



RELICS OF THE SOUTHEAST - NEW DISCOVERIES IN CAN GIO - HO CHI MINH CITY

Anh Tuan Le

Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism

Phuong Truc Luu

International School Ho Chi Minh City - American Academy; Email:

luuphuongtruc2005@gmail.com

Trong Thuy Than

Head of Department of Hotel Management and Restaurant Management, Faculty of Tourism and Gastronomy, HCM University of Food Industry; Email: thantrongthuysg@gmail.com

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Abstract:

The goal of the study is to synthesize new findings of archaeologists when studying monuments in the Southeast – specifically in Can Gio district, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The study overviews the theoretical basis of archaeology and the relationship of archaeology to history; from there, synthesize new findings from the research of Nguyen Thi Hau (2010, 2016) and the research of the University of Natural Sciences HO CHI MINH CITY. The results showed that Can Gio district could have previously been a busy port. At the same time, the study also synthesizes techniques and methods that previous researchers used to conduct archaeological research in Can Gio district, Ho Chi Minh City.

Keywords: Archaeology, Can Gio, Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam

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1. Introduction

The contributions of Vietnamese archaeology in recent years are very important and significant, besides contributing to clarifying many historical and cultural issues, thereby arousing pride, contributing to education and propagation of long-standing historical traditions, rich in the identity of the Vietnamese nation. Therefore, after research and excavation,

how to promote the value of these archaeological heritages is a very important issue - a practical requirement, directed by interested management agencies and has achieved remarkable results. However, in practice, there are still many "outstanding" and inadequacies related to this issue, requiring closer and more specific direction and guidance, on the basis of close coordination between ministries and



agencies at the central and local levels, between researchers and managers, experts in preserving and embellishing, in order to be able to further promote the values of archaeological cultural heritages.

Archaeology is a science whose role is to reconstruct the past and history through material cultural evidence including relics stored in the ground. Therefore, archaeology clarifies the mysteries in the history of human culture and civilization, especially in the prehistoric period when people did not have a curse. Archaeology always brings new insights, adding important data in the study of material history. Human history is presented first of all through the approach from real relics and relics " eyes and ears " will help us better visualize the life of the nation and humanity from the beginning to the modern era.

Archaeology has three main objectives, namely to date artifacts and archaeological remains, to reconstruct the way of life of people in the past from specific monuments to habitats, and to interpret human society in the past in chronological dimensions, space and culture (Han Van Urgent, 2008:54). Therefore, this article proceeds to synthesize the results of archaeological research in Can Gio, Ho Chi Minh City to serve as a basis for future studies.

2. Literature review

2.1. Archaeology and Historical Science

Archaeology is a science that explores the history of mankind on a very wide time axis,

since humans began to make tools of labor, that is, more than two million years ago. The process of archaeological research is the process of discovering rare human relics and relics underground, through which to learn the history of human development and development, the history of culture and civilization of mankind.

Archaeology is a branch of historical science, so Archaeology from the very beginning of archaeology had a close and strong relationship with historical science. According to Western researchers they conceive of Archaeology as History. Historical science has two main sources of historical data: written documents (books, notebooks, marbles ...) and real material (tools, tools, relics of houses ...). The written history that humanity left behind is only 5 or 6 thousand years ago today. Compared to the history since the appearance of humanity on earth, millions of years ago, the amount of written history that has been obtained is very small. And archaeology itself is the science that will study that long period of history through what people have left in the ground. Archaeology adds to the historical literature of mankind, helping us to know the pages of history with unknown human objects. This is the role of archaeology in the unwritten period, adding new knowledge to history. But even when people have written words, archaeological knowledge still plays a great role, providing important and valuable guidance. There is no denying that written documents have many advantages over in-kind documents when it



directly speaks to the voice of the past. But in many cases, written documents are not as dominant as real documents. The written document, although rich, is not really objective and comprehensive. The majority of written documents dealing with political issues, the lives of kings and social classes rarely find references to the economic situation, people's lives and other aspects. Written material is mostly limited by the subjective stance and perspective of the historian. The objectivity of the documents is also very verifiable, but at the same time, very difficult to verify. The material is rich, but not comprehensive, interrupted and much lost. Not to mention that many written documents have not been able to decipher e.g. The handwriting found in the Harapa - Mohenjôdô culture (An Do civilization), is mostly the writing on the marbles of the Cham people or recently written. While the world has had writing since about 3000 BC, and still has many written records on caves, rock museums, tortoise shells, animal bones ... In Vietnam, it was not until 1272 that the first history – The Great Viet Chronicle of Le VanHuu appeared, which is no longer available. Written materials are limited in quantity and quality, so studying all aspects of the country's history is indeed a difficult thing. But there is no denying the role of historical documents in Archaeology, it provides valuable guidance for excavations, finding cultures and civilizations. The written document does not say much, or even mention the relics comprehensively, but in the documents, including the folk

documents left behind, there is often a little mention of what is special and strange about many lands. They also left in writing historical stories about civilized regions, like tracing the "Trojan War" to find a whole civilization...

On the contrary, archaeology helps historians solve many deadlocked issues such as "Hung Vuong builds water", the first state problem Van Lang – Au Lac, Lam Ap – Champa, Phu Nam, Magnet. For example, the legend of St. Wind and the phenomenon of "Deification of the Iron Age", the burial customs of the primitive period, the Citadel and the accumulation of crossbows... "Archaeology has created a turning point in the science of History. It opened to history a vast telescope-like horizon that opened the eyes of Astronomy. It has opened hundreds of times to historians the prospects of the past just as open microscopes show biologists the life of the smallest cells that look outside of large bodies that will not be visible. It eventually led to a change in the mass and content of historical science just as radioactive energy led to a change in Chemistry." - Gordon Childe (1949)

In general, the remaining ancient and medieval archaeological documents have been studied in conjunction with written documents of the respective eras. While coordinating research can use one document to check the other. A lot of archaeological material has corroborated the records of ancient and medieval authors. The sources



of written material that archaeology uses are not only domestic written documents, but also need to pay attention to the sources of neighboring countries.

2.2 Archaeology is closely related to ethnography

Ethnography is a branch of historical science that specializes in the study of ethnic characteristics expressed in the culture and life of people through the development of that nation in history. The research results of ethnography through the investigation and observation of material and spiritual cultural life, the customs and practices of residents and ethnic groups help archaeologists better understand the use and functions of archaeological artifacts. From there, they are able to predict the mode of cultivation, as well as the material and spiritual life of the owners of cultures. This is a science that focuses on the study of current society through investigation or observation. Meanwhile, Archaeology is a discipline that focuses on the study of human society in the past through the exploration, discovery, investigation and excavation, examination and interpretation of the material traces that they have left to this day. These two sciences are in the same historical archive, and researchers take the image of "descriptions" and "charts" to visualize this relationship and complementarity. Archaeological artifacts are largely "dumb and mysterious" documents, which are sleeping documents. So we need to combine it with Ethnographic and Historical

documents to be able to explain fully, deeply and validly. Many of the archaeological phenomena discovered in monuments hundreds of years ago are difficult to explain, but the ethnographic literature that ethnographers are studying semi-enlightened societies, ethnic minorities take for granted, finds it to exist even in the peoples they are studying. For example, the use of some stone and metal tools that are discovered in monuments, burial of some ethnic groups, residences discovered at residence sites, etc. So Archaeology needs to look at those sources.

Archaeology, on the other hand, has more complete additions to the literature for Ethnography. Archaeology contributes to elucidating the origin and development of ethnographic phenomena. Archaeology helps ethnography determine the area of residence of ethnic groups in history so far.... It is for these reasons that scientists acknowledge that archaeology has a very close relationship with ethnography.

2.3 Relationship of Archaeology and Linguistics

Linguistics is the science that studies language, its origins, and linguistic phenomena. Linking the history of voices with the history of artifacts and cultures is a valuable scientific principle because there are direct connections between voices and human production. During archaeological excavations many written documents have been discovered, providing insights for the study of the history of the language. The



discovery of the Roseta Stone and Champollion's deconstruction of the Egyptian hieroglyphics (CLÉOPATRA) helped scientists read and decipher an entire civilization more than 5,000 years ago.

Linguists understand the evolution of writing, of language from cave drawings discovered in the Paleolithic period, to drawings, signs, early Sumerian hieroglyphs, Chinese hieroglyphs, cursives, to Peruvian letters, the letter rotates in the direction of the plowed cow, the ancient Greek alphabet... to the language system and the typeface now. These documents are mainly engraved on stone, belts made of seashells called Wampums, on tortoise shells, animal bones, on Papyrus paper, on bamboo cards, silk fabric, wood (woodblocks, which was discovered by Archaeologists when excavating monuments. Reading words also means results, important discoveries that help scientists read the message left by their fathers. Read his father's life in history and more. The participation of Linguists in the excavations is very important.

2.4 Relationship between Archaeology and Anthropology

Similar to Ethnology, Archaeology also has a close relationship with Anthropology – a discipline that studies human nature in the biological, social, and cultural aspects of different groups and ethnic communities both past and present. Also, the major studies both the homogeneity and differences of the inhabitants of the world from origin to the

transformation of learning throughout the entire history from antiquity to the present. Archaeology is an indispensable leading department to help Anthropology solve problems related to its research object, especially the study of different groups of people, ethnic communities in the past, and the length of ancient history. In archaeological excavations, archaeologists have found human remains, animal remains, burial items.... These artifacts are all objects that help anthropologists study the biological, social and cultural characteristics of those people in history and the relationship, the characteristics, the process of that race to the present. For the disappeared ethnic groups, those that are still in a semi-declared state such as some ethnic groups in An Giang, Truong Son – Central Highlands ... written documents often do not help much and ethnographic and archaeological sources are very important sources. Today, as human consciousness grows, there is a need to scientifically and thoroughly address longstanding questions such as: Where did people come from? When did people get here? Where are people going?.... These are questions that cannot be explained by the knowledge of a discipline and so the requirement to link these sciences is getting higher and higher.

And like Ethnology, Anthropology is also a discipline that contributes to adding skin and flesh to the framework of knowledge obtained from excavations, from archaeological documents.



2.5. Archaeological Relationship with Archives

Archivalism is the science of studying all the materials formed by human activity in all spheres of social and natural life, organizing the use, preservation and compilation of the rationale and methods for these processes. Or, it can simply be understood that archiving is the text that is saved. Clerical-archival has only been around since the feudal social period. Archives for earlier social periods are also mainly obtained from discovered Archaeological artifacts. The archives are reliable documents on which archaeological relics can be found such as: documents on the journeys of Dong'an ships that traded with Southeast Asia are important sources to help locate shipwrecks in this sea as well as date, owners of those ships. These documents contributed to the development of Underwater Archaeology in the true sense of the word. And once relics and sites are excavated, once again archaeological results will help verify and verify the authenticity of archives.

3. New findings in Can Gio district, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

3.1. According to the survey results of Nguyen Thi Hau (2010)

Through the latest discovery of archaeologists, it is possible that 2,000 years ago, the Can Gio area was a "primitive port", a place to absorb and transform many cultural and technical elements from outside,

as well as a place to accumulate and spread indigenous cultural elements.

Can Gio district is located in the southeast of Ho Chi Minh City, is an estuarine delta - sea bay. The surface of the low-lying plain is covered with mangroves and is divided by a system of rivers and canals. On this complex terrain, archaeologists have discovered a system of more than 30 archaeological sites on red earth beds. The traces of early human habitation here have made the ecological and human environment of Can Gio different from other mangroves, where there are merely traces of nature's reclamation process.

Rich and unique relics

From the first discoveries in the years 1976 - 1978, through many surveys and 3 continuous excavations (1992, 1993 and 1994) and recently in 2021 - 2022, archaeologists have initially outlined the history of Can Gio from 3,000 to about 2,000 years ago, by identifying the archaeological cultural features here.

The archaeological sites in Can Gio are mostly residential monuments. The process of living and producing pottery of ancient inhabitants began very early, right on the background of sea lightning and left a rather thick accumulation of "red soil".

Some relics from the residence gradually became burial grounds, such as at Giong Ca Mallet and Giong Pac. Most of the remains are buried in large ceramic jars with a knee-tight sitting position - the position of the



child in the womb. This is the most different from other tomb sites in Southeast Asia (Southeast Asia).

The relics and burial items of the tombs of Giong Ca Mallet and Giong Pac are extremely rich and unique. It is a locally produced ceramic with its own characteristics of material and type, which is used to identify Can Gio's connection with other areas. The pottery buried in the tomb is very diverse, indicating the connection of the owner of the relic with the Dong Nai, Sa Huynh cultures of the same time and OcEo culture in the later stages... In particular, many jewelry (rings, beads, earrings) are made of jade stones, agate, glass, gold ... produced on-site, by importing raw materials and acquiring manufacturing techniques from other areas through trade in the South China Sea.

At these monuments, there are not many tools of agricultural production, but only a handful of weapons symbolizing power such as iron spears and copper axes. The natural environment and relicshave shown that the ancient Can Gio area was not a developed area of agricultural cultivation like many other places in the metal age. The ancient inhabitants of this place have a rather special economic life, which is to develop trade by sea towards the island area and beyond, by river towards the mainland Southeast Asia, combining the exploitation of natural resources on the spot.

Therefore, it can be said that 2,000 years ago, the Can Gio area was a "primitive

port", a place to absorb and transform many cultural and technical elements from outside, as well as a place to accumulate and spread indigenous cultural elements.

Marine elements in cultures

The geographical location of Can Gio is quite special, with the "façade" of the vast Dong Nai basin, which is a "transit station" between Vam Co - Dong Nai basin or the West - Southeast. In many land areas in Can Gio, relics of ancient inhabitants of OcEo culture (such as Giong Am) were found and later in the period of exploring the Dong Nai basin (such as GiongCá Moon). The song "Nha Be water flows in two / Whoever goes to Gia Dinh, Dong Nai returns" appeared quite late, but reflected the mood of the groups of people floating on the river, from GanhRáito Can Gio bay, or from Dong TranhtoVam Co bay to go deeper into Dong Nai - Cuu Long basin.

Choose the location of the "estuary - bay" to reside and develop the economic life of trade, natural exploitation ... Perhaps the ancient inhabitants of Can Gio have contributed to the formation of one of the rules of the "Southern village": settling on the high Giong where "bordering the water", the village grows, on the banks is the town, the hammer market, under the river canoe upstream. Boats often stay in the "bordering water" place, waiting for large water to go back into the plain or net water to go down to the sea.

The system of archaeological relics in Can Gio reflects the extensive exchange of Can



Gio "port town", which has played a role in promoting the development of the prehistoric Dong Nai basin. At the same time, it made an important contribution to the formation of the OcEo civilization of the ancient kingdom of Funan from the early centuries AD. From the archaeological relics in Can Gio, it can be seen that the marine factor - especially the trade / migration route in the East Sea - is the cause of the phenomenon of "cultural homogeneity" of many archaeological cultures in Southeast Asia, but the chum tomb in 2 GiongCá Mallet relics, It's typical. And the factors in each continental area make the difference between cultures, such as between Sa Huynh culture and Can Gio culture.

Sea trade is one of the important factors participating from the beginning in the development process from Sa Huynh culture to ChamPa civilization in the Central region and from Can Gio culture (in the context of Dong Nai basin) to OcEo civilization in the South.

Prehistoric archaeological cultures in Southeast Asia have shown that the East Sea is not a factor separating and isolating the peoples of this area, but on the contrary, is a "bridge" connecting coastal peoples together, linking between the island and mainland Vietnam, between Southeast Asia and the farther reaches of the vast Pacific Ocean. The East Sea, from ancient times until now, has always been an important factor in the development of southeast Asia.

Preserving and promoting heritage values

Can Gio district has a system of many types of historical and cultural relics such as archaeological relics, pavilions, pagodas, tombs, revolutionary relics, intangible cultural heritages such as Nghinh Ong Ceremony ... Besides, Can Gio also has a unique landscape space of mangroves. The archaeological relics are concentrated in Can Thanh, Long Hoa and Ly Nhon areas, where every day all economic, political and cultural activities of the population take place with increasing speed, richness and diversity.

This means preserving traditional cultural values, protecting inherent historical relics, spaces and natural landscapes, but at the same time ensuring harmoniously oriented development (adaptive conservation). Therefore, it is necessary that options and solutions for the preservation and promotion of the values of cultural heritages in general and the archaeological relic system in particular in Can Gio must be urgently set out because Can Gio archaeological relics system has high value not only in scientific research but also in serving population development and sustainable tourism.

According to the "Can Gio coastal urban area" plan, the archaeological relic system in Can Gio has not been directly affected. However, specific implementation of the "land reclamation" plan and especially the control of the rate of urbanization and population development is essential! The construction of an urban area in the estuary -



bay area in the current rapid and complex climate change will certainly affect the environmental landscape, the change of natural conditions, the conservation of nature as well as the preservation of the monument landscape. It is impossible to protect the archaeological relic system of Can Gio, which also loses a cultural heritage of special value to Ho Chi Minh City and the whole country.

Plans to preserve and promote the value of the archaeological relics system of Can Gio district need to be placed in the master plan of Can Gio area in general and biosphere reserve in particular. Monuments are associated with environmental landscapes. Can Gio is also fortunate to retain the mangrove ecosystem that was formed tens of thousands of years ago. Over a long period of war, although heavily damaged, the incredible revival of Can Gio mangrove forest not only brings environmental and economic benefits but also historical value, because this is the habitat of the owners of archaeological relics more than 2,000 years ago.

3.2. According to the survey results of lecturers and students of Ho Chi Minh City University of Natural Sciences

Archaeology of mallet fish relics by GPR method

Located on The Red Land in Hoa Hiep Hamlet, Long Hoa Commune, Can Gio District, Ho Chi Minh City, GiongCá Mallet is a site with a rather thick cultural layer, as

well as a rich burial ground. According to archaeologists, Can Gio is an ancient land, where ancient traces of humanity are recorded through archaeological sites and ancient tombs; in which the Mallet Fish Site dates back about 3000 years. In the Giong Ca Mallet area, we have found the seeds of OcEo-Sa Huynh culture. With the wetland terrain, ancient people in Can Gio had a rather special form of burial of the dead, which was done by tying the dead in a knee-bound position and placing them in jars.

In 1993, the Ho Chi Minh City City Committee's Social Science Department (now the Ho Chi Minh City Institute of Social and Cultural Research) surveyed and found a number of jars and burial items. By 1994, excavation of 230m² of area was carried out. The cultural layer is up to 1.50m thick, consisting of 4 layers: arable land to a depth of 0.3m; basalt red soil from 0.3-0.7m; porous black soil with a lot of ash charcoal pottery from 0.7-0.9m; red and yellow soil with many ceramics from 0.9m-1.5m. Through 2 excavations, archaeologists initially confirmed that this is a pottery production residence site that is the burial site of the ancients. Nearly 350 jar graves and 10 earthen graves have been found. Relics in graves are human remains, especially in chum graves that are quite intact. Most of the remains in the jar were buried by the ancients in a knee-jerk sitting position. There are two types of ancient graves and earthen graves, of which earthen graves predominate, over 90%, and these two types are not seen in any of the chum



tomb sites in Southeast Asia. The large number of jars, with the unity of methods and the uniformity of the type of burial jars, shows that the burial of the inhabitants of Giong Ca Mallet has existed for quite a long and stable time, as a unique tradition in Southeast Asia. Archaeologists determined that this is a burial site belonging to the pre-archaeological culture of Sa Huynh, the owner is an indigenous resident, clearly showing the Mongoloid strain.

Along with human remains, there are many artifacts rich in materials, types and uses found at Giong Ca Mallet Relic Area. The number of artifacts obtained was: 21 double-headed earrings, 02 three-piece earrings, 1,046 stone beads, 09 bracelets and many pieces of stone rings, more than 200 beads, 15 glass bracelets; 36 bracelets, some string beads, 36 animal fangs, 8 bone tools; 70 spears, javelins, hooks, metal axes. Bronze

had axes, spears, needles and pieces of bronze. Pottery is also very rich, there are all kinds of pottery belonging to Sa Huynh archaeological culture.

Archaeologists confirmed that in Ho Chi Minh City, there are 132 buildings and sites that have been classified as relics but only 160 ancient burial sites dating from the late 18th century to the early 20th century; in which, 12 ancient tombs have been identified that meet the criteria for making a relic rating record, while 21 tombs are included in the list of conservation planning. And only 2 archaeological relics are classified as national relics, GiongCá Mallet and Hung Loi Pottery Furnace (District 8, showing that GiongCá Mallet Archaeological Site in Can Gio district is an ancient land, where ancient traces of humanity are recorded through archaeological sites.



Figure 1. Spherical type 1 chum tomb, rounded bottom

On 13-04-2000, the Ministry of Culture and Information decided to recognize GiongCá Mallet Archaeological Site in Long Hoa commune, Can Gio district as an archaeological relic among the national historical and cultural relics in need of protection. The Giong Ca Mallet project has been restored, restored and is an ecotourism development plan for the whole Can Gio district, Ho Chi Minh City. The goal of the

project is to preserve, restore and restore the natural and social scenes of relics, natural landscapes such as plants, plants, organisms ... At the same time, the living and productive landscapes of the ancients on this land more than 2,000 years ago will be studied and restored. The ancient tombs and artifacts in them are excavated, preserved and displayed on site, making the monument more vivid.



Figure 2. Two-headed earrings unearthed at the monument

With the advantage of having both forests and seas and being a World Biosphere Reserve, Can Gio has been selected by the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism as one of the 29 ecotourism destinations of the country. The planning for the development of Can Gio Tourist Area, including the restoration and development of GiongCá Mallet Relic Area, is both in line

with the development trend of Ho Chi Minh City facing the sea and in accordance with the general orientation according to the socio-economic master plan of Can Gio district in the period from here to 2020; in which Can Gio Tourism industry will become an important economic sector as a driving force for other economic sectors in the area to develop together.

4. Conclusion

Can Gio district is located in the southeast of Ho Chi Minh City. HCM, is a new estuarine delta – border bay formed about 6,000 - 5,000 years ago. The surface of the low-lying plain is covered with saltwater forest-type vegetation, which is divided by a system of rivers and canals. On this complex terrain, archaeological remains are often found on land formations made up of incomplete silt accumulation in the Dong Nai estuary. The traces of early human habitation here have made the ecological and human environment of Can Gio different from other mangrove areas, where there are merely traces of natural reclamation.

From the first discoveries in the years 1976 - 1978, through many surveys, surveys and 3 continuous excavations (1992, 1993 and 1994), archaeologists have initially outlined the history of Can Gio from 3,000 to about 2,000 years ago, through the study of archaeological cultural features here.

-The site homed habitable monuments with a fairly thick cultural layer, formed right on the background of sea lightning. The accumulation of the process of producing cultural pottery has contributed together with nature to create archaeological relics.

- The residence site gradually became a burial ground with the practice of burial in the tomb of Chum being the main one. However, it can be noticed that there are some other burials at an earlier or later stage than the chum grave stage.

- The relics and burial items of Can Gio tomb relics are extremely rich and unique. It is the type of Giong Ca Mallet – Giong Pac pottery, which is considered as a criterion to identify the connection of Can Gio with other regions. There are countless types of pottery with the style of Dong Nai, Sa Huynh, OcEo cultures ... The types of jewelry indicate the origin of on-site production or import of raw materials and techniques from other areas of the island sea, the absence of agricultural production tools, but only some weapons that symbolize power.

- The natural environment, monuments, relics have shown that this is not a culture of cultivated agricultural inhabitants - like many archaeological cultures in the metal age - but the owner of this culture has a rather special economic life. It is commercial development combined with natural mining activities.

Therefore, it can be said that Can Gio two thousand years ago was a "primitive port", a place to absorb and transform many cultural and technical elements from outside, as well as a place to accumulate and spread indigenous cultural elements.

Conditions for Can Gio "port town" to form and develop

Looking at the natural geographical map, Can Gio is like a peninsula cut off from the mainland by major rivers: the north is Nha Be River – Bo Tau River, the East is Dong Tranh River – Thi Vai River, the West is



Soài Rap River, and the South is the East Sea. Surrounded on 4 sides by rivers and seas, Can Gio is also divided by rivers, canals ... other large and small, horizontally intertwined throughout the Sac forest. Up to now, the main means of transport in this region is still waterways, the exchange route of Can Gio with other regions is still by river and sea. Heading inland, from Can Gio Bay, you can follow the rivers back to Nha Be. From here, either follow the Saigon River deep into the hills of the old alluvial shelf associated with the Northeast Bloc of Cambodia, or follow the Dong Nai River to the rich Dong Nai Ha region, and further, to Dong NaiThuong (Dai Dong – Big River) attached to the Southern Highlands. Dong Nai and Vam Co basins, a few thousand years ago, were separated by a large alum depression. Therefore, the most convenient exchange route between the East and West is Saigon River / Dong Nai River - Nha Be River - Soai Rap River - Vam Co East - West River.

Facing the outside, Can Gio faces the East Sea with countless large and small estuaries that empty into Ganh Rai Bay and Dong Tranh Bay. The South China Sea is essentially an enclosed sea, surrounded by the Asian continent and archipelagos stretching from Taiwan through the Philippines to Boocnéo. In this sea, there are only small, local currents, influenced by the topography of the sea and decided by the monsoon regime. There are two ocean currents, the current running along

the coast of Vietnam in the direction of Northeast - Southwest flows most strongly and stably in autumn - winter. The Southwest - Northeast Current in the spring-summer period flows along the islands of Southeast Asia. Can Gio sea has a strong semi-tidal regime, the tidal amplitude is very large, tens of kilometers inland still have the influence of the tide.

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The geographical location of Can Gio is quite special, it is the estuary – the bay is the "façade" of the vast Dong Nai basin, which is the "transit station" between the two regions of Vam Co – Dong Nai basin or the West – Southeast. The song "*Nha Be water flows in two – Whoever goes to Gia Dinh, Dong Nai comes back*" although it appeared quite late, but must also be the mood of people floating on the river, back from Can Gio bay or from Vam Co East - West to Gia Dinh – Dong Nai region right from that ancient time. Choosing this location to reside, perhaps the ancient inhabitants of Can Gio, contributed to forming one of the rules of the "Southern village" is to settle on the high ground where the "water border", where the tidal water flows backwards and the river water flows downstream. The tide pushes the water into the canals, meets the flow of the river to the sea, when it meets, whether the water is large or the alluvial net water is deposited in these places - canoes back and forth often stay here waiting for the water. Villages sprang up..., which is the place



bordering the water, there on the shore is Thi Tu, Hammer Market ...

On the other hand, the prehistoric archaeological cultures in Southeast Asia have shown that the East Sea is not a factor separating and isolating the peoples of this area, but on the contrary, has been a "bridge" connecting coastal peoples together, linking between the island and the mainland, between Southeast Asia and the farther reaches of the vast Pacific Ocean.

Entering the metal age, the Dong Nai Delta has been a busy agricultural center, where a large amount of resources of the southern part of the Indochina peninsula is gathered. Dozens of archaeological sites are densely distributed along the banks of Dong Nai, on both islands and extending to the coastal area. The traces of long-term, stable and abundant human habitation are reflected in the large number of relics, many types and reflect the cultural and technical characteristics of the human communities here. Large craft workshops produce a wide variety of items for human life such as pottery, stone tools, molds and metal tools, stone jewelry whose number of products has surpassed the level of self-sufficiency. The ancient inhabitants also created a settlement life on the "mountains of land" in the middle of the depression, where there were rich stone production tools, ceramic utensils, especially many types of animal bone tools and mollusk shells. Although the exchange relationship

between Vam Co and Dong Nai has developed on a large scale and has been very frequent, Vam Co residents still have their own lifestyle and cultural products.

Relying on such a large and rich rear, Can Gio "port town" has a socio-economic foundation to survive and develop. As mentioned above, the natural conditions of Can Gio are not suitable for the agricultural economy because this is a mangrove area all year round, only Sac forest trees are the key in keeping the land to form an *ecosystem of "fish before mangrove"*. Fresh water here is very rare, the rainy season also has enough rainwater, but the dry season must completely buy fresh water transported by boat by river from Dong Nai – Saigon. It can be said that without the food and fresh water of Dong Nai's rear, the ancient inhabitants of Can Gio could hardly create a "city port" even if it was a "primitive" form of berths – markets. Not only that, in Can Gio, there are also bronze and iron weapons and tools such as axes, spears, javelins, small knives, hooks and even jewelry ... Their origin is undoubtedly from the Dong Nai metallurgical center, or further afield, from Ban Chang, Non Nok Tha in Northeastern Thailand. In particular, some weapons are meant to symbolize power or status when they are buried in the tomb of Jars.

The "trade" between Can Gio and Dong Nai basin is not so one-sided. The owners of the monuments in Can Gio do not



completely depend on the rear, but they themselves have created this place to become an industrial center with pottery, stone jewelry, mollusk shells, glassmaking ... Their products have been commodities, exchanged in an "equal" way, even precious commodities. With Dong Nai basin, along with natural products, the pottery produced in Giong Ca Mallet, Giong Pac has been present all the way to Pagoda Slope, Phu Hoa, Weasel Stream, Long Buu in Dong Nai basin; Rubber Mound, O Chua Mound in Vam Co basin. Many designs of jewelry in Phu Hoa chum tomb such as double-headed earrings, 3-piece earrings, agate beads ... Previously considered evidence of the influence of Sa Huynh culture, it can now be seen as a result of the close relationship with Can Gio estuary.

In particular, the type of Ca Tie (ceramic stove) has developed more and more perfectly, from the early stage in Vam Co to Dong Nai, the late stage in Can Gio has taken on the appearance of Ca Ràng in OcEo culture. From here, the type of ceramic stove of the inhabitants of the Southern River has become a familiar item of residents of many parts of Southeast Asia.

Unlike other monuments in the Dong Nai region – which mainly produces pottery and metallurgy – Can Gio is now a craft center producing *jewelry* from gold, precious stones, glass and mollusk shells.

Here, stone jewelry plays a leading role in both quantity, design and production techniques. The main products are jade beads, agate stones, two-headed earrings ... Initial research shows that some products are made on-site from imported materials (jade stone, agate stone), from on-site production materials (glass) or from natural materials (shells, oyster shells ...). However, it is still easy to recognize the element of technical exchange with India and beyond, especially in the manufacture of jewels and glass. Many products in Can Gio are imprinted with many other cultures such as pottery with Sa Huynh cultural style; ceramic earrings of asterisks, gold jewelry, ceramic pots, bird figurines in the style of artifacts of the Philippine island ... So far in Can Gio, 28 double-headed earrings of jade and glass have been found – accounting for more than half of these jewels in archaeological sites in Southeast Asia. But from the archaeological materials in Can Gio, a new hypothesis has been put forward, which is the origin of the jewelry present in many jar tombs in Southeast Asia on the continent and islands produced in Can Gio?

The extensive exchange relationship of Can Gio "port town" is one of the factors stimulating the development of prehistoric Dong Nai culture and an important contribution to the formation of OcEo civilization since the early centuries AD. Thanks to the convergence and promotion of the advantages of geographical location,



wide trade with the outside and material resources of Dong Nai – Cuu Long basin, the "early port town" Can Gio in the past, Ben Nghe port in the Nguyen era and Saigon – Ho Chi Minh City today have maintained their important roles in different historical periods. It is a *peculiarity* that hardly any seaport in Vietnam does not have.

5. Preserving cultural heritage of Saigon, Can Gio – Ho Chi Minh City

The biggest challenge for Ho Chi Minh City is to assert its character and cultural identity in the course of its history and continuous development towards the modern city in the future. However, due to the poor level of urban management, inadequate awareness of cultural heritages in colonial times, city development planning is not strategic... leading to the narrowing of parks, taking advantage of all the grounds of ancient structures, deforming, even "killing" canals, green areas, ponds, demolishing or changing the architecture of ancient buildings ... bringing immediate benefits to a group of people but at the same time erasing the cultural soul of the city.

The process of rapid urbanization makes a lot of the inherent urban value lost. The pressure of immediate economic profitability and the lack of sanity and foresight in policy making and urban planning all led to the full exploitation of land in the central area of the old city. The process of urbanization in developing

countries such as Vietnam under the pressure of globalization both geo-economic and the pressure of "modern architectural art" disappears the cultural identity of each city.

- The replacement of a section of the population after 1975, the massive immigration of recent years, the transition of common and private ownership of these buildings, and the retail thinking develops the trend of taking advantage of "façade houses", sidewalks ... to trade, make the structure change badly, the messy surroundings do not have the civilization of a modern metropolis.

The legal system and policies for preserving cultural heritages have not been widely disseminated. The compliance with the law of the people and investors is not good because only the immediate economic benefits are seen. State management agencies in charge of cultural heritages are not yet capable of performing their functions. The coordination between relevant agencies is not synchronous.

Each city is formed with its own characteristics, terrain, environment, history and people that make up its personality. Therefore, there is no city like any other and so is Saigon – Ho Chi Minh City. With the advantage of a convenient geographical location for trade and economic-cultural exchanges, as a young, dynamic and creative city, Ho Chi Minh City is accelerating the process of urbanization, building a modern civilized



city and aiming for sustainable development.

In the context of the socio-economic development of Vietnam and Ho Chi Minh City, "surface development" is not only the relationship between people and the natural environment, but mainly the relationship between economic development and socio-cultural issues. Culture and society are the purpose of development, sustainable economic development requires sustainability in social and cultural development. In other words, economic development without preserving material and spiritual cultural heritage is lame and unbalanced development. will lead to the breakdown of the process of economic and social development, i.e. failure to achieve the goal of "sustainable development". This is a necessary warning for the current urbanization process in Ho Chi Minh City.

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