

The Hue Citadel Area in the Transition of Urban Composition During the Rise and Fall of the Nguyen Dynasty in the 19th Century

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The history of the old Hue City intertwined closely with the fortunes of the Nguyen Dynasty. After the citadel area was chosen as the capital of a unified Vietnam from 1802 by Emperor Gia Long (the founder of the Nguyen Dynasty, 1802–1945), the appearance of Hue changed rapidly towards urbanization. In the first period from 1802 to 1884, urban composition was informed along the course of the Huong River by royal sites, of which the core was the Hue citadel – an admirable combination of geographical space and human talents, handicrafts works, and commercial space. That made Hue an interesting historical landscape albeit its narrow space for a broader urbanization. However, with incoherent policies on the economy, diplomacy as well as religious conflict, the Nguyen Dynasty was not able to avoid an invasion by the French Empire or to save itself from decline. Being home to a defeated native dynasty, Hue became powerless in both economy and administration under French colonization, in spite of the fact that modern industrial locations were partly encouraged to be built here from 1884. The present paper attempts to give a general view on the urban composition and urbanization of Hue based on the two political periods of the feudalistic period (1802–1884) and period of colonization (1884–1899).

Keywords: urban composition, feudalism, colonization, Hue Citadel Area, the Nguyen Dynasty, the 19th century

Introduction

In 1802, the first king of the last feudal dynasty of Vietnam, Gia Long (1802–1820), was enthroned, starting the imperial fortunes of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802–1945). The Hue Citadel Area was the most valued item they inherited from their predecessors (the Nguyen Lords, 1558–1775). Under the Nguyen rule, it changed rapidly with the emergence of the great Hue Citadel, imperial mausoleums, royal palaces with green gardens, exquisite handicrafts and other handmade items, and prosperous market places, which gave the city a quasi-urban face. Nonetheless, this golden era of the Hue Citadel Area could not be preserved for long due to the encroachment of the French in the second half of the 19th century and the concomitant dwindling of the native rulers' power. Henceforth, while from the very beginning to the end of the 19th century, the urban composition of Hue Citadel Area was based on the course of the Huong River and was represented by the traditional royal constructions; from the end of the 19th century, the urban composition was clearly comprised at the same time of feudal and capitalist constructions.

Much scientific research has been done on the Hue Citadel Area, particularly under the Nguyen Lords and

the Nguyen Dynasty, mainly by Vietnamese and Japanese scholars, thanks to its unique culture, and several preserved monuments. Some of this research has contributed to a general urban view of the old Hue citadel city, but still sufficient and mainly expressed by historical or architectural scholars. The purpose of this paper, hence, is to systematic the research of many scholars, old maps, and historical documents, then rearranging them from a historical and geographical view in order to delineate the urban composition in relation with historical, social and political contexts of Hue in the feudal period under the control of the Nguyen Dynasty and in the French colonization during the 19th century. The 20th century saw the transition on urbanization of Hue City under the French colonization till 1954, yet because of a shortage of materials and research sources about Hue in this period, this paper will rather concentrate on the 19th century.

Another point that might be posed is to prevent the misunderstanding of the term “Hue City” by readers as an administrative unit according to the modern city definition (while actually there had been no limited administrative border line for the urban Hue until 1899), the author will choose another term, which do not refer to any city unit with an exact border line. The term “Hue Citadel Area” seems a proper one to refer to Hue from 1802 to 1884, including the citadel area and other imperial locations of Hue, which was composed of construction that was directly under the management and usages of the Hue Court. After that, from 1884 till the end of the 19th century, the urban space of Hue was extended to the southern side of the Huong River by the construction of the French quarter, which was not belonged to the imperial properties, yet certainly contributed to the urbanization of Hue. For this period, the term “Hue Citadel Area” is still used, but means to be constituted by not only imperial locations but also new urban factors.

I. Contextualizing a pre-urbanized Hue Citadel Area

It would be a mistake not to mention the fundamental foundation of the first Nguyen line (1558–1775) that was established for successors of the Hue Citadel Area. Before the year 1558, Hue, like other regions in Thuan Quang,¹⁾ was a fierce and warring place when Lord Nguyen Hoang²⁾ started building his own empire. Through the ability and moral benevolence of the talented general, not only did Nguyen Hoang provide peace for the protectorate, he also built a unique society, which was described as follows: “in the market, there was no irrational pricing, no thieves, no one had to lock their front doors to prevent robbery, and foreign merchants coming here to do business were offered suitable prices....”³⁾ With the reclamation of the new but promising Thuan Quang protectorate, the Nguyen Dynasty began to make a fortune. Hue, as the central region chosen for the Nguyen line, became the chief city from 1636 (when the royal citadel was moved to Kim Long, on the

1) From 1569, Thuan Quang was the name of the protectorate of the Nguyen line, fortified from the Gianh River (in Quang Binh province) to Quang Nam Province.

2) Lord Nguyen Hoang founded the first Nguyen line in 1558.

3) Lê Quý Đôn, *Phủ biên tạp lục* (Frontier Chronicles), Văn hóa-Thông tin Publishing House, 2007, p.62. This book is a historical treasure, written by Lê Quý Đôn, a government officer from 1762–1765, 1767–1784 for the Le Dynasty and Trinh Lords. Vi.

western Hue Citadel). The city gradually attracted merchants and handicraftsmen for the process of urbanization, particularly when Lord Nguyen Phuc Thai (1649–1691) commanded that Phu Xuan Citadel (1687–1712, being located on a part of the location of the Hue Citadel) be built.⁴⁾ However, two hundred years after this excellent start, the pre-Hue Citadel Area, with a population of sixty thousand people in around 1749–1750, which made Hue “seem[ed] to be a populous city”, still did not have a very well-developed economy, as Pierre Poivre describes: “It is less a city than a mass of bamboo huts, poorly constructed and set haphazardly on either side of the river. The streets are narrow and flooded during the wet season.”⁵⁾ This lack of development was explained partly by the inconvenience of geographical conditions, and partly by political stipulations that hampered the enthusiasm of foreign merchants, except for the seafaring Chinese. Besides a narrow and fragile sea-gate and being poor in resources, Hue was less attractive to foreign merchants than Quinam (now Quang Nam Province)⁶⁾, which became the site of the long-enduring international port called Faifo (Hoi An seaport), and the most attractive station on the trading route in Southeast Asian waters. A Chinese merchant frequenting Vietnam extolled Quinam: “countless kinds of merchandise can be found here, as much as even a hundred big junks cannot carry everything at the same time.”⁷⁾ Yet he also complained that: “vessels from Thuan Hoa [from Gianh River to Quang Tri Province, including Hue] load nothing valuable except for pepper.” Despite its poor economic conditions, the Nguyen Dynasty still chose the familiar and safety Hue for their residence. Basically, the Phu Xuan Area of the Nguyen Lords was the foundation for development of greater Hue Citadel Area, a suitable place for extending their influence over both the north and the south, and lent itself to construction based on belief in the principles of *feng-shui* (Chinese Geomancy) for substantial sites by the native rulers.⁸⁾ In short, politics, not economics, was the most important factor altering the urban face of Hue.

II. The urban composition of Hue Citadel Area during the feudal period from 1802 to 1884

Unlike Hanoi and Saigon – cities that lie on the two biggest, wealthy delta plains in the north and south – Hue Area in central Vietnam is composed of rugged mountains, narrow plains, and numerous sand dunes. Hue’s special landform made it impossible to build a centralized or fan-shaped urban model. In the book, *Đại Nam nhất*

4) See Nguyễn Văn Đăng, “Yếu tố “thị” trong đô thị Huế trước 1945” (a “market” factor of Hue urban before 1945). In the book of Hội Khoa học Lịch sử Thừa Thiên Huế (Thua Thien Hue Association of Historical Science), *Cổ đô Huế xưa và nay* (Hue in the past and present), Thuận Hóa Publishing House, 2005, pp.179–191. Vi.

5) Pierre Poivre (translated by Kristine Alilunas-Rodgers), *Description of Cochinchina, 1749–50*, (pp.60–97) p.77. In the book by Li Tana and Anthony Reid, *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyễn*, JBW Printers & Binders Pte.Ltd, 1993. E.

6) See Trần Kinh Hòa, “Làng Minh Hương và phố Thanh Hà thuộc tỉnh Thừa Thiên” (Minh Huong village and Thanh Ha street of Thua Thien province), *Đại học Journal*, No 3, July, 1961, p.105. Vi.

7) Lê Quý Đôn, op.cit., footnote 3., p295.

8) See Trần Đức Anh Sơn, *Huế triều Nguyễn, một cái nhìn* (Hue under the Nguyen Dynasty – a view), Văn hóa thông tin Publishing House, 2008, pp.17–18, p.49. Vi.

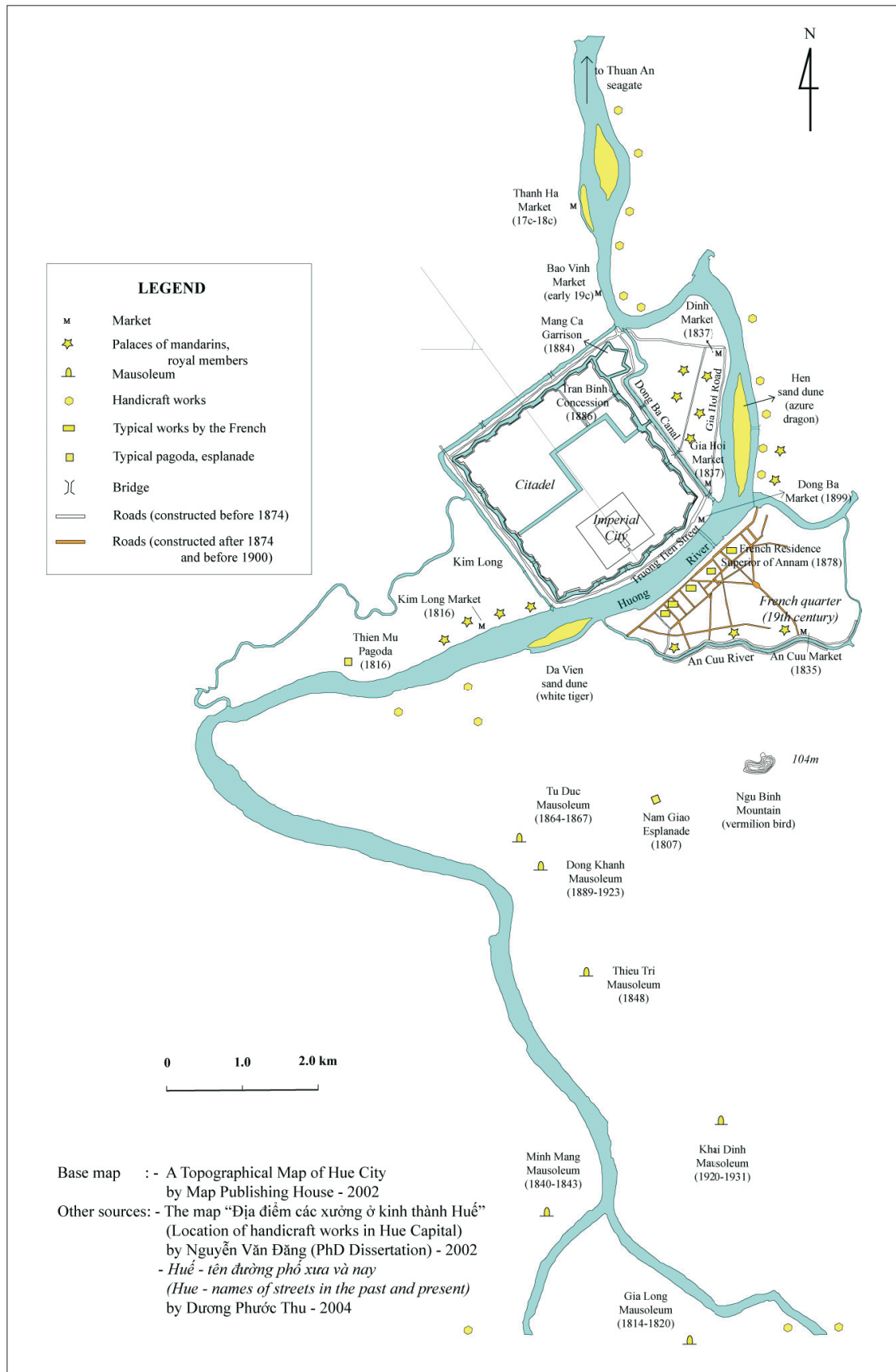


Figure 1. Map of the Hue Citadel Area in the 19th century

thống chí,⁹⁾ the Association of History of the Nguyen Dynasty regards the core region of *Thừa Thiên phủ* (*phủ* – on the same administrative level as province) as the so-called *Kinh sư* (Citadel City, Citadel Area), which consisted of the Hue Citadel (*Kinh thành*), royal shrines, pagodas, mausoleums, weapon producing and ship building locations, elephant husbandry houses, etc.

The Huong River, Gia Hoi Market and Thanh Ha Street-market were, on the other hand, considered belonging to the outskirts areas. Here, it is acknowledged that by the term *Kinh sư*, the Nguyen Dynasty did not mean a central economical and administrative city, but merely a political center, which included whatever was defined as royal property.

In this paper, the author would like to apply this urban bias while discussing old Hue, otherwise, a considerable number of historical characteristics of the Hue Citadel Area will be overlooked. However, it should be recognized that the economy was an inextricable factor contributing to the development of Hue, and hence, it is not excluded from the urban composition of Hue, such as Gia Hoi Market, for example, though being located in the contiguous areas of *Kinh sư*, concentrated densely a numerous Chinese merchants, who was an important factor for the Hue Court in order to hamper the commercial activities as well as to practice the “locked country” policy toward the European merchants.¹⁰⁾ Similarly, national handicraft works, mainly lying along the Huong River farther to the north and the south, was primarily reserved for the Hue Court and national demands rather than for the locality needs.

Last but not least, because the Hue Citadel Area’s composite parts were mainly based on the course of the Huong River, this paper will describe the Hue Citadel Area in the 19th century as following its backbone – the Huong River.

From Thanh Ha – Bao Vinh river–port chain

On the way from Thuan An Sea-gate to the Hue Citadel along the Huong River, Thanh Ha – Bao Vinh emerged as the river-side central markets. After the 17th and 18th centuries as the central commercial center under the first Nguyen line, Thanh Ha port-market was replaced by Bao Vinh, the next port to the south, after a sand dune emerged in the middle of the river.¹¹⁾ Also, when the Association of History of the Nguyen Dynasty (*Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn*) claimed in their published series on national geography and resources, that: “Thanh Ha was once the celebrated commercial center, now [before 1875] becoming feeble.”¹²⁾ The very beginning of the 19th century, therefore, was the start of Bao Vinh Market.¹³⁾ The market in the early 19th century was a

9) Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (The Association of History of the Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam nhất thống chí* (A book on the united Dai Nam – the second republication, translated by Phạm Trọng Diễm from the original Sino-Vietnamese version published among the period 1864–1875), Volume 1, Thuận Hóa Publishing House, Hue, 2006. Vi.

10) Đỗ Bang, *Kinh tế thương nghiệp Việt Nam dưới triều Nguyễn* (the commercial economy of Vietnam under the Nguyen Dynasty), Thuận Hóa Publishing House, 1996, p.88. Vi.

11) Trần Kinh Hòa., op.cit., footnote 6., pp.115–116.

12) Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn., op.cit., footnote 9., p.215.

13) See Trần Kinh Hòa., op.cit., footnote 6., p.113.

shining light in the mind of *Đức Chaigneau*, the half-French, half-Vietnamese, who had dwelt in Hue for a long time, where it centralized “a numerous Chinese and Vietnamese merchants had congregated... [and which was] full of Chinese cargoes.”¹⁴⁾ To some extent, Thanh Ha village was home for several Chinese, who would like to dwell permanently in Vietnam from the Nguyen Lord reigns. They were called as the Minh Huong people. Most of them were merchants, others served for the Nguyen Dynasty as officials, whose works related to commercial activities.¹⁵⁾ In the 19th century, among the local residents in Thanh Ha, the significant figures were a family of *Trần Tiễn Thành*, one of three regents for Emperor Duc Duc in 1883. Thanh Ha-Bao Vinh was also a choice for residence of retired government handicraftsmen (as we know, there were a high-positioned carving and inlaying handicraftsman in Bao Vinh and a tailor for royal members in Dia Linh village). The existence of Bao Vinh port-market was preserved till the middle of the 20th century although its heyday had interrupted in the 19th century, and lost its luster to Gia Hoi commercial area, which attracted more and more Chinese merchants, a part of whom moved from Thanh Ha-Bao Vinh. In the second half of the 19th century, an echo of the market-port chain sank into oblivion to the emergence of other central markets in the eastern Hue. Among the central markets of the Hue Citadel Area that the book *Đại Nam nhất thống chí* mentions, Bao Vinh Market does not exist in the main list, but is only listed as a local market, although it is described as a lively market with numerous Chinese merchants. Also, for M.A.Auvray, a French naval physician, when sailing on the way along the Huong River from Thuan An Sea-gate to the Hue Citadel in 1879, he wasn't impressed by any market or port not until when he turned to a canal in the east of the citadel (*It is certain that he already passed by the market-port chain of Thanh Ha-Bao Vinh*) and saw a commercial quarter, which was really prosperous [*Gia Hoi*] according to his opinion.¹⁶⁾

The Hue Citadel and imperial palaces

Gia Long commanded that the Hue Citadel be built in 1803 based on his own design. It was regarded as the symbol of the power of the Nguyen, as they stated: “the structure in the middle of Vietnam, the high roof in the four directions, the Great Bear surrounded by the other stars.”¹⁷⁾ The great citadel is an excellent combination of the Vietnamese talents, mixed architecture between the French Vauban-style and traditional style, and Asian culture – based on belief in *feng-shui*. In referring to the construction of the citadel, a considerable labor force spent nearly thirty years (1805–1833), and used various precious products from all over the country, such as iron wood from Nghe An; flagstone from Thanh Hoa; plank from Gia Dinh (now demarcated as Ho Chi Minh City); tile from Quang Nam; paint and thin gold-leaf from Bac Thanh (in the north), etc.¹⁸⁾ Surrounded by a moat, whose

14) Quoted from Michel Đức Chaigneau, *Souvenirs de Hué*, Paris, 1867, p.193 by Nguyễn Thế Anh, *Kinh tế & xã hội Việt Nam dưới các vua triều Nguyễn*, Văn học Publishing House, 2008, pp.211–212. Vi.

15) Trần Kinh Hòa., op.cit., footnote 6., p.99.

16) M.A.Auvray, “Mười tám tháng ở Hué, những ấn tượng và kỷ niệm” (Eighteen months in Hue, impression and memories). In *Những người bạn cố đô Hué* (Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue – translated from the French version), 1933, p.275. E.

17) Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn, op.cit., footnote 9., p.16.

18) Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (The Association of History of the Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục (Chronicles of Nguyen Dynasty)*, volume 1, Giáo dục Publications, 2006, p.552. Vi.

water derives from the Huong River and serves as a Vauban-style fortification (a pentagonal fortress in French style), the citadel plays the role of protection. Furthermore, although it is hard to find any detailed information in historical documents, several historians believe that the Nguyen Dynasty practiced the principles of *feng-shui* for construction of the Hue Citadel. Emperor Minh Mang (1820–1840), who himself admitted to not trusting *feng-shui*, said that it was still necessary to adopt the principles of *feng-shui* for construction of the citadel for security.¹⁹⁾ The Huong River flows in front of the citadel, along the east to the back, its function being the creation and maintenance of good “air” for the citadel to make its owners stronger and wealthier as desired. Additionally, the Hue Citadel, facing southeast, is in a harmonious location according to *feng-shui*, which combines the powers of the vermilion bird in front, azure dragon to the left and white tiger to the right.²⁰⁾ Applying these concepts to the actual natural landscape, Ngu Binh Mountain in front of the citadel is regarded as the vermilion bird in front, or in other words, the screen to protect the whole citadel. Da Vien sand dune on the left side and Hen sand dune on the right side play the roles as the azure dragon and white tiger guards, respectively. The existence of a black tortoise in the back of the Hue Citadel is not regularly mentioned, while there is short and simple words concerning this issue in the historical document *Đại Nam nhất thống chí*, that “great river flows in front [of the Hue Citadel], and high mountain protects in back.”²¹⁾ It was not explained obviously about the “high mountain” in this sentence. For military, it is certain that the Ngang Pass, a spur of Truong Son mountain chain in the western central Vietnam, was the protecting screen of Hue in the north (in the back of the Hue Citadel). However, in the context of *feng-shui* ideologies, its distance of more than 230km from the Hue Citadel is wondering the author that, whether it is possible for a black tortoise to be located in such a far distance? Or in reality, the Hue Citadel is lacked of the protection of a black tortoise? Besides, the location of the citadel – which encounters high topography in front, but goes down to a lower region in back – confuses the author about the geomancy beliefs of the Hue Court, which seemed to be in contrast with the Chinese *feng-shui* principle.²²⁾

The Hue Citadel, to some extent, could be compared to a small city (or core urban area of the feudal city), with its three circles of ramparts, whose highlight was the innermost forbidden purple palace (*Tử Cấm Thành*) for the Emperor and his family. Surrounding it was the Imperial Palace (*Hoàng thành*), the place for ceremonies, honorably royal shrines for defunct emperors, harems of a successive emperor’s mother and a paternal grandmother, royal gardens and education places for princes and princesses, etc. The outermost area was called the Citadel (*Kinh thành*), situated at various construction locales that separated between the west and east, the north and south. The southeast was for national offices and houses of princes, while the southwest was for the palaces of princesses. Farther to the north were located houses of officials, soldiers, national handicraft works,

19) Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (The Association of History of the Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục (Chronicles of Nguyen Dynasty)*, volume 3, Giáo dục Publications, 2006, p.461. Vi.

20) See Trần Đức Anh Sơn, *op.cit.*, footnote 8., pp.31–58.

21) Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn, *op.cit.*, footnote 9., p.15.

22) See *Yang Dwelling Classic*, quoted from Stephan D.R.Feuchtwang, *An Anthropological analysis of Chinese geomancy*, Vithagna Press, 1974, p.120. E.

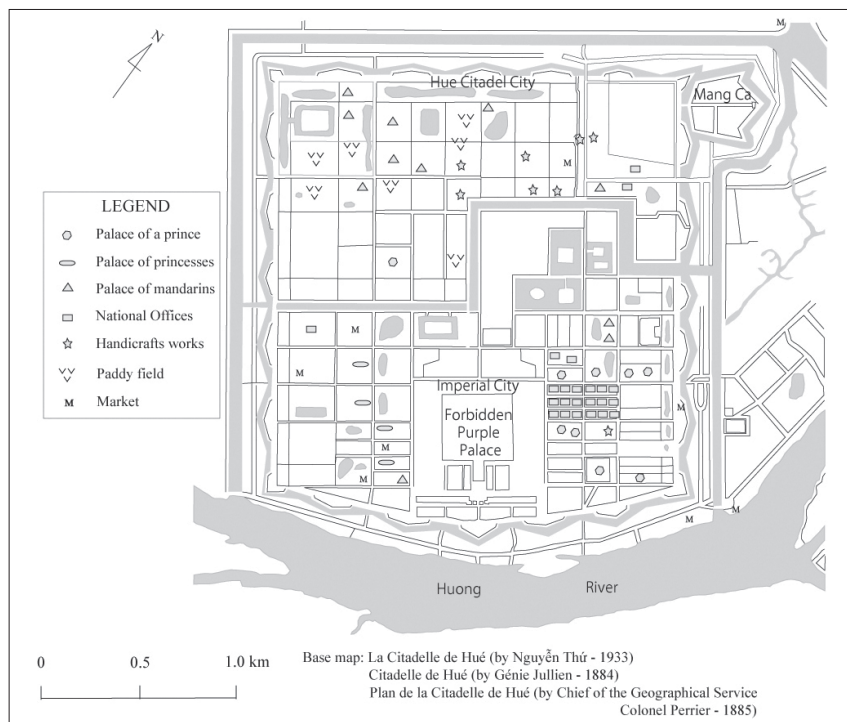


Figure 2. Map of the Hue Citadel in the 19th century

depots, and markets.²³⁾ Here rises a strange point that the Imperial City was put in the southernmost part of the Citadel, while common mandarins and soldiers lived in the back, which seems improper in regards to the original principles of Chinese *feng-shui* and feudal ideologies. The only reasonable explanation to be elicited here is in terms of geographical conditions. The Imperial City was built on a dry and physically stable soil density to prevent the palace from the damage of regular floods. From a broader view, although the whole citadel was located on not particularly high topography (as compared to its eastern and western sides), it was preserved thanks to the well-built drainage system, which connected a numerous ponds and man-made canals (which are in connection with the Huong River) to regulate water level. Furthermore, in spite of being the Citadel City, agricultural land was still remained inside it (in quite a large area, according to the map “Plan de la Citadelle de Hué”²⁴⁾ drawn in 1920), in accordance with the common ideology of the statecraft in the feudal period that agriculture was the basic economic sector needed among all classes in the social hierarchy, not excluding the city population or high officials. In reality, to urban context, the city model of Nguyen feudalism was evident through the rural-urban complexity of Hue Citadel City.

Several palaces for royal members and high officials appeared on the western and eastern sides, some on the

23) According to the map “Partie Nord de la Citadelle de Hué” by L.Cadière – 1933, in “La Citadelle de : Onomastique” of L.Cadiere (des Missions Etrangères de Paris) (pp.67–130); and the map “Citadelle de Hué” by Génie Jullien in 1884, in “La Citadelle de Hué: Cartographie” by H.Cosserat (pp.1–66). 古好城都, *Bulletin des Amis du vieux Hué*, No.12, 1933. Fr.

24) The map “Plan de la Citadelle de Hué – fourni par le Hộ thành”, 1920. in “La Citadelle de Hue: Cartographie” by H.Cosserat (pp.1–66). 古好城都, *Bulletin des Amis du vieux Hué*, No.12, 1933. Fr.

southern side of the citadel, and both of which were located along the Huong River or its branch (the An Cuu River). The location of these palaces is supposed to satisfy four important conditions: easy access, convenient to reach the Hue Citadel for daily working or visiting (mostly by river-way transportation), good security because of a concentration of soldiers, and weapons, and probably, a beautiful landscape along the Huong riverside. The west, with its poetically beautiful landscape, was the site of the majestic palace of the Nguyen Lords, and remained home for many of them. The east, meanwhile, bustled with commercial and cultural activities, complete with full of shops and goods, and concert houses and shrines, which stood alongside the palaces of the upper classes.²⁵⁾ These residential locales were generally built on the principles of *feng-shui*, in the traditional style called “*nhà rường*”. Houses were a pleasant composite of wood (without using a nail or iron tools as the articulation),²⁶⁾ signified by wooden pillars. The houses were also distinguished by their tile roofs (without using cements as the adhesives),²⁷⁾ and decorated by a big green garden planted flowers, bonsai. It is the traditional housing style of the upper classes in Hue that could hardly be said to be based on an urban style or a rural style. For the owner, this housing type served the function of both living and relaxing, and provide “the stability under the severe climate conditions, the warmness in the winter, and coolness in the summer,”²⁸⁾ however, was considered normal of palaces (in 1879), and without luxurious decoration of royal members in eyes of the Frenchman M.A.Auvray.²⁹⁾

The central market-street places

An increasing demand of the native rulers, and benefits from taxation of local products also stimulated commerce in Hue. In terms of central markets of the Hue Citadel Area in the 19th century, there are thirteen ones are listed in the book *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí*.³⁰⁾ Except for some central markets, which were built in the early 19th century and dispersedly located in the areas concentrating royal members and high officials, such as Kim Long, An Cuu, An Van, Nam Phổ, etc, there were market-streets, which were built more orderly and lively and represented typically the urban face of Hue. In this century, market-streets were moved upstream along the Huong River, nearer and nearer the citadel “to serve demand directly”³¹⁾ of the Hue Court, from Thanh Ha – Bao Vinh in the north to Dinh, then Gia Hoi market-streets in the east of the citadel. In 1808, the Nguyen Dynasty built three bridges to connect the citadel and the eastern side³²⁾ in order to initiate construction of market-street places within

25) See the description on historical monuments of Phan Thuận An., *Huế xưa và nay, di tích và danh thắng* (Hue – the past and present, relics and sightseeing places), Văn hóa thông tin Publishing House, 2008. Vi.

26) Lê Kim Anh, “Nhà rường vườn Huế xưa” (“nha ruong” and a garden of the former Hue). In the book *Nhà vườn Huế*, Trẻ Publishing House, 2007, p.09. Vi.

27) Lê Kim Anh., *ibid.*, p.09.

28) Lê Kim Anh., *ibid.*, p.09.

29) M.A.Auvray., *op.cit.*, footnote 16., pp.278–279.

30) Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn, *op.cit.*, footnote 9., pp.215–217.

31) Phan Thuận An., *op.cit.*, footnote 25., p.153.

32) Phan Thuận An., *op.cit.*, footnote 25., pp.154–155. However, according to the map “Citadelle de Huế” by Génie Jullien in 1884, one of these three bridges already disappeared.

the urban area. As a result, three rows of market-streets, where local inhabitants conducted commerce, emerged on the opposite side of the citadel's eastern edge, along the Dong Ba man-made canal.³³⁾ Nevertheless, the most prosperous and busy commercial activities were to be found in another place – the riverside, where ships could dock, and where the market-street was divided finely into eight lines:

“On [Gia Hoi Road (now called Chi Lang)] , located along the Huong River, several stores displayed raw silk, silk, cotton, food, carvings and inlaid items [though according to the author, these were not as valuable those of Bac Ha – the northern Vietnam] , bronze pots, etc. On [another road, now called Nguyen Chi Thanh Road] , one could find specialized items of various sizes, and at many price levels...One could also find a numerous items such as shoes, clothes, Annamese hats, Holland lamps, Swedish match boxes, and British bottles....”³⁴⁾

The eastern side of the Hue Citadel became the liveliest commercial area in Hue in the 19th century evidently because of its advantageous geographical and political conditions. However, here, it was not the local people but Chinese merchants, who would “carry on a great trade here, having sometimes thirty junks in the river at a time.”³⁵⁾

The handicraft guilds

Along the Huong River, a numerous handicraft works were supported mainly by filling orders for the Hue Court,³⁶⁾ which implies of being representative of rather self-sufficiency in production.³⁷⁾ It is said that, “the increasing demand of the royal family and the imperial court [for construction, military, and daily-needs] encouraged the concentration of small-industrial handicraft works [in and around the Hue Citadel].”³⁸⁾ The court selected many skilled workers from all over the country, especially from the north and central regions, for national handicraft works at Hue. Numerous handicraftsmen, who were employed nationally, belonged to the traditional handicraft guilds of Hue: Phu Bai iron metallurgy, Hien Luong iron forgery, Ke Mon gold and silver fine arts, and Phuoc Tich stoneware, etc. From 1822, the guilds had developed even further, counting fifty-seven different kinds, with more than 3,853 poll-tax exempt workers, according to the historical book, *Khâm Định Đại Nam hội điển sự lệ tục biên*. Some had to work throughout the year; others worked at appointed times.³⁹⁾ The

33) Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn, op.cit., footnote. 9., p.214.

34) M.A.Auvray., op.cit., footnote 16., pp.278–279.

35) William Milburn, *Oriental commerce*, Vol II, Black, Parry and Co., 1813, p.457. E.

36) See Nguyễn Văn Đăng, “Đô thị Huế dưới thời Nguyễn” (Hue urban under the Nguyen Dynasty) – chapter III. In the book of Nguyễn Thừa Hỷ, Đỗ Bang, Nguyễn Văn Đăng, *Đô thị Việt Nam dưới thời Nguyễn* (Vietnamese urban under the Nguyen Dynasty), Thuận Hóa Publishing House, 2000, pp.48–78. Vi.

37) See Nguyễn Văn Đăng., op.cit., footnote 36., p.69.

38) Bùi Thị Tân, “Tiểu thủ công nghiệp ở Thừa Thiên Huế và vấn đề đô thị hóa” (Handicraft guilds in Thua Thien Hue and problems during urbanization). In the book *Huế xưa và nay* (Hue-the past and present) by Thua Thien Hue Association of Historical Science, Thuận Hóa Publishing House, Hue, p.764. Vi.

39) See Bùi Thị Tân, Vũ Huy Phúc, *Kinh tế thủ công nghiệp và phát triển công nghệ Việt Nam dưới triều Nguyễn* (Handicraft economy and technological development of Vietnam during the Nguyen Dynasty), Thuận Hóa Publishing House, Hue, 1997,

number of national works for building and repairing ships on the southern side of the Huong River – 255, and for making gun powder – 10,⁴⁰⁾ indicate the dominant role played by the military under the Nguyen reigns. Inside the citadel were handicraft and handmade works of coin mintage, weapon production, home appliances making, etc., A little farther to the southwest were constructed the weapon production and tile and brick burning works. Farther to the south and northwest of the Huong River appeared many gun powder producing works.⁴¹⁾

It is commonly said that national handicraft works were developed mostly because of demand from the minority, such as the upper classes and national military or financial needs,⁴²⁾ rather than through promotion of consumption by the ordinary population. Both the handicrafts and commercial activities of the native people were described as meager and feeble with the invasion of various Chinese and European merchandises.⁴³⁾ Except for Sino-Vietnamese porcelain (or *Bleus de Hué* in French – designed by the Vietnamese, and produced in China), which was one of the few types of merchandises of Hue that established a name for itself among national celebrated handicraft products, but was reserved only for the Nguyen court, handicraft products in Hue did not actually stand out as compared with those in Hanoi or Quang Nam Provinces. Moreover, handicraftsmen in the state-owned handicraft works were compelled to work under conditions as severe as those of soldiers, and obtained poll-tax free status and what little revenue they could acquire from hard work. Such disadvantages dampened the enthusiasm of handicraftsmen for working for the Hue Court.⁴⁴⁾

The mausoleums

In contrast with the lively eastern and central regions of the Hue Citadel Area, the mountainous west was imbued with peacefulness from the quiet, slowly flowing Huong River and the mysterious mausoleums of the Nguyen emperors: Gia Long, Minh Mang, Thieu Tri, Tu Duc, Kien Phuc, Dong Khanh and Khai Dinh, etc. At least twenty-six royal mausoleums had been built around the period 1864–1875 to preserve the majestic bodies and souls of emperors and empresses of the Nguyen Dynasty, according to the historical book, *Đại Nam nhất thống chí*. As was the case with other important construction projects of the Nguyen Dynasty, *feng-shui* principles – combining the power of mountain and river – were also adopted seriously for imperial mausoleums, whether in traditional Vietnamese or modern Western styles. Despite their sparseness, mausoleums in Hue were constructed in an order fashion in relation to the orientation of the Huong River, as were the other great structures of the city. Hence, they comprised part of the imperial architecture of the Hue Citadel Area in the 19th century. Concurrently,

pp.21–27. Vi.

40) Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn., op.cit., footnote 9., p.83.

41) See the map “Địa điểm các xưởng ở kinh thành Huế” (Location of handicraft works in Hue Capital) and the map “Địa điểm các xưởng trong kinh thành” (Location of handicraft works in the Hue Citadel City) by Nguyễn Văn Đăng, “Quan xưởng ở kinh đô Huế từ 1802–1884” (National handicraft works in Hue Capital from 1802 to 1884), PhD dissertation (5.03.15), Hanoi, 2002. Vi.

42) See Nguyễn Văn Đăng., op.cit., footnote 36., pp.68–69.

43) See J.L.Dutreuil de Rhins, “Huế những năm 1876–1877, nhật ký hành trình” (Hue in 1876–1877, a journey diary), in a book of Trung tâm Nghiên cứu Huế (Hue Research Center), *Nghien cuu Hue*, Thuận Hóa Publishing House, volume 6, 2008, pp272–274. Vi.

44) See Bùi Thị Tân – Vũ Huy Phúc., op.cit., footnote 39., pp.12–32.

mausoleums were not simply architectural sites, but symbolized for the power and royalty of the Nguyen Emperors. Emperor Tu Duc (1847–1883) used his mausoleum as the second imperial palace for resting. Handicrafts works were maintained partly in order to build mausoleums. Under the rubric of urban feudalism, in which urbanism served the upper classes foremost, as in the Hue Citadel Area, a set of mausoleums was naturally an inextricable component of the urban structure, regardless of the distance from the center of the city.

Besides, here were some other parts also stated belonging to the Hue Citadel Area: faith works (Xa Tac, Tien Nong, and Nam Giao esplanades), Buddhism pagoda or Confucian shrine (Thien Mu Pagoda, Van Mieu), and a national university (Quoc Tu Giam).⁴⁵⁾ These sites were not located inside the Hue Citadel, yet same as central markets, royal mausoleums and palaces which are mentioned above, they were both belonged to the Hue Court, and symbolized as the national properties.

III. Political transition

By maintaining a conservative feudalistic ideology in a time of political, economic, and social changes in the Far East wrought by the European empires, the Nguyen Dynasty foundered in relation to the Europeans. When the Europeans came and attempted vainly to knock at the door of their territory again in spite of repeatedly suffering a cold reception, the Nguyen Dynasty eventually adopted the way of closing the country to prevent encroachment by the Europeans and protect their traditional customs. They were particularly strict toward the French. What a pity that, gradually had the French realized a great potential good chance to actualize their long-lasting ambitions in Vietnamese territory, which were twofold: 1. They desired to access the Chinese market through a safe route that was not under the control of the British, and recognized the Mekong River and Red River of Vietnam in connection with China were ideal for satisfying this purpose.⁴⁶⁾ 2. The French also strove to balance their colonial empire with the British Empire on the map of Southeast Asia by getting a foothold at the door from the marine zone to the inland – Indochina. Eventually, a religious conflict, albeit not the express goal, was a reason the French encroached on Vietnam in 1858.⁴⁷⁾ Partly because of their bias toward isolation from the outside world, the Nguyen Dynasty easily fell into the hands of the French Empire as a result.

From 1874, the French claimed six provinces in the southern part of Vietnam as their colonial region. Ten years later, through the Treaty of Hue negotiated by Jules Patenôtre in 1884, Annam, including Hue, and Tonkin were officially placed under the protectorate of the French. After Emperor Ham Nghi's defeat by the French in 1885, Hue Citadel and many royal treasures were acquired by the French. The colonizers appointed Emperor Dong Khanh to the throne, filling the vacuum that Emperor Ham Nghi left after the defeat of his resistance. Under the reign of this puppet king (1885–1888), the French successfully won control of the diplomatic

45) See Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn, op.cit., footnote 9.

46) See Robert Aldrich, *Greater France, a history of French overseas expansion*, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996. E.

47) See Oscar Chapuis, *The last emperors of Vietnam – from Tu Duc to Bao Dai*, Greenwood Press, London, 2000, p.48. E.

relationship, commerce, and national budget of Annam.⁴⁸⁾ Concomitantly, from this time, the Nguyen Dynasty lost its real power to the French Empire, and retained Hue Citadel as its “last property”. In 1945, the last feudal dynasty totally collapsed in the face of the emergence of another political power, yet for Hue Citadel Area, the end of its being the capital of Vietnam came several years before that.

IV. The urban composition of Hue Citadel Area under French colonization from 1884 to 1899

When the French claimed Hue as a protectorate through the Treaty of Hue, the city once again experienced upheaval. To fortify their base in Hue – the political center, the French desired to be transferred military and residential land in the city from the Nguyen Dynasty, and they won the success through political negotiations. In the last twenty-six years of the 19th century, in the so-called political region, right on the opposite side of the Hue Citadel over the Huong River, arose a modern French quarter, including national offices such as the French Residence Superior of Annam (*Résidence Supérieure de l’Annam*), Department of Gendarmes; public infrastructure such as Hue National School, Dong Chua Cuu The and Phu Cam Churches, Hue Hospital, and the Hue Post Office; and a residential zone with several villas, shops, restaurants, and small workshops.⁴⁹⁾ Right inside the citadel, the French Mang Ca military base was set up in 1884, and expanded in 1886 into the Tran Binh concession area, which was located on the northeast edge – the most vulnerable part of the citadel, where they could observe and control every move from Thuan An Sea-gate to the Huong River and a turning flow.⁵⁰⁾ The area differed from the old citadel in that it now had a modern zone with new roads named after deceased French soldiers, as well as military bases, banks, restaurants, libraries and food storehouses in the concession area appeared.⁵¹⁾ Concomitantly, the prosperity of traditional handicraft guilds in Hue had declined as consumption decreased, as modern French merchandise invaded the market.⁵²⁾ From 1885, when the Emperor Ham Nghi left the citadel after losing the war against the French, many national handicrafts works were dissolved, and only 67/95 works remained.⁵³⁾ More vanished later during the invasion of modern French cargoes. The end of 19th

48) See Dương Kinh Quốc, *Việt Nam – những sự kiện lịch sử (1858–1918)* (Vietnam – historical events 1858–1918), Giáo dục Publishing House, Hanoi, 1999; also see Viện sử học (The Historical Institute), *Lịch sử Việt Nam 1858–1896* (The Vietnamese History 1858–1896), Khoa học xã hội Publishing House, Hanoi, 2003. Vi.

49) See Nguyễn Thị Dâm, Huỳnh Kim Thành, “Sự biến đổi diện mạo đô thị Huế cuối thế kỷ 19, đầu thế kỷ 20” (The transition appearance of Hue city in the end of 19th century and the beginning 20th century), *Southeast Asia Studies*, Volume 05, 2006. pp.42–50. Vi.

50) See Phan Thuận An, *Kinh thành Huế* (The Hue Citadel), Thuận Hóa Publishing House, 1999, p.198. Vi.

51) Nguyễn Thị Dâm, Huỳnh Kim Thành., op.cit., footnote 49., p.33.

52) See Vũ Huy Phúc, *Tiểu thủ công nghiệp Việt Nam (1858–1945)* (Vietnamese handicrafts 1858–1945), Khoa học xã hội Publishing House, Hanoi, 1996; also see Nguyễn Hữu Thông, *Huế – nghề và làng nghề thủ công truyền thống* (Hue – traditional handicrafts and handicrafts guilds), Thuận Hóa Publishing House, pp.40–43. Vi.

53) Phan Thanh Hải, “Về các quan xưởng và thợ thủ công của triều Nguyễn sau ngày 5/ 7 /1885” (About national handicraft works and handicraftsmen of the Nguyen Dynasty after July 05th, 1885), *Huế Xưa và nay*, No.56 (3 – 4 /2003), pp. 64–68. Vi.

century, in short, was considered as the preparation of the French for officially exploiting Vietnam in the next century. At this time, in Hue, although the French still allowed the feudalistic system of the Hue Court to remain, the ones holding the privileges of managing diplomatic relationships, commerce, and even the national budget were the French.⁵⁴⁾ The Hue Citadel Area, though not being a French colony, was for all practical purposes of a colonized area.

In a last attempt to improve the local economy, in 1899, the Hue Court built the Dong Ba Market right on the foot of the citadel to enable the local people to share the benefits from commerce at Hue with the Chinese, and French.⁵⁵⁾ However, somehow, the Chinese merchants were able to make themselves present among the native people in this market, and also the new lively commercial center – Truong Tien Street (now called Tran Hung Dao Street), located along the Huong River, where it appeared the Dong Ba Market.⁵⁶⁾

In short, under the influence of French power, Hue lost its role of being the capital of Vietnam by the end of the 19th century, long before the official collapse of the Nguyen Dynasty in 1945, and could not compare with Saigon in the south, Da Nang in the central part, or Hanoi and Hai Phong, Nam Dinh cities in the north, which the French regarded as central municipalities of Vietnam. In 1887, the French designated Saigon the capital not only of Vietnam but of all French Indochina, and Hue was henceforth ceased being the capital of Vietnam. In 1899, Hue (limited by an established border line) was labeled “*thị xã*” (a central urban of Thua Thien Province) by the consent of the native rulers and the French.⁵⁷⁾ However, it was not until 1945, when the Hue Citadel was integrated into the administrative unit of “Hue City”.⁵⁸⁾

Conclusion

The transition of the Hue Citadel Area in the 19th century was divided into two periods: 1802–1884, and 1884–1899. The first period was a time of formal development, including great royal structures, residences of royal members and high officials, handicraft and commercial centers. At this time, though the urban composite parts were not located concentrically, their organic contribution to forming an urban face of Hue could not be refused. The second period turned the Hue Citadel Area into a modernized area with the emergence of factories, hotels, schools, hospitals, etc., but under the control of the French. The urban composition of feudalism works

54) See Viện Sử học., op.cit., footnote 48., pp.629–631.

55) Nguyễn Đắc Xuân, *100 năm chợ Đông Ba* (A one hundred-year Dong Ba Market), Thuận Hóa Publishing House, 1999, p.17. Vi.

56) Trần Kinh Hòa., op.cit., footnote 6., p.118.

57) Dương Kinh Quốc, op.cit., footnote 48., p.256.

58) Nguyễn Quang Trung Tiến, *Biến đổi địa giới hành chính đô thị Huế trong hai thế kỷ XIX-XX* (The transition of administrative border line of the urban Hue during the 19th and 20th centuries), in a scientific seminar “Thay đổi của văn hóa truyền thống ở Thừa Thiên Huế tiếp cận nhân loại học và sử học từ trong và ngoài nước” (Hue in the process of change: observation of anthropologists and historians inside and outside). Vi.

was broken by the capitalism construction. This period also witnessed Hue losing its central political function and main economical invests to other developed cities.

In the first period, owing to the open policy of the Nguyen Dynasty toward the seafaring Chinese, the latter, in alliance with the former, hampered the economy of Hue for a long time.⁵⁹⁾ It is certainly true that the superficially prosperous face of Hue reflected the life of the upper classes, including the royal members, mandarins, and the Chinese merchants rather than that of the local people. In the second period, the French intended to invest in the infrastructure development of the Hue Citadel Area with the simple aim of serving the demands of the colonizer. For the French, Hue was merely a political center, rather than an administrative or economic center like Hanoi and Hai Phong, and Nam Dinh in the north, Saigon in the south, and Da Nang in the central region.

In the early stages of urbanization of the Hue Citadel Area, it is obviously recognized that the Huong River played a primary role in forming the urban space of Hue thanks to its functions in transportation as well as *feng-shui* landscape's formation. Basing on the Huong River and its branches, the Hue Citadel Area in the 19th century tended to urbanize toward the north-south axis rather than the east-west axis. Another reason, which led to the urban shape of Hue at this time, to some extent, is the narrow topography from the west to the east, which physically limits the extension of the Urban Hue.

On one hand, Hue would be unable to become the capital of Vietnam if it lacked a political base. On the other hand, to the author's opinion, Hue could not take the opportunity of being the capital to develop because the native rulers focused on economic monopoly, trade restrictions and conservative feudalistic ideas (for example, they focused on agriculture but trade or industry). During their reigns, the Nguyen Dynasty was not inclined to encourage the native people to engage in trade. They also refused any official diplomatic relation with the Europeans, hence, they wasted their opportunities to improve the domestic economy, technology, and education. It is partly explained for their weak power to the encroachment of the French Empire from the middle of the 19th century.

Aiming to developing a domestic industrial sector of Hue to serve their own demands, the colonizing French started cashing in on the local economy by building lime factory, wine factories, water supply factory, and power stations, etc., significantly from the early 20th century.⁶⁰⁾ Modernization of Hue City under the French colonization was peaked in the early 20th century, with the construction by the colonizers of a railroad to connect the north and the south, and industrial factories, schools, and hotels. The Nguyen Dynasty's loss of power was evident by the increasing influx of ordinary residents into the Hue Citadel from 1916.⁶¹⁾ Here the problem arises

59) See Trần Kinh Hòa., op.cit., footnote 6., p.96–110; also see Trương Thị Yến, “Nhà Nguyễn với các thương nhân người Hoa thế kỷ XIX, *Nghiên cứu* Journal, No 3, May-June, 1981, pp.59–65. Vi.

60) See Nguyễn Thị Đàm, Huỳnh Kim Thành., op.cit., footnote 49.

61) See Phan Thanh Hải, “Cư dân trong vùng di tích lịch sử, hiện trạng và những ảnh hưởng đối với cơ cấu dân cư và chính sách phát triển của Thừa Thiên Huế” (Residences in historical monuments – present conditions and effects on settlement structure and developing policy of Thừa Thiên Huế), in a scientific seminar “Thay đổi của văn hóa truyền thống ở Thừa Thiên Huế tiếp

that there has been much research on the French works in Hue, and in the whole Indochina generally have been conducted, but the contribution of the native rulers to the urbanization of Hue city has not been well documented. Thus, it remains for future research to clarify the differences in roles and competition between these two political powers for the transition and urbanization of Hue in the early 20th century – on the one side were the French imperialists, who desired to exploit the natural and labor resources of Indochina to strengthen their fortifications in the Far East, and also to indemnify their huge loss after the World War I; On the other were the native feudalists who attempted in vain to save their honor and political power. The author's future research will address these issues, based on analysis of old map, illustrated images, and historical materials. Additionally, the geographical conditions of Hue will be deeply analyzed.

cận nhân loại học và sử học từ trong và ngoài nước” (Hue in the process of change: observation of anthropologists and historians inside and outside), August, 2008. Vi.