

VIETNAMESE HISTORY

BACK TO NAM ĐỊNH: RE-QUESTIONING VILLAGE SOCIETY AND FAMILY/CLAN STRUCTURES DURING THE LATE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

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Manuscript received: 11/10/2021; Peer-reviewed: 02/11/2021; Accepted: 05/11/2021

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Abstract

This paper tries to shed new light on the research on the village history in the Red River Delta during the 18th to early 19th centuries, based on the reexamination of the materials collected at former Bách Cốc Village (Vụ Bản District, Nam Định Province) and its surrounding villages in the joint field research project during 1994-2006. Although several preliminary studies on these materials have already been published, there is still room for deeper research. After summarizing the history of the research for the communal village in Northern Vietnam, this paper closely examines the information of landholdings in 1805 of Bách Cốc and two neighboring villages (Tiểu Cốc and Dương Lai). The striking deviation among these villages are then analyzed from new viewpoints other than conventional one that concentrate in the scale of landholdings (of only rice fields). For instance, judging from the records of Bách Cốc and another nearby village named Thị Mai, female landholders played an important role through their marriage in the land transfer among villages. Records of Tiểu Cốc shows that, besides rice fields, the land category of “housing lots, gardens and ponds” should be paid more attention to understand the household economy and the relationship among clanspeople as well. Finally, textual problems so far overlooked (the lack of uniformity among the sources of a same category and that among the listed information within a single material as well) of well-known materials related to the three villages such as *địa bạ* (land cadasters) and *gia phả* (family genealogy) are raised, hopefully providing basis of further research.

Keywords: *Vietnam; The early modern period; Village society; Landholding; Family/clan*

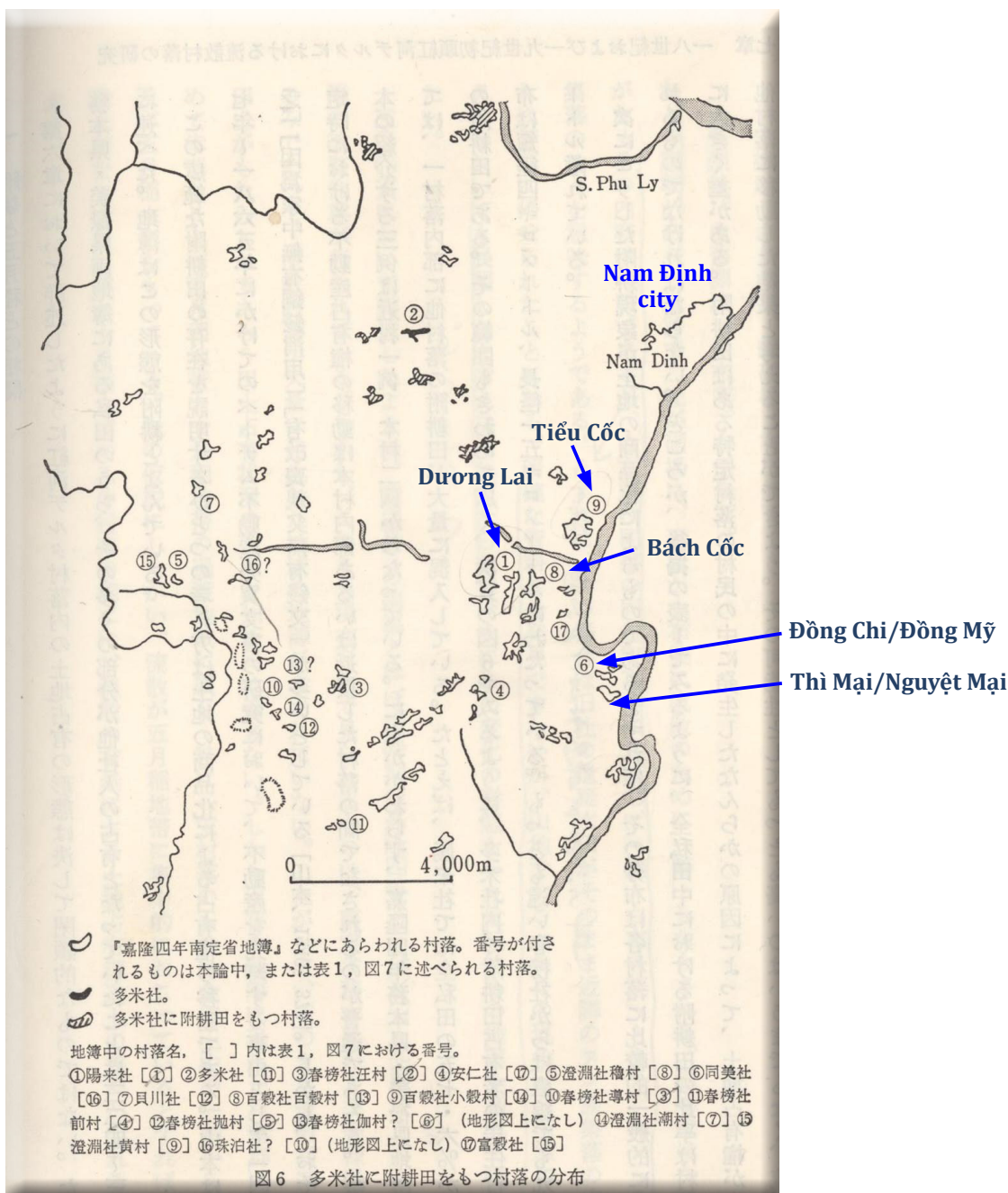
The author of this paper has specialized in the “Medieval” history of Vietnam focusing on the Lý-Trần Periods. Simultaneously, however, he participated in several joint field research programs in village history in Northern Vietnam, during which he collected numerous *Han-Nom*

materials, mainly from the 18th to the early 20th century. Of these projects, the most important one was undertaken at former Bách Cốc village (làng Bách Cốc 百穀 村, now included in the Cốc Thành Agricultural Cooperative as its five on eight *xóm* or hamlets, in Thành Lợi Commune,

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Vụ Bản District, Nam Định) from 1994 under the leadership of the late Professors Sakurai Yumio and Phan Huy Lê¹. Research on the contemporary economy and society of Bách Cốc/Cốc Thành is still ongoing (conducted by young scholars). However, its pre-modern history, for which the collection of materials from neighboring villages continued until 2006, has almost been forgotten

following the sudden demise of the late Professor Sakurai Yumio in 2012 (before completing his monograph on Bách Cốc, the first draft of which was written in 2006 [20]²). Younger historians, including the author of this article, were charged with other tasks and projects from 2007 onwards³, though they had published several articles before then, too.



Map: Bách Cốc and neighboring villages in Nam Định, on which Sakurai Yumio conducted research (adapted from the map of Sakurai [18, p.350])

Since December 2020, while preparing a couple of lectures and conference presentations on early modern Vietnam and East Asia, the author chanced upon several interesting pieces of information in the materials collected up until 2003, which had never been examined by anyone. Following this, he decided to widely reexamine these materials to make a new case study on the formation of the village and the family during the early modern period⁴. This paper is the first report of the author's research, intended to reorganize the research into these common topics from such viewpoints as family/gender structures and household economy, and to point out textual problems so far overlooked of well-known materials such as *địa bạ* 地簿 (land cadasters)⁵ and *gia phả* 家譜 (family genealogy), hopefully providing basis of further research.

1. A background on village studies

Behind the joint village study, there were well-known debates on the nature and structure of the 'traditional' village in Northern and North-Central Vietnam [18][19]⁶, which was a corporate body organized on the basis of communal rice fields (called *công điền* 公田 or *quan điền* 官田, which literally meant *public rice field*, and which were periodically (re)distributed among all full-status villagers), although the proportion of the communal field in the village was usually smaller than that of *tu điền* 私田 or the *private rice field*. The membership of these villages was stipulated by their own customs and their internal affairs were generally controlled by the council of elders rather than by the legal and administrative system of the state. This village society provided the basis for both colonial rule and anti-colonial movements, and later provided resources for the anti-American war in accepting socialist land nationalization (as a new type of *công điền* system). For this reason, the village society has attracted academic interest since the French colonial period, and a large number of studies have been published in western and Vietnamese academic circles, not only in the field of political, social and economic research, but

also in the field of cultural and religious studies.

Japanese scholars, including Sakurai Yumio, have also been interested in this topic since the period of the Vietnam War⁷. Sakurai completed his monograph in 1987 by combining three methodologies: (a) traditional skills in the textual study in Asian history, (b) developed Marxist theoretical studies far beyond the level of the Soviet Union and China, and (c) emerging Southeast Asian area studies focusing on ecology and agricultural technology, to draw a new picture of the history of communal land and village communities in the Red River Delta [18]. Previous studies, both in foreign and Vietnamese academia, were preoccupied with the idea that communal villages with communal landholding systems must be a remnant of primitive/ancient times, and believed that they survived the development of private landholding systems. However, Sakurai pointed out that there is no direct evidence of the communal land system before the 14th century⁸, and the famous Marxist theory of Asiatic Modes of Production was not as systematic as other socio-economic structures (such as slavery and feudal systems, and even its plausible part is only applicable to dry agrarian societies, the eco-systems of which are clearly different from that of wet-rice civilization). Based on these views and a broad comparison of the "public" land system in Asia during the medieval and early modern eras, Sakurai drew a new picture, according to which the early modern *công điền* derived from the state-owned fields of the Lê Dynasty in the 15th Century. The Hồ and Lê Dynasties accumulated a large amount of land by confiscating it from the elites of former dynasties and Ming colonizers and expropriating the lands abandoned in the anti-Ming wars. After Lê Lợi got independent, the government allocated these state-owned fields to villages, strictly regulating their distribution among villagers according to official and social statuses, so that the state could secure tax-based income, while the large number of ex-soldiers and landless people could be guaranteed a minimum livelihood. However, this system reached a dead end after the 16th

century due to demographic pressure and civil wars. Under the restored Lê Dynasty after the 17th century, the income from public rice fields and then public rice fields themselves were appropriated by local officials, soldiers, and powerful local families. And the appropriated fields were converted into their private fields. Since the early 18th century, the Lê-Trịnh central government had to conduct reforms to secure enough tax income and prevent corrupt low-rank officials and local bosses from arbitrary exploitation. Among these reforms, the central government granted villages the right of self-control over the public rice fields in exchange for a fixed amount of tax, and started levying regular taxes on private rice fields (the modern definition of private property then became applicable for *tư điền*). Thanks to these measures, many villages were able to survive natural disasters and social unrest in the mid-18th century, at the cost of developing a large-scale class of landlords. The Nguyễn government seldom intervened in these villages. Then, what would be regarded as a "traditional" village of strong collectivity led by small holders was crystallized. The French generally maintained the system for their purpose of dominance and exploitation. Based on this wider picture alongside research conducted from 1979 to 1990⁹ on the history of agricultural reclamation in the Red River Delta, Sakurai conducted field research at Bách Cốc and later in other regions together with his colleagues and students. Besides the research in geography/ecology and agriculture, his team tried to examine the nature and historical evolution of the village community together with its internal components such as residential and ritual units of *thôn*, *xóm*, and *giáp*, and clan-like units of *dòng họ*¹⁰, as well as religious centers like Buddhist temples and shrines.

2. Land holdings recorded in the land cadasters made in 1805

Just as uneven land holding and the necessity of its reform were urgent issues in densely-populated East and Southeast Asian

villages in the mid-20th Century, regardless of the political and economic systems of the related countries, land holding in the village society has also become an important topic in history. Historians under the influence of Marxism considered it the key to understanding the social structure of the agrarian village as a whole. In the case of early modern northern Vietnam, land cadasters attracted attention. While those established before the Tây Sơn Period seldom survive today, most of the cadasters established under the Nguyễn Dynasty are still preserved by institutions such as the National Archives (Trung tâm Lưu trữ Quốc gia) and the Sino-Nôm Institute. Every village established a cadaster under the observation of local officials, and a bound volume of all villages in its jurisdiction was made in every *tổng* 總 (the unit between district and village). The cadaster of a village (usually called *xã* 社) was divided into multiple village units called *thôn* 村 (a unit usually regarded as a sub-unit or a segregated part of an original village) in some cases, while a *thôn* had its own cadaster in other cases. The cadaster lists the location¹¹ and area of various categories of land in the village, as shown in Tables 1-2 below. It also records the three-rank grade (1st grade is most productive) and cropping season (Summer field 夏田 for *lúa chiêm* or Fifth lunar month rice and Autumn field 秋田 for *lúa mùa* or Tenth lunar month rice) of rice fields. The cadasters made in 1805¹² are of special interest because they record the "cultivators" (= holders') name, area, and the names of holders in charge of the surrounding plots (in the East, West, South, North), of each plot of the private rice field (and sometimes of other categories). Public rice fields possessed by other villages (categorized as *kỳ tại* 其在) and private rice fields cultivated (held) by people from other villages (categorized as *phụ canh* 附耕) are also listed.

Sakurai Yumio examined the cadasters of 19 villages (*xã* or *thôn*) in Nam Định, which happened to have been collected by Toyo Bunko (see the map above), and compared his analysis with that of Nguyễn Đức Nghinh in Từ Liêm, Thanh Trì, and

Thượng Phúc [18: chaps 6 and 8]. After the 1990s, more statistical research in wider areas in Hà Đông, Thái Bình, and Hà Nội were conducted by Vietnamese scholars led by Phan Huy Lê. These studies mainly examine topics such as the ratio of public to private rice fields, the scale of private rice-field holdings of individual holders, village headmen (*chức sắc*¹³), clans, and of females as well. However, Sakurai only partially undertook

the attempted update of the analyses of the Nam Định cadasters based on fieldwork since 1994. For this reason, the author of this paper tries to review the relevant materials; first the cadasters of the three villages neighboring each other, that is, thôn Bách Cốc, thôn Tiểu Cốc 小穀村 (the information of both *thôn* compose the cadaster of xã Bách Cốc), and xã Dương Lai 陽来社¹⁴ as shown in Tables 1-3 below.

Table 1. Rice fields recorded in the land cadasters in 1805 for the villages Bách Cốc, Tiểu Cốc, and Dương Lai

Thôn Bách Cốc							
Public rice field 公田				Private rice field 私田			
Rank	Season	Plots 所	Area	Season	Plots 所	Area	Holders
1	Autumn	3	29 mẫu 0 sào 0 thước 0 tấc	Autumn	19 (2?)	76 mẫu 2 sào 1 thước 4 tấc (3.3.10.3?)	13 (1) ? +1
2	Autumn	3	59.6.8.7	Autumn	30(3?)	101. 4. 7. 4 (11. 6. 4. 3)	20 (2) ? +2
3	Autumn	9	117.3.9.4	Autumn	42(1)	145. 3. 2. 6 (3. 4. 12. 6)	25 (1)
Total		15	206.0.3.1		91 (4)	322. 9. 12. 4 (18. 4. 12. 2)	39? (3?) +2+4
Thôn Tiểu Cốc							
Public rice field				Private rice field			
Rank	Season	Plots	Area	Season	Plots	Area	Holders
1	Autumn	3	20.5.1.0	—	—	—	---
2	Autumn	7	57.7.8.9	—	—	—	—
3	Autumn	12	122.7.2.8	Autumn	42	15.9.9.9	30
Total		22	200. 9. 12. 7 (+ kỳ tại of 2 villages: 143.4.4.5)		42	15.9.9.9	30+4
Xã Dương Lai							
Public rice field				Private rice field			
Rank	Season	Plots	Area	Season	Plots	Area	Holders
1	Autumn	1	5.6.12.0	Autumn	12?	45. 5. 11. 7?	11?
2	Autumn	4	5.5.12.5 (5.6.12.0)	Autumn	35 (4)	115. 5. 14. 4 (13. 6. 12. 3)	32(4) ?
3	Autumn	1	1.7.6.4	Summer /Autumn	Summer 16 (16?) ; Autumn 42 (40)	Summer 79. 6. 7. 0 (79. 6. 7. 0?) Autumn 200. 2. 7. 2 (192. 1. 7. 8)	47(45) ?
Total		6	16.2.0.9 (5.6.12.0)		105 (60)	441. 0. 10. 3 (285. 4. 12. 1)	83 (49) ?+19

Notes:

- 1) The units to indicate area were indicated with the units of four grades, namely *mẫu* 畝 (approximately 3,600 square-meters), *sào* 高 (360 square-meters), *thước* 尺 (24 square-meters), and *tấc* 寸 (2.4 square-meters). The area in each column indicates the sum of the numerical values recorded in the information for individual plots, not the total amount written in the top lines, which is for the village.
- 2) The number of holders is calculated with the assumption that the same personal names always indicate a single person. The number accompanied by a question mark indicates that its original information includes questionable entries (about the holder's name or home village) for the application of this assumption. Besides individuals, the private rice field holders of thôn Bách Cốc include two groups, as shown in Table 3. The number of private fields held, shown in *italic* letters after a + sign, indicates the

- number of holders who only appear in the information pertaining to the surrounding plots of a certain plot of land (private rice fields, dry fields, or housing lots, gardens, and ponds).
- 3) The number and numerical value displayed in parentheses after a plot number, a numerical value of an area, or a holder number indicates the number or numerical value of a *phụ canh* field included in the total number or numerical value showed before the parenthesis.
 - 4) The public rice fields of Tiểu Cốc include *kỳ tại* property of other two villages, namely thôn Nhuệ Đoàn and thôn Đông Bắc of xã An La, Thượng Nguyên District, Thiên Trường Prefecture 天長府上元縣安邏社銳兌崗北二村 (Nam Định), while Dương Lai possessed public rice fields (3 plots of second rank fields are shown in parenthesis, of which the total area was 5 mẫu 6 sào 12 thước) in the form of *kỳ tại*, which were reportedly locates in three villages in the vicinity (xã Trung Phu 中孚, xã Trình Xuyên 程川, and xã Đại Đê 大堤).
 - 5) In the cadaster of Dương Lai, 6 plots (2 plots of 1st rank, 1 plot of 2nd rank, and 2 plots of 3rd rank Autumn field; a plot of 3rd rank Summer field) of private rice fields were listed without the holder's name (abandoned or uncultivated fields must be classified as "abandoned fields" for the purpose of tax exemption). Besides, Dương Lai has 2 plots of mounds (*thổ phụ* 土阜) with a total area of 3 mẫu 8 thước (or 3 mẫu 8 thốn)

Table 2. Other categories of land recorded in the land cadasters in 1805 for the villages Bách Cốc, Tiểu Cốc, and Dương Lai

Bách Cốc								
Rice fields of temple and shrine 神祠仏寺田		Public dry field 公土		Housing lots/gardens/ponds 土宅 園池		Graveyards 他麻墓地		Streams 溪渠水道
Plots	Area	Plots	Area	Plots	Area	Plots	Area	Passages
2	1.3.10.6	2	8.5.0.0	3	70.1.14.1 (*32.1.0.0)	2	0.4.5.0	5
Tiểu Cốc								
Rice fields of temple and shrine		Public dry field		Housing lots/gardens/ponds		Graveyards		Streams
Plots	Area	Plots	Area	Plots	Area and holders	Plots	Area	Passages
—	—	3	28.0.9.0	72 (43 housing lots/gardens + 29 ponds)	27.7.14.7 (housing lots/gardens 20.6.3. + ponds 7.1.11.7) (*25.8.0.0) <i>15 + 25 holders</i>	4	0.7.7.0	3
Dương Lai								
Rice fields of temple and shrine		Public dry field		Housing lots/gardens/ponds		Graveyards		Streams
Plots	Area	Plots	Area	Plots	Area and holders	Plots	Area	Passages
3	0.8.4.0	—	—	12	73.0.4.3 (*13.5.0.0) <i>12 + 14 holders</i>	6	3.4.7.0	1

Notes:

- 1) The units of area are the same as those in Table 1.
- 2) The numerical values shown with * marked in parentheses in the columns of the category "housing lots, gardens, and ponds" indicate those noted for the amount of the current total amount in 1805 as the tax-exempted commoners' residence (dân cư 民居) that "used to be approved" (by the government of the Lê Dynasty).
- 3) Two holder numbers are indicated in italic letters in the columns of the category "housing lots, gardens, and ponds" respectively, in Tiểu Cốc and Dương Lai. Both of them indicate the number of persons recorded in the information pertaining to the surroundings of a certain plot of "housing lots, gardens, and ponds" (while its holder himself/herself was not recorded), but the first number indicates that of the holders of private rice fields, while the second number indicates that of the people who were not recorded in the pages of private rice fields.

**Table 3. Private rice-field holdings calculated by clan for the villages
Bách Cốc, Tiểu Cốc, and Dương Lai**

Bách Cốc (Autumn rice field only)			
Family/loneage/clan	Plots	Area	Total clan possession (plots: area)
Nguyễn 阮 20 men Nguyễn Công 阮功 (阮公) :7 Nguyễn Đình 阮廷: 5 Nguyễn Việt 阮曰: 2 Nguyễn Lang 阮琅: 2 Nguyễn Như 阮如: 1 Nguyễn Tài 阮才: 1 Nguyễn Thế 阮世: 1 Nguyễn Đăng 阮登: 1 6 women:	51 20 21 3 3 2 1 1 11	205.5.4.7 87.9.11.3 79.8.8.0 16.0.6.0 9.6.14.4 8.1.14.0 2.4.0.0 1.3.3.0 1.0.11.0 30.0.8.9	62: 235.5.13.6 (including <i>phụ canh</i> fields: 14. 9. 14. 6) -1 st rank: 13: 56.3.6.8 (including 2 plots of <i>phụ canh</i> : 3.3.10.3 -2 nd rank: 21: 80.8.8.5 (including 3 plots of <i>phụ canh</i> = 11. 6. 4. 3) -3 rd rank: 29: 98.3.13.3
Bùi 裴 9 men Bùi Huy 裴輝: 3 Bùi Văn 裴文: 3 Bùi Trí 裴致: 1 Bùi Đăng: 裴登: 1 Bùi Thế :裴世: 1 2 women	17 10 4 1 1 1 2	64.4.10.2 30.0.5.1 22.6.12.5 5.1.14.0 1.0.11.0 0.4.13.0 3.6.1.4	19: 68.0.11.6 -1 st rank: 2: 9.1.1.0 -2 nd rank: 6: 16.5.8.9 -3 rd rank: 11plots: 42.4.1.7
Đỗ 杜 Man of Đỗ Đình: 1	3	9.4.10.6	3: 9.4.10.6 -1 st rank: 2: 6.7.6.0 -2 nd rank: 1: 2.7.4.6
Trần 陳 (2:0) 2 men Trần Huy: 1 Trần Đình: 1	2 1 1	4.4.7.6 3.4.2.6 1.0.5.0	2: 4.4.7.6 wide -1 st rank: 1: 3.4.2.6 -3 rd rank: 1: 1.0.5.0
Phùng 馮 of xã An Triền 安塵(0:1) 1 woman	1	3.4.12.6	1: 3.4.12.6 (<i>phụ canh</i> field) -3 rd rank: 1: 3.4.12.6
Other groups Tư văn hương 斯文鄉 Cụu xã trưởng 舊社長	2 1	1.1.6.4 0.7.9.0	3: 1.9.0.4 wide -1 st rank: 1: 0.6.0.0 wide -2 nd rank: 2: 1.3.0.4 wide
Tiểu Cốc (3rd rank autumn rice field only)			
Clan (men: women)	Plots	Area	Total clan possession (plots: area)
Nguyễn 12 men Nguyễn Đăng 阮登5; Nguyễn Duyên 阮緣 2; Nguyễn Công 阮功1; Nguyễn Đình 阮廷1; Nguyễn Đắc 阮得1; Nguyễn Tông 阮宗1; Nguyễn Hữu 阮有1 4 women	17 5	6.6.2.9 2.0.2.0	22: 8.6.4.9
Bùi 8 men Bùi Sĩ 裴仕2; Bùi Bách 裴伯2; Bùi Như 裴如1; Bùi Văn 裴文1;裴廷1; Bùi Hữu 裴有1	10	3.9.5.0	10: 3.9.5.0

Vũ 2 men of Vũ Đình 武廷 1 woman	3 1	1.0.3.0 0.4.0.0	4: 1.4.3.0
Lê 3 Lê Đắc黎得men 1 woman	3 1	0.9.7.0 0.4.10.0	4: 1.4.2.0 e
Đỗ 1 woman	1	0.5.0.0	1: 0.5.0.0
Dương Lai (including <i>phụ canh</i> holders of Tiểu Cốc and other villages)			
Clan (men:women)	Plots	Area	Total clan possession (plots: area)
Bùi 裴 6 men Bùi Huy裴輝: 3 Bùi Đức裴德: 1 Bùi Sĩ裴士: 1 Bùi Đình裴廷: 1 1 woman	9 5 2 1 1 1	17.8.12.2 5.1.0.0 4.2.8.0 3.3.11.0 3.0.12.5	33.6.13.7 - 1 st rank: 5: 16.0.8.2 - 2 nd rank: 5: 17.6.5.5
Phạm 范 4 men Phạm Điền范田: 2 Phạm Đình范廷: 1 Phạm Danh范名: 1 1 woman	5 2 2 1 2	17.2.0.3 6.6.9.0 7.4.6.3 3.1.0.0 7.8.1.0	7: 25.0.1.3 - 1 st rank: 2: 8.5.6.3 - 2 nd rank: 5: 16.4.10.0
Trần 陳 3 men of Trần Văn 陳文 3 women	3 3	10.5.7.0 9.7.14.0	6: 20.3.6.0 - 2 nd rank: 6: 20.3.6.0
Đặng 鄧 5 men Đặng Hữu 鄧有: 3 Đặng Văn 鄧文: 2	5 3 2	20.3.1.3 10.2.3.0 10.0.13.3	5: 20.3.1.3 - 2 nd rank: 4: 15.3.1.0 - 3 rd rank: 1: 5.0.0.3
Nguyễn 阮 2 men Nguyễn Huy 阮輝: 1 Nguyễn Văn 阮文: 1 2 women	3 1 1 3	6.7.5.0 3.7.7.0 2.9.13.0 10.1.5.2	5: 16.8.10.2 - 1 st rank: 2: 8.8.0.2 - 2 nd rank: 3: 8.0.10.0
Dương 楊 3 men 2 Dương Thế 楊世 1 Dương Văn 楊文? 1 woman	5 2 3 1	13.5.5.5 5.8.5.5 7.7.0.0 3.0.14.1	6: 16.6.4.6 - 2 nd rank: 5; 13.5.5.5 - 3 rd rank: 1: 3.0.14.1
Đỗ 杜 2 men of Đỗ Văn杜文	2	7.6.0.11	2: 7.6.0.11 - 2 nd rank: 2: 7.6.1.1
Vũ 武 1 woman	1	3.3.6.0	1: 3.3.6.0 - 1 st rank: 1: 3.3.6.0
Nguyễn from Tiểu Cốc (and Bách Cốc?) 24 men 6 Nguyễn Đăng 阮登(*3. One from Bách Cốc?), 4 Nguyễn Hữu 阮有, 3 Nguyễn Duyên 阮緣3人(*1), 3 Nguyễn Đình 阮廷, 3 Nguyễn Công 阮功(*1), 3 Nguyễn Văn 阮文, 3 Nguyễn Viết 阮曰(1 from Bách Cốc?), 1 Nguyễn Đắc, 1 Nguyễn Tông 阮宗	31	146.4.4.1	31: 146.4.4.1 - 2 nd rank: 1: 2.8.3.3 - 3 rd rank: 30: 143.6.0.8

Trần 陳 from Tiểu Cốc 3 men 1 Trần, 1 Trần Xuân 陳春, 1 Trần Nao 陳饒 1 woman 1 Trần Gia (họ Trần) Trần from xã Trình Xuyên 程川社 3 men 2 Trần Đình 陳廷, 1 Trần Danh 陳名 Trần from xã Vụ Bản 務本社 1 man	3 1 1 3 14	14.7.7.0 5.0.5.8 5.4.10.0 10.8.9.0 4.9.4.6	9: 41.0.6.4 - 2 nd rank: 3: 10.8.9.0 - 3 rd rank: 6: 30.1.12.4
Lê 黎 from Tiểu Cốc 4 men of Lê Đắc 黎得 (*1)	7	38.8.1.7	7: 38.8.1.7 - 3 rd rank: 7: 38.8.1.7
Bùi 裴 from Tiểu Cốc 5 men 1 Bùi Như 裴如 (*1), 1 Bùi Hữu 裴有, 1 Bùi Sĩ 裴仕, 1 Bùi Bác 裴伯, 1 Bùi Đình 裴廷	6	25.3.2.5	6: 25.3.2.5 - 3 rd rank: 6: 25.3.2.5
Vũ 武 from Tiểu Cốc 2 men 1 Vũ Đình 武廷, 1 Vũ Hữu 武有 (*1)	2	10.0.4.4	2: 9.0.4.4 - 3 rd rank: 2: 10.0.4.4
1 man of Cáo Văn 韶文 from Tiểu Cốc	1	5.6.11.0	1: 5.6.11.0 - 3 rd rank: 1: 5.6.11.0
1 man of Phạm Văn 范文 from Tiểu Cốc	1	3.5.3.0	1: 3.5.3.0 -3 rd rank: 1: 3.5.3.0

Notes:

- 1) Units of area are same as those in Tables 1 and 2.
- 2) To avoid making the columns too complicated, different forms were employed in three parts of this table (corresponding to a village) to enlist the male landholder numbers in a clan.
- 3) Among the holders' number of *phụ canh* fields at Dương Lai, the number of villagers of Tiểu Cốc who possessed private rice fields in Tiểu Cốc itself was indicated in parenthesis using a * sign.

Despite the general situation of the rural area in the Red River Delta such as high population density and small-scale agricultural production, scholars of village studies have often been impressed by the diversity among villages. This is also the case with these three villages, although the difference of population among these villages during those days is unknown and textual problems with cadasters and other materials are still to be closely examined, as discussed in the final part of this paper. In both Bách Cốc and Tiểu Cốc, there are plenty of public rice fields (more than 200 mẫu each, the whole of Tiểu Cốc had another 28 mẫu of public dry fields or công thổ) but private rice fields differ in scale from each other. In Bách Cốc, more than 300 mẫu of tư điền was held by around 41 people and groups (average: 7.88 mẫu). Most of these tư điền holders were resident villagers. If 18 mẫu 4

sào 12 thước 2 tấc held by probably 3 phụ canh holders are excluded, the average area of 38 persons and groups who originally belonged to the village was 8.01 mẫu. The differential among villagers was relatively large: the smallest one only held 4 mẫu 13 thước and the largest held 51 mẫu 1 sào 11 thước 9 tấc (Nguyễn Đình Kỳ 阮廷驕). In Tiểu Cốc, only approximately 16 mẫu of tư điền (of 3rd rank fields) was divided into 40 plots (from 2 sào to 5 sào wide) and held by 30 holders. Only two holders held more than one mẫu in their own village. In Dương Lai, there was a small scale of public rice field (around 16 mẫu), while there was more than 400 mẫu of private field, but 64.7 % of it was phụ canh held by people from other villages. Specially important was the fact that a maximum of 255 mẫu 0 sào 4 thước 5 tấc, a 89.4 % of the total phụ canh fields, were held by 45 villagers of Tiểu Cốc (of various family names as

listed in Table 3) including 38 who did not have a private rice field in their home village. The phụ canh fields in Dương Lai belonging to these 45 holders (averaging 5.67 mẫu) varied from 2 mẫu 1 sào 5 thước to 13 mẫu 5 sào 14 thước, were not as evenly held as the private rice fields in their original village. Nonetheless, no villager of Tiểu Cốc had more than 10 mẫu of private rice fields. This was also the case with Dương Lai: a total of 34 private holders of Dương Lai only held 4.58 mẫu per person. No one held more than 10 mẫu of private rice fields.

3. Female holders and the transfer of lands across the borders of villages

From the viewpoint of the micro-scope village study, the information of land cadasters should be combined with the information available via other sources, such as family genealogies (gia phả) and stone inscriptions that recorded donations to religious bodies for the purpose of rituals after the donor's death (bia hậu). Here, the author would like to mention two topics for the study of which such a combination will be helpful.

The first of these is women's right to own property (that was to be maintained even after her marriage), a topic that has long been regarded as a symbol of the Vietnamese traditional family system. Table 3 also shows that a proportion of private rice fields were held by women in the three villages. From the viewpoint of studying villages, women's property recorded in land cadasters can shed light not only on women's rights, but also on the transfer of land across the border of the village. For example, the cadaster of Bách Cốc recorded a female name Nguyễn Thị Vệ 阮氏衛 among private rice field holders. She had a plot of 1st rank field in xứ Đồng Lộ 同洩處 that amounted to 2 mẫu 4 sào 10 thước 3 tấc, while the other 2 plots (one first rank field in xứ Đồng Bến 同漚處 that amounted 9 sào and one 2nd rank field in xứ Đồng Lai that amounted 3 mẫu 4 sào 7 thước) were recorded as phụ canh fields held by Nguyễn Thị Vệ of xã Thị Mai,

Nam Chân District 南真縣時邁社. Xã Thị Mai (located around 3 km South of Bách Cốc) was later renamed Nguyệt Mai 月邁 in the reign of Tự Đức (due to the imperial taboo surrounding its previous name) and its cadaster was bounded into the cadasters of Trình Xuyên Hạ Tổng 程川下總, Vụ Bản District according to the late-Nguyễn jurisdiction. In the 1805 cadaster of Thị Mai included in the cadaster of Trình Xuyên Hạ Tổng, we can find a Nguyễn Thị Vệ, who held as much as 46 mẫu 9 sào as a villager of Thị Mai [5]. If these Nguyễn Thị Vệ were all identical to each other, she was the biggest land holder throughout the 19 villages studied by Sakurai. For her possession, it can be inferred that she was born to a certain Nguyễn family in Bách Cốc and owned (by inheritance?) 3 plots there, then married a Thị Mai villager (a bride usually moved into the husband's house after marriage in those days) and obtained a large amount of new property (while the compiler of the Bách Cốc cadaster failed to indicate one of her plots as phụ canh?). One of the two family genealogies (hereafter called version A [2]) entitled *Đỗ gia thế phả* 杜家世譜 of the Đỗ Clan in Thị Mai/Nguyệt Mai recorded in the part of "the Second Branch 次支" a husband and wife named Đỗ Sên 杜笙 (who died in the year Bính Tuất 丙戌, possibly 1826) and Nguyễn Thị Vệ (who died in the year Tân Mão 辛卯, possibly 1831), respectively. Judging from the genealogy, inscriptions, and sắc phong (the letter of appointment or permission for ancestral rites issued by the name of the king) preserved in Thị Mai/Nguyệt Mai until now, it is apparent that the Đỗ Clan was the most powerful clan in Thị Mai in the 18th century.

Although it is unclear whether the Nguyễn Thị Vệ in the genealogy indeed came from Bách Cốc; there are some records of marriage between the Đỗ Clan and villagers of Bách Cốc. For instance, according to *Đỗ gia thế phả* (version A), Đỗ Bác Trách, who was the eldest son in the 7th generation of the Major Line (Trưởng Phái 長派) of the "First Branch 長支" and who held 49 mẫu 4 sào 10 thước in the cadaster, was the son of

Trọng Khản 仲侃 (the second son of Hữu Tín 有信, who was the eldest son in the 6th generation of the Major Line) and a woman of the Nguyễn Clan in xã Bách Cốc (whose grandmother was a daughter of Đỗ Hữu Nhiệm 杜有任 in the 5th generation of the Major Line). The adopted son of Hữu Tín, named Trọng Nghiễm 仲儼, also married a woman from the Nguyễn Clan of xã Bách Cốc and appears to have had a son named Đức Trạch 德澤 who held 48 mẫu 3 sào in the 1805 cadaster. Đỗ Bác Điển 杜伯僊 was recorded in version B of the genealogy as the eldest son of the Major Line (who might be identical with Đỗ Huy Điển 杜輝僊 in the 1805 cadaster who held 19 mẫu 9 sào) and his mother named Phạm Thị Liên came from xã Bách Cốc. On the Bách Cốc side, the genealogy of the Nguyễn Công Clan (a quốc ngữ text compiled in 1966) recorded 9 women who were married to men with the family name Đỗ, including two from Nguyệt Mai [20, p. 243]. There remains in Bách Cốc a large tomb called Lăng Gạch, that belongs to a powerful eunuch named Bái quận công 沛郡公. According to one of the inscriptions incised on its surface (Phật tự bi ký 伏祀碑記 incised in 1735 [8]), Bái quận công's wife whose family name was Đỗ was recognized as hậu phật (who would be worshiped after her death) in 1735 by 2 giáp (a group of villagers organized for rituals) of East and West. Therefore, it is possible that she also came from the Đỗ Clan in Thì Mai/Nguyệt Mai.

There is also interesting information related to the female properties recorded in the cadasters. A Đỗ Thị Hấn 杜氏夔 of xã Đồng Chi 同枝社 (a village nearby later renamed Đồng Mỹ 同美社, the cadaster of which is also contained in that of Trình Xuyên Hạ Tổng) is recorded in the cadaster of Nguyệt Mai as a holder of phụ canh rice field of 27 mẫu 9 sào. No person with the family name Đỗ appears in the cadaster of Đồng Chi, while 7 women of the family name Đỗ were recorded in the cadaster of Nguyệt Mai as tư điền holders inside the village. They held in total 96 mẫu 8 sào 8 thước on 669 mẫu 4 sào 3 thước of the private rice fields in the village

(14.5 %). Therefore, it is likely that she was born to the Đỗ Clan of Nguyệt Mai and possessed (by inheritance?) tư điền there, then married a man in Đồng Chi.

Sakurai [18] analyzes the background of the diversification of landholdings among villages in the Red River Delta after the 16th century from two perspectives. The first perspective is of “pawning (điễn mại 典賣)” and the appropriation of public rice fields, as well as the buying and selling of private rice fields. The second perspective is of natural disasters and social unrest (which occurred especially frequently in the 18th century), which tended to disturb the unstable Summer Rice production more severely than it did the stable Autumn Rice production; therefore, a large part of the Summer Rice Fields had been abandoned and subsequently possessed as kỳ tại or phụ canh by the people of other villages before the original holders returned. It is now clear that female inheritance and female marriage outside the home village was another factor that may have caused a considerable scale of land transfer among villages.

4. The household economies of villagers

The second topic concerns the household economy, including aspects other than rice production, which also became a much-discussed issue among the present-day villagers under the Đổi mới Policy. In this regard, the land category of “housing lots/gardens/ponds” (thổ trạch viên trì 土宅園池) shown in Table 2 deserves more attention. On the one hand, housing lots had been exempted by the Lê government, at least in its last phase (see Table 2), and the amount they paid (by copper cash or silver money) for gardens and ponds was usually smaller than what they paid for rice fields, according to the cadasters of 1888/1889 which are bound together with the 1805 cadasters. Although the tax rate is unknown, it is possible that some of the rice fields were disguised as housing lots or gardens. For instance, the total amount of housing lots/

gardens/ponds recorded in the cadasters of Bách Cốc and Dương Lai, both of which were far larger than that of Tiểu Cốc and the amount of tax-exempted housing lots in Bách Cốc and Dương Lai themselves, can be perceived from this angle. On the other hand, villagers could utilize housing lots and gardens for purposes such as planting vegetables and fruits, breeding pigs, poultry, and so forth. In ponds, they could fish and harvest aquatic plants. None of the cadasters of the three villages recorded who occupied these lands and ponds, but the recorded 3 plots of thôn Bách Cốc and 12 plots of xã Dương Lai must have been occupied by many villagers. The cadasters of the thôn Tiểu Cốc and xã Dương Lai recorded the holders of the rice fields or housing lots/gardens/ponds of surrounding land plots of the listed housing lots/gardens/ponds. Especially in Tiểu Cốc, 40 holders of surrounding land plots were recorded while the recorded housing lots/gardens/ponds were divided into as many as 72 plots, including 43 housing lots (probably including gardens) and 29 ponds. The average area of a housing lot was 6.46 sào (2,327m²), while that of a pond was 2.48 sào (891m²). The difference in the area of housing lots was not large, most of them ranged from 3 to 6 sào, and only two plots were more than 7 sào. Through the clues provided in this information, we may make some inferences regarding the household/family economies of the villagers in Tiểu Cốc.

As mentioned above, the private rice fields in the thôn Tiểu Cốc itself were neither wide (only around 5 sào per person among 30 registered holders), nor productive (all belonged to the 3rd rank), and 38 among 45 holders of phụ canh fields in Dương Lai (also all belonging to the 3rd rank) did not have a private rice field in Tiểu Cốc itself. Additionally, as presented in Table 1, there may have been some other private rice field holders in Tiểu Cốc, who only appear in the information regarding the surroundings of private rice fields in Tiểu Cốc or Dương Lai, as the case of the (private) rice fields of Nguyễn Doanh Quý 阮盈貴 were reportedly located to the South of the

private rice field of Lê Thị Tựu 黎氏就 in Tiểu Cốc. If we suppose there were around 70 Tiểu Cốc villagers who held private rice fields in 1805 and all the public rice fields and public dry fields were distributed among them equally (averaging 2.87 mẫu and 0.6 mẫu, respectively), those who only held 5 sào of private rice field in Tiểu Cốc without having any phụ canh field in Dương Lai may have produced a subsistent level of rice and other crops (taro, sweet potato, beans, among others), though people like the village headmen, villagers charged in state service, and drafted soldiers who may well have been favored in distribution, and the exact burden of individual families/households (taxes and corvée labors, and the expenditure of the village community), is unknown. Furthermore, the products of the housing lots, gardens, and ponds must also have improved their diet and family accounts.

However, we need to consider the population of each village and the size of the family/household. An ordinary village of Việt (Kinh) people before the French colonial regime was usually supposed to have had around 500 inhabitants. If we assume that every land holder represented a household of five persons, a village of 70 landholders or 350 total residents (together with some people who did not have full membership of the village) does not appear so strange, especially after the turmoil seen in the late 18th century. Then, how did 70 households/families use 43 housing lots? If those who had rice fields only in Phú Cốc did not have housing lots there, it is possible that they were allowed to reside in housing lots in Tiểu Cốc belonging to their wealthy clansmen (or those in their kin group on the maternal/wife's side). Additionally, in thôn Bách Cốc and xã Dương Lai (especially in Bách Cốc where the registered number of private rice field holders was small judging from the total amount of rice fields), villagers who had no or little private rice field allocation may have lived in the big housing lots of wealthy people. In such cases, family/lineage/clan (not always patrilineal) ties, and kinship (not always the

paternal side) ties as well, must have functioned among the rich and the poor, rather than simple class relationship between landlords and tenant farmers.

Regarding the family ties, the research in former làng Hoa Bản, Sơn Tây (present-day Phường Bản (芳板) village, Phụng Châu commune, Chương Mỹ district, Hà Nội city) undertaken by Ueda Shinya [23: chap. 7] is worth considering. A fewer number of men than women were registered in its 1805 land cadaster as private rice field holders, but the scale of men's land was larger than that of women's in most cases (this is also shown in the chúc thư 囑書 documents of property distribution from parents to children). According to his closer study, it is not likely that this situation has reflected villagers' maneuver to reduce the burden of labor and military service levied upon male adults. Ueda rather stressed the possibility that the recorded men represented a multi-household compound, while each woman was given smaller properties, mainly as a future bride price. A multi-household compound is a concept of Southeast Asian sociology (having also been applied in ancient Japanese history), according to which a plot of land was resided in by multiple nuclear families/households with respective ridges. It differs from the Chinese-style of extended family in which all married sons of a parentage are encouraged to live together on a plot with their wives and children. Rather, the co-living units of multi-household compounds change according to the life cycle of family members. When a child (not always a son) would get married, the new family would build their own ridge in the housing plot of his/her parents (by this stage, all the fields that the parents and the child cultivated could be registered as the property of the father). Younger brothers/sisters followed this pattern, but they would leave the plot one after another for new residences whenever they had enough land and their own children grew up. Finally, the youngest son or daughter would live together with the old parents to take care of them and inherit the

original plot after the death of the parents. The records of the housing lots/gardens/ponds of Tiểu Cốc may have partly reflected this system, which Ueda inferred from the records of rice fields.

5. Remaining problems and issues for further research

Through the 1805 cadasters of merely three villages in Nam Định, we were able to discover several things, especially when they are combined with other local sources such as family genealogies and inscriptions, or when compared with village studies in other areas. For instance, regarding basic topics such as the scale and frequency distribution of landholdings, from which the structure of village communities can be inferred, the striking discoordination of the boundaries between village and land ownership of xã Dương Lai (which held public rice fields in other villages, while the larger part of its own private rice field was occupied by people from other villages) is of special interest in relation to the 18th century social crisis. Information pertaining to the two other villages and land cadasters, including the records of land other than the rice fields, can shed light on new issues such as the trans-village transfer of rice fields through marriage (xã/thôn Bách Cốc) and family/household economies (thôn Tiểu Cốc).

These findings may stimulate further research in many directions. Here, the author would like to mention two key issues that require attention: one related to the village community, the other related to family, kinship, and clan. Regarding the history of the village community, the author is especially interested in the cadaster of Tiểu Cốc, according to which both categories of private rice fields and housing lots/gardens/ponds were divided into small and relatively even plots. If the thôn Tiểu Cốc was actually founded at some point in time in the 18th century, the records in the 1805 cadaster may show, in a faithful way, that it was recognized by the government at the time of its establishment.

Once a cadaster was approved, the real situation of land holdings was seldom reinvestigated by the government. However, the first governmental approval of a new village must have been accompanied by an actual investigation. For this reason, total research in the history of Tiểu Cốc, as conducted at Bách Cốc, may reveal a typical pattern of village establishment in the post-18th century context. The even distribution of land may not simply be understood as a remnant of the primitive/ Asiatic community. If these villages did not physically inherit an earlier division of land plots (from the 15th century, for instance), the land distribution appears to have reflected the peasants' decision to bear such burdens as taxes, corvée labor, and military services in equal measures under the condition that land was not abundant in comparison with the population. This, in turn, suggests that the cadasters of Bách Cốc and Dương Lai may have not only recorded the situation of old villages where the differentiation of land holdings became clear but also reflected expedient declarations and disguises. The detailed information of Tiểu Cốc also appears to be comparable with the situation of contemporary villages in Japan under the murauke or village contract system, under which every village was contracted with its feudal lord to submit a fixed amount of land tax and labor, and the villages had strong communality and strict membership.

Regarding family and clan, studies of land cadasters and family genealogies can also be connected to land cadasters. For example, there were 13 clans (dòng họ) in the area of former làng Bách Cốc in 1994 [20]. Table 3 indicates that the Nguyễn and the Bùi were two big land holding groups in thôn Bách Cốc in 1805, but the former has now been divided into 8 clans according to different middle names (Nguyễn Tài 阮才, Nguyễn Lang 阮琅, Nguyễn Công 阮公¹³, Nguyễn Đình 阮廷, Nguyễn Như 阮如, Nguyễn Văn 阮文, Nguyễn Ích 阮益, and Nguyễn Viết 阮晔), while the latter has been divided into 3 (Bùi Huy 裴輝, Bùi Văn 裴文 and Bùi Doãn 裴允).

Other clans are Vũ 武 and Trần 陳. Probably the small clans distinguished from each other by their middle names were formed after the late-18th or early 19th century as a result of internal conflicts before then, in the cases of both the Nguyễn [20] and the Bùi [24], while the Bùi in Tiểu Cốc continued to be a single clan which compiled a gia phả in 1891. Among these 13 clans of Bách Cốc, Nguyễn Văn, Bùi Doãn, and Vũ do not appear in the 1805 cadaster, while a Đỗ Đình Vinh is recorded as the holder of 3 plots (that amount to 9 mẫu 4 sào 10 thước 6 tấc in total). There are also personal names in the cadaster, of which the middle names listed do not exist today in the village, such as Nguyễn Thế 阮世, Bùi Trí 裴致, and Bùi Thế 裴世. The vicissitudes of these groups are still not well known.

To undertake deeper research into these aspects, textual problems must be examined more carefully. In this regard, the author would like to introduce a few problems to conclude this paper. First, several personal names were only recorded as holders of private rice fields or housing lots/gardens/ponds in the information of the surrounding plots of land that was formally registered. Second, among more than 30 private rice field holders registered in the 1805 cadaster of thôn Bách Cốc, only around 16 people can be identified as having been recorded in the family genealogies of Bách Cốc according to the author's preliminary observations. Neither Nguyễn Đình Kỳ (who held 51 mẫu 1 sào 11 thước 9 tấc, the biggest landholding in this village if the abovementioned case of Nguyễn Thị Vệ is omitted) nor Bùi Huy Dung 裴輝榕 (容) (who held 30 mẫu 3 sào 1 thước 3 tấc, the biggest amount among the Bùi Clansmen) appears in any genealogy, while the second largest holder Nguyễn Công Cẩn 阮功謹 (45 mẫu 9 sào 7 thước 9 tấc) and Nguyễn Công Bản (who held 26 mẫu 2 sào 4 thước 8 tấc) are recorded in the genealogy of Nguyễn Công. Nguyễn Đình Kỳ and Bùi Huy Dung are also listed as village headmen in the 1805 cadaster with their signature. Could any fictitious persons be registered in the state

cadaster?

The possibility of total disguise and the simple mis-spelling of personal names put aside, these facts may lead us to some textual assumptions. First, judged from the above-mentioned records of Nguyễn Thị Vệ in the Bách Cốc cadaster, information pertaining to different land plots may indicate facts of the land from different points in time (it is likely that one of her plots was recorded before marriage but two were recorded after her marriage to a man in Thì Mai). It is technically difficult to immediately update the information of surrounding land plots whenever the owner dies or transfers the plot to another person. In many cases, a land cadaster may have been composed by simply combining information pertaining to individual land plots from different points in time without strict cross-checking. Second, the same randomness can be found regarding the indication of names. In private sources such as family genealogy, it is often found that the members of a clan are recorded by different categories of names. Male members were not always recorded by their formal names (húy 諱). They were often recorded by their tự 字 (their current name or posthumous name) or hiệu 號 (a pseudonym), and sometimes by the combination of a middle name indicating their natal position in their generation (such as Bá 伯 and Trọng 仲) and their own (current) name. Such arbitrary/ad hoc ways of writing appear to reflect the everyday lives of villagers, and this does not appear to have been challenged even in official documents such as land cadasters. Both the fair copier of the cadaster of xã Bách Cốc (including the part pertaining to the thôn Tiểu Cốc) and the compiler of the family genealogy of the Nguyễn (Đình) Clan in 1809 were written as Nguyễn Xuân Thiều 阮春韶. According to the genealogy, however, Xuân Thiều was the eldest son of Công Mão 功茂, and Xuân Thiều was the current name, while his formal name was Thắng 勝 and posthumous name was Đoan Lương tiên sinh 端良先生 ([7, p.4]). This suggests that even the hereditary middle name had not yet been

fixed. In the land plot information, including surrounding plots in the cadaster, such disunity and inconsistency must also be reflected.

Paying enough attention to these problems, the author wishes to publish future paper(s) on the village history in Nam Định, focusing more on the issues 伙 related to families and clans.

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Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS, project no. 21H00577) for financial support and Editage (www.editage.com) for English language checking and editing.