

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF CONFUCIANISM IN VIETNAM

(Final part)

Abstract: *Confucianism, also known as the Way of Scholars or the Teachings of Confucius and Mencius, has a significant contribution towards the Vietnam's traditional culture. However, from the past to the present, it has often been viewed as a politico-social doctrine. Indeed, during its existence and development, Confucianism has had a complete system of concepts, rites, and practices associated with ideas of the universal principles and of the mankind which plays as foundations for viewing it as a religion. This article seeks to shed light on the religious perspective of Confucianism and of Confucianism in Vietnam.*

Key words: *Confucianism, the Way of Scholars, Confucius, State religion, official religion*

5. Ancestor worship

Ancestor worship, as a primary foundation of Chinese religion in general, aims at expressing great gratitude to ancestors. This is one of the most important ethical principles in Confucianism. Worship means the desirable expansion of life of ancestors in the celestial realm. This custom could be found since the ancient time. It could be the first Heavenly Emperor mentioned since the Shang dynasty who was the first ancestor to be deified. The Chinese now often say that they have a religion of “worshiping Heaven and making offerings to ancestors” with a very long tradition.

While the emperor and top-ranked mandarins were responsible for performing official rites, ancestor worship could be found among the grassroots. The dead of a family and of a kin would be in charge of performing this worship. They had to be men. Thus, ancestor worship

* PhD., Institute for Religious Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

could be found both at both State and grassroots levels. According to the common rule, this kind of worship would rely on the bloodline of the performers. This was compulsory to both people of the upper class and of the lower class.

In rich families, tablets engraved full names of the ancestors would be placed on a separated area within the altar. In poor families, the altar was often placed inside a hole on the wall, in the corner of the house where husband and wife would sleep during the night. A tablet would be placed next to the coffin of the dead where it was buried. That place was seen as the residence for the dead. Thus, ancestors made a part of the life of their descendants.

In Spring and Autumn, descendants often performed a solemn rituals to ancestors at which offerings would be food, fresh flowers and votive objects for the the use in the other world. The same thing would happen on the first day and the fifteen day of the month according to the lunar calendar. The provision of offerings with foods was an important ritual since it would help to maintain life of the spirit. The tablet was also called the “holder of spirit” - a vague concept which was mixed between the Chinese-Buddhism’s view of rebirth and the Taoism’s view of the soul (spirit of the mind) and senses (spirit of the physical body and thinking) coexisted within a man. Senses were believed to still embedded within the dead body until the body was total ruined. The dead body according to the judgment of Hades (*Diyu*) would either travel to the Heaven or to the Hell.

The Chinese believed that ancestors paid great attention to the fertility of the soil and their descendants’ destiny. Thus, it was extremely important to maintain the humanness and blessings from the ancestors by using special and solemn rituals to make sure these entities would not be disappointed and get angry. Ancestor worship would cease to exist when the last heir of the family died. Therefore, every man had to have a son. This was a must and as a sacred principle. For example, one of the man’s great mistakes was having no son. This was considered as a son’s failure in showing filial piety to his parents.

Residents within a village often were kin. In this case, rich families often built a separated worshipping house for tablets of ancestors. Such a house could have hundreds or thousands tablets. Tablets were placed in

both the left and the right and all faced South. Normally, tablets were only displayed up to 5 generations. Beyond this limit, tablets would be stored somewhere in order to save space. Ancestors from the 5th generations backwards would only be worshiped as the secondary. No offerings would be prepared for them directly.

Ancestor worship only began after the dead was buried and ceremonies such as 49th day and 100th day were performed, etc.

Thus, ancestor worship is the final important feature of Confucianism as a religion. Confucianism, also known as the official religion or State religion, has a long history in China. These important contents define the religious perspective of Confucianism which has been not adequately concerned by the Vietnamese. However, it is necessary to acknowledge differences between Confucianism with Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, or Catholicism. Differences reveal in many aspects as discussed in the first part of this article. Confucianism is not a religion at a glance. Yet with a close enough look, we can see that it is not totally different from other world religions.

6. Confucianism in Vietnam and in Hanoi

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic nation within which the Việt (the Kinh) belongs to the majority. When mention Confucianism in Vietnam, we talk about Confucianism among the Kinh. Of course, we should also pay some attention to the minority group of Chinese Vietnamese in Vietnam.

Thus, Confucianism does not take the whole national space. In history, the Vietnamese monarchies always tried to expand the Confucianism's influences over the whole territory. Among the King, from the beginning, Confucianism neither became the dominant religion nor equally absorbed among different groups of people, social classes and among men and women. Only during 15th -20th century, did Confucianism take the privileged position thanked to the State's policy. Yet in reality, Confucianism had to share the social and mental role with other religions such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Catholicism. Specially, like in China, as discussed previously, Confucianism had also to give way to popular religious beliefs including those originated from indigenous religious beliefs or derived from mainstream religions.

The history of Confucianism in Vietnam can be divided into different periods with different contents and historical contexts. Despite of such differences, we can still discuss of a whole Vietnamese Confucianism including Confucianism in Vietnam and Vietnamese Confucianism. Hereunder are main features of the long existence of Confucianism in Vietnam.

6.1. The Chinese domination

From around the 2nd century BC, Vietnam, precisely the northern region of the present Vietnam, became the land under the Chinese domination. The domination might begin with the Zhao dynasty. Yet not until the 1st century AD was Vietnam invaded and controlled literally. Vietnamese territory was divided into Chinese model of administrative units (following models of the Qin and of the later dynasties). That ruling system basically targeted in eradicating the Vietnamese traditional institutions with two fundamental features: the existence of many relatively autonomous villages and the translocal links among local heads. However, plans were different from what the dominant had achieved. In reality, typical features of the Vietnamese traditional society existed with its own culture. This was the social context of the Confucianism during the foreign domination over 1,000 years.

During this period, there appeared assimilation and resistance to that assimilation in terms of nationality and culture. These two processes also represented a dual transformation. On the one hand, it was once said that without the Chinese domination and without influences from Chinese civilization there would be no Vietnamese. To say it more correctly, the Vietnamese on the one hand resisted the Chinese ruling forces. On the other hand, the Vietnamese accumulated achievements from Chinese civilization for their own evolution. The evolution of the Vietnamese led to the birth of nation-state and the ideologies of national autonomy which was realized in 905 by Khúc Thừa Dụ, then of the national independence realized by Ngô Quyền. Ngô Quyền defeated Chinese troops and opened up the national independence over 1,000 years later.

In that context, Confucianism of the Chinese domination of Vietnam (belonging to the North) had specific features in comparison with its whole history in Vietnam. First of all, Confucianism, already had a form of a religion, and because it came with invasion, it basically belonged to

the Chinese rulers and migrants. Its spaces of existence were certainly where the Chinese resided, which meant areas surrounding local administrative units. Meanwhile, the rest of the Viet still immerse themselves in the old and indigenous system of traditions. This was what we could find during early centuries.

Later, during the course of time, with inter-bloodline marriages, and the Vietnamese perception, Confucianism step by step entered the Vietnamese mental life and formed the national Confucianism. There were Vietnamese who not only understood correctly fundamental concepts, ideologies, and rites but also participated in examination to become officials of the administrative system in China.

Vietnamese official history records had a list of Chinese administrators in Vietnam who had contribution to the formation of Confucian studies and Confucianism in Vietnam. Among them, there were three famous characters: Tích Quang, Nhân Diên and Sĩ Nhiếp. The last character was the general administrator in Vietnam that time for 40 years (187 - 226).

Sĩ Nhiếp originally came from Luo. His ancestors fled to Giao Chi after Wang Mang's uprising under the Western Han dynasty (9 - 24) and Sĩ Nhiếp was of the 6th generation. He was specialized in reading and making annotations for the Zuo Qiu Ming's annotated version of the *Spring and Autumn annals* and for the *Book of Documents*. It could be said that Sĩ Nhiếp was the first scholar of Vietnamese Confucianism. There had to be some reasons for the Vietnamese Confucians later called him the "ancestor of Vietnam's Confucian studies". Besides, Sĩ Nhiếp was also a practitioner of Taoism. He was famous for the technique of *qi gong*. He was the first facilitator for Buddhism when this religion started to be introduced into Vietnam. The evidence was the establishment of a famous Buddhist monastery in Luy Lâu where Sĩ Nhiếp built his office. This monastery attracted the visit of many Indian and Chinese Buddhist monks on their ways to promulgate Buddhism into Vietnam. Vietnamese official histories praised Sĩ Nhiếp for his many achievements during his office in terms of administration, science, and religion.

Through Sĩ Nhiếp we could see a harmonious relation between Indian religion and Chinese religions in Vietnam, yet Confucianism was still the dominant religion thanked to the favor and leadership of the

administrator. Generally speaking, Confucianism, like other world religions, had the role as one of sources for Vietnam's national culture if we consider the facts that this religion brought into the nation Confucian qualification examination, the administrative system, ethical and moral standards, scripts, rites, and worldviews.

The Confucianism's influences in Vietnam as both a philosophy and a religion were not much clear. All the fundamental Confucianism's religious concepts and views had been familiar with the Vietnamese upper class. That was the primary condition for them to quickly escape from the situation of those who were under a foreign ruler and proceeded to the position of leaders of movements for national independence. Regarding the deification, there were some negotiations between Chinese and Vietnamese indigenous deities. Chinese administrators did also worship Vietnamese deities such as Long Đỗ and Tô Lịch. In nature, Confucianism as the State religion had not gone far beyond the traditional religious beliefs which based on animism and polytheism. This was true for both China and Vietnam. The reason was that Confucianism was basically the religion of the peasants.

In short, until 938, the Chinese domination of Vietnam created the reality that Confucianism had deep and pervasive influences on various aspects of the society. From 938, the Vietnamese had their own ruler and thus their hidden power was freed. The Vietnamese did not boycott all the Chinese influences but preserved what they considered valuable, including Confucianism. Now with the new stance, the Vietnamese built and advanced their society.

6.2. Đại Việt's Independence

This was a long period which began in 938 and ended by 1945. Dynasties and national regimes one by one led and governed the nation, including: Ngô, Đinh, Early Lê, Lý, Trần, Late Lê, Mạc, Tây Sơn, Nguyễn. This period can be then divided into smaller periods. Confucianism could be called Vietnamese Confucianism with its own development and distinctive features.

The Ngô, Đinh, and Early Lê dynasties

From the Ngô to the Early Lê, the regular change of dynasties revealed the fact that there had not been a central regime that was

powerful enough to maintain national stability and unity. That was a favorable condition for Confucianism to grow. The official historical records only provided little information of some aspects of this growth. Achievements from archaeology recently in old imperial city Hoa Lu revealed some information of the Đinh and the Early Lê dynasties. It could be said that the most prominent feature was that three religions, including Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, were all present at imperial city of the Đinh and the Early Lê. This illustrated that all Three Religions were highly respected at that time.

Thus, Confucianism had not been the most dominant religion in this period. This was evident in the comments made by a historian under the Lý and Trần dynasties as indicating that the conferment of many empresses by emperors of the Đinh and Early Lê dynasties did not follow the Confucian rites properly.

These examples were among many critics by historians of the later dynasties who had deeper understanding of Confucian's principles. Only few information about religious events mentioned in the official historical records such as conferment for Buddhists and Taoists; the formation of shrine for god of mountain; the act of pilling sugarcane on the head of a monk under the Đinh dynasty; decision of setting the emperor's birthday as the fixed date for boat racing. There was the information about emperor Lê Đại Hành who first performed Royal Ploughing ceremony at Đọi Mountain (Long Đội, in 1007). There were also notes of the journeys to the north to request Buddhist scriptures from China.

During the Đinh and Early Lê dynasties, also from the official historical records, there appeared prophecies which predicted future of the new dynasty. These pieces of information only let us assume that Confucian rites had not been systematized. Besides, it revealed that there was none academic or scholarly activities and this suggested that religious practices were more prominent than religious teaching and religious studies.

Also during this period, the role of scholar-mandarins - the official students of Confucianism - was not dominant as the role of Buddhist monks and Taoists who participated in politics and foreign relations such as Vạn Hạnh, Pháp Thuận, etc. After 1,000 years under Chinese domination, at the early stage of independence, Confucianism could not

be considered as Vietnamese Confucianism yet. This only happened after several hundred years later.

The Lý, Trần, and Hồ dynasties

Failures in the ruling of the nation under the Đinh and Early Lê dynasties did not mean that Confucianism had no role. It was the temporary situation when the national leaders needed just more time to see clearly the role of Confucianism. Under the Lý dynasty, Confucianism showed undeniable advantages in the construction and administration of the society which helped creating a powerful centralized regime to unify the nation and expand territories. Đại Việt became one of the flourished civilizations that emerged in East and Southeast Asia.

From 1009 to the first half of the 20th century was the period of autonomy and independence. This was the longest and the only period with centralized-power monarchies in the history of Vietnam. Most historians called this time the period of feudalism.

During this period of 900 years, there were two times when the independence was interrupted because of foreign invasion. The first was the Ming dynasty (1407 - 1427) which terribly destroyed the Vietnamese culture. The second was the invasion by the Western colonials (mainly the French) and the Japanese occupation (1858 - 1945). Vietnam was turned into a colonized society but still had the title of a monarchy. This is the main feature of the Vietnamese history with deep impacts on all aspects of the society including Confucianism.

The Lý dynasty began a real monarchy in Vietnam. It lasted for over 200 years (1010 - 1225). The beginning of the Lý came with the settlement of the imperial city in Thăng Long. It was formerly the Đại La citadel built by Cao Biền as the administrative headquarter under the Tang dynasty. The reason for the relocation of the imperial city from Hoa Lư to Thăng Long was clearly stated in historical records in the form of a Q&A session between Lý Công Uẩn as the founder of the Lý dynasty and his top-ranked officials. It is now called *Thiên đô chiếu* (The Edict on the Transfer of the Capital). In that document, Lý Công Uẩn reminded his people of an example in relocation of capital in ancient China. At the same time, he used one of the key Confucian concepts *the Mandate of*

Heaven to advocate that the relocation both followed the Heaven's will and the people's desire. The Đại La citadel was chosen to be the centre of the nation and would then be inherited by later generations. Đại La was said to be the place that met the needs for national expansion and development and avoided mistakes by the Đinh and Early Lê dynasties which neglected the Mandate of Heaven by having chosen the disadvantaged Hoa Lư for the capital city. The symbol of the new imperial city was the golden dragon flying ahead of the emperor's boat. This was also the main reason for the name of the new imperial capital: Thăng Long.

The establishment of the new capital city had great importance on the Vietnamese's development. It marked the Vietnam's evolution as an independent land with ideology of autonomy and the aspiration to build up a larger, richer and more powerful nation. At the same time, this event also gave a signal that Confucianism would assume a more significant role in the society and with the State as the national leader chose to follow the Chinese model of State and social administration.

From now on, Vietnamese Confucianism began to form itself and became the official religion of the Vietnamese powerful centralized monarchy. However, in order to achieve the most respected position under this dynasty, Confucianism still had to co-operate with Buddhism and Taoism thus made the existence of Three Religions (Tam giáo).

It is necessary to review some important points of Confucianism and its features under the Lý dynasty. The main reason was that in reality this monarchy framed the State model for the successive Trần and Hồ dynasties.

First, regarding the studies of doctrines and education of Confucian scholars, official historical records did not provide any details of the use of Confucian doctrines. Yet we can find some clues regarding the use of *Book of Poetry* and *Book of Documents* for teaching-learning and examination. It is even vaguer as seen in parts that inform us about contests during Trần dynasty in making annotations. Meanwhile, historical records revealed that the Lý emperors asked for *Tripitaka* from China. Private historical records did not provide any further information. It seemed that during the Lý dynasty, the number of doctrines that had been studied and annotated was still very small.

However, in 1070, under the Lý Thánh Tông's reign, the Temple of Literature was built in Thăng Long. In deed, Confucius only had a position in the court's pantheon 60 years after the establishment of the Lý dynasty. Historical records read: "By August of the Autumn, statues of Confucius, Zhu Xi and Four Great Disciples were built. 77 Confucian exemplars' images were painted. They were all worshiped in four seasons. Princes went to that place for studying". This could be seen as a complex of temple, shrine, and school. We have no clues of the scope of the Temple of Literature at that time. Archaeological findings in 1999 by the Institute for Archaeology proved clearly that the current Temple of Literature was continuously maintained and renovated since the Lý dynasty.

The "Stories of Hanoi" in *Đại Nam nhất thống chí* (Official Geographical and Historical Record of Great Viet) read that the Temple of Literature "... located in Minh Giám ward, Thọ Xương district towards the south-west of the imperial capital (Thăng Long), had been built up from Lý Thánh Tông's reign at which Confucius, Four Great Disciples, and 77 exemplars. In the back of the Temple, a National university was built for students to come to study. The Trần and the Late Lê dynasties followed that model. On both sides of the Temple, there stood stone steles engraved names of doctors of all dynasties..."

The truth was that Confucianism at that time had not been dominant. It still had to blend with and travel in parallel with other religions. That was shown in examination. Generally speaking, two dynasties Lý and Trần always had Three Religions examinations. There was information of Confucian students who scored very high marks and this illustrated that studying and taking examination in Confucian doctrines were two separate activities.

The year 1075 opened up tradition of Confucian examination till 10 centuries later and it was only dismissed in 1919. There were 183 highest-level examinations and 2,898 persons had been recognized as doctors. The first doctor was Lê Văn Thịnh of the Lý dynasty. Of course the number of people who studied and sat in examinations was greater.

However, it is necessary to point out that in the period of 10 centuries adopting the Confucian educational system; there was not any truly Vietnamese Confucian thinker or philosopher. No books of Confucian

annotation can be found. This suggests that Vietnamese Confucianism has been more about practices than research, in following Chinese model rather than seeking creativity, imitating classical forms of behavior rather than proposing new arguments and justification. For example, under the Trần dynasty, *Lịch triều hiến chương loại chí* (An Encyclopedia of Classified Regulations through Dynasties), on composed books of doctrines, only mentioned *Tứ Thư thuyết ước* (*Speaking Briefly of the Four Books*) by Chu Văn An.

Regarding rites, historical records told us that ritual performance during the Lý, Trần, and Hồ dynasties lacked of corrections in comparison with Chinese classical standards. Confucian scholars of later generations criticized this situation many times in historical records. Typical rites were: Ritual to Heaven (at the Circular Mound Altars in the South and in the North), ritual performances at National Temples, birthday and dead anniversaries, national funeral, coronation, ceremonies to confer the former emperor and empress, to confer a new empress, rituals to god of earth and millet plus rituals to gods of wind, cloud, thunder, and rain, and ritual of making a collective oath of allegiance (*lễ minh thệ*).

Along with these over ten kinds of rites, there were veneration of Confucius and great disciples in the Temple of Literature, and the event at which emperor Lý Thái Tổ recognized an ordained tutelary god named Tô Lịch existed since Tang dynasty's domination. These facts revealed that there lacked a lot of rites given the case of the Lý, Trần and Hồ dynasties. Moreover, ceremony to confer empress was under heavy critiques. Meanwhile, the royal ceremony of making a collective oath was not written in ancient Chinese book of rites.

Among the listed-above rites, rituals to Heaven and to Earth were the most important. However, historical records let us know that these rituals However, they were only performed during the Lý dynasty and not during Trần and Hồ (?) The inaccuracy in ritual performance was strongly criticized by scholars of the later generations. The costumes used for rites were not properly noted and this made state officials complained a lot of lacking reliable references.

Royal ancestor worship was also subjected to critiques by Confucian scholars of the later generation. Especially the problems of royal conferment: the ruler of the nation was entitled “emperor” while

his father was entitled “king”. Items of offerings were not noted in details, etc.

These evidences reaffirmed that Vietnamese Confucianism during the Lý, Trần, and Hồ dynasties had not formed a comprehensive system like it during the Later Lê dynasty. This could be seen more clearly if we compare the domestic situation with Confucianism in China under Song and Ming dynasties.

In contrast, we need to agree that emperors of these dynasties tried to perform proper rites. This showed that Confucianism gradually formed the backbone of the State’s structure, which was the class of scholar-mandarins. By the mid-Trần dynasty, Confucian scholars began to attack Buddhism. Consequently, under the Hồ dynasty, Confucianism and Confucian scholars became a dominated force.

We need to pay attention to the lack of agreement in assessment of the role of rites between the emperor and scholars. For example, an emperor of the Trần dynasty once heavily criticized those “white-face students” who dared to replace the Northern (Chinese) with old rites established by ancestors. This critique suggested that Vietnamese Confucianism clearly had differences with Chinese Confucianism. This is understandable because of social differences between the two nations. It should also be noted here that emperors of the Lý and Trần dynasties were so attracted to Buddhism and Taoism.

The above-listed religious rites were mainly performed in Thăng Long. The stance of an imperial capital was seen through the ritual to Heaven conducted by the emperor. Undoubtedly, through this ritual, an independent State had a truly capital city. The nationalistic ideology was clearly the product of the maturation of the State and of the Vietnamese agriculture. From now on, the existence of Đại Việt as a nation would be protected and blessed by a powerful Heaven in accordance to the Mandate of Heaven. This was significant to the following stages of the Vietnamese’s development.

Places of worship were not mentioned in historical records compiled that time. However, with some rituals as listed above, we are informed of places for religious ceremonies such as Circular Mound Altars for Heaven and Earth, or other altars built for worshipping gods of cloud, rain, wind, thunder, and the temple for the emperor’s ancestors in Thăng Long.

Đại Nam nhất thống chí informed us that the Circular Mound Altar for Heaven of the Ly dynasty was located in Thọ Xương district to the South of the imperial capital. This altar lasted through the Late Lê till the Nguyễn dynasties. Now the land belongs to Thịnh Yên village, Lê Đại Hành ward, Hai Bà Trưng district, Hà Nội. The Circular Mound Altar for Earth of the Lý dynasty to the south-west of the imperial capital, located in the Thịnh Hào ward, Vĩnh Thuận district (now Thịnh Hào ward, Đống Đa district, Hà Nội) and it was built since Lý Thiên Cảm Thánh Vũ the fifth (1048). We do not know in details of the architecture and the materials used to build these altars.

The Late Lê, Mạc, Tây Sơn, and Nguyễn dynasties

In these four dynasties, attentions will be paid to the Late Lê dynasty (1418 - 1789) and Nguyễn dynasty (1802 - 1945).

The Đại Việt's independence was under threat in years before the end of the Hồ dynasty. The Ming's invasion caused one of the most terrible tragic incidents in the history of Vietnam. It not only hurt the people and destroyed material infrastructures but also seriously undermined cultural heritages. Its violence and negative impacts in 20 years were even compared to the consequences of the whole period of 1,000 years under the China's domination before. This comparison could be too exaggerated yet it suggested that the Ming dynasty tried its best to put an end to the whole Vietnamese's intellectual, mental, and cultural foundations.

The independence was re-established along with the birth of the longest dynasty in the history of the nation: the Late Lê with the founding emperor Lê Lợi. Under the Late Lê, Confucianism reached its peak, and became highly respected, especially in the 15th century. Confucianism during these dynasties revealed clearly its religious characteristics to the extent that it could be confidently compared with Confucianism in China.

From the late 15th century, Confucianism became the official ideology and solely respected, especially in the Emperor Lê Thánh Tông's time. Basically, Confucianism under the Later Lê was the model for following dynasties. It had got greater achievements, in almost every aspect of the society than ever before. Confucianism under the Late Lê was likened to the Đại Việt's civilization which was characterized by the powerful centralized monarchy. The monarchy

came with the national organization of politics, military, ideology, and arts, and also the expansion of the national territories marked with achievements by the Nguyễn dynasty¹.

It is also necessary to indicate that Vietnamese Confucianism this period, especially during the Late Lê and Nguyễn dynasties was very much like the Chinese Confucianism with dogmas and conservatism. Every rite was performed strictly in accordance to the Chinese standards. At the same time, the frequency of rites was high, and basic Confucian views and concepts were promulgated throughout the nation. All activities as such targeted in protecting the longevity of the monarchy, not only with social reality created but also in terms of ideology and the advocacy of a supernatural force. However, at the end of the monarchy, Vietnamese Confucianism became exhausted, lack of vitality, and pushed back to the darkness thus existed as fragments only.

This situation illustrated that there existed contradictions in the Vietnamese society's development and in the Vietnamese Confucianism. As the nation sought development in terms of politics, economy, and territorial expansion, it also carried within itself seeds of division, localization, which could be seen through the internal wars between the Lê and Mạc dynasties or the Trịnh and Nguyễn dynasties. The prolonged internal wars took away the opportunity for the nation to make a leap forward.

The bureaucratic and corrupted structures pushed the State into circular crises. Peasants' uprisings and the replacement of emperors and dynasties happened regularly after the reign of Emperor Lê Thánh Tông. Scholar-mandarins who made the foundation of the Confucianism had been differentiated. There were some Confucian scholars who chose to become mandarins, even for the Chinese emperors. Meanwhile some scholars stayed away from politics, some strictly maintained original doctrines and proper rites, while others sought for foundations in Taoist and Buddhist doctrines. Thus, in some senses, Vietnamese Confucianism was both the ideological foundations and the seeds for interruptions because of the ways it caused impacts on the society.

Despite of these facts, Confucianism was still the official ideology for the national building processes. Below, I would like to review main Confucianism's achievements during this lengthy period.

Regarding viewpoints and ideology, from the Late Lê dynasty on, main Confucian concepts were studied and used pervasively in books and documents. Confucius and his disciples' doctrinal documents were studied, made into qualification examinations, and applied regularly in the governance of the nation and ritual performances. There appeared distinctive scholars who were specialized in translation and annotation of Confucian doctrines on the basis of providing a brief version. The most famous scholar was Lê Quý Đôn with more than 8 book titles.

However, these books only provided briefs of Confucian doctrines. How could they assist the deep and sophisticated studies of Confucianism? How could the Vietnamese achieve high levels of understandings main Confucian viewpoints and ideologies? Official historical records did not mention much of contents of qualification examinations yet only noted of examinations of making annotations, composing edicts, essays, etc. This meant Confucianism was mainly represented in practices.

On the one hand, in stead of making metaphysical works, Vietnamese scholars at that time tended to write poems to represent main Confucian concepts. On the other hand, there appeared some notable historical records. Most main Confucian concepts were reflected indirectly through events such as making public announcement, qualification examination, administration, and viewpoints in writing official historical records, etc. These evidences revealed nothing but the dependence on Chinese books to represent Vietnamese Confucian ideology.

Many researchers have illustrated that the most distinctive feature of Vietnamese Confucianism is the stress on the concept Righteousness that is more emotional and less rational in meaning than it is perceived in Confucianism in China, Japan, and Korea. However, concepts that were more frequently used including these core concepts of Confucianism: Heaven-Mankind interactions, Heaven and the Mandate of Heaven, Yin-Yang and Tao, *li* and *qi*, the relations of Five Elements, and the ultimate powerful role of the Son of Heaven.

Regarding rites, since the Late Lê dynasty on, the Vietnamese Confucian system of rites became perfected. Under the Nguyễn dynasty, the system had been complicated and sophisticated, associated with ever large system of material basis. Archaeological findings recently also

provide evidences of performed Confucian rites through items of architecture, sculpture, painting, porcelain, and worshiping objects made from wood and bronze.

The Late Lê and Nguyễn dynasties had the best records of the system of rites: the *Lịch triều hiến chương loại chí* (An Encyclopedia of Classified Regulations through Dynasties) and *Khâm định Đại Nam hội điển sự lệ* (A Record of Culture and History). These records revealed that the Nguyễn dynasty had the most completed system of rites. Notably, for the first time, required principles and procedures of rites were listed clearly. Besides main and typical Confucian rites, there were also notes of music, costumes, and the nominated ministries in charge.

National stability and unity were conditions for Confucianism to exist and operate properly. There existed trends of correcting the ritual performance according to the standards of Chinese Confucian rites under the Ming and Qing dynasties. Emperor Minh Mạng even asked the Ministry of Rites to trace back to norms existed in previous dynasties of Zhou, Han, Tang, and Song for further supplements. This is the difference between Confucianism under Late Lê dynasty and under Nguyễn dynasty. Conservation in ritual performance under the Nguyễn dynasty became a hindrance for its renovation to cope with the Western colonization in mid 19th century. This made Vietnam different from some Asian nations which renovated themselves to stand independently.

However, in almost 500 years from the Late Lê, then the Mạc, and the Tây Sơn to the Nguyễn dynasties, a big change happened to the position of the imperial capital. From the Tây Sơn dynasty on, the capital was moved from Thăng Long - Đông Đô to Phú Xuân - Huế. This was an interruption to the development of the Thăng Long - Đông Đô - Hà Nội. The relocation of the capital meant that from Minh Mạng's time, Hà Nội became a citadel in the north (the Tây Sơn called it "Bắc thành", Gia Long called it "Bắc thành tổng trấn") or a province (from Minh Mạng year 12th onward) under the government of the capital now located in Huế.

This also resulted in the degradation of rites and material basis. From the Tây Sơn to the Nguyễn dynasties, official rites performed by emperors and the education for high-level Confucian scholars were no longer seen in Hà Nội. Despite of different political reasons, Thăng Long

- Đông Đô - Hà Nội in the later 18th century and even in the 19th century was still an imagined, symbolic, and religious capital of the whole nation.

In the whole period from the Late Lê to the Nguyễn dynasties, despite of ups and downs, Confucianism could be observed in material basis created, including shrines and temples that were built for the religious purpose. Archaeological discoveries from 1998 till present in inner Hà Nội citadel, and the whole system of temples, shrines, tombs in the old capital city of Huế recognized by UNESCO as a cultural heritage can illustrate my above observation.

From the Late Lê dynasty onward, the completeness of the state religion established in accordance to the Chinese model provided more evidences for seeing Confucianism as a religion in Vietnam.

Regarding Đông Đô - Hà Nội, from the Late Lê to the Nguyễn dynasties, material basis for rites and the list of recognized deities showed the Confucianism's scale was quite large. However, Hà Nội under the Nguyễn dynasty had a very large territory, including current provinces of (former) Hà Tây, Hà Nam, and Hưng Yên. Here, I will only mention the material foundations found in Hà Nội of the Nguyễn dynasty yet in the current territory. I also list here what belong to the Late Lê dynasty to see the continuity. These are what we know from *Đại Nam nhất thống chí*, as follow:

Circular Mound Altar for Heaven of the Lý dynasty (now somewhere in the Hai Bà Trưng district), Circular Mound Altar for Earth of the Lý dynasty (now somewhere in Đống Đa district), Circular Mound Altar for God of Agriculture (built from Lê Thánh Tông emperor's time, now somewhere in Hai Bà Trưng district), Quảng Văn communal house (built since the Lý, now somewhere in the Hoàn Kiếm district, near Cửa Nam market), Cung Hoàng temple (for Chu Văn An, now in the Thanh Trì district), Circular Mound Altar for Earth of the Nguyễn (built since 20th year of Minh Mạng's reign, in the west of Hà Nội citadel, now somewhere in the Ba Đình district), the Circular Mound Altar for God of Agriculture (built since the 20th year of Minh Mạng's reign, in the west of Hà Nội citadel, now somewhere in the Ba Đình district), Sơn Xuyên Altar (built since the 6th year of the Tự Đức's reign, in the South-west of Hà Nội citadel), the Temple of Literature since the Lý onward and the Khải Thánh temple for father of Confucius (now in Đống Đa district),

Hội Đồng temple (built since the 1st year of Thiệu Trị, now in Ba Đình district), temple for Phùng Hưng (now in Đống Đa district), temple for Lý Ông Trọng or Khang Hy (now in Từ Liêm district), temple for Sóc Thiên Vương (now in Từ Liêm district), Uy Linh temple (now in the Tây Hồ district), Đồng Cổ temple (now in Tây Hồ district), Chiêu Ứng temple (now in Hoàn Kiếm district), temple for Linh Lang (now in Ba Đình district), Bạch Mã temple (now in Hoàn Kiếm district), temple for Cao Sơn (now in Đống Đa district), temple for Quý Minh (now in Hoàn Kiếm district), temple for Phạm Thái Úy (now in Đống Đa district), Trung Liệt temple (for Guan Yu, built since the emperor Lê Chính Hòa's time, now in Hoàn Kiếm district), Ngọc Sơn temple (Taoism, now in the Hoàn Kiếm district), Hỏa Thần temple (now in Hoàn Kiếm district), Hiền Khánh temple (now in Thanh Trì district), temple for Trưng Nữ Vương (now in Hai Bà Trưng district), shrine for Thục An Dương Vương and Cổ Loa citadel (now in Đông Anh district), shrine for Triệu Vũ Đế (now in Gia Lâm district), temple for Lý Nam Đế (now in Gia Lâm district), temple for Lý Thánh Tông (now in Gia Lâm district), temple for Đồng Xung Thiên Thần Vương (now in Gia Lâm and Sóc Sơn districts), temple for Hoài Đạo Vương Nguyễn Nộn (now in Gia Lâm district), temple for Female scholar-mandarin - Nữ học sĩ (now in Sóc Sơn district). Besides, though not listed in *Đại Nam nhất thống chí*, there existed hundreds temples for village tutelary gods or for other gods. Therefore, Thăng Long - Đông Đô - Hà Nội could be the place with highest density of Confucianism's material foundations. This is about Confucianism only and all other religions' bases are not counted.

Vietnamese Confucianism had a distinctive aspect in comparison with Chinese Confucianism: the conferment of a village's tutelary god. This was the recognition and integration of new gods into the existing pantheon of the State religion. Gods of this pantheon were classified into three groups: the upper class, the middle class, and the lower class. In China, tutelary gods were mainly found in citadels because of the specific characteristics of the monarchy. In Vietnam, the monarchy heavily relied on villages. In China, once the citadel was seized, the emperor and his people would loose the land thus the nation. In Vietnam, even when the nation was lost, the villages would maintain relative independence and autonomy. Under the Trần dynasties, the Thăng Long was strategically abandoned by the military but the villages were still military bases.

Therefore, villages' tutelary gods could never be dismissed completely by the State. Gods at the Vietnamese villages had different origins, including those came from natural phenomena, historical heroes, or mythical events. However, these gods often took the human appearance and they were historized (from Kinh Dương Vương to later dynasties, including Chinese governors) and localized (many forms of one god or many gods were integrated into one god according to imagination of the local people). The gods had their own mystical biography (with merits and contributions), rituals, and were later worshiped according to the State's regulations. To say it correctly, the State had to recognize local gods, classify them so as to control villages. Thus, Confucianism in Vietnam was clearly polytheistic. Further, Vietnamese Confucianism relied much on words of mouth than on documentation thus constituted vagueness. It is hard to present a stable pantheon of the Vietnamese Confucianism since it integrates many aspects of foreign and domestic religions and beliefs.

This distinctiveness does not mean that Vietnamese Confucianism is a totally new religion not yet seen elsewhere. The difference only lies in the spiritual structure between the Vietnamese and the Chinese while the organizational system stays the same. Vietnamese Confucianism was even more conservative than that in China.

The Western colonialism took place in 1858 was a milestone of the Vietnamese history. Vietnamese Confucianism was challenged and gradually lost its leading role in the religious life and finally became dismissed. The unfair treaties with the French colonist signed by the Nguyễns in the last two decades of the 19th century resulted in the lost of the nation. Consequently, Confucianism lost its State and official stance despite of the Nguyễn' efforts. Main sources for the continuity of the Confucianism - qualification examinations in Chinese and Chinese documents - were all eradicated by 1919. Since then, there would be no longer scholar-mandarins.

Yet Confucianism had not disappeared soon for in villages it still existed in the form of ethics, family's institutions and rites. The collapse of the official ideology from the court did not result immediately in the collapse of Confucianism among the grassroots within the society which had been under this religion's influence for centuries. Once again, it can

be seen here the importance of the Vietnamese villages not only to the fate of the nation but also non-political product such as Confucianism.

The end of Confucianism as a religion at the early years of the 20th century and its slow disappearance also meant the shift of the Vietnamese society to a new model. Not until 1945, with the August Revolution, was that new social model affirmed with two stages of the People's Democracy and the Socialism. Now, Confucianism was only ending sound of the Vietnamese Confucianism's orchestra over 1,000 years.

7. Conclusion

Thăng Long - Đông Đô - Hà Nội played an important role to the Vietnamese Confucianism. It was the real capital city for 8 centuries and a symbolic capital city for over a century (1802 - 1945). Hà Nội had the most typical Confucian tradition with most impressive material basis. All components that constituted Confucianism and Hà Nội had close relations. Hà Nội was even the place that decided the fate of Vietnamese Confucianism for 10 centuries. Being the place of residence for the emperor who was a deified human being, a son of Heaven, and an agent that represented the Heaven-Earth-Mankind relations, Hà Nội had always been the most sacred symbol of Vietnam since the birth of the nation.

Confucianism and Hà Nội had been together for 10 centuries. It is hard to deny that Confucianism had been deeply embedded in the Hanoian's ethical behaviors. In any senses, Hà Nội was still the fullest and most typical representative for the Vietnamese Confucianism./.

Notes:

1. Until the Nguyễn dynasty, Việt Nam had not got the shape like what we can see today.

References:

1. Phan Huy Chú (1992), *Lịch triều hiến chương loại chí*, tập 2, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [*An Encyclopedia of Classified Regulations through Dynasties*, Vol. 2, Hanoi: Social Sciences]
2. Quang Đạm (1994), *Nho giáo xưa và nay*, Nxb. Văn hóa, Hà Nội. [*Confucianism, Yesterday and Today*, Hanoi: Culture]
3. Lê Quý Đôn (1962), *Văn đài loại ngữ*, tập 1, Nxb. Văn hóa, Hà Nội. [*Classified Discourse from the Library*, Hanoi: Culture]
4. Marcel Granet (1968), *La Civilisation Chinoise*, Édition Albin Michel, Paris.

5. Trần Đình Huợu (1994), “Nho giáo với tư cách là một tôn giáo”, trong *Những vấn đề tôn giáo hiện nay*, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [“Confucianism as a Religion” in *The Contemporary Religious Problems*,
6. Trần Trọng Kim (1929), *Nho giáo*, Nhà in Tân Việt, Sài Gòn. [*Confucianism*, Saigon: Tân Việt]
7. Hoàng Thọ Kỳ, Trương Thiện Văn (1999), *Chu Dịch Dịch Chú*, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [Zhou Yi - Translation and Notes, Hanoi: Social Sciences]
8. Ngô Sĩ Liên (1971), *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, tập 1, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [*Great Việt Complete History*, Vol. 1, Hanoi: Social Sciences]
9. Ngô Sĩ Liên (1972), *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, tập 2, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [*Great Việt Complete History*, Vol. 2]
10. Ngô Sĩ Liên (1972), *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, tập 3, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [*Great Việt Complete History*, Vol. 3]
11. Ngô Sĩ Liên (1974), *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, tập 4, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [*Great Việt Complete History*, Vol. 4]
12. Henri Maspero (2000), *Đạo giáo và các tôn giáo Trung Quốc*, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [*Taoism and Religions in China*, Hanoi: Social Sciences]
13. Nội các triều Nguyễn (1993), *Khâm định Đại Nam hội điển sự lệ*, tập 6, 7, 8, Nxb. Thuận Hóa, Huế. [*A Record of Culture and History*, Vol. 6, 7, 8, Huế: Thuận Hóa]
14. Henri Charles Puech chủ biên (1976), *Histoire des religions*, tome III, Encyclopédie de la Pléide, Édition Gallimard, Paris.
15. Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (1992), *Đại Nam nhất thống chí*, tập 3, Nxb. Thuận Hóa, Huế. [*Official Geographical and Historical Record of Great Viet*, Vol. 3, Huế: Thuận Hóa.]
16. Ngô Đức Thọ chủ biên (1993), *Các nhà khoa bảng Việt Nam*, Nxb. Văn học, Hà Nội. [*Vietnam Laureates in Former Competition-Examinations*, Hanoi: Literature]
17. Ngô Tất Tố (1991), *Kinh Dịch*, Nxb. Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. [*Yi Ching*, Hochiminh City]
18. Nguyễn Quốc Tuấn (1993), “Thờ cúng Thành hoàng làng Việt ở Bắc Bộ: nhận thức nguồn gốc”, trong: *Văn hóa vì con người*, Nxb. Văn hóa và Tạp chí *Văn hóa Nghệ thuật*, Hà Nội. [“Worshiping of Tutelary God in the Viet Villages in the North Vietnam: A Root Conceivableness” in *The Culture for Human’s Sake*, Hanoi: Culture & Journal of Arts Culture.
19. Viện Nghiên cứu Hán Nôm (1991), *Di tích lịch sử văn hóa Việt Nam*, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [*Vietnam Vestiges of Cultural History*, Hanoi: Social Sciences]
20. Viện Nghiên cứu Hán Nôm (1981), *Tên làng xã Việt Nam đầu thế kỷ XIX*, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [*Place Names of Vilages in Vietnam in the first of the 19th Century*, Hanoi: Social Sciences]
21. Viện Triết học (1994), *Nho giáo tại Việt Nam*, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [*Confucianism in Vietnam*, Hanoi: Social Sciences]