

# **The Complex of Hue Monuments, introduction of its significances and considering for the future tourism development: Case study of Kim Long village and its frontal base town**

**Le Vinh An**

Faculty of Architecture, Duy Tan University,  
Da Nang City, Viet Nam.

## **Abstract**

First phrase of this paper aimed to introduce in general the significance of the Hue as a first UNESCO World Heritage site in Vietnam which has been recognized since December, 1993. Ancient Capital City of Hue (the Heritage site) located in the middle region of Vietnam developed as a base of Nguyen Dynasty and thrived as a capital of the Country from the early 19th century to middle 20th century. The Heritage site contained full concept of the typical Ancient Capital City of Vietnam which including the Citadel, Imperial Palaces, Imperial Tombs, Temples, Religious facilities and its surroundings great natural environment well known as Feng-shui concept are still remained.

In second phase, this paper examines for considering on the current issues of Kim Long village and its frontal base town for future development. Kim Long village is well known as a first base of the Capital city of Hue during 17th century to 18th century under period of Nguyen Lords in Cochinchina of Vietnam. Located at West-South side of the Hue Citadel, Kim Long village is famous for tourism, well known as interfere zone between politic center and religious center of the Heritage site, which hasn't been cultivated for development yet.

**Keywords:** Vietnam | Hue | Nguyen Dynasty | UNESCO | World Heritage

.....  
Selected paper: Seminar and Workshop Establishment of the Network for Safeguarding and Development of the Cultural Heritage in the Mekong Basin Countries. Theme: Issues, Problems and Future Challenges of World Heritage Sites and its Frontal Base Town/City: Making a Key Step towards Close Cooperation on Historic City Summit in Southeast Asian Countries focusing on Siem Reap, Hue, Champasak, Ayutthaya, and Pyu. Organized by Institute of UNESCO World Heritage (JSPS Core-to-Core Program "Establishment of the Network for Safeguarding and Development of the Cultural Heritage in the Mekong Basin Countries"), Waseda University and Faculty of Architecture, Silpakorn University at Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Center, Bangkok, Thailand. December 16-17, 2017.

## 1. Historical Background

The location of Thua Thien Hue province is in the narrow land-strip of the central part of Vietnam. Located at 16°35' parallel of latitude, in the tropical and temperate zone, it is characterized by a strong monsoon influence, a considerable amount of sunny days and with a high rate of rainfall and humidity.

Historically, the Hue area was caught in cultural interference layered by Dong Son culture and Sa Huynh culture. According to the old bibliographies, it was the one of five districts belongs to Nhat Nam prefecture of China under Han period (Trieu – Nam Viet dynasty, some centuries B.C)<sup>1</sup> Based on Vietnamese historical documents, in Champa period, Hue area was named by “Chau Ly”, territory land of Dai Viet (1306 – Tran dynasty) was changed as “Chau Hoa” from the years of 1558. There is a story that the word of “Hoa” has been pronounced as “Hue” used continuously nowadays.

The time when Nguyen Hoang, the great mandarin of Le dynasty, had come to “Thuan Hoa” as a top-herd of this area (1558-1613), he made every effort to change this wasted lands into cultivated lands. Succeeded by his son – Nguyen Phuoc Nguyen, the Lord (1613-1635) – the area became the Capital city of Dang Trong (Cochin-china) until 1777. After Tay Son succeed in rising up in arms, Nguyen Hue was proclaimed Emperor with the date of Quang Trung, established Tay Son Dynasty (1788-1802) and also set up the capital of kingdom in Hue which named Phu Xuan Capital<sup>2</sup>.

In 1802, after the short term of period, Nguyen Phuoc Anh (the descendant of the Nguyen family) was proclaimed Emperor with the date of Gia Long, restored career of Nguyen’s family and established the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945).

Following the last recommendation of his grand-generation, Gia Long Emperor decided to choose Hue as a capital city of Vietnam<sup>3</sup> and ordered the planning of Citadel according to the Feng-shui/Geomancy theory of ancient China. Although the construction activities of the Citadel were started from the beginning of Gia Long period (1802-1820), it would be animatedly and in large scale in Minh Mang period (1820-1841)<sup>4</sup>. The construction, expanding and repairing of the

.....

<sup>1</sup> Tran Quoc Vuong. “Xứ Huế dưới góc nhìn Chính trị Văn hoá” (*Hue area observed from the Geo. Politics angle*), *Tạp chí Di sản Văn hoá (Vietnam national Cultural Heritage magazine)*, No 3, Hanoi 2003, p. 5

<sup>2</sup> Li Tana, Nguyen. *CochinChina – Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Cornell University, Seap, New York 1998, page 11-17, 139-154.

<sup>3</sup> Tran Quoc Vuong, *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *The Nguyen Dynasty’s Quốc Sử Quán, Khâm Định Đại Nam Hội Điện Sự Lệ, Bộ Công,; Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí, Kinh Sư.*

Hue capital city were associated with the existing of Nguyen dynasty during nearly one and half century in Vietnam. It is inherited amount of great cultural heritages from that period with the historical environment, natural landscaping and whole complex of monuments, etc.

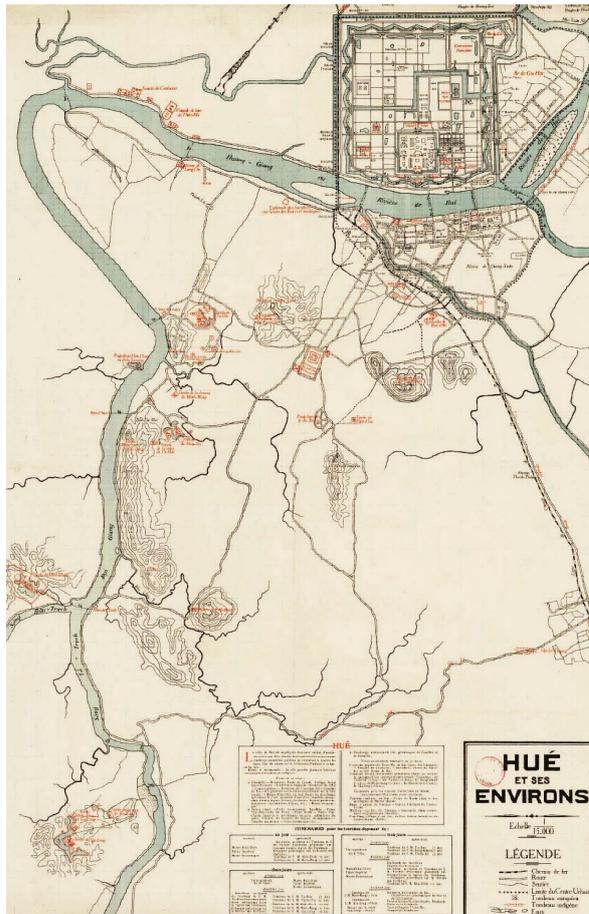


Fig. 1: The Complex of Hue Monuments

## 2. Significances of the Heritage site

The Heritage site is the great assembly of the typical historic architectures of the one history stage in Vietnam from early 19th century to middle of 20th century with whole concepts of the Ancient Capital City including Citadel, Imperial city, Imperial tombs, Temples, Shrine, Pagodas, Esplanade, Royal arena etc. It is located in a dreamlike beauty of natural landscapes along with full-factor of the oriental Feng-shui theory which has been whole conserved continuously till nowadays.

## 2.1 Capital of Mountain and River

Mountain and River are usually the basic factors for a settlement of ancient Vietnamese in particular and of ancient Asia people in general. The concept of “*Non-Nuoc*” (峯/Mountain-水/Water factor) is distinguished from the “*Phong-Thuy*” (Feng-shui/風水) concept which originally came from ancient China philosophy.

Indeed, if the “*Water*” to be an essential factor for the life, then the “*Mountain*” to be a necessary landmark factor for going home back. Really, a pair of Hong river and Tan Vien mountain is a significance of the Trang An region (Ha Noi nowadays), the Lam river and Hong Linh mountain is a significance of the Thanh Nghe region, the Huong Giang river and Kim Phung mountain is a significance of the Hue region, the Thu Bon river and Kim Ke mountain is a significance of the Quang Nam region, the Sai Gon river and Ba Den mountain is a significance of the Sai Gon-Gia Dinh region. The natural geographic composed by a pair of river and mountain is a signification of regional features over the country from Northern to the Southern of Vietnam in which the Heritage site is a typical case of study (fig.2).

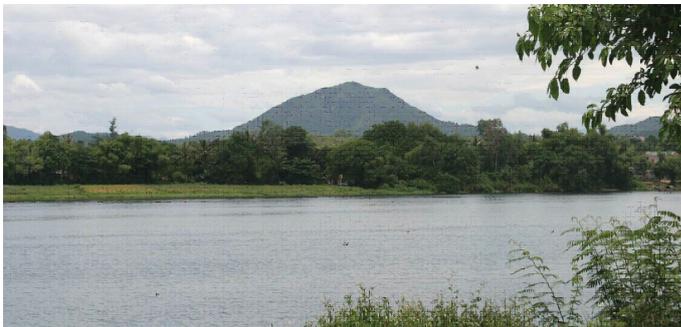


Fig. 2: Huong Giang river and Kim Phung mountain in Hue

## 2.2 Capital of Rectangle of water

The Land chosen to be a settlement of the Capital City of Hue formed from three rivers to shape the “*Rectangle of water*” called “*Vuong Dao*” which included: Huong Giang/front side river, Bach Yen /back side river and Kim Long/central river.

According to the results of excavation carried out by the Hue Monuments Conservation Center in September, 2008, original land-cote of the Capital city is lower than the present around 1.2m. Historically, the Nguyen dynasty had to gather clean-land from over country to filling up the area for construction of the Capital City. In 1805, Minh Mang, second emperor of the Nguyen Court gave a decision to fix main axis of the Citadel faces to East-South direction (slanting 25 degree from North-South direction) based on the theory of Feng-shui, it is an ideal direction for the Emperors govern a state (fig.3, 4).

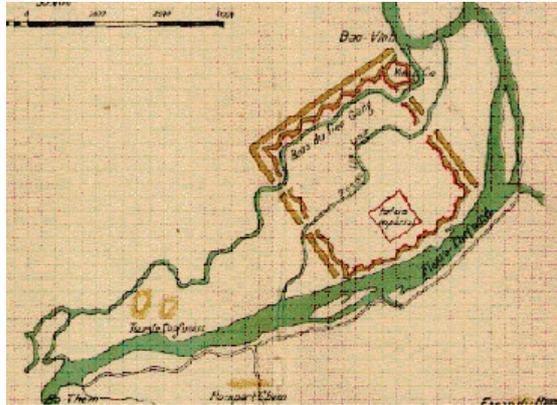


Fig. 3: "Rectangle of water" and location of the Capital City

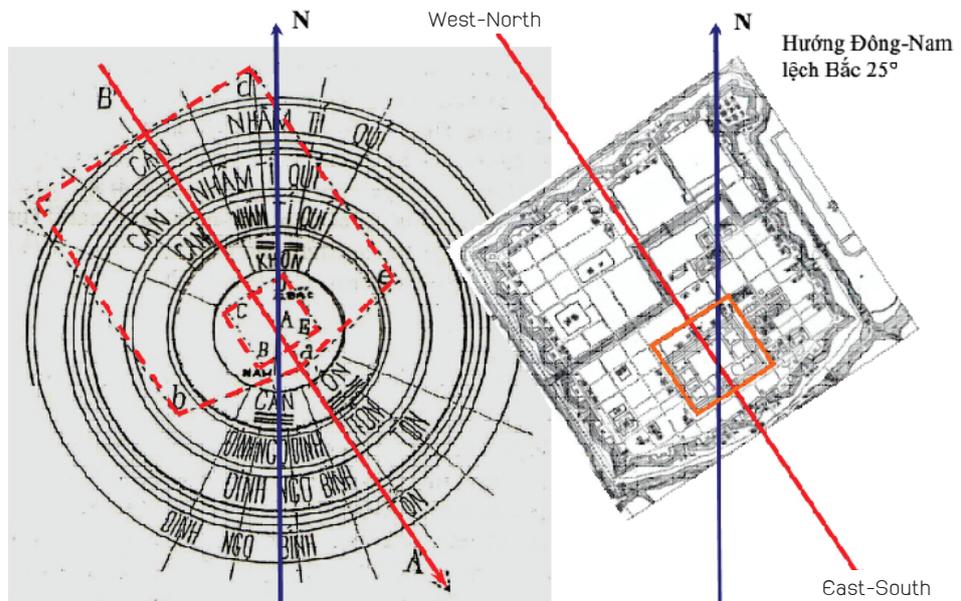


Fig. 4: Central axis and direction of the Citadel according to Feng-shui theory

### 2.3 Capital of Feng-shui theory

The architects of Nguyen Court were very skillful to engage the Capital City into great beauty natural landscape with full natural factor of ancient Feng-shui theory: The Ngu Binh mountain placed on the central axis, in front of the Citadel, plays a role of Tien An/Phoenix; the Hen island placed on the left hand-side of the Citadel, plays a role of Thanh Long/Blue Dragon; the Da Vien island placed on the right hand-side of the Citadel, plays a role of Bach Ho/White Tiger; the Truong Son mountain placed on back side of the Citadel, plays a role of Huyen Vu/Black Turtle;

the Citadel placed at central, plays a role of the Huynh Tho/Yellow Land and Huong Giang river winds through front-base of the Citadel, plays a role of Minh Duong/Water factor as a big-natural mirror to reflect the universal (fig.5).

Ecologically, Huong Giang river plays a salient factor of substantial environment for whole city, winds its way through front-base of the Citadel to shape Z feature of river brings prosperous for the Capital City. It is said that arrangement of the natural geography of Hue look like a unique present from heaven for the Capital City of Feng-shui.

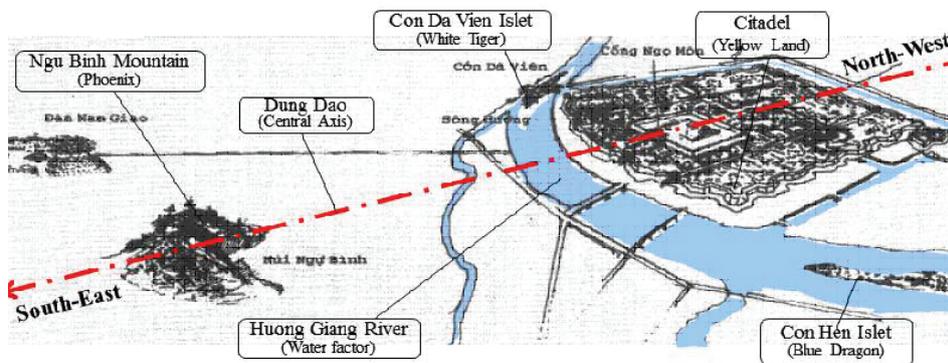


Fig. 5: Feng-shui/Geomancy concepts of the Capital City of Hue

## 2.4 Capital City of Magic Square - The Citadel

The Citadel located at the North side of Huong Giang River and nearby river side, was constructed under Gia Long period (1802-1820) and Minh Mang period (1820-1841). It is a combination between the construction ideas of China Citadel (Beijing) which including three wall-layers (Citadel - Imperial City - Forbidden City) and the concept of defensive system of Vauban style which was popular in Europe in 17th century (fig.6).

Site plan of the Citadel was divided into 9 equal parts as "Tinh Dien" principle which originally came from the Zhou dynasty (771 BC) of ancient China. The central part is originally used for Imperial City was a little bit moved to South side, its area equal 1/9 of the Citadel, then area of the Forbidden City equal 1/3 Imperial City (fig.7).



Fig. 6: Aerial photo of the Citadel

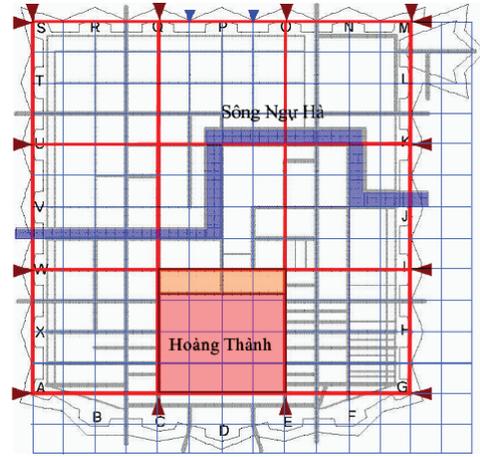
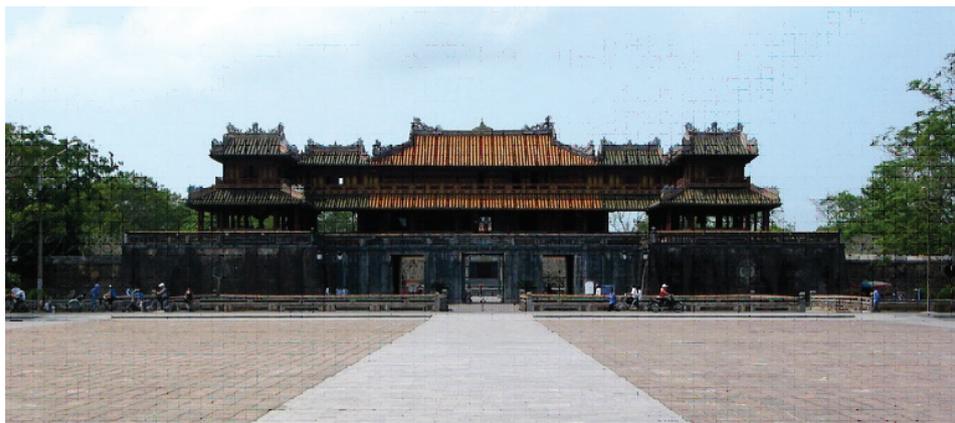


Fig. 7: Site planning of the Citadel

## 2.5 The Imperial City

The Imperial Palaces located inside the Citadel including Imperial City and Forbidden City, was constructed from Gia Long period to Tu Duc period (1802-1883) and repaired from Thanh Thai period to Bao Dai period (1889-1945) with the several famous names such as Ngo Mon, Thai Hoa Dien, Can Chanh Dien, Can Thanh Dien, The To Mieu, Thai To Mieu, etc. (fig.8).

Fig. 8: “*Ngo Mon*” main gate of the Imperial City – Symbol of the Heritage site

## 2.6 The Imperial Mausoleums

The Mausoleums, the last resting-place of the Nguyen Emperors, were planned at the mountain area in the West-South direction of the Citadel with several famous names such as Thien Tho Lang mausoleum (tomb of Gia Long Emperor), Hieu Lang mausoleum (tomb of Minh Mang Emperor, fig.9), Xuong Lang mausoleum (tomb of Thieu Tri Emperor), Khiem Lang mausoleum (tomb of Tu Duc Emperor), An Lang mausoleum (tomb of Duc Duc Emperor), Tu Lang mausoleum (tomb of Dong Khanh Emperor) and Ung Lang mausoleum (tomb of Khai Dinh Emperor).



Fig. 9: Mausoleum of Ming Mang Emperor (1820-1841)



Fig. 10: Interior of the Mausoleum of Khai Dinh Emperor

## 2.7 The Imperial Esplanade and Arena

The Nam Giao Dan (Nam Giao Esplanade) located at the South side of Huong Giang river, was constructed in 1806 and used for sacrifice offering ceremonies to Gods.

The Ho Quyen (Royal Arena) located at the South bank of Huong Giang river, was constructed in 1830 under Minh Mang period, where duels between trained elephants and tigers, used for the entertainment of the Nguyen Court and the public in special occasions.

## 2.8 The Religious facilities

The Pagodas, temples, shrines located in a density over Hue city and were levelled variously such as Thien Mu Pagoda (fig.11), Van Mieu Temple, Vo Mieu Temple, Linh Huu Quan Shrine, etc. They themselves manifested the depth of the history and culture of the homeland which maintained a thought background by the combination of royal faith and spiritual faith.

With those factors above made whole Ancient Capital City and historic ecological urban of Hue which has been recognized as the World Cultural Heritage by UNESCO and was admitted with the specific, salient and outstanding universal values.



Fig. 11: Linh Mu pagoda

### 3. The current issues of Kim Long village and considering for future development

#### 3.1 Background

Kim Long village located at the West-South side of the Hue Citadel, well known as the most beautiful landscape, populous and richness area of the Hue ancient capital city, was discovered by Nguyen Phuc Lan Lord for settlement of the capital city of Dang Trong (Cochin-china) of Vietnam from 1636 to 1712 (fig.12).

The historical document of Nguyen Dynasty records that in the years of 1636, Nguyen Phuc Lan Lord saw the land of Kim Long area as a place of "good terrain" and he gave decision to move the capital city from Quang Tri province to Kim Long area, since then Kim Long had became the first capital city of the Nguyen family in Hue area<sup>5</sup>.

Geographically, Kim Long located nearby the Citadel, at the right hand-side, same land of "Vuong Dao" which enclosed by three rivers: Huong Giang - Bach Yen - Kim Long (fig.3). It plays an important role for tourism development as an interfere zone between politic center (the Citadel) and religious center (the Linh Mu pagoda, Van Mieu temple and Vo Mieu temple) of the Heritage site (fig.13, 14).

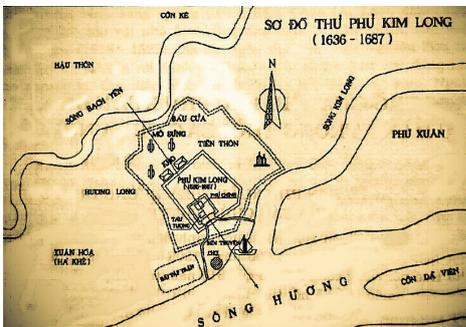


Fig. 12: Map of Kim Long area (1636-1687)

Fig. 13: Van Mieu main temple (worshiping for Confucianism)

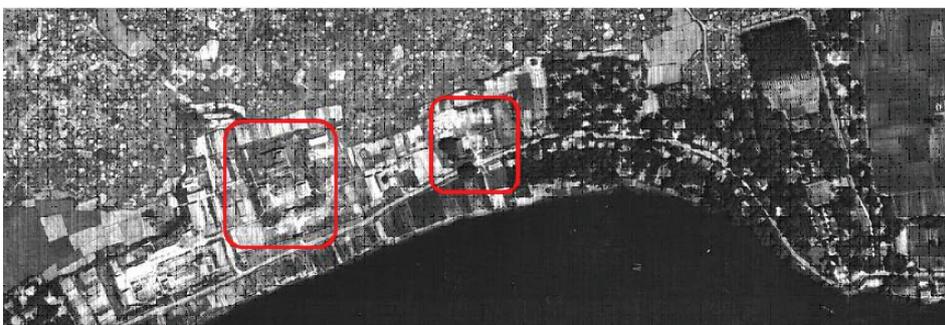


Fig. 14: Location of Van Mieu temple and Vo Mieu temple

### 3.2 Tourism development capacity and its current issues

There are various heritage components still remained such as “*Dinh*” communal house (fig.15), traditional housing known as “*Nha Vuon*” garden house (fig.16), Phu Mong canal (a trace of Kim Long river) etc., bring a great capacity for tourism development .

Beside, the village contains a number of issues that caused by population increasing, air pollution, new construction and periodically flooding. The family cell-division requires more land use for resident population that directly impacts to the “*Nha Vuon*” traditional residences; air pollution caused by smoke-engines from road traffic and new constructions; floodings giving high humidity and insect damaged the wooden structures of architectural heritages etc., Those things gradually make change characteristics of the village.



Fig. 15: The Kim Long “Dinh” communal house



Fig.16: The “Nha Vuon” garden house

### 3.3 Considering for future development

- Dredging of the Phu Mong and Kim Long canal, re-organizing the canal traffic system and establishing the evening beautifications on the canal for tourism.
- Conservation of the “*Nha Vuon*” garden house and doing restoration/renovation for the traditional house.
- Tree re-covering for all residences giving back the ecological environment for the area.
- Cleaning and re-planning of the village front base town, construction of the ship stations to develop the water traffic system as an intermediary-port (tourist trading center) between “*Dap Da*” damp (tourist staying center) and the Linh Mu pagoda, Van Thanh/Vo Thanh temple (tourist spirit center).
- Developing home-stay services and popularizing the art of traditional eating and drinking.
- Restoring and renovation the shop-houses along the river side-band for selling souvenir products.

A-26 หน้าจั่ว: ว่าด้วยสถาปัตยกรรม การออกแบบ และสภาพแวดล้อม  
วารสารวิชาการ ประจำคณะสถาปัตยกรรมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

## References

- Tran Quoc Vuong. (2003). “Xứ Huế dưới góc nhìn Chính trị Văn hoá” (*Hue area observed from the Geo. Politics angle*), *Tạp chí Di sản Văn hoá (Vietnam national Cultural Heritage magazine)*, No 3, Hanoi.
- Li Tana, Nguyen. (1998). *CochinChina – Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, New York: Cornell University.