

Stone Heritage - A Resource Worth Highlighting In The Existing And Aspiring Geoparks Of Vietnam

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The geology of Vietnam, comprising fragments of different tectonic plates including ancient continental crust, records a long history of geological evolution resulting in complex geological features with various rock types and minerals. The rocks, ranging from very ancient (2,500 million years old) to recent, were variously derived from either magmatic, metamorphic or sedimentary origins. Broadly speaking, though northern Vietnam displays a rich diversity of rock types, limestone predominates there and constitutes some 35-40 percent of the mainland. Central Vietnam is characterized by paleo-metamorphic rocks of the Kontum uplifted massif, a part of the ancient supercontinent Gondwana, bordered around with polymictic Paleozoic rock formations. To the south is a territory of intrusive igneous rocks dating from Mesozoic times up to the present. At Vietnam's southern tip lies the Mekong Delta that is composed mainly of modern riverine - marine sediments with a few scattered exposures of late Paleozoic - Mesozoic igneous and sedimentary rocks. In the meantime, archaeological evidence suggests that human culture in Vietnam appeared earliest in northern Vietnam, at least 33,000 years ago, and resulted in the first manifestations of Vietnam's "stone heritage". Since such an ancient time, pre-historic and later people have traditionally used stone, especially limestone, for many different purposes. This paper on Vietnam's Stone Heritage, therefore, gives an overview of limestone and some of its applications in Vietnam's cultural history up to the present day. Its second part similarly reviews the use of other types of stone and the last section discusses the possible use of Stone Heritage in Vietnam's existing and aspiring geoparks.