


ФИЛОСОФСКИЕ НАУКИ



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Confucianism in Vietnam Under the Ly and Tran Dynasties: Development, Peculiarity and its Influence on Political Life

Abstract. The study on Confucianism and its role in Vietnam in the history is still a matter of great interest for researchers. In the Ly - Tran dynasties, Buddhism was considered as the national religion and dominated in all aspects of social life in Vietnam. However, Confucianism in that context gradually received the attention of the ruling class. Confucianism gradually occupied position in the national political life; meanwhile, Buddhism moved in the opposite direction. This is a special phenomenon of the ideology of the Ly - Tran dynasty. The study on the role of Confucianism in the spiritual life of Vietnamese people in the Ly - Tran dynasties is a matter with a lot of values. The author wants to clarify the development and characteristics of Confucianism in the Ly - Tran dynasties, thereby assessing its role in the political life of Vietnamese people in this period in this article.

Key words: Confucianism, Buddhism, Vietnamese feudalism, political life, Ly and Tran Dynasties, philosophy in Vietnam.

Confucianism is a socio-political doctrine that has a great influence on the spiritual, political and cultural life of East Asian countries, including Vietnam. Being introduced more than twenty centuries ago, Confucianism has played a very great role in history of the development of Vietnam's feudal dynasties. By the XV century, Confucianism had become an orthodox ideology and was used as a tool for managing and governing the country for many centuries [1, p. 29]. However, since the previous dynasties, especially the Ly - Tran dynasties, the kings were also aware of the need to use Confucianism as a tool for constructing and developing the state apparatus and the country to protect the national independence.

The Ly - Tran dynasties was a special period, lasting from 1010, when Ly Cong Uan ascended to the throne and founded the Ly dynasty until 1400 - when the Tran dynasty finished its mission [4, p. 20]. In terms of history, these were two consecutive dynasties, lasting for about four centuries. In terms of culture, this was a peak stage of development of Dai Viet culture and it was the process of shaping a strong national spirit [4, p. 21]. This period has created important foundations for the national culture and the country development in the next stages.

In the Ly - Tran dynasties, Vietnamese Buddhism developed to its peak and became the national religion. Buddhist culture became the basic feature of this era. However,

along with Buddhism, Confucianism also began to be used by kings for creating a centralized government during the independent period. Confucianism gradually played a larger role in society, although it was impossible to obtain the status of Buddhism. However, during this period an inverse shift took place between Confucianism and Buddhism. If Confucianism in the Ly – Tran dynasties gradually increased its influence in the society, Buddhism slowly lost its primacy to Confucianism, although Buddhism still had a prominent role in the ideological life of both ruling class and commoners [see 14, p. 9-19]. These are features that are almost never seen in the later periods of Vietnam's feudal history. The emergence of Confucianism to the heart of a Buddhist society was a quite unique phenomenon, requiring serious study and interpretation from a philosophical-ideological perspective.

In recent years, there have been studies on Confucianism in Vietnam in the Ly - Tran dynasties, but there weren't found satisfactory answers for many problems. In this article, we want to make an analysis of the development of Confucianism, clarify its basic features, and assess the role of Confucianism in Vietnam's political life of Vietnam in Ly-Tran dynasties.

Transformation of Vietnamese perception of Confucianism: from refusal to active receipt

Confucianism was introduced to Vietnam in the second century BC as the invading army of the Northern feudal dynasties. However, until the second century AD, the spread of Confucianism was implemented in a systematic manner [see 10, p. 28-29].

Since the second century, Vietnam was under China's feudal domination. Chinese and Confucian scripts were introduced into Vietnam to implement the cultural assimilation policy. Mandate of Heaven, Three Moral Bonds and Five Constant Virtues were used as a tool to Sinicize the Vietnamese culture. However, during this period, Confucianism did not play any significant role in the life of Vietnamese people and society.

During the Northern colonial period, Confucianism played a very important role in legitimizing the domination of Northerners in Vietnam [11, p. 51]. Since it was a foreign tool to carry out cultural enslavement, when entering Vietnam, Confucianism did not receive sympathy from Vietnamese people [1, p. 26]. Confucianism even encountered strong resistance from the people. The fight against foreign invaders at that time was identified with anti-Confucianism and against Hanization (or Sinicization) [11, p. 52-56]. When it came to Hai Ba Trung's career, the first person to raise the flag against the North, the book «History of the Dai Nam (Great Southern) Kingdom» wrote «First is swiping out the enemies; second is bringing back the old career of the Hung Family» [3]. It shows that in the mind of Vietnamese people, the fighting against foreign invaders means fighting against Hanization and preserving civilization of the Hung King era, the era that marked the national self-consciousness and asserted the civilized roots of Vietnamese people [3].

In the 11th century, when the Ly dynasty was established, the construction, consolidation and maintenance of the feudal regime and a highly-centralized feudal state apparatus became an urgent need and an inevitable development trend of Vietnam's society. The Tran dynasty continued the path of unification and centralization of the Ly dynasty and continued to exploit and use Confucianism to build the feudal dynasty and Dai Viet nation. Therefore, in the Ly - Tran dynasties, Confucianism was officially recognized and used by the feudal state of Vietnam. The feudal class chose and used Confucianism as an ideology and an instrument of social ruling and governance. This was wise and very thorough choice of the Ly - Tran feudal dynasties.

Ly Thai To's announcement of the relocation of the capital city highlighted the lesson of the imperial city and ruling of the country of the Three Dynasties in China. Ly Thai Tong asserted before his mandarins that Duong Ngu society is a good society to follow. King Ly Thanh Tong's established

Van Mieu to worship Zhou Gong, Confucius, Quartets and 72 Talents in 1070 [1, p. 28]; King Ly Nhan Tong organized the scholarly Minh Kinh exam in 1075 to select talented people to become mandarin and teach Confucianism, set up Quoc Tu Giam in 1076 to teach Confucianism, in 1086 opened an exam to select talented people to enter the Academy. The Ly King's organization of the state apparatus with the same titles as the Tang mandarins was the proof of that choice. These events marked a change in the Vietnamese perception of Confucianism. Confucianism was previously considered as a foreign tool. By the Ly dynasty, it was actively used by the government to serve the building of an independent feudal state.

The change of thinking and attitudes of Vietnamese people in re-recognizing the role of Confucianism was due to many different reasons.

First of all, it was due to the need to build and develop a centralized state apparatus that spurred the search for an ideological tool strong enough to establish a social order [6]. The Ly dynasty found such a tool in Confucianism. As a socio-political doctrine, Confucianism directly aimed to solve practical problems of the society. Its categories such as Heavenly Destiny, Loyalty, Filial Piety, Three Moral Bonds and Five Constant Virtues contained the connotation of protecting the position of the king, protecting the class division, protecting the cohesion of individuals in society and ensuring the social order. Since the Ly dynasty, Confucianism was used with two basic tasks: protection of the status of the ruling class and managing and building the country. The Tran dynasty inherited the Ly dynasty and continued to develop Confucianism to a new height. Confucianism was increasingly asserted position in the society.

Along with the development of the feudal state, the training of talents to serve the state apparatus was also set out in parallel. This was the second driving force to promote the ideological change of the Ly - Tran dynasties. The study of Confucianism and the organization of Confucian examinations

focused on training and recruiting talents. Through Confucian training and examination, the Vietnamese Confucian class was formed. This class gradually replaced the Buddhist clergy class. They were the support for the new feudal state.

The link between Chinese civilization and Vietnamese civilization was a factor that strongly influenced the choice of Confucianism of Vietnamese people. There is no denying the fact that Vietnam is located in the sphere of influence of Chinese civilization. During 1000 years, Vietnamese people were under the domination of the Northern people, so there was no denying the imprints of Chinese culture in Vietnam. During the independence period, Vietnamese feudal dynasties always kept the diplomatic link with Northern dynasties. This was part of a foreign policy aiming at countering Chinese hegemonic ideology. The relationships between Vietnam and China have been both a struggle and a development historically. To protect the country well, we must know and understand the enemy. Therefore, the study of Confucianism has not only internal motivation, but also is an external need. This connection facilitated the exchange of Confucianism and brought the Chinese Confucian classics into Vietnam [1, p. 29-30].

It should be added that the subjects of the active reception of Confucianism in the Ly - Tran dynasties were the kings. They were the rulers of a Buddhist nation, but saw the urgent need for social reforms and centralized state construction. They were the ones themselves who played a very significant role in actively receiving and using Confucianism as a tool of the state governance.

Vietnamese Confucianism in the Ly - Tran period had a development step associated with the change of Vietnamese ideology and attitudes towards it. The anti-Hanization (or against Confucianism) in the early period of introduction did not prevent those who were against this process spontaneously to absorb Confucianism to build and strengthen the bureaucracy force of the feudal state of Vietnam.

Basic features of Vietnamese Confucianism in the Ly - Tran dynasties

The Ly - Tran period was a special period of Vietnamese history and culture. Vietnamese Confucianism in this period also had its own characteristics and was different from Confucianism in the next stages. The basic features of Vietnam Confucianism can be generalized as follows:

Vietnamese Confucianism affected the ruling class, not much the people

The influence of Confucianism on the spiritual life of the people in this period was still weak. During the Ly - Tran period, Buddhism still played a key role in the ethical and social activities of Dai Viet people. Confucianism manifested itself as an ideological tool of the ruling class. Confucianism was firstly received and used by kings and mandarins of the feudal court. Consequently, Confucianism clearly influenced the ruling class.

The model of a feudal state was executed by the king. Confucianism considered the King to be the Son of Heaven, performing the Heaven's will. Therefore, the king must at first be a moral role model. In other words, Confucianism especially emphasized the role of morality and the moral upbringing of the king to the development of the dynasty. Confucius once said: «Using virtue to do political work, as well as the North God star, staying in a position where other stars are glaring at» [16, p. 214] and «Using virtue to lead, using ceremony to keep order, people are ashamed to go to a good place» [16, p. 215]. While Mengzi affirmed: «If the king has goodness, no one dares to be inhuman, if the king has righteousness, no one dares to be dishonest [16, p. 1065]. Moreover, Confucianism further affirmed that the rulers were virtuous and acted ethically, the people believed and followed; otherwise, the king's political career was bound to fail. Even in the concept of an ideal society, Confucians also considered «moral king» as one of the basic characteristics of that society. This argument greatly influenced the class of kings and mandarins of the Ly - Tran dynasties. Vietnamese kings not only paid

attention to the aspect of cultivating morality, but also emphasized the king's attitude and responsibility towards the country and the people. As a result, from the Ly - Tran dynasties, the Vietnamese Confucians all affirmed that the society was orderly or chaotic, mainly depending on the king's behavior and morality [10, p. 28-36].

Vietnamese Confucianism in the Ly - Tran dynasty was showed mainly in terms of politics

Stemming from the needs of practice in building the country and central government, Vietnam Confucianism in this period existed mainly in the political sphere. In other words, the academic problems related to worldview and metaphysics were rarely mentioned. The ideological aspects of Confucianism were exploited to serve urgent practical problems of the time. The active acquisition of Confucianism was selective and compact. Vietnamese Confucians summed up the immense treasure of Chinese Confucianism into simple and concise documents that were easy to absorb, apply and convey to learners. Therefore, in the Ly - Tran period, there were no Confucian schools of study and no outstanding Confucian works. It can be said that the characteristics of Vietnam Confucianism in the Ly - Tran dynasties were simplistic, unsystematic and selectively from Chinese Confucianism to solve the most urgent tasks in building the country [see 8, p. 10-21].

Confucian fusion with other religions and national spirit.

Vietnamese Confucianism in the Ly - Tran period was mixed with Buddhist and Daoist ideology and closely attached to the national spirit. This fusion came from the openness of Vietnamese people's thinking. Moreover, each religion can only solve and fulfill a few aspects of social life. Therefore, in order to effectively carry out many political tasks in building society, the feudal state of Vietnam used Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism [see 7, p. 67-72]. The subjects of this integration were Confucians. Confucianism in fact played a more effective role than the other two religions in building and

developing feudalism. In Confucian doctrine, the line of state ruling was clearly outlined and easily applied to political practice. Therefore, in the integration of the three religions, Confucianism still emerged as the factor that had the greatest influence on many aspects of the political life in Vietnam during the Ly - Tran dynasties.

One factor that cannot be ignored when analyzing the characteristics of Vietnamese Confucianism in the Ly - Tran period is national self-consciousness. The national self-consciousness is manifested in the spirit of patriotism and national independence. This is an important basis for kings, mandarins and Confucians to selectively absorb the positive aspects of Confucianism to serve the nation's construction and defense. The categories and contents of Confucianism, when absorbed, would have to go through the patriotic lens of the Confucians. Therefore, the contents of the categories and concepts of Confucianism were modified to suit the requirements of practice. The combination of Confucianism and patriotism had a double effect. First of all, Confucianism became an effective tool of the ruling class in concentrating power and building the state. Secondly, Confucianism created a common spiritual strength of the Vietnamese people to build and defend the country. The poem «Nam Quoc Son Ha» by Ly ThuongKiet, or HichTuong Si of Tran Hung Dao were the most obvious signs of combining Confucian ideas of destiny, humanity and meaning with the spirit of democratic autonomy. This was a banner of thought to help the Vietnamese people create resounding victories over the northern enemies [2, p. 19-20]. Inevitably, the development of Vietnamese Confucianism in the Ly - Tran dynasties was inseparable from thoughts about the country and the nation. It can be said that this was a prominent feature of Confucian thought of this period.

Confucianism and the way of state governance in the Ly - Tran dynasties

Along with Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism also soon entered Vietnam. During the Ly - Tran dynasties, Buddhism had a

fairly prosperous development, and was chosen by the feudal state to be the national religion. However, this religion did not provide the government with a clear way of governing the country. In other words, the Buddhist doctrinal system had no adequate answers to the issues related to the consolidation of the feudal state.

During the Northern colonial period, Confucianism still played no significant role in the political and spiritual life of Vietnamese society [9, p. 65]. However, when the central feudal regime of Vietnam was established and influenced by the model of the feudal state in the North, Confucianism proved appropriate and became a requirement, a kind of scholarship ideas that people in the country needed to absorb.

Confucianism was a doctrine that defended the court's orthodoxy which, in fact, defended the rulership of the king. In addition, Confucianism also set out ethical standards for human behaviors, requirements for king-I, father-son, husband-wife relationships, for spiritual cultivation, etc., and had a great effect in helping the central government to consolidate class dominance and national unity.

Basically, the Ly and Tran dynasties still respected Buddhism. Nonetheless, to maintain their power, the organization that governed society, these dynasties chose another tool, Confucianism. Later, Buddhism gradually retreated, while Confucianism, with the advantages in consolidating the centralized monarchy and the order of feudal society, gradually rose and developed quite strongly. That development was slow, but steady. Because, along with the requirements of the social management organization and the organization of the state administrative apparatus, the development of Confucianism was also associated with the needs of cultural and educational development [2, p. 18-20].

Confucianism and talent training to serve the country

In the Ly-Tran period in Vietnam, along with the construction and completion of the state apparatus, the requirement for the de-

velopment of an independent and autonomous culture and education was set forth. Confucianism in this period showed its role in shaping educational ideology and realizing it in the creation of a new education aiming at recruiting talents [12, p. 41-44].

Buddhist doctrines were unable to create an educational system to train forces that serve the society [15, p. 88]. Meanwhile, in Confucianism, the theory of human education and forms of human formation had been fully formed [2, p. 16-17]. Therefore, Confucianism took up its historical mission and had the opportunity to take root deeply in the political and social life in Vietnam [6]. Through examinations, Confucianism not only directly affected the contingent of intellectuals and talents, but also affected people's moral standards and political worldview. Since then, Confucianism crept into different aspects of social and personal life. In 1070, the Ly dynasty built Van Mieu and in 1075 opened the first Confucian examination [4, p. 22; 1, p. 29]. This was the event that gave birth to the Confucian examination background in Vietnam. Events such as the establishment of QuocTuGiam (1076); and the construction of a temple to worship Confucius (1156) [see 13, p. 414-421] showed respect for Confucian education of the court [see 2, p. 17-18].

By the Tran dynasty, the recruitment of talents to supplement the bureaucracy and

Confucian education was promoted. The Confucian class was more numerous than before. In 1227, the Tran opened the exam of Three Religions. In 1232, the Tran opened a Doctoral exam. From 1246 onwards, it was organized every 7 years [see 5, p. 22-31]. Although in the beginning of Tran dynasty, the influence of Buddhism still dominated all aspects of social activities, including education and examinations, at the end of the Tran dynasty, Confucianism enhanced its position through the learning and examination path. It can be seen that, up to the Tran dynasty, Confucianism really developed, dominated education, feudalism, created a large contingent of Confucian intellectuals, promoted the development of national education and form Confucian culture.

Having been introduced to Vietnam for more than 200 years, Confucianism encountered a strong reaction from Vietnamese people when entered Vietnam for the first time. However, during the development process, Confucianism gradually prevailed and had a profound influence on the political life of Vietnamese people in the Ly - Tran dynasties when Buddhism still held a dominant position in the spiritual life of the society. From time to time, Kings gradually applied Confucianism in ruling the country and training talents to serve the construction of government and society and protect the country from invaders.

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