

Yen Ho

Co Loa Citadel

11/13/16

Arch History: Ancient through the Renaissance

Prof. Stephen Anderson

Summary Description:

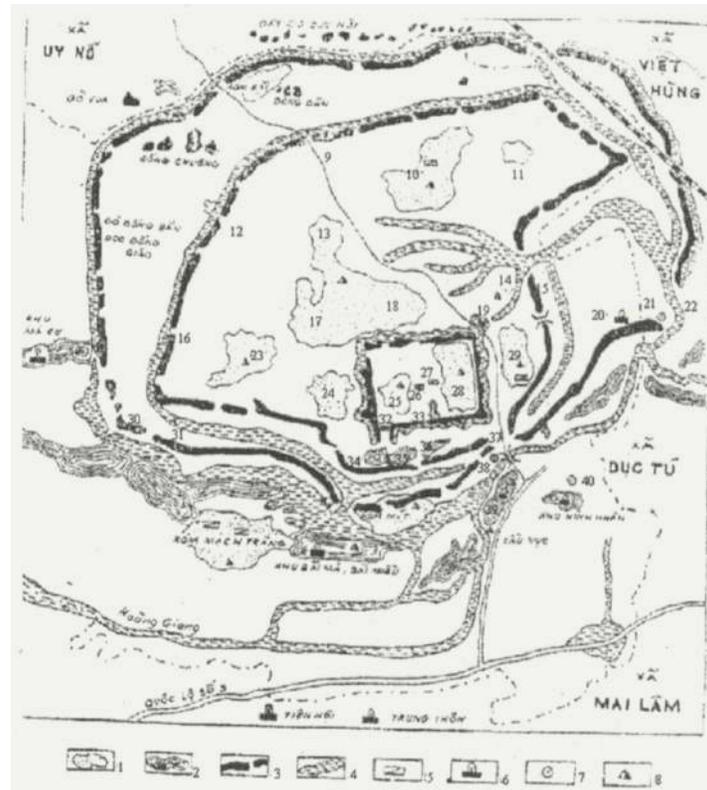
In the third century BCE Vietnam, the Co Loa Citadel was built to defend the fortress from Chinese invaders. An Duong Vuong, the king of Vietnam at that time, built the citadel and made it the new capital. Legend says that the golden magic turtle gave the king its claw as a trigger for his crossbow that can shoot as many arrows to kill the invaders. His daughter accidentally gave that secret away to her Chinese husband, causing the Chinese to attack, and the rise of Chinese rule. The citadel has a shape of a snail, which is where the name of the citadel came from. It was build with nine loops with moats surrounding it, but today, it currently has three loops. According to research, the citadel was considered as a “male city” since the site has moderate-sized mounds, taking this as an advantage for the defenders.

The Situated Work:

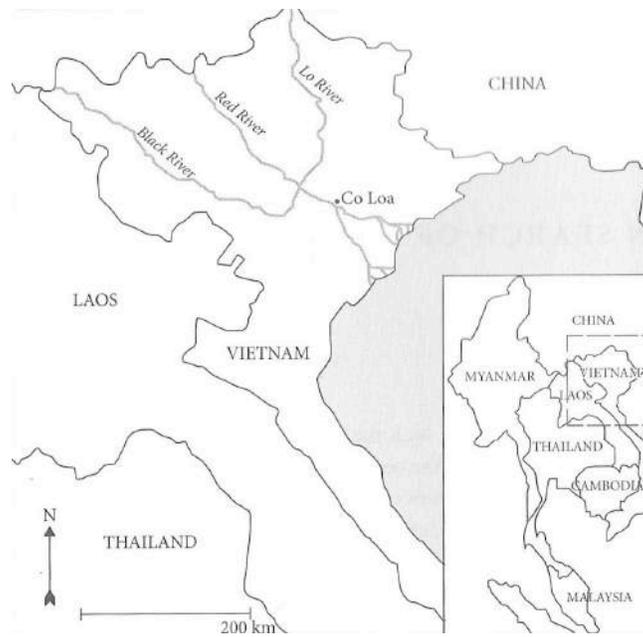


Site plan of the Co Loa Citadel¹

¹ Nam C. Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam*, 6

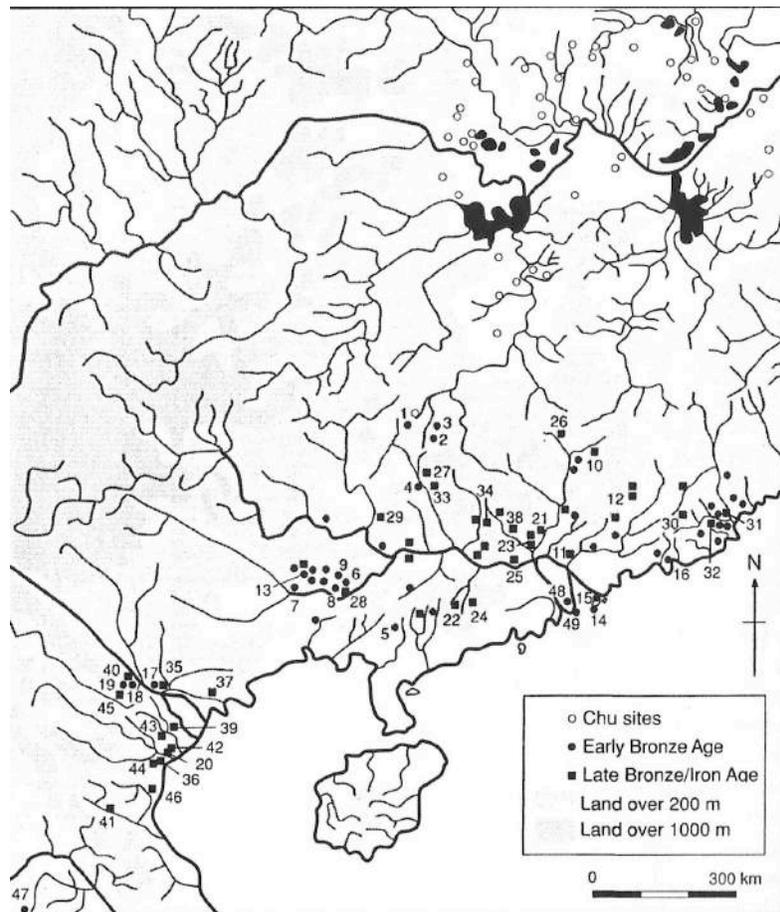


Site plan of the mounds from the citadel²



Map of Bac Bao and the Red River³

² Marilyn Larew, *Thục Phan, Cao Tong, and the Transfer of Military Technology in the Third Century Viet Nam*, 14



Map of Bac Bo with major Chu centers (35: Co Loa)⁴

³ Nam Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2015), 2

⁴ Charles Higham, *The Bronze Age of Southeast Asia* (United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 92



Entrance of the Thuong Temple⁵



Inside the Co Loa Citadel⁶

Since Co Loa is located in the northern part of Vietnam, it's where there's a mix of tropic from the southern lowlands and temperate from the northern highlands. The most significant part of northern Vietnam was its seasonal change: the average rainfall is 1300-1800 mm during warm, wet season. During the summer, it's considered warm and very humid with the average

⁵ Nam Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2015), 9

⁶ Huỳnh Phúc Hưng, <http://vn.worldmapz.com/photo/89541_de.htm> (12 November 2016)

temperature between 27-29 degrees Celsius while in the winter, it's cool and dry, averaging between 16.3-20.9 degrees Celsius. Agriculture played a huge role in social development. The city of Co Loa is located in the historical region of Bac Bo, where it has less extreme climate: dry climate with moist winds, which allows crops on fertile soil yearly. The most important crop in the region was rice. The diversity of the climate is beneficial to both tropical and sub-tropical crops. Other crops they grew were maize, potato, sweet potato, jute, and legume.⁷

The more agriculture grew, the more the population grew, thanks to rice growing and also farming and animal keeping. Farming and animal keeping made communities feel lazy, impacting on the environment. To determine the population during the third century, researchers thought looking at the size of the household, settlement, and regional levels would help them determine the size, growth, and decline population levels.⁸ With the combination of cross-cultures and the Han population, it was assumed that there were thousands of people living in the Co Loa area during the third century.⁹

Researchers were having a hard time trying to figure out about the Co Loa culture. Fortunately, they were able to find artifacts from the site. The drums that were found are key factors in finding evidence of Vietnam's ancient culture. Researchers found a Chinese coin inside the drum, telling about the events in chronological order. Another thing researchers found were Chinese characters inscribed on the coin. The two clues from the drum gave researchers some possibilities: either there was a political shift, or the rulers from Co Loa made contact with the north, but there might be rivalry between them.¹⁰

⁷ Nam Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2015), 14-15

⁸ Nam Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2015), 17-18

⁹ Nam Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2015), 214

¹⁰ Nam Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2015), 154



A Dongson drum recovered from the site¹¹

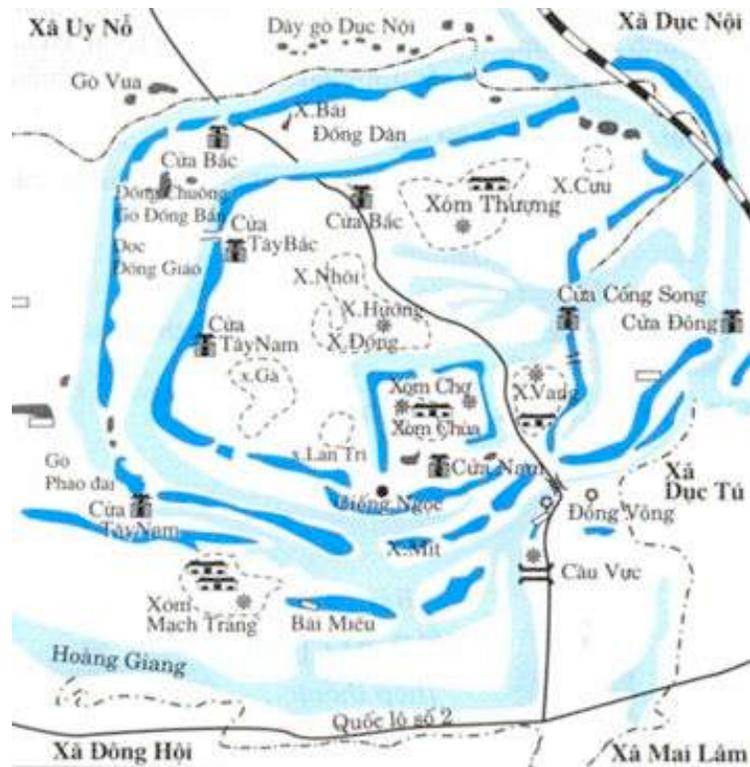
Orthographic Drawings:



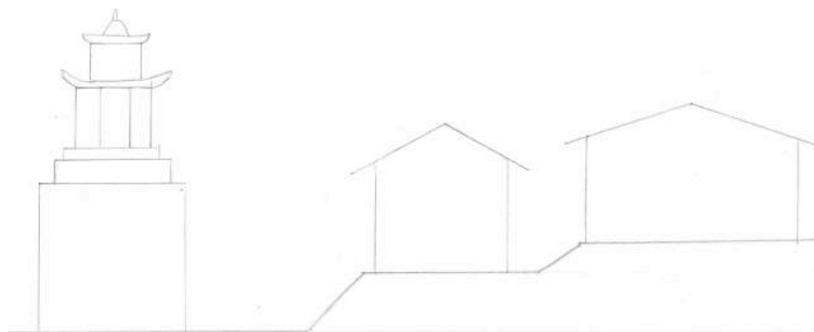
Detailed site plan from Google maps satellite¹²

¹¹ Trinh Hoang Hiep, Nam C. Kim, Lai Van Toi. "Co Loa: an investigation of Vietnam's ancient capital." (Antiquity, 2010), 1013

¹² Trinh Hoang Hiep, Nam C. Kim, Lai Van Toi. "Co Loa: an investigation of Vietnam's ancient capital." (Antiquity, 2010), 1015

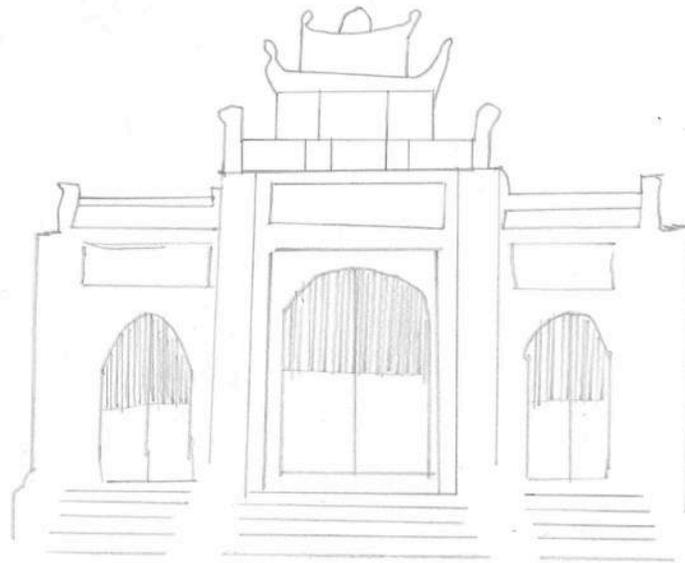


Floor plan of Co Loa Citadel¹³



Mt section drawing of Co Loa Citadel

¹³ Donf Tinh. "Co Loa Citadel, Dynasty royal family, alter of My Chau" <
<http://vanhien.vn/news/Den-Co-Loa-dinh-Ngu-trieu-am-My-Chau-34272>> Accessed
 November 12 2016



My elevation drawing of Co Loa Citadel

Typological and Stylistic Analysis:

Co Loa Citadel' was used to defend the city against invaders, making it a fortified city. Its location was considered a "male city". A "male city" cannot be attacked if it has small and moderate-sized marshes and no high mountains. The mounds are an advantage when it comes to defense. The defenders are able to fire down invaders and are able to see who's coming.¹⁴ The citadel has a shape of a snail shell came from how the walls were arranged like rings. Fortification, earthworks, and labor from the citadel's system demonstrated a combined system of military defense. The middle and outer walls formed an irregular-shaped enclosure, making a possibility that the irregular shape of the walls spread from the hilltops that were purposely connected, causing the walls to seal up.

The remains from the citadel revealed that it came from northern influence in terms of

¹⁴ Marilynn Larew, *Thuc Phan, Cao Tong, and the Transfer of Military Technology in the Third Century Viet Nam*, 133

architecture. The rammed earth wall was assumed it came from China from years ago. When finding artifacts at the citadel, most of them came from China. Not only they came there, the Vietnamese transliterated the name of the artifacts, but with the same name meaning. For example, there was the Freer sword that was imported from China, and the Chinese name for it was “jian”. The Vietnamese version of the sword was “kiếm”. It was concluded that the Chinese heavily influenced the Vietnamese culture during the third century BCE.¹⁵

Anthropological Analysis:

The construction behind the Co Loa Citadel was based on a legend on how King Au Duong built the citadel. During construction, local spirits stopped it, causing the king to ask why the citadel wasn't finished. The reason why the spirits came was because the previous king lost his inheritance. A thousand year old white chicken led the spirits, causing the golden turtle, named Kim Quy, to appear to defeat it. It took half a month to finish constructing the walls. After that, the golden turtle stayed with the king to have the citadel finished. Then, the golden turtle gave the king one of his claws so the king can use it as a trigger to defeat invaders.¹⁶ Cao Lo made the crossbow for the king and said, “He who is able to hold this crossbow rules the realm; he who is not able to hold this crossbow will perish.” (Kim, 5) Unfortunately, the king's daughter betrayed him when she told her Chinese husband about his magic crossbow. Her husband was the general, and betrayed them, causing him and his army to attack the city. Afterwards, the king and his daughter went away and the king needed help from the golden turtle. The turtle told him it was his daughter who betrayed him, causing the king to cut her head off. Her husband found her head when he found goose feather trains from the king's daughter's jacket, and killed himself to be with her in the afterlife.¹⁷ The crossbow was introduced in China, and it became part of their weaponry. When pulling the trigger, it gains pressure and force when releasing it. The turtle's

¹⁵ Marilynn Larew, *Thuc Phan, Cao Tong, and the Transfer of Military Technology in the Third Century Viet Nam*, 18

¹⁶ Marilynn Larew, *Thuc Phan, Cao Tong, and the Transfer of Military Technology in the Third Century Viet Nam*, 29

¹⁷ Vu Hong Lien and Peter Sharrock (*Descending Dragon, Rising Tiger: A History of Vietnam*, London, Realktion Books, 2014), 29

claw from the crossbow revealed about the king's military force. The theme behind the legend was the battle of strength between the turtle and the white chicken. The white chicken represented the past before the Middle Age while the turtle represents the Chinese god of war.¹⁸

When looking through Vietnamese records, archaeologists concluded that there are no surviving records about the foundation of the citadel. The only evidence that tells about the citadel was tales. The desire of massive walls showed a sign that the king used military force. It is huge that it had slaves or war prisoners building it, assuming they owe the king paid taxes. With the large amount of labor due to agriculture problems, it had many people from their villages put to work. Management was important during the project because the people who were building the city had no experience with digging, hauling and carrying. In order to get the city done, Cao Lo and his military engineers have to train and supervise the villagers. Having military force is benefit towards the villagers. It would help them stay out of trouble and keep them working.¹⁹

Today, the Co Loa citadel is still in use to hold festivals during Lunar New Years to celebrate the history and the site itself, but the festival is mostly about celebrating the king's achievements. On the sixth day of the first lunar month is when the festival takes place. During the festival, on the fifth day before the official day of the festival, all groups of people gather at the communal house for a incense offering ceremony. During that day, village officials and mandarins created their version of the king's achievements. On the official day of the festival, there were entertainments and rituals and it lasts until the sixteenth day, ending with fireworks, music and activities like tug-a-war, martial arts, dancing, and many more. Co Loa citadel is where Vietnam started to develop into a country, despite having Chinese influences with the materials.²⁰

Experiential Projection:

When walking inside the city of the Co Loa Citadel, it would feel like being part of the time

¹⁸ Keith Weller Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 2005), 22

¹⁹ Marilyn Larew, *Thuc Phan, Cao Tong, and the Transfer of Military Technology in the Third Century Viet Nam*, 41

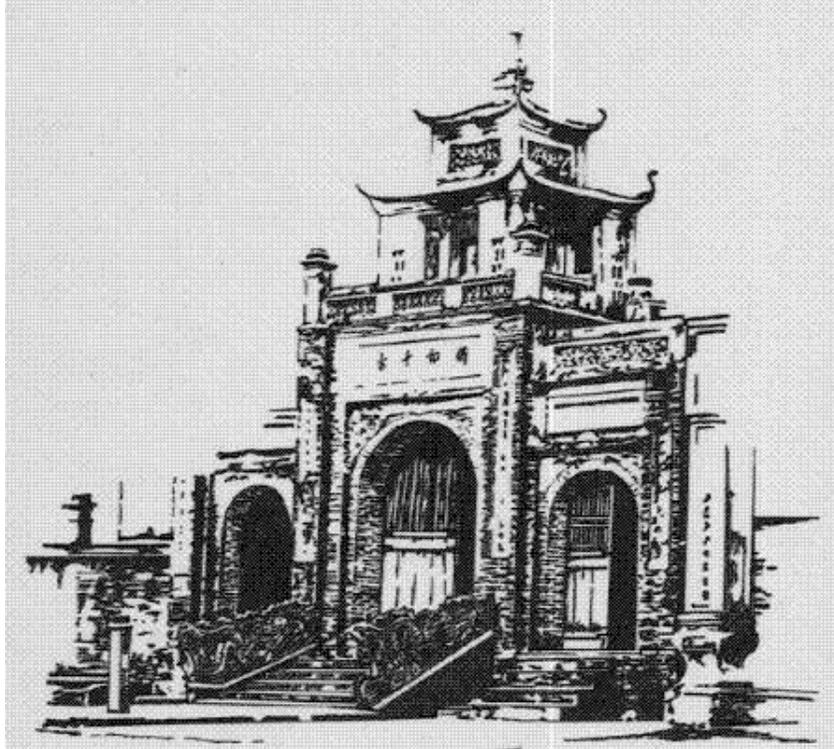
²⁰ "2015 Co Loa Festival in pictures" <<http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/vietnam-in-photos/124474/2015-co-loa-festival-in-pictures.html>> (accessed November 12 2016)

period. Inside, there are buildings and the citadel itself that are renovated, and when walking inside any one of them, people would visualize what life was like in third century Vietnam. Since the citadel had to do with war, people would imagine how the villagers felt when Chinese invaders started to attack. When arriving at the place, everyone enters through the main gate, and when they enter, they would feel an empty feeling since no one is living in the historic citadel at first. When being explained about the place, they would close their eyes and think about the lifestyle in ancient Vietnam.

It was a dark time for ancient Vietnam. There was no such thing as a good time. To me, it felt like it was the medieval time since there were monarchies demanding money from peasants who didn't owe them. When building the wall, I imagine being one of the villagers building the wall. I would feel exhausted with the hot, tropic climate and in pain since building a moat was hard to do. Since the king and Cao Lo wanted the villagers to pay for their taxes, they were kind enough to help them in order to get the money. I would feel relieved of they helped the villagers and me.

Since walls surround the citadel, people can assume the people from the third century were being isolated from the outside world. It makes sense that the king wanted his city to be protected from invaders, and hoping no one from his city betrays him. The king was all about trust and suspicion since he found out his daughter betrayed him. If I was inside the citadel, and imagining what it was like living under the king's rule, I would feel scared about leaving the place, making the king think I was a spy for the Chinese like his daughter's Chinese husband.

Sketch:



Drawing of the Co Loa Citadel²¹



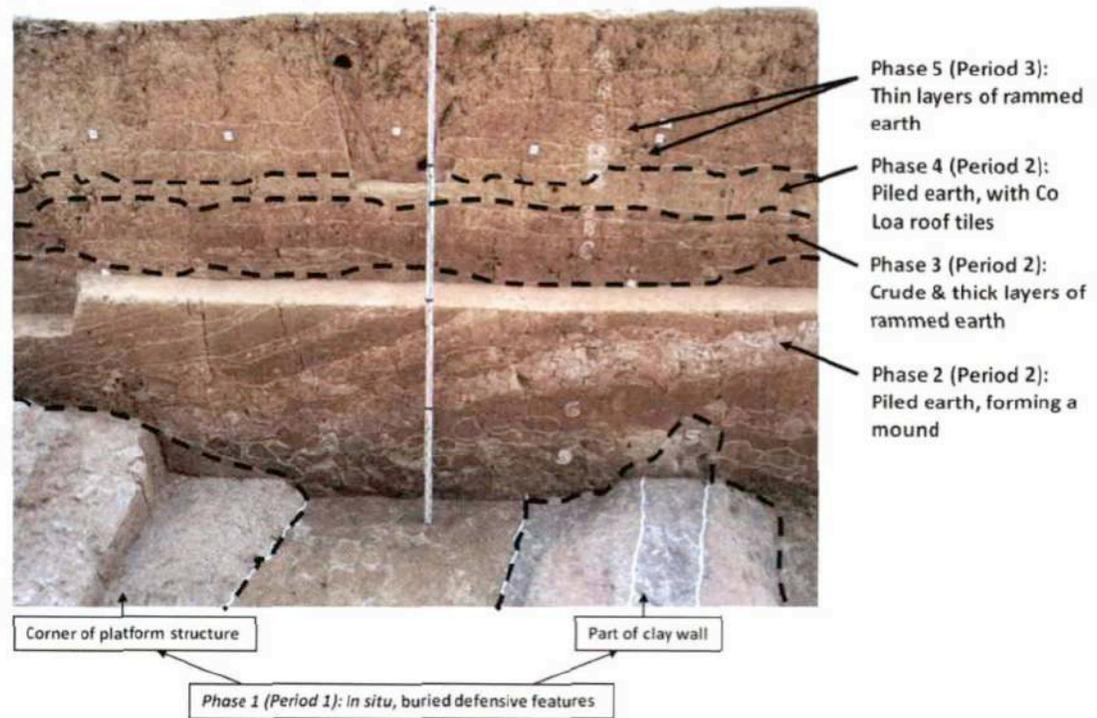
Sketch of the exterior of the citadel

²¹ "Co Loa after Ngo Quyen dynasty" <<http://www.hoangthanhthanglong.vn/en/co-loa-thoi-ky-sau-ngo-quyen/488>> (accessed November 12 2016)

Material and Structural Analysis:

Archaeologists found that the ramparts were made of rammed earth. The three walls, inner, middle and outer, were excavated to determine the chronology of the construction. They started with the middle wall, and they found there were three major periods: early, middle and late. Early corresponds to Phase 1 from 500-300 BCE, middle corresponds to Phases 2-4 from 300-100 BCE, and late corresponds to Phase 5 from the post 100 BCE or historical period to medieval period, which archaeologists were unsure of. In Phase 1, they found that the wall and the platform were made out of clay. It was suggested that it was served as a defensive function. The exterior faces of the smaller clay wall were large at first when it was first constructed. It was assumed the exterior faces were falling apart, having it covered with earth to preserve it. Phases 2-4 the walls were made out of dumped earth and thick stamped earth, and the period 2 investigations, the radiocarbon dates revealed that the walls were being constructed during the third century. In Phase 3, the builders back then used the stamped earth technique, and it resembles the Sinitic civilization, which was hang-tu, where there were heavy influences from China. It was concluded that the stamped earth was used during the time the Great Wall of China was built. Phase 5 walls were made out of thin stamped earth, almost similar to what the Phase 3 walls had. The artifacts that were found in each phase gave researchers clues on what period the walls were built. It was possible that the Han people were in control during the post-period time.²²

²² Nam Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2015)*, 161



All five phases at the middle wall²³

With the use of waterways, rivers, and hills, the builders from Co Loa were building the earth walls there as a military defensive function. The Phase 1 construction has the defensive utility, showing the conflict of social change with competition, violence, and possible outbreaks. Defensive utility was also used during the Phases 2-4 in the third century, but the ramparts are larger. It is no surprise that there were concerns with security and competition in Co Loa with their development of agriculture. With their concerns over security, it shifted by changing the defensive strategies. Overall, at the Co Loa citadel, militarism and defense were the most important parts of the social life with their huge scale of the ramparts. Not only the ramparts are huge, it also tells about the wealth and power with resources and labor.²⁴

The three walls have similarities as the Chinese's wall construction. Each wall has a difference in height. The middle wall was taller than the outer wall, with the height of 6-12 meters.

²³ Trinh Hoang Hiep, Nam C. Kim, Lai Van Toi. "Co Loa: an investigation of Vietnam's ancient capital." (*Antiquity*, 2010), 1017

²⁴ Nam Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2015), 164-169

Since the citadel has hills, it has good use for soldiers seeking safety and attacking invaders when attacking the outer wall. The middle wall had numerous gates, making troops flow easier while defending the citadel.²⁵

A Fictional Account:

Kevin Bowen wrote a poem about the Co Loa Citadel called “Snail Gathers of Co Loa Thanh”. He wrote the poem based off the legend of how the citadel was built: construction falling apart by spirits, the golden turtle defeated it, gave the king the claw for his crossbow. “The legends of Co Loa Thanh, Old Snail City, tell how spirits of Mount Tarn Dao tried to stall the citadel by slipping down rocky hills each night to undo the labors of the day. One night a golden tortoise crawled up river, gave the king new weapons, bows to slay the spirits of Tarn Dao. And so the city rose carved from carcasses and shells.” (Bowen, *Snail Gathers of Co Loa Thanh*)²⁶ He thought about the culture gap between Vietnamese and American. He hoped both cultures understand each other by translating the stories being told from Vietnamese artists and writers into English.²⁷

Detail Study:

Throughout the investigation of the three walls, artifacts were found and recovered. The roof tiles from the site gave researchers some indication of what they were made of, and how it was used. There were many theories from the roof tiles, making researchers feel uncertain about it: the roof tiles were used against attacks from the invaders, or they were placed to protect the walls to decay from tropical rain. The presence of the roof tiles from Co Loa and nowhere else revealed about the city’s settlement. It was found that in Co Loa, the roof tiles were decorated with a method called “rolling clouds”. Coincidentally, the Qin and Han dynasties used the same technique at the Nanyue kingdom. It was concluded that the tiles were built when the kingdom of

²⁵ Marilyn Larew, *Thuc Phan, Cao Tong, and the Transfer of Military Technology in the Third Century Viet Nam*, 13-15

²⁶ Kevin Bowen, *Snail Gathers of Co Loa Citadel* (*American Poetry Review*, November/December 1992), 22

²⁷ “US vet bridges cultural gap”, *TUOITRENEWS*, December 30 2013, <
<http://tuoitrenews.vn/lifestyle/16438/us-vet-bridges-culture-gap-with-vietnam>> (accessed November 11 2016)

Nanyue took over Co Loa.²⁸



Roof tile sample, found at the site²⁹

All three walls have a moat along the exterior. It was said all the three moats have to connect to a larger source of water supply within the area, which is the Dam Ca. The river surrounding the outer wall was the Hoang Giang River, and it flows around the whole area before entering the Dam Ca, resulting the river flowing through the inner and middle walls' moats. The moat had a V-shape and it was dry when the city was in construction. The dry moat made it into a defensive system. The shape of the moat and the depth of it played a huge role when it comes to military strategies. Having water around the citadel is beneficial when traveling.³⁰ The ironic part of the citadel was that the citadel was served as a defense system, but there were waterways to run through. The Chinese have a similar way. During the Warring States times at Ying, there was access for ships into the city, penetrating the water gate from the outer wall. Unlike Ying, Co Loa didn't have natural rivers. Instead, Co Loa's two moats were linked together, which allowed ships

²⁸ Nam Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2015)*, 145

²⁹ Trinh Hoang Hiep, Nam C. Kim, Lai Van Toi. "Co Loa: an investigation of Vietnam's ancient capital." (*Antiquity*, 2010), 1021

³⁰ Nam Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2015)*, 171

entering inside the second wall.³¹

The roof tiles and the moats have the same idea as the Chinese. The roof tiles were served as defensive devices in order to keep the building from standing and decaying. The king was all about keeping it standing ever since the construction of the citadel kept falling every night according to the legend. Meanwhile, the moats served as an aid since there were ships entering and exiting the gateway warning others about incoming trouble and get the army ready to aim.

Present Day Parallel:

Today, not many buildings were used as a military device, and not many used borders for their homes to protect invaders. In the 21st century, people used moats as a decoration and comfort. In 2007 Guz Architects built the Tangga House in the tropic Singapore. The house is considered a sustainable house because of its natural ventilation through the L-shaped plan that has open spaces, roof gardens, and a swimming pool, making residents feeling comfortable.³²

There are many differences between the Co Loa Citadel and the Tangga House, but there is only one similarity between the two buildings: it's located in a tropic area in Southeast Asia. The reason the Co Loa was located near the Red River was because of their rice growing. The river and its climate played a huge role in survival. Without the great agriculture Vietnam had back in the third century BCE, there won't be many people living. The Tangga House was a challenge because of Singapore's climate condition. People from Singapore were feeling hot and exhausted, so the Guz Architects decided to design a house that can help residents feel comfortable and in harmony during hot, tropic weather. Both buildings' goal was to sustain the living environment with resources surrounding them. Trees, helping the cooling ventilation, surround both of the buildings.³³

The buildings were surrounded by water, but they were used in different purposes. Back

³¹ Marilynn Larew, *Thuc Phan, Cao Tong, and the Transfer of Military Technology in the Third Century Viet Nam*, 16

³² "Tangga House/Guz Architects", *ArchDaily*, 31 July 2010, <
<http://www.archdaily.com/70892/tangga-house-guz-architects>> (accessed November 11 2016)

³³ "Tangga House, Singapore Home: Guz Architects", *e-architect*, 6 September 2010, <
<http://www.e-architect.co.uk/singapore/tangga-house>> (accessed November 11 2016)

then in the third century BCE, Co Loa Citadel has moats as a way to communicate the people about incoming invader and to provide resources for the people who seek food. Modern houses like the Tangga House bring back the moats in the design, but with a modern twist. The moats were used as a luxury so people can feel comfortable.³⁴

Another difference between the two buildings was how they decided to make the building. Researches who searched around the Co Loa Citadel found that the influences came from the Chinese. China ruled almost all of Southeast Asia, and changed how Vietnam specifically life style. Defensive materials are the purpose of how the citadel was built: to keep mostly Chinese invaders out. The inspiration from the Tangga House came from the environment of Singapore. Instead of designing a building with active designs with air conditioning and heating systems, they researched about the climate condition and decided to use passive systems in an area in Singapore where cooling occurs most. Only the Guz Architects designed the Tangga House while the Co Loa Citadel was invaded by Chinese invaders, which lead to researchers found out the materials were from China.



*Exterior view of the Tangga House*³⁵

³⁴ Richard Torres, "Trending: Modern Moats", *Studio M*, <<http://interiorsbystudiom.com/modern-architecture-home-design-castle-moat/>> (accessed November 11 2016)

³⁵ "Tangga House, Singapore Home: Guz Architects", *e-architect*, 6 September 2010, <<http://www.e-architect.co.uk/singapore/tangga-house>> (accessed November 11 2016)



Exterior view of the Co Loa Citadel³⁶



Interior of the An Dong Vuong Temple³⁷

³⁶ DTINEWS, “Co Loa Citadel to become cultural-ecological park”, *Talk Vietnam*, July 19 2012, <<https://www.talkvietnam.org/2012/07/co-loa-citadel-to-become-cultural-ecological-park/>> (accessed November 12 2016)

³⁷ Huỳnh Phúc Hưng, <http://vn.worldmapz.com/photo/89541_de.htm > (12 November 2016)



*Interior of the Tangga House*³⁸

³⁸ Tangga House/Guz Architects", *ArchDaily*, 31 July 2010, <
<http://www.archdaily.com/70892/tangga-house-guz-architects>> (accessed November 11
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