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## An investigation into the tale values on the legends of Nguyen Anh (king Gia Long) in the southern region of Vietnam

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### ABSTRACT

*Legend is a genre reflecting the historical figures and events of locals and nations. The historical war between the Tay Son and Nguyen Lords in the Southern battlefield being associated with local historic and cultural imprints has become abundant materials for the formation of an array of legends about Nguyen Anh in the Southern region. This article is to provide an overview of tale system (based on a set of 52 story units collected around the region) and its values in terms of content and techniques.*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Discussing on the source of legends of *Nguyen Anh* in the South Vietnam, Cao Tu Thanh (2007) concluded that *Nguyen Anh* actually is the king who left the greatest number of legends in the South, because in Vietnam no kings had had the number of footprints as he did around this territory, especially when he took refuge there from the *Tay Son* before 1788.

Legends of *Nguyen Anh* in the Southern region are a group of folk stories, associated with the escape journey of *Nguyen Anh* to the South during the fight with the *Tay Son* and widely retold in the South. These are short stories with brief form containing the unitary structure; each story narrates a scenario revolved around the central event, the escape journey of *Nguyen Anh* from the *Tay Son* pursuit. Overall, the stories are according to the belief of the people to the event and progress of a character in relationship with landmarks, monuments, rituals and folk festivals in the local areas. From the documents about the *Nguyen* dynasty history, Southern literature history, culture, local monography, and so on, 52 story units of the

Southern region about *Nguyen Anh* are collected. About circulating areas of stories, according to document collection and toponym elements of story, there are places with number of story units namely, *Ba Ria-Vung Tau* (3), *Dong Nai* (1), *Binh Duong* (1), *Gia Dinh* (2), *Tien Giang* (2), *Long An* (2), *Ben Tre* (3), *Vinh Long* (3), *Tra Vinh* (2), *Dong Thap* (3), *Can Tho* (3), *Soc Trang* (3), *An Giang* (6), *Chau Doc* (3), *Kien Giang* (6), *Bac Lieu* (4), and *Ca Mau* (5). Preliminarily speaking, the stories of *Nguyen Anh* are retold across the South corresponding to the reality of the events about this character.

## 2 RESULTS

### 2.1 Structural features

#### 2.1.1 Plot model

Plot, according to *Dictionary of Literature Terms*, is a system of real events being constructed to address mental and art requirements, composing the portion which is the most basic and important in the active form of narrative and play-related literature works (Le Ba Han *et al.*, 2012).

Group of legend has model of traditional plot with general 3-part outline including opening, developing, and ending according to the event progress. The first progress is to indicate the setting of event, the appearance of the character mainly connected with time factor, background of the dispute with the *Tay Son*, the escape journey to the South or certain regions. The second progress is to recall the impressing events about the character. The thrilling content expresses the behavior and activities have occurred (such as a surprising fortune or a special

event related to a specific character) in order to create a name on places, monuments, verses, distiguished costumes and so on in bonded with a specific situation. The final progress is to finish the scenarios including specific results related to the character such as landmarks or vestiges remained. About the plot building units, after the evaluation of 52 stories of *Nguyen Anh* in the South, 16 details and motifs expressed in the topic-plot were considered (Table 1).

**Table 1: Sixteen details and motifs expressed in the topic-plot**

Details	Motifs
Character ran into the territory	Character was pursued
No human assistance	Sacred animals, unusual events support
Escaped successfully	Human support
Character uttered the curse	Character prayed or encountered prophetic dream
Ordains or bestows a title	Character or royal family member suffered hardship time
Change naming habit	Active vestiges of the character and soldiers on the road
	Names places
	Names objects
	Save landmarks, monuments
	Preserve as verses and proverbs
Total: 06	10

*2.1.2 Details, motifs of the story groups*

The system of legends has the type of crucial character as the monarchy founder with his arduous process to mark the period of “*tiem de*” (pre-throning) of a king. Being corresponding to character type, the system of legends has the topic-plot as the intriguing behavior of *Nguyen Anh* in the escape journey from the *Tay Son*. This topic-plot is

established with the character features including the miracle support for the future king; human support; and activities imprints and vestiges remained.

*a. Character feature: The miracle support for the future king*

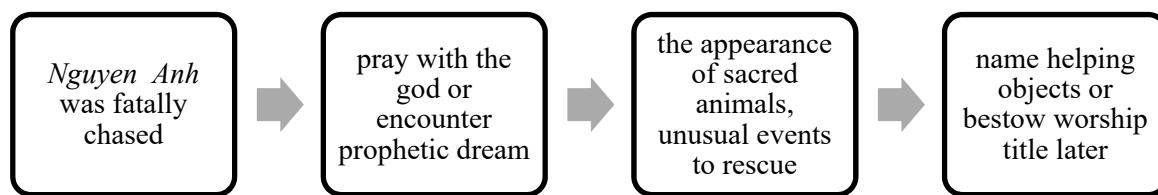
The group of this character feature has 11 story units. The names and references are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: List of names and references of 11 units of story group about character feature of the miracle support for the future king (tentative translation)**

Stories	References/citations
Tales about crocodiles which helped <i>Nguyen Anh</i> at <i>Ong Doc</i> estuary	Huynh Minh, 2001a
Thunderstorms and freshwater flows in the sea	Trinh Hoai Duc, 2004
<i>Tra Son</i> Mountain	Quoc su quan trieu Nguyen, 1971
Ask crocodile to carry through the dangerous river	Quoc su quan trieu Nguyen, 2007
A flock of snake raising the boat bottom	Quoc su quan trieu Nguyen, 2007
<i>Ganh Rai</i> with a herd of miracle otter and King <i>Gia Long</i> 's story	Huynh Minh, 2001g
Spiritual bird informed <i>Nguyen Anh</i>	Huynh Minh, 2001c
Strange tale about <i>Ca Ong</i>	Huynh Minh, 2001d
A kind of small fish saves <i>Nguyen Anh</i>	Truong Vinh Ky, 1997
Origin of <i>My Long</i> Sea merit	Oral
<i>Bung Binh Thien</i>	Huynh Cong Tin (Ed), 2005
Total: 11 story units	

Structure diagram about story plot is presented in Figure 1. *Nguyen Anh* is fatally chased, he then prayed gods or encountered prophetic dreams. It was

resulted in the appearance of sacred animals, unusual events to rescue him. Lately, he would name helping objects or bestow worship title.



**Fig. 1: Structure diagram of story plot on the character feature of the miracle support for the future king**

Some details, motifs of storyline are described as:

*Motifs “Character was pursued”*

Motif acts as specific opening function of story group. In terms of reality imprint, the timeline of the *Tay Son* rebel was put in connection with the location during escaping journey as: “*When Nguyen Anh ran to the South, he and his entourage had to pass through the sea...*” (*Ganh Rai* with a herd of miracle otter and King *Gia Long*’s story); “*In 1775, when Lord Nguyen Anh fled from the Tay Son to the South to Dinh Tuong...*” (Spiritual birds informed *Nguyen Anh*), etc.

*Motifs “Sacred animals, unusual events support”*

Motif represents the rescue of character by the spiritual animal or natural phenomenon. As the *Ca Ong* rescued boat, The strange tale about *Ca Ong* narrates: “... *Suddenly, emerged from underwater was a pair of whales keeping the two sides of boat, using their backs to support and led the boat to the land safely...*” (or: “*Fisherman of Bai Ngao (Ba Tri) narrates that, King Gia Longs’ boats once had come here confronting a big storm and enormous tides and being protected by the whale Ong to Bai Ngao*”)...; or about the crocodile rescues boat: “... *Suddenly emerged a flock of crocodiles fully covering the road...*”, later, it was known that there was an ambush of *Tay Son* at the estuary (Tales about

crocodiles which helped *Nguyen Anh* at *Ong Doc* estuary).

The images bearing significant functions offer urgently the assistance to the character. In general, these helping “forces” include sacred animals (crocodiles, sea snakes, fish, birds, etc) and the strange natural phenomena (thunderstorms and fresh water at sea, etc.). Therefore, in the most dangerous situations, *Nguyen Anh* had the active support of the powerful and supernatural elements which are considered as cultural agents from the human consciousness. The images of sacred animals, unusual events in stories are related to the cultural icons of the South Vietnam and the world. Specifically, the symbols of birds, fish, snakes, and trees are combined together into meaningful symbol system as prophetic signs and turning risk into safe (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 1997). Sacred factors associated with the symbols of consciousness expressed a demand of belief. The story may spring from the desire and expectation in a miracle help in the deadlock situation. Consequently, it would be a belief based on the traditional notion of a “true King” in the “servant” point of view.

*b. Character feature: Human support*

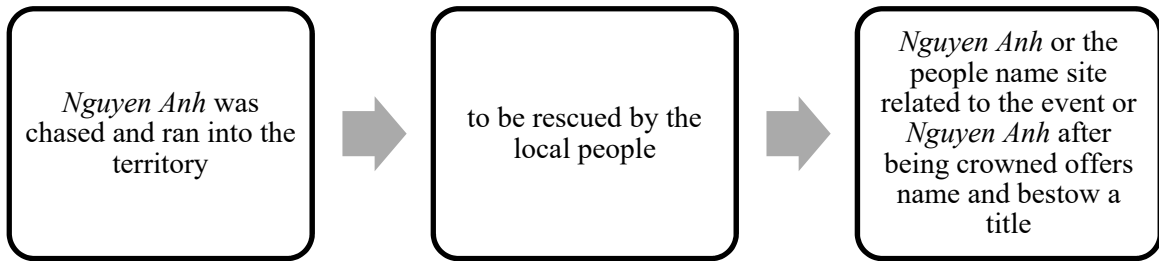
The group has 11 units of the series. The names and references are shown in the Table 3 below.

**Table 3: List of names and references of 12 units of story group about character feature of human support (tentative translation)**

Stories	References/citations
About the name of <i>Tan Loc Phuong</i>	Truong Vinh Ky, 1997
<i>Ong Doi</i> Cape	Truong Thanh Hung, 2008
<i>Linh Yen</i> Bridge	Truong Vinh Ky, 1997
<i>Ba Vien</i> Canal	Oral
<i>Co Chien</i> River and conferred women	Huynh Minh, 2001a
Lord <i>Nguyen Anh</i> and <i>Thien Ton</i> shrine	Thich Hue Thong, 2000
Tale about <i>Nguyen Huu Le</i>	Nguyen Ngoc Quang (Ed), 2010
<i>Ong Doc</i> River	Nguyen Huu Hieu, 2004
<i>Ong Hong</i> Canal	Nguyen Huu Hieu, 2004
<i>Ba Duong</i>	Huynh Minh, 2001e
<i>Dat</i> Isle and the word <i>thuy lieu</i> Fruit	Huynh Minh, 2001a
<i>Gia Long</i> bestows title to <i>Tam Bao</i> pagoda	Oral
Total: 12 story units	

Structure diagram about story plot is presented in Figure 2. *Nguyen Anh* was chased and ran into the territory. He was rescued by local people. *Nguyen*

*Anh* or the people then named sites related to the events, or *Nguyen Anh* after being crowned offered names and bestowed a title.



**Fig. 2: Structure diagram of story plot on the character feature of the human support**

Some details, motifs of storyline are described as:

*Motif “Human support”*

Motif shows the characters being supported by the specific people. The first form of support is the rescue. There are soldiers and maids who sacrifice to save him, namely a soldier risked his life in the naval battle with the *Tay Son* at rivulet *Ong Doc*, in *Phu Quoc*, a soldier searched the anchor to save the military boat (*Ong Doi Cape*). Especially, the legend of *Nguyen Huu Le* with the presence of magical element narrates that when confronting the enemy, a man named *Le* appeared to the rescue, after beheaded by the *Tay Son*, “he took the head to assemble back to the body” and went to see *Nguyen Anh* to remain him “do not forget today, His Majestic...”. The second form is indispensable material and capital supports. These are specific people in local regions, such as *Ong Hong* in the *Vam Co Tay* who dug the canal to deliver rice to *Nguyen Anh* during three months (*Ong Hong Canal*); the landowner *Le Thi Khach* in *Binh Tan*, *Vinh Long* provided porridge for the whole entourage (*Ba Vien Canal*). The third form is to provide the shelter. Location is usually the temples where *Nguyen Anh* had to shelter when being pursued. Additionally, “On the hiding way, he found this place having favorable terrain. There was high hill with the temple, so Lord *Nguyen* came to hide...”. The story progress has intriguing elements: “Three incenses burned by the monk were turned off at a same time, Lord considered as the prophetic signal....” (Lord *Nguyen Anh* and *Thien Ton* shrine).

The story of two village women who sold silk thread rescued the boat (*Co Chien River* and conferred women) has a similar version in the Central area of the country. An old woman offered silk straps as oar-strap, the old man braided coconut chain to help *Nguyen Anh*’s boat fled to *Gia Dinh*

(*Chau Phe* singing custom in *Duong Thien* village and *Vinh Quang* village) or the story about *Nguyen Hoang* narrated a woman using rowing straps tied the oar-strap to help the Lord escape (The legend of *Ba To* temple). There is also the story of the woman named *Pham* providing food timely for *Nguyen Anh* (*Banh nam* of *Phu Quoc* women). The central motif of human support becomes an art motif of the series system of the *Nguyen* Lords. As a plot builder, the appearance is a developing element of the event. The assistance is mundane but expresses a deep sense of reality. This is the support of the people for the Lord in hatred in line with the common sense about willingness to support “true king”.

*Motif “Save landmarks, monuments”*

In terms of motif imprints, landmarks and monuments were mainly established including names combined with geography and geophysics (mountains, rivers, streams, beaches, ponds, wells, bridges). Toponymic names are formed such as *Ong Doi Cape*, *Ba Vien Canal*, *Co Chien River*, *Ong Doc River*, *Linh Yen Bridge*. For example, “... the canal *Long Ong* is the line in which *Madame Vien* has ordered people to supply porridge to help *Nguyen Anh* troop, so-called *Ba Vien Canal*”; “The bridge over the canal was called *Linh Yen Bridge*”. The abundance and diversity of landmark and heritage types brought new sense about its existence although the authenticity of the event was excluded.

*Detail “Ordains and bestows a title”*

About ordaining a pagoda, the changed factors are naming places in the different locations where the character took refuge and vowed to repay; for example, “After being throne, the king ordained a lot of temples where he previously took refuge from *Tay Son* including *Thien Ton pagoda* ...” (Lord *Nguyen Anh* and *Thien Ton* shrine). This event has

a fact foundation coming from the profound intentions of *Nguyen Anh*, as Son Nam (2002, p.27) commented:

*“Nguyen Anh was a politically wise to take advantage of sticking to the Buddhist temples to hide. Later, Nguyen emperor bestowed old pagoda at the*

*Southern two words “Sacred title” that make local people proud”.*

*c. Character feature: The activity imprints and vestiges remained*

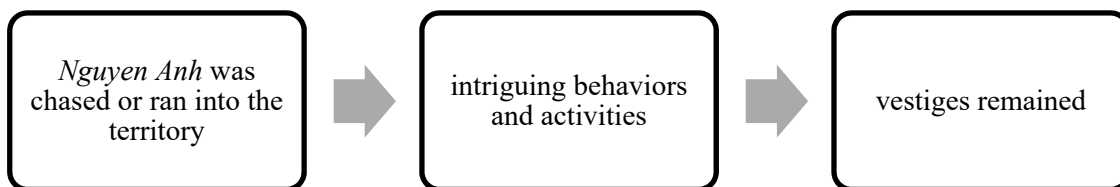
The group has 29 units of the series. The names and references are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: List of names and references of 29 units of story group about character feature of the activity imprints and vestiges remained (tentative translation)**

Stories	References/citations
Eldest, Second	Son Nam and To Nguyet Dinh, 1993
Chac Bang Canal with <i>Nguyen Anh</i>	Huynh Minh, 2001a
<i>Canh Den</i>	Chu Xuan Dien (Ed), 2005
Princess <i>Ngoc Du</i> Cape and <i>Hang</i> Pagoda	Huynh Ngoc Trang, 2002
<i>Ba</i> Islet	Nguyen Huu Hieu, 2004
The Curse of King <i>Gia Long</i>	Nguyen Ngoc Quang (Ed), 2010
<i>Cam</i> Mountain	Huynh Cong Tin (Ed), 2005
<i>Viinh Hung</i> Tower	Chu Xuan Dien (Ed), 2005
<i>My Thanh</i> River	Huynh Minh, 2001a
<i>Nguyen Anh</i> and the verse “Wind blows up blumea to the sky....”	Huynh Cong Tin (Ed), 2005
<i>Can Co</i> Canal	Oral
<i>Lap Vo</i> Market	Oral
<i>Ro Ghe</i> Canal	Oral
The <i>Long Hung</i> Whirlpool and <i>Long Ho</i> River	Huynh Minh, 2002
<i>Long Hung</i> landmark and banyan tree and <i>Ben Ngu</i>	Huynh Minh, 2001e
<i>Long An</i> Canal and Village	Huynh Minh, 2003
<i>Gia Ngu</i> Hamlet	Huynh Minh, 2001a
Origin of <i>Cat</i> Isle landmark	Doan No, 2011
<i>Bai Xau</i> landmark	Oral
<i>Bong</i> Well (or <i>Ngu</i> Well)	Huynh Ngoc Trang, 2002
Ancient <i>Vung May</i> with the story about <i>Ngu</i> Well	Huynh Minh, 2001g
<i>Gia Long</i> Well at <i>Cam</i> Mountain	Huynh Cong Tin (Ed), 2005
<i>Ngu</i> Well in <i>Soc Trang</i>	Oral
<i>Ngu</i> Well in <i>Phu Quoc</i>	Huynh Ngoc Trang, 2002
The mischievous bronze pot	Huynh Minh, 2001a
About the name of <i>Can Tho</i>	Huynh Minh, 2001b
Origin of “ <i>Thuy Lieu</i> ” landmark in <i>Go Quao</i>	Oral
Origin of <i>Phu Quan</i> Fruit	Huynh Minh, 2001f
<i>Ngu</i> mango, <i>Ngu</i> fish sauce	Truong Vinh Ky, 1997
Total: 29 story units	

Structure diagram about story plot is presented in Figure 3. *Nguyen Anh* was chased, or ran into the

territory. He performed a serial of intriguing behaviors and activities resulting in vestiges remained.



**Fig. 3: Structure diagram of story plot on the character feature of the activities imprints and vestiges remained**

Some details, motifs of storyline are described as follows:

*Motif “Character or royal family member suffered hardship time”*

Motif is shown to be the crisis and challenge to the character. About the event, the character himself or his harem member had been through many tragic situations and circumstances on the run. For example, in *Ca Mau*, *Nguyen Anh* encountered “fatal illness” to utter “the last word” (*Chac Bang Canal* with *Nguyen Anh*); *Ha Tien*, is the place where the princess was forced to jump into the sea (Princess *Ngoc Du Cape*); or in *Con Lon*, *Madame Phi Yen* disputed the seeking for foreigner aid, *Nguyen Anh* was unsatisfied and treated her badly (*Ba Islet*).

*Motif “Active vestiges of the character and soldiers on the road”*

Motif plays a central role in the storyline. The most common is the recognition of the specific locations of intriguing events associated with the operation of *Nguyen Anh* and soldiers. For instance, in *Bay Nui*, *An Giang*, they hid and ordered no entry (or leave a treasure in mountain) (*Cam Mountain*); in *Soc Trang*, the military refugees were cooking rice (or Khmer people are treating them a meal) but had to run again before cooking done (*Bai Xau Landmark*); in *Dong Thap*, soil was used to cover parts of the ship “*do thuyen*” (*Lap Vo Market*); rolling on the river canal *Can Gao* (*Kien Giang*) where the army trip moved (*Ro Ghe Canal*).

*Detail “No human assistance”*

The only circumstance appears in the event, accordingly, while being chased, *Nguyen Anh* had his relatives died due to the lack of help. The story “The Curse of King *Gia Long*” said: “... the king brought the prince wandering to ask for feeding, but the women did not have sympathy to the pitiful infant...” similarly detailed with “*Ba Lon Tuong Grave*” story).

*Motif “Save landmarks, monuments”*

Motif is repeated with high frequency showing strongly reality imprint. Landmarks established probably belong to location or monument, shrines, temples and royal tombs, such as *Gia Ngu Hamlet*, *Long An Canal*, *Canh Den*, etc. Landmark naming method is mainly intended to create an “account of truth” for the story. Accordingly, the character named a location to remark the place where he had arrived to as his habit; or the location also named by the local people to give tribute to the character (*Cam Mountain* narrates: “... people named *Ong*

*Cam Mountain* to remark where the king had taken refuge”, “... so later the canal is named *Ro Ghe*...”). This type of landmarks is often simple as “*Gia Long* does not name the land in a mundane way” (Truong Thanh Hung, 2008). The phenomenon is similar to the story chain of *Nguyen Hoang* in the Central area of the country, as the *Tro Bai Mia* sites in *Quang Loi* hamlet where the Lord stopped to eat sugar cane and throw bagasse. Relating to geophysical naming, water source venues have been told in many places, such as *Gia Long* well or *Ngu* well in *Phuoc Tuy*, *Ca Mau*, *Phu Quoc*, *Soc Trang*, *Vung Tau* as noted in Customs and Characters Verses of the South:

“The well never been in *Thang Nhi*,

the custom of naming *Ngu* well still is recorded” (Tentative translation)

(Nguyen Lien Phong, 1909, p.6).

*Detail “Changing birth order naming habits”*

Details express a change of naming habit, calling the first child *Hai* instead of *Ca*. It is because “*Ca*” (Eldest) is the first child of the king, also called “*Hai*” (. Event content expresses cultural meaning because, as well as other interpretations, it reminds of the less strict family disciplines of local residents. In the perception, taking away the word “Eldest” seems to release a part of responsibility and burden of the hierarchy.

According to the author Divine, people and land of Viet the word “Eldest” disappeared in the South and almost from Cochinchina in the family hierarchy. It is not because of Prince *Canh* homage as interpretation but dedicated to the gods (as the Grand Master *Ba Da Loc* (Piere Pigneau de Béhaine) or Master *Xe Ca* of the *Cham* people ...) (Ta Chi Dai Truong, 2006, p.126).

## 2.2 Content value of the story system

To the overall evaluation in considering authentic factor of the event being told, it is suggested that the group of stories is less significant in understanding the history (Cao Tu Thanh, 2008) or this is the legend without historical evidence being demonstrated (Huynh Ngoc Trang *et al.*, 2002). Some objective opinions from the series system are noteworthy.

### 2.2.1 The emotional expression of Southerners to *Nguyen Anh*

Through various notes, in general, the stories which were created and circulated strongly show the emotional attitude of Southerners to *Nguyen Anh*. This emotional attitude is passionately ex-

pressed in the stories related to place name and vestige remained. In the stories, the form of naming places has expressed positive sentimental attitude of people towards the character. The most impressing one is the inclusion of events associated with the character, in order to explain the formation of these specific place names and vestiges. Truong Thanh Hung (2008) pointed out in the story about *Gia Long Well* or *Ngu Well* in *Phu Quoc* that the crack at the bottom of a puddle was *Gia Long's* sword slashing down to find water source; the stone seems like the armchairs which was thought to be used by the king. The legend was not quite precisely neglected, but reflected positive attitudes of people towards *Gia Long*.

Regarding the famous place names in the local regions, according to Nguyen Huu Hiep (2008), people named the places to save the memory of *Nguyen Anh's* visits while hiding from *Tay Son*. Customs and Characters Verses of the South has also mentioned the landmarks showing positive attitudes of Southern people towards *Nguyen Anh*:

*"Hon Dat, Hon Tre, mountains and rivers being carved,*

*helps the Majestic many times"* (Tentative translation)

(Nguyen Lien Phong, 1909, p.89).

It is a general awareness, especially the positive attitude of the people towards *Nguyen Anh*. A singing verse from *Hau Giang* village:

*"Sadly resting, miss my old Lord,*

*old friend of Long Xuyen never to be forgotten"* (Tentative translation)

It is probably to recall "The Lord *Tan Chinh* and *Thai Thuong* were killed in *Long Xuyen* by *Tay Son*" (Nguyen Van Sam, 1972, p.287). Because there is lack of condition for people to understand the integrity of the *Tay Son* army, they already spent the sincere affection for their Lord in the arduous running. This is one side of the chivalrousness of the Southerners in particular. On the other hand, the positive attitudes of the people have an actual foundation from the political and social situation. There are comments:

*"If Nguyen Anh does not become a king of the Nguyen dynasty, his activities in Phu Quoc will be less mentioned. As Nguyen Anh later became King Gia Long, and Nguyen dynasty had offered Phu Quoc beneficial policies, the remarks of Nguyen Anh are quite bolded on the island and there are legends about the "inborn king"* (Truong Thanh Hung, 2008, p.124).

There is also another mental reason according to Son Nam (1963, p.94):

*"King Gia Long is the first and final king arriving in U Minh forest. His tales of escape journey make people feel that Rach Gia attached to "kingdom and nation"*.

Thus, the idea of the gratitude towards the king is a familiar mindset of the people here; moreover, this is the first king of the South. The migrants had experienced many hardships to establish new villages which are still autonomous organizations. The Lord *Nguyen* order to establish authority and divide society unit and field area; at that time, the people felt joyful because they had "nation". Consequently, with chivalrous personality, Southerners considered "a piece of land, a stem of vegetable being offered by the Lord" as a responsibility to pay back. Customs and Characters Verses of the South stated exactly this attitude:

*"At the time of King Gia Long,*

*many times desperately wandered and hidden,*

*history was written apparently,*

*piece of land stem of vegetables, feel deeply sympathy"* (Tentative translation)

(Nguyen Lien Phong, 1909, p.90).

In another aspect, the process of territorial establishment and society reassurance in the new land of Lord *Nguyen* Cochinchina was effective to early found the relationship between people and government (people also felt thankful to *Nguyen Huu Canh* with his achievement and high popularity throughout the region). This is the neglect of *Tay Son* while their imprints on this land are mainly about the strikes and chasing tribulations through which people had suffered. Therefore, in the historic confrontation between Lord *Nguyen* and *Tay Son*, sense of "real king" according to the general educational framework mainly goes toward Lord *Nguyen*. Especially, the class of landlord and rich peasants, who took direct benefits, wholeheartedly supported this force. Thus, the escape journey of Lord *Nguyen* received the help and support of the people. The respect and even loving towards a king are the main forces to preserve and spread this kind of legends.

### 2.2.2 Cultural Significance

Currently, in the point of re-innovating and re-evaluating view about the greatest achievement and contributions of the *Nguyen* dynasty, the historians indicated:

“*Nguyen dynasty has left a greatest heritage; it is a kingdom which is spread through the unified territory from the north to the south*”, “*On this territory, there is the enormous cultural heritage*” (Phan Huy Le, 2008, p.11).

Considering the overall story phenomenon, in terms of cultural values, this is also a part of the intangible culture which has been built and formed of folk cultural heritage of the South.

The legends narrated the escape journey of *Nguyen Anh* from the *Tay Son*, with intriguing activities in a large scale throughout *Gia Dinh* to the end point of Southern territory. This implied that *Nguyen Anh* had had his footprints throughout most sites of the South and the perception of Southern people towards King *Nguyen*. The stories spread are mainly linked with the cultural evidences including landmarks, monuments of worship, religion and folk festivals, etc. in many Southern regions, forming a cultural space of the system series. As the landmark, there are *Ha Tien*, *Phu Quoc* with *Hang Pagoda*, *Princess Ngoc Du Cape*; *Soc Trang* with *My Thanh River*, *Bai Xau Landmark*; *Bac Lieu* and *Ca Mau* with *Gia Ngu Hamlet*, *Vinh Hung Tower*; *An Giang* with *Cam Mountain*, *Bung Binh Thien*; *Sa Dec*, *Vinh Long* with Landmark *Long Hung* and *Long Ho River*, *Ba Vien Canal*; specially, *Ngu Well* can be found in *Vung Tau*, *Tra Vinh*, *Kien Giang*... In terms of monuments, beliefs and rituals, there are *Dinh Tuong*, *Kien Giang* with *Long Nguyen Pagoda Quartet*, *Tam Bao Pagoda Quartet*; *Go Cong*, *Ben Tre*, *Tra Vinh* with *Ca Ong Temple*, the *Ca Ong Nam Hai Temple*, *My Long Beach* worship ritual.

However, the cohesion may be fictional and fabricated because a few places and events are unreal. For example, mentioning the traces of *Nguyen Anh* in *Ha Tien*, *Phu Quoc*, *Huynh Ngoc Trang et al.*, (2002, p.377) assumed: “*Phu Quoc is one of the places where Gia Long hid during the chasing of Tay Son. Therefore, Phu Quoc as Ha Tien has several monuments being tied to Nguyen Anh*”.

Or about the traces of worship in *Con Dao* which is thought to be related to the character *Madame Phi Yen* (*Ba Islet*), *Dinh Van Hanh* (2008):

“*The history of 113-year existence of the colonial government prison has covered rare folklore culture on the island to create other stories*”, thus, “*the story of Madame Phi Yen is a historical legend, but are too irrelevant to the historic truth*...”.

In addition, although the temple in *Go Cong*, *Ben Tre* shares the name *Ca Ong* with the ones in *Ba Ria – Vung Tau* and *Phu Quoc*, the latter is only

associated with pure story about *Ca Ong*. Generally, it indicates the trend of combining the event to character rather than the explanation of true origin.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

Legends of *Nguyen Anh* in the Southern region possess the local imprints of the Southern land. Overall, the research describes and analyzes the abundance, real existence and characteristics of this group of legends. Regarding of art, the type of the character of the story system were determined; thus, features of the character in story groups were classified and described in order to specify the properties and attributes of the character. This method of survey may cover story document sources. The comparisons and connections with the other groups of the same or relative type in other regions have shown the characteristics of the story system more clearly. Generally, the unique appearance and characteristics of this legend group have created specific imprints in the system of Southern folk tales. On the other hand, the study also emphasizes the local characteristics of the folk culture of the South, based on the unity but diversity of national folk culture.

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