



Fig. 15: Street vendor of betel in North Vietnam; in 2000 (courtesy of Dr. Trần Tiến, Hanoi, 2003).

nuts and green leaves the human sense, the living feeling, and folk identity ... I enter the bride's home along with four maidens who bring the tray with over hundred areca nuts and I am vibrating with deep, sweet love, and affection. I really reach up the sublime happiness of a Vietnamese mother" (Mai Thục 1998: 24). It seems necessary to note that most of these offered quids finally will wither; nobody wants to chew them.

Many Vietnamese keep immemorial souvenirs from this custom. Among Vietnamese elderly, the reminiscence from the past, especially from their childhood, is always mixed with areca palm trees and their suave fragrance.

After the end of the war (April 30th, 1975), over three million Vietnamese left their country and



Fig. 17: Betel leaves in Paris 13^e, France (Nguyễn Xuân Hiến, 2005).



Fig. 16: Areca nuts (Nguyễn Xuân Hiến, 2005).

were spread over a hundred countries all over the world. A couple of Vietnamese elderly people from the first generation living abroad have always kept the custom of chewing-betel. They brought with them a rather complete betel service, especially the areca knife. But the Vietnamese diaspora is not numerous; moreover, they are recent residents. In the USA, the Vietnamese American community is the most populous in Vietnamese diaspora and concentrates in some localities such as Santa Clara (California), Houston (Texas), etc. The environmental conditions facilitate the practice of betel-chewing custom among some last chewers. In France, where they have settled for a long period and keep a rather constant relationship with their motherland, one