

Report on the joint UNESCO/ICOMOS  
Advisory mission to the World Heritage property  
“Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi”  
(Socialist Republic of Viet Nam)

5-9 July 2023





# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary

This report elaborated by four experts of the joint WHC/ICOMOS advisory mission presents the overall assessment and provides advice to the State Party of Vietnam on the project relating to the research and renovation of the World Heritage site 'Central Sector of the Thang Long Imperial Citadel - Hanoi.'

The property was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in 2010 as a site composed of various architectural and archaeological elements dating from the early dynastic period to the 20th century, bearing testament to the evolution of Vietnamese history and its people.

The State Party of Vietnam has conducted, in response to the World Heritage Committee's recommendation at the time of the inscription, various research and archaeological surveys on the different parts of the inscribed property, in order to strengthen the representativity and authenticity of its dynastic elements associated with Criteria (ii) and (iii), which were judged scarce. On the basis of the research results of more than a decade, the State Party expressed its wish to implement measures to enable further archaeological research in view of the enhancement of the presentation of the Central Sector of the property.

Desired advancement of the archaeological research would in the view of the State Party require the removal of two buildings constructed during the colonial era, on the royal path connecting the royal Palace to Doan Mon (Great Gate). Beyond the scientific considerations, these two buildings, which are located on the royal axis of the Imperial Citadel, are perceived by communities and the State Party as elements posing difficulties in fully experiencing the original spatial organization of the Imperial Citadel built on the principles of geomancy, as well as hindering the practice of associated cultural and religious traditions, such as the ancestral worship and royal court's entertainments valorised by the national communities.

The main task of the advisory mission was thus to understand the full background - both technical and historical – and rationale of the State Party's aims through an engaged dialogue with the stakeholders, and detailed study of the accumulated academic and scientific resources. The main purpose of this report is to assist the State Party in developing ways of delivering their proposed aims, in full compliance with technical and procedural requirements for a World Heritage property.

The details of the participants, programme and Terms of Reference of the Advisory Mission are Annexed to this report.



## Recommendations

In view of the analysis presented in the mission findings, the mission recommends the following:

### **1. Research and Renovation of the Central Sector of the World Heritage property of the Thang Long Imperial Citadel**

#### ***1.1 Development of an over- arching Vision for the Central Axis within the overall property***

Develop with the support of WHC and ICOMOS a 'Vision' for the future development of the Central Axis in order to capture what the State Party wishes to achieve through the Master Plan, in relation to the purpose of the World Heritage Convention and to the sustenance of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, and how this can be achieved in line with the recommendations of this mission report.

The Vision would provide the basis for defining an Archaeological Strategy (see section 3.1) and detailed excavation projects and, following the outcome of these, a detailed Conservation and Presentation Strategy (see section 1.4) for the Central Axis, that would assist the State Party in achieving the aims set out through the Vision and the Master Plan.

#### ***1.2 Clarification of Attributes of OUV***

As a basis for the development of a Vision, clarify as soon as possible, with the support of ICOMOS and WHC, the attributes that convey the OUV of the property on the basis of the Statement of OUV, relevant parts of the nomination dossier, the Management Plans and of the outcomes of research carried out so far;

The Vision and the clarified attributes would need to be submitted as soon as possible to the WHC and ICOMOS for review.

#### ***1.3 Dismantling of the Operations Department and Artillery Commands Buildings***

The mission considers that proposed dismantling of the Operations and Artillery Buildings is understandable and could be accepted as a preliminary step towards the enhancement of the property in line with the agreed Vision to be developed by the State Party and recommends that the State Party:

1.3.1 Submit a proposal for the controlled dismantling of the two above-mentioned buildings based on the following activities:

1.3.1.1. Complete the descriptive list of buildings and structures within the property already prepared and shared with the mission experts following the advisory mission, with the structures that have not yet been included in that list;

1.3.1.2. Complement geometrical documentation of the Operations and the Artillery Buildings by carrying out research on the transformation of the buildings over time by applying combined methods,

including stratigraphic analysis of the buildings, and analyses of construction materials and building components, as further detailed in the text above, before the actual archaeological dismantling of the two concerned buildings commences;

1.3.1.3. Consider ensuring, in the process of removing the Operations and Artillery Buildings, that trees can be conserved in their current or any other suitable location.

The mission advises that the documentation resulting from the above activities be shared with the WHC and ICOMOS for review.

*Once the actual dismantling phase will be agreed upon:*

1.3.2. Ensure that the removal of the buildings is conducted through documented and controlled dismantling, in the presence of archaeologist(s) to ensure that maximum information about the construction and historic development of the buildings as well as potentially pre-colonial building materials and artefacts can be retrieved.

#### **1.4 Archaeological Strategy for the Central Axis**

In conjunction with the abovementioned Vision, and before conducting archaeological investigations on the areas of the Artillery and Operations Buildings, develop an Archaeological Strategy that encompasses the following:

- 1.4.1. Specific research questions that the proposed seven-year excavation project will target and how the results of each year's excavations will inform and justify further excavation of the central area.
- 1.4.2. A list of buildings and structures that the State Party aims to dismantle and remove from the property for targeted archaeological investigations, conservation, restoration and enhancement of the property, with an explanation of the reasons why these buildings need to be dismantled and what research questions are being targeted in these areas.
- 1.4.3. A management process which guides how and when excavation is proposed, and how it is undertaken. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that future excavations are carefully planned and consistent with the past investigations, and to respond to specific research questions and the need for targeted excavation data.
- 1.4.4. Nomination of certain areas where archaeological deposits will not be immediately excavated but preserved for future archaeological research, considering the advancement of excavation techniques and retaining some of the Dan Tri areas for research by future generations.
- 1.4.5. Consideration of non-invasive archaeological investigative techniques prior to or in place of excavation. Although remote sensing to date has provided limited results for the Thang Long Citadel, these techniques should continue to be explored, especially in open areas prior to excavation, such as immediately following demolition of the Operations and Artillery Buildings.
- 1.4.6. Elaborate a detailed excavation proposal for the area of the main palace, to ensure that excavation strategies consider the extent of survival of the Long Thien and Kinh Thien Palaces,

and that the results of excavation and evident levels of preservation inform further excavation proposals;

- 1.4.7. Define what further research questions and archaeological recording needs to be undertaken, noting that excavation is destructive, and is best reserved for addressing specific gaps in current knowledge.

The mission advises that such a Strategy be submitted to the WHC and ICOMOS for review before decisions are taken on further removing other structural elements of the Long Thien Palace until further archaeological data is available regarding both this Palace and the former Kinh Thien Palace.

## **2. Conservation and Presentation Strategy for the Central Axis**

*Following the outcome of further excavations and research, and before decisions are taken with regard to the form of possible restoration/reconstruction of the Central Axis, a Conservation and Presentation Strategy should be developed that sets out:*

2.1. Comprehensive proposal on clarifying the envisaged options for the ‘restoration’ of the space of Kinh Thien Palace, by specifying a general plan regarding which interventions and physical presentation of the archaeological vestiges the restoration is pursuing, whether the reconstruction of some of the ancient and no longer standing structures is envisaged, and what sources of information and scientific evidence are expected to be used and how, including:

2.1.1. An explanation on whether and what areas will be exposed to public access, what areas will be reburied, what areas will be preserved for future research, the areas where reconstruction is planned, how such intervention will guarantee that archaeological remains will not be altered and, to what extent they will remain accessible for future research, considering that the archaeological remains are attributes of the OUV and exhibit a high level of authenticity;

2.1.2. a detailed synthesis of all historical sources such as ancient writings, memorial inscription stela/epitaphs, illustrations, pictures, drawings, other sources of information gathered and studied until present, as well as of the outcomes of comparative studies with contemporary or earlier royal citadels in Vietnam and/or in China, Japan, South Korea, including an explanation of the methodology adopted to draw conclusions from these studies in relation to the hypotheses regarding configurations of the Kinh Thien palace and its ceremonial space;

2.1.3. a comprehensive compilation of all studies conducted until the present day on Kinh Thien Palace and the royal courtyard, the central royal axis and surrounding corridor structures, their construction materials, decoration, spatial arrangements and, based on the outcomes, the identification of additional research necessary to lay down a solid scientific basis for such a project so as to facilitate an understanding of their results and of the rationale for the choices being pursued for the enhancement of the property;

2.1.4. An exploration of whether the rationale of prioritizing the 18th-century facies of the Central Sector of the Thang Long Imperial Citadel is the optimum way to achieve the desired presentation of the Central Axis and its multiple layers of occupation of the area as a seat of power;

2.1.5. Further information on how tangible and intangible evidence retrieved through the excavations and archival and other methods have been used to develop the presented visual 3D models of the Kinh Thien Palace and of its ceremonial space (Dan Tri and Ngu Dao)

The mission advises that the Conservation and Presentation Strategy be submitted to the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS for review, before its adoption and before any irreversible work is undertaken.

2.2. Carry out study visits, if possible, and consultations with scholars and authorities who have conducted extensive historical reconstruction abroad, such as the Nara Palace and Gusuku Palace in Japan, and some sites in China, among others, to learn the experiences from these projects.

2.3. Discuss with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS throughout the process of developing the Vision, the Archaeological Strategy and Conservation and Presentation Strategy the scope and timeframe for conducting a Heritage Impact Assessment and only when concrete proposals will be formulated on possible restoration/reconstruction of the Central Axis.

2.4. All the documents are requested to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre in one of the official UNESCO languages.

The Annex 6 can be referred to on the suggested detailed sequence of the operations relating to the recommendations 1 and 2.

### **3. Further implementation of the Master Plan:**

*In addition to the above-mentioned recommendations relating to section 1 also undertake the following:*

3.1. Developing a landscape study and an inventory of the existing vegetation cover with a focus on the aged and large trees standing in the property, including information on their age, species, characteristics and health conditions; in this exercise, also take into account historic graphic and photographic documentation that may provide information on the evolution of the tree cover in the property over time.

3.2. Continuing to explore non-invasive investigative techniques for the property and commit to implementing non-invasive investigations if a suitable technique is identified.

### **4. Preservation of the overall World Heritage property**

*Central axis:*

4.1. Enhance urgently the protection of the large, excavated areas of archaeological remains between the Doan Mon Gate, the French Army Operations building and any other areas by providing protective measures to prevent adverse effects on exposed archaeological deposits including drainage system to prevent the rainwater infiltration into the excavated area;

*18 Hoang Dieu archaeological site*

4.2. Consider a suitable conservation of archaeological deposits including in-situ structures, artefacts, in particular wooden objects, within a controlled environment;

### *19-20th century elements*

4.3. Consider the urgent need of conservation for some of the small gates of the Nguyen period as well as of any other buildings that may be part of the attributes of the OUV as soon as these have been identified;

### *In general:*

4-4. Pursue further opportunities for collaborative international projects concerning the research on the Central Sector;

4-5. Consider a wider dissemination of results of archaeological research of the property beyond the Vietnamese language;

4-6. Provide details on buildings and structures that have been removed since inscription, especially with regard to the Dan Tri courtyard, in order to record the changes through time of the property.

## **5. For future excavation and demolitions beyond the seven-year plan**

5.1. Provide further detail on the long-term conservation and/or reconstruction of the Can Chinh Palace.

5.2. Provide any details of excavation plans, however general, for work beyond 2030, including the areas north of Hau Lau and how the results of excavations undertaken to date will inform future excavation plans.

5.3. Consider retaining some unexcavated sections of the citadel for long term preservation, to ensure availability for future archaeological research and more advanced investigative techniques.

## **6. Presentation, interpretation of the overall property**

6.1. Elaborate a policy document for the presentation and interpretation of the property, by for instance presenting how they intend to combine different exhibition spaces and in-situ elements in a way to optimize the public understanding of the past history.

6.2. Reflect on the presentation of the excavated areas by selecting specific areas to be left exposed to the public by ensuring the optimal conservation conditions as well as the visibility of the historical layers; for example, in situ exhibition with suitable protective measures such as glass tops;

6.3. Enhance the interpretation in museums and other exhibit spaces and possibly on-line and in published materials, combined with the display of in-situ conservation area, the exhibition panels and explanation materials which clarify its geomantic features, chronology, the research history and the main line of the historical, architectural and artistic evolution, allowing the contextualization of the historical evidence in the perspective of Vietnamese and world history.

6.4. Possibly elaborate a section presenting the interconnection with other parts of the World and other World Heritage sites (e.g. trade, religions,) to explain the values of the site as World Heritage transcending the national border, and as a particularly important place in global history.

6.5. Develop further the 3D simulation for the public to understand the possible configuration of Kinh Thien Palace and its surroundings. The application of new technological tools in architectural research, interpretation for exhibition, and digital documentation of the heritage sites could contribute to the enrichment of the public understanding of the heritage space.

6.6. Collect and compile historical maps, drawings and pictures of 18-20th centuries CE would enable the understanding of the successive alterations to the Central Sector, in particular with regard to Criterion vi.

## **7. Museums and Moveable heritage**

7.1. Submit the complete documentation on the planned and on-going museum projects to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS.

7.2. Ensure that the exhibition rooms in the main house and the storage house in Vaxuco building be equipped with appropriate climate control measures, such as protection of windows with UV film, temperature and moisture control.

7.3. Store objects in the storage rooms with appropriate spacing with the neighbouring objects and heavy and voluminous objects placed at the lower shelves.

7.4. Safekeep the copy of the electronic inventory and update on a second server.

7.5. Given the challenge of conserving a great number of excavated objects, establish a clear guidance on how to differentiate the objects by order of priority in terms of scientific and aesthetic values, and for the purpose of research. It is advised to prepare a specific storage for storing the types of objects which are not subject to the important research and public display, after thorough documentation.

7.6. To cope with these tasks, and to reinforce the capacity in interpretation and communication of knowledge, reinforce the team in charge of the conservation and management of collections and museum display and exhibition planning.

## **8. Others:**

Consider the expansion of the buffer zone to fully surround the property, to include the eastern part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Citadel, in order to ensure appropriate protection on the archaeological vestiges that could shed further light on the history of Thang Long.



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## Abbreviations

<b>AB(s)</b>	Advisory Body/Bodies
<b>Convention</b>	<a href="#"><i>Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage</i></a> (1972)
<b>HIA</b>	Heritage Impact Assessment
<b>ICCROM</b>	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
<b>ICOMOS</b>	International Council on Monuments and Sites
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>OGs</b>	<a href="#"><i>Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention</i></a>
<b>OUV</b>	Outstanding Universal Value
<b>SOC</b>	State of Conservation
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>WHC</b>	UNESCO World Heritage Centre

# 1 Background

“The Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi” (Viet Nam) was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2010 (Decision [34 COM 8B.22](#)) under Criteria (ii), (iii) and (vi), as the most important and best-preserved part of the ancient Imperial Citadel of Thang Long, located in the heart of the capital of Viet Nam.

The Imperial Citadel was built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by the Ly Dynasty, marking the independence of the Đại Việt. Built on the remains of a Chinese fortress dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, on drained land reclaimed from the Red River Delta in Hanoi, it was the centre of regional political power for almost thirteen centuries without interruption.

At its inscription, one of the recommendations by the World Heritage Committee was for the State Party to continue carrying out archaeological research to provide more information on the property and its historical development through time. Since the inscription of the property on the World Heritage List in 2010, the Vietnamese authorities have shown a strong commitment, including by the Prime Minister, to “continue to expand the archaeological excavation area, especially in the Hanoi Citadel, and strengthen research to clarify the value of architectural relics from the Pre-Thang Long period to the Nguyen Dynasty on the central axis of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi”.

They have been implementing oral, documentary, and archaeological research on the site, to comply with the ICOMOS evaluation at the time of inscription, which stated “an imperial citadel for which the architectural evidence of the dynastic periods earlier than the 19<sup>th</sup> century is either very incomplete or of only limited authenticity”; hence the recommendation by the World Heritage Committee at the time of inscription to enhance further research activities. The recommendation includes the need to “Strengthen and extend the archaeological study of the property;” and “Strengthen and extend the discussion of the perceptions of the authenticity and integrity of the property in the light of their complexity, which is attributable to the history of the Thang Long Citadel and the weakness of the architectural and urban evidence from the dynastic period.”

The 2010 ICOMOS evaluation also noted that “There is a certain number of secondary constructions that accompany the main buildings. Since many of them are later and without any particular architectural or visual interest, the State Party has announced that they will be demolished at an unspecified date. This part of the property also has many trees, most planted in the 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.”

Up to 2022, archaeological excavations were conducted over an area of 9,000 m<sup>2</sup> in the Central Sector. Vestiges of the main space of Kinh Thien Palace of the Le dynasty, main space of Long Thien Palace of the Nguyen dynasty, and cultural layers of Ly – Tran – Dinh – early Le dynasties and Dai La capital were exposed.

In September 2022, the Vietnamese authorities, at the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, organised an international conference dedicated to the property, which introduced

a scientific project to enhance the research activities in the Central Sector of the property. A set of documents were submitted in November 2022 and May 2023 to the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS presenting the results of previous historical research and archaeological excavations conducted between 2011 and 2022, following the recommendation by the World Heritage Committee at the time of inscription to enhance further research activities.

The objective of the future project as outlined was to carry out full excavation of and restoration of the Kinh Thien Palace, dating back to 15<sup>th</sup> century, in order to enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, as well as to promote cultural activities valorising intangible culture and community involvement at the site. In particular, the State Party expressed its will to further investigate the Central Sector, for which the removal of two colonial buildings would be necessary, in view of the potential restoration of the Kinh Thien Palace space, including a potential reconstruction of the palace itself.

In parallel, the Vietnamese authorities expressed interest in inviting a joint WHC/ICOMOS Advisory Mission to the property to consider the current state of scientific research and potential impacts of the suggested interventions in the Central Sector and assess whether they may affect the attributes supporting the OUV of the property, as well as provide advice on further steps to be taken in that regard.

A joint Advisory Mission was undertaken on 5-9 July 2023 and focused on the current state of affairs and desirable preparations for further exploring the possibilities of the following major developments:

- Full excavation of the Central Sector;
- Potential removal of archaeological remains within the inscribed area;
- Potential removal of some existing buildings within the inscribed area;
- Potential restoration of the Kinh Thien Palace and technical requirements to be fulfilled

In preparation of the advisory mission, the State Party shared two sets of documents, the first in December 2022 and the second in May 2023. The documents include the following:

## 2022

- Scientific Dossier of Research, Renovation of the Central Sector of the World Heritage Site of The Thang Long Imperial Citadel
- Brief Synthesis Report on Scientific Dossier of Research and Renovation of The Central Sector of The World Heritage Site Thang Long Citadel
- Five maps and drawings with captions in Vietnamese
- Minutes of the meeting between the Conservation Centre of the Thang Long Ha Noi Imperial Citadel and the UNESCO Office in Viet Nam

## 2023

- A Short film on the results of the archaeological excavations at Thang Long Citadel
- Dossier Summary Report on research and renovation of The Heritage Site: Central Sector of The Thang Long Imperial Citadel and proposed conservation methods for the French Army Operations Department Building (2023) - Draft
- Dossier Summary Report on research and renovation of The Heritage Site: Central Sector of The Thang Long Imperial Citadel and proposed conservation methods for the French Army Artillery Command Building

- Presentation on activities and achievements at the World Heritage Site the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long - Hà Nội (2010-2021) and new findings
- Report on the historical research of the Central Axis Area with Annexes of maps and photos (as separate document)
- Archaeological excavation procedures for the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi

Following the conclusion of the Advisory Mission, the State Party further shared with the mission experts the following documents:

1.1 Decision 696

1.2 Decision 975

1.3 Map 1

1.4 Map 2

1.5 Map 3

2. Thang Long Heritage Management Plan 14.11.22

3.1 Report of the documentation process and methodology

3.2 Operations department building (CT17) in 3D format

3.3 Aerial photo of buildings

4. Report on archaeological excavations

5. Map of the archaeological excavations

6. List of typical artifacts

7. List of the buildings at Thang Long site

8. Annexes of photos

8. Summary Report on the LIDAR application to the Central Sector

Additional Comments

WHC-ICOMOS Advisory Mission, participant list

These documents are provided as annexes to the present report.

## **The property and its Outstanding Universal Value**

The property was recognised as a site of successive historical layers, witnessing the history of Viet Nam, from its independence from China, establishment of a local Viet dynasty, French colonial period, War of Independence and the War of Unification in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The World Heritage Committee inscribed the property on the World Heritage List in 2010 and in 2011 approved the following Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

### **Brief Synthesis**

*The Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long -- Hanoi, located in the heart of the capital of Viet Nam, is the most important and best-preserved part of the ancient Imperial Citadel of Thang Long. The Thang Long Imperial Citadel was built in the 11th century by the Vietnamese Ly Dynasty, marking the independence of the Đại Việt. It was built on the remains of a Chinese fortress dating from the 7th century, on drained land reclaimed from the Red River Delta in Hanoi. It was the centre of regional political power for almost thirteen centuries without interruption.*

*The buildings of the Imperial Citadel and the remains in the 18 Hoàng Diệu Archaeological Site reflect a unique South-East Asian culture specific to the lower Red River Valley, at the crossroads of influences coming from China in the north and the ancient Kingdom of Champa in the south.*

*The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long is characterized by its longevity and continuity as a seat of power, evidenced by different archaeological levels and monuments.*

**Criterion (ii):** *The Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi bears witness to the meeting of influences coming mainly from China in the north and the Kingdom of Champa in the south. It expresses a set of intercultural exchanges which shaped a unique culture in the lower Red River Valley.*

**Criterion (iii):** *The Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long bears witness to the long cultural tradition of the Việt populations established in the Delta and the lower Red River Valley. It was a continuous seat of power from the 7th century through to the present day.*

**Criterion (vi):** *The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long at Hanoi, with its political function and symbolic role, is directly associated with numerous and important cultural and historical events, and leading artistic expressions and moral, philosophical, and religious ideas. The succession of these events marks the formative and development process of an independent nation over more than a thousand years, including the colonial period and the two contemporary Wars of Independence and reunification of Viet Nam.*

### **Integrity**

*The continuity of its political role is demonstrated by the archaeological elements brought to light and by the later built elements of the Thang Long Citadel. In spite of absent and not always very visible evidence, the conditions of integrity in terms of the architecture, structure and landscaping of the property are acceptable. The very promising archaeological vestiges of the 18 Hoàng Diệu site must be completed by a study programme on the scale of the property for confirmation of the archaeological integrity.*

### **Authenticity**

*The degree of authenticity expressed by the architecture of Thang Long corresponds to buildings of the late 19th and the 20th centuries. Older buildings, dating back to the dynastic periods, notably the Doan Mon Gate and the Hau Lau Palace, have been restored and modified. However, these changes*



*are related to the political history of the property. Over the long historical period of the Citadel of Thang Long, the archaeological authenticity of the property is good, even if expressed by only a small excavation area. The degree of authenticity of the architecture is variable depending on the period examined, being more satisfactory for the contemporary and colonial buildings.*

The approved Statement of Outstanding Universal Value is articulated around the fact that the Citadel is an important historical symbol of the Đại Việt's independence in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and the site's uninterrupted existence as the centre of political power for almost 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, even of different powers- Chinese until the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Viet between 11<sup>th</sup> and the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and then, again between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century under the French colonial power, and then by independent Viet Nam today, and successive rebuilding and extensions.

### **Attributes Supporting the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)**

Neither the nomination dossier nor the Management Plans include a list of the attributes of the property supporting the Outstanding Universal Value. Following more than ten years of archaeological research and after the management entity of the Central Sector of Thang Long - Hanoi Citadel has been handed over most of the assets forming the property, and can therefore have full access to it, it seems now the right time to make an overall appraisal of the outcomes of the research and of the information being collected in inventorying the property to define the attributes of OUV. This is a crucial undertaking that is preliminary to any further intervention and that the State Party would need to carry out with maximum urgency, in order to clarify which attributes convey the approved Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and hence should be the object of conservation and management actions, as well as the essential reference on which a possible Heritage Impact Assessment could be designed and conducted to evaluate potential impacts of future interventions on the OUV.

For the purpose of the present report and on the basis of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, as well as certain parts of the nomination dossier and the Management Plans, the mission has preliminarily clarified key attributes that support the Outstanding Universal Value of the property in the following:

- The layout and the morphology of Thang Long Imperial Citadel, in particular of the Central Sector, with its north-south axis and its siting reflecting the application of geomantic principles, is still clearly perceivable from the south-north sequence of the pre-French surviving standing structures (the Flag Tower, the Doan Mon Gate, the Dragon Steps, the Hau Lau Palace and the North Gate), by the site of the Kinh Thien Palace, and further highlighted by the remains of the royal path from different centuries that have been uncovered through the excavations between the Southern Gate and into the Operations Building, and by the foundations of the royal palace;
- The cultural layering and the development of a distinctive cultural tradition from long-lasting cultural interchanges. These are illustrated by multi-layered archaeological remains of built structures, water management systems and associated abundant archaeological finds uncovered in the Central Axis and 18 Hoang Dieu site. They include architectural elements and cultural artefacts, many of which exhibit high artistic qualities in addition to their information potential about the achievements of the royal dynasties that occupied the site. These

archaeological finds are now complemented by those being excavated in the area between the Southern Gate and the French colonial Operations Building. The most recent historical events that occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are illustrated by various buildings and standing structures, erected and used during the Nguyen period, the French colonial presence and subsequently by the military forces of independent Viet Nam, as well as by the landscape arrangements that were mostly introduced by the French.

- Landscaping elements and trees dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- The intangible heritage associated with the ancestral worship as practiced in the area now occupied by the French Army Artillery Command Building as well as the other socio-cultural practices that bear roots in the historical uses and practices within the Citadel and that are today re-enacted to give meaning and life to the property such as the water puppet shows, usages of past costumes, and oral transmission of the knowledge through communities of use, among others.

The integrity and authenticity of the property rely particularly on the archaeological remains, which, with the excavations carried out since the inscription up to the present day, have been enhanced. At the time of inscription, the conditions of integrity, with regard to architecture, structure and landscaping, were found to be acceptable despite “absent or not always visible evidence”. Most recent buildings were indicated to be more authentic compared to older ones, as these underwent restoration and modifications, related to the political history of the property.

The axuality of the Central Sector of the Citadel is not readily apparent due to the presence of various buildings erected during the French colonial presence, which was used subsequently by the Vietnamese military forces. The buildings of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries show an uneven level of architectural significance, most being essentially functional structures. However, some of these buildings can be considered of symbolic meaning in relation to the Thang Long Citadel being a place recurrently sought after as a seat of power. For instance, building D67 and the associated underground bunker which reflect the struggle for independence and reunification of Viet Nam; tangible evidence of the colonial period also reflects “the formative and development process of an independent nation over more than a thousand years including the colonial period and the two contemporary Wars of Independence and reunification of Viet Nam” as expressed by the justification of criterion (vi).

Consultation with ICOMOS and the WHC on the way forward to further clarify the attributes supporting the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, as a clear basis for the management, preservation and any interventions on the property, is advisable.

As a first step towards a more detailed clarification of the attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value, it would be extremely useful if the State Party can prepare a detailed inventory of all buildings and structures currently existing in the property and its buffer zones, with plans, photographs and a brief description and information on each of them as a basis for the further elaboration and detailing of the attributes. The archaeological remains uncovered through excavations appear much more systematically documented than the standing structures and buildings, and it seems easier to use the documentation prepared by the State Party on the archaeological relics as a basis for the identification of attributes pertaining to archaeology.

### **Intangible and Living aspects of the property**

This property appears to always have been a significant centre of religious/ritual significance and national political symbolism for the people of Vietnam even during the military occupation. This was stated during the presentations, but more so during the stakeholder meetings where some representatives asserted that they always passed by and gave prayers facing the Citadel despite the fact that they had no access to the space. Today, however, the religious/ritual practices have been allowed and encouraged and do take place, including within the central shrine located in one of the rooms of the Artillery building. The mission team visited this space, and its significance was carefully explained.

In addition to the religious/ritual practices that are carried within it, this property occupies a place of central national political importance. It does not only have archaeological material from the property (in addition to the ones excavated at the parliament building) displayed in the precinct of the National Parliament, the most powerful political institution representing the Vietnamese people, but has become the place of a must visit for visiting dignitaries, including heads of state, the UN, and UNESCO. In this way, this living space is playing a critical role in not only explaining the origins and development of the Vietnamese nation, but also the concept of the Vietnamese national identity.

The Citadel has also become a meeting place and a cultural venue for various groups ranging from school children, who come to learn archaeology, history and other facets of the past of their nation, to elderly citizens whose interests focus more on the ritual and religious use of the space. It is not uncommon also to see visitors wearing traditional costumes, similar to the ones used during the reign of the emperors, moving around and taking photos (probably for their social media).

One of the most impressive aspects of the living heritage practiced within the Citadel is the famous Vietnamese theatrical art associated with royal entertainment, the water puppet show. This long-standing tradition has been revived at the Citadel and the mission was treated to a performance. It is indeed an outstanding intangible heritage that mixes both art and theatre, and the Citadel has an opportunity and responsibility to safeguard this cultural practice.

All these make the property alive, living and relevant to the communities around.

It is important to further assess both tangible and intangible aspects of the OUV that could be at risk. This should include potential impacts on the integrated approach to nature and the universe that created unique and important traditions associated with the Citadel.

## 2. Mission Findings

Over the course of its three days, the mission visited the World Heritage property “Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi”, held numerous consultation sessions with representatives of the State Party, and studied the following elements:

### 2.1. Overall state of conservation of the property, notably on the state of the attributes supporting its OUV

The property is comprised of two adjoining areas, crossed by Hoang Dieu Street; the first is a long strip of land corresponding to the north-south (or central) axis of the ancient Citadel of the Imperial Capital Thang Long, whilst the second is comprised of an L-shaped archaeological area (18 Hoang Dieu) where excavations since 2002 have uncovered the long history of the property.

The overall state of conservation of the property can be considered between good and acceptable; although, given its size and the number of buildings included within it, a number of structures show the need for continued maintenance and conservation measures. This applies particularly to some of the smaller gates of the Nguyen period that penetrate the walls delimiting the various parts of the citadel, some of which appear in urgent need of conservation works.

#### 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century standing structures







*19<sup>th</sup> century gates in the Citadel © Luisa De Marco*

The draft Management Plan of the property (Section 6.2 Conservation Status of Monuments) provides a synthetic but comprehensive state of conservation of the monuments and key built structures included in the property with indication of the necessary remedial actions.

The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings related to the French colonial and post-independence periods appear overall in an acceptable state of conservation although in need of maintenance. The Management Plan envisages for the buildings of this period either conservation/restoration or conversion to different heritage uses, in relation to their function and heritage value.

The French Army Artillery Command Building (hereafter referred to as “Artillery Building”), one of the French colonial structures mentioned explicitly in the nomination dossier, because it sits on the site of the Long Thien Palace, which replaced the Kinh Thien Palace in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, is reported to be in a precarious structural condition. At the moment, the front façade of the Artillery Building is not visible because it is covered with a real-scale two-dimensional hypothetical representation of the Kinh Thien Palace. In front of the building, an altar has been installed to perform worshipping rituals before entering the building, where a shrine dedicated to the Viet kings and their ancestors has been installed in one of the rooms on the ground floor.

The visit to the Artillery Building allowed the mission to ascertain that it suffers from the effects of rainwater leakages in some rooms of the first floor and of a general lack of maintenance, whilst on the ground floor the rooms that were visited appeared in a good state of conservation.

The rear and lateral façades exhibit the typical decay phenomena caused by inadequate rainwater drainage and humidity, including mold growth, peeling paint, localised pulverization and flaking.

Because of water infiltration, it is possible that some of the structures might have suffered and partially lost their efficiency. The staircase to access the first floor was said to be not fully efficient from a structural point of view.



*Artillery Building. Rear façade © Luisa de Marco*





*Artillery Building main room first floor © Luisa De Marco*

The northern section of the central axis area was handed over by the Ministry of Defence only a few years ago. Only two colonial period buildings destined to be retained were visited during the mission: the Vaxuco Building and the adjacent construction, to the south, housing part of the collection of archaeological objects unearthed during the excavations. From what could be seen from the open spaces surrounding the visited buildings, it appears that the northern section of the property includes several constructions.

A comprehensive conservation, restoration and rehabilitation intervention has begun and is ongoing on the Vaxuco Building, located in the northern portion of the central sector of the Citadel. The Vaxuco Building was not explicitly mentioned in the nomination dossier, most probably because the northern section of the Central Sector of Thang Long Imperial Citadel was still under the management and use by the Ministry of Defence and therefore not fully accessible for research and documentation. This is an L-shaped imposing two-storey building with a mansard-type roof. The building was erected by the French to house the Military Intendence and then reused by the Vietnamese Army.

A rehabilitation project to adapt the building as a museum to exhibit the findings of the archaeological excavations carried out at the property has been developed and is under implementation. The building has been structurally reinforced with the introduction of steel structures that are meant to remain visible. The roof structure has been preserved as well as the staircases and their wooden balustrades. Windows and shutters have been either repaired or, mostly, replaced with new wooden elements reproducing the

ones that were found in the building. The Vietnamese team explained that, where necessary, the window glasses will be coated with UV filters. Original staircases have been maintained and their wooden elements (e.g. railings, steps) await conservation intervention.

The mission provided some recommendations on how to improve the finishing of the exteriors and preserve the architectural conception of the façades through a careful study of the original palette of the colour shades. Recommendations were also provided to ensure that the exhibition and storage of the archaeological artefacts in the building guarantees optimal conditions for their conservation. These recommendations are detailed below in the section of the report concerning presentation and interpretation of archaeological research.

Overall, the project seems respectful of the architectural characteristics and qualities of the Vaxuco Building; however, the mission could not examine all the details of such a large-scale project. Therefore, it would be useful if the State Party could share the documentation of the project with the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS, while its implementation is still ongoing so that more thorough technical advice from the Advisory Body on the project implementation can be developed.



*Main Façade of Vaxuco Building under restoration © Luisa De Marco*



*Vaxuco Building. Main Staircase under restoration. it has been structurally reinforced but awaits surface restoration © Luisa De Marco*





*Vaxuco Building. Structural reinforcement with steel beams.*

*The added structure will remain visible. © Luisa De Marco*

### **18 Hoang Dieu Archaeological Site**

The archaeological area at 18 Hoang Dieu Street is currently covered with two temporary shelters that protect the archaeological remains; superelevated paths allow visitors to access the archaeological site. The mission undertook a short, night-time visit of this site in the evening of 7 July 2023, hence our observations are limited.



*Well uncovered on the archaeological site of 18 Hoang Dieu ©UNESCO2023\_N. HAYASHI*

Immediately before the entrance to the archaeological remains, a Lapidarium has been arranged to exhibit the pillar bases found in the excavation. It would be useful for both archaeologists and non-archaeologists if explanations could be provided about the exact location they were found, whether they all belong to the same building or to more than one building, what was their original location and reciprocal position so that the visitors can better understand their original function.

The 18 Hoang Dieu Street site also contains the archaeological remains of a small, wooden boat. This artefact has been left in situ and carefully re-covered by fabric and soil to aid its preservation. In the long term the preferred approach would be to re-excavate the boat and employ a suitably experienced

specialist to conserve the wooden elements within a controlled environment. This would provide an interesting centrepiece for the citadel's exhibitions. While there has been extensive archaeological excavation in the 18 Hoang Dieu Street site the remains for non-archaeologists still presents a fragmentary, and somewhat disjointed perspective on the history of buildings in this area. Buildings from different periods are represented by multiple isolated features, often difficult to relate to the broader architectural layout of the area.

The presentation of this archaeological site, although challenging to non-archaeologists, does demonstrate the long and diversified occupation of the site as well as the environmental conditions prevailing at different times. There are numerous wells, in particular, representing different periods of occupation, most of which were carefully constructed and walled with stone. This particular part of the site also demonstrates the role played by waterways as the Citadel was located in an area surrounded by the Red River and extensive wetlands, as recorded in historical records. Numerous finds from this site, as well as other excavated areas within the Citadel and the National Assembly building, are now exhibited in the underground museum of the imposing, modern centre of political power, the National Assembly. The archaeological area at 18 Hoang Dieu Street itself is currently covered with two temporary shelters that protect the archaeological remains with the provision of paths that allow visitors to access the archaeological site.

## **Central Axis**

With regard to the archaeological remains, the mission visited archaeological areas where excavations are still ongoing, namely the area between Doan Mon Gate and the French Army Operations Department Building (hereinafter referred to as "Operations Building"), the excavation trenches opened inside and adjacent to the northern side of the Operations Building, as well as the trench opened to the immediate west of the Artillery Building.

The archaeological remains uncovered in the area between the Doan Mon Gate and the Operations Building appear in remarkably good condition and the stratigraphy of the different periods, particularly of the 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, are clearly distinguishable. Excavations in this area are exposed to weathering, even though temporary sheet covers are used to protect the most fragile parts, such as the stratigraphic sections. This also demonstrates the challenges brought about by large scale excavations of different occupational layers.

The archaeological trench opened on the western side of the Artillery Building is protected by a temporary roof, so is not prone to direct ingress of rainwater.

Other areas explored archaeologically have been reburied for protection, but could be retrieved, if needed, for research or conservation/ restoration and enhancement.

The most urgently needed intervention appears to be the protection of the archaeological remains uncovered in the large area between the Doan Mon Gate and the Operations Building, as they are exposed to the sun, rains, humidity and weathering; the creation of a temporary drainage system that can prevent the rainwater from infiltrating the excavated area and stagnating there would also be advisable. It appears that the water table in this general area is close to the surface and therefore water has high potential to inundate the trenches. A sustainable way of dealing with this is needed, especially if these remains are going to remain exposed.



Earlier excavations undertaken to the immediate north of the Doan Mon Gate have remained exposed with a glass roof covering the area. This glass roof is situated just above the modern ground surface and acts as a glass floor for visitors to be able to view the remains. The opening between the top and where it is connected to the ground allows circulation of air and ensures proper visibility despite the humid conditions. It is not clear, however, whether this approach will be replicated in other areas of the citadel, or even whether this glass structure will be retained at this location in the long term. It would be good if particular sections of the excavated areas, especially part of the royal pathway between Doan Mon Gate and the Operations Building, could be visible (e.g. similar glass and steel protection structure) for visitors to see and experience the archaeological remains attesting to the long-standing role of Thang Long as a seat of power. This is particularly important since the exposed route, which looks well-preserved, is a few meters below the present ground surface.

Other areas of excavation in the citadel, such as the southwest corner and the areas east of Hau Lau (Figure 1), have presumably all been backfilled: not all former excavation areas were visited during the Advisory Mission due to limited time and the expansive site.

## **2.2. Evaluation of the project of full excavation beneath the partially excavated Long Thien Palace to reveal the earlier and larger Kinh Thien Palace of the Le Trung Hung period (15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century) and the following historical restoration of its main spaces**

The mission studied the proposed project, notably in relation to the points below:

### **The scope and extent of research and excavation conducted since the inscription of the property (2010)**

Archaeological investigations undertaken since 2010 have targeted multiple areas across the citadel (Figure 1). Since 2010, excavations have revealed extensive architectural remains from each of the citadel's dynastic periods, revealing the long and continuous history of the precinct. Excavations in the southwest and northeast of the Dan Tri courtyard, have revealed the pillared, corridor structures that flank the central courtyard, as well as the courtyard surface itself. Excavation of the main palace structure in the central location has been limited, due to the presence of colonial structures, notably the contested French period Artillery Building where the central ritual area is also located. Small trenches were excavated in 2011 near both sets of dragon steps, but the results provide only a small glimpse into the history of this area.

Despite large-scale excavations being undertaken in a number of areas, including the royal pathway, which helps make the site more understandable, there are other areas whereby the interpretation of the archaeological remains is still based on minimal evidence. For instance, the layout of pillared pavilions in the southwest of the Dan Tri courtyard during the Le So dynasty (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century) is based on fragmentary and incomplete archaeological remains; only a few pillar bases and foundation trenches are included within the relevant plans of the site (Figure 2).

Despite extensive excavations since 2010, only two discrete excavation areas within the main citadel were visible during the Advisory Mission:

1. the central, Dan Tri Courtyard located between the southern Doan Mon Gate and the large colonial 'Operations' Building; and
2. a small area to the immediate west of the colonial 'Artillery' Building.

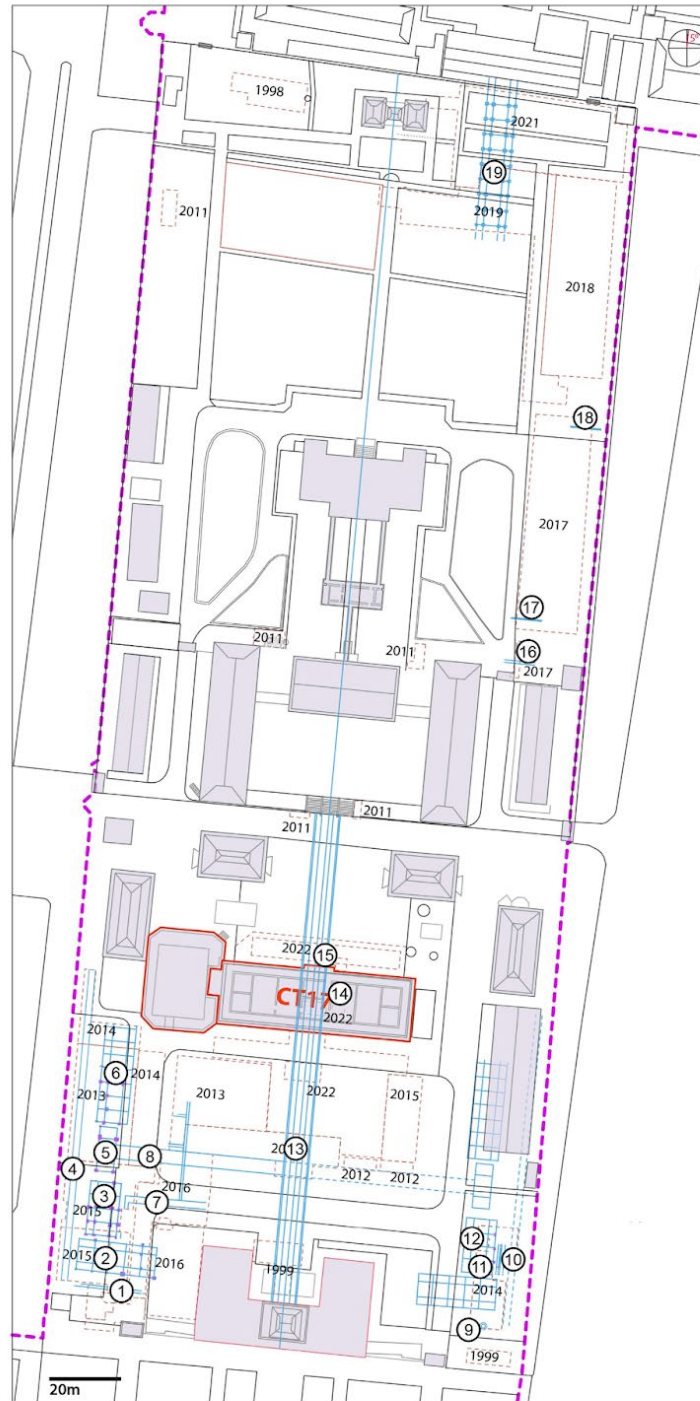
### Dan Tri Courtyard

A large excavation area is located between the southern Doan Mon Gate and the Operations Building (see 2022 areas in Figure 2), and even extends into the basement of the Operations Building. Excavation in this area has exposed large sections of the Dan Tri paved courtyard flanking the royal path leading to the Kinh Thien Palace (Revival Le dynasty, 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century). This courtyard is associated with dark-grey stone pavers, which are visible across much of the excavation area, and which was encountered in excavations in other areas of the citadel. The surface of the royal pathway along the central axis, however, has not survived, as the higher quality tiles here were likely re-used in later periods. In the few areas where the dark grey paved courtyard has not survived, excavation has continued into deeper levels, where older elements associated with the Kinh Thien Palace (Le Dynasty, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century) were identified. Small sections of the earlier Le dynasty courtyard surface, which is characterized by large, square terracotta tiles, were also exposed. As might be expected with excavations within a courtyard, few structural remains were encountered from either the Le or Revival Le dynasties. Foundations of an even earlier gate structure and fragments of a water management system, something that appear to be common were revealed, belonging to the Ly Dynasty (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century). The presence of the large colonial Operations Building has prevented a more extensive exposure of the Kinh Thien Palace courtyard, and the State Party is seeking to remove this building to allow excavation to continue to the north, linking the Doan Mon Gate, Dan Tri Courtyard, Dragon Steps and to the area now occupied by the Artillery Building and reckoned to be the site of the successive palaces of the emperors including the Dien Kinh Thien palace. Excavation in this area will help provide a direct archaeological link between this area and the area north of the Operations Building, where a large open courtyard was believed to have existed throughout the majority of the palace's use.

Figure 2: Diagram of archaeological excavation in Kinh Thien Palace  
Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi



**Figure 1: Site plan of Hanoi Ancient Citadel**  
 (source 5. Map of the archaeological excavations Figure 2)



**Figure 2: Archaeological traces of Le So dynasty**  
 (source 5. Map of the archaeological excavations Figure 6)





*Excavation undertaken south of the Operations Building © Matthew Whincop*



*Excavation undertaken within the basement of the Operations Building © Matthew Whincop*





*Gray pavers (where two people are standing) exposed in Tri Dan north of Doan Mon Gate (rear)*

© Matthew Whincop



*Prof Tin indicating the paved areas flanking the absent royal path © Matthew Whincop*





*Earlier, finer terracotta pavers exposed in deeper excavations © Matthew Whincop*



**General outline of Dan Tri courtyard and surrounding structures © State Party**  
(source SP 4. Report on archaeological excavations, p. 20)



### French Artillery Command Building

The excavation area located to the immediate west of the Artillery Building, which, according to historical research, occupies the original location of the primary palace of the citadel, is a much smaller excavation area (not depicted in Figure 1 above).



*Excavation area behind the Artillery building ©UNESCO2023\_N.HAYASHI*





*Excavation area behind the Artillery building ©UNESCO2023\_N.HAYASHI*

The trench here has exposed some archaeological deposits, but precious few structural elements. Two possible pillar foundation trenches from the Kinh Thien Palace (Le Dynasty) have been excavated, but no other elements survive. This excavation area is small and largely constrained by existing colonial buildings, including the locally unpopular Artillery Building; the State Party is seeking to remove this

building to allow excavation to continue to the east in order to investigate the location of the main palace building and to enable the reinstallation of the altar to the kings' ancestors and worship site that is now placed inside the Artillery Building. The Artillery Building only partially occupies the Palace site: its forecourt, which features several large trees, was originally also occupied by the palace. Access to the main palace terrace is via two sets of stone dragon steps (Le Dynasty), which form part of the Royal Path along the citadel's central axis. Historical documents and photographs indicate that the latest Thang Long Palace, which was located in this area, was removed by the French military in the late nineteenth century. The Artillery Building was deliberately constructed on this same site. Hence, the presence of the Artillery Building does prevent archaeologists investigating the main, central palace building associated with each phase of the citadel. Some experimental geophysical surveys have been undertaken at the citadel, with the investigators concluding that the long sequence of buildings and intrusive modern elements severely hinder the efficacy of most techniques. Non-invasive technologies are often not fully effective amongst multiple modern structures; they are better suited to large, open areas with minimal modern intrusions. Nevertheless, the geophysical investigators concluded that non-invasive techniques "can contribute to determining the distribution of objects buried in the archaeological site of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long" (8. LIDAR report: p. 6). While this may be true, the large excavations so far carried out particularly in the areas between Doan Mon Gate and the Operations Building show very dense concentration and mixed nature of archaeological materials in nearly every layer. This may make it very difficult to make sense of the findings in the absence of real excavation. Geophysics might be able to shed some light on the outline of subsurface structures, but excavation will be needed to effectively date and fully understand the nature of these archaeological deposits.

The State Party advised that all excavation areas within the main citadel will be backfilled upon completion of excavation, although this has not happened at 18 Hoang Dieu site and the area south of the Doan Mon Gate. This has also not yet happened at the excavation areas between Doan Mon Gate and the Operations Building, some of which were excavated in 2012 and 2013 (Figure 1). While the back filling may be advisable and would create a more uniform landscape within the property, there may be a need to identify some key areas/features for in situ exhibition with possible glass tops for real experience, also to let visitors appreciate the multiple levels of occupation of the Central Sector of the Citadel throughout the centuries. This may apply to among others some parts of the royal path as well as portions of the palace should this be unearthed. For non-archaeologists and particularly the general public such visual experience rather than just diagrams may be more fulfilling.

#### Archaeological Methods Used

According to the SP, all excavations within the citadel have been undertaken in accordance with national standards for archaeological research, exploration and excavation, as contained within the *Law on Cultural Heritage 2001* (Law No. 28/2001/QH10), revised *Law on Cultural Heritage 2009* (Law No. 32/2009/QH12) and the *Regulation on Archaeological Excavation and Exploration 2008* (Decision No. 86/2008/QD-BVHTTDL). Article 17 of the Regulation outlines the minimum archaeological excavation process (see Appendix A below). The first of three phases in this process is that considerable preparatory work is undertaken *before* excavation begins, including research into the site, preparation of a detailed excavation methodology and schedule, and recruitment of technical staff with "sufficient moral qualities and working capacity." Archaeological excavation constitutes the second phase of the process, which follows a clear procedure:



- Make an exact map of the excavation area;
- Clear the excavation area;
- Conduct excavation of the site's stratigraphic units according to 'traditional' methods;
- Undertake a preliminary classification of artefacts; and
- Maintain a dig diary during the process.

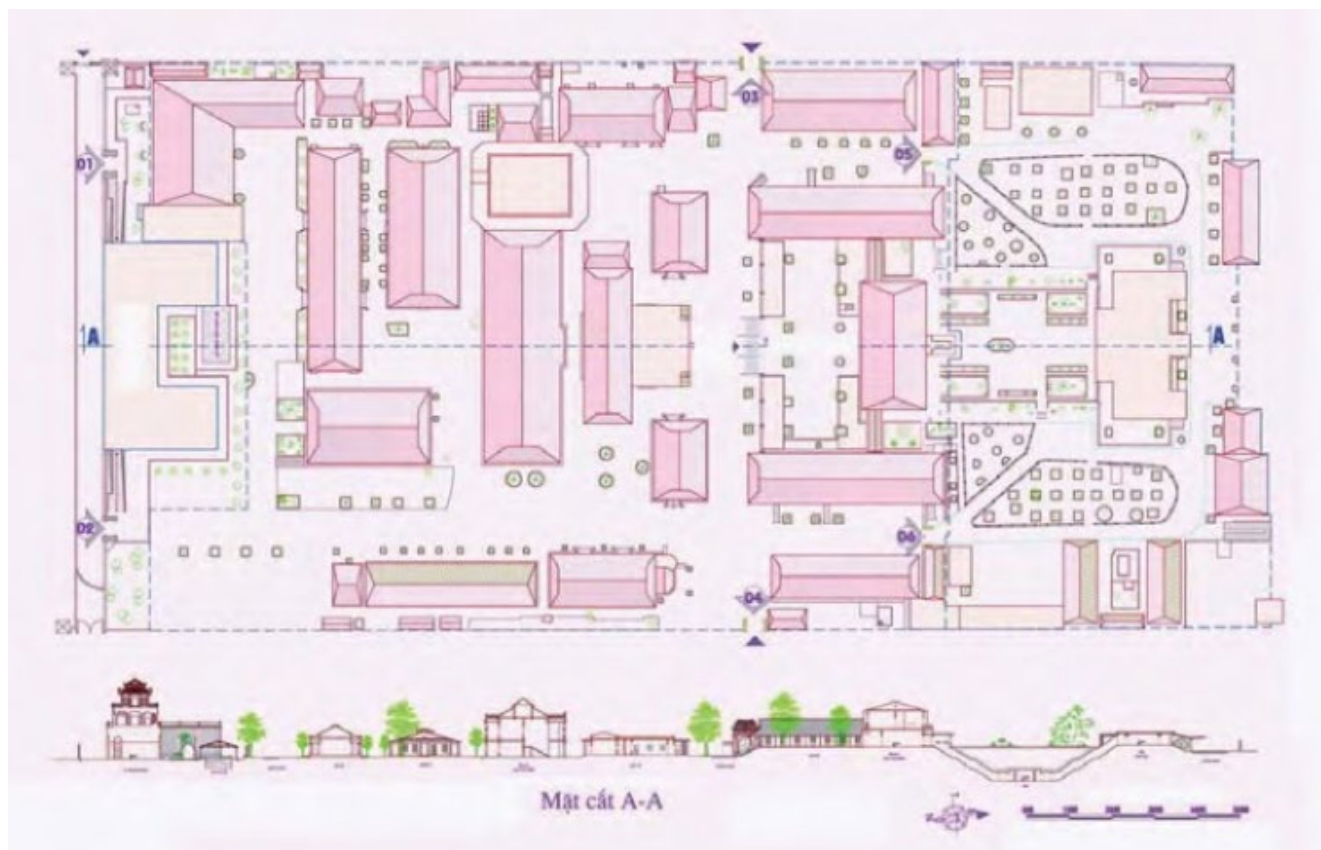
These 'National Standards' accord well with International Best Practice. The focus in these standards appears to be largely on good documentation of careful excavation. The National Standards do not focus much on conservation, post-excavation treatment of finds, sustainable development of the site, stakeholder engagement, assessment of impacts, and establishing significance. Despite the above observation the mission's visit to the newly established documentation and conservation centre/storage showed good practice including in the treatment of the material, classification, documentation and storage. Furthermore, during the stakeholder meeting, it emerged that stakeholders including the local UNESCO Association, and the community representatives were aware of the excavations and the results. Prof Tin was specifically cited as having been involved in the site for many years with great dedication to the archaeology of the Citadel, even when some people were sceptical of the activity.

During the site visit, it was clear that the State Party has followed the national excavation procedure very closely. Large areas of the site have been excavated according to stratigraphic units. Excavation was carefully controlled and recorded, with all relevant archaeological standards applied, such as the use of a total station to accurately record stratigraphic levels, detailed photographic recording, and measured drawings of finds and stratigraphic sections. Excavation was clearly conducted in a carefully controlled manner, with appropriate small hand tools evident during the site visit (e.g. trowels, small mattocks, brushes); no evidence of large-scale machine excavation was evident. There is some concern that the archaeologists have preferred an approach that emphasizes a large open area excavation, with large sections of a stratum exposed simultaneously and few baulks (i.e. retained sections) maintained between trenches. This is not necessarily poor technique, but it does demonstrate a greater emphasis being placed on horizontal exposures, and less consideration given to the vertical relationship between strata. This technique is often employed when the methodology is focused on large architectural remains, rather than stratigraphy and the sequence of site history.

The national legislation on cultural heritage requires that the results of all excavations be disseminated through publication and the exhibition of relics. To date, the vast majority of archaeological publications is limited to the Vietnamese language. While this may not necessarily be a negative thing as it promotes the heritage locally among the Vietnamese, decolonizing the subject of archaeology and truly making it community-centred in nature as opposed to an elitist and foreign language dominated, it does have its shortfall at international level. Thus as a result of the limitation in language, archaeological data is less available for the wider academic and global community to appreciate and assess. Further publication should seek to explore dissemination to a wider audience, and foster international research collaborations.

Recent excavations in the citadel have targeted the Dan Tri courtyard area located between the Doan Mon Gate and the Operations Building. A plan of the citadel provided in the Nomination Dossier clearly depicts three large colonial buildings located in this area that, presumably, have been removed; they

certainly were not present during the site visit (Figure 4). The three buildings are of a similar orientation, size and roof structure as the other known colonial buildings of the citadel. Another, fourth building to the north of the Operations Building also appears to have been removed since the preparation of the plan. It is not clear, however, when these buildings were removed; whether prior to, or since inscription on the World Heritage List (the date of the plan, or its currency at time of inscription, is unknown).



**Figure 4: Site plan of Hanoi Ancient Citadel (north to right)**  
(Source: Drawing 3, Nomination Dossier, p. 34)

The image above suggests that at the time of inscription more buildings were still standing compared to 2023, when the advisory mission visited the property; namely between Moan Don Gate and the Operations Building and between the latter and the Artillery Building. Furthermore, to the west of Moan Don Gate another building is indicated in the map that the mission did not see in July 2023.

Considering the extensive research already completed, the mission considers that this research could be given wider resonance if the State Party develop further opportunities for collaborative international projects and commit to wider dissemination of archaeological results beyond the Vietnamese language.

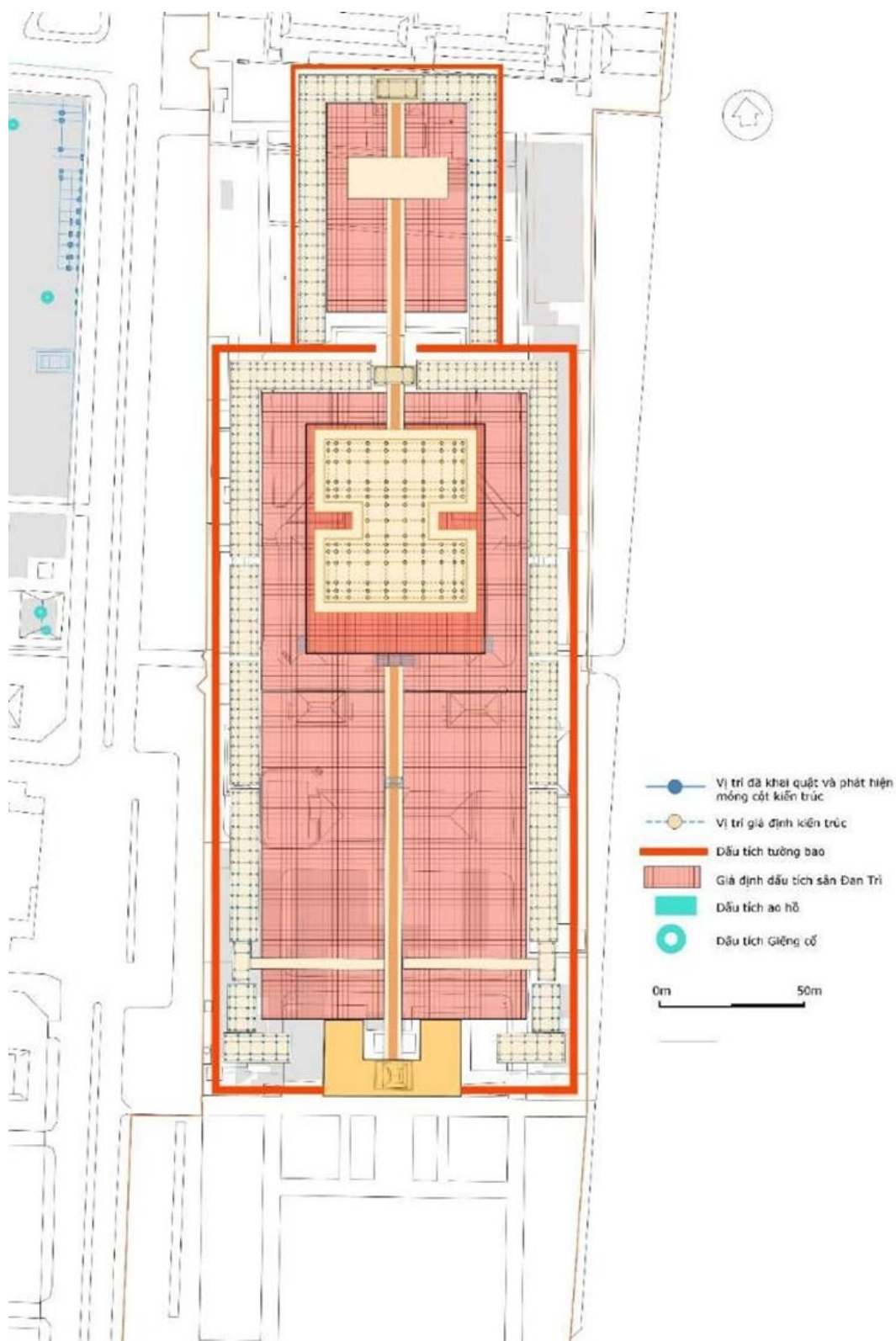
It would be equally important if the State Party could provide details on which buildings and structures have been removed since inscription, especially with regard to the Dan Tri courtyard. This will contribute to understanding the site through time including creation of archival material of changes through time.

**Full scope of the area considered for future excavation and whether it is foreseen that further excavations and demolitions would be undertaken beyond the current seven-year plan.**

The State Party has outlined a proposed seven-year project of archaeological excavations within the main citadel area. This project will initially focus on the remains of the Kinh Thien Palace of the Le Dynasty (15th-18th century), and the Dan Tri Courtyard, which forms the central, most-important space of the ancient citadel, other than the emperor's main palace (Figure 6). These areas are considered sacred to Vietnamese society and define their identity as an independent sovereign state with a long history of over one thousand years of independence. It is envisaged that by 2025, the excavation program will broaden its scope to include the Can Chinh Palace (emperor's daily workplace), believed to be located to the north of the Kinh Thien Palace (Figure 5). The seven-year project outline includes:

- 2023: Conduct excavation to have all traces of Dan Tri yard from the area of the Operations Department Building to the front of dragon steps of Kinh Thien Palace.
- 2024: Conduct exploration and excavation around the foundation of Long Thien Palace to learn the structure and scale of Kinh Thien Palace.
- 2025: Focus the excavation on the northern area of Kinh Thien Main Hall, which is adjacent to the area predicted to be Can Chinh Palace; basically, finish the entire exploration of the scale of Kinh Thien main hall.
- 2026-2030: Excavate the space of Can Chanh Palace.

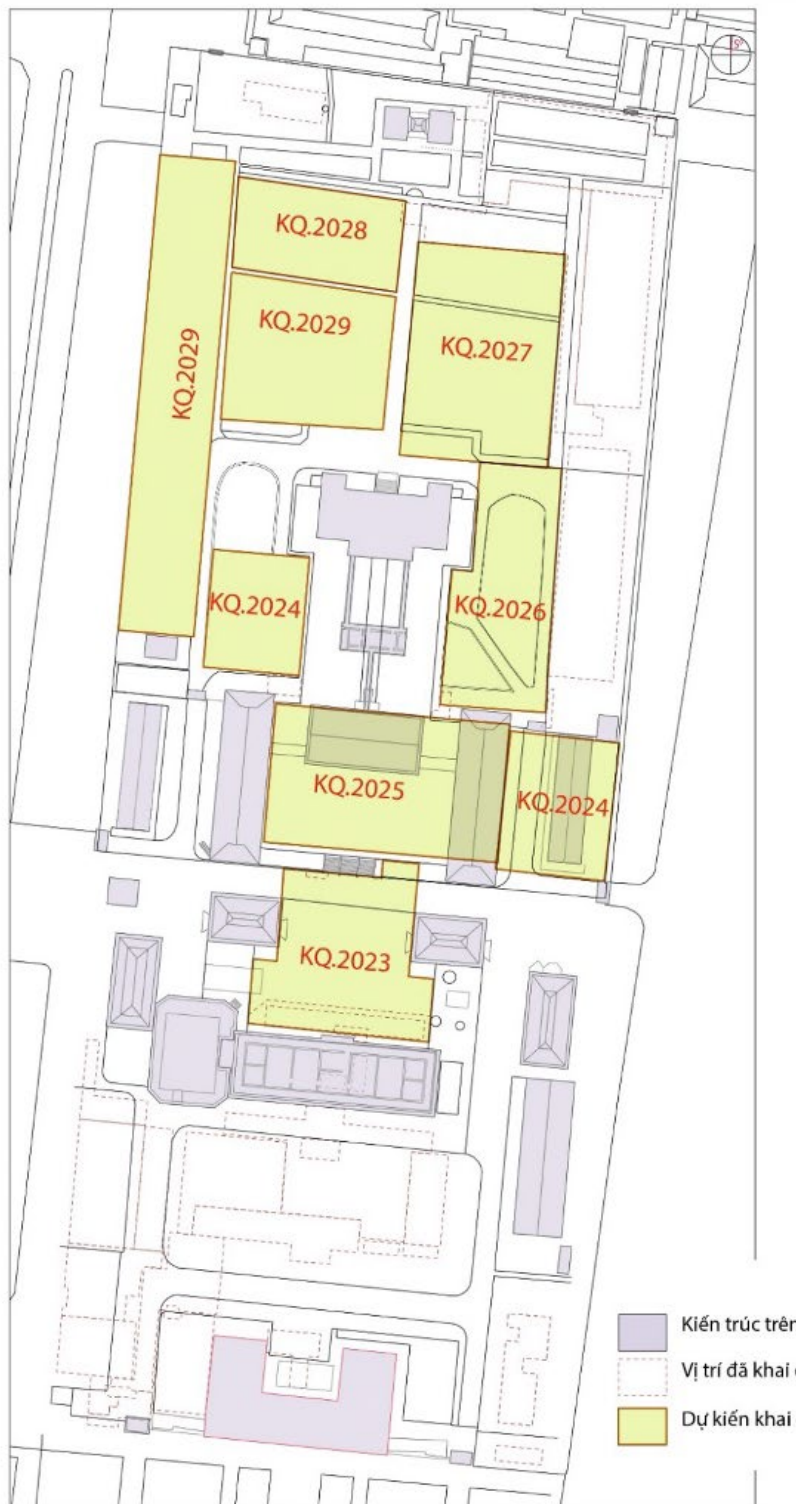
The Can Chinh Palace, which is characterized by a large, pillared structure to the north of the main Kinh Thien Palace, was first excavated in 2019 near Hau Lau. The seven-year excavation plan includes further excavation of this structure. There are few existing, apparently recent structures in this area, and access should be relatively straight forward. It is not clear whether the long-term planned reconstruction of the Kinh Thien Palace includes reconstruction of the Can Chinh Palace. In this regard, it would be relevant to understand the rationale and scope of the future excavations. If the State Party could provide further detail on the long-term conservation and/or reconstruction of the Can Chinh Palace; namely, whether the remains of the palace will be left exposed, reburied or reconstructed.



**Figure 5: hypothesis of the layout of Kinh Thien Palace during Le Dynasty**  
 (Source: SP 4. Report on archaeological excavations, p.. 21)

The proposed excavation program outlines a clear emphasis on the Kinh Thien Palace, and other structures associated with this period (Le dynasty – 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries). It is unclear why this period has been prioritized over all other periods. Due to this focus, there is a danger that archaeological deposits associated with the later periods will be lost in preference for the Kinh Thien remains. Is the Kinh Thien palace considered the ‘golden age’ of the Thang Long citadel? If so, why? The State Party have agreed, at least in principle, that the remains of the later periods would not be removed unless considerable *in situ* deposits relating to the Kinh Thien Palace were identified; i.e. excavation would proceed, at least initially, *between* the remains of the later period. Another possible approach would be to remove 20th century structures and then apply non-invasive investigative techniques; while the approach may not provide sufficient clarity, it is non-destructive and certainly worth attempting before excavations commence. The Master Plan, discussed below, does not provide any details on whether archaeological excavations will target the northern areas (beyond Hau Lau), once the colonial buildings in that area are removed (Figure 7). The State Party will likely continue excavation of the citadel beyond the seven-year plan, yet no details have been provided. It would be useful if further details could be shared by the State Party on archaeological work that the State Party intends to carry out beyond 2030, including in the areas north of Hau Lau. It is important to limit excavation to only those areas that have a clear research directive, and excavation should not proceed just for the sake of excavation, or because it is possible. Non-invasive techniques should be employed whenever possible. While considering the recommendation by the World Heritage Committee to undertake further excavation, it is advisable to note that excavation is a means to an end, with the end result being the enhancement and enrichment of the property’s OUV. A management process should be in place for determining how and when excavation is proposed, and how it is undertaken. This will ensure that future excavations are undertaken in a manner compatible with the current investigations and only when specific research questions are being asked of the excavation data, with a clear understanding of whether new excavations can contribute to respond to the research questions. Moreover, archaeological excavation techniques are forever improving, and there is a strong push within archaeology to preserve archaeological sites for future excavation, when more advanced techniques and methodologies might be available. It would be beneficial for the State Party to consider retaining some of the Dan Tri areas for research by future generations.

The proposed excavation project would benefit from a clear Archaeological Strategy for the property as a whole. This would include a series of research questions and gaps in knowledge that excavation would seek to address, with consideration given to how excavation will address these issues. An Archaeological Strategy would also ensure that future excavation will be informed by the results of past excavations, and will be conducted in a unified, consistent manner.



**Figure 6: Tentative map of proposed seven-year excavation project**  
 (Source: Archaeological Excavation Procedures)



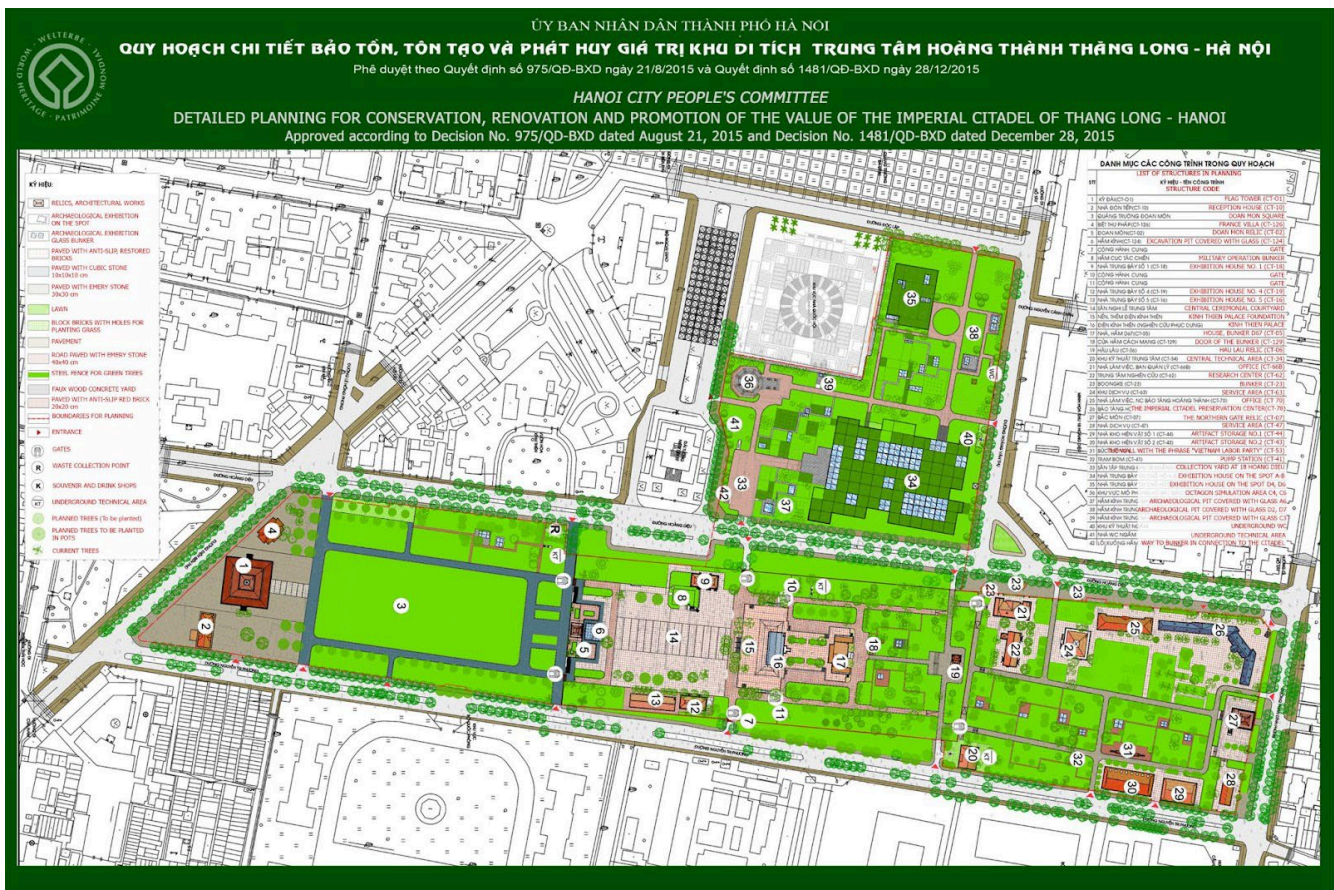


Figure 7: Master Plan (provided by SP)

**Justification of the demolition of the layers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in archaeological terms, based on the knowledge currently available, or necessity of further non-invasive assessments to first identify the remainder of the Kinh Thien Palace before implementation of non-reversible excavations.**

The seven-year excavation plan demonstrates a clear focus on the Kinh Thien Palace of the Le Dynasty and Restored Le Dynasty (15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century). Until excavations commence, and the results of excavations in areas associated with the Kinh Thien Palace are available, it is not clear what elements of this building will be archaeologically present. Will the excavations reveal a clear layout of the structure, or only fragmentary glimpses into its architectural elements? For this reason, future excavations should avoid removing any features associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century palace until a clear understanding is available of the extent of material dating to the Kinh Thien Palace. Excavation should be able to proceed in areas without disturbing features associated with the later palace phase and expose earlier archaeological layers. If the Kinh Thien Palace is archaeologically well-represented, and further exposure is warranted, a proposal should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for consideration before the removal of material belonging to the Long Thien Palace commences. At present, little structural material belonging to the Long Thien Palace has been identified with no

guarantee that substantial structural elements belonging to either the Long Thien Palace or Kinh Thien Palace will survive.

The State Party has advised that some remote sensing (non-invasive investigation) techniques have been implemented at Thang Long citadel with mixed results. During the site visit, the State Party informed that the results were unreliable due to significant interference from intrusive modern elements (e.g. metal, pipes). A short report outlining the results of these experimental geophysical investigations provides detail on which techniques were used and confirms that more than one approach was employed. Despite the mixed results, the investigator, an expert in geophysics from Italy, concluded that non-invasive techniques “can contribute to determining the distribution of objects buried in the archaeological site of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long” (8. LIDAR report: p. 6). There remains good potential for an appropriate non-invasive technique to provide some insight into the location, extent and nature of the Kinh Thien Palace. Such techniques can help guide excavation strategies. The mission therefore recommends that the potential of non-invasive technique for the citadel continue to be explored and applied in archaeological research. Annual plans for future archaeological excavations in the area of the Long Thien and Kinh Thien palaces would be useful to ensure that the strategy for excavation considers the extent of the survival of both palaces.

#### **Full scope of the area considered for future excavation and whether it is foreseen that further excavations and demolitions would be undertaken beyond the current seven-year plan.**

The current excavation plan provides details for archaeological investigations until 2030 only. The SP has provided no details for research beyond that year, although the Master Plan does indicate that a number of buildings will be removed from the northern half of the main citadel in the future. According to the State Party, once these temporary buildings are removed, there will be few impediments for archaeological investigations in the north. During the stakeholder meeting when asked whether there were intentions to remove any other buildings apart from the Operations Building and the Artillery Building, the State Party’s reply was that they will remove what are referred to as temporary structures. It is important that future directions in archaeological research be informed by the results of ongoing archaeological excavations. This is best practice and will ensure that the research questions behind excavation decisions will be relevant and informed. In addition, it is important to consider that archaeological techniques and methodologies are constantly improving, and there is a strong argument for retaining some archaeological deposits intact for future archaeologists, with improved approaches, to excavate.

#### **Elements of the Long Thien Palace which could be removed**

The Long Thien Palace has been only partially documented. Structural features from this period (19<sup>th</sup> century) have been encountered in excavation areas across the wider citadel area, but the central, main palace is not well documented. Further excavation in and around the area now occupied by the Artillery Building may reveal a much more complete picture of this period. It is not clear how much of the earlier palace buildings survive under the Long Thien remains. Excavations in other areas of the

citadel have revealed a complicated succession of buildings; some buildings were re-used in later periods, some were simply abandoned and built over, while others appear to have been extensively removed prior to construction. There also appears to be some inconsistencies in the alignment of the central 'royal' axis, which does not currently adhere to a strict linear form, but displays slight variations, or shifts, in the citadel layout. This could be out of choice of a generation of emperor builders of the citadel or a representation of the improved knowledge of the layout in line with North- South, East-West orientation and the Feng Shui principles. It would be important if further information could be provided on these variations, if already studied, or to expand the research to better understand them. Until more data is available about both the survival of the Long Thien Palace and the preceding Kinh Thien Palace, however, it is recommended that decisions regarding removal of architectural remains from the Long Thien period not be finalised.

**Identification of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century colonial and other buildings/structures which would be demolished to facilitate the above-mentioned excavations.**

During the mission, the focus was on the Artillery Building and the Operations Building, which are those that the Vietnamese authorities intend to remove in the short term. An overall approach for the property, however, as emerged during this process, drawing upon digital recording, renderings, 3D models and maps shared by the State Party in advance of the mission, and from the presentation and conversation during the mission; it is clear that more buildings and structures are expected to be removed. As noted above, these buildings, apart from the Artillery Building and Operations Building, were referred to as 'temporary' structures. It seems that some temporary buildings scheduled for removal would include a mix of French period buildings as well as the Vietnamese army period. The mission considers that it is important that these buildings are identified and recorded, and that consultation with UNESCO and ICOMOS regarding these buildings is undertaken, even if this will be a long-term project. This would remove any ambiguity around which buildings can be demolished, and proceeding without proper consideration the demolition of all/any 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century structures forming part of the OUV of the property.

The Master Plan illustrated by the State Party during the Advisory Mission also confirms that the long-term conservation of the site involves the removal of many more colonial buildings, especially from within the northern half of the Citadel area (between Hau Lau and the North Gate) (Figure 7), but also in the central area between the Doan Mon Gate and Bunker D67.

Following the mission, the State Party provided an English translation of the Prime Ministry Decree n. 696/QĐ-TTg approving the Master Plan and the layout of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long at 18 Hoang Dieu, Hanoi City dated 8 June 2012 and the Ministry of Construction's Decision n. 975/QĐ-BXD approving the detailed plan of conservation, enhancement and promotion of the values of the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi.

The 2012 Decision focuses essentially on the 18 Hoang Dieu archaeological site and will not be discussed in detail (but see above) in this report as the advisory mission focuses on the archaeological investigations and restoration of the spaces of the Long Thien and Kinh Thien palaces.

The 2015 Decision identifies the property and some general characteristics, outlines the objectives of the plan, its overall orientation and defines the planning content. Under this item, the decision

categorizes the buildings and structures within the Central Sector of Thang Long according to four categories: the group of historical cultural relics; the group of relics and architectural works of revolutionary history, which interestingly includes the Operations Building and Bunker D67, the group of structures built during the French colonial and following periods (among which the Vaxuco Building, visited by the mission, is listed), and the temporary and valueless structures and newly-built class-4 houses, which are not included in what needs to be 'preserved and embellished': this category does not include an explicit list of structures considered of limited value. It would be essential as already noted above if the State Party, in conjunction with the detailed inventory of the buildings and structures currently existing within the property, could provide a list of the buildings/ structures that are reputed of limited value and therefore not to be preserved and embellished. Letter b) of Point 5 of the 2015 Decision lists the main actions planned for conservation and enhancement according to four specific zones: the area between the Flag Tower and the South Gate, the area from the South Gate to the Princesses' Palace (Hau Lau), the area from the Princesses' Palace to the North Gate, and the Archaeological Area at 18 Hoang Dieu Street. Planned actions include the preservation of explicitly listed relics, conservation interventions at some relics, the restoration of the spatial axis connecting pre-colonial relics, of the open space and view around the Flag Tower, options for research evidence-based restoration of the Kinh Thien Palace, the relocation of certain functions to other buildings (e.g., the Conservation Centre's offices) or outside the property, repurposing of some of the existing buildings, as well as the dismantling of a number of 'temporary' structures (at both sides of the Kinh Thien Palace foundation as well as working spaces of the Thang Long – Hanoi Conservation Centre). For most actions the preparation of detailed plans and design is required.

The decision also envisages the analysis and evaluation of each dated French monument within the property for the purpose of their preservation as architectural works built during the French period to be used as thematic exhibition spaces. However, a clear list of these French-dated monuments does not seem to be included in the master plan or in the decision. The so-called Vaxuco Building is explicitly mentioned but other French-period buildings are not.

The examination of options for removal or relocation of the Operations Building is also mentioned in the decision, but nothing is said about the Artillery Building, which is erected on the place where the 19th century Long Thien Palace stood before the arrival of the French, and where the foundation of the 18th century Kinh Thien Palace is expected to be found.

The map of the Master Plan annexed to the 2015 Decision visually illustrates the approach and programme for the conservation and enhancement of the property.

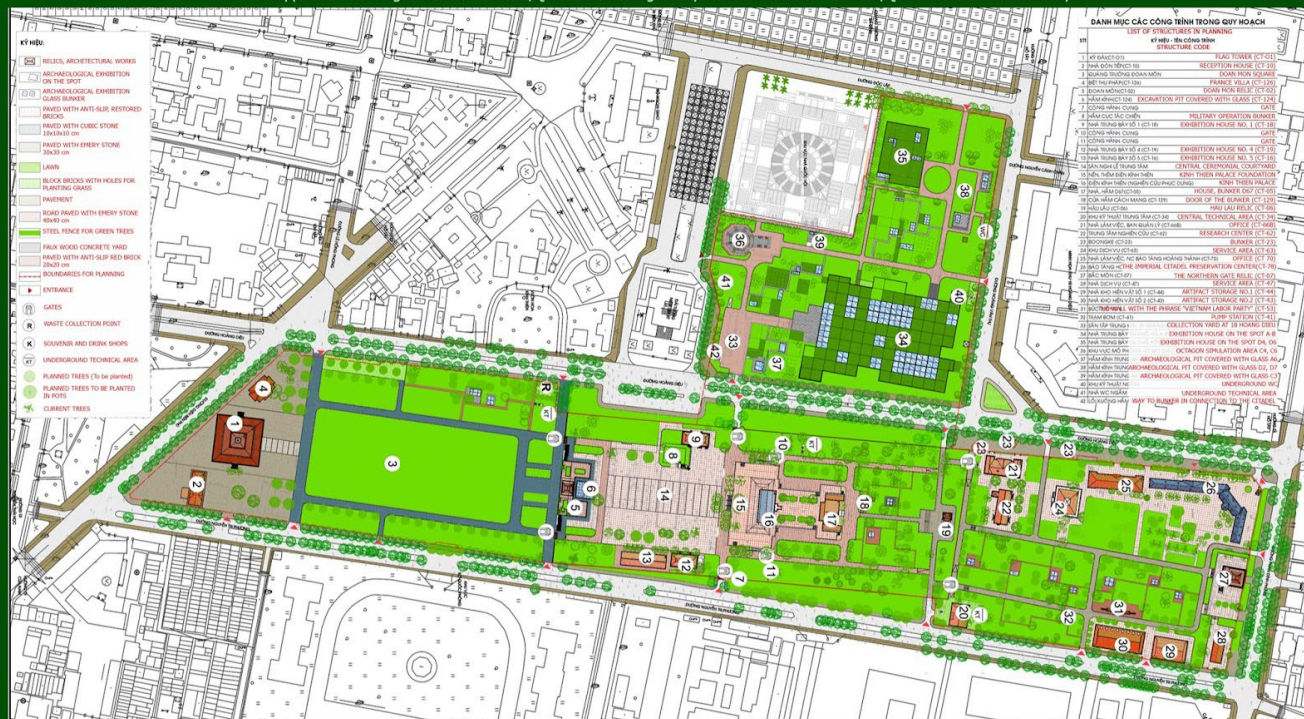
The mission notes some discrepancies between the version of the map of the Master Plan presented during the mission and the one submitted in the additional information in July 2023. Notably, the two pavilions between the Operations Building and the Dragon Steps, which were included in the map presented during the mission and part of previously shared documents, are no longer visible; equally one building along the western side of the property, south of the building identified with number 9 in the map, was visible in the map presented during the mission and marked by n. 7 in the map shared in 2022, but is no longer visible in the map submitted in July 2023. It is understood that this building has already been removed to carry out archaeological excavations on the western side of the property's zone between the Operations Building and the Main or South Gate.





ỦY BAN NHÂN DÂN THÀNH PHỐ HÀ NỘI  
**QUY HOẠCH CHI TIẾT BẢO TỒN, TÔN TẠO VÀ PHÁT HUY GIÁ TRỊ KHU DI TÍCH TRUNG TÂM HOÀNG THÀNH THĂNG LONG - HÀ NỘI**  
Phê duyệt theo Quyết định số 975/QĐ-BXD ngày 21/8/2015 và Quyết định số 1481/QĐ-BXD ngày 28/12/2015

HANOI CITY PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE  
**DETAILED PLANNING FOR CONSERVATION, RENOVATION AND PROMOTION OF THE VALUE OF THE IMPERIAL CITADEL OF THANG LONG - HANOI**  
Approved according to Decision No. 975/QĐ-BXD dated August 21, 2015 and Decision No. 1481/QĐ-BXD dated December 28, 2015



Version of the Masterplan received in July 2023



*Version of the Masterplan (image on the right) shown during the mission. On the left is shown the current situation of the property © Luisa De Marco*

The vegetal cover indicated in the map of the Master Plan shared in 2022 (at that time not clearly indicated as such) and presented during the mission and the one indicated in the map submitted in July 2023 show some differences. In particular, the July 2023 map indicates as retained the large trees in front of the Dragon Steps as well as the trees grown on the superelevated platform where the Artillery Building is located.

In general, the July 2023 map of the Master Plan presents a less geometric structure for tree distribution and seems to envisage the retention of a number of the existing trees, in line with the provisions of the 2015 Decision. It discusses the enhancement of landscape space under letter d) and provides for the protection and retention of perennial trees within the relic site, the addition of suitable trees, and the replacement of infested, unsafe and potentially broken trees; a careful survey and assessment of the vegetation cover are also indicated as needed in the decision and proposal for new trees must be part of a design, with an indication of location, type, size and features of the species.

The mission observes that several old and large trees thrive within the property. They provide important ecosystem services within the urban environment that would need to be preserved. This is of course taking into consideration the challenges cited above such as infested, unsafe and potentially broken trees. Hence, carrying out a detailed inventory and assessment of the perennial plants within the citadel



as recommended by the 2015 Decision is very important to establish a way forward on how to deal with the vegetation.



*Vegetation cover in the Forbidden City (west of Khin Thien Palace space). Photo © Luisa De Marco*





*Vegetation in front of the Artillery Building and the Dragon Steps © Luisa De Marco*

Furthermore, the landscaping of the area is mentioned in the integrity section of the Statement of OUV and can be seen as illustrative of the French colonial layer which is one of the several historic cultural layers supporting the value of the property as “a continuous seat of power from the 7<sup>th</sup> century through to the present day” and as a place associated with a succession of important events marking the “formative and development process of an independent nation over more than a thousand years, including the colonial period...” (Statement of OUV).

It should also be noted that the root systems of large trees are likely to have disrupted archaeological deposits preserved underground, therefore their removal for conducting archaeological investigations would not guarantee in situ archaeological deposits in these areas. Given the heights and size of some of these trees, their removal for relocation to other places seems technically very challenging if not unfeasible; furthermore, the capacity of large and aged trees to withstand the stress of uprooting and transfer is limited.

A systematic inventory of the trees currently present on the property, particularly of large and old trees, would be an important element of knowledge for informed decision-making about the future of the elements of vegetation cover. Some trees may even date back to the pre-colonial period and hence could be important historic landscape relics. In fulfilment of the 2025 Decision, a study on the landscaping concept applied to the site would also be helpful to understand better how this can be improved and used to enhance the property.

Overall, the mission notes that, while several colonial buildings are scheduled to be retained, the aim of the Master Plan is to restore a general openness of the main citadel by removing buildings from the citadel's courtyards. While the Master Plan makes it clear which buildings are scheduled for removal, few details about these buildings, and whether they contribute to the OUV of the property has been provided.

The changes in the maps of the Master Plan mentioned in the previous paragraphs suggest that the intentions on how to achieve the enhancement of the property have evolved and are likely to continue to evolve as research proceeds and management needs are progressively clarified and detailed. This leaves some uncertainties as to what buildings, and when, and on which parameters, are planned/ proposed for removal/ dismantling and how in reality the aim of restoring the space of the Kinh Thien Palace will be implemented.

However, since the property has been inscribed on the World Heritage List, it is necessary to offer to the international community, represented by the World Heritage Committee, a clear picture of the future of the property and of the destiny of its elements, through an agreed roadmap that presents in detail the steps to achieve the enhancement of the property as outlined in the masterplan and in the relevant government decisions. For this reason, clarity about the Vision for the property is needed and the potential impacts on its Outstanding Universal Value.

A clear and agreed-upon clarification of the attributes supporting the Outstanding Universal Value of the property has been recommended. A list of all buildings and structures that are expected to be dismantled to implement the Master Plan for the conservation and enhancement of the property, together with justifications is also needed and the suggested phases of implementation. These should be part of the Archaeological, and Conservation and Presentation Strategies. Subsequently there may have to be an agreed, phased approach for the implementation of the Master Plan.

Following the advisory mission, the State Party has shared a list of buildings located within the boundary of the property with a brief description and some images for correct identification. In this document, 26 buildings and structures and seven archaeological areas/ sites with remains of architectural complexes (including 18 Hoang Dieu site) are briefly described; 13 buildings and structures are indicated as those included in the nomination dossier, while 13 buildings located in the southern and northern areas of the Central Sector of Thang Long Imperial Citadel, are indicated as those to be added to the documentation

of the property; only two of the 13 buildings belong to the post-independence period, the others all belong to the French Colonial period.

The mission notes that the additional list and brief description of the buildings provided by the State Party in July 2023 is very helpful. It would be important that it is further augmented to also cover the remaining buildings and structures that still survive within the property and have not been presented in that document. The mission observes that it is of particular importance to document all buildings and structures as they stand today, including those that may be considered as 'temporary' or lacking heritage significance.

In addition to the map in the Master Plan, which is annexed to the 2015 Decision, two further maps have been provided in July 2023.

The first indicates the buildings that were 'included' in the nomination dossier and those which are to be added to the documentation of the property. Since these buildings are within the boundary of the inscribed property, it should be clarified whether these additional buildings are considered to be attributes of the property's Outstanding Universal Value.

The second identifies the buildings that the State Party would intend to remove by archaeological dismantling and those which are indicated as 'temporarily used structures'. This definition is not clear, but if read in conjunction with the text of the 2015 Decision, these buildings seem to fall into the fourth category of structures which are not meant to be preserved and embellished, and therefore might be removed.

In summary, with regard to the proposed removal of Operations and Artillery Buildings, the mission advises that a proposal be submitted to the WHC for review by ICOMOS, on the basis of an agreed set of attributes that convey the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, in light of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, relevant parts of the nomination dossier and the management plans, and the results of the research completed so far, with appropriate justification based on the Vision for the property and including the analyses on the historic fabric of the two buildings.

For the future possible removal of other 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings from the property for the implementation of the Master Plan for the conservation and enhancement of the Central Sector of the Thang Long - Hanoi Imperial Citadel, the mission recommends that before any decision is finalised about their removal, the State Party should define, in addition to the above-mentioned elements, a proposal for their removal, with appropriate justification based on the Vision for the Central Axis and the Archaeological, and Conservation and Presentation Strategies and submit this to the WHC for review by ICOMOS.



*Map on the left: buildings that the State Party propose 'to add' to the property. Map on the right: buildings that the State Party proposes to dismantle archaeologically © State Party*

Regarding the specific request to remove the Operations Building and the Artillery Building, during the mission, the State Party presented the geometrical documentation executed for both buildings applying the 3D laser scanning technology in conjunction with photogrammetry. The exercise is very important for rigorous geometrical understanding of the two buildings. It would be important if this documentation could be complemented by the systematic photographic documentation of architectural details as well as by research and analyses on the construction elements, techniques and materials and on modifications that have occurred through time. Understanding the origins, production processes and preparation for usage of all building materials and elements, determining the chemical, physical and structural characteristics of the construction materials, including plasters, painting layers, timber and metallic elements, doors, windows and shutters is a necessary step for comprehensive historic building documentation, for their conservation, including in digital form, as envisaged by the State Party.

Stratigraphic investigations of the building, according to the methodology of archaeology applied to architecture, and of its surfaces, to determine the subsequent layers of paintings used and possibly of their various decorative configurations also would help understanding better how the history and transformations of these buildings and shed light on the most recent history of the property. In this way, the geometrical and textural documentation of the buildings will be complemented by essential elements of knowledge about their built fabric and their transformation over time, to better comprehend these two buildings and their builders, who certainly included Vietnamese people and to ensure their full recording.

Further detailed recommendations for steps to be undertaken before the dismantling of the building can take place are provided in the recommendation section at the end of this report.

### **Proposals for subsequent consolidation, restoration, and reconstruction of the excavated areas**

The Prime Minister's Decision (dated 2015), envisages the restoration of the Central Axis connecting the relics from the South Gate to Kinh Thien Palace, Foundation the House D67 and the associated bunker, Hau Lau Palace and the North Gate, on condition that sufficient historical data and evidence is found. In relation to the Kinh Thien Palace, the Decision determines the continuation of archaeological investigations and research to develop proposals and options for the restoration of Kinh Thien Palace. The Decision therefore lays down the main orientation for the enhancement of the Central Sector of Thang Long Imperial Citadel but does not detail how this will be achieved as the options and specifics will have to be decided on the basis of the evidence retrieved through research.

As stated earlier, this point can be clarified by the Vision that will relate the Master Plan to OUV, and by a Conservation and Presentation Strategy. The following text highlights some of the aspects of the proposed work that will need to be clarified and/or augmented through these documents.

The report on the historical research of the Central Axis area lists historical sources and excerpts that mention the Kinh Thien Palace, its space and associated structures. The sources listed in this report seem to provide little elements to understand the layout and shape of the Palace complex, although the spatial relationship between the Main or South Gate (Doan Mon), the Royal Courtyard (Dai Tri) and the Royal Path (Ngu Dao) and the Palace is confirmed. Comparison with the planning of other capitals of Eastern Kingdoms or monarchic dynasties in Viet Nam, China, Japan and Korea is drawn to explain the similarities of the functions of the main palaces' spaces and to highlight the similarities of the layout and structure of royal palaces across eastern Kingdoms.

Excavations carried out since 2011 until the present day in the area between the Doan Mon Gate and the Operations Building have uncovered remains that offer information on the layout of the Dai Tri, of the Ngu Dao.

In front of the Doan Mon Gate, on its northern side, the archaeological remains uncovered by excavations carried out in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century have been left visible and protected by a steel structure with structural glass panels that allow the view of the remains. The structure has been built in a way that



allows for air circulation and this solution appears to have prevented the growth of moss, mould or vegetation on the archaeological remains.



*Protection of the archaeological remains uncovered near Doan Mon Gate. © Luisa De Marco*



*Detail of the steel and glass structure built to protect but leave visible the archaeological findings near Doan Mon Gate. © Luisa De Marco*

The excavation of the area west of the Doan Mon Gate uncovered the foundations of a corridor flanking the western side of Dan Tri. Discovered evidence provides information on the position and interspace between the foundations of the corridor. At the moment, the excavated area has been filled again for protection purposes. Excavations are currently ongoing in the central area between the Doan Mon Gate and the Operation Building and excavation trenches have also been opened inside the building and adjacent to its foundations on the northern side.

The mission noted that plans for the conservation and presentation of these newly discovered remains of the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century phases of the Central Sector of Thang Long are yet to be consolidated and it is not fully clear how these remains will be conserved, presented and interpreted. Intentions remain unclear on whether the whole of Dai Tri and Ngu Dao will be exposed, or just some sections, or whether excavated areas will be reburied. and solutions based on contemporary design and modern technologies will be used to evoke the evidence of the former layouts of the courtyard and royal path in the previous phases. The mission recommends that at least some areas will remain exposed for interpretive purposes, possibly under a glass cover to showcase the archaeological remains including those associated with the royal path. This is important that the general public, including the numerous school groups that visit the site, is able to understand and appreciate the role of archaeology in exposing past lifeways and how these past achievements are now buried underground.

Digital visualizations of the Kinh Thien Palace space implies that a full recreation or restoration of the Kinh Thien palace, the Dan Tri and the Ngu Dao is being proposed, including the covered side-corridors; the status, accuracy and purpose of these visualizations remains unclear.





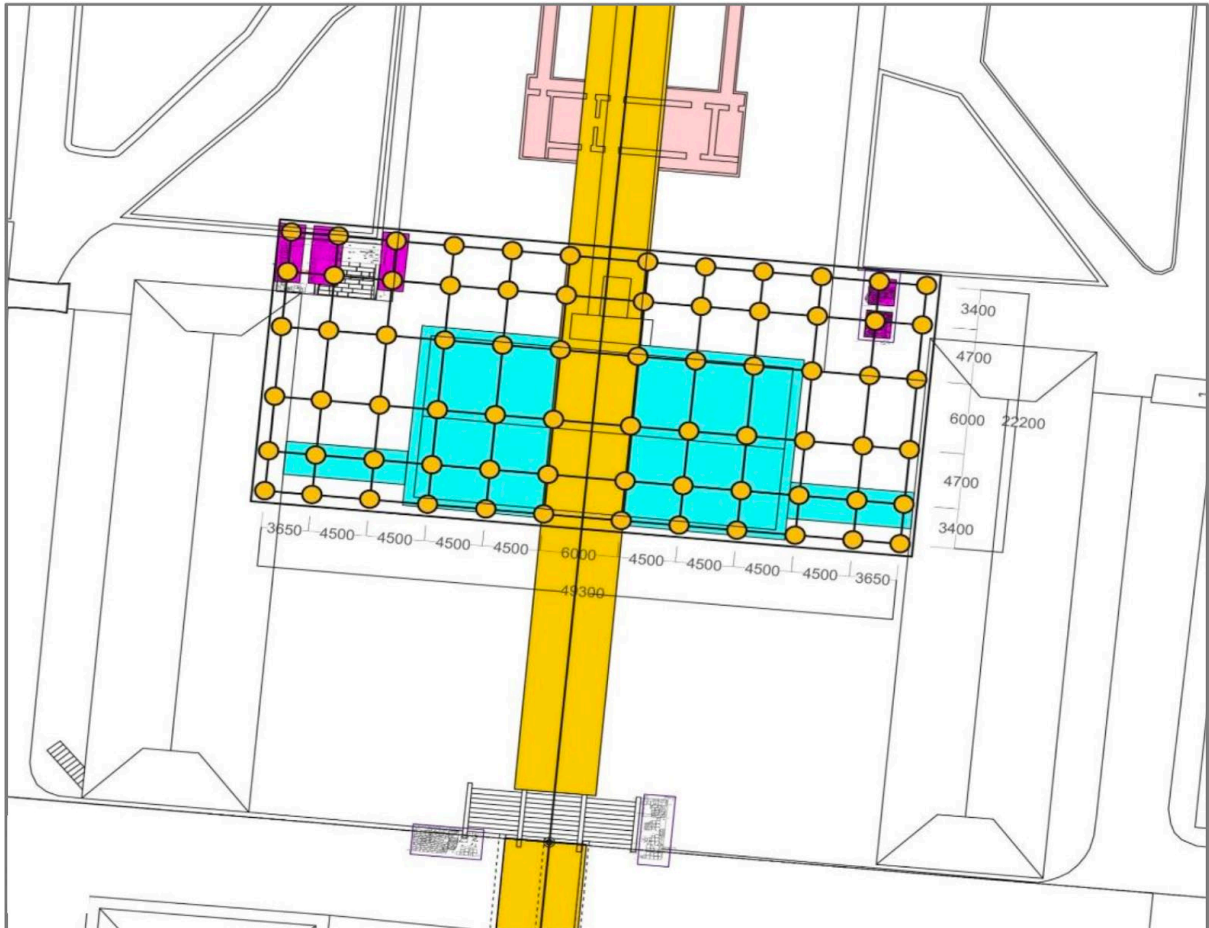
*Hypothetical configuration of the main space of Kinh Thien Palace under the Le Dynasty ©State Party*

It also seems that, among Vietnamese experts there is a preference to re-establish the 18<sup>th</sup> century layout of the Central Axis of the Thang Long Citadel, apparently in relation to the survival of standing structures, i.e. the Doan Mon Gate and the Northern Gate. However, the Doan Mon Gate standing structure is the result of a 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration intervention and the Northern Gate was rebuilt in 1805. Since the Outstanding Universal Value of the property is based on the fact that Thang Long Citadel has been a long-lasting seat of power, as evidenced by the remarkably conserved superimposing archaeological remains, the justification for choosing a particular period in time for restoration is unclear, considering that no standing structures dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century survive and standing relics are the result of restoration, new construction, or reconstruction carried out at different dates in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Although the State Party is proposing the reconstruction of the Kinh Thien Palace in its 18<sup>th</sup> century configuration, no sufficiently detailed historical iconographic source seems to have survived of this period because the building was removed by the Nguyen king in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the capital of Vietnam was moved from Thang Long to Hué, approximately 700 km south of Hanoi. Kinh Thien was replaced by a royal residence, the Long Thien Palace, used by the Nguyen kings when they visited the north of the country. Photographs exist of the Long Thien Palace, which seems to have been smaller than its predecessor.

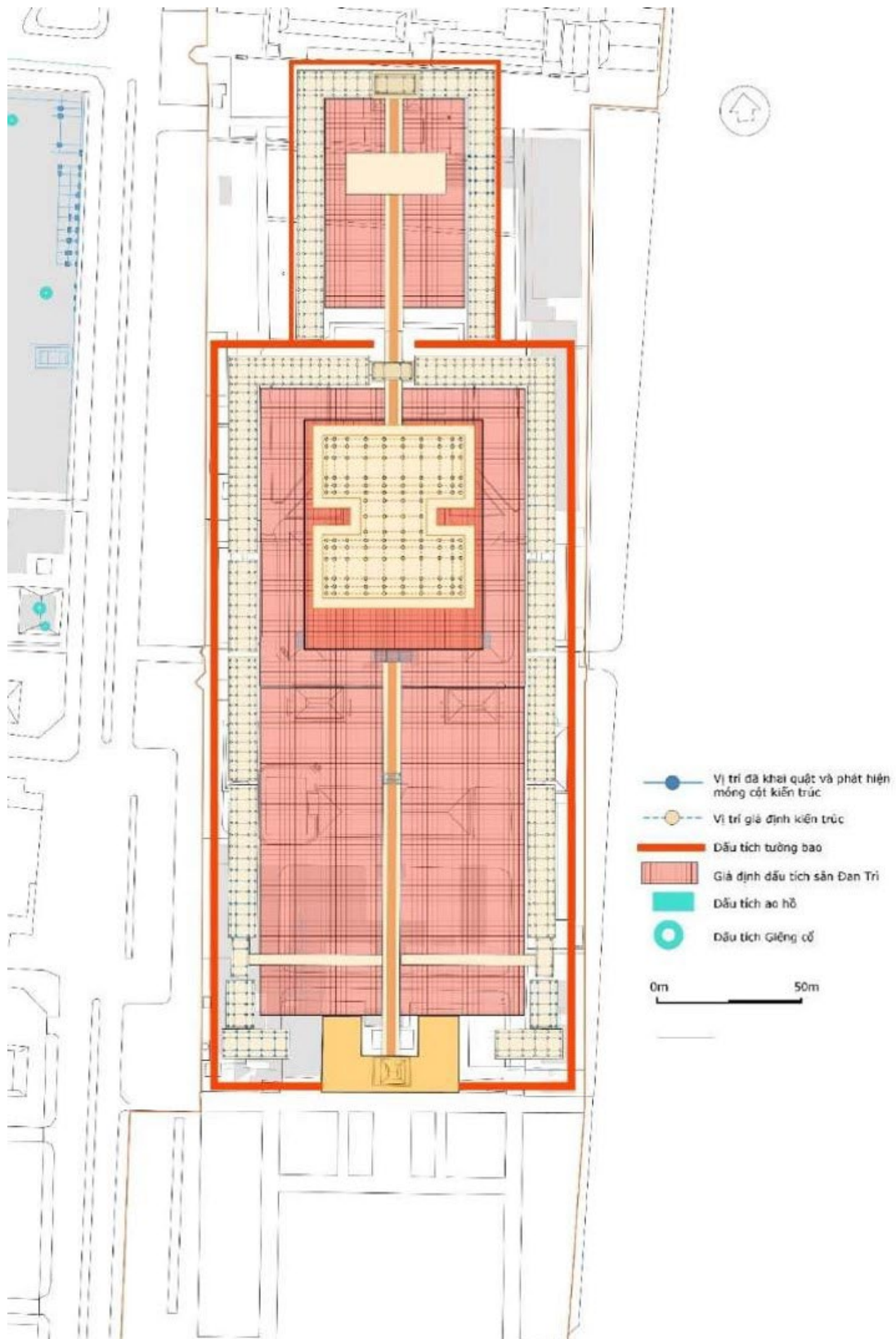
Excavations conducted close to the ancient steps on the north-western side and to the north east of the Artillery Building uncovered the traces of the foundations of supporting pillars of Kinh Thien Palace (three couples on the western side and one couple on the eastern side).

This evidence has been used by the State Party to advance an hypothesis of the grid of the foundations of the Palace.



*Hypothesis of the distribution of the foundations of the pillars of Kinh Thien Palace, based on the uncovered foundations north-west and north-east of the Artillery Command Building - ©State Party*





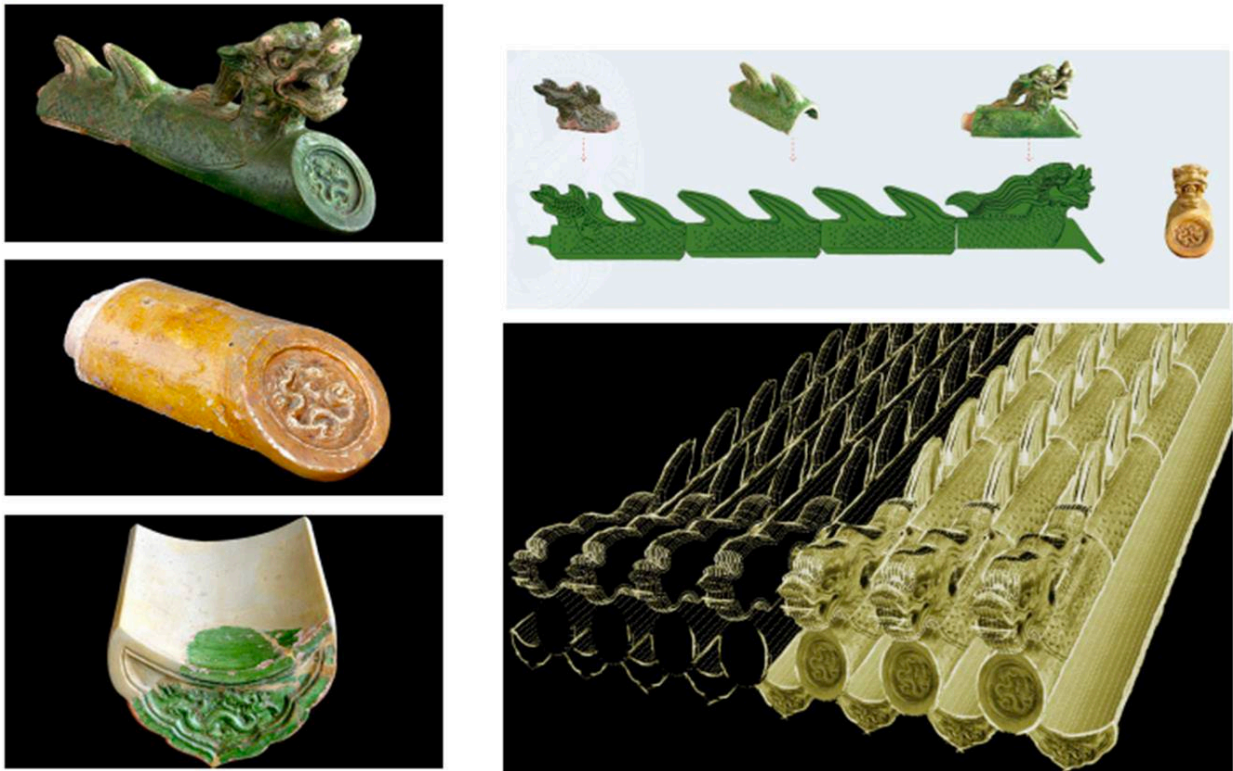
*Presumptive map of the overall area of Kinh Thien Palace during the early Le dynasty on the basis of some excavated vestiges up to 2019 - ©State Party*

Excavations being conducted on the western side of the Artillery Building have not yielded decisive evidence for the Palace, and Vietnamese experts consider that further excavation under the Artillery Building could provide more evidence to determine the distribution of the foundations of the palace and of the pillar grid and confirm or reject the hypothesized layout. Therefore, it remains not fully clear on what additional evidence the whole grid has been proposed, taking into account that the measures of the distance between sets of pillars differs from the reciprocal distance between the uncovered archaeological remains of the foundations.

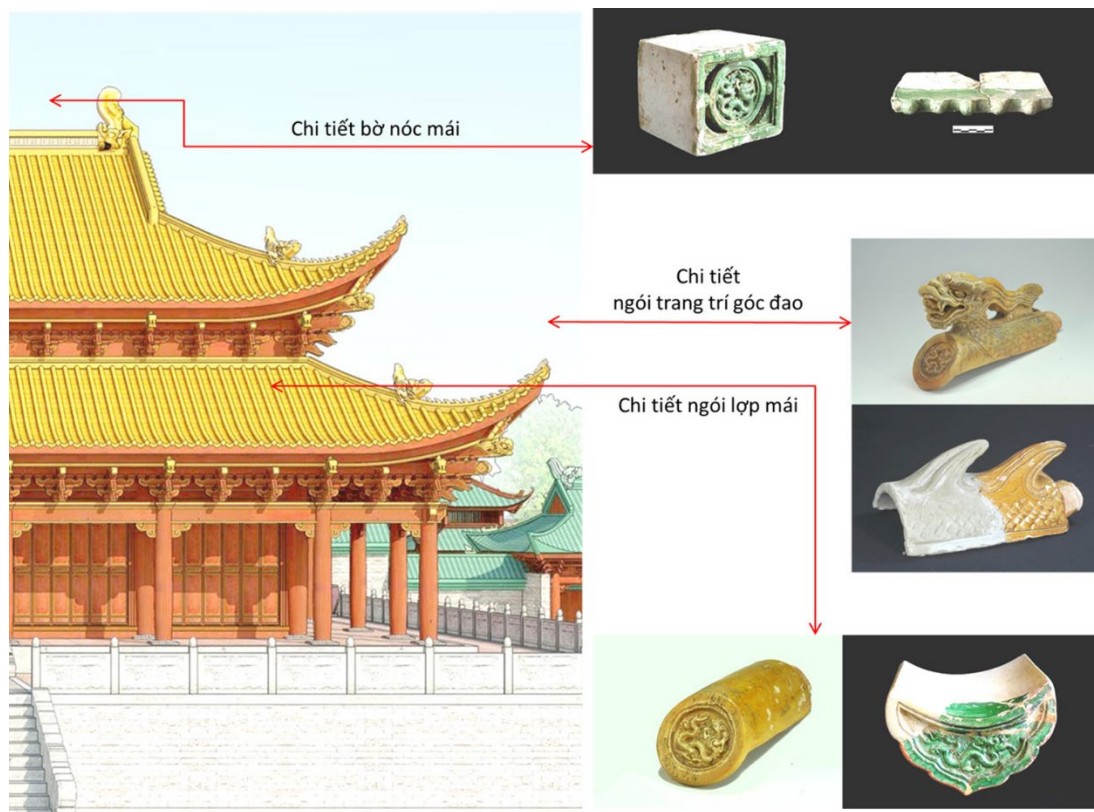
The mission observes that, even if the complete grid of the palace foundations might be retrieved through archaeological investigations, it will be critical to clarify what sources of information have been gathered to understand the dimensions (section and height) of the supporting pillars, the configuration of the palace building and its internal distribution, the detailed structure, articulation and slopes of its roofs.

It seems that, for this additional information, the Vietnamese scholars rely on comparisons and similarities with other royal palaces in Vietnam (Thai Hoa Palace in Hué, Lam Kinh palace at the Lam Kinh Citadel, Ho Citadel Royal palace, Hoa Lu in Trang An, the royal courtyard in Yen Tu), China, Japan and South Korea. Explicating how the various sources of information have been or will be used to build an understanding of the possible configuration of the Kinh Thien space, its palace and its architectural elements is important to clarify and communicate the level of reliability of the hypotheses that have been and will be proposed.

During the mission, some Vietnamese experts explained that they considered having gathered enough material evidence to propose a full-scale reconstruction of the Kinh Thien Palace in its 18<sup>th</sup> century configuration. The following elements were mentioned: decorative elements, decorated and yellow-glazed tiles, a few wooden elements (components of dougong-type joints), recorded bricks, and one glazed ceramic sculpture of a palace roof; all of which emerged from the excavations. A detailed list of archaeological findings has been prepared and shared by the State Party following the mission and it is annexed to this report.



*Elements of a dragon roof tile retrieved at Kinh Thien space ©State Party*



*Suggestion of the palace roof configuration ©State Party*





*The ceramic sculpture of the roof structure and upper part of a building © State Party*

During the mission, it appeared that the Vietnamese experts considered the ceramic sculpture found during excavations as an important source of information for the configuration of the roof.

The mission notes that it would be important to clarify the status of this model: where was it found? Has it been dated and how? What was its function? Was it a ceremonial or votive object? Was it a study model? Have other examples of this type of sculpture been found elsewhere in archaeological excavations at eastern dynastic citadels? Is it mentioned in the chronicle related to Thang Long or similar objects in other documentary sources of information that can help to understand the function of these sculptures?

A better understanding of the reliability of this ceramic sculpture as a real architectural model would be critical, before the hypothetical configuration of the Kinh Thien Palace roof based on it is further explored. The Vietnamese experts informed the mission that they have started studying this sculpture to draw further information from its form. It would be important if additional detailed information on how it has been studied and the available preliminary results could be shared with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS. A more detailed and conclusive study of this sculpture might be useful in clarifying its original function, rather than taking for granted that this was a model to guide construction. At this stage, it seems difficult to consider it a reliable source of information on the real configuration of the roof of the Kinh Thien Palace.



Since there was not sufficient time during the mission to explain and understand how the outcomes of comparative studies were drawn, interpreted and used for developing an understanding of the Kinh Thien Palace configuration, it would be imperative for the State Party to clarify this aspect.

It would be of great value if the commendable work done by the State Party over this many years could be used to provide these further details.

A crucial point to be clarified concerns how the archaeological relics that have been discovered so far, and those that might be found if excavations continue in the area of the Kinh Thien Palace, will be preserved.

Such details would be needed as part of the Conservation and Presentation Strategy, which should set out the justification for how the property might be presented, and this will need to take account of the fact that overlapping archaeological remains from several centuries of occupation of the Central Axis and pertaining to subsequent dynasties are a key attribute of the OUV of the property and their authenticity need to be preserved, without alteration. Accessibility for future research should also remain possible.

The mission notes that a lot of research has already been carried out, but only a fraction of it is accessible in one of the official UNESCO languages. It would be important for this information and data so far retrieved that is used to understand the palace's configuration, reflections, interpretations, extrapolations including the most recent findings to be made available to the wider audience. This would further help in better understanding and sharing the state of the art of the investigations and of their outcomes and, in particular inform the choices being considered by the State party with regard to the options for the restoration of the Kinh Thien Palace space and the reconstruction of the Kinh Thien palace.

The mission notes with satisfaction the results of the proceedings of the International Scientific Conference held in September 2022 on topic Twenty years of research, conservation and promotion of the values of the Thang Long - Ha Noi Imperial Citadel heritage site. These proceedings gather together the outcomes of the research carried out since the beginning of the 21st century and as such represent an important milestone for the appraisal of knowledge built on the property and the future steps to be considered for its sustainable management and use. Academic papers such as Bui Minh Tri and Nguyen Quang Ngoc, "Research to decipher the architectural morphology of Kinh Thien Palace during the Le So dynasty based on archaeological documents and comparative studies" in Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference - Research, Conservation, and Promotion of the Values of the Thang Long - Ha Noi Imperial Citadel Heritage Site, 8-9 September 2022) are providing valuable insights on this subject.

Since most of the papers are in Vietnamese their accessibility to the international readership is a challenge. Translation into the official UNESCO languages would add great value to this important work making it accessible to a wider audience.

In summary, as explained above, the mission considers that further information is needed, including the outcomes of the archaeological investigations that the State Party intends to carry out and for which the removal of the Artillery Building and Operations Building has been proposed, before deciding which forms could take the restoration of the Khin Thien Palace space, the potential reconstruction of the palace and, more generally the enhancement of the property and of its archaeological remains.

At this stage, in relation to the plans concerning the preservation, restoration, reconstruction, presentation and interpretation of the excavated areas and of the Central Axis, the mission recommends that a comprehensive Conservation and Presentation Strategy of the archaeological remains in the Central Axis be established in order to guarantee the scientific rationale of interventions.

More specifically, in relation to the comprehensive proposal for the restoration of the Central Axis of the Khin Thien Palace and its possible reconstruction, the mission considers that the Vision, which relates the Master Plan to the OUV of the property, should provide the main framework for developing such a proposal, while the Conservation and Interpretation Strategy should justify how the proposals would be delivered. With both of these documents in place, a comprehensive proposal would then need to be further elaborated that clarifies the envisaged options for the 'restoration' of the space of Kinh Thien Palace and specifies the plan on which interventions and physical presentation of the archaeological vestiges the 'restoration' is suggested/pursued, what sources of information and scientific evidence are expected to be used and how. The extensive and longstanding research efforts made by the Vietnamese experts in the last decade will certainly assist in developing such a proposal. Such a comprehensive proposal would need to be submitted to the WHC for review by ICOMOS.

Further details and suggested steps are presented in the conclusions section of this report.

### **Possible contents of the Heritage Impact Assessments and timing**

The mission observes that, until a comprehensive set of attributes supporting the Outstanding Universal Value of the property has been clarified, it would be difficult to develop a Heritage Impact Assessment: i.e. impacts will could not be assessed against the attributes of OUV. The state party may therefore consider expediting the identification and documentation of the attributes before the commencement of an HIA.

To assess the impact of the Masterplan and its related implementation projects, identifying such a set of attributes represents the first indispensable step to understand impacts.

Furthermore, since the Masterplan for the conservation and enhancement of the Central Axis of the Thang Long Citadel outlines the main lines of the objectives but does not detail how this will have to be achieved, it is premature to conduct a Heritage Impact Assessment until a Vision has been agreed and more detailed proposals have been developed on the basis of the outcomes of ongoing research and further archaeological investigations.

An HIA at the project level would need much more detail with regard to not just the objectives of the project but also how it will be implemented, what are the possible options, and the modalities and timeframes for implementation.

In the present context, it would appear more effective that the implementation of the masterplan adopts a phased approach, and, for each step a heritage impact assessment approach and related steps (see the newly published *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessment*) are integrated into the design process. In this way, the safeguard of OUV and the protection of its attributes as well as other heritage values and related features become the benchmarks against which to measure the adequacy and appropriateness of the interventions and modalities of execution.

Within the framework of collaboration between the State Party, the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS, such a heritage impact assessment approach might be developed and implemented alongside the development of a Vision, an Archaeological Strategy and a Conservation and Presentation Strategy and through the progressive elaboration of the projects necessary to give application to the Master Plan.

### **Proposals for Conservation, presentation, interpretation and use of the excavated areas in the Central Axis**

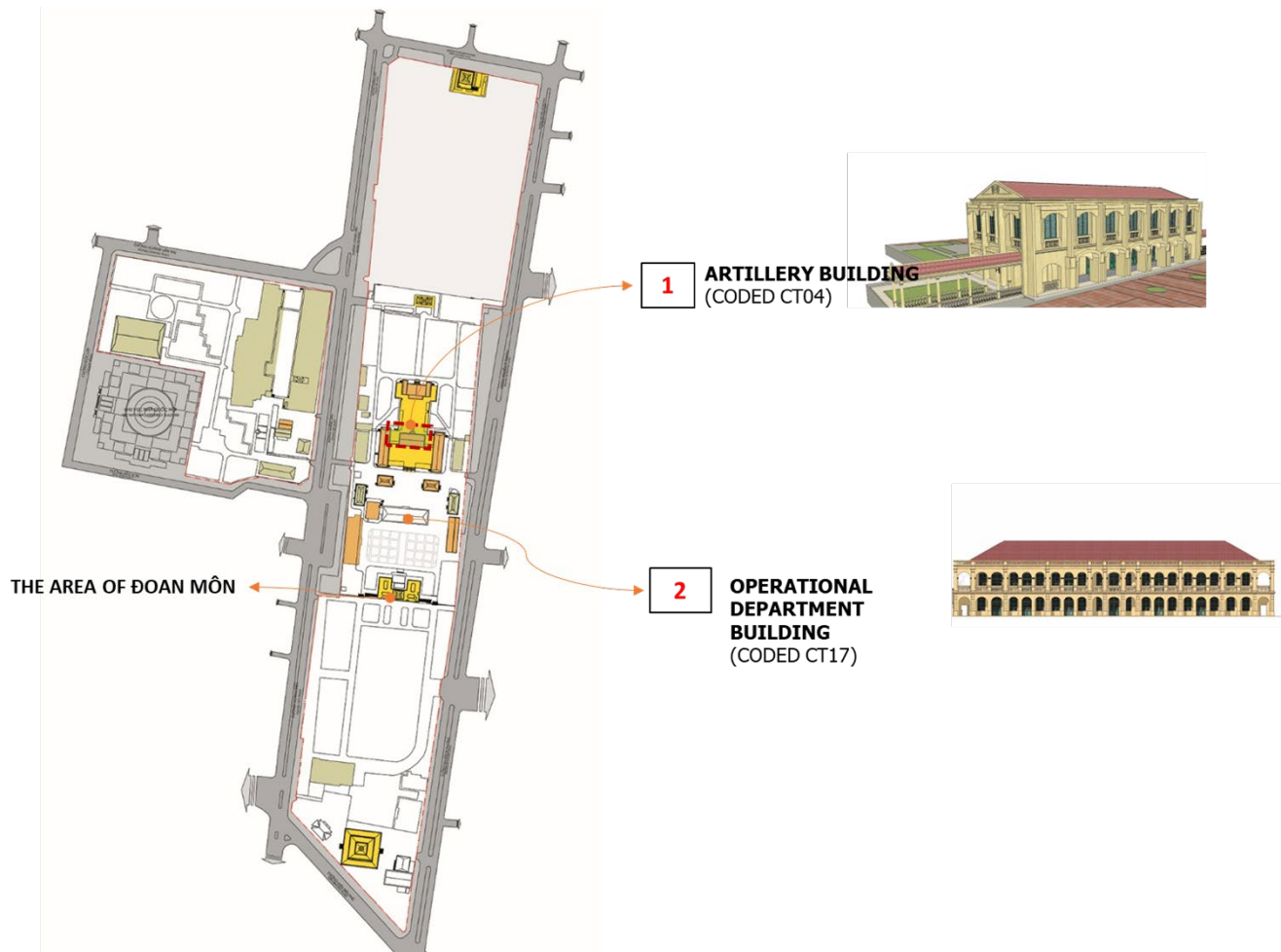
The mission has an overall impression that the policy on the conservation, presentation, interpretation and use of the excavated area needs to be clarified in view of the continuation of the archaeological excavation.

The World Heritage property covers a vast zone of the inscribed area of 18.395 hectares (Hanoi Ancient Citadel of 13.865 ha and the Archaeological site at no 18 Hoang Dieu street of 4.530 ha) and the buffer zone of 108 ha. The State Party has been engaged, since the inscription, in the extensive research activity by documenting, studying and excavation of the Central Sector of the property, covering 35.000 m<sup>2</sup> from the Doan Mon gate to the House D67. This site used to be the place of power from 10<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. The State Party submitted to the mission various documents, including the two main technical presentations concerning the two major areas of the excavation relating to the suggested future operations. The first relates to the areas between the Operations Building and the Doan Mon (the great gate), the second concerns the area close to the Artillery Building including the location believed to be the foundation of Kinh Thien Palace.



Area between Kinh Thien Palace (currently occupied by French Artillery building) and the Great Gate (Doan Mon) © State Party





*Map showing the Central Sector and 18 Hoang Dieu archaeological site with the locations of two neoclassical colonial buildings © State Party*

The area spreading between the Operations Department Building and the Doan Mon is under continued excavation, including the test excavation pits opened inside parts of the ground floor of the Operations Building. The Central area is supposed to include the main space of Kinh Thien palace, Dan Tri courtyard, Doan Mon gate, Ngu Dao (Royal Path), corridor gates, and surrounding walls. The archaeological excavations conducted in 2021-2022 spread over 9,000 m<sup>2</sup> in the Central Sector, and confirmed the existence of the foundation of Long Thien Palace of the Nguyen Dynasty which reused some elements of the Le Trung Hung period.

The foundations and four foundation pillars of Kinh Thien Palace of the Le Trung hung period (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century) were found in the northern area of the Long Thien Palace foundation. The dragon-carved staircases in the south were dated to the early Le Dynasty (1467) and another in the north area of the foundation of Long Thien Palace was dated to the Le Trung Hung period. The Dan Tri courtyard extending from Doan Mon (the great gate) to the Long Thien Palace foundation was tiled with square tiles in the early Le Dynasty (15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century) and with stone dating back to the Le Trung Hung Period (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century). The boundaries of the main space of the Kinh Thien Palace were identified preliminarily behind the House and Bunker 67. Other discoveries include objects dating back to the Tran, Ly, Dinh, early Le and Dai La dynasties from 7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century such as the building foundations,

roads, outer walls, foundation pillars, water pipes, sewers, brick yards, flowerpots, construction materials and ceramics.

The archaeological excavations from 2011 to present have significantly contributed to enrich the understanding of the history of the Vietnamese dynasties which are otherwise little known by material and written evidence. The knowledge from these excavations has been promoted through the exhibition of discoveries in several locations, such as the exhibit pavilions of the Thang Long citadel and the exhibition located in the basement of the Parliament building in the buffer zone.

The mission understood the overall will of the Vietnamese authorities to further promote the outcomes of the excavations on the Central Sector, as well as to reveal further layers of the successive dynasties to deepen the understanding of the artistic, political and technical developments associated with the Vietnamese dynasties. The space between the foundations of the Kinh Thien Palace and the Doan Mon is given particular focus because of the historical accounts bearing testament to the holding of the royal audiences and other important events presided over and/or attended by the kings and dignitaries. Up to now three layers have been found in the courtyard (Dan Tri) belonging to the early Le, Le Trung hung and the one of Long Thien Palace of the Nguyen dynasty. Based on these results, the authorities intend to revive the courtyard space to showcase the strata of the different dynasties, as well as host community events on the occasion of the Tet (Lunar New Year) and other national celebrations, e.g. by organizing processions for ancestors' worship attended by the Hanoian communities.

'Renovation methods for the Central Sector of the Thang Long Imperial Citadel' is the document provided by the State Party to present the rationale and key tasks.

In this document, the State Party explains that the Central Sector currently does not have any built structure symbolizing its status as the political centre of Dai Viet from 11<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, except for the Doan Mon gate of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Currently the layers of the dynastic history are invisible and not comprehensible in the configuration for the general public. To the contrary, the current landscape is dominated by several French colonial buildings as well as post-colonial military structures creating an impression of a former French and 20<sup>th</sup> century military barrack with little pre-19<sup>th</sup> century Vietnamese elements. Apart from the open archaeological trenches that now show underground layers of Vietnamese presence, nothing much else represents the 1000 years of Vietnamese political development captured as one of the attributes supporting the OUV.

Considering the scarcity of the material representations of the Vietnamese dynastic periods (only 3 out of 11 are visible), the mission can recommend the continuation of archaeological research in line with the suggested methodology in the two technical documents and considering the recommendations of this advisory mission. Concerning the **presentation and interpretation and use** of the excavated area, the mission considered several documents and presentations by the State Party including "REPORT ON THE HISTORICAL RESEARCH OF THE CENTRAL AXIS AREA", and "ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS AT THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE THE CENTRAL SECTOR OF THE IMPERIAL CITADEL OF THĂNG LONG - HÀ NỘI (2010-2021) AND NEW FINDINGS" (illustrated).

The first document of 31 pages shows a preliminary list of the old Vietnamese historical sources that have mentioned the Kinh Thien palace 32 times. This document also provides the information on other royal palaces in Vietnam and abroad, as interesting sources to provide evidence on the importance of the Palace and its courtyard for rituals and power exercise.

These documents provide a number of visual and written elements which can serve as a basis of the elaboration of a clear policy on the presentation and interpretation.

The mission recommends that the State Party elaborate a policy document demonstrating a vision for the presentation and interpretation of the property, by indicating the use of different media to optimize the public understanding of the property's values and national history. Such a document would also indicate the best areas to showcase the historical layers and how these could be enhanced by photographic, archival and artifacts exhibitions and by the possible use of advanced technological means, such as 3D representations, AR and VR.



*Dragon steps and a part of Long Thien Palace of the Nguyen Dynasty (picture dated to 1887-1888)*



*The alteration to Long Thien Palace which was destroyed and replaced by the Artillery Building in 1888-1889  
(Source: exhibition of Ha Noi Citadel, EFEO, September 2010)*





*3D Simulation of the main space of Kinh Thien Palace of Le dynasty © State Party*

### **Management of the proposed archaeological project**

The state party submitted a document entitled “ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION PROCEDURE FOR IMPERIAL CITADEL OF THANG LONG – HANOI” which presents the sequence of the planning, site preparation, excavation, documentation and reporting with procedural and technical requirements. Its second chapter “EXCAVATION PLAN FOR THE PERIOD OF 2023-2025” presents an archaeological research plan for the period for 2023-2030, which will focus on the survey of the entire space of Kinh Thien main hall and Kinh Thien palace foundation in order to assess the overall value of the archaeological remains as well as serve as a scientific basis for solutions to promoting the value of the site. The State Party suggests the application of traditional excavation methods as the main method but combined with the gradual application of non-invasive surveys such as ground-penetrating radar (GPR) exploration and applications of photo scans to collect and store archaeological data. This plan would benefit from being embedded within an over-arching, property wide Archaeological Strategy, which would include the types of research questions being addressed through excavation, and how excavation is expected to provide clarity. Such a strategy would ensure that ongoing excavations are informed by past excavation results, and that excavation does not proceed without a clear objective.



*Tentative map of archaeological excavation in the central area of Thang Long Imperial Citadel from 2023 -2030  
(Scientific dossiers for research and embellishment of the World Heritage of Thang Long Imperial Citadel, 2023)*

©State Party

The mission considers this planning reasonable and recommends that a Conservation and Presentation Strategy should be developed to present a clearer way forward by identifying which areas are best to be exposed to the public in the future and for which rationale, in line with the strategy presented in the Management Plan 2021-2025 Chapter 7.2. Formulation of Research Strategies. The above-mentioned Archaeological Strategy will provide guidance on the process and protocol of future archaeological investigations.

At the end of the mission, the authorities shared with the mission team the English version of “THE HERITAGE MANAGEMENT PLAN OF THE CENTRAL SECTOR OF THE IMPERIAL CITADEL OF THANG LONG - HANOI FOR 2021-2025, ORIENTATION TO 2030, VISION TO 2045” which provides the evaluation of the previous period of management (2013-2020) and includes “Objective 4: To facilitate the research, education and cultural promotion”. Overall, it was appreciated that “archaeological excavations have revealed the main hall of Kinh Thien Palace including Ngu Dao, Dan Tri courtyard, architectural foundation (corridor), giving a solid basis for the research and restoration of Kinh Thien Palace.” The document further mentions as an objective for the period 2022-2027, “Completing the tasks of conservation, restoration and embellishment of landscapes, converting buildings’ functions for different purposes in accordance with the Detailed Planning for Conservation, Restoration and Promotion of Thang Long – Hanoi Imperial Citadel (scale 1/500) approved in Decision No.975/QĐ-BXD dated 21/8/2015 and the Master Planning of the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi at 18 Hoang Dieu (scale 1/500) approved in Decision No.696/QĐ-Ttg dated 8/6/2012.” and “further fulfilling the Government’s commitment on heritage management and progressing the investment projects according to the approved Master Planning” for 2021-2025.

Overall, this Management Plan presents aspects of a vision to promote heritage preservation, research, the conservation and the restoration of some key elements, as well as the reconstruction project of Kinh Thien Palace, and promoting the site as an important public space referring to historical continuation of the nation as well as to anchor it in the current landscape of political power, occupying a central space in Ba Dinh district. All these details need to be reflected in the overall Vision for the Central Axis as well as being included in the Archaeological Strategy, and Conservation and Presentation Strategy.

Concerning the management structure, pursuant to Article 18, Decision No.48/2016/QĐ-UBND dated 11/7/2016 on the regulations of protecting and promoting historical-cultural relics and landscapes of the city, the People’s Committee of Hanoi is responsible for managing the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi. Under its guidance, Thang Long – Hanoi Heritage Conservation Centre is assigned as the direct management body. The Centre, as a public non-business unit with partial financial autonomy, is in charge of managing, conserving, restoring and promoting the value of Co Loa Ancient Citadel and Thang Long Imperial Citadel as the two favourite destinations of Hanoi and of Vietnam. The Centre’s task includes “outlining and implementing the Master Planning for the Ancient Citadel of Co Loa and Thang Long – Hanoi Imperial Citadel; preparing detailed plans and projects for the protection and restoration of cultural heritage sites under the management of the Centre”; the research into new technologies, establishing an information technology system, storing relevant documents to support professional activities, hosting exhibitions to introduce tangible and intangible cultural heritage to attract visitors to the Ancient Citadel of Co Loa and Thang Long Imperial Citadel.

The Centre includes the Board of Directors and eight Departments (Department of Administrative Affairs, Department of Planning and Finance, Department of Security, Department of Presentation and Interpretation, Department of Heritage Research and Collection; Department of Heritage Storage and Display, Management Unit of the Project on Conservation and Restoration of Co Loa Ancient Citadel, Management Board of Co Loa Ancient Citadel Relics), with a total of 180 staff. The management tasks also encompassed the large area of the buffer zone as the location of many state organizations and households. It also envisages partnership with functional bodies such as the People's Committees at district and ward levels and other state agencies that is important for successful implementation of the Management Plan and various projects, with the involvement of the heritage management body, central and local governments (i.e., People's Committees at city, district and ward levels), specialized agencies and other stakeholders (travel agencies, investors).

### **Projects in the wider property: On-site museum project at 18 Hoang Dieu archaeological site and the royal exhibition project in Vaxuco building**

The State Party has in both the Master Plan as well as the Management Plan for the property and its surrounding area identified numerous projects to be carried out to enhance the OUV of the property. Currently, the State Party intends to establish two important exhibition projects in addition to the previously established exhibition facilities.

One is an in-situ preservation of the vestiges covered by large, roofed houses at 18 Hoang Dieu street archaeological site. This project was briefly presented during the international conference of September 2022, and the World Heritage Centre has several observations on the concept as the proposed structure may place direct threats to the OUV of the property, in particular to the excavated structures. In compliance with paragraph 192 of the Operational Guidelines, the mission recommends that the State Party submit the complete documentation to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS on the proposed project.

Vaxuco building (1906) was originally the French department for military alimentation and is one of the most typical French colonial architectures located in the buffer zone and in the immediate vicinity of the inscribed area.





*Vaxuco building ©State Party*

Because of its architectural value and configuration, it is an appropriate place to organize an exhibition dedicated to the collections of successive dynasties of the Dai Viet. The State Party presented the Vaxuco Museum project in the document entitled “Presentation on the Achievements and the new findings”. The main building of two storeys is to be used for the visitor reception, permanent and temporary exhibitions, while an annex building is planned to be used as storage space. The mission suggests that the exhibition rooms in the main house and the storage house can be equipped with appropriate climate control measures, such as protection of windows with UV films, temperature and moisture control.

### **Management of moveable heritage**

A number of publications and scientific research documents are available on the archaeological discoveries from the Thang Long Citadel and 18 Hoang Dieu site. The Management Plan states that since 2010, “the People’s Committee of Hanoi have taken the responsibility for receiving, displaying and preserving 12,832 artifacts and 1,886 safes of artifacts from the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences. The two agencies also signed a memorandum outlining the plan and timeline for handing over the remaining artifacts during the 2020-2025 period, with a total of 5,983 artifacts of different types; 69,210 safes of artifacts, 415 m<sup>2</sup> of bricks and tiles, and 97 architectural components.” The Management Plan 2021-2025 suggests “to build a repository system on an area of 6,000 m<sup>2</sup> and equip adequate facilities for artifact storage and conservation; gradually establish a professional unit to be in charge of artifact storage.”

The existing exhibition spaces include the three pavilions in the Central Sector of the site and the museum in the basement of the parliament building. The storage area is located in several places, including the one located in the building next to the Central Sector. In the storage area, the state of conservation is in general satisfactory as the environmental control is good, the storage materials and

spatial organization are appropriate, as well as the proper documentation system with the unique object reference code allowing one to see the provenance, the year of excavation, and the serial number. The rooms are organized by object materials, including the one dedicated to the materials discovered in water and mud which require a specific storage environment (in the water pool).



*Water container for materials uncovered from water ©UNESCO\_N.HAYASHI2023*

It was observed by the mission that some objects can be stored with more spacing between them with the neighbouring objects and heavy and voluminous ones placed at the lower shelves. It was also suggested that the copy of the electronic inventory could be saved and updated on a second server. It was observed that in view of the continuous excavations, the management of the objects may be

challenging. The authorities are advised to establish a clear guidance on how to differentiate the objects by order of priority in terms of scientific and aesthetic values, and for the purpose of research. It is further advised to prepare a specific storage for storing the types of objects which are not subject to important research and public display, after thorough documentation.

To cope with these tasks, and to reinforce the capacity in interpretation and communication of knowledge, it is desirable, as planned in the Management Plan, to reinforce the team in charge of the conservation and management of collections and museum display and exhibition planning.

### **The Intangible heritage and its role in understanding the site's history, meanings and values: the concepts of cultural rights and decolonization of heritage spaces**

The Thang Long World heritage property is listed under the UNESCO 1972 Convention that recognizes heritage of Outstanding Universal Value. The 1972 Convention is a key UNESCO convention that has not only recognized humanity's heritage with OUV but that through its Operational Guidelines has come to recognize and promote the role of communities including the formerly marginalized and indigenous ones.

The convention today has a strong stand on human rights and community rights in the recognition, listing and management of their heritage thus promoting a community-centred heritage management approach as opposed to purely expert or government approaches of the past. This approach is further grounded in the Conventions 5C'S principles that have community as one of them.

The community participation element promoted through the Convention and the World Heritage Committee's 5th 'C' calls for public/stakeholder participation in the management and decision making of world heritage properties to get a buy-in and as good practice. Paragraph 112 of the Operational Guidelines that addresses effective management of world heritage properties recognizes the fact that heritage is not divorced from society (and people) but that the two have a reciprocal relationship that when good decisions and effective management are applied may contribute to sustainable development. Further that integrated approach to planning and management is essential to guide the evolution of properties over time and to ensure maintenance of all aspects of their Outstanding Universal Value. This approach goes beyond the property to include any buffer zone(s), as well as the wider setting. The wider setting may relate to the property's topography, natural and built environment, and other elements such as infrastructure, land use patterns, spatial organization, and visual relationships. It may also include related social and cultural practices, economic processes and other intangible dimensions of heritage such as perceptions and associations.

Nothing defines communities' interests, beliefs, cultural practices, and understanding of their world views better than their intangible heritage, which gives meaning to their actions including the physical and tangible heritage that they create and recreate. The norms, practices, rituals, rights, language, oral and written history, beliefs, among others form part of the intangible heritage that shape and guide societies including on what they see and consider right and wrong. Thus to understand a people and to appreciate their heritage including their value systems, one must also be able to understand and appreciate the intangible heritage of the same people. It is within the lens of their intangible heritage that the hidden meanings and values of their heritage including cultural landscapes, architectural and

archaeological heritage should first be seen and judged. Intangible heritage, like other facets of heritages, is therefore critical in understanding of the local as well as the global heritage dialogue. The objective of the State Party for the future project that has been outlined is to carry out full excavation of and restoration of the Kinh Thien Palace (15<sup>th</sup> century) in order to enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, as well as to promote cultural activities valorising intangible culture and community involvement. When carried out properly and in the spirit of the convention and according to the principles and practice of conservation, the proposed project may further contribute to the synergy between the various UNESCO Conventions, especially the 1972 and 2003, a point that UNESCO General Conference has often recommended, including to the World Heritage Committee.

It is in view of the foregoing that the present UNESCO WHC/ICOMOS mission also among others looked at the issues at hand. Apart from visiting and evaluating the physical aspects of the property including the architectural and archaeological heritage, there were meetings with experts, different community representatives and organizations in order to appraise their views on their heritage.

### **Arguments put forward by the State Party based partly on the intangible heritage for the justification of the removal of the two buildings.**

The State Party from the first day of the mission and through their representatives were clear and categorical on the need to remove/demolish/dismantle notably the two French period buildings namely the Artillery and the Operations Department buildings. These buildings were seen and considered as intrusions on top of some of the most sacred spaces of this Citadel and by extension the Vietnam state, a space considered one of the most revered in Vietnam. According to the State Party, this consideration is not only based on the fact that this landscape was the abode of successive emperors who are all considered God's representative on earth, but is also pointed out as the origin of the independent state of Vietnam dating to over a thousand years ago. These are clearly stated in the three criteria under which the OUV is based, and the property listed.

While the Artillery building is seen to be located on the sacred grounds of the emperor's palace (15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century Kinh Thien Palace), the most sacred part of the palace complex, the Operations Department buildings is said to be on the emperor's processional route that is equally revered. These two are seen as not only hindering the realization of a complete picture of the palace complex as a cultural and religious landscape of greatest sanctity but also the realization of the identity of the Vietnam nation and its people. Further that their presence cannot allow the full expression of Criteria (ii), (iii) and (vi) that form the basis of the OUV of which the property was listed.

In presentations made by Professor Tong Trung Tin, Chairman of the Vietnamese National Association of Archaeology who has studied and excavated the site for decades, Professor Nguyen Quang Ngoc, Vice-Chairman of the Vietnamese National Association of History, Professor Dang Van Bui, Vice-Chairman of the National Council of Cultural Heritage all representing the State Party in the discussions pointed to deeper reasons for wanting to remove the buildings and not just because of their colonial origins. They were categorical in their views that the colonial buildings, and the Operations and Artillery Buildings in particular, present a major hindrance to the fulfilment of the Vietnamese nationhood, national identity, national healing, political, cultural and spiritual fulfilment of the Vietnamese nation and people as well as reconciliation with their colonial past. These elements are presented in a way that they are all tied to the feelings of a nation and a people and embedded in intangible values built in a



historical trajectory of the nation, that has both the good and the bad, the acceptable and the unacceptable.

To quote one of the professors in his presentation, the buildings remind them of occupation forces rather than a valued heritage. They sit on the most sacred of places, the sanctum of Vietnamese spirituality being comparable to the Vatican in Rome for the Christian Catholics. The same sentiments were made in the stakeholder meeting that took place on the last day of the mission.

### **Need for rebalancing the representation?**

At face value one question that comes to mind when dealing with the issue of removal of such structures in a landscape of contestation is whether this is purely based on hatred and the need to eliminate unwanted history and memory! According to the State Party, this is not so. Despite their strong feelings expressed in words such as reminders of colonial domination, they argue that their action is more influenced by the need to realize full potential of the property, to better present its OUV, to strengthen authenticity and integrity based on the criteria for which the property is inscribed, and to meet the national needs and expectations including spiritual/religious, political and cultural that are all being hindered by the presence of these buildings.

To justify this, they state that they are investing heavily in the restoration, maintenance and conservation of colonial buildings everywhere in Vietnam and not only in the capital city Hanoi. They also stated that because they cherish the buildings that is why they are found and protected in their hundreds and currently they are spending millions of dollars in restoring and conserving colonial-built heritage including within the core and buffer zone of the property. They consider many of these buildings as contributing to the OUV of the property and one of the buildings being restored in the property is the Vaxuco Building located in the northern portion of the central sector of the Citadel. The State Party expressed its intention in removing what they referred to as recent temporary buildings constructed by the Vietnamese military and that were not listed as contributing to the OUV of the property. This to them also demonstrates that the State Party is not only selecting French period buildings for removal, but also their own that they considered not important in expressing the values of the property. Like the Vietnamese buildings to be removed, some people including some Vietnamese experts expressed the opinion that the two colonial period buildings proposed for removal were of no architectural significance as they were “only functional barracks of junior officers”.

These two buildings are seen to sit on the most sacred space of the Vietnamese nation that expresses the Vietnamese statehood spanning over one thousand years complete with history of their royal lineages. Thang Long palace, as the most important royal space in Vietnamese history, is also considered the most sacred place where the emperors connected with their God on behalf of the nation and its people. Today being occupied by the Artillery building of the colonial period is not only considered a symbol of national shame but also loss of spiritual connection and religious and cultural practices, loss of independence, a symbol of domination and subjugation that continues to create a national mental anguish. According to the State Party this can only be rectified through a pragmatic decolonization action. This is envisaged to involve the removal of what is considered the negative energy producing Artillery structure to allow positive energy through excavation and restoration of the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century Kinh Thien Palace, that will become the centre of religious and cultural life of the people of Vietnam and to fully comply with the spirit of the listing of the site as captured in the three criteria.

The State Party also argues that for a complete and authentic state of the property that expresses its OUV in full and is representative of the religious, historical, political and cultural values that the Operations Department buildings on the emperor's processional route that is equally revered must also be removed. Towards this, the State Party has engaged in archaeological excavations for over ten years that have undoubtedly demonstrated the existence of the procession route currently deep under this building. It is argued that only when these actions have been made, that in addition to the expression of the OUV in its fullest sense, this sacred landscape will reclaim its meaning, purpose and reconnect the Vietnamese people through their historical past, removing collective national pain, and bringing to conclusion a national reconciliation with its past. This feeling is not confined to State Party government officials or experts but seems to permeate the entire national psyche as expressed in stakeholder meetings during the mission.

While all these feelings and experiences are critical and are of utmost importance, the main question would also be whether a) the presence of these buildings are a hindrance and a blockage to the realization of the fullness of OUV of the property as expressed in the criteria under which the property is listed; b) whether these buildings create a constant negative presence and a hindrance to the realization of spiritual, cultural and political fulfilment of the Vietnamese people in a site they consider most sacred and c) whether the removal of these buildings will enhance the understanding, appreciation and use of the property as well as the full expression of its OUV as per the criteria for listing.

In dealing with the issue of removal and the intangible aspects of the property as clearly expressed in Criterion (vi), it would be important to recognize some critical facts. First, that despite the negative feelings about the buildings as markers of oppression and domination by foreign power and their relatively recent age compared to over a thousand years of history expressed in the archaeological and architectural layers and historical narratives, they have been part of this landscape and contributing to criteria vi. This criteria states that: *The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long at Hanoi, with its political function and symbolic role, is directly associated with numerous and important cultural and historical events, and leading artistic expressions and moral, philosophical, and religious ideas. The succession of these events marks the formative and development process of an independent nation over more than a thousand years, including the colonial period and the two contemporary Wars of Independence and reunification of Viet Nam.*

It may therefore call for justification that first, the removal of particularly the two buildings are based on sound archaeological evidence that demonstrate the existence of even more valuable and critical heritage values of the property to be exhibited to replace them and, secondly, if and when dismantling the buildings, that the most appropriate care and method is applied to document and preserve the memory of the same for future reference.

# 3 Conclusions and Recommendations

## 3.1 Conclusions

A UNESCO/ICOMOS Advisory Mission visited the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi on 5-9, 2023 to advise on a project to excavate and fully restore the 15th-18th century Kinh Thien Palace and its spaces within the property.

The key findings of the mission and its recommendations are summarized below.

The State Party has responded proactively to the World Heritage Committee's recommendations issued at the time of the inscription in 2010; the mission noted that several important research and documentation activities have been carried out since 2010 to improve the understanding of the property, strengthen its Outstanding Universal Value, integrity, and authenticity and as a basis for the property's progressive enhancement.

In particular, the State Party has significantly strengthened and extended archaeological investigations in the Central Sector of the Citadel, namely on the western side of Doan Mon Gate, in the area between Doan Mon Gate and the French Army Operations Building, at the foot of the two sets of Dragon Steps, and the area near the Hau Lau Palace. These excavations have uncovered new evidence concerning the layout of the Citadel in its different phases of occupation, including the location of the Dan Tri courtyard, the alignment of the royal path, the position of Khin Thien Palace and the location of some sets of its supporting pillars. Archaeological investigations have also yielded a wealth of movable artefacts that shed light on the history of the property and the achievements of Vietnamese culture throughout several centuries.

All these achievements and accumulated scientific material support further investigation, and the sharing of the results on the Central Axis will contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynastic history and enhancement of the OUV of the property.

Furthermore, to strengthen the management of the property, the State Party has progressively decommissioned the military use of sections of the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel and relinquished custody of the property to the management entity of the property.

The State Party has started to document the northern section of the Central Axis, which has only recently come under the responsibility of the management entity of the property, as well as to restore some of the buildings (e.g. the Vaxuco Building and its southern neighbour) to give them a function as a Museum of the property and storage of the archaeological collection of objects retrieved during the excavations. Further work is needed to complete the inventory of this part of the property.

To guide the enhancement of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi the State Party has developed a Master Plan via two governmental decisions – one adopted by the Prime Minister and the other by the Ministry of Construction in 2012 and 2015, respectively. The draft Management Plan is also linked to the implementation of the Master Plan.

It is in this context of management and research activities being implemented since inscription that the proposal for the removal of two French colonial buildings - French Army Operations Department Building

and French Army Artillery Command Building - has been put forward by the State Party, and which has been assessed by the mission.

Following archaeological and historical research, it has been clarified that the French Army Operations Department Building stands on the recently discovered Dan Tri courtyard and the French Army Artillery Command Buildings stands on the location of the 19th century Long Thien Palace and the preceding Khin Thien Palace. The removal of these two buildings will permit the State Party to expand the archaeological research and excavations with a view to restoring the Khin Thien Palace space and possibly reconstructing the palace.

Beyond concerns on material preservation and archaeological research, the Citadel, based both on archaeological, historical, and oral tradition sources, is possibly the most important expression of religious/ritualistic, political and social representation of the Vietnamese nation spanning over 1000 years of uninterrupted dynastic tradition. The mission understood that experiencing and reviving the original spatial configuration of the Central Axis of the Citadel is a matter of great importance for the management of the property; the mission considers that this aspiration is legitimate and would be supportive of the Outstanding Universal Value.

The mission considers that proposed dismantling of the Operations Building and Artillery Building is understandable and could be accepted as a preliminary step towards the enhancement of the property for the following reasons:

- Sufficient archaeological and scientific data has been retrieved from the surrounding Dan Tri courtyard area to justify the removal of these buildings to allow further archaeological investigation on the spaces of the Dan Tri courtyard and the royal path, and of the layout of the Khin Thien Palace;
- The removal of these buildings will make it possible to improve the full expression of the property's OUV as well as its understanding, presentation and appreciation;
- Neither of the two buildings can be considered to exhibit a particular architectural significance compared to other buildings erected during the Colonial period;
- The Operations Building makes it difficult to read the axiality of the Central Sector of the Citadel and the configuration of the Dan Tri courtyard, whilst the Artillery Building prevents research on the pre-colonial configuration of the Central Axis of the Citadel;
- Both buildings are remnants and difficult reminders of foreign occupation; and
- They encroach upon two most sacred places for the Vietnamese native dynasties.

The mission also considers that the research already carried out has gathered knowledge and an understanding of the property that can nurture the elaboration of an over- arching Vision for the Central Axis, within the context of the whole property, that is based on the OUV and ties in the Master Plan elaborated for the Central Axis. Such a Vision will assist the State Party to guide all future plans and actions within the property.

Hence, before proceeding with the controlled dismantling of the Operations Building and Artillery Building can take place, the mission advises that some preparatory steps be undertaken.

The mission could verify that two buildings do not exhibit a particular architectural or historical significance compared with other existing and much more representative structures of the colonial and



contemporary periods linked to Criterion (vi). It is essential, however, that a clarification and comprehensive identification of the attributes supporting the OUV is carried out and clarity is achieved about which buildings from the colonial period contribute to this facet of the property's Outstanding Universal Value. This will allay any potential concerns that the proposal of this removal may raise. For this reason, clarifying the key attributes of the OUV of the World Heritage property is a crucial prerequisite to any conservation and enhancement programme aiming at sustaining its Outstanding Universal Value, as well as a prerequisite to conduct any Heritage Impact Assessment to evaluate possible impacts on OUV of future interventions.

The State Party proposes to digitally preserve the French Army Operations Department and French Army Artillery Command Buildings and has prepared rigorous documentation on the geometry of the Operations Building through the application of laser scanning and photogrammetry. Dimensions and geometry are important data for considering architecture; this could be further consolidated with, a comprehensive documentation covering the building fabric, the construction materials used, their provenance and treatment, the structural conception, the construction techniques, and details of all elements, including pavements, plasters, windows and doors, as well as the transformations that occurred over time. The same rigorous process should be applied to the Artillery Building.

The mission also considers that the archaeological investigations at the sites of the Operations and Artillery Buildings will be facilitated if an Archaeological Strategy is in place.

Clarity would also be needed with regard to which other buildings or standing structures that the State Party is planning to remove as part of the Master Plan. Although the current proposal addresses the removal of only two buildings, this is tied with a potential proposal for restoring a key section of the Central Axis and, therefore, will have implications for the subsequent steps and approach to the Master Plan implementation.

Regarding the 'restoration' of the spaces of the royal courtyard and of the Khin Thien Palace, this action has potential to enhance the understanding of the OUV through revealing the several layers of occupation that reflect the property being a continuous seat of power, as stated in the statement of Outstanding Universal Value.

The mission considers that further reflection, a solid scientific proposal and additional information are needed, including the outcomes of proposed additional archaeological investigations for which the removal of the Artillery and Operations Buildings has been proposed, before deciding which options would be feasible for the restoration of the Khin Thien Palace space, the potential reconstruction of the palace and, more generally the enhancement of the property and of its archaeological remains. In particular, it would be important to understand whether, as it seems, one historic period will be preferred for the restitution of the imperial palace spaces over others and for what reasons, or whether there will be efforts to illustrate the multi-layered nature of the property and the different layouts that Thang Long assumed throughout the centuries, including more recent periods. More specifically, in relation to the ambition to re-establish the Khin Thien Palace, it seems necessary to understand what sources the State Party intends to use to retrieve all necessary data for the physical reconstruction of the palace. For instance, the State Party aims to excavate the site currently occupied by the Artillery Building to retrieve the foundations of the supporting pillars. It is not clear, however, how the distribution of the pillars will provide information on the height, size, wooden type, or shape of the pillars.

The mission advises that a Conservation and Presentation Strategy, along with roadmap for a phased approach to the enhancement of the Central Axis, the restoration of the Khin Thien Palace space, including the potential reconstruction of the palace, be developed, with the support of the World heritage Centre and ICOMOS, that remain available to continue to support the State party in this important undertaking, which can become an exemplary process.

The state of conservation of the property can be considered between good and acceptable, although a number of standing structures show the need for maintenance and conservation measures, especially the smaller gates of the enclosure wall. The uncovered archaeological remains at 18 Hoang Dieu are protected by a plastic undulated sheet roofing from rainwater and some in-situ elements, such as wooden objects, need a specific conservation measure. The mission understands that a large-scale project is planned for the enhancement and interpretation of the archaeological site, through two museum projects for 18 Hoang Dieu and in Vaxuco building; the mission recommends that details of such projects be sent to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS before any decision is finalised, as per paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

The archaeological remains in the Central Axis, uncovered during the most recent excavation campaigns in the area between Doan Mon Gate and the Operations Building are exposed to weathering; in the short term they need to be protected by a roof, if the intention is to maintain them exposed, or reburied. Creating a drainage system to prevent rainwater infiltration and stagnation in the trenches would also be useful to preserve the archaeological remains and the stratigraphic sections.

Beyond the seven-year research plan, it is important to fully clarify the policy for the conservation, enhancement, and interpretation of the uncovered archaeological remains within the Central Sector of Thang Long – Hanoi. What areas will be kept open and visible, like 18 Hoang Dieu site or the area immediately north of the Doan Mon gate, and what areas will be reburied?

The proposal of the State Party would necessarily lead to the reflection on the longer-term planning on how it intends to frame further scientific research, cooperation and the valorisation of the outcomes of academic studies through interpretation and presentation. In this regard, the mission also suggests a set of recommendations for the overall vision for the presentation of the site, on-going museum projects and management of moveable heritage.

A vision beyond 2030 is recommended to consider the retention of some unexcavated sections of the Citadel, a careful investigation to verify the survival of the layers of Long Thien Palace and Kinh Thien Palaces, while exploring the possibility of non-invasive investigation techniques whenever applicable.

A comprehensive strategy for the conservation of the uncovered archaeological remains is suggested to be built on the solid vision on how the State Party intends to enable a balanced presentation of its historical layers. The conservation of the archaeological remains can be combined with other complementary media, such as museums and exhibition materials, and digital means, to the holistic understanding of the history of the country encapsulated in the evolution of the Citadel and its spaces.

One important recommendation that is yet to be addressed by the State Party relates to the expansion of the buffer zone to fully surround the property. It is noted that the eastern part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century citadel, which was encircled by Vauban-style fortifications erected by Nguyen Dynasty and later demolished by the French, is not included in the buffer zone, although this area may preserve below ground archaeological vestiges that could shed further light on the history of Thang Long. Therefore,

providing appropriate protection mechanisms for the area east of the Central Sector of the Citadel seems necessary to guarantee that potential buried remains are preserved.

## **3.2 Recommendations**

In view of the above, the mission recommends the following:

### **Research and Renovation of the Central Sector of the World Heritage property of the Thang Long Imperial Citadel**

#### ***1.1 Development of an over- arching Vision for the Central Axis within the overall property***

Develop with the support of WHC and ICOMOS a 'Vision' for the future development of the Central Axis in order to capture what the State Party wishes to achieve through the Master Plan, in relation to the purpose of the World Heritage Convention and to the sustenance of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, and how this can be achieved in line with the recommendations of this mission report.

The Vision would provide the basis for defining an Archaeological Strategy (see section 3.1) and detailed excavation projects and, following the outcome of these, a detailed Conservation and Presentation Strategy (see section 1.4) for the Central Axis, that would assist the State Party in achieving the aims set out through the Vision and the Master Plan.

#### ***1.2 Clarification of Attributes of OUV***

As a basis for the development of a Vision, clarify as soon as possible, with the support of ICOMOS and WHC, the attributes that convey the OUV of the property on the basis of the Statement of OUV, relevant parts of the nomination dossier, the Management Plans and of the outcomes of research carried out so far;

The Vision and the clarified attributes would need to be submitted as soon as possible to the WHC and ICOMOS for review.

#### ***1.3 Dismantling of the Operations Department and Artillery Commands Buildings***

The mission considers that proposed dismantling of the Operations and Artillery Buildings is understandable and could be accepted as a preliminary step towards the enhancement of the property in line with the agreed Vision to be developed by the State Party and recommends that the State Party:

1.3.1 Submit a proposal for the controlled dismantling of the two above-mentioned buildings based on the following activities:

1.3.1.1. Complete the descriptive list of buildings and structures within the property already prepared and shared with the mission experts following the advisory mission, with the structures that have not yet been included in that list;

1.3.1.2. Complement geometrical documentation of the Operations and the Artillery Buildings by carrying out research on the transformation of the buildings over time by applying combined methods, including stratigraphic analysis of the buildings, and analyses of construction materials and building components, as further detailed in the text above, before the actual archaeological dismantling of the two concerned buildings commences;

1.3.1.3. Consider ensuring, in the process of removing the Operations and Artillery Buildings, that trees can be conserved in their current or any other suitable location.

The mission advises that the documentation resulting from the above activities be shared with the WHC and ICOMOS for review.

*Once the actual dismantling phase will be agreed upon:*

1.3.2. Ensure that the removal of the buildings is conducted through documented and controlled dismantling, in the presence of archaeologist(s) to ensure that maximum information about the construction and historic development of the buildings as well as potentially pre-colonial building materials and artefacts can be retrieved.

#### **1.4 Archaeological Strategy for the Central Axis**

In conjunction with the abovementioned Vision, and before conducting archaeological investigations on the areas of the Artillery and Operations Buildings, develop an Archaeological Strategy that encompasses the following:

- 1.4.1. Specific research questions that the proposed seven-year excavation project will target and how the results of each year's excavations will inform and justify further excavation of the central area.
- 1.4.2. A list of buildings and structures that the State Party aims to dismantle and remove from the property for targeted archaeological investigations, conservation, restoration and enhancement of the property, with an explanation of the reasons why these buildings need to be dismantled and what research questions are being targeted in these areas.
- 1.4.3. A management process which guides how and when excavation is proposed, and how it is undertaken. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that future excavations are carefully planned and consistent with the past investigations, and to respond to specific research questions and the need for targeted excavation data.
- 1.4.4. Nomination of certain areas where archaeological deposits will not be immediately excavated but preserved for future archaeological research, considering the advancement of excavation techniques and retaining some of the Dan Tri areas for research by future generations.



- 1.4.5 Consideration of non-invasive archaeological investigative techniques prior to or in place of excavation. Although remote sensing to date has provided limited results for the Thang Long Citadel, these techniques should continue to be explored, especially in open areas prior to excavation, such as immediately following demolition of the Operations and Artillery Buildings.
- 1.4. 6. Elaborate a detailed excavation proposal for the area of the main palace, to ensure that excavation strategies consider the extent of survival of the Long Thien and Kinh Thien Palaces, and that the results of excavation and evident levels of preservation inform further excavation proposals;
- 1.4.7. Define what further research questions and archaeological recording needs to be undertaken, noting that excavation is destructive, and is best reserved for addressing specific gaps in current knowledge.

The mission advises that such a Strategy be submitted to the WHC and ICOMOS for review before decisions are taken on further removing other structural elements of the Long Thien Palace until further archaeological data is available regarding both this Palace and the former Kinh Thien Palace.

## **2. Conservation and Presentation Strategy for the Central Axis**

*Following the outcome of further excavations and research, and before decisions are taken with regard to the form of possible restoration/reconstruction of the Central Axis, a Conservation and Presentation Strategy should be developed that sets out:*

2.1. Comprehensive proposal on clarifying the envisaged options for the ‘restoration’ of the space of Kinh Thien Palace, by specifying a general plan regarding which interventions and physical presentation of the archaeological vestiges the restoration is pursuing, whether the reconstruction of some of the ancient and no longer standing structures is envisaged, and what sources of information and scientific evidence are expected to be used and how, including:

2.1.1. An explanation on whether and what areas will be exposed to public access, what areas will be reburied, what areas will be preserved for future research, the areas where reconstruction is planned, how such intervention will guarantee that archaeological remains will not be altered and, to what extent they will remain accessible for future research, considering that the archaeological remains are attributes of the OUV and exhibit a high level of authenticity;

2.1.2. a detailed synthesis of all historical sources such as ancient writings, memorial inscription stelae/epitaphs, illustrations, pictures, drawings, other sources of information gathered and studied until present, as well as of the outcomes of comparative studies with contemporary or earlier royal citadels in Vietnam and/or in China, Japan, South Korea, including an explanation of the methodology adopted to draw conclusions from these studies in relation to the hypotheses regarding configurations of the Kinh Thien palace and its ceremonial space;

2.1.3. a comprehensive compilation of all studies conducted until the present day on Kinh Thien Palace and the royal courtyard, the central royal axis and surrounding corridor structures, their construction materials, decoration, spatial arrangements and, based on the outcomes, the identification of additional research necessary to lay down a solid scientific basis for such a project so as to facilitate an understanding of their results and of the rationale for the choices being pursued for the enhancement of the property;

- 2.1.4. An exploration of whether the rationale of prioritizing the 18th-century facies of the Central Sector of the Thang Long Imperial Citadel is the optimum way to achieve the desired presentation of the Central Axis and its multiple layers of occupation of the area as a seat of power;
- 2.1.5. Further information on how tangible and intangible evidence retrieved through the excavations and archival and other methods have been used to develop the presented visual 3D models of the Kinh Thien Palace and of its ceremonial space (Dan Tri and Ngu Dao)

The mission advises that the Conservation and Presentation Strategy be submitted to the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS for review, before its adoption and before any irreversible work is undertaken.

- 2.2. Carry out study visits, if possible, and consultations with scholars and authorities who have conducted extensive historical reconstruction abroad, such as the Nara Palace and Gusuku Palace in Japan, and some sites in China, among others, to learn the experiences from these projects.
- 2.3. Discuss with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS throughout the process of developing the Vision, the Archaeological Strategy and Conservation and Presentation Strategy the scope and timeframe for conducting a Heritage Impact Assessment and only when concrete proposals will be formulated on possible restoration/reconstruction of the Central Axis.
- 2.4. All the documents are requested to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre in one of the official UNESCO languages.

The Annex 6 can be referred to on the suggested detailed sequence of the operations relating to the recommendations 1 and 2.

### ***3.Further implementation of the Master Plan:***

*In addition to the above-mentioned recommendations relating to section 1 also undertake the following:*

- 3.1. Developing a landscape study and an inventory of the existing vegetation cover with a focus on the aged and large trees standing in the property, including information on their age, species, characteristics and health conditions; in this exercise, also take into account historic graphic and photographic documentation that may provide information on the evolution of the tree cover in the property over time.
- 3.2. Continuing to explore non-invasive investigative techniques for the property and commit to implementing non-invasive investigations if a suitable technique is identified.

### ***4.Preservation of the overall World Heritage property***

*Central axis:*

- 4.1. Enhance urgently the protection of the large, excavated areas of archaeological remains between the Doan Mon Gate, the French Army Operations building and any other areas by providing protective measures to prevent adverse effects on exposed archaeological deposits including drainage system to prevent the rainwater infiltration into the excavated area;

### *18 Hoang Dieu archaeological site*

4.2. Consider a suitable conservation of archaeological deposits including in-situ structures, artefacts, in particular wooden objects, within a controlled environment;

### *19-20th century elements*

4.3. Consider the urgent need of conservation for some of the small gates of the Nguyen period as well as of any other buildings that may be part of the attributes of the OUV as soon as these have been identified;

### *In general:*

4-4. Pursue further opportunities for collaborative international projects concerning the research on the Central Sector;

4-5. Consider a wider dissemination of results of archaeological research of the property beyond the Vietnamese language;

4-6. Provide details on buildings and structures that have been removed since inscription, especially with regard to the Dan Tri courtyard, in order to record the changes through time of the property.

## **5. For future excavation and demolitions beyond the seven-year plan**

5.1. Provide further detail on the long-term conservation and/or reconstruction of the Can Chinh Palace.

5.2. Provide any details of excavation plans, however general, for work beyond 2030, including the areas north of Hau Lau and how the results of excavations undertaken to date will inform future excavation plans.

5.3. Consider retaining some unexcavated sections of the citadel for long term preservation, to ensure availability for future archaeological research and more advanced investigative techniques.

## **6. Presentation, interpretation of the overall property**

6.1. Elaborate a policy document for the presentation and interpretation of the property, by for instance presenting how they intend to combine different exhibition spaces and in-situ elements in a way to optimize the public understanding of the past history.

6.2. Reflect on the presentation of the excavated areas by selecting specific areas to be left exposed to the public by ensuring the optimal conservation conditions as well as the visibility of the historical layers; for example, in situ exhibition with suitable protective measures such as glass tops;

6.3. Enhance the interpretation in museums and other exhibit spaces and possibly on-line and in published materials, combined with the display of in-situ conservation area, the exhibition panels and explanation materials which clarify its geomantic features, chronology, the research history and the main line of the historical, architectural and artistic evolution, allowing the contextualization of the historical evidence in the perspective of Vietnamese and world history.

6.4. Possibly elaborate a section presenting the interconnection with other parts of the World and other World Heritage sites (e.g. trade, religions,) to explain the values of the site as World Heritage transcending the national border, and as a particularly important place in global history.

6.5. Develop further the 3D simulation for the public to understand the possible configuration of Kinh Thien Palace and its surroundings. The application of new technological tools in architectural research, interpretation for exhibition, and digital documentation of the heritage sites could contribute to the enrichment of the public understanding of the heritage space.

6.6. Collect and compile historical maps, drawings and pictures of 18-20th centuries CE would enable the understanding of the successive alterations to the Central Sector, in particular with regard to Criterion vi.

## **7. Museums and Moveable heritage**

7.1. Submit the complete documentation on the planned and on-going museum projects to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS.

7.2. Ensure that the exhibition rooms in the main house and the storage house in Vaxuco building be equipped with appropriate climate control measures, such as protection of windows with UV film, temperature and moisture control.

7.3. Store objects in the storage rooms with appropriate spacing with the neighbouring objects and heavy and voluminous objects placed at the lower shelves.

7.4. Safekeep the copy of the electronic inventory and update on a second server.

7.5. Given the challenge of conserving a great number of excavated objects, establish a clear guidance on how to differentiate the objects by order of priority in terms of scientific and aesthetic values, and for the purpose of research. It is advised to prepare a specific storage for storing the types of objects which are not subject to the important research and public display, after thorough documentation.

7.6. To cope with these tasks, and to reinforce the capacity in interpretation and communication of knowledge, reinforce the team in charge of the conservation and management of collections and museum display and exhibition planning.

## **8. Others:**



Consider the expansion of the buffer zone to fully surround the property, to include the eastern part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Citadel, in order to ensure appropriate protection on the archaeological vestiges that could shed further light on the history of Thang Long.

## 2 Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference of the Mission

Annex 2: Mission Team

Annex 3: Mission Programme

Annex 4: Participants

Annex 5: Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Annex 6: Legal and conceptual references

Annex 7: Suggested sequence of the actions relating to Recommendations 1 and 2

# Annex 1: Terms of Reference of the Mission

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi, Vietnam

Joint UNESCO-ICOMOS Advisory Mission

5-9 July 2023

### ***Purpose of the Mission***

The mission has been requested by the State Party of Vietnam to advise on a project to excavate and restore the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century Kinh Thien Palace within the property.

### ***Background***

In December 2022, the State Party submitted a “Brief synthesis report on scientific dossier of research and renovation of the Central Sector of the World Heritage Site Thang Long Citadel”, to the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS for their study.

This report sets out an overview of archaeological excavations that extended across some 90,000 m<sup>2</sup> of the property as well as historical research between 2011 and 2022 in the context of the decision of the World Heritage Committee at the time of inscription. It also outlines a project to fully excavate and then “restore” the Kinh Thien Palace which flourished between 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the ultimate goal of “enhancing the Outstanding Universal Value of the property” and enabling community cultural activities at the Thang Long Hanoi Imperial Citadel.

So far, excavations have allowed the identification of the foundations of the later Long Thien Palace of the Nguyen Dynasty, (19<sup>th</sup> century). The aim is to fully excavate beneath this palace to reveal possible extensive vestiges of the earlier and larger Kinh Thien Palace of the Le Trung hung period (15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century) and then “fully restore” its main spaces. Such a project may bring the need to demolish the remains of the already excavated Long Thien Palace and 20<sup>th</sup> century colonial buildings and may also encompass the possible reconstruction of key monuments.

The State Party has also defined the key stages of a research and renovation project for the central sector which are largely sequential as much will depend on what archaeological excavations might reveal.

### ***Scope of the Mission***

On the basis of the documentation submitted by the State Party in December 2022 and in May 2023, the Advisory Mission will address the following:

- Assess the overall state of conservation of the property, having particular regard to the attributes of the property which support its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) relating to three Criteria (ii), (iii) and (vi);
- Consider in detail the project to fully excavate beneath the currently partly excavated Long Thien Palace to reveal what are believed to be extensive vestiges of the earlier and larger Kinh Thien Palace of the Le Trung hung period (15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century) and then “fully restore” its main spaces, and in particular:
  - The scope and extent of research, excavations and analysis undertaken since inscription,
  - The full scope of the proposed seven-year archaeological excavations which have been set out by the State Party as follows:
    - ‘2023: Conduct excavation to have all traces of Dan Tri yard from the area of the Operations Department Building to the front of dragon steps of Kinh Thien Palace.
    - 2024: Conduct exploration and excavation around the foundation of Long Thien Palace to learn the structure and scale of Kinh Thien Palace.
    - 2025: Focus the excavation on the northern area of Kinh Thien Main Hall, which is adjacent to the area predicted to be Can Chinh Palace; finishing the entire exploration of the scale of Kinh Thien main hall.
    - 2026-2030: Excavate the space of Can Chanh Palace’;
  - Whether proposals to demolish 19<sup>th</sup> century layers in order to reveal the earlier palace structures can be justified in archaeological terms on the basis of what is currently known, or whether further non-invasive assessments are needed to determine more accurately what survives of the Kinh Thien Palace before non-reversible excavations are undertaken;
  - Which 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century colonial and other buildings would need to be demolished to facilitate these excavations;
  - Which elements of the Long Thien Palace would be removed;
  - How and when one or more Heritage Impact Assessments might be undertaken;
  - The full scope of the area considered for future excavation and whether it is foreseen that further excavations and demolitions would be undertaken beyond the currently proposed seven year plan;
  - The full scope of proposals for subsequent consolidation, restoration, and reconstruction of the excavated areas;
  - Proposals for presentation, interpretation and use of the excavated areas;
  - Management of the proposed archaeological project;



- Proposals for conservation and restoration of the remainder of the World Heritage property;

Proposal for possible non-invasive assessments

- Any other relevant matters that may arise

The State Party will facilitate the necessary field visits and access to key locations, as well as meetings with stakeholders, including the Ministry of ..... and other authorities and stakeholders involved in the proposed project and the overall management of the property, including local communities.

In order to enable the preparation of the mission, it be necessary that the following items are provided to the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS as soon as possible:

- List of archaeological remains, buildings and other attributes included in the nomination file with a detailed map showing their location.

Please note that additional information may be requested during or following the mission which should be submitted within seven days following the end of the mission.

Based on the results of the above-mentioned reviews, assessments and discussions with the State Party representatives, authorities and stakeholders, the mission will prepare a concise report on the findings and recommendations as soon as possible after the completion of the mission.

The recommendations will be provided with the mission report, and not during the course of the mission.

In line with policies of both UNESCO and ICOMOS, their experts will not engage with the media, nor discuss the mission findings and recommendations, which should only be presented in the final mission report.

## **Annex 2: Mission Team**

The mission team was composed of:

**Luisa De Marco and Matthew Whincop**, representing ICOMOS International;

**Nao HAYASHI and George ABUNGU**, representing the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

## Annex 3: Mission Programme

### MISSION SCHEDULE

#### Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory Mission

#### Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi" (Viet Nam)

5-9 July 2023

<u>Wednesday, July 5 2023</u>		<u>Venues</u>	<u>Composition</u>
11.25	Dr. Matthew arrives Noi Bai airport.	T2 Terminal	Thang Long – Ha Noi Heritage conservation centre (TL centre)
13.45	Mrs. Luisa De Marco arrives Noi Bai airport.	T2 Terminal	TL centre
17.15	Prof. George Abungu arrives Noi Bai airport.	T1 Terminal	TL centre
	Check-in at the hotel.	Hotel de l'Opera Hanoi – Mgallery (29 Tràng Tiền, Hoàn Kiếm)	TL centre
<u>Thursday, July 6, 2023</u>			
6.25	Ms. Nao HAYASHI arrives Noi Bai airport. Check-in at the hotel.	T2 Terminal Hotel de l'Opera Hanoi – Mgallery (29 Tràng Tiền, Hoàn Kiếm)	TL centre
8.45	Transfer to Thang Long Imperial Citadel	9 Hoang Dieu, Ba Dinh	

9.00 – 11.30	<p>Overall introduction about <b>the</b> World Heritage Site - the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Ha Noi:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Map of attributes</li><li>- Research history</li><li>- Archaeological excavations</li></ul> <p>Etc.</p>	Meeting Hall II, TL centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The WHC/ICOMOS experts</li><li>- Representatives of Viet Nam National commission for UNESCO, UNESCO Ha Noi;</li><li>- The standing members of the Scientific Advisory Council;</li><li>- Thang Long centre.</li></ul>
11.30 – 14:00	<p>Meeting hosted by the Leaders of Ha Noi city.</p> <p>Venue: <i>9 Hoang Dieu, Ba Dinh</i></p> <p><i>UNESCO:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Mr. Firmin Edouard Matoko, the Assistant Director-general of the Africa Department and External Relations of UNESCO;</li><li>- The WHC/ICOMOS experts: Ms. Nao Hayashi Prof. George O. Abungu Mrs. Luisa De Marco Dr. Matthew Whincop</li><li>- Representatives of Viet Nam National commission for UNESCO, UNESCO Ha Noi;</li></ul> <p><i>Viet Nam:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Mr. Ha Kim Ngoc, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, President of Viet Nam NATCOM;</li><li>- Mr. Hoang Dao Cuong - Deputy Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism;</li><li>- Ms. Le Thi Hong Van, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO;</li><li>- Mr. Nguyen Van Phong, Deputy Secretary of Ha Noi Party Committee;</li><li>- Mrs. Vu Thu Ha – Vice Chairman of Ha Noi People’s Committee;</li><li>- Representatives of the Scientific Advisory Council.</li></ul>		



	- Mr. Nguyen Thanh Quang – Director of Thang Long – Ha Noi Heritage conservation centre.		
<b>14:00 – 17:00</b>	Field visit of <b>the World Heritage Site - the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Ha Noi</b> - The archaeological sites - The artifact storage areas - VAXUCO Building,...	<i>9 Hoang Dieu, Ba Dinh</i>	- The WHC/ICOMOS experts - The standing members of the Scientific Advisory Council; - Thang Long centre.
<b><u>Friday, July 7, 2023</u></b>			
<b>8.45</b>	Transfer to Thang Long Imperial Citadel	<i>9 Hoang Dieu, Ba Dinh</i>	
<b>9:00 - 12:00</b>	Continue the field visit.	<i>9 Hoang Dieu, Ba Dinh</i>	- The WHC/ICOMOS experts - The standing members of the Scientific Advisory Council; - Thang Long centre.
<b>12.00 – 14.00</b>	Lunch break		
<b>14.00 – 17.30</b>	Presentation on The first draft of Heritage Impact Assessment. Discussion.  Q & A on the existing documents and the discovery of the field visits	Meeting Hall II, TL centre	- The WHC/ICOMOS experts; - The standing members of the Scientific Advisory Council; - UNESCO Ha Noi office; - The consultant agency; - Thang Long centre.

<b><u>Saturday, July 8, 2023</u></b>			
<b>8.45</b>	Transfer to Thang Long Imperial Citadel	<i>9 Hoang Dieu, Ba Dinh</i>	
<b>9.00 – 12.00</b>	Draft Outline of the Heritage Dossier A roadmap of the next steps to complete the file to be submitted to the World Heritage Committee for its 46 <sup>th</sup> session. (technical & procedural follow-up) Q&A.	Meeting Hall II, TL centre	- The WHC/ICOMOS experts; - The standing members of the Scientific Advisory Council; - UNESCO Ha Noi office; - The consultant agency; - Thang Long centre.
<b>12.00 – 14.00</b>	Lunch break		
<b>14.00 – 17.00</b>	Discussion.	Meeting Hall II, TL centre	- The WHC/ICOMOS experts; - The standing members of the Scientific Advisory Council; - UNESCO Ha Noi office; - The consultant agency; - Thang Long centre.
<b><u>Sunday, July 9, 2023</u></b>			
<b>Morning</b>	Meeting with the local communities		- The WHC/ICOMOS experts - The standing members of the Scientific Advisory Council; - Thang Long centre.

<b>14:00 – 16:00</b>	The internal meeting of the experts on the evaluation items, organisation of the report compilation in July/August	Meeting Hall II, TL centre	- The WHC/ICOMOS experts - Representatives of Viet Nam National commission for UNESCO,
<b>16:00- 17:30</b>	Informal debriefing of the mission	Meeting Hall II, TL centre	UNESCO Ha Noi; - The standing members of the Scientific Advisory Council; - Thang Long centre.
<b><u>Monday, July 10, 2023</u></b>			
<b>Morning</b>	<b>Visiting Ha Noi:</b> - Temple of Literature - Hoan Kiem Lake - Old Quarters... - The Houses of Parliament.		- The ICOMOS experts - Thang Long centre.
	<b>Day visit to Ha Long Bay World Heritage site and meeting with the provincial authorities</b>		-The WHC experts
<b>12.00</b>	Lunch		
<b>18.30</b> <b>19.30</b>	Dr. Matthew Whincop departures from Ha Noi. Mrs. Luisa De Marco departures from Ha Noi.	Ts Terminal	Thang Long centre.

## Annex 4: Participants

No	Full name	Position	Remark
<b>I</b>	<b>Members of the Standing Committee of Scientific Advisory Council for Research and Conservation of Co Loa relic and Ha Noi Citadel</b>		
1	Assoc.Prof. Tran Duc Cuong	Chairman of Vietnam Historical Science Association	
2	Assoc.Prof. Nguyen Quang Ngoc	Vice Chairman of Vietnam Historical Science Association	
3	Assoc.Prof. Dang Van Bai	Vice Chairman of the National Cultural Heritage Council	
4	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tong Trung Tin	Chairman of Viet Nam Archaeological Association	
5	Dr. Nguyen Van Son	Chairman of Ha Noi Historical Association	
<b>II</b>	<b>Ministry of foreign affairs</b>		
1	Mr. Ha Kim Ngoc	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chairman of <i>Viet Nam National Commission for UNESCO</i>	
2	Mrs. Le Thi Hong Van	Ambassador, Representative of Viet Nam's <i>permanent delegation</i> to UNESCO	
3	Mr. Pham Vinh Quang	Director-General of the Department of Cultural Diplomacy and UNESCO Affairs, Secretary General of Viet Nam <i>National Commission for UNESCO</i>	
4	Ms. Nguyen Lan Huong	Officer, Department of Cultural Diplomacy and UNESCO Affairs, Viet Nam <i>National Commission for UNESCO</i>	
<b>III</b>	<b>UNESCO Viet Nam Office</b>		
1	Ms. Pham Thi Thanh Huong	Programme Specialist in Culture	
2	Ms. Miki Nozawa	Programme Specialist in Education	
2	Ms. Le Hoang Lien	Officer	
3	Ms. Nguyen Phuong Dieu Ngan	Officer	
<b>IV</b>	<b>The stakeholders</b>		
	<b><i>Viet Nam National Institute of Architecture</i></b>		
1	Assoc.Prof. Mai Thi Lien Huong	Director, Viet Nam National Institute of Architecture	

2	Mr. Vu Thiet Phong	Head of Planning department	
3	Mr. Tran Vu Thang	Deputy Director of the Center for Architectural Consulting and Construction Investment	
4	Ms. Nguyen Thu Trang	Deputy Head of Organization and Administration Department	
	<b><i>3D ART Technology solution and design consulting joint stock company</i></b>		
1	Arch. Đinh Viet Phuong	Director, Founder	
2	Ms. Nguyen Ngoc Huyen	Project officer	
<b>V</b>	<b>Representatives of the local communities</b>		
1	Mr. Truong Minh Tien	Chairman of Ha Noi UNESCO Association (Representative of Ha Noi Union of Friendship Organizations)	
2	Mrs. Nguyen Thi Don	Vice Chairman of Thang Long Cultural Heritage Preservation Association	
	<b><i>Community living in the heritage area</i></b>		
3	Mrs. Pham Thi Mao		
4	Mrs. Nguyen Thi Tan		
5	Mrs. Nguyen Thi Anh		
6	Mrs. Hoang Thi Minh		
7	Mrs. Tran Minh Ngoc		
8	Mr. Nguyen Van Binh		
9	Mr. Nguyen Tuan Anh		
10	Mr. Nguyen Van Manh		
11	Mrs. Trinh Thi Hanh		
<b>VI</b>	<b>Ha Noi authorities</b>		
1	Mrs. Vu Thu Ha	Vice Chairman of Hanoi People's Committee	
2	Mr. Nguyen Van Phong	Deputy Secretary of Hanoi Party Committee	
	And the representatives of Department of Culture and Sports, Department of Foreign Affairs		
	<b><i>Thang Long – Ha Noi Heritage Conservation Centre</i></b>		
3	Mr. Nguyen Thanh Quang	Director	
4	Mrs. Nguyen Hong Chi	Vice Director	
5	Mr. Ngo Van Nam	Vice Director	
6	Mrs. Do Ngoc Yen	Head of Department of Research and collection	
7	Mrs. Bui Thu Phuong	Deputy Head of Department of Research and collection	
8	Ms. Chu Thi Hien	Technical staff, Department of Research and collection	



9	Mr. Do Duc Tue	Technical staff, Department of Research and collection	
10	Mrs. Vo Thu Thuy	Head of Heritage management Department	
11	Ms. Nguyen Thi Minh Thu	Head of Communication and Propaganda Department	
12	Mrs. Vu Thieu Hoa	Deputy Head of Communication and Propaganda Department	
13	Ms. Bui Thi Phuong Dung	Head of Financial and Planning Department	
15	Mrs. Nguyen Hong Anh	Chief of Administrative Office	
16	Mrs. Hoang Thu Thuy	Deputy Chief of Administrative Office	
17	Ms. Bui Thi Hai Yen	Officer in charge of international cooperation, Admin office	
18	Mrs. Nguyen Thi Yen	Head of Preservation and Exhibition Department	
19	Mr. Nguyen Cao Cuong	Technical staff, Preservation and Exhibition Department	
20	Mr. Le Thiet Hung	Director of the Project Management Board of Co Loa relics and Thang Long citadel	
21	Mrs. Phan Thuy Quynh Lien	Vice Director of the Project Management Board of Co Loa relics and Thang Long citadel	
22	Mr. Nguyen Khac Van	Officer, Communication and Propaganda Department	
23	Mr. Le Vu Hai	Officer, Communication and Propaganda Department	
24	Ms. To Hai Ha	Officer, Communication and Propaganda Department	
25	Ms. Nguyen Hong Hanh	Officer, Communication and Propaganda Department	
26	Ms. Bui Thu Trang	Officer, Communication and Propaganda Department	
	And the other colleagues...		

## Annex 5: Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

### Brief Synthesis

The Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long -- Hanoi, located in the heart of the capital of Viet Nam, is the most important and best-preserved part of the ancient Imperial Citadel of Thang Long. The Thang Long Imperial Citadel was built in the 11th century by the Vietnamese Ly Dynasty, marking the independence of the Đại Việt. It was built on the remains of a Chinese fortress dating from the 7th century, on drained land reclaimed from the Red River Delta in Hanoi. It was the centre of regional political power for almost thirteen centuries without interruption.

The buildings of the Imperial Citadel and the remains in the 18 Hoàng Diệu Archaeological Site reflect a unique South-East Asian culture specific to the lower Red River Valley, at the crossroads of influences coming from China in the north and the ancient Kingdom of Champa in the south.

The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long is characterized by its longevity and continuity as a seat of power, evidenced by different archaeological levels and monuments.

**Criterion (ii):** The Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi bears witness to the meeting of influences coming mainly from China in the north and the Kingdom of Champa in the south. It expresses a set of intercultural exchanges which shaped a unique culture in the lower Red River Valley.

**Criterion (iii):** The Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long bears witness to the long cultural tradition of the Việt populations established in the Delta and the lower Red River Valley. It was a continuous seat of power from the 7th century through to the present day.

**Criterion (vi):** The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long at Hanoi, with its political function and symbolic role, is directly associated with numerous and important cultural and historical events, and leading artistic expressions and moral, philosophical, and religious ideas. The succession of these events marks the formative and development process of an independent nation over more than a thousand years, including the colonial period and the two contemporary Wars of Independence and reunification of Viet Nam.

### Integrity

The continuity of its political role is demonstrated by the archaeological elements brought to light and by the later built elements of the Thang Long Citadel. In spite of absent and not always very visible evidence, the conditions of integrity in terms of the architecture, structure and landscaping of the property are acceptable. The very promising archaeological vestiges of the 18 Hoàng Diệu site need to be completed by a study programme on the scale of the property for confirmation of the archaeological integrity.

### Authenticity

The degree of authenticity expressed by the architecture of Thang Long corresponds to buildings of the late 19th and the 20th centuries. Older buildings, dating back to the dynastic periods, notably the Doan Mon Gate and the Hau Lau Palace, have been restored and modified. However, these changes are related to the political history of the property. Over the long historical period of the Citadel of Thang

Long, the archaeological authenticity of the property is good, even if expressed only by a small excavation area. The degree of authenticity of the architecture is variable depending on the period examined, being more satisfactory for the contemporary and colonial buildings.

### **Protection and management requirements**

The legal protection of the property is based primarily on two laws: the Law on Cultural Heritage (2001) which ensures the protection of the various recognized moveable and immoveable components of the property, and the Law on Construction for all work and projects. In the event of discordance in the application of these two laws, for example for a proposed project in the territory of the property nominated for inscription, the Law on Heritage Management takes precedence. The legal protection in place is appropriate for the property, but it needs to be completed and a wider buffer zone should be envisaged.

The management authority is well-defined and is already functional: in 2006, the People's Committee of Hanoi entrusted the Co Loa and Thang Long Vestiges Preservation Centre, also called Thang Long Centre, with the responsibility for the management of the property. The general guidelines of the Management Plan are satisfactory, but this Plan must be enacted, and the archaeological studies component should be strengthened and expanded. Furthermore, the capacity building for the personnel involved in the conservation of the property should be enhanced.

All other applicable protection and management mechanisms required for the sustainable management of world heritage property including the protection of its OUV, authenticity and integrity should be put in place.

## Annex 6: Legal and conceptual references

### 1. International Documents

- The 1972 International Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage;
- Guidelines for implementing the International Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage;
- Nara Document on Authenticity (1994)
- Resolution No.34 (**34COM8B.22**) approved in the 34th meeting of the World Heritage Committee on 31/7/2010 in Brasilia (Brasil) to inscribe the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi as a World Heritage site based on criterion (ii), criterion (iii) and criterion (vi);
- Resolution No.35 (**35COM8B.60**) approved in the 35th meeting of the World Heritage Committee from 19 to 29/6/2011 in Paris, agreeing upon the outstanding universal value of the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long, Hanoi.

### 2. Legal Documents at National Level

- Law on Cultural Heritage No.21/2001/QH10 dated 29/6/2001 and the amended law No.32/2009/QH12 dated 18/6/2009 supplementing some articles of the Law on Cultural Heritage issued in 2009.
  - Law on Tourism No.09/2017/QH14 approved on 19/6/2017; - Law on Urban Planning No.30/2009/QH12 approved on 17/6/2009;
  - Law on Land No.45/2013/QH13 approved on 29/11/2013;
  - Law on Construction No.50/2014/QH13 approved on 18/6/2014 and the amended law No.62/2020/QH14 approved on 17/6/2020 supplementing some articles of the Law on Construction;
  - Decree No.109/2017/NĐ-CP dated 21/9/2017 by the Government on protecting and managing cultural and natural heritage in Vietnam;
  - Decree No.166/2018/NĐ-CP dated 25/12/2018 by the Government on the roles and responsibilities of relevant agencies, procedures of appraising and approving schemes and projects on conservation and restoration of historical-cultural sites and landscapes. 4 35
  - Decision No.696/QĐ-TTg dated 08/6/2012 on the Approval of the Master Planning for the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi in 18 Hoang Dieu Street, Hanoi.
  - Decision No.1647/QĐ-TTg dated 01/11/2012 on the Approval of the Detailed Planning for the Conservation, Restoration and Promotion of the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi (scale 1/500).
  - Decision No.975/QĐ-BXD dated 21/8/2015 on the Approval of the Detailed Planning for the Conservation, Restoration and Promotion of the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi (scale 1/500)
- #### 4.1.3. Documents at Local Level
- Decision No.48/2016/QĐ-UBND dated 17/11/2016 on the Issuance of Regulations on Management, Conservation and Promotion of Historical & Cultural Monuments and Landscapes in Hanoi;
  - Decision No.14/2018/QĐ-UBND dated 25/5/2018 on the Issuance of Temporary Regulations on Managing and Organizing Events, Festivals and Activities in the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi;
  - Decision No.1351/QĐ-UBND on the Recognition of the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi as a World Cultural Heritage Tourist Site.

## Annex 7 Suggested sequence of the actions relating to Recommendations 1 and 2

### Phase 1: Actions to be undertaken in parallel

- 1.1. Clarification of attributes of OUV
- 1.2 Preparation and submission of the Vision for the Central Axis, in the context of the whole property
- 1.3 Documentation of the historic fabric of the two buildings proposed for demolition
- 1.4 Submission of proposal for controlled dismantling of two buildings with indication of methodology, etc. and documentation annexed of the historical built fabric of the two buildings (to preserve information of how they were built and possibly understand how much of pre-colonial material has been reused)
- 1.4. Exchange with WHC and ICOMOS and agreement with them on way forward for the dismantling

### Phase 2: Actions to be undertaken in parallel following clarification of attributes and agreement of Vision

- 2.1 Controlled Dismantling of the two buildings
- 2.2 At the end of the dismantling, transmission of documentation on dismantling process and on the 'state of the site' after completion of dismantling
- 2.3 Development of an Archaeological Strategy (in parallel)
- 2.4 Exchange on draft Archaeological Strategy with WHC and ICOMOS and agreement on way forward
- 2.5 Beginning of archaeological exploration and excavations in the sites of the two dismantled buildings
- 2.6 Development of a Conservation and Presentation Strategy

Action	Time frame				
Clarifying the attributes					
Preparing a Vision					
Documenting historic fabric of the two buildings					
Exchange and agreement with WHC and ICOMOS on the above					



and submission of the dismantling proposal					
Dismantling the two buildings					
Developing the Archaeological Strategy					
Exchange with WHC and ICOMOS					
Starting the archaeological excavations of the two sites					
Developing a Conservation and Presentation Strategy					