

THE INFLUENCE OF FRENCH COLONIALISM ON VIETNAM'S CULTURE

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***Abstract:** French was colonialized Vietnam over six decades, it is of course influenced Vietnamese in many ways such as the way of life and their culture. It is interesting to explore how people in Vietnam adapted French culture now days after they got their freedom because the influence of colonizer is hard to erase in colonized. Even Vietnam not fully adapted French culture in their daily lives.*

This paper is focused on the influence of French colonialism on Vietnam's culture especially in the architecture, cuisines and religion. Post colonialism by Homi K Bhabha is used as grand theory in this paper. In other words, Bhabha argues that cultural identities cannot be ascribed to pre-given, irreducible, scripted, ahistorical cultural traits that define the conventions of ethnicity. Nor can "colonizer" and "colonized" be viewed as separate entities that define themselves independently. Bhabha suggests that the negotiation of cultural identity involves the continual interface and exchange of cultural performances that in turn produce a mutual and mutable recognition (or representation) of cultural difference. Qualitative method is used in this paper by library research.

Key words: Post colonialism, colonialism, hybridity, culture, architecture and cuisine.

I. INTRODUCTION

The French colonization in Vietnam officially started from 1887 to 1954, even though as cited on Julie Shackford (2000:181) the French and other European groups had already arrived and started to influence events in Vietnam as early as 1516. Portuguese ships bringing missionaries and traders were the first to arrive in Vietnam, and soon afterward French missionaries followed. Actually, as suggested by Long S Le (2011:132) French missionaries was one of "mission civilatrice" that was supported by French intellectual. This was not merely missionaries to spread Christian religion but also to spread French hegemony in Vietnam. In that time French tried to capture world attention by spread their hegemony by colonialism. However, French seemingly drew an observation about Vietnamese that they were once relatively progressive and intelligent due to Chinese cultural influences, but of which had relapsed. After China colonialism gave many influences on Vietnam

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in many ways such as in culture, politic, religion and economic. But, Vietnam made no progress after separating from China. In addition, Vietnam need stimulus to make any development in civilization, they have to contact people who had define culture (cited in Lieberman 2003:8).

China colonialism made deep influence in Vietnamese so that French tried to erase the influence of China colonialism as cited in Long S Le (2011:132). This view was later redefined in which "mission civiliatrice" must also break Vietnam's links to China. That is, French colonial officials became "convinced that to achieve permanent colonial success required harsh curtailment of Chinese influences", including the writing system and the ritualized mandarin examination, in order "to isolate Vietnam from its heritage and to neutralize the traditional elite" (Marr 1981: 145). Those activities have been done by French as the efforts conquered Vietnam. French tried to implant their hegemony in Vietnamese mind and in the way their live.

However this essay is focused on the influence of French Colonialism in Vietnam's culture especially in architecture, cuisines and religion. It is interesting to discuss how far French hegemony remains in those field. Said (1994:15) stated there has been a gathering awareness nearly everywhere of the lines between cultures, the divisions and differences that not only allow us to discriminate one culture to another, but also enable us to see the extent to which cultures are humanly made structure of both authority and participation, benevolent in what they exclude and demote. It cleared that we can differentiate between one cultures to another in this case French's culture and Vietnam's culture and the culture also can be assimilated with the other culture.

The Influence of French Colonialism in Vietnamese Religion

As stated above that the purpose French came to Vietnam is missionaries which one of mission civiliatrice. However, before missionaries came to Vietnam there were the three common religions: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Confucianism emphasized respect for elders, equals, and authority, and this emphasis fit well into the cult of ancestors, which remained the core of religious life. This religion became popular among the mandarins because of its principle of respect and reverence for authority. Those religions were adapted from China. Of course it could be challenged for missionaries.

Catholicism began to take hold in Vietnam in the 1600s and caused major problems for both the Vietnamese government and the people. The French began to convert Vietnamese to Catholicism in 1644, and in 1659, the first vicariate was founded. By 1650, there were already 200,000 converts, most of whom were in

the Tonkin Delta where missionaries had offered food and medical assistance to Vietnamese Catholics during famines and hard times. By 1660, there were over 400,000 converts.

Interestingly, early Western religious missionaries in Vietnam during the seventeenth century, following the lead of French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes, sought the origins of "Tonquinese" (northern Vietnamese) society no earlier than its separation from China in AD 939. Alexandre de Rhodes came to Vietnam in order to help facilitate conversion and romanized the Vietnamese language. In 1615, he published his first Latin-Portuguese-Vietnamese dictionary. Both Chinese and Japanese had also been previously Romanized by missionaries. He found the best way how to attract people to join Catholics by gave them sermons in Vietnamese in order to make his sermon easier he taught them Roman letters. So that, by the Romanized system, missionaries did not have to learn a complex system of characters.

Even though Romanized writing system used in order to spread Catholicism by missionaries through the village but during the early period of French colonialization it was taught in in schools to Vietnamese students who were trained to work for the government and as translators. In the early 1900s its popularity grew among progressive Vietnamese and **nationalist** who named it "*quae ngu*" national language. This system also considered could close the gap of communication between the bureaucracy, who had always used Chinese and the peasants who spoke Vietnamese.

In the other hand, the government saw the growing number of Catholics with their differing system of laws and morality, as a major threat to the country's well-being. Catholicism, for example, was not in agreement with the idea of ancestor worship, which was a cornerstone of village, and Confucian, philosophy. Catholic villagers were not allowed by the priests to give financial contributions to the patron deity of the village or to the village itself. Moreover, the Catholic family did not follow the rules of the Confucian family, which was a central part of the moral foundation of society and the government. For these reasons, becoming a Catholic was seen by the Vietnamese government as an act of subversion against Vietnamese law.

For that reason the missionaries were often expelled from the country but continued came back again to Vietnam, they obviously ignoring the Vietnamese government. Father de Rhodes was expelled three times: in 1627, 1640, and 1645, but returned twice. Others followed his example. In 1845 and 1847, both the Americans and the French attacked the harbor of Da Nang to try and rescue a priest who had been imprisoned in Vietnam. This missionary had been expelled

three times within a seven year period but returned each time. This attack by foreigners resulted in more attacks on Catholic Vietnamese.

During the period which led up to colonization, missionaries were given more rights by the Vietnamese government through treaties which Vietnamese leaders were forced into signing after periods of direct French aggression. In 1884, for example, the **Patenotre** Treaty missionaries and Vietnamese Catholics almost complete freedom as the French took over the country.

But nowadays the pries has the right and freedom to spread catholic. Almost 3% of population in Vietnam is Catholic. It is that fact that the the French colonialism influence Vietnamese in religion.

The Influence of French Colonialism in Vietnamese Cuisines

Many of the Vietnamese food has been heavily affected by French colonialism in Indochina, Some of them stay and combine with the Vietnamese culinary culture. That makes new taste and variant of Vietnam traditional culinary. Whilst highlighting their historical tastes as the Vietnamese people have put their own stamp onto the food introduced by the French.

Hanoi is one of the oldest city in Vietnam where some of most popular Vietnamese traditional dishes originated from here. Hanoi was the capital of French Indochina from 1902 to 1954.it has been said that the true home of Franco-Vietnamese cooking is Hanoi.

Vietnamese Baguette/Bánh mì

One of most popular food from French is baguette, which the Vietnamese adapted and today create their own style of baguette using rice flour. Many of the vegetables introduced to the country are common in Western cooking, and their names in Vietnamese reflect their origins. Potatoes, carrots, artichokes onions and asparagus are just some of the most obvious vegetables that are included here, with the Vietnamese word for potato (khoaitây) literally meaning 'Western yam'. Influences are not limited to simple ingredients, but stretch to methods of cooking too, with the use of butter and wine in the preparation of meals as a nod towards the French. The increase of beef into the cuisine is also apparent, as seen in dining experiences such as bò 7 món, which is a multi-course meal of beef created by the French to celebrate the rise in the availability of the meat, which followed their arrival in the French colonial era.



Vietnamese baguette

Bánh mì, or Vietnamese baguettes as they are known to those outside of the country, are bursting with Asian food and flavours. A delicacy found from street vendors and Vietnamese bakeries, its availability makes it a regular chew for both locals and tourists. Usually containing grilled meat, coriander and pickled carrots, the use of rice flour for the baguette makes it a lighter option to the heavier French loaf, and gives the crust a thinner, crunchier texture. Vegetarians do not despair, for there are commonly found options containing either tofu or seitan.

Coffee

Many people in this world like coffee. As cited in Double Dutch Digital Magazine In 1857, the French colonial government introduced coffee to Vietnam, and large-scale production on plantations started in the beginning of the 20th century. The Vietnam War disrupted coffee production in Buon Ma Thuot, which was already then a major **center** of coffee production. Shortly after the end of the war in 1975, the coffee industry was **nationalized**. The reforms of 1986 reintroduced private ownership and was a boost for the coffee industry. In the aftermath of the reforms, many new coffee businesses were established, such as Trung Nguyen in 1996, and Highlands Coffee in 1998.

Coffee has become one of the most integral parts of modern Vietnamese social culture. Consumed **in the morning**, noon and night, coffee shops are a hub of social interaction for everyone from **business people** to young socialites. Vietnam grows an incredible amount of coffee beans, and it is the world's second largest exporter of coffee, predominantly growing the coffeacaneophora species which gives the **Robusta** coffee bean and rewards the drinker with a **Chocolate bitter delicious** finish.



Vietnamese Coffee

There is no country in the world where coffee production has increased as such explosive rates as in Vietnam. In 1990, Vietnam produced about 1% of the world's coffee. In 2014, it overtook Brazil as the world's largest coffee exporter, and coffee is now the largest agricultural export after rice. However, most of Vietnam's coffee production consists of Robusta, which is generally considered as of low quality and is mostly used for blends and instant coffee. Vietnam is currently the King of Robusta on the international market place.

Actually, people in Vietnam has his own way to drink their coffee. The local coffee has been brewed and served in a unique way for a long time since its first introduction by the French colony in the late 19th century until now (Huynh, 2013)

Most coffee grown and brewed in Vietnam is made with bold Robusta beans, rather than Arabica beans typically used in European- style espresso" (ibid.). These beans are roasted over low heat and ground to make coffee grounds which are used to be brewed with boiling water. Coffee extract drips slowly and brings with it "oils, flavor, and caffeine out of the ground coffee beans to create a dark, dense liquid" (ibid.). So that, Starbucks cannot replace Vietnamese coffee culture.

The preservation of Vietnamese coffee culture can accelerate the development of the tourism industry in Vietnam. Berger and Stirling reported that since coffee is very much appreciated by Vietnamese, “as reflected by the distinct coffee preparation and vibrant coffee culture”, it is as well appealing to foreign tourists. (Jolliffe, Kwan, & Yen, 2010).

The influence of French colonialism in Vietnamese Cuisines from those example above from postcolonial view can be conclude to hybridity. Bhabha suggested hybridity is the process by which the colonial governing authority undertakes to translate the identity of the **colonized** (the Other) within a singular universal framework, but then fails producing something familiar but new. (Papastergiadis 1997) Bhabha contends that anew hybrid identity or subject-position emerges from the interweaving of elements of the **colonizer and colonized** challenging the validity and authenticity of any essentialist cultural identity (Paul Meredith,1998;2). Hence, Rutherford said that For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘Third Space’, which enables other positions to emerge. (1990: 211).

It can be seen in the Vietnamese Baguette /Bánh mì that in Vietnam it bursting with Asian food and flavors. Even though Baguette is one of food from French but they do not want to lose their **taste** of Vietnam, so they mix it with Asian food and flavors. That also happen to coffee the way they made it and different ingredient also the way they drink it are different from the other country.

The Influence of French Colonialism in Vietnamese Architectures

Hanoi as the Capital city of Vietnam remains many French colonialism. Hanoi is known as the canal modern city. Many architecture buildings from nineteenth until the early of twentieth century that French colonialism built. Not only in Hanoi that popular with canal modern city, there is also Ho Chi Min City where in the past was capital city of French colony. In the past Ho Chi Min City was Saigon. It changes the name into Ho Chi Min City since Vietnam got their independent in 1975 and as respect to their leader Ho Chi Min so it called Ho Chi Min. it also known as little Paris in the East (*Paris Phương Đông*). or Jewel in The East (*Hòn ngọc Viễn Đông*). The fact of French colonialism can be seen by many heritage of French colonial in Ho Chi Min and Hanoi. Some of the buildings in there use European style.

Buu Dien (Post Office)

Saigon Post Office or Buu Dien Thanh Pho Ho Chi Min is one of France colonial heritage in Ho Chi Min City. It built by France and opened on November 11, 1860. The first postage was stork picture and launched on January 13, 1863. This building is really popular in Ho Chi Min city because the architecture is mixed between

European and Asian style. It located at district 1 Paris boulevard where cross with cathedral Notre Dame (Herty, 2012:1).



BuuDien (Post Office)

Notre Dame Cathedral

The Saigon Notre Dame Basilica in Ho Chi Min is look like Notre Dame in Paris. it built in 1863 and renovated in 1877 by French architect. This cathedral is really popular and becomes one of tour destination in Ho Chi Min



Notre Dame Cathedral

Saigon Opera House

Saigon Opera House or Municipal Theatre in the past it called French Opera House. It is by **Eugene FERRET, French** architect in 1897. It is look like **Palais Garnier or Opera House in Paris**. In this opera house also has poetry gumery or statue in the above the roof of opera house, pillar and Greece statue same as Palais Garnier



Saigon Opera House

Long Bien Bridge

Long Bien Bridge crosses red river in Hanoi. It was design by Dayde' & Pille company and finished in 1903. In the French colonial era it called Paul Dolumer bridge same with the name of Indochinese General. Beside Long Bien Bridge there are many architecture as French colonial heritage such as, **Presidential** Palace in Hanoi, Bac Ky Governor Palace Indocina Bank (Vietnam National Bank), Louis Finot Museum (National Museum of Vietnamese History) and courthouse.



Long Bien Bridge



Presidential Palace, Hanoi

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