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CHINA-VIETNAM-FRANCE RELATIONS ON THE VERGE OF THE COLLAPSE OF THE TRIBUTARY SYSTEM IN THE 19TH CENTURY

This article attempts to explain why China-Vietnam relations, which were based on tributary ties, broke down when France conquered Vietnam in the 19th century. As such, it traces the history of China-Vietnam-France relations, particularly on the eve of the French invasion of Vietnam, and explores China's efforts to defend the country. This study is significant because it sheds light on the history of the French conquest of Vietnam while it was under the Chinese tributary system. For almost a century, China claimed to have power as a presidential state over Vietnam. However, the French did not acknowledge China's power. Moreover, one by one, the territories of Vietnam were seized and eventually conquered by France. In this study, qualitative content analysis was applied to primary and secondary sources to evaluate the extent to which the tributary system affected and influenced the international external relations between the three countries of the three countries. The study's findings showed that Vietnam had autonomy in theory but was submissive and willingly under China's protection regarding its foreign affairs. However, the French did not recognize the tributary system as a foreign relationship, and they continued to mobilise colonial efforts in Vietnam in the mid-late 19th century.

Keywords: *China-Vietnam relations, France-Vietnam relations, China-France relations, Sino-French War, Tributary System*

Introduction

The relationship between China and the Western powers was established in the Tang Dynasty (618–907), with the Silk Road connecting China with the Western World. Marco Polo (1254–1342), a renowned Italian explorer, visited China during the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368). He was treated well during his visit from 1275 to 1292 and was appointed an officer in the Privy Council in 1277 by Kublai Khan (1215–1294) and a tax inspector in Yanzhou (northern Nanking).

At the dawn of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), the emperor practised a policy that prohibited the people of China from conducting trade with those

from outside China. However, as confirmed by Li Jinming:

“It was stipulated that not even one board was allowed to be put in the sea. It seemed that all of the overseas trades were cut off. They were not. During the ban on overseas trade, not only did overseas trade never stop, trade with Southeast Asia developed.”¹

Emperor Yongle (1402–1425) instructed Admiral Zheng He (1371–1435) to sail seven times to all corners of the world and as far as the African continent from 1405 to 1433.² The Ming Dynasty opened a new chapter in China’s foreign relations with the West, especially with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1514.

The change in China’s reign from the Ming Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) did not change the policy on foreign affairs with neighbouring countries. The Qing Dynasty was the last imperial dynasty to continue the public service system based on Confucianism. The Qing government continued to maintain the institutions and culture inherited from the Ming Dynasty to win the support of the Chinese people for the new government he founded. The tributary system, which symbolised China’s superiority in external relationships, continued to be practised. Hence, the closed-door policy only began after the 18th century, after the change and political upheaval in China’s internal politics and neighbouring countries. Narration on policy and foreign affairs policy for the government of China during the Qing Dynasty has been described in detail by Fairbank.³

During the late 1700s, the outbreak of an industrial revolution urged Western powers such as Britain, Holland, France, and Spain to explore new frontiers across the European continents in their quest to search for raw materials and markets. This change and development were not known to China. As Fairbank emphasised, Emperor Qianlong (1796–1829) was unaware of the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of power by the British in India and Canada.⁴ Therefore, whenever the Western powers came on diplomatic missions, China perceived that they were trying to enter into their tributary system. The concept of tributary held China’s external relationship with the Western powers. The Chinese government continued to regard rural populations outside their empire as barbarians or uncivilised. In 1724, Emperor Yongzheng (1723–1735) declared *Catholicism* a “heterodox faith.” He forbade the entry of Christian missionaries, except for scientists, engineers, and astronomers. The ban was due to the misunderstanding between Franciscan and Dominican schools with the Jesuits, and Emperor Yongzheng was worried that the conflict could involve China. In addition, Christians considered the Pope in Rome the greatest ruler in the world, and China was also opposed to the concept of *Tianzi* (Son of Heaven).⁵

Similarly, China regarded itself as centre the of the world (Middle Kingdom), closing its doors to those from outside, except for countries with whom they had tributary relationships. China believed they did not require trade relations with foreign countries, as they had everything in China. Emperor Qianlong (1736–1795) told King George III (1738–1820) in Britain that “*tianchao wuchan fengying, wusuo buyou, yuan bujie waiyi huowu yitongyou wu*”: China is rich with natural resources, and everything that is needed is available in China. Thus, there is no need for trade with the Western world).⁶ The opinion of Emperor Jiaqing (1796–1820) was that “*tianchao fuyou sihai, qi xu er xiao guo xie wei huowu zai*”: China’s wealth was well known, and China needed the materials from the small states [the West].⁷ China believed that Westerners’ efforts in building a trade relationship were to enter the tributary system and that the goods were tributes to China. Hence, they treated them as protectorates who came in favour of recognition from the Chinese Emperor.⁸

As a result, China did not acknowledge Westerners as being on par diplomatically but only as a state who gave tribute to as described by James L. Hevia.⁹ This is because China practices a tributary system in establishing its foreign relations with neighbouring countries. The tributary system is the relations between pre-modern states in which the less powerful state or kingdom submitted to the payment of tribute to the more powerful in order to maintain a degree of independence. As described in the Chinese Emperor’s decree, “For him [Emperor Qianlong], George III was an obscure monarch of some petty kingdom, of no more and no less important than other “external vassals” (*waifan*) such as Laos, the Ryuku Islands, or Sulu.”¹⁰

China did not establish a foreign affairs office dealing with foreign parties, including the Westerners. China’s relationship with foreign countries was based on the countries within the tributary system, as described by Ning Chia. Countries located in *Inner Asia*, such as Mongolia, Xinjiang (Sinkiang), Xizang (Tibet), and Russia, were managed by *Lifanyuan* (the Court of Colonial Affairs). *Lifanyuan* was an agency under *Zuolibu* (coordinating offices). Meanwhile, affairs with countries such as Vietnam, Japan, Korea, and the Ryukyu Islands were managed by *Zhukesi* (the diplomatic bureau), who worked with all tributaries and supervised all forms of trade affairs from it. *Zhukesi* is a form of the department in *Libu* (the Board of Rites).¹¹

As confirmed by Teng and Fairbank, the war “had the most disastrous effect upon the old Chinese society. In every sphere of social activity, the old order was challenged, attacked, undermined, or overwhelmed by a complex series of processes political, economic, social, ideological, cultural.”¹² China’s defeat in the First Opium War (1839–1842) was described as a turning point in the development of China’s history. The First Opium War ended with the Nanjing Treaty (Nanking) in 1842 when China began opening doors to other Western powers.

However, after the Beijing Convention [Peking] in 1860, on the recommendation of Gong Qinwang Yixin, who was also known as Prince Kung (1833–1898), Zongli Yamen (Tsongli Yamen), or the office of General Administration, was established in Beijing on March 11, 1861. Prince Kung affirmed the importance of establishing Zongli Yamen:

“If we act by the treaties and do not allow the barbarians to exceed them by even an inch [to China], if we give an appearance of sincerity and amity while we quietly try to keep them in line, then they will not suddenly cause us great harm for several years to come, even though they may make occasional demands.”¹³

With the establishment of Zongli Yamen, China’s hopes were that it would not only be able to maintain peace with the Western powers but, more importantly, solve the internal problems of China, as described by Prince Kung: “The troubles at home were more serious at the [that] moment than those coming from outside, and so it was a matter of practical politics to get along with the foreign powers for the time being.”¹⁴ According to Teng and Fairbank, Zongli Yamen, was a small council to *Junjichu* (Grand Council of State) in China’s system of bureaucracy.¹⁵

The conflicting views between China and the Western powers on the role of Zongli Yamen created problems when both parties questioned the established relationship. As described by Husheng, China’s dispute with Western powers (especially Britain) was due to conflicting understandings of the concepts of Westphalian sovereignty practised by the West. The system which inaugurated international relations is based upon the principle of sovereign equality between two states. Of course, with the introduction of Westphalia, the tributary system that considers China as the centre with its neighbouring states as the periphery of their culture and power is trying to be eliminated. As China’s suzerain state, Vietnam observed China’s upheaval and the West’s movements. As a study by Fairbank, Hamashita, Kang, and Dogan demonstrated, China’s foreign relations centred on the tributary system ultimately led to ongoing conflict and hostility between China and the West. For this reason, it is interesting to examine the truth of the claim. While a study conducted by Arrighi, Hamashita and Selden stated that, between 1860 and 1890, China lost its tribute claims over many protectorate countries, such as Burma, Vietnam, and Korea. The loss of Vietnam involved the Qing Dynasty in a battle with the French. In contrast, the fight with Japan to seize Korea brought terrible consequences to Qing’s governance, eventually collapsing the Korean dynasty ten years later. In 1894, the Korean Donghak Peasant Revolution sparked the First Sino-Japanese War, which resulted in the defeat of the Qing army. The post-war Treaty of Shimonoseki stipulated that China recognised the independence of Korea and ended its tributary relations with

Japan, which annexed Taiwan. Korea had modern diplomatic relations with the Qing, but the Japan - Korea Treaty of 1910 forced Korea to be annexed by Japan against their will.¹⁶ A study by Liang Zhiming summarised that the deep-rooted friendly relations between China and Vietnam were based on their long history of friendship, interlinked cultural connections, and mutually dependent geopolitical and economic ties, which were also crucial for the sustainable development of Sino-Vietnam friendship. However, after the arrival of the French, their relationship grew increasingly difficult to understand. The relationship between China and Vietnam was complicated, featuring elements of both friendship and animosity, as well as both company and conflict.¹⁷

Meanwhile, Piotr Olander concluded that China's interests lay more in the northern parts of Vietnam. Beijing only opposed the French incursion in the area compared to the southern parts of Vietnam. He delved into the history of China-Vietnam relations and stressed that the concept of interdependence between both countries caused China to continue defending Vietnam.¹⁸

Based on the studies that have been conducted to date, this article attempts to trace the extent to which the relationship between China and Vietnam and later France lasted in the 19th century. This study will investigate the early relations between China and the Western powers, specifically with the French, Vietnam-France relations, and China-Vietnam relations, based on the tributary system. In addition, it examines the French attempt to capture South Vietnam and the reaction from China when France carried out the invasion. Much remains unclear, such as to what extent the early China-France and Vietnam-France relations were intertwined, leading to the China-French conflict. What was China's first reaction to learning of the French invasion of the southern province of Vietnam? As a protectorate, Vietnam needed to report to China what was happening in their country immediately. If they had been informed of the current situation, what efforts or actions were taken by China? Therefore, this study is significant in understanding the history of the French conquest of Vietnam, one of the countries still under China's tributary system. It attempts to explain the extent to which China acted under its capacity as an overlord state to protect the interests of its protectorate, Vietnam, or whether it was simply an allegation that China did not defend Vietnam initially because the French invasion occurred only in southern Vietnam, which was far from China's security borders. It was because Vietnam saw China as its sovereign in facing the advances of the French forces.

France–Vietnam Relations (1802–1865)

Emperor Gia Long (1802–1819), was the first emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1884) of Vietnam who unified what is now modern Vietnam in 1802. Emperor Gia Long took a cautious approach to Western influence during his reign. He believed in isolation and keeping distance from the result of the

West, as he perceived that Vietnam's greatness and harmony could only be maintained with the non-interference of the Western powers.¹⁹ However, Emperor Gia Long also believed that the practice would discourage traders from Europe, who would then withdraw from Vietnam. This is demonstrated by a study conducted by Chester A. Bain, which states that Vietnam turned down trade missions led by the British in 1804 (The Roberts Mission) and 1822 (the Crawford Mission) due to Vietnam's isolation policy.²⁰

Nevertheless, the French aided Emperor Gia Long until he ascended the Vietnam throne, giving placement opportunities for French advisers, namely Jean Baptiste Chaigneau and Philippe Vannier Chester, under his governance. However, he prohibited the involvement of these officers in Vietnam's diplomatic affairs. Jean Marie Dayot was one of the military officers assigned to lead the navy, and Oliver du Puymanel led the army.²¹

In addition, Emperor Gia Long allowed the Christian missionaries (Roman Catholics) from France to spread Christianity in Vietnam.²² In 1808, Emperor Gia Long established a system of government based on the teachings of Confucianism and appointed Confucius (551–479 SM) as the Master.²³ However, in 1817, he noticed the close relations of the *Societe des Missions Etrangeres* (Society of Foreign Missions)²⁴ with the French government. He began to be suspicious and cautious of the missionaries' work.²⁵

When Minh Mang, also spelt Minh Menh (1820–1841) was the second emperor of the Nguyen dynasty of Vietnam ascended to the throne, he wanted to build a firm administration in Vietnam. He believed that the foreign ambitions by religion threatened the politics in the palace and the state of Vietnam. Emperor Minh Mang's father, Emperor Gia Long, once advised him, "There are two things to observe after I pass. First, respect France and love the French. Second, defend the sovereignty of our country. Never surrender even an inch of our land to the French."²⁶

The policy taken by Emperor Minh Mang was similar to the pattern of administration of China, which was rooted in Confucianism, until it was written by Truong Vinh Ky, "Be born in Guangdong, die in Hanoi and spend your youth in Korea."²⁷ According to Phan Thi Lan, Confucianism and Confucian education under the reign of Minh Mang attached great importance to practical studies.²⁸

Emperor Minh Mang believed that the French government used the Catholic missionaries, whether or not they realised it.²⁹ The French Catholic missionaries had been arriving in Vietnam since the 17th century. Alexander de Rhodes (1591–1660), who came to Vietnam in 1624, was a French missionary who preached Christianity in Vietnam for 21 years. He was not only actively spreading the Gospel but was also involved in collecting information about the socio-economic and natural resources in Vietnam.³⁰

The French government used the information to march into Vietnam with ease. Hence, greedy traders and French imperialists exploited the

missionaries' work to fulfil their ambitions in the East.³¹ According to Osborne, "Possibly the most distinctive feature of the growth of French influence was the extremely active role played by missionaries and their supporters in France."³² Hence, in the 18th century, the French developed a strategy to capture Vietnam and hoped they could advance to China via Vietnam. Pierre Pigneau de Behaine's report to King Louis XVI (1754–1793) in 1787 indicated the quest.³³

In 1825, Emperor Minh Mang released his first decree to ban the spread of Christianity as a heterodox faith.³⁴ According to Taboulet:

“[Emperor] Minh Mang viewed Christianity as an alien and disruptive faith that threatened the serenity of his kingdom and his role as emperor. Missionaries he [Emperor Minh Mang] regarded as carriers of this moral “disease,” and those of his subjects who converted to Christianity he considered to be traitors.”³⁵

Emperor Minh did not allow the Christian doctrine, which served one God and favoured loyalty to the Pope in Rome as the head of the Catholic Church. In his view, practising Christianity was dangerous, as foreigners taught it through communication, and they received full support from the West (including France). The West was compelled to carry out its imperialist policy in Asia. In addition, the Catholic missionaries (including those from France) often violated the national laws in Vietnam. Apart from flouting the decree's prohibition on evangelization of the Christian faith. In specific cases, they would influence the followers to look down upon the officers and the government of Vietnam.³⁶ These missionaries were also involved in a series of uprisings against the Vietnamese government. Even though their involvement did not directly weaken the government, its effect was the same.³⁷ French Catholic missionaries, such as Joseph Marchand (1803–35), who offered supplies of firearms to Le Van Duyet for the uprising during 1833–1835 against Emperor Minh Mang, were a facade for their ambition to conquer Vietnam.³⁸

In Vietnam, the people were divided on the issue of banning the teaching of Christianity. Some older generations knew of the friendship between Pigneau de Behaine and Emperor Gia Long (1802–1819). Pigneau de Behaine was a French Catholic priest best known for his role in assisting Emperor Gia Long to establish the Nguyen dynasty in Vietnam after the Tay Son Uprising. Consequently, the spread of Catholicism was permitted during Gia Long's reign, in contrast to Emperor Minh Mang's. According to Nguyen Khac Vien, Emperor Minh Mang believed that a policy of openness toward Western powers would weaken the Vietnamese monarchy.³⁹

Thus, in 1833 Emperor Minh Mang banned Christianity in Vietnam and launched an action against the Catholic missionaries.⁴⁰ Christian churches in Vietnam were demolished, missionaries were killed, and all ports were closed to the West. As noted by Coughlin, under Emperor Minh Mang's rule,

Vietnam adopted a policy of isolation toward Western powers similar to China. A strict Confucianist and admirer of Chinese culture, Minh Mang persecuted Western missionaries and Christians unmercifully and refused to conclude a commercial treaty with France. In many respects, he “out-Manchued” the Manchus, and indeed the response of these two empires to Western contact was strikingly similar.⁴¹ However, the isolation policy did not involve neighbouring countries like Laos and Cambodia. Vietnam continued to establish its vassal states’ tributary system, which paid homage and economic tribute. Tributary envoys from Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Phnom Penh brought tribute to Hue every few years and on special anniversaries.

Thieu Tri (1841–1847), the eldest son of Emperor Minh Mang, seized the throne as the third emperor of the Nguyen dynasty after his father’s death. He, too, practised the isolation policy and put more pressure on the Christian missionaries. According to Tate, Emperor Thieu Tri’s persecution of Christian missionaries foreshadowed the French conquest of Vietnam. He became increasingly entrenched in their Confucian doctrine, and the nation underwent a stagnation period. Mandarins of the court became progressively ignorant of global events. Even worse, they instituted an isolationist policy that made communication with foreigners illegal.⁴² France began to intervene at that time with efforts to help the oppressed apostles follow their appeal to the French government.⁴³

The French government was also responsible for prolonging the situation because they refused to act initially when Vietnam still did not have the military strength to resist France’s attack. Meanwhile, other European countries, such as Britain, were hesitant to assist because they feared that it would bring back memories of their imperialism, which was still remembered by Vietnam’s older generation.⁴⁴

The French had a strategy to examine the event, which began in 1843. The event started when the Christians were openly insulted, and harsh actions were taken upon them without limitations, including a public death penalty from time to time. France did not take stringent measures to end the chaos but persisted until a trade treaty was signed. As mentioned by Nina Shapiro Adams, “As the Vietnamese failed to control domestic rebels or conform to French desires, the French used the appearance of disorder to justify further intervention in Vietnam.”⁴⁵ It was undertaken during the era of three anti-Christian emperors: Minh Mang, Thieu Tri, and Tu Duc. Tu Duc was the fourth emperor of the Nguyen dynasty of Vietnam which ruled from 1847 to 1883. The French then had a valid reason to stop the chaos and injustice of the French missionaries intervening in Vietnam. Yet, despite the intervention, the French were more concerned with the aspect of the economy than religion, as confirmed by Duiker:

“Commercial loss to the British of the “China Market” agitated for an aggressive policy to bring Vietnam under French influence and to open up the “soft underbelly” of China to French economic exploitation.”⁴⁶

French Conquest of Southern Vietnam (Cochinchina)

In the 17th century, France began following in the footsteps of the Portuguese and the Dutch to explore the East in search of new conquests. Initially, their target was India. At the dawn of the 18th Century, France combined the East India Company with companies in Senegal and China. It became the France East India Company to collect funds and energy from India. At the dawn of the 1760s, the British began to settle in India, which caused conflict between the two countries. After a series of battles, France was finally forced out of India by the British at the end of 1761, except for in Pondicherry. Consequently, France focused on a new area, and Vietnam became their next target.

The French tried to enforce their political influence in Vietnam, and they had several requests from the facility to do business there. They tried diplomatic means to gain trade facilities but failed due to Vietnam’s isolation and anti-Western policy. In 1825, Emperor Minh Mang rejected the French emissaries led by Baron de Bougainville, who brought letters from King Louis XVIII. The reason for the envoy was “for peace and protection,” as mentioned in the notes. He left Vietnam without delivering the letters or obtaining peace or protection, as was hoped. The rejection of emissaries in 1826 by Vietnam officially affected Vietnam-France relations.⁴⁷

In 1827, France sent another envoy led by de Kergariou and another in 1831 led by Admiral Laplace. After the envoy in 1831 was rejected, France took no aggressive action to follow through with a trade relationship with Vietnam.⁴⁸ This is because France was going through an internal conflict in the 1830s, so they were more focused on their country’s internal disputes than the situation in Vietnam.⁴⁹

In addition, the French were still cautious and had to worry that their advancement in Vietnam could lead to an intervention by China. However, after China’s loss in the First Opium War (1840–1842), France no longer worried or stayed cautious of China and immediately advanced into Vietnam.⁵⁰ Besson stated that:

“It was not until 1842 that the July Monarchy coveted territory in the Far East. At that time, the Treaty of Nanking ended [1842] the Opium War between China and Great Britain ...The extent of the British triumph in the Opium War impressed Francois Guizot, then the most powerful member of Louis-Philippe’s cabinet, and prompted him to declare that France needed suitable bases (*points d’appui*). In Asian water.”⁵¹

In the 1830s, France's attention was again focused on Vietnam because of the anti-missionary's policy enforced by Emperor Minh Mang. The emperor established a strict law to control the movement of the missionaries. In 1824, French first-class Mandarin officers Jean Baptiste Chaigneau and Philippe Vannier Chester were asked to leave Vietnam. This persecution led to new demands by the missionaries for France to intervene politically in Vietnam.

In 1838, Martin Fourichon (1808–1884), a young Naval officer, urged the French government to seize Da Nang Port (France knows it as Tourane). However, Francois Guizot (1787–1874), a Minister of Foreign Affairs in King Louis-Philippe's (1830–1848) cabinet, rejected it as something that would ruin his plans to cooperate in foreign affairs and could lead to war with Britain. According to Hanotaux, Francois Guizot believed that France already had many problems in Europe, India, and the African continent and that France's intervention in Vietnam would only increase their burden.⁵²

Nevertheless, between February and March 1843, the French Navy began to intervene in Vietnam. Admiral Cecille ordered the warship *Heroine* under the command of Captain Favin Leveque to sail to Tourane, where the captain demanded that the French missionaries who were sentenced to death by Emperor Thieu Tri be released.⁵³ As the study by Tate, the situation was handled well by Emperor Thieu Tri, and the apostles were given money and clothes and allowed to leave Vietnam. This shrewd approach could have prevented France from invading Vietnam during the Vietnam crisis, given France had no valid basis to do so.

In March 1847, the warship *La Gloire* under the command of Captain Lapierre and the warship *La Victorieuse* under Captain Charles Rigault de Genouilly arrived in Tourane. They demanded that Bishop Marcel Lefebvre (Bishop Apostolic of West Cochinchina), who was sentenced to death, be released without knowing that Bishop Marcel Lefebvre was exiled to Singapore. When the demand was not met, the French attacked by firing 800 shots, which lasted for 17 minutes, destroying five Vietnamese ships and killing almost 10,000 people. Only one French soldier died during the attack. France's attack on Tourane destroyed any hopes of a good relationship between Vietnam and France.⁵⁴

A few months after the attack on 4 November 1848, Emperor Thieu Tri passed away and was succeeded by Tu Duc (1848–1883). During his rule, Emperor Tu Duc continued his anti-Christian activities. In the administration of Vietnam's state policy, Emperor Tu Duc was greatly influenced and dependent on his ministers, who were rather orthodox in their thinking.⁵⁵ The ministers were Truong Dang Que, Vu Trung Binh, Phan Thanh Pan, and Nguyen Phuong Tri. They affirmed, "In this world, the relationship between two countries was centred on tributary relation. Hence, issues regarding trade relationships with foreign countries never existed."⁵⁶ Thus, the foreign trade policy was total isolation from the West. Emperor Tu Duc refused to allow delegations from

the United States, Britain, and Spain to trade in Vietnam.⁵⁷

The political upheavals in China also affected the stance and policy of Vietnam against the Western powers. After China's defeat in the First Opium War, Britain, France, and the United States urged China to review its old treaty. Ye Mingshen (1807–1859), the Guangzhou Commissioner's act of driving out the British from China, was observed by Vietnam. As described by Hall, Emperor Tu Duc followed China's tactics in handling the Western parties. However, the emperor's method was more extreme than Ye Mingshen's methods in eliminating threats from the British.⁵⁸

The emperor's severe actions against Western powers resulted from chaos among the conflicting tribes in Vietnam's royal family. Those who were unsatisfied conspired with the emperor's nephew, Hong Bao, who rose to revolt against the Emperor. Hong Bao received support from Catholic missionaries in Vietnam after being promised freedom of religion. Although the upheaval was controlled in 1851, Emperor Tu Duc continued to take drastic action against those Catholic missionaries who supported Hong Bao.

Among Hong Bao's supporters were Bishop Augustin Schoeffler and Bishop Jean-Louis Bonnard as they were executed under the command of Emperor Tu Duc for engaging in missionary work. This is due to proselytization being banned in Vietnam. In March 1851, an anti-Catholic law was passed by Vietnam, in which Christian Vietnamese would be exiled. In 1852, Emperor Tu Duc offered a reward of 30 silver coins to anyone who killed missionaries and those who spread the religion.⁵⁹ In 1856, the King of France, Louis Napoleon (1808–1873), sent Charles de Montigny, a French Consul in Siam, to Vietnam to protest Emperor Tu Duc's action on the missionaries and Catholics in Vietnam. The French insisted on freedom of religion, trade rights, and the establishment of a French Consul from the government of Vietnam. Emperor Tu Duc disregarded the proposal. According to Jean Fredet, this refusal was because the Emperor of Vietnam, whose subjects believed he was the Son of Heaven, should not defile himself through personal contact with barbarians such as the French.⁶⁰

France's claims revealed its ambition to expand its economy by using the excuse of intervening in the oppression of missionaries by Vietnam. King Louis Napoleon viewed Vietnam as a suitable geopolitical base to rival the British power in Far East Asia and as a "protector" of the Catholic institution in Asia. Hence, the oppression of the French Catholic missionaries and Spain in Vietnam was a strong reason for them to involve themselves in Vietnam's politics. This is because the persecution of the Western missionaries continued. In 1848–1860, at least 25 Western missionaries, including Spanish missionary Mgr. Diaz was killed.⁶¹

On 1 September 1858, Admiral Charles Rigault de Genouilly (Commander in Chief of the French Naval Division of the China Seas) launched an attack on Tourane. Rigault de Genouilly warned Emperor Tu

Duc “to put a stop to the constantly recurring persecutions against Christian in Cochinchina and to secure them the efficacious protection of France.” A day before the attack, Rigault de Genouilly emphasised that Vietnam was the gateway to Southeast Asia.⁶²

Rigault de Genouilly’s army conquered the Tourane territory without solid opposition from Vietnam. Taboulet stated, “France lost far more soldiers and sailors from heat exhaustion, malaria, diarrhoea, and cholera than from the bullets of the Vietnamese Army at Tourane [Danang] and Saigon.”⁶³ On 17 February 1859, Rigault de Genouilly’s navy conquered Gia Dinh (Saigon), Vietnam’s main supply of paddy crops. With this success, France gained control of Vietnam’s supply of rice.

After the success at Gia Dinh, the French army did not continue to proceed into other territories in Vietnam, as they were at war with China in a Britain-France treaty (Second Opium War 1856–1860). France was involved in the Second Opium War against China when Abbe Auguste Chapdelaine, a French missionary, was killed in February 1856 in Guangxi on the count of influencing the Chinese to retaliate against the Qing Dynasty. France claimed that the killing had violated the principles of the “Main Rights of the Foreign Territory,” which was given to France in the Whampoa Treaty in 1844, although Guangxi was still closed to the West. Consequently, France joined the British to avenge the death of Augustus Chapdelaine.⁶⁴ The army in Gia Dinh was not strong, as the majority of the military had been sent to China, as explained below:

...The renewed outbreak of war in China led to the recall of all the available forces from Cochinchina to join in the second expedition to Tientsin [Tianjin]...Tourane [Da Nang] was abandoned, and a sufficient garrison only was left in Gia Dinh [Saigon] to hold its own until circumstances should permit the resumption of active operations.⁶⁵

Vietnam’s chance of defeating the France-Spain army was better because 12,000 Vietnam soldiers cornered France’s troops under Captain Joseph Daries of less than 800 soldiers. However, Emperor Tu Duc did not use the opportunity to do so. Instead, he was focused on oppressing and sending rebel farmers into exile.⁶⁶

In November 1860, the British-France allied forces left Beijing after ending the war with China through the Beijing Treaty (*Convention of Peking*), which was signed on 24 October 1860.⁶⁷ On 23 February 23, 1861, approximately 27 ships and 3,500 soldiers were sent to Vietnam to strengthen the forces. In January 1861, France managed to conquer Chi Hoa and My Tho (Tien Giang Province), followed by a settlement in Gia Dinh, Bien Hoa, and Go Cong.⁶⁸

After taking over from Admiral Leonard Victor Joseph Charner (1797–1869), Admiral Louis Adolphe Bonard conquered the whole of Cochinchina, including Poulo Condore and the small islands around the Mekong River.⁶⁹ Although Vietnam had more soldiers than the French-Spain allied forces, Vietnam's weak strategy, old weaponry, and low morale among soldiers caused Vietnam to be defeated by the allied troops as alleged by Long Yongxing.⁷⁰ Emperor Tu Duc realised the weakness of his troops, and the war had cost him 200,000 francs. There was also a rebellion from the heir of Dynasty Le in Tonking, and there were signs that the French would assist the rebels in overthrowing him. Hence, on 5 June 1862, the emperor surrendered and signed a treaty (Treaty of Saigon) with France. Under the treaty, Emperor Tu Duc agreed to surrender three territories in the Mekong Delta: Bien Hoa, Gia Dinh, Mytho (Dinh Tuong), and Poulo Condore to France. Tourane, Xuan Thuy (Ba Lac), and Quang An (Luang Vam) ports were opened to French trades. French ships were allowed to sail along the waters of Cambodia and the Mekong River, and Vietnam promised to give them the freedom to practise their religion.⁷¹

China's Reaction to France's Conquest in Southern Vietnam

During the time that Vietnam was faced with threats from France (1840–1862), China adopted a non-interfering stance, as they believed that as a suzerain country, they should not interfere with its vassal state's internal affairs. In 1841, Vietnam faced another challenge from the heirs of the Le Dynasty, who continued to launch a rebellion against the Nguyen Dynasty.

After the coronation of Emperor Thieu Tri, revolts broke out in Ha Tien, Vinh Long, Kien Giang, Nam Thai, and Ha-Am. The governor-general of Yunnan, Liang Zhangju, informed the *Junjichu* in Beijing of the upheaval. Liang Zhangju was instructed not to intervene in Vietnam's political problems to maintain a good relationship with Vietnam. Chinese officers in Guangzhou and Guangxi were instructed to monitor citizens' movements at the border so that rebels from Vietnam could not sneak into China. Meanwhile, Chinese citizens were also being watched to prevent them from entering Vietnam, which could cause suspicion that they were helping the rebels in Vietnam.⁷²

The upheaval that continued to happen in Vietnam was ignored by China, as they were clear on their policy. The China government only prioritised the implementation and efficiency of the tribute system. What concerned China was that in the relationship, there are three schedules in the tributary system followed by Vietnam: *zhengong* (state protectorate presents tributary items to the Emperor of China), *Chao* (an audience ceremony with the Emperor of China), and *Feng* (coronation of kings of the protectorate by the Emperor of China). China perceived that as long as Vietnam carried out

those duties, it complied with the tributary system. Hence, China continued to stay out of its internal affairs as it watched the progress in Vietnam.

After the First Opium War (1839–1842), China had to deal with a breach of a massive scale from the Western powers, to the extent that part of the territory became a semi-colony of the British. This was further aggravated by the instability caused by a series of rebellions, such as the Nian Rebellion (1850–1868), the Muslim Panthay Rebellion (1856–1873), the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), and the Tongan Rebellion (1862–1873). This made it difficult for China, and they did not have the time and energy to interfere in the upheaval in Vietnam.⁷³

Meanwhile, Vietnam believed that as long as they abided by the tributary system, they did not need China to interfere in their political affairs. Vietnam only reported the “good” news and did not report current issues or France’s efforts to conquer Vietnam. Instead, amidst the rebellion, Vietnam continued to send tributes to China and carry out the audience ceremony. From 1840 to 1860, the reports received by *Junjichu* in China included pieces on Vietnam’s plea to curb piracy and robbery, reports on dates to send tributary, and audience ceremonies.⁷⁴

These reports from *Junjichu* in Beijing, as seen in Table 1.0, show that there were no events, notes, or messages sent during 1854, 1858, 1859, 1860, 1861, and 1862 by Vietnam through Governor-General Liangguang (Guangxi and Guandong) and Governor Yunnan. Reports stating that there are no reports indicate that no emergency situations are occurring in Vietnam.

Table 1.0: Reports received by *Junjichu* (Grand Council of State) regarding the situation in Vietnam (185

Year	No	Yes (bil.)	Matters
1854	×	-	-
1855	-	√(1)	The situation on pirate activities
1856	-	√(1)	The situation on pirate activities
1857	-	√(1)	The situation on pirate activities and robbery
1858	-	√(1)	The situation on pirate activities and robbery
1859	×	-	-
1860	×	-	-
1861	×	-	-
1862	×	-	-
1863		√(1)	Request for the delay in sending tributes
1864		√(1)	Request for the delay in sending tributes and report on a robbery at the borders of China-Vietnam
1865		√(1)	Request for the delay in sending tributes
1866		√(2)	Request for the delay in sending tributes

Source: Adapted from *Qing Shi Lu* (Qing Veritable Records), various volumes.

Junjichu received only one report in 1855, 1856, 1857, 1863, 1864, 1865, and two in 1866. The reports were mainly about Vietnam's plea to China to help stop robberies at the borders and postpone the tribute delivery.⁷⁵

The situation took an unfortunate turn during the 1850s when China-Vietnam's relationship was at a "standstill" due to the onset of the Taiping Rebellion. The connection was severed when the rebellion established its headquarters in Nanjing in 1853 until it subsided in 1864. In the 12 years, many upheavals occurred near the China-Vietnam border, particularly in the southern regions of Guangxi, Yunnan, and Guangdong, which were Vietnam's tributary paths to China.⁷⁶ Due to this, Vietnam could not send its tributary mission to China. Four tributary envoys had to be postponed, as seen in the report made by Governor-General Liangguang to *Junjichu*, which the main reason for the postponement was due to "disturbance in the territories of Guangxi, Yunnan, and Guangdong" and because "Vietnam's tributary path to China was still obstructed."⁷⁷

During the pause in the China-Vietnam relationship, France quickly began efforts to conquer Vietnam. Delays in sending the tributaries caused not only the dissolution of the traditional relationship between China and Vietnam but also the dissolution of the diplomatic relationship. The absence of reports and tributary envoys to China resulted in Vietnam disappearing from China's scrutiny, as China was unaware of the political arena and administrative problems in Vietnam.⁷⁸

For this reason, the Chinese did not respond to the French conquest of southern Vietnam (known as Cochinchina by France) by the Treaty of Saigon in 1862. China assumed that the Saigon Treaty (1862), signed between Vietnam and France, was only as the quote goes: *Manchu Zhisheng, buzhu yujiao* (struggles between two barbaric nations, which there is no need to worry about).⁷⁹

Relations between China and Vietnam during the reign of Emperor Thieu Tri

In their relationship, Vietnam continued to acknowledge China as its suzerain state, even when the West threatened China. However, China no longer perceived Vietnam as having a lower stature than itself. Hence, the title *Yue Yi Hui Guan* (Vietnamese Barbarians' Hostel), the name given to the place Vietnam's tributary envoys arriving in Beijing (China) stayed, was unpleasant to the Vietnamese. In 1840, envoys from Vietnam led by Hong Te My and Ly Van Phuc, a *thi-lang* officer (vice-presidents) from *Luc-bo* (Six Boards), arrived in China to apply for the coronation of Thieu Tri (1841–1847) as the Emperor of Vietnam, expressed an objection to China.

We [Vietnam] are descendants of Than Nong [Sen Nong]. An ancestor's heritage is common to the Chinese. Therefore, referring to us [Vietnamese] as the "Yi" (barbarian) is inappropriate for China.⁸⁰

To solve this matter, China immediately removed the word "Yi."⁸¹ For the Vietnamese, the term "you" represented Vietnam as a country uncivilised or not progressing culturally. In 1802, when Emperor Gia Long founded the Nguyen Dynasty, Vietnam adopted China's model of the tributary system in countries such as Laos and Cambodia, as well as the minority tribes in the Highlands (such as Luang Phrang and Vientiane), which were required to send tributes to Vietnam.⁸² Emperor Minh Mang brought up the issue of Vietnam's "status" in China's perception in 1840, when he insisted that China would instead punish him and then let Vietnam's rank be at a position lower than Luang Prabang, Ryukyu Island, and Siam in an audience ceremony with China's Emperor in Beijing. Indeed, Vietnam was at its prime during the era of Emperor Minh Mang in terms of implementing Confucianism in every aspect of life. In 1832, the emperor named Vietnam Dai Nam (The Great of Vietnam), which saw the country as similar to "Little China," equal excellent service and attention from China.⁸³

However, China did not allow such a misunderstanding to continue because the coronation of Emperor Thieu Tri was still carried out in 1841, although the palace was celebrating the 60th birthday of Emperor Daoguang (1821- 1850). Emperor Daoguang the seventh Emperor of the Qing dynasty, reigning from 1820 to 1850, believed that although Vietnam was a small country, it could not be left without a king. Consequently, the Emperor instructed the Guangxi Governor, Bao Qing, to go to Phu Xuan (Hue) to ordain Emperor Thieu Tri as the ruler of Vietnam.⁸⁴ The acknowledgement was much appreciated and emphasised by Emperor Thieu Tri. He instructed his citizens from across the country to gather and celebrate the coming of the emissaries from China in the grandest manner and customs.⁸⁵ The Emperor well received the coronation, and he told his ministers: "I am thankful for my coronation by the Emperor of Qing (China)."⁸⁶

Emperor Thieu Tri sent two tributary envoys from Vietnam to China during his reign in 1845 and 1846. They presented tributary items to the Emperor of China. This was according to the tributary schedule set in 1839 by Emperor Daoguang, which required Vietnam to give tributes once every four years instead of twice a year.

China did not want to complicate Vietnam as its protectorate. This is because, during Emperor Thieu Tri's reign, he appealed to China for protection, pleading for Vietnam's cause as one of China's vassal states. Instead, China was concerned with the security of Vietnam. In 1842 and 1853, Emperor Daoguang instructed Vietnam that the items used during coronation (*Xie en*) should be kept and used as tributary items for another time.⁸⁷ This was intended to lessen

Vietnam's burden, as China realised that whenever a tributary mission was sent, the envoys had to cross five provinces in China, such as Guangxi, Hunan, Hubei, Henan, and Hebei, before the goods could be presented to the Emperor of China in Beijing.⁸⁸ Upon knowing of the Emperor's offer, Vietnam sent a letter to request a postponement in sending out the tributes for the year and to proceed with the audience ceremony only.⁸⁹

In 1848, Bui Hoi, Vietnam's palace officer, went to China to bring news of the passing of Emperor Thieu Tri and seek the coronation of a new king.⁹⁰ Informing the death of Vietnam's king to the Emperor of China was a tradition in the China-Vietnam relationship because Vietnam needed a letter of acknowledgement and the king's seal from the emperor before a new king could ascend the throne. In 1849, Emperor Tu Duc received a letter of ordaining and the king's seal from the Emperor of China through the governor of Guangxi, Lao Congguang. The king's coronation ceremony was conducted in Hue.⁹¹

In 1853, Phan Huy Vinh and six others requested an audience with Emperor Xianfeng (1851–1862) to present tributary items and a coronation ceremony. The envoy from Vietnam was allowed to meet the Emperor in *Shen Wumen* (north gateway to the Forbidden City). This was the only tributary envoy received by Emperor Xianfeng during his reign in China; the tributary envoys were halted as there was a rebellion in Taiping.

During the Taiping Rebellion in 1855, the governor-general of Liangguang, Ye Mingshen, reported that the army led by Zhou Anying from Fuzhen, who was sent to Guangzhou to help eliminate the rebellion, was met with a storm during their sail. The team had to seek shelter in Vietnam while getting food supplies. Vietnam provided the soldiers 100 taels of silver, food, and water.⁹² As a consequence, Ye Mingshen suggested in his report that Vietnam should be given a reward, such as gold pots, bracelets, and silk. The gifts could be sent through the Vietnamese ship that traded in China.⁹³

Conclusion

Vietnam was said to have been a subordinate state to the Chinese empire for millennia. So, Imperial China's response to Western legal arguments against the tributary system is best demonstrated in this instance. Meanwhile, in the mid-late 19th century, the West stormed the Chinese mainland's gates, causing insecurity and instability in the country as it defended itself against Western attacks. However, this did not impede Vietnam's ability to cultivate relations with China through the tributary system. Vietnam continued to view China as a shield against the rise of French power in its country. The practice of the tributary system was made acceptable by the Confucian universalism of all-under-heaven, which might also be translated as all under the just rule of the Chinese emperor. In exchange, the continuation of the tributary system and the persistence of geopolitical reality restored the integrity of Confucian

universalism. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Western powers began to annex China's erstwhile tributary kingdoms and undermine China's internal political structure, the logic held for thousands of years. Furthermore, the study's findings indicated that China strove to fulfil its responsibilities as Vietnam's master nation. Throughout France's aggressive attempts to capture Vietnam, China defended Vietnam with a steadfast resolve.

However, China-Vietnam relations were temporarily halted due to Chinese national insecurity, and France seized the opportunity to conquer the southern region of Vietnam (Cochinchina) in 1858. This conquest was possible because internal chaos and insecurity forced China to prioritise internal conflicts over those of its neighbouring countries, including Vietnam. It is also due to the excessive centralisation of Confucianism by Vietnam's emperors, namely Minh Mang, Tuc Duc and Thieu Tri, whose expelling and suppressing the work of missionaries provided space and a powerful reason for France to conquer Vietnam. China remained silent at the beginning of the French conquest of southern Vietnam because no reports were received from its' official. Therefore, the matter was not taken seriously. In contrast, China protested France's invasion of northern Vietnam in the late 19th century, resulting in the Sino-French War (1884–1885). China was upset because of the shared border between its country and a portion of northern Vietnam. However, it was too late to save Vietnam, as France's advance was too swift. Finally, the Treaty of Tientsin signed in 1885 officially ended the vassal relationship between China and Vietnam. Hence, the new powers demanded a new order consolidated with legal instruments. The Chinese were forced to recognise the legitimacy of the French claim based on the treaty.

Endnotes

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2. The missions were 1405–1407, 1408–1411, 1412–1415, 1416–1419, 1421–422, 1424–425, and 1430–1433, covering 29 years. The first mission (1405–1407) with 62 ships and 27,800 passengers left Nanjing for Calicut. Zheng also visited Champa, Java, Srivijaya, Sumatra, and Ceylon in this mission. The second mission (1407–1409) was a voyage to India and the coronation of a new king in Calicut. The third mission (1409–1411) was a mission to Champa, Temasek, Malacca, Sumatra (Samudera and Tamiang), and Ceylon. The fourth expedition (1413–1415) sailed to Champa, Java, Sumatra, Malaya, the Maldives, Ceylon, India, and Hormuz. The fifth expedition (1417–1419) was

- Champa, Java, Palembang, Aden, Mogadishu, Brawa, and Malindi in West Africa. The sixth mission (1421–1422) sailed to Africa. The final mission (1431–1433) was to southern Vietnam, Surabaya, Palembang, Malacca, Samudera, Ceylon, Calicut, Africa, and Jeddah. See *Ming Shi* (History of Ming Dynasty), Vol. 304, *Zheng He Zhuan* (Biography). [《明史》。卷三百四：郑和传。]
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 4. John K. Fairbank, "Tributary Trade and China's Relations with The West," *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 1(2): 147. During the Ming Dynasty, imperial commissioner Ch'i-Ying was confused that Fo-lan-shi (France) was the same as Fo-lang-chi (Portugal). See J. D. Frodsham, 1974. *The First Chinese Embassy to The West: The Journals of Kuo Sung-Tao, Liu His-Hung and Chang Te-Yi*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942, p. xvii.
 5. Richard Madsen, "Catholic Revival during the Reform Era," *The China Quarterly*, 2003, 174: 470.
 6. 《天朝物產丰盈，无所不有，原不藉外夷货物以通有无》，"Emperor Qianlong's letter to King George III of England," 1793 in *Yue Hai Guan Zhi* (Gazetteer of Guangdong Ocean), Vol. 23. [梁廷楠，《粤海关志》。第二十三卷。]
 7. 《天朝富有四海，岂需尔小国些微货物哉》，in Wang Yanwei et al., 1968. *Qing Dai Wai Jiao Shi Liao* (Foreign Relation History During Qing Dynasty), Vol. 1: *Jiaqing Zhao Si* (Emperor Jiaqing Reign), No. 4, Taipei: Cheng wen chu ban she, min guo. [王彦威等编，《清代外交史料。卷一：嘉庆朝四》，台北：成文出版社。]
 8. "Emperor Qianlong's edict to Suchang, the Governor-General of Liangguang," dated 3rd November 1761, in *Qing Gaozong Shi Lu*, Vol. 649. (《清高宗实录》。卷六四九)。〈国家四海之大，何所不有，准通洋船者，特怀柔远人之道。……天朝并不藉此些微远物也?〉 (China is a vast country, everything we need is here. Allow the Western ship to trade, treat them without tributary system...our country does not need anything from them).
 9. James L. Hevia, *Huai Rou Yuan Ren: Ma Ga Er Ni Shi Hua De Zhong Ying Li Yi Chong Tu* (Cherishing Men From Afar), trans. Deng Changchun, Beijing: She hui ke xue wen xian chu ban she, 2002, p. 11. [鄧常春译，《怀柔远人：马嘎尔尼使华的中英礼仪冲突》，北京：社会科学文献出版社。]
 10. J. D. Frodsham, 'The First Chinese Embassy to The West,' *The Journals of Kuo Sung-Tao, Liu His-Hung and Chang Te-Yi*, 1974, p.

xvii.

11. Ning Chia, "The Lifanyuan and the Inner Asian Rituals in the Early Qing (1644–1795)," *Late Imperial Chinese*, 1993, 14(1): 61.
12. Ssu-yu Teng, John K. Fairbank, et al., *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839-1923*. New York: Atheneum, 1967, p. 1.
13. Masataka Banno, *China and the West, 1858–1861: The Origin of the Tsungli Yamen*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1964, p. 221.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 220 and see also S. M. Meng, *The Tsungli Yamen: Its Organization and Functions*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962, pp. 16-25.
15. Ssu-yu Teng, John K. Fairbank, et al. *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839–1923*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967, pp. 47–49. It had the following characteristics:
 - a. It was intended as a temporary office in the custody of a prince who several ministers and secretaries assisted. Prince Kung became president while Wen-hsing became the councillor chairman and vice president of the Board of the Chief Minister.
 - b. It had no statutory basis and was responsible for implementing foreign policy.
 - c. It was managed into five departments: Russia, Britain, America, France and coastal defence.
 - d. It was responsible for foreign affairs and promoted the construction of modern schools, science, and communications companies.
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20. Chester A. Bain, "The History of Viet-Nam from the French Penetration to 1939," Ph. D dissertation, University of Washington, 1956, p. 17.
21. Richard, S. Gundry, *China and Her Neighbours: France in Indo-China, Russia and China, India and Thibet*, Publisher: Wentworth

- Press, 2019, p. 2–3.
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 25. Thiah Nhat Hanh, *Vietnam: Lotus in A Sea of Fire*, New York: Hill & Wang, 1967, p. 16.
 26. Tran Trong Kim, 1992. *Viet Nam Su Luoc* (Vietnamese History), trans. Dai Kelai, Beijing: Shang wu yin shu guan, p. 301 and see also Inaba Iwakichi, *Qing Zhao Quan Shi* (History of Qing Dynasty), trans. Dantao, Taipei: Zhong hua shu ju, 1960, p. 89. [稻葉岩吉著; 但燾譯訂, 《清朝全史》, 台北: 中华书局。]
 27. Truong Vinh Ky known as Petrus Ky and Jean-Baptiste Petrus, was a Vietnamese scholar whose publications helped improve understanding between colonial Vietnam and Europe. See P. J. B. Truong Vinh Ky, 1987. *Chu Yen Di Bac-Ky Nam at-Hoi (1876)* (Voyage to Tonking in the Year At-Hoi (1876)), trans. P. J. Honey, 1987. London: University of London, p. 87.
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 31. You Mingqian, 1999. “Yuenan Ruan Chao Ming Huang Di De Zhe Xue Si Xiang,” (The Philosophic Ideology of Emperor Minh Mang of the Nguyen Dynasty in Vietnam), *Journal of All-Around Southeast Asia*, 3(83): 57. [游明谦, <越南阮朝命明皇帝的哲学思想>, 《东南亚纵横》。]
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33. Charles B. Norman, 1884. *Tonkin, or France in the Far East*, London, Chapman & Hall, 1884, pp. 43-44. In the report, Pigneau de Behaine explained, "If we can conquer Vietnam in peace or war, we [France] will reap its benefit." The benefits were:
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 - b. The benefit II: During the war, France could sever any ties of trade with China and other countries which were enemies.
 - c. The benefit III: If a network of trade routes linking Vietnam with the southwest of China were built, France would acquire the land's wealth in southwestern China because other Western powers did not recognise China or its rich natural resources.
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- took advantage of the situation by sending ten warships to Tonking Gulf and stopping over at Haiphong Port to enter the Mekong River. However, the mission failed, and the British sailed to Macao. See Wang Zhichun, annotated Zhao Chunchen, 1989. *Qing Chao Rou Yuan Ji* (Records of Qing Dynasty Foreign Relations), Beijing: Zhong hua shu ji, pp. 212–213. [王之春撰；赵春晨点校，《清朝柔远记》，北京：中华书局。]
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 48. In December 1851, Louis Napoleon did a *coup d’etat* and became the President of France. On 9 October 1852, during a speech in Bordeaux, he officially dismissed the governance of the Second Republic and used the title of Emperor Louis Napoleon III. He also insisted, “I would conquer, for the sake of religion, morality, and material ease, that portion of the population, still very numerous, which, amid a country of faith and belief, hardly knows the precepts of Christ; which, amid the most fertile country of the world...”. Since then, France continued to improve its competitiveness with other European powers as an occupying power, returning its control in Vietnam. See J. H. Robinson, 1906. *Readings in European History*, Vol II, New York: Ginn and Company, pp. 563–564.
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52. The missionaries were Bishop Miche, Bishop Duclos, Bishop Berneaux, Bishop Galg and Bishop Charnier. See D. J. M. Tate, 1979. *The Making of Modern South-East Asia*. Vol. I (The European Conquest), p. 445.
53. Thomas Hodgkin, 1981. *Vietnam: The Revolutionary Path*, London, Macmillan, 1981, p.128.
54. Although the ministers were grateful to Vietnam and were honest, they were controlled by their orthodox mindset, which refused change. These ministers were from two groups of thought. The first were those who knew little about developments in the Western world but only preached theories and never acted on them. The second group were those who had visited outside the country but did not practise what they learned when they returned. Thus, most of them still lived in their cocoons. Emperor Tu Duc was diligent in handling administrative matters and tried to figure out how to strengthen the country. However, the proposed reforms in the agricultural sector, constitution, transportation, trade relations with the consent of the West, modernisation of the armed forces, and others presented by Nguyen Truong To (1828–1871), Dinnh Van Dien, Nguyen Hiep, Le Dinh and Phan Liem were rejected by the orthodox ministers with the excuse that it was not time yet. They were unsuitable for Vietnam's situation. See Guo Zhenduo & Zhang Xiaomei (eds.) *Yuenan Tong Shi* (General History of Vietnam), p. 607 see Chau Phan Thien Long, "Transitional Nationalism in Viet-Nam," PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1965, pp. 27–29.
55. *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Chinh Bien* (Chronicle of Nguyen Dynasty Principal Period), Lie Chuan (Collect Group of Biographies), Vol. 22. [《大南实录》。正编。列传：卷二十二。]
56. Chau Phan Thien Long, "Transitional Nationalism in Viet-Nam," p. 23.
57. D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*. London: Palgrave, 1981, p. 687.
58. Chen Chinghe (annotated and ed.), *Ruan Shu Wang Jin Ri Ji*, p. 2.
59. *Ibid*.
60. "Charles Rigault de Genouilly report to Admiral Hamelin, Colony Minister and France navy," 8 September 1857, Archives Nationales, Serie Marine, BB4752, in James A. Bising, 1972. "The Admirals' Government: A History of the Naval Colony That Was Frenchy Cochinchina, 1862–1879," p. 22. In the report, Charles Rigault de Genouilly insisted that churches would be destroyed and schools closed while Catholic missionaries ran. Charles Rigault de Genouilly reiterated that negotiations were the most dangerous system to be used; instead, he recommended that the French take stricter measures

- to resolve the persecution of Catholic missionaries in Vietnam.
61. R. S. Gundry, *China and Her Neighbours: France in Indo-China, Russia and China, India and Tibet*, New York: Adegri Graphics LLC, 2011, p. 6.
 62. Georges Taboulet, *La geste Francaise en Indochine Histoire Par les Textes de la France en Indochine des Origines a 1914*, Vol. II, Paris: Librairie d'Orient et d'Amerique Broche, 1955–56, pp. 462–463 In James A. Bising, 1972. “The Admirals’ Government: A History of the Naval Colony That Was Frenchy Cochinchina, 1862–1879,” p. 28.
 63. Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 206.
 64. R. S. Gundry, *China and Her Neighbours: France in Indo-China, Russia and China, India and Tibet*, New York: Adegri Graphics LLC, 2011, p. 9.
 65. The French received help and support from Spain because the Spanish missionaries were also killed by the Vietnamese. The Spanish base in Manila led by Admiral El Cano sent 22 residents and 550 Spaniards, and 13 warships to Vietnam. Among the warships were *Nemesis*, *Phlegeton*, *Primauguet*, *Avalanche*, *Dragonne*, *Fusee*, *Mitraille*, *Gironde*, *Saone*, *Dordagne*, *Meurthe* and *Durance*. See R. S. Gundry, *China and Her Neighbours: France in Indo-China, Russia and China, India and Tibet*, New York: Adegri Graphics LLC, 2011, p. 6.
 66. Beijing Treaty (Convention of Peking) gave priority to the West in trades such as the opening of Tianjin in China, as well as compensation paid by China to the British-French of eight million taels of silver. See Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 2002, pp. 214–215.
 67. John F. Cady, *The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967, pp. 270–271.
 68. D. J. M. Tate M., *The aking of Moden South East Asia*, Vol. I (The European Conquest), 1979, p. 448.
 69. Long Yongxing, “Zhong Fa Zhan Zheng Qian Fa Guo Dui Yuenan De Qin Lue Hua Dong,” (French Aggressive Activities in Vietnam Before the Sino-French War), *Dong Nan Ya* (Journal Southeast Asia), 1993, 3: 39. [龙永行, <中法战争前法国对越南的侵略活动>, 《東南亞》。]
 70. Vietnam recognised the loyalty as Hao-uoc Nham-tuat (Treaty of the Year of Nham-tuat), while the Western party recognised it as the Treaty of 1862 or Treaty of Saigon. See Mark W. Mcleod, 1993. “Truong Dinh and Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism 1859-64: A Reappraisal,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 1(24): 89.
 71. “Report Liang Zhangju to Junji Dachen (Grand Ministers of State),” 14 May 1841, in *Qing Xuanzong Shi Lu*, (The Veritable Records of the Emperor Daoguang), Vol. 350, pp. 22–23. [《宣宗实录三》。]

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72. Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolution: China from the 1800s to 2000*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 138.
73. San Jun Da Xue (ed.), (The Armed Forces University), *Zhongguo Li Dai Zhan Zheng Shi* (History of Wars in China), Vol. 17, Taipei: Li ming wen hua shi ye gong si, 1972, p. 112. [三軍大學編著, 《中國歷代戰爭史》, 台北市: 黎明文化事業公司。]
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Qing Wenzong Shi Lu* (The Veritable Records of the Emperor Xianfeng), Vol. 333. (《文宗實錄》, 《卷三百三十三》。)
76. *Huang Zhao Zheng Dian Lei Zuan*, (Classified Compilation of Qing Dynasty), *Li Bu* (Rites Section), Vol. 40, p. 8906 [《皇朝政典類纂》。禮部。]
77. Long Yongxing, 1993. “Zhong Fa Zhan Zheng Qian Fa Guo Dui Yuenan De Qin Lue Hua Dong,” (French Aggressive Activities in Vietnam Before the Sino-French War), *Dong Nan Ya* (Journal Southeast Asia), 3: 38.
78. 《蛮触之爭, 不足与較》. Long Yonghang, 1987. “Jin Dai Zhong Yue Zong Fan Guan Xi Chu Yi” (Opinion on Tribute Relations Between China and Vietnam), *Dong Nan Ya Yan Jiu* (Southeast Asian Studies Journal), 1(2): 82. [龙永行, 《近代中越宗藩关系刍议》, 東南亞研院。]
79. Phan Thuc Truc, *Quoc Su Di Bien* (The Compiler and Contents of the Quoc Su Di Bien), Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhong wen da xue xin ya yan jiu suo dong nan ya yan jiu shi, 1965, p. 346. [藩叔直, 《國史遺編》, 香港: 香港中文大學新亞研究所東南亞研究室。]
80. Phan Thuc Truc, *Quoc Su Di Bien*, p. 346.
81. In 1815, Emperor Gia Long listed 13 countries he claimed as protectorates in Vietnam’s tributary system. See Alexander B. Woodside, 1971. *Vietnam and The Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Nguyen and Ching Civil Government in The First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, p. 237. See *Dai Nam Tuc Luc Chinh Bien* (Chronicle of Nguyen Dynasty, principal period), No. 2, Vol. 220.
82. “Little China” is a term that refers to Vietnam due to the influence of solid aspects of Chinese culture. See Alan H. Brodrick, 1942. *Little China: The Annamese Lands*, Oxford University Press, 1942.
83. The royal coronation ceremony of Vietnamese emperors like Emperor Gia Long and Minh Mang was conducted in Hanoi. However, during Emperor Thieu Tri’s coronation, Vietnam requested that the place of royal coronation ceremony be a representative of the Emperor of China be conducted in Hue. See *Qing Shi Gao* (Draft History of the Qing Dynasty), Vol. 527: Shu Guong Chuan Er (Vassal State

- Biography), No. 2: Yuenan (Vietnam). [《清史稿》。卷五百二十七：属国传二，越南。]
84. Phan Thuc Truc, *Quoc Su Di Bien* (The Compiler and Contents of the Quoc Su Di Bien), p. 359.
85. Chinese translation 《大清封吾帝，朕安心矣》 [Daqing geng wudi, zhen anxin yi]. See Guo Zhenduo & Zhang Xiaomei (eds.) *Yuenan Tong Shi*, p. 560.
86. *Qing Xuanzong Shi Lu* (The Veritable Records of the Emperor Daoguang), Vol. 373, p. 32–33 and *Qing Wenzong Shi Lu* (The Veritable Records of the Emperor Xianfeng), Vol. 13, pp. 12–13.
87. Chen Yulong, “Li Shi Zhong Yue Jiao Dong Dao Li Kao,” (Study of China Vietnam Ancient Route) in *Dong Nan Ya Shi Lun Wen Ji* (Collections of History of Southeast Asia), Zhengzhou: He nan ren ming chu ban she, 1987, p. 117. [陈玉龙, 《历代中越交通道里考》, 《东南亚史论文集》, 郑州: 河南人民出版社。]
88. *Yuenan Guo Huang Cheng* (Memorial of Vietnam Emperor) 《越南国王呈》 in Gao Weinong, *Zou Xiang Jin Shi De Zhongguo Yu Chao Gong Guo Guan Xi* (Toward to Modern Period of China and Tributary State Relationship). Guangdong: Guang dong gao deng jiao yu chu ban she, 1983, p. 29. [高伟浓, 《走向近世的中国与朝贡国关系》, 广东高教出版社。]
89. “Zheng Zuchen’s report to *Neige* (Grand Secretariat) in Beijing,” 27 February 1848, *Qing Xuanzong Shi Lu* (The Veritable Records of the Emperor Daoguang), Vol. 451, pp. 16–17.
90. *Qing Shi Gao*, Vol. 527: Shu Guong Chuan Er (Vassal State Biography), No. 2: Yuenan (Vietnam).
91. *Qing Wenzong Shi Lu*, Vol. 176, pp. 10–11.
92. *Ibid*, Vol. 228, p. 15.

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