. After the 1945 August Revolution, the name of *Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc* was given to the Old Quarter of Hanoi and one of its streets bore the name of *Luong Van Can*.

On the night of December 19, 1946, when the war of Resistance broke out, *Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc's* barricades valiantly resisted against General *Leclerc's* armoured cars and tanks. The siege lasted two months, to the great bewilderment of colonialist

strategists who anticipated an easy success. Entrenched in the blocks of low houses which communicated with one another through openings in the walls, the youth of Hanoi — in self defence groups which later merged with the Regiment of the Capital — successfully drove back all enemy assaults, until the day when, obeying the orders of the High Command, they withdrew from the City through the Red River embankment, taking with them all their wounded and weapons. But it was a mere postponement: on October 10, 1954, the Regiment of the Capital together with other regiments, came back to a Hanoi which had thrown off the colonialist yoke.

Strolling in the labyrinth of the Old Quarter you will notice many changes in its business activities. In the shop-windows of Silk Street, "Cantonese" Street and Basket-Street, one finds far fewer foreign goods and many more locally-made articles. Tin-ware has overflowed from Tinsmiths' Street into the neighbouring Hat-makers' Street. The Street of the Makers of Votive Objects still exhibits paper hats and horses which superstitious folk offer to the genii to ask for health or rain, but its shops specialize more and more in the making of children's toys, mostly at the approach of the Mid-Autumn Festival. Leather-goods making, mother-of-pearl inlaying and embroidery are springing to life and vigour on account of increased exports.

Hanoi respects its ancient cultural values. On All-Souls' Day, pious hands lay bouquets at street corners where its defenders fell, and the bells in all pagodas and temples inside the Old Quarter ring out in unison.

The people of Hanoi will always remember its past filled with glory and labour, vestiges of which remain in the narrow streets of the Old Quarter.

THE TOURIST'S OLD HANOI

I — Hanoi, Mirror of National History

Many of the remains found in Hanoi today evoke the legendary and historical past of the city and the whole country.

The first Vietnamese state was under Chinese feudal domination for 1,000 years (111 BC-939 AD). The first popular insurrection was led by the two Trung Sisters (42 A.D) who succeeded in capturing 65 citadels". They were defeated and drowned themselves in a river. The people erected a temple south of Hanoi in 1142 in grateful commemoration of the heroines.

The country recovered its independence in the 10th century. Hanoi was chosen as capital (1010) under the name of Thang Long by the Ly dynasty (1009-1225) and it is to this dynasty that we owe the Tran Vu Temple, the Temple of Literature and the One Pillar Pagoda.

In the 15th century, king Le Thai To finally drove back the Ming invaders after ten years of guerilla war. His memory remains linked with the *Restored Sword Lake* in the centre of Hanoi: the legend says that the King was sailing on the lake one day after the victory when the Golden Tortoise appeared from under the water to take back the sacred sword lent to Le Loi from Heaven.

At the end of the 18th century King Quang Trung headed the greatest peasant insurrection of our

history and defeated a 200,000 strong Manchu army of invasion at the *Dong Da mound*, Tet (Lunar New Year) in 1789.

In 1802 the Nguyen dynasty transferred the Court to Hue, and from then on Hanoi was only capital of the northern Vice-kingdom.

The city fell into the hands of the French in 1882.

The *Restored Sword Lake* (Hoan Kiem) The *Ngoc Son* temple (Jade Mountain) was built on a small island in the 19th century. It is dedicated to the Genius of Letters Van Xuong, to General Tran Hung Dao, the victor of the Mongols in the 13th century and to the father of medicine La To. Notice the The Huc bridge (rising sun bridge) painted red, the Tower of the Pen "writing on the Azure" and the Portico of the Inkstand.

There is also a statue of King Le Thai To in the old Thong Nhat Club on the bank of the lake. The small Tortoise Pagoda on a small island is often used as the emblem of Hanoi.

The West Lake (Ho Tay) :

Originally an old bed of the Red river, it covers an area of 583 hectares. According to one legend, it was a thickly wooded area which was the lair of a 9-tailed fox; this evil monster was drowned by the Dragon King who dug up the lake and flooded it. Another legend says that the Vietnamese bonze Khong Lo (11th century) rendered great service to the Emperor of China, and as a reward brought back from the Heavenly Land all its bronze and cast a huge bell of it; the sound of the bell could be heard all the way to China and the Gold calf-buffalo, mistaking it for its mother's voice, ran to the south, trampling about on the present day site of the Ho Tay and turned it into a lake.

It was formerly also called Lake of Mist, on the banks of the West Lake magnificent royal and seigneurial palaces were built, which were later destroyed in the course of feudal wars.

— *The Truc Bach Lake*: (*Truc Bach*: White silk) — from the Ivory Bamboo village is separated from the West Lake by a road lined with flame-trees. In the 18th century, Lord Trinh had a Summer Palace built here which became a harem for erring concubines who were condemned to weave a very beautiful white silk (called Truc Bach silk) in their prison.

— *The One - Pillar Pagoda* (*Chua Mot Cot*): Originally built in 1049, its form evokes a lotus. King Ly Thai To had no son, and he dreamed that the goddess Quan Am, seated on a lotus flower, handed him a male child. He married a young peasant girl whom he met in the garden and had an heir by her. To express his gratitude he had this pagoda erected.

The architecture is most original: the small square wooden frame pagoda (3m by 3m) is built on a single stone pillar 1.25 metre in diameter.

— *The Ambassadors' Pagoda* (*Quan Su*) was the centre of Buddhism in Hanoi. In the 17th century, there was a Guest House here for foreign ambassadors (*Quan Su*) from Buddhist countries which may explain the small additional pagoda nearby, which was rebuilt between 1936 and 1942.

— *The Ba Da Pagoda* (*The Holy Stone Lady*) thus called because a stone statue of a woman is supposed to have been brought to light during excavation work for the building of Thang Long Citadel (Hanoi). The first construction work on the temple that became a pagoda dedicated to her dates back to the 15th century.

— *The Two Sisters Temple (Den Hai Ba)* :

The first construction work dates from 1142. Here one can see a statue of the two Trung sisters kneeling with their arms raised, as if to address the masses. (According to the legend, this posture shows them diving into a river to drown themselves when they were defeated).

— *The Quan Thanh or Tran Vo Temple* — wrongly named great Buddha Pagoda by the French colonialists), was first built under the Ly (1010-1225), on the bank of the West Lake. Tran Vo to whom the temple is dedicated was the guardian God of the North and his familiars were the tortoise and the snake, symbols of power. In the pagoda are a bronze statue from 1677, 3.72 metres high and weighing 4 tons. The Bronze bell also dates from 1677.

— *The Tran Quoc Pagoda* is situated on a peninsula of the West Lake. The stele there dates from 1639 and tells the story of the pagoda. It was no doubt built on the ruins of an old Summer Palace belonging to royalty and has bronze stupas and statues.

— *Temple of the Kneeling Elephants (Voi Phuc)*
The first construction work here dates from the reign of Ly Thanh Tong (1054-1072). This temple is dedicated to Prince Linh Lang who distinguished himself in the resistance against the Sung aggressors. He is said to have charged the enemy with his squadron of elephants. Statues of Linh Lang and his men can be seen there.

Co Loa Citadel (Snail — shaped Citadel), — in Dong Anh district, outskirts of Hanoi.

These are the remains of a fortified settlement with earth ramparts around it which dates from the 3rd century B.C. It was the capital of King An

Duong of the Thuc dynasty. Of the sections of the ramparts (enclosing an area of more than 5 sq. km). there remain only three, parts of which are 2m high and 15m long. In the centre of the citadel there is architectural work and sculpture of great value, the temples of King An Duong and his daughter, the princess My Nuong, whose blind love for her treacherous foreign husband led to the loss of the country.

NOTES

Thang Long (Soaring Dragon): old name of Hanoi (1010).
Kinh Thanh, Hoang Thanh, Tu Cam Thanh:

Kinh Thanh: (Capital City) designates the Commoners' city, the city proper: Inside the city there is the *Hoang Thanh* (royal city, for audiences and official ceremonies) which in turn surrounds the *Tu Cam Thanh* (the Forbidden Red City), residence of the King and the royal family.

Phuong: administrative unit of old Hanoi, the equivalent of a village in the countryside. Generally speaking people from the same village lived here and had the same occupation; and therefore had some common interests.
Phuong hoi: kind of corporation or guild of those working at the same craft or trade in the *phuong*.

Thuoc: (old unit of length = 40 cm)

Tac : 4 cm

Mau : 3,600 sq metres

Sao : 360 sq metres

Vietnamese dynasties — Hong Bang Dynasty: the Hung kings (from the 40th, 50th to the 3rd century BC).

Thuc dynasty (257 — 208 BC).

The Tch'ao or Trieu dynasty, founded by a Ching general who annexed the country to two provinces in southern China (207 — 111 BC). After a 1000-year long rule by the Chinese (111 BC — 939 AD), Viet Nam was independent until the 19th century.

Ngo dynasty: 939 — 967.

Dinh dynasty: 968 — 980.

The earlier Le dynasty: 980 — 1009.

Ly dynasty: 1010 — 1225.

Tran dynasty: 1225 — 1400.

Ho dynasty: 1400 — 1407, followed by a short period of Chinese rule (1407 — 1427).

The later Le dynasty: 1427 — 1789.

Tay Son dynasty: 1769 — 1802.

Nguyen dynasty: 1802 — 1945.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

VIETNAMESE SOURCES:

Viet Su Luoc Abridged History of Dai Viet. Abridged text of *Dai Viet Su Ky* (History of Dai Viet) by Le Van Huu (1272).

Dai Viet su ky toan thu (abr. *Toan thu*) Complete Collection of Historical Memoirs of Dai Viet. Official annals in 15 volumes compiled in 1479.

Kham dinh Viet su thong giam cuong muc (Cuong muc). Texts and Commentaries fully reflecting the history of Viet Nam, compiled on imperial order. Annals in 53 volumes written in the reign of Tu Duc (19th century).

Nguyen Trai: *Du dia chi*: Treatise on Geography (15th century).

Vu Quynh, Kieu Phu: *Linh Nam chich quai* Selection of Legends of Countries of the South (15th century).

Le Huu Trac: *Thuong kinh ky su*: Journey to the Capital (1782).

Le Quy Don: *Kien van tieu luc*: Miscellany of Things Seen and Heard, 12 volumes (18th century).

Pham Dinh Ho: *Vu trung tuy but*: Essays Written on Rainy Days (19th century).

Pham Dinh Ho and Nguyen An: *Tang thuong ngau luc*: Notes Written at Random on the Ups and Downs of this World (19th century).

Phan Huy Chu: *Lich trieu hien chuong loai chi* (Loai chi) — Chronology of Dynasties, 49 volumes (19th century).

Tran Huy Lieu: *Lich su thu do Ha Noi*: History of the Capital City of Ha Noi, Hanoi, 1960.

Hoang Dao Thuy: *Pho phuong Ha Noi xua*: Hanoi's Old Quarters, Hanoi, 1974.

FOREIGN SOURCES:

Baron S. — *Une description du Royaume du Tonkin* (a description of the Kingdom of Tonkin) in *Histoire générale des voyages* (General History of Travels) by the abbot Prévost, volume IX, Paris, 1752. Reproduced in R. I., 1914.

Dumpier W. — *Supplément au voyage autour du monde* (Supplement to Trip around the World), Amsterdam 1701, volume III (reproduced under the title: *Un voyage au Tonkin en 1688* (A journey to Tonkin in 1688) in R. I., 1909 — 1910).

Marini J. P. (de) — *Histoire naturelle et curieuse des royaumes du Tonquin et du Lao* (Natural and Curious History of the Kingdoms of Tonkin and Lao), Paris, 1066 (R. I. 1910).

Ma Tonan Lin — *Ethnographie des peuples étrangers : la Chine* (Ethnography of foreign peoples: China) Tome III : *Méridionaux* (Southern), Translation of Hervey Saint — Denys, Geneva, 1876 — 1883.

Richard J. (Abbé) — *Histoire naturelle, civile et politique du Tonquin* (Natural, Civilian and Political History of Tonkin), Paris, 1778, 2 volumes. Inspired by a note from missionary Saint-Phalle.

Vietnamese Studies

(Already published)

1. South Viet Nam '64
2. Agricultural Problems (Vol. I)
3. Contribution to the History of Dien Bien Phu
4. Nguyen Du and Kieu
5. Education in the DRVN
6. Health Organization in the DRVN
7. Pages of History (1945-1954)
8. South Viet Nam (1954-1965)
9. With the Fighters of Quang Binh — Vinh Linh
10. Vietnamese Women
11. Failure of Special War
12. Viet Nam: Fundamental Problems
13. Agricultural Problems (Vol. II)
14. Literature and National Liberation in South Viet Nam
15. Mountain Regions and National Minorities
16. In Face of American Aggression (1965-1967)
17. South Viet Nam 1968 — The DRVN at War
- 18-19. South Viet Nam: Realities and Prospects
20. American Failure
21. Traditional Viet Nam
22. The Year 1968 (detailed chronology)
23. From the National Front for Liberation to the Provisional Revolutionary Government
24. A Century of National Struggle (1847-1945)
25. Twenty-Five Years of Health Work
26. Glimpses of U.S. Neo-Colonialism (I)
27. Agricultural Problems (Vol. III): Some Technical Aspects

28. Viet Nam — Laos — Cambodia, 1969-1970
29. Chemical Warfare
30. General Education in the DRVN
31. Glimpses of U.S. Neo-Colonialism (II): U.S. Neo-Colonialism in South Viet Nam
32. Ethnographical Data (Vol. I)
33. Indochina 1971-1972
34. Rural Health Work and Disease Prevention
35. Glimpses of U.S. Neo-Colonialism (III): U.S. Neo-Colonialism in Southeast Asia
36. Ethnographical Data (Vol. II)
37. Hue — Past and Present
38. Agricultural Problems (IV)
39. Indochina: 1972-1973 Turning-point
40. Linguistic Essays
41. Ethnographical Data (Vol. III)
42. Glimpses of U.S. Neo-Colonialism (IV): U.S. Neo-Colonialism in South Viet Nam. The "Vietnamization" of the War.
43. Dien Bien Phu — Before, During, After
44. Economic Policy and National Liberation War
45. Saigon (I)
46. Archaeological Data (I)
47. Glimpses of U.S. Neo-Colonialism (V): Collapse of the Neo-Colonialist Regimes in Indochina

PRINTED IN THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM

After a bitter struggle lasting 117 years, Viet Nam is again completely independent and reunified. She proclaimed herself a Socialist Republic on July 2, 1976, and right at her birth the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam reiterated the choice of Hanoi as capital of the country.

Hanoi has a history stretching back a thousand years. In 1010, it was chosen as the capital of a centralized feudal state and was called Thang Long (City of the Soaring Dragon). It became the political and cultural centre of our country, the soul of all our movements for liberation and national resistance.

In this issue of Vietnamese Studies we have tried to give a sketch of Hanoi from her beginnings to the French conquest in the 19th century. The contemporary history of the city will be dealt with in later publications.

Index : 12,193