

POSITION AND IDENTITY OF GEO-CULTURE OF PHỦ GIẦY

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Everybody knows the great historian, revolutionary - the pioneer of Vietnamese revolutionary history - Trần Huy Liệu, who was born in Phủ Giầy. Writing on his village, he said in simple manner:

"My hometown is in the delta of Nam Định province, with nothing special, only sandy field filled with corn, potatoes, cotton and beans that made ground never peaceful. It is similar to other villages with bamboo, billabong and empty shrines where the God of the soil has been worshipped." Many people have known, talked and visited it because it is the hometown of Goddess Liễu Hạnh, who was famous in Vietnamese mythology, and also has a temple where believers worship in its festival for 10 days annually.⁽¹⁾

This article is written by a junior of Trần Huy Liệu, who is not in the same village but was born in his same district in Nam Định province, and has visited his hometown several times, therefore, the author has inwards-looking and exotic looking at Phủ Giầy.

Phủ Giầy is really sandy field. There is a field where the grave of Goddess Liễu is located in Kim Thái commune, Vụ Bản district, hitherto known as sandy field. The elderly also says this area has four large mounds of sand dunes with their traces such as Nam Miếu mound which is now Bôn village with a long sand bank running

through Vân Tiến, Tây Miếu mound which is the banian tree area of Ba village, Đông Miếu mound which is now Vân Cát village, and Vân Cầu mound which is now in Vân Cát.⁽²⁾

Sandy soil here, in fact, was considered as a mixture of river sand and beach sand by the scientists. This means it was an estuary – coastal area. Sediment in this delta is the youngest in the North Delta, mainly sand - fine-grained silt.

Geographers and oceanographers in the world have demonstrated that, due to ocean currents, alluvium of river and sea has been "pushed" from the northeast to the southwest of North Delta triangle and then gradually deposited⁽³⁾.

Thus, the sea and its impact on the formation of Phủ Giầy - Vụ Bản in particular and Nam Định in general is obvious.

Phát Diệm Cathedral, built close the sea, after 101 years, was located in the mainland,

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(1) Institute of history (1991), *Hồi ký Trần Huy Liệu (Memoirs of Trần Huy Liệu)*, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, p.9.

(2) Our retrospective survey results, October, 1991.

(3) Phan Đình Tồn (1967), *Các dòng hải lưu trên đại dương (Currents in the Ocean)*, Saigon.

Lê Bá Thảo (1997), *Thiên nhiên Việt Nam (Vietnamese Nature)*, Science and Technology Publishing House, Hanoi, p.15.

away from the sea 12-15 km⁽⁴⁾.

Formerly, in the Tự Đức dynasty (1847 - 1883), Nguyễn Công Trứ and the poor broke fertile ground in coastal area, formed two districts of Kim Sơn (Ninh Bình) and Tiền Hải (Thái Bình). It is repeated that: Until the last reign of Lê – the early Nguyễn dynasty (before 1890) Thái Bình and Nam Định were still towns of Sơn Nam Hạ.⁽⁵⁾

In the old days, *Hồng Đức* dyke (1470 - 1497) has each section, from Nam Định to Ninh Bình, marking a coastal dyke in the 15th century; In the poems that were written in Non Nước - Ninh Bình, Nguyễn Trãi also found the sea gate (Đại An gate) very close.⁽⁶⁾

Going back in history, the end of the Lý dynasty and at the beginning of the Trần dynasty (the 13th – 14th centuries) the villages of Xuân Bảng, Xuân Hy... in Thiên Trường district (now in Xuân Thuỷ) were broken and developed fertile ground.⁽⁷⁾

Đại Việt sử lược (*Abridged Chronicles of Đại Việt*)⁽⁸⁾ noted that the King Lý went to the harvest in Nam region, only the royal step-over place Ứng Phong which is now in Vụ Bản, on the top of Nghĩa Hưng district.

According to *Việt điện u Linh tập* (*Collection of Stories on Spirits of the Departed in the Viet Realm*) compiled by Lý Tế Xuyên (1329), story Triệu Quang Phục in the reign of Lý Nam Đế (the 6th century), in case of "loss of water", he went down to the sea in Đại Nha.⁽⁹⁾ After that, the temples where he has been worshipped were built in the sea gate Đại Nha and the temple of worshipping Lý Phật Tử who is his antagonist / counterpart was built in the sea gate Tiểu Nha, on the opposite side.

Dr. Nguyễn Văn Huyền, in the 40th decade, has determined that it was *Độc Bộ*, the

intersection of Đáy River and Nam Định River. This is Đáy "primitive" estuary (at least from the 6th century to prior to the 14th century).⁽¹⁰⁾ The common people called *Độc Bộ*, where many temples of worshipping *Thần Nước* are located, "Tam toà Lục Bộ".

The estuaries of Đại Nha, Đại Ác and Đại An were recorded in the annals from the reign of Đinh - Lý (the 10th – 11th centuries). *Độc Bộ* is far from Phú Giầy 10 - 15 km, and is also a region of legends about the "Early Lý dynasty." The temple where

(4) Đinh Xuân Lâm (and other authors) (1960), *Lịch sử cận đại Việt Nam* (*The Modern History of Vietnam*), Vol.1, Education Publishing House, Hanoi.

Lưu Tỹ, Phạm Văn Cự, Lại Duy Anh and Nguyễn Thế Tiếp (1980), "Các đường bờ biển trong hệ thống Toàn Tân ở miền Bắc Việt Nam" (*The Coastlines of the Toàn Tân System in the Northern Vietnam*), *Archaeology Magazine* No. 1, pp.30 -37.

(5) Historical Research Department of Hà Nam Ninh (1988), *Lịch sử Hà Nam Ninh* (*History of Hà Nam Ninh*), Vol.1, pp.210-215.

Institute of History (translated) (1971), *Đại Nam nhất thống chí* (*Đại Nam Comprehensive Encyclopedia*) (part of Nam Định province), Vol.3, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, p.306.

Nguyễn Siêu (1960), *Phương Đình dư địa chí* (*Geography of Phương Đình*), translation, Freedom – Saigon, pp.225 -229.

The town Sơn Nam Hạ in the 3rd Minh Mạng (1882) changed into town Nam Định, Thái Bình was a Palace until it became a province, separated from Nam Định.

(6) Nguyễn Trãi (1969), *Completed Works*, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, pp.285-287.

(7) *Lịch sử xã Xuân Bảng* (*History of Xuân Bảng Commune*) - Nam Định, 1980 and our fieldwork in Xuân Hy, Xuân Bảng communes in April – May 1992.

(8) Trần Quốc Vượng (translated) (1960), *Đại Việt sử lược* (*Abridged Chronicles of Đại Việt*), History Publishing House, Vol.2, 3.

(9) Lý Tế Xuyên (1960), *Việt điện u linh tập* (*Collection of Stories on Spirits of the Departed in the Viet Realm*), Culture Publishing House, Hanoi (the translation of Lê Hữu Mục, Saigon in 1961).

(10) Nguyễn Văn Huyền (1994), *Le culte des Immortels en Annam* (*Tục thờ những vị thần bất tử ở An Nam*), Hanoi.

Lý Nam Đế (Lý Bôn/Bí)⁽¹¹⁾ has been worshipped is next to Phủ Chính (Tiên Hương) and Phủ Vân (Vân Cát).

By the way of mentioning the ancient Đáy estuary that is close to Phủ Giầy, it is advised to say that, according to our fieldwork documents and folk legends, "under the earth (or in the village of Minh Giám), there was the King Ba Vành" (1826), between the village of Minh Giám (Thái Bình) and the village of Trà Lũ (Nam Định) of the same military base Ba Vành, separated only by a "rope bridge" spanning a rivulet, *buộc ba nước lạt* (folk etymology of the name of Ba Lạt estuary). The Red River estuary is now expanded to this region; therefore, two villages are far from each other up to 10 km!

Everyone knows that, in the chaos titled "the twelve warlords" in the middle of the 10th century (944-968), the warlord of Trần Lâm was garrisoned in the sea gate Bồ, where then became Kỳ Bồ commune with Bo River, Bo Bridge and Bo guava that have been famous in Vũ Tiên - Thái Bình⁽¹²⁾.

The notes of Vietnam chronicles are very consistent with the research results of the modern oceanographers in the world: in the 10th century, the world's ocean water level was 0.50 meters higher than the current sea level.⁽¹³⁾

As mentioned above, along with the sea, the river was the decisive factor for accretion and formation of the giant "detrital cones" - delta triangle. Phủ Giầy and a larger region including Ý Yên, Vụ Bản and Nghĩa Hưng are accreted by alluvium of two major rivers: the Red River and the Đáy River (parallel system) along with the tributaries (tree system) of Nam

Định River and Ninh Cơ River...⁽¹⁴⁾.

Moreover, the flows also have impact on and are organic component associated with the ecological – humane system. Until now, the river is still a standard for reference to "the inner field - outer field", "the inner village – outer village", and the places are always associated with Upper - Middle - Lower of a flow nearby.

And, perhaps from the very beginning, the people have followed and relied on the rivers to live. Gradually, they selected favourable positions to settle.

Recently, the modern geo-archaeology found that Thăng Long - Đông Đô - Hanoi was located in a large water quadrangle. However, so long ago, the common people said exactly:

“Nhị Hà is located from the North to the East

⁽¹¹⁾ The legend of Kê Giầy has it that: Lương troops garrisoned from Sắt Bridge and Hộ Bridge (Bình Lục) to Đồng Cao (near Độc Bộ). In that New Year's (?) they garrisoned for celebrating the New Year. Lý Bôn encamped at *Đức Vua* Temple (Lý Nam Đế) now of Tiên Hương Kê Giầy and fought against Lương troops on the Lunar New Year. Lương troops retreated and ran on the second day of New Year. Since then Kê Giầy has practiced "torchlight procession to the Đức Vua temple" on the second day of New Year. The old and the young, the boys as well as the girls each carry a torch to the temple to "take luck and fortune".

⁽¹²⁾ Trần Quốc Vượng (translated) (1960), *Ibid.*, Vol.1, pp.45-47.

Ngô Sĩ Liên, *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư (Complete Annals of Đại Việt)*, translated by Institute of History, Vol.1, pp.160, 328, 329, 523.

⁽¹³⁾ Fairbridge R.W, *Dating the Last Movements of Quaternary Sea Level*, Trans. New York, Acad. Scien. Vol.20, 1958, p.471. *The Level of the Sea World and Change for Climate*, London, 1962. Chart I - marine transgression Flandrian.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Nguyễn Văn An and Nguyễn Cao Phương (1982), *Sông ngòi Việt Nam (Rivers of Vietnam)*, Vol.1, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, p.63.

Kim Ngưu Tô Lịch is a river on this side”
or:

“Nhị Thủy River is ahead, and Hoàn Kiếm Lake is behind”.

With such thought, it is easy to recognize that the ancient capital of Hoa Lư is located in a water quadrangle combined by the Đáy River (front) and Hoàng Long River (behind). Phú Xuân - Huế also has Hương Giang River which is ahead and Bạch Yến River which is behind.

Kẻ Giầy - Phủ Giầy is also located in a quadrangle of water:

If Phủ Giầy (or expanding to both villages and communes such as Tiên Hương village - Vân Cát village, and Kim Thái commune in Vụ Bản now) is taken as the reference system, Phủ Vân (Vân Cát) and Phủ Tiên Hương are westward. There is the Sắt River or called Mỹ Dương River (the Sắt River has been just set again at that section, running close to Mỹ Dương) in the West behind a mountain range (discussed below). It is the “ahead” (West) river of Phủ Giầy. All daily activities (wet rice cultivation) and spiritual life (worshipping the Goddess Liễu Hạnh) of the people of Tiên Hương - Vân Cát, Kẻ Giầy are “towards” the river. The elders, the whole village, and Phủ Giầy region thoroughly know this river: It is only a small river (but it is passable for boats), originating from “Quế Quyền” that is now a tributary of the *Châu Giang* River separated from the confluence of An Bài, Vĩnh Trụ (Lý Nhân) (Actually, this is the famous *Thiên Mạc* River in the reign of Trần with resistance and brave sacrifices of the general Trần Bình Trọng (1285) – who originated from

Lê family of Lê Hoàn, in Liêm Cầu, Thanh Liêm⁽¹⁵⁾, running through the *Sắt* bridge, *Họ* bridge (Bình Lục), to the western of *Phủ Giầy*, down the southwest, across the Tào bridge (Trịnh Xá, Ý Yên) and then “Vĩnh” estuary - almost in the middle of Non Nước (Ninh Bình) (West) và Độc Bộ (East) on the same latitude - and then flowing back into the Đáy River. “Vĩnh” estuary is now in the village of Vĩnh Trị, Yên Trị commune.

Thus, it is possible to say this river is a défluent of the Red River, or it is an affluent of the Đáy River.

This river, in the middle of the Ngã mountain and the Tiên Hương mountain, is branched off (the theory of “tree system” of geography) that is called *Ngã* or *Tiên Hương* or *Cánh Gà* river by the common people of Phủ Giầy. In the folk consciousness of Phủ Giầy, this river is “sanctified” into *Bạch Xà Vương*. The junction of Sắt - Ngã/ Tiên Hương is called Cánh Gà junction, and now called Cánh Gà sewer because a sewer is newly built. In the old days, when “the Mother festival is on the March” - Phủ Giầy festival worshipping the goddess Liễu Hạnh - hundreds of boats, from the *Họ* Bridge (Northwest), from the Tam toà Lục bộ of the Đáy River (southwest), and from Nam Định - Vị Hoàng (East), closely gathered at the junction of Cánh Gà below the temple door of the Mother Thượng Ngàn on the mountain of Tiên Hương.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Summary record of the scientific conference on the Trần dynasty and the cause of founding and defending the country of Hà Nam Ninh people, 1985.

- From the Hộ bridge and Tam Toà, the way is to follow the Sắt River; which waterway is followed from Nam Định - Vị Hoàng?

The Ngã/ Tiên Hương river from the junction of Cánh Gà "runs" in U shape back to Kẻ Giầy, from the Northwest - North - Northeast to the Southeast, across the *Đất* bridge, the *Châu Bạc* bridge, *Bát Di* bridge and *Giành* bridge to the river of Vị Hoàng - Nam Định, being a behind (East) river of Kẻ Giầy.

- Also the Sắt River, when it flows down from the West of Ngã mountain to the West of Báng Mountain (Kim Báng - now in Kim Thái commune Tiên Hương - Vân Cát, Phú Giầy), is branched off in the middle of the Báng mountain and the Lê mountain to surround the Kẻ Giầy in the Southwest and then runs through the Eastern of the Gôi mountain, the Western of Hồ mountain and pours into the Đào - Vị Hoàng River near Nghĩa Hưng district. This river was shallow, but there is still Lê (Lê Xá) lagoon which is long and wide in the southwest of Kim Thái field (Lê Xá - Xuân Báng).

"The water quadrangle of Phú Giầy" mentioned above shall be more obvious on the map with large scale of 1: 25.000.

In the old days, waterway was the main means of transport of Vietnam in general, Kẻ Giầy in particular. According to the flow, boats can gather and go freely everywhere. Explaining the identity of geo-culture of Kẻ Giầy cannot but mention the nature of fishing in the rivers in the old days.

WATER with large sediment discharge (fine-grained sand) contributed to form Kẻ Giầy, an area of wet rice agriculture - farm produce on the sandy field.

Water is also a top concern of the Vietnamese farmers: "first water, second fertilizer." In addition to adaptation to the weather - climate - temperature - humidity - monsoon ("Thank to favourable weather conditions, deep plowing and careful harrowing is well done"), the farmers have to make irrigation, although they know: "a bucket of water bailed cannot be comparable to a rain-water droplet." However, the weather is unfavourable and has months and years of drought. Apart from river water, it was a must to dig the pond - puddle, creating a specific "culture of pond - puddle" in the Northern Delta.

In fact, the whole area from Phú Giầy - Vụ Bản, Trục Ninh - Nam Trục (Nam Ninh), Keo Hành Thiện Pagoda (Xuân Trường) across the Nhị River to Keo Vũ Nghĩa Pagoda (Vũ Thư), Kiến Xương - Thụy Anh (Kiến Thụy) in Thái Bình is a legend of footprints of Khổng Lồ - Không Lộ - Minh Không (the people of Phú Giầy also called Khổng Minh Không), and Tiên Hương communal house - Phú Giầy is a place where the "cultural hero", "enlightened hero" or "the Buddhist priest" has been worshipped ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Our fieldwork results in this area from the 80th decade to April 1992 have established a hypothesis to be considered solid: Just as the "Gióng horse's footprints" in the midland bordering on the delta of Bắc and Đoài region. (Châu Cầu - Phả Lại, Phù Đổng -

⁽¹⁶⁾ Nguyễn Quang Vinh (1971), "The Image of Cultural Creativity Hero in the Folk Legend Không Lộ", *Vietnam Literature Review*, No.6.

Nguyễn Siêu (1960), *Phương Đình dư địa chí* (*Geography of Phương Đình*), the translation of Ngô Mạnh Nghinh, Freedom Publishing House, Saigon, pp.225 - 226.

Sóc Sơn...), the footprints of Không Lộ - Không Lộ - Minh Không in the traditional region of Sơn Nam Hạ are the irrigation systems, ponds - puddles "supporting the rain", "supporting the weather", waiting for rain or confronting the drought of the people who cultivate wet rice. Many ponds and puddles are now leveled (due to "modern" irrigation and agricultural works) or water-taro is planted on the immense rice fields⁽¹⁷⁾.

As mentioned above, we said Kê Giầy and Côi (Gôi) mountain - the Vĩ River" were only reclaimed and developed between the end of the Lý dynasty and the beginning of the Trần dynasty (the 13th – 14th centuries), because in the South (Độc Bộ) it was the sea gate of Đại Ác - Đại An of the Đáy River and also in the 10th century the Red River estuary was located the bridge of Bo - Kỳ Bó (Bố estuary).

"Giao Thủy" hereby shall be mentioned in detail from Nam Định to Thái Bình.

Giao Thủy means a water-bordering region. As regard to settlement, when the Việt people who came to low-lying coastal regions - such as Kê Giầy Vụ Bản - established the village which was always influenced by the rivers.

In addition to coastal villages of fishermen such as the ancestors Không Lộ - Minh Không as well as the Trần dynasty (thousands of fishermen of this region are now in Giầm Giải (Bình Lục) and Vĩnh estuary (Vĩnh Trị), there is also water-bordering village (Giao Thủy) along the river banks. It is the intersection between upstream tide and downstream river- water. The tide pushes the water into the canals - rivulets (such as the rivulet flows on the left - South - Phủ

Tiên Hương to Công Đồng communal house in the West of Phủ Chính and then to the Northwest and the Ngâm River close to Đất bridge), meeting the flow of rivers (Đáy, Sắt, Vĩ Hoàng, Nhị Hà...) to pour into the sea. Upon meeting, despite "spilled water" - shallow water - or "low tide" - high water, the water will not flow anymore. Sediment in these areas is called "donkey back" by the people in the South. While according to the elders of Phủ Giầy, the legend has it that this region has four "sand mounds" about 400-500 years ago. Boats which trade and fish often stay here to wait for the tide. For this reason, the villages were established. Also, Kê Giầy region, Côi mountain, Vĩ River, as well as Hoa Lư - Non Nước (Ninh Bình), Tức Mặc (suburb of Nam Định city), Lạc Quần (in the Linh Cơ River, bordering Nam Ninh Xuân Thủy), or Cầu Bo (Thái Bình town) etc. were established accordingly. If anywhere is a water-bordering place, it would be town, market (such as Viềng - Phủ Giầy market - Dân market - Vụ Bản district, Gôi town...) and at the same time or later would be the center of culture - religion - society⁽¹⁸⁾.

If talking about the position and identity of geo-culture of Phủ Giầy area, it cannot but mention another important thing.

It is MOUNTAIN.

In addition to river, water, sandy field

⁽¹⁷⁾ Historical Research Department of Hà Nam Ninh (1988), *Ibid.*, pp.98 - 99.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Nguyễn Phương Thảo(1991), "Làng Việt Nam Bộ và văn hoá dân gian của người Việt trên đồng bằng sông Cửu Long" (Vietnamese Village in the Southern and Folk Culture of the Việt People in the Mekong Delta), *Journal of Southeast Asian Research*, No. 2 (3), p.20.

and sea... between an extensive delta (located in "low-lying land" of Hà Nam Ninh, between the Red River, Đáy River, Châu Giang - Phủ Lý River and Nam Định River), there have emerged a series of mountains (such as mountain of Ngâm, Tiên Hương, Báng, Lê, Gôi and Hồ) stretching from the Northwest to the Southeast.

Geologists - geographers think that the schist - sandstone mountains as well as Đới Sơn, Diệp Sơn in Duy Tiên area appeared about 70 million years ago due to impact of orogenetic movement, that has made the waterfall in the South of Red River raise⁽¹⁹⁾. At the same time the sea gradually retreated and gave way to the formation of delta. At the foot of these mountains, there were also fossilized traces of shellfish - mussels.

With the speed of silt accretion at present (80-100m per year), the scientists predicted that the Nẹ mountain which is currently derelict on the high sea of Kim Sơn district (Ninh Bình) and Nga Sơn (Thanh Hoá) shall also be "on the mainland" like mountain ranges in Phủ Giầy⁽²⁰⁾.

The land here is not only entirely aggraded directly but also indirectly by sediment of the sea and coastal sediment. The world of geography called such sediment the delta at the edge.

In short, after "looking at" the seas, rivers, mountains and sandy soil of Phủ Giầy and looking back on it as a system, we have a general idea about it as follows:

+ This is a part of the low-lying plain and remaining mountains and hills⁽²¹⁾ from Duy Tiên - Thanh Liêm - Bình Lục to Vụ Bản - Ý Yên of the low-lying land of Hà - Nam - Ninh, which is artificial and natural,

surrounded by the river dike. Phủ Giầy is a smaller water quadrangle in a larger quadrangle including Châu Giang, Hồng Hà, Vị Hoàng and Đáy River.

In the "age of Goddess Liễu" (the 16th – 17th centuries) and until recently, it was a typical flooded rice area; only in the "age of Hồ Chí Minh", this delta was "improved" by a large-scale pumping station system, a

⁽¹⁹⁾ Historical Research Department of Hà Nam Ninh (1988), *Ibid.*, p.25.

Lê Bá Thảo (1977), *Ibid.*, pp.114, 115.

⁽²⁰⁾ Trần Viết Đức (born in Tân Mũi 1913, the person who looked after the Phủ Tiên Hương the Goddess Liễu Hạnh) composed a poem titled *Dựng bức hoạ đồ* to describe the landscape of Phủ Giầy. Please see the following:

Determining to create a map

Giving all love for the hometown

Following and searching the trace of ancestors

Mountain side or mountain peak

There is Tiên mountain (Tiên Hương mountain T. H. K)

Sound on the mountain echoes every night

Sisters of Ngọc became absorbed (three beautiful person – T.H.K)

Playing with the moon and dancing and singing under the moon

Does the Moon delegate the Phoebe

To create the great moon- shaped land..

(Kim Thái commune is semicircular shape, which is a coastal strip of dunes)

From the north to the south of Phủ Giầy, there are:

Ngâm mountain, Cánh Gà mountain and then

Nàng Tiên mountain with Đa Đôi

Cao Pagoda and Báng mountain have

Bells echoed across the distant region

To call Lê Xá and Côi mountain

Hồ mountain is august

Rivers are immense in all sides ("water quadrilateral" – T.H. K)

Waves whispered soft and low causing the hearts to be stirring

River created combat trenches

Mountains formed majestic long wall..

⁽²¹⁾ Vũ Tự Lập (and other authors) (1991), *Văn hoá và cư dân đồng bằng sông Hồng (Culture and Residents of the Red River Delta)*, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, pp.11, 13, 20.

small – medium agricultural works system that made the paddy field of Phú Giày and the whole surrounding area have two crops, and made the goddess Liễu be somewhat surprised when she manifested and visited her homeland where she "descended on earth" and lived there for 21 years under the reign of Mạc which was much more "liberal" and "busier" than under the Lê dynasty.

However, as Hà Nam Ninh, its geographical - cultural landscape is "old and young". Structure of shallow sea and coastal river (QVI 1-2) still exists in many places. In addition, there is also sediment of "delta swamp" (type of Lê swamp) (Q.IV - V.3), especially near the river of Đào - Nam Định - Vị Hoàng, sea-breeze sediments (Q. IV - V 3) of the coastal sand dunes, marking the coastline (Q. IV - V 3) in the beginning of Christian era to 1000 years ago (Độc Bộ). There are many remaining mountains and hills and mainly schist - sandstone hills (P2T1) or rocky hills (PR). The soil structure is mainly boggy soil - gley alluvium and feralit soil on bedrock (J-Pg-F). The land was used for farming for 1 - 2 crops, rice cultivation, farm produce or cotton growing... Perennial fruit trees have been planted in fertile hills, and hills bad – and forests (eucalyptus, pine, casuarina) are being replanted in poor hills. Climate is something like the winter because it is near the sea without too cold months or/and too droughty months⁽²²⁾.

There is only limit to the position and identity of "traditional" geo-culture in the countryside of the Goddess from the view of geo-archeology or / and geo-history, as a result, we came to the following conclusion:

1. From the late Neolithic period (4000 years ago) the humans appeared here. Evidences include smooth shoulder and quadrilateral stone axes found in Tiên Hưng - Vụ Bản, on the edge of Lê Mountain, and Ngãm mountain.

However, the owners, who made these axes, were coastal fisherman rather than the farmers.

2. In the Gôi mountain, at the end of the French colonial period and recently, in the Ngãm mountain and Hội Đồng communal house, more than 06 Đông Sơn bronze drums have been found.

New found drums had disappeared. The bronze drum experts ranked drums of Gôi I mountain in Đông Sơn drums (Heger Type I) group B (sub group - two) along the drums of Duy Tiên, Ngọc Lũ II, Ngọc Lũ III in the low-lying land in Hà Nam Ninh⁽²³⁾; being later than group A but earlier than group C, with date over 2000 years ago.

At that time, Kê Giày and the whole surrounding region (Ninh Bình - Nam Định) were coastal region and the ancient Việt Đông Sơn people settled in the hills – at the foot of mountains near the sea.

3. The people also lived in this region under the period of domination by northern invaders for thousands of years. Material evidences include ancient “Hán” graves scattered on the mountain side and sand dunes. Spirit evidences are legends and temple of worshipping Lý Nam Đế - Triệu

⁽²²⁾ Vũ Tự Lập, *Ibid.*, p.33.

⁽²³⁾ Many authors (1990), *Trống đồng Đông Sơn ở Việt Nam (Đông Sơn Drums in Vietnam)*, Vietnam Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, pp.80 - 81.

Quang Phục against the Chinese domination in the sixth century.

4. The region continued to be reclaimed in the reign of Lý - Trần. Evidences are temples of worshipping Minh Không - Không Lộ, the Keo Pagoda - under the footsteps of Không Lộ - irrigation system of pond and puddle in the middle of the field.

5. Before the Goddess Liễu for three generations, the Mẫu family of Trần origin came to Kẻ Giầy - Côi Sơn to avoid chaos (?) and then changed into Lê family (but the Lê family still gave Trần Lê family officially. Almost the people of Tiên Hương - Vân Cát have Trần Lê family). This family and other families continued reclaiming and developing the region into a prosperous one.

If indeed the Goddess Liễu "descended on earth" in Đinh Tỵ 1557 as written by researchers (the date of Thiên Hựu under the Lê Anh Tông dynasty – Southern dynasty Thanh Hoá) or the date of Quang Bảo under the Mạc Tuyên Tông Phúc Nguyên dynasty - Northern dynasty Thăng Long, the family of the Goddess Liễu went to Kẻ Giầy in the latter half of the 15th century, under the Lê Hồng Đức dynasty. At that time, with the Hồng Đức dike in Hà Nam Ninh, coastal reclamation was developed strongly. Village culture, rural civilization and animist, polytheism and Buddhism have been developed.

6. According to orthodox chronicles (Synopsis), before the goddess Liễu "descended on earth" for a quarter of a century, in 1533, the Catholic priests of the Jésuites brought triptych of Maria Madonna and Jesus Christ to carry on missionary work in Quần Anh, Ninh Cường (Hải Hậu), Trà Lũ,

Hoành Nha (Giao Thủy) in Nam Hà. The image of Madonna (or Queen) Maria has opposition and combination with tradition of revering mother and respecting father), worship of the Goddess from the heaven to the earth, from Thượng Ngàn to the rivers and seas,... and under the reign of Lê Hồng Đức (and earlier), there were many Chăm colonats with the sacred image of Yang Po Neqara; as well as the image of goddess of mercy (Bodhisattva Kwan Yin of the Vietnamese folk) - especially the statue of Nam Hải Buddha that was carved in the reign of Mạc - have effect on the formation of supremely sacred mother (parallel sentence in Phủ Giầy and Phủ Tây Hồ), the only and final Goddess of the system of 'Four immortals' of the Vietnamese folk – the Goddess Liễu Hạnh? That is the subject of other essays. It is said that the “Giao Thủy” Hà Nam Ninh is the earliest home of Maria Madonna in the spiritual life of Vietnamese populations; that the majority of Vietnamese Catholic Church is "Notre Dame", to the extent that researcher believed that: if there was no Maria Madonna, it is difficult for the Catholicism to be integrated into the relatively densely populated part of Vietnam broadly and deeply as we know it.

Not only the Catholicism and Maria Madonna have penetrated to Hà Nam Ninh sea in the sixteenth century, at that time and even a few centuries later, some foreign merchant ships such as China, Netherlands and France often came in the winter and left in summer, and exchanged goods in the Sơn Nam area. Anyone remembers that *Phố Hiến (thứ nhất Kinh Kỳ, thứ nhì Phố Hiến)* – The most flourishing city is the Capital,

then comes Phố Hiến) is Hiến headquarters of the Sơn Nam town under the reign of Lê - Trịnh". "Siêu God" in *Phương Đình Diệt địa chí (Geography of Phương Đình)* noted that "Cửa Liêu is on the territory of two Communes of Quần Liêu and Hải Lăng in Đại An District (Nghĩa Hưng now) is a major coastal place of Bắc Kỳ... After the Lê Trung Hưng dynasty, merchant ships of the Chinese must be examined and then entered. It was only slightly less than Phố Hiến in Kim Động district.

As mentioned above, Phủ Giầy is far from Cửa Liêu 10 -15 km. Not suddenly, the archaeologists of the University of Hanoi picked up countless pieces of beautiful porcelain of the Nguyên - Minh - Thanh of China in Thượng Miêu village pagoda (Xuân Thượng commune, Xuân Thủy). This pagoda's stele recorded the restoration, the 13th Chính Hòa date (1692) and the village communal house noted that "Hồng Đức Nhâm Dần (1482) found progenitor".

Nor was it a coincidence that when the professor - musician Trần Văn Khê performed *Chầu văn* singing (worship singing at the Goddess Palace) in Seoul in 1990, the musical circles of Korea and Japan was "flabbergasted" because they found their traditional music. Also, with one night of *Chầu văn* singing in Phủ Tiên Hương - Kẻ Giầy (11/10/1991), the musicologist, Dr. Nguyễn Thụy Loan "recognized" the melody of Hồ - Quảng (southern China) in "Xá" breath of this melody! Nevertheless, it is within the scope of musical circles and we are only "laymen", just "learn something at second hand"!

7. What we consider as "findings" (small

only) is, as well as many other parts of the structure of wet rice cultivation civilization of Vietnam, in Kẻ Giầy, in addition to worship of the Goddess Liễu in Phủ Tiên Hương and Phủ Vân, the goddess Thượng Ngàn on Tiên Hương mountain and a system of temples and shrines worshipping the goddesses *Tôn ông, châu Bà*, great mandarin... of three palaces or four palaces of Vietnam, there is a system of worshipping Cloud, Rain, Thunder and Wind gods of the people who cultivate wet rice from the "primitive" period:

- The Cloud god in Vân Cát, Vân Đình, Vân Thôn, Vân Miêu.

- Wind god in Đồng Cao (the people of Kẻ Giầy, in addition to wet rice cultivation, grow cotton and are afraid of wind breaking cotton). Đồng Cao has two large round stones coming from another place. The common people believe that praying for wind is okay.

- The Rain god in Bảo Ngũ Chợ Dền.

- The Thunder god in Công Đồng Tiên Hương communal house (with votive tablet).

8. Also, it is repeated that the Phủ Giầy has worshipped "Saint Khổng Minh Không", not as the Keo Pagoda, Keo below - that means he has been worshiped in PAGODA as a Buddhist priest, in the manner of pre-Buddhist, post-Saint" - but here he has been worshipped in COMMUNAL HOUSE, as a tutelary god of village, village god, "Communal house of Khổng", as called by the people of Kẻ Giầy, being slightly slanted toward Phủ Tiên Hương in the west, and the Communal house is on the east in opposition to the Phủ Mẫu. The reason why is it so and what it means, shall be discussed in another study.

