

Chapter 1

Introduction

This research examines the preference of the people in aesthetic response to the environment in front of the Hue Citadel in Vietnam. Introductions of Hue citadel and summarization of research process are described in this chapter as the following parts:

- Overview of the Hue Citadel
- Statements of interest of the Hue Citadel
- Purpose of the research and the research topics
- Scope of the research
- Organization of the thesis

1.1 Overview of the Hue Citadel

Hue is the capital city of Thua Thien Hue province where is located in the central area of Vietnam. Hue has not only beautiful landscape with the sceneries of Ngu Mountain and Huong River¹, but also famous of the monuments in the city (Figure 1.1). Historically, in 1802, after many wars, Nguyen Phuc Anh (the first King of Nguyen Dynasty) established his control over the whole of Vietnam, and settled

¹ Ngu Mountain is the short name of a famous mountain in Hue city, in wich the full name of this mountain is Ngu Binh Mountain; and Huong River is the name of the river which is located in the centre of the city. These are also two important factors form the Feng Shui principle for the Hue citadel.

Hue to be the capital. Along Nguyen Dynasty, the citadel and many monuments were built and remain until nowadays (Nguyen, 2010).

During many wars in Vietnam, almost of monuments of other Dynasties were destroyed. Fortunately, Hue is the only capital city of the Vietnamese monarchy that remains today (Phan, 2009), including many monuments such as wall, palaces, royal tombs, and moat.

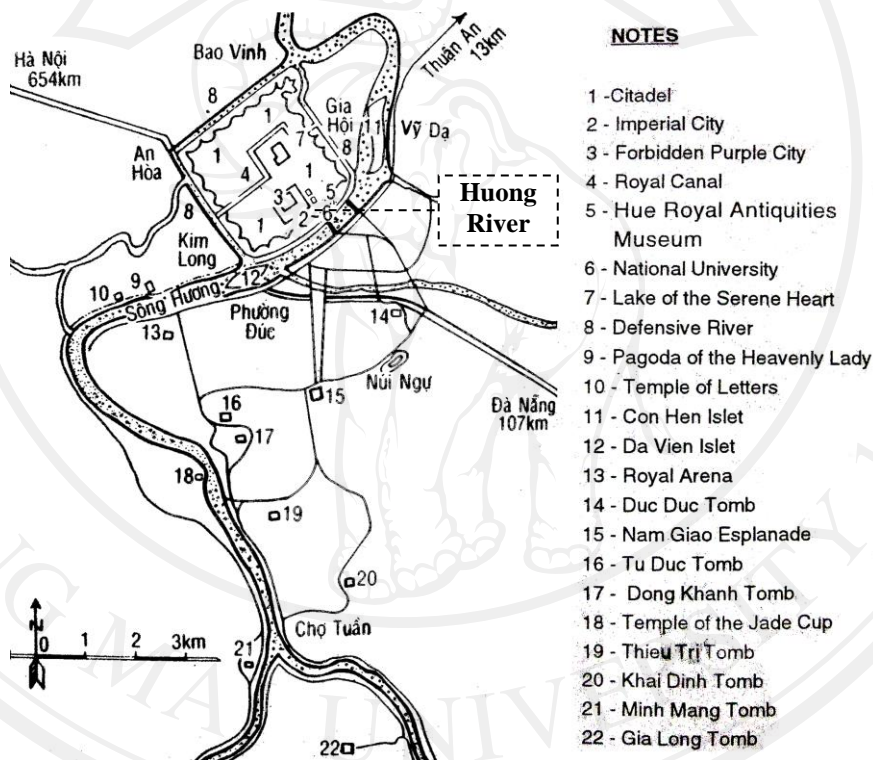


Figure 1.1 Complex of monuments of Hue (Source: Phan, 2009)

1.2 Statements of Interest of the Research

Interest of the Hue Citadel

Nowadays, Hue is one of the main tourism destinations in Vietnam. Millions of tourists per year visit Hue, especially in Hue citadel. The complex of monuments of

Hue citadel is considered to be the World Cultural Heritage, which is acknowledged by UNESCO. Hue citadel is the most famous destination place (Figure 1.2). This historical place and important preservation is not only plenty of heritage buildings inside but also is located in centre of city.

Normally, visitors enter to the citadel at a main entrance² in front of Hue citadel. Here, the environment faces to many problems of physical characteristics which can be perceived and evaluated by visitors.

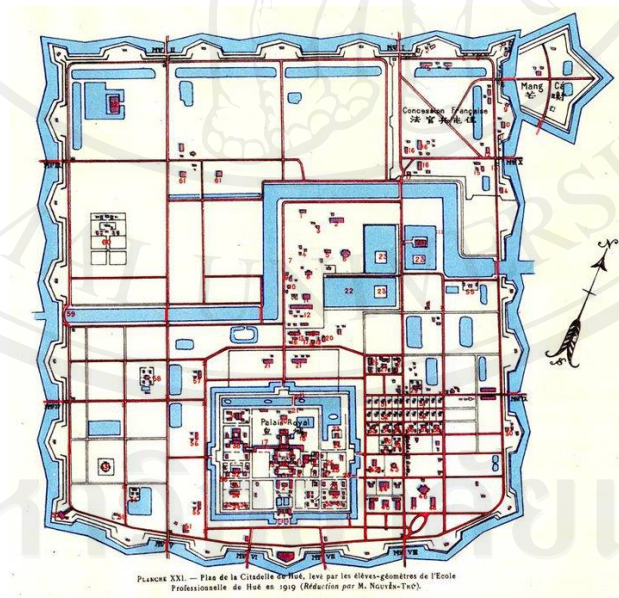
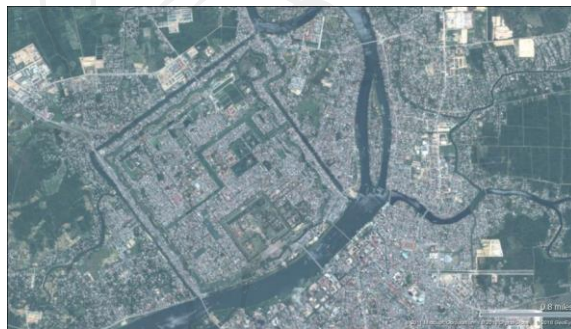


Figure 1.2 The Hue Citadel (Source: <http://www.map.google.com>)

² The main entrance is mentioned above is the Cua Ngan Gate, one of ten gates of the Citadel. This way is controlled as one-way road for coming inside the citadel.

Visitors come to visit the Citadel have to start from the tourism parking-lot in front of the Hue Citadel, then walk along a road to main entrance of the Citadel (Figure 1.3). Across that gate, visitors are going inside the citadel and start the trip. Along the route from parking-lot to the citadel, there are many shophouses on the right hand side which express as a feature attribute of the environment in this area (Figure 1.4).

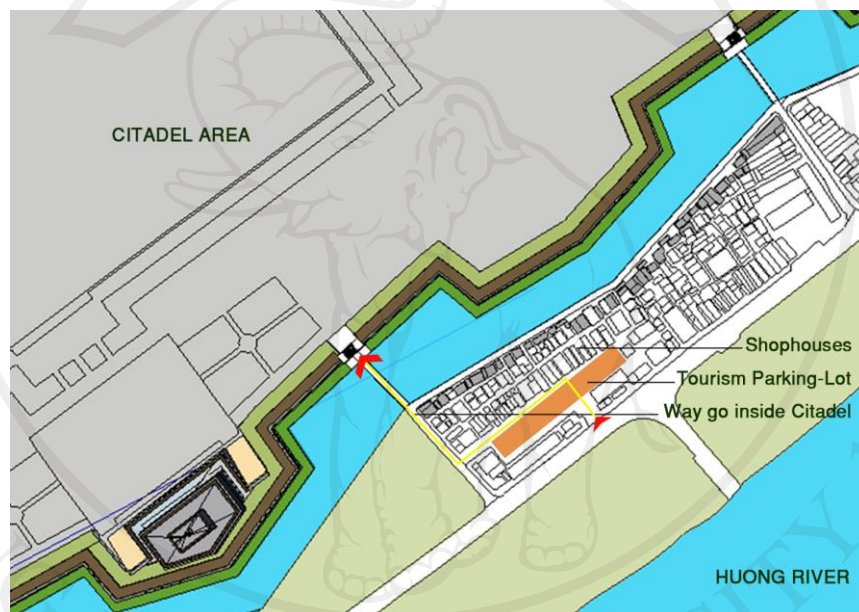


Figure 1.3 Main entrance of the Hue Citadel



Figure 1.4 Shophouses and other environmental characteristics on the way to the Hue Citadel

Environment in front of the Hue Citadel and Significant of the Research

The observation with environment on the tourist route to the Hue Citadel realizes the general problems of many environmental feature attributes in this area (Figure 1.5 to Figure 1.10). Those are the environmental characteristics' issues, such as an unsystematic of building height, skyline, and width of shophouses, problems of side-walk using, advertising sign, vehicle parking, electric line, and lack of vegetation (green tree).

In this area, almost of shophouses are formed spontaneously, so the appearance of shophouses depends on the owner. The varieties of owners' need cause lack of identities because of disordered and unsystematic shophouses. The difference of the height and the width among each of shophouses and uneven skyline cause the disordered impression to the observer is considered the problem of aesthetics. Shophouses also occur without the unification of the form with many kinds and sizes of advertising sign. In addition, some parts of the sidewalk are use for business or parking, so the façade of shophouses cannot be appearance clearly.

Vegetation is one important element of landscape in term of aesthetics. "Architecture can be softened and blended with the site's plants and land forms and can act as a background. They can enhance a space or act merely as sculptural form" (Schutt, et al., 1978, p8). According to the issue of aesthetics, the green trees are quite rare in the parking-lot. Electric line also can affect aesthetics by degrading the surrounding environment (e.g., intruding on the view of a landscape)³. Thus those problems affect the built environment in term of aesthetics under the visual perception of the observer as the responder.

³ Referring to information from the website as:
<http://psc.wi.gov/thelibrary/publications/electric/electric10.pdf>

Vegetation can solve the problems of attributes. Indeed, the role of vegetation in landscape is claimed in many studies (Rogge et al., 2007; Wolf, 2004; Herzog et al., 2000; Coeterier, 1996; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1983; Purcell and Lamb, 1984). According to Ulrich (1986), liking for urban scenes is usually increased when trees and other vegetation are presented. Views of nature, compared to most urban scenes lacking natural elements such as trees, appear to have more positive influences on emotional and physiological states. The benefits of visual encounters with vegetation may be greatest for individuals experiencing stress or anxiety. His research demonstrates that responses to trees and other vegetation can be linked directly to health, and in turn related to economic benefits of visual quality (Ulrich, 1986).

Behavioral responses of people to the built environment are the result of specific person-environment relationships. While people select elements in the built environment from which to build a mental image, they often have attitudes towards and preferences for those elements (Suthasupa, 1994).

Visual perception is an ability to interpret the surrounding from visual effect. The study of perception in the environmental aesthetic in front of Hue citadel can evaluate by preference. Environmental perception refers to the subjective ways in which groups and individuals perceive and evaluate their environment. As a subfield of cultural and behavioral geography, environmental perception is not limited to the natural environment; rather, it includes factors such as built structures, customs, values, and other individuals or groups. Studies of environmental perception highlight the discrepancies between individual and group choices based on their perceived environment and their actual environment. To clarify the environmental problems should have a perception of environmental feature attributes in term of aesthetics.

Therefore, study of preferences in the aesthetics of the environment in front of the Hue Citadel is necessary to conduct for increasing general knowledge about urban design and planning, as well as providing an understanding of how people perceive and would prefer this area.



Figure 1.5 View from the main gate of the Parking-lot



Figure 1.6 View from a point inside the Parking-lot



Figure 1.7 View from a point inside the Parking-lot: The way to the secondary gate of Parking-lot



Figure 1.8 View from a point near secondary gate of Parking-lot: Shophouses on the way to the Citadel

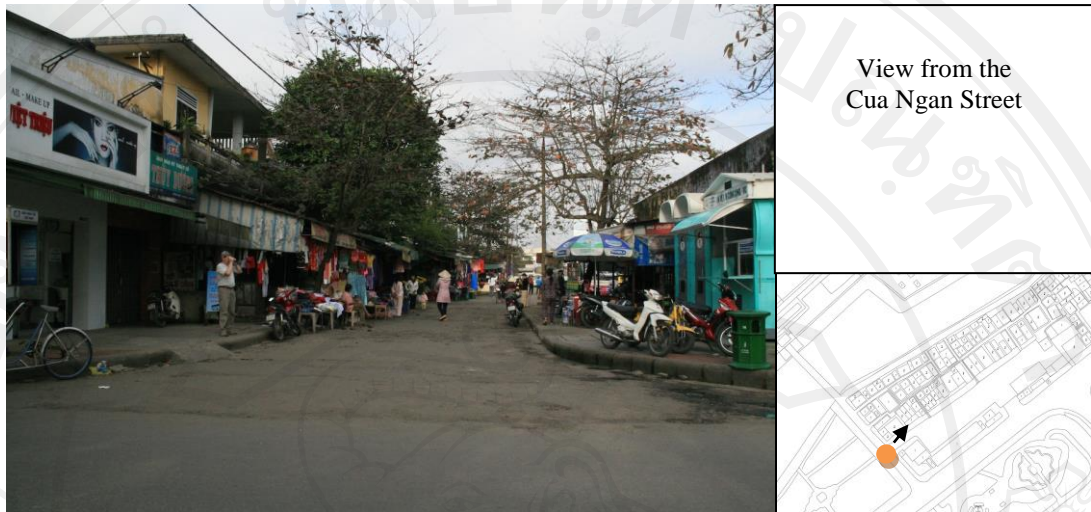


Figure 1.9 View from a point at the corner of the way from Parking-lot and Cua Ngan Street

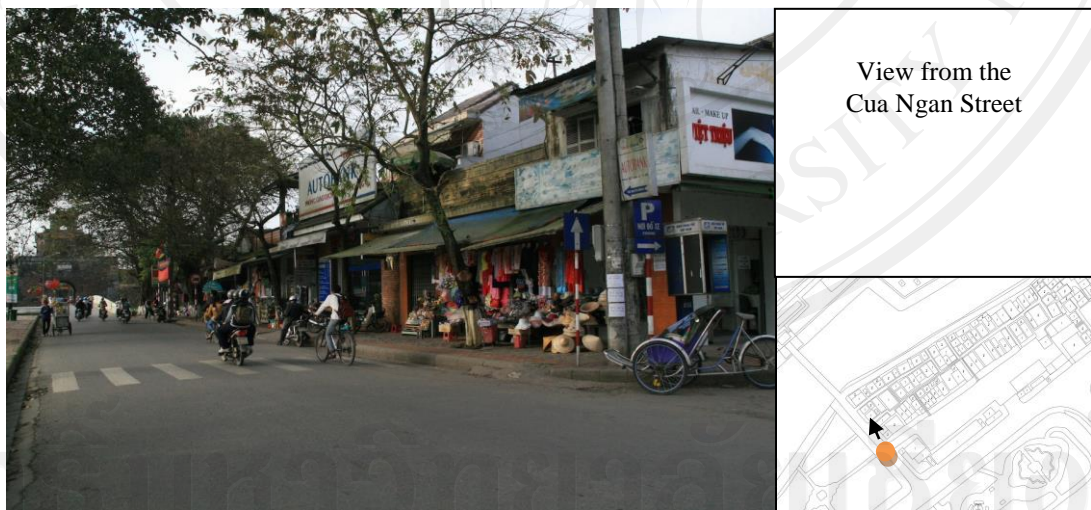


Figure 1.10 Views from a point on Cua Ngan Street: Physical characteristics on the way to the Citadel

1.3 Purpose of the Research and the Research Topics

This study is designed to obtain the perceptions in aesthetics of the environment in front of the Hue citadel by preference evaluation. The study focuses to the appearances of physical elements base on that purpose and aims to investigate follow to the research topics below:

Research Topic 1: The Data of Individual Factors

This topic describes the personal characteristics of the participants who joined the survey.

Research Topic 2: Aesthetic Responses

- *The most aesthetic response:* This topic aims to show the most preference of participants while responding to the environment in front of Hue citadel in term of aesthetics.
- *The effective factor with aesthetic responses:* The goals of this topic are finding the effectiveness of factors to the environmental aesthetic response in this study area.

Research Topic 3: Correlations of Aesthetic Response's Factors with Preference

The research topic designs to solve both the correlation between preference and the other factors of aesthetic response to the environment; and how relationship if it has existences of correlations between them.

1.4 Scope of the Research

Scope of Study:

- Perceptions and preferences in built environment
- Aesthetics of the built environment

Study Area:

The study is conducted the area in front of Hue Citadel, on the route from tourist parking-lot to the main entrance of the citadel.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

In addition to preceding introduction, the thesis is organized into six chapters as followings:

Chapter 1:

This chapter firstly mentions about the overview of the Hue Citadel and the statements of interest of the Hue Citadel. Research purpose, research topics, and scope of the research are also discussed in the later parts.

Chapter 2:

This chapter is a review of the theories, literatures and former research as a research background, including literatures pertaining to environmental behavior studies, visual preference, and discussions relevant to issues with regard to those theories.

This chapter can be divided into two main parts, those are: environmental behavior studies with including the theories of environmental perception and aesthetic response to environment; and visual preference, in which comprises reviews of visual preference, visual preference and the built environment's characteristics.

Chapter 3:

Chapter 3 is divided into two main parts which are research design and research methodology.

This chapter describes about the plan of the study, details the research topics and describes the research methodology. The methodology is including five steps as followings:

- Step 1: Visual survey and photographic collection
- Step 2: Selection of Photographs and Questionnaire Development
- Step 3: Participant Selection
- Step 4: Questioning
- Step 5: Data analysis

Chapter 4:

This chapter reports data analysis which is obtained from the questionnaires. The results are detailed follow to three research topics.

Chapter 5:

This chapter is aimed to discuss about the results which are acquired after analyzing the data of the survey. Referring to the research objectives, this chapter is divided into two parts:

- The aesthetics response of the environment in front of Hue citadel;
- Aesthetic response's factors.

Chapter 6:

Base on the results of the study, the outcomes are drawn and from those cause the extrapolations for suggestions. The study also has limitations, so it is the opportunity to open the directions for the further researches.

This chapter is divided into three parts:

- Summarizations of the research;
- Limitations;
- Further research directions.