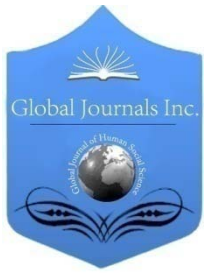
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"Tributary Trade" Activity in Diplomatic Relations between Vietnam & China in the Feudal Period

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Abstract- In diplomatic relations between Vietnam and China in the feudal period, Tributary activity (which was considered as one of two important contents of diplomatic relations besides investiture beseeching) was not only a method of maintaining pacific political relations but also the orthodox way of establishing trade relations between Vietnam and China. During the feudal period in Viet Nam, the Kings after coming to the throne paid special attention to tributary activity for Chinese emperors. In terms of form, tributary activities were diplomatic rituals and an indispensable means of communication in the relations between "vassal" (Vietnam) and "mother country" (Chinese). However, in fact, the value of tributes and gifts was not small. Broadly, we can divide the tribute and gift system into 2 categories: The first is the tributary materials and items that Vietnam's King presented to Chinese Emperor; the second is items the ambassadors brought with them.

Keywords: *vietnam, china, tributary activity, diplomacy, trade, feudalism.*

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Abstract- In diplomatic relations between Vietnam and China in the feudal period, Tributary activity (which was considered as one of two important contents of diplomatic relations besides investiture beseeching) was not only a method of maintaining pacific political relations but also the orthodox way of establishing trade relations between Vietnam and China. During the feudal period in Viet Nam, the Kings after coming to the throne paid special attention to tributary activity for Chinese emperors. In terms of form, tributary activities were diplomatic rituals and an indispensable means of communication in the relations between "vassal" (Vietnam) and "mother country" (Chinese). However, in fact, the value of tributes and gifts was not small. Broadly, we can divide the tribute and gift system into 2 categories: The first is the tributary materials and items that Vietnam's King presented to Chinese Emperor; the second is items the ambassadors brought with them. Each part of such tribute system was associated with the ambassadors' different trade ways at that time. In spite of the fluctuations in diplomatic relations in the field of politics, tributary trade relations between Vietnam and China were heterogeneous but had ups and downs through the historical periods (which were fully proven vividly under the Nguyen dynasty, especially when Vietnam-China relation was influenced or under pressure from the third "factor"- French colonialism), the remarkable achievements of "tributary trade" activities between two countries contributed to maintaining and building a peaceful diplomatic relation between Vietnam and China and laid a necessary foundation for the continuation and development of the Vietnam- China economic relation in the next periods.

Keywords: vietnam, china, tributary activity, diplomacy, trade, feudalism.

I. Introduction

It can be said in the diplomatic relation history of Vietnam until now, the diplomatic relation between Vietnam and China has always played a very important role. This relation reflects firstly the compulsory diplomatic policy due to specific historical and geographical circumstances of two countries. In term of time, total war years is still shorter than the peaceful centuries when the two countries have set up cultural, economic and diplomatic relations, etc. Thus, under the feudalism, besides the peacefully political diplomatic relation, we witnessed significant developments in economic relations between Vietnam and China. In particular, tributary activity[1] (which was considered as one of two important contents of diplomatic relations besides investiture beseeching) was not only a method of maintaining pacific political relations but also the orthodox way of establishing trade relations between Vietnam and China at that time. A question is raised that, how did such activity take place in practice? Under the ever-changing historical circumstances, especially the changes in the political relations between the two countries and the impact of external factors, how did "tributary trade" activity between China and Vietnam change through the historical periods? What is the essence of "tributary trade" activity like? What is its role in the economic and political relations between Vietnam and China in the feudal period? These are important issues that this article focuses on.

II. Overview of Vietnam- China Economic Relation from the Years of National Construction to the Year 938

Vietnam - China economic relation emerged naturally very early along with the development of the relation between two countries. Throughout thousands of historical years of co-existing with each other, the diplomatic relation between two countries was up and down from time to time but almost never interrupted.

For a long time, when it comes to the political relation as well as the economic relation between Vietnam and China, it has been often referred to the event: Viet Thuong country in the South offered white pheasant as a tribute to Thanh Vuong Emperor of Zhou Dynasty (in China) (1134 B.C - 221 A.D). However, this act not only has economic significance in nature because its main goal is to establish a diplomatic relation with the neighboring country –China, which was accomplished through the political means. Vietnam-China economic relation naturally begins at the border. Is it true that the geographical proximity as well as the intimate friendship among ethnic groups in two countries' frontier is an advantageous condition for two sides to exchange production as well as business experience? As early as the third century B.C, the

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[1] "Tribute" means tax, precious items payable to big countries in the defined period, have binding force (Ta, 1995, p.70-71).

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techniques of wet rice cultivation and drum processing were spread from the North to the South (Tran, 1966). At the same time, the trade exchanges at the state level gradually emerged. According to *A complete history of the Dai Viet* book, it is was recorded that "in 196 B.C, Luc Gia, who is Han Dynasty's mandarin in China, went to Nam Viet as an ambassador and returned with a lot of expensive jewelry" (Ngo, 1972, p.3). Or in 184 B.C, due to discrimination between Chinese and Vietnamese furniture, Han Dynasty banned Nam Viet people from buying bronze work, ironwork at the door of court; Horses, buffaloes, goats (of Han Dynasty) exchanged with Nam Viet were just male, not female (Ngo, 1972, p.75 - 76). The above events, on the one hand, reflected the political aspect in the Vietnam - China economic relation; on the other hand, they also reflected the fact: Not to this point, the object exchange between two countries began that this activity must have existed before. Therefore, under Han Dynasty, Lu Hau issued above prohibition order – which is to ban an activity which had already existed before. Obviously, Vietnam - China economic relation had been quite developed until Han dynasty, their mutual dependence had reached to the extent they could cause several economic difficulties to each other in a certain extent. Moreover, while the goods imported from China such as iron farming tools, cattle, goats, horses, etc, were products symbolizing the agricultural economy, Vietnam's economy was only in the rudimentary cultivation stage but the objects exchanged with Han Dynasty were forest products and seafood such as ivory, pheasant, pearl, cinnamon bark, etc. In the early period, trade exchanges between two countries took place in such a simple way!

From the year 111 BC to 938 AD, Vietnam was under Chinese domination for more than 1,000 years. The economic relationship between two independent countries was also no longer maintained in this period. These trade exchanges between two countries were almost dependent on China or just unorthodox exchanges of two countries' merchants during this period. At that time, Vietnam had increasingly become a market for Chinese merchants to sell their goods (especially porcelain, tea, Chinese traditional medicine, etc), consume and purchase goods (especially ivory, halcyon fur, jewels, etc) which were then brought to China or other countries to sell for profits. Of course, in Vietnam there were also Vietnamese merchants who had even dealt with Chinese merchants before, later became rivals fiercely competing with each other. Especially, with the exclusive trade policy of most important items of Tang dynasty (in China), Vietnamese merchants gradually lost all their economic interests. Vietnam's dependence on China in term of politics inevitably led to the economic dependence.

Up till the tenth century, particularly after Bach Dang victory of Ngo Quyen in 938, when Vietnam became independent completely, Vietnam - China economic relation officially opened.

III. Tributary Trade Activities between Vietnam and China before 1802

For Vietnam feudal dynasties, tributary activities between Vietnam and China showed small country' respect for big country, expressing wish for establishing, maintaining a peaceful relation between the two countries. To express such respect and pacific attitude, Vietnam's feudal dynasties based on specific figures such as the number of tributes and gifts offered to Chinese Emperor on each tributary occasion. These figures vividly demonstrated the value and real economic significance of tributary activities at that time.

The following table summarized the Vietnamese ambassadors' typical tributes and gifts offered to Chinese Emperor on the tributary occasions from 938 to 1802

Table 1 : Summary table of the Vietnamese ambassadors' typical tributes and gifts offered to Chinese Emperor on the tributary occasions from 938 to 1802

No.	*Dynasty*	*Vietnam's typical tributary occasions from 938 to 1802*	*Vietnam's tributes and gifts for China dynasties from 938 to 1802*
1	Tien Le dynasty	1004: Le Ngoa Trieu assigned his younger brother, Minh Xuong, and Hoang Thanh Nha to bright tributes to Song dynasty	Present white rhinoceros
2	Ly dynasty	1014: Phung Chan, Ly Thac arrived in China to inform Song Emperor about the victory	Present 200 horses
		1034: Tran Ung Co and Vuong Van Khanh arrived in China to establish a peaceful relation	Present an unicorn (An animal has one horn)
		1046: To Nhan To và Dao Duy Phien arrived in Song Dynasty to	Present 10 elephants

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		inform about winning Champa	
3	Tran dynasty	1266: Duong An Duong and Vu Hoan visited Yuan dynasty	Present frankincense wood, rhinoceros horn, ivory, gold, silver, porcelain bowl
4	Hau Le dynasty	1428: Le Thieu Dinh, Le Canh Quang, Le Duc Huy assigned to present items	Present a golden statue, a silver incense burner, a pair of silver flower vase, 300 pieces of local silk cloth, 14 pairs of ivory, 200 incense vases, two ten thousand incense sticks, 24 blocks of solid aloes wood.
5	Mac dynasty	1542: Mac Phuc Hai assigned Nguyen Kinh Dien, Nguyen Cong Nghi and Luong Gian arrived in China to give thanks and present items	Tribute 4 set of golden incense burner and flower vases (100 hundred grams), 1 yellow turtle (90 hundred grams), 1 piece of silver crane and 1 piece of silver lamp support (50 hundred grams), 2 sets of silver flower vases and incense burners (150 hundred grams), 12 pieces of silver tray (641 hundred grams), 60 kg frankincense wood, 148 kg solid aloes wood.
6	Le Trung Hung dynasty	From tributary occasion in 1721, tributary procedures were carried out every 6 years; 2 offerings were tributed as regulated[2]	Tributary procedures were carried out every 6 years including: - The offerings were taken before: 66 hundred grams of local silver, 39 pieces of local silk cloth, 290 pieces of fan, 29 kg pepper. - The offerings for met ceremony: 100 hundred grams of local silver, 50 pieces of local silk cloth, 30 kg pepper, 2000 black incense sticks, 2000 white incense sticks, 200 pieces of fan - Two sets of tributes, one set of offerings as follows: 4 pieces of incense burner and flower vases (209 hundred grams in total, used for 29 gold bullion bars), 20 pieces of silver tray (692 hundred grams in total, used for 69 silver bullion bars), 960 hundred grams of aloes wood, 2,368 hundred grams of solid aloes wood - The offerings for the ambassadors carry with them: two ingot gold bars (10 hundred grams/bar), 3 logs of red leaf (18 rules/log), 3 logs of green leaf, 824 grams of local silver, 400 pieces of local silk, 600 black incense sticks, 600 white incense sticks, 200 pomade pots, 600 paint fans, 30 kg pepper, paper-wide 5000 sheets, 30 laminated wood plates. - Thanksgiving offerings: 1 golden incense burner and 1 golden flower vase (57 hundred grams), 1 silver crane and 1 silver lamp support (48 hundred grams), 1 silver incense burner and 1 silver flower vase (50 hundred grams) - Congratulation offerings: 1 yellow turtle (18 hundred grams), 1 silver crane and 1 piece of silver lamp support (50 hundred grams), 1

[2] Qing Dynasty regulated in 1718 when Vietnamese ambassadors arrived in China to inform King Hy Tong's funeral.

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			silver incense burner and 1 silver flower vase (49 hundred grams), 30 kg frankincense wood, 60 kg solid aloes wood, 100 paint fans. - The offerings at funeral notice: 30 kg frankincense wood, 70 kg solid aloes wood - Reporting offerings: like congratulation offerings except 100 paint fans were not required.
7	Tay Son dynasty	4/1789 and 9/1789: Quang Trung King assigned the ambassador to Qing Dynasty 2 times for giving tributes	-Tribute: 2 set of golden flower vases and incense burners (104 hundred grams and 5 grams); 6 silver pots (345 hundred grams and 5 grams); frankincense wood (480 hundred grams); 1810 hundred grams of solid aloes wood; 300 pieces of rhino chloroplast and pomade in the other pot; 300 coconut leaf fans; 158 small-sized ceramic pots and wet incense in other pots; 50 white incense sticks, 30 black incense sticks

*(**Source:** Phan, H. C. (1961). Regulations of Successive Dynasties by Subject-Matter – Matters of diplomatic relations (Translation). Hanoi: Historical Publishing House; Nguyen, T. L. (2005). Diplomatic relations of Dai Viet, Volume I, II, III, IV. Hanoi: Culture and Information Publishing House.)*

According to the above statistics, it can be seen: The quantity of tributes, gifts that was presented from Vietnam to China was not small and not purely symbolic significance. In fact, China has obtained great economic benefits from these tributes. Therefore, in terms of semantic aspect as well as the actual content, the tributary activities, firstly and mainly were "tax" which maintained by Chinese feudalism to collect great economic resources from the smaller nations in the region. To keep sovereignty peacefully, Vietnam and many "vassal" countries of China were required to conduct economic relations in the form of tributary activities.

On the side of China, upon receipt of tributes, Chinese Emperor gave some gifts to Vietnamese King and mission's members. Chinese Emperor's gifts were often brocade, chiffon, silk, etc which were its "specialties". For example, in 1260, during Vietnamese ambassadors' trip to China to reciprocate Yuan dynasty, Yuan Emperor gave Vietnam's ambassadors "3 pieces of west brocade, 6 pieces of *kim thuc cam* (one kind of brocade)" (Ngo, 1972, p.194). Or in 1790, on the occasion of Qianlong Emperor's longevity anniversary, Vietnam's mission, especially with participation of Quang Trung King arrived in China. Vietnam's mission presented China's Emperor various specialties and Qianlong Emperor presented: 5 pieces of *doan ngoai* (a kind of cloth), 5 pieces of *doan trong* (a kind of cloth), 4 pieces of brocade, 4 pieces of doan bong (a kind of cloth), 4 pieces of *doan vay* (a kind of cloth), 1 pair of large ha *bao*, 2 pair of small ha *bao* and many other cloths (Nguyen, 2005, volume 4, p.58). Indeed, compared to the Vietnamese mission's total specialties, the gifts of Chinese court were small. However, based on the specific rewards of Chinese court to Vietnamese mission, it is unavoidable to think this is one of the expressions of commodity exchange between two countries as a result of natural economic development needs between contiguous countries although such exchange of economic products wasn't truly equal.

However, it comes to tribute, we not only talk about gifts Vietnamese Kings presented Chinese Emperor but also items carried by ambassadors. The ambassadors bring items with them to exchange and do business in China for profits. The number of items brought by the ambassadors was not small in fact. This was described by Truong Han under Ming Dynasty as follows: "the gifts of Ming dynasty were great but only accounted a very small part compared with tributes. Cost was only less than one ten thousandth of *items brought by the ambassadors* [i.e. a small number compared to the quantity of goods that the missions brought with them to do business with China]" (Ly, 1988. p.19 - 20).

It can be said that the way to China of the ambassadors of many Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam is the most favorable trade and exchange way in the feudal period. Chinese government admitted it and assigned officials to do business with the ambassadors from the Southeast Asian countries. Since Ming Dynasty, local items of countries brought in China were tested and transported by officials at Thi bac ty (district). This is also a main reason why this exchange and business method is called "tributary trade". *In Survey of civilization through the dynasties* book, Vuong Ky, an author under Ming Dynasty, wrote: "Our court established *Thi bac ty* to manage the ambassadors who bring tributes with them. Our court allows them to bring items with them to do business with people at a transaction center established by the

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Government, called *Ho thi* (where commercial activities between people in other countries with Chinese people are conducted), Ho thi only exists when there is a boat to tribute" (Ly, 2006, p.96). In particular, for Vietnamese feudal dynasties, before increasingly popular commercial activities of the ambassadors, some strict rules were also issued: "The ambassadors absorbed in trading in goods shall be reduced to a lower rank or deported. The ambassadors who are allowed buying strange treasures, books and medicine have to declare all items bought in details. If there is anything worth offering to the King, the purchase price of such items shall be returned to the ambassadors. If there is any untruthful information, the ambassadors shall be reduced to a lower rank and such items shall be seized" (Tran, 1995). However, in fact, due to the advantages of this business method as well as great revenues, the ambassador's commercial activities didn't always take place as prescribed by the government.

Ngo Si Lien in *A complete history of the Dai Viet* book repeatedly mentioned the cases of Vietnamese ambassadors to China did surreptitiously business, violated the regulations and were discovered. For example: "In 1433, Le Dynasty assigned a mission led by Le Vi to Yen Beijing to inform King Le Loi's death. A member of the mission, Pham Tu Minh, made belts (shirts, hats) to sell to the Ming people. Chief envoy Le Vi and Chief envoy Nguyen Truyen purchased 30 Chinese cargo loads in Vietnam". Ultimately, Le Dynasty "seized all goods to arrange at the palace in order to humiliate them. The handling measure then became a general rule". Similarly, in 1435, Thai Quan Thuc and Nguyen Tong Thu arrived in Ming dynasty as ambassadors "brought a lot of money and bought goods in China, the King took all luggage to give mandarins as a penalty on them" (Ngo, 1993, p.327). Obviously, "such handling method then became a general rule". This statement of Ngo Si Lien reflected the fact that: at that time Vietnamese diplomatic envoys' trade exchange activities became quite popular. Vietnamese ambassadors might bring their valuable goods to China for sale and then transported Chinese goods to Vietnam and turned them into luxury goods at that time. In that sense, both sides (Chinese government or tributary countries) earned huge profits. Therefore, it was the reason why under rigid control of Government (typically Le Dynasty (Vietnam), tributary trade activities were constantly maintained through Vietnam dynasties.

On the side of China, besides huge profits from exchange and trade with Vietnamese ambassadors, Chinese ambassadors also frequently brought their goods to Vietnam and sold to Vietnamese dynasty at a high price. They also bought more goods from Vietnam to bring them to their hometown. The following facts proved it clearly: In 1434, Quach Te and Chu Bat, ambassadors of Ming dynasty, visited Vietnam to attend King Le Thai To's death anniversary. They assigned a lot of people to transport goods from China to Vietnam and then forced Le Dynasty (Vietnam) to buy at high price. Along with that trade method, in December 1435, the ambassadors of Ming dynasty, Chu Bat and Ta Kinh, arrived in Vietnam to inform about Minh Anh Tong's enthronement. During this trip, the mission led by Chu Bat brought a lot of Chinese goods to Vietnam, offered at high prices and forced Le dynasty to buy them. When returning their home country, they bought a lot of goods of Le dynasty, mobilized thousands of people to carry tributes and luggage on their shoulders (Ngo, 1993, p.334, 358). So, once again, using the above purchasing method, the Chinese government increased profits from this trade activity. Moreover, objectively, this trade activity was characterized by unbalanced exchange rate. Chinese government and ambassadors received huger profits. In other words, as well as the tribute activity, concurrently commercial activity of the ambassadors between two countries was an unequal exchange.

However, besides the tributary trade activities of the missions, there were only a few of trips for purely trade purposes of the ambassadors of two countries. For example: in 1790, King Quang Trung assigned Nguyen Hoanh Khuong to go to Qing Dynasty to trade with Emperor Phuc An Khang to buy ginseng for his mother who was sick (Nguyen, 2005, Vol 4, p.50 - 51). Similarly, upon the needs of the King or royal members, Vietnamese Kings assigned the ambassadors to go to China to buy Chinese specialties to meet urgent needs. Meanwhile, Chinese Emperor repeatedly assigned the ambassadors or sent a letter to Vietnam to buy Vietnam's precious specialties to serve the royal needs. The following example is an illustration. It was under Song Dynasty, Emperor Tong Hien Tong who had just been on the throne was going to hold Nam Giao Offering Rituals, assigned an envoy to go to Vietnam to buy 10 elephants. Thus, the Vietnamese mission gave elephants as tributes after Emperor Tong Cao Tong removed the prohibition of using elephants as a tribute. However, in comparison with the trade activity of diplomatic missions, the trips just for purely trade purposes of the missions of the two countries were not significant.

So, we realize that the way of going to the foreign country as King' envoy become a quite lively trade way between Vietnam and China. As for Vietnam, tributary trade activities were maintained as an important diplomatic method and brought certain huge economic benefits. Meanwhile, as for China, these activities not only brought enormous economic benefits but also improve the political ascendancy and put China in tune with the actual needs and the regional economic environment movements even when it applied the policy of "sea prohibition" and "closed -door".

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IV. "Tributary Trade" Activities in Vietnam - China Diplomatic Relations during Nguyen Dynasty - the Last Feudal Dynasty in Vietnam History

a) *"Tributary trade" activities in Vietnam - China diplomatic relations from 1802 to prior-French colonial aggression*

Like the previous feudal dynasties, under Nguyen Dynasty - the last dynasty in Vietnamese feudal history, the tributary activities are not only a method of maintaining pacific political relations but also the orthodox way of establishing trade relations between Vietnam and China.

Tribute system in fact always consists of two parts: First, the tributes and gifts of Nguyen King and second, the items brought with by the ambassadors. In terms of form, like the former dynasties, the tributes (as prescribed) and gifts of the Kings of the Nguyen Dynasty to Qing Emperor was an indispensable diplomatic means of communication in the relations between "vassal" country (Vietnam) and "Mother country" (China) at that time. However, in fact, the quantity of tributes and gifts was not small.

In addition to tributes offered to Qing Emperor, Vietnamese ambassadors were also offered objects to make presents on the way. In *Compendium of Institutions and Administrative Cases of Dai Nam* book, the quantity of tributes and gifts of ambassadors recorded are: "Silver bullion bars and silver rings weighed 1,140 hundred grams (the ambassadors used 100 bullion bars (10 hundred grams/ bullion bar); 14 bullion bars (2 hundred grams/ bullion bar), 52 bullion bar (1 hundred grams/ bullion bar), 100 bullion bar (5 guans/ bullion bar); 1000 silver rings (1 guan/ring). Only ambassadors for congratulation used: 30 silver bullion bars (1 hundred grams/ bullion bar) and 140 silver bullion bars (5 guans/ bullion bar). In other cases, the ambassadors used tributes as above). Vietnamese white silk cloth: 120 pieces, Vietnamese new silk cloth: 220 pieces (The ambassadors for graduation only used 100 silk cloths, 200 unbleached silk cloths), 100 Vietnamese cloth pieces, 50 kg Vietnamese cinnamon, 20 ivory cups, 300 ivory fans, 200 elephant hairs (30 gold-coated hairs, 170 silver-coated hairs), 150 hawksbills (75 medium size pieces, 75 small-size pieces), 150 pomade boxes. The items brought by Lang Son province mandarins during waiting at the door of court: 24 Vietnamese unbleached silk cloth pieces, 20 kg Vietnamese cinnamon, 40 hawksbill pomade boxes, 8 hundred grams of pomade, 80 ivory fans, 40 silver - covered tail hairs, 10 platinum bars[3] . Lang Son mandarins presenting gifts to the mandarins of Qing Dynasties used: 10 buffaloes, 10 goats, 10 pigs, 10 kg rice, 20kg wine. The items brought by mandarins of 3 provinces who assigned to wait at the door of court were: 50 colored silk cloth pieces, 10 white unbleached silk cloth pieces, 40 ivory fans, 20 hawksbill pomade boxes, 30 elephant tail hairs (15 silver-coated hairs, 15 gold-coated hairs), 1 kg cinnamon bark (Caption: under King Gia Long, each ambassador's items reduced: 100 colored silk cloth pieces, 100 silver-encrusted elephant tail hairs, 100 fans, 50 pomade boxes. Until the 9th year of Minh Menh, some new items were supplied to the ambassadors. Like the old rules, tributes included ivory fans and hawksbill fans. Until the 12th year of Minh Menh, fan types were manufactured with frames made of straight ivory, fan swings made of Vietnamese silk cloth." (Internal Affairs of Nguyen dynasty, 1993, p.312 - 313).

The above figures show that tributes and gifts in Vietnam- China relations in the first half of the nineteenth century had a real economic significance and were not merely the symbolic gifts. Following the former feudal dynasties, Qing Dynasty maintained the ancient tribute regime for the economic exploitation of small countries near China. With the desire of keeping independence and sovereignty in a peaceful manner, Vietnam forced to give tributes to China (Ta, 1995, p.81). Humility in political relations, the economic losses is the price Vietnam has to pay for independence, freedom and the peaceful relations between Vietnam and China, which Vietnamese people never want to lose.

In response, Qing Emperors always gave gifts back to Vietnamese ambassadors when they came China to offer the tributes. For example, in 1804, to requite Vietnam's tributes, Qing Emperor gave Vietnamese ambassador the gifts, including: 8 pieces of *doan mang* (a kind of cloth), 8 pieces of *doan mo* (a kind of cloth), 8 pieces of brocade, 27 pieces of silk, 27 pieces of *truu mua xuan* (a kind of cloth) (Library of Nguyen Dynasty, 2002, vol. I, p.581). These gifts were less than Vietnam's tributes. However, it is easily understandable for thinking that the exchange of tributes and gifts between Vietnam and China originated from the natural needs of socio-economic development between countries in the same region although such exchange was unequal due to the political relations regulated by two countries at that time.

Besides tributes and gifts offered by the Kings of Nguyen Dynasty to Chinese Emperors and mandarins on the tributary occasions, the ambassadors of Nguyen dynasty *also brought a large number of items with them to do business for profits*. Qing dynasty itself didn't also ignore large resources from exchanging and trading in this tributary trip of "vassals" like Vietnam. Therefore, following the former feudal dynasties, Qing dynasty still continued to maintain the department of inspecting, shipping and conducting sales of goods carried by the

[3] Each bar is 24 grams

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tributary ambassadors. *In The history of diplomatic relations of China with Annam - Vietnam in XVI – XIX centuries* book, G. Deveria based on *Annam' products* book, listed goods types that Vietnamese ambassadors often brought to China to sell; for example, natural gold, silver, copper, pearl, tortoise-shell, coral, frankincense wood; libel pearl; white pheasant; white deer; rhino; elephant; female rhino horn used to make drinking cups; mountain goat; gorilla; tropical monkey; mouse-catching monkey; python; mangoes; jackfruit; dried areca; pepper; spruce wood; ebony; salt; paint (Deveria, 1880, 88-89). To gain the highest profits, the Chinese merchants often took several measures to force prices in the goods purchase process of Vietnamese ambassadors. The resources that Chinese Government gained from tributary activities of Vietnamese ambassadors increased accordingly.

Besides carrying tributes to the Chinese Emperors, Vietnamese ambassadors who arrived in China as Nguyen dynasty's envoy for the tributary task, thanksgiving, report, congratulation, *etc were in charge of purchasing goods for the court*. Therefore, in addition to the envoys (including one chief envoy and two assistant envoys), the Court also added a retinue and many porters in charge of carrying palanquin for the envoy, especially tributes, sold goods and purchased goods. This showed the remarkable advantages of tributary trade activities compared to other exchange and trade types at that time. There are many historical data sources which rather exhaustively recorded sold goods and purchased goods of Nguyen dynasty's ambassadors in the first half of the nineteenth century. According to *Appendix of all administrative documents of Nguyen Dynasty book*, on March 28th of the 7th year of Ming Menh (1826), Nguyen Huu Thuan, the Governor of Bac Thanh reported the King that two ambassadors returned to Thang Long after a trip to Qing dynasty. When two chief envoys, Hoang Kim Hoan and Hoang Van Quyen returned Hue Capital early, four assistant envoys had to stay in Thang Long to control goods. Nguyen Cong Thiep and the assistant envoys checked and categorized purchased items. Lighter commodities like brocade, cloths, etc; included 14 boxes and were divided into 12 loads transported by road to Hue capital from March 25th. Heavy goods included 16 boxes and were sealed and assigned to Manufacture Bureau for storage, which were waited for transported to Hue capital by sea along with 53 boxes of personal belongings and two missions and entourages (State Archives Department, 1998, p.420). Or according to *True Records of Dai Nam* book, it was also recorded that the ambassadors of Nguyen Dynasty under King Tu Duc dynasty sought and bought Chinese goods in 1848 as follows: "Office of Interior Affairs delivered the purchase orders to the ambassadors to go to Qing Dynasty (Chief envoy Bui Quy and the assistant envoys, Vuong Huu Quang and Nguyen Thu, went to China to notify Qing Dynasty of King Thieu Tri' furneral and ask for King Tu Duc's enthronement and buy goods of Qing dynasty. Besides, pearl furniture, antiques, porcelain and strange toys were also recorded" (Library of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007, vol VII, p.46).

Goods bought by the ambassadors of Nguyen dynasty often were very various specialties of the provinces and cities of China where they went through on their mission journey. Among the items purchased, it cannot be mentioned Jiangxi ceramics. Normally, on the mission journey, the ambassadors dropped in Jiangxi, ordered ceramic items as required by the court and mandarins of Vietnam (porcelain for specific purposes). Upon returning the home country, they transported porcelain ordered to Vietnam. Porcelain for specific purposes was usually carved the reign title (for example, "Made under King Minh Menh", "Made under King Thieu Tri", "Made under King Tu Duc", "Made under King Khai Dinh", etc...). Moreover, the ambassadors also ordered to purchase porcelain items for themselves and often required to carve the year of their mission journey to mark the arduous journey they had went through (for example, "Made in Rat's year" (1804); "Made in Tiger's year" (1820); "Made in Dog's year" (1826); "Made in Snake's year" (1857)...(Tran, 2007, p.305).

Besides Jiangxi porcelains, Jiangnan premium silk cloths, Guizhou wine, Beijing traditional medicine, Hubei tea, snappers, peacocks, horses, special fabrics, Thien Truong paper, local flute types, marbles, copper ores, copper platinum, diamonds, purple quartz, lapis lazuli, gypsum, amber, small stones, black salt, camphor, etc in Guangxi and Yunnan…were Chinese specialties preferred by Vietnamese ambassadors (Derevia, 1880, p.86 - 92).

However, besides the above tributary trade activities of the ambassadors, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the history witnessed the trips of ambassadors for *purely commercial purpose.*

Table 2 : Statistical table of the number of the trips of Vietnamese missions for purely commercial purpose by the orders of Nguyen dynasty (1802 - 1858)

Dynasty	*The trips of Vietnamese missions for purely commercial purpose*	*Times*
Gia Long		0
Minh Mang	- 1825: Nguyen Dac Suy and Tran Van Trung went to Guangdong to buy goods and returned to Da Nang in 1826 (State Archives Department, 1998, p.420).	3

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	- 1826: Tham Trung went to Chaozhou to buy items for the court. (State Archives Department, 1998, p.356). - 1826: Tuan Duc Trang's boat departed to Guangdong to purchase goods (State Archives Department, 1998, p.711).	
Thieu Tri	1846: The Court assigned Kim Thanh Ngo to Guangdong to purchase goods (Tran, 2007).	01
TOTAL		04

Source: *State Archives Department - Hue University - Center for Vietnam Research and Cultural Exchange. (1998). Appendix of all the administrative documents of Nguyen Dynasty, 2 volumes. Hanoi: Cultural Publishing House; Tran, D. A. S. (2007): "Commercial activities of Vietnamese embassy in China during the Qing dynasty". Summary record of the scientific conference: Vietnam in the Asian trade system in the 16th – 17th centuries. World Publishing House.*

This statistical table shows the ambassadors of Nguyen dynasty went to China to purchase goods by the orders of the court four times in the 1802 -1858 period. Comparing 4 trips for purely commercial purposes of Vietnamese ambassadors in this period with 11 tributary trips (in 1804, 1809, 1813, 1817, 1824, 1828, 1832, 1836, 1849, 1853, 1857) and 10 gift offering trips (1804, 1809, 1819, 1820, 1824, 1830, 1841, 1845, 1848, 1851) in the same period (Library of Nguyen Dynasty, 2002, 2004, 2007, Vol. I – VII; Sun, 2005, p.80-82), it can be seen that the tributary trade form of the ambassadors under Nguyen Dynasty was more popular than their pure trade form. This also clearly shows the advantages of tributary trade form of the ambassadors of Vietnam and China at that time. Is it true that the overlap between political and economic color of this trading activity is one of the outstanding characteristics, contributing to create such special advantages of tributary trade activity?

b) *"Tributary trade" in Vietnam - China diplomatic relations from the invasion of French (1858) to the permanent cessation of "Mother country" – "Vassal" relationship between China and Vietnam under the Tianjin Convention between France and China in 1885*

Like the previous historical periods, the tributary trade activity in this period was not only the maintenance of Vietnam – China peaceful ties but also the official trading way between two countries.

In the period of 1858 - 1885, Nguyen Dynasty sent tribute missions to China for five times under the rules (in 1861, 1868, 1872, 1876, and 1880) and for 4 or 5 times on the occasions of thanksgiving, death notice, congratulation…(Library of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007, Vol. VII - VIII; Sun, 2005, p.81-82). However, the tributary activities didn't take place smoothly and conform to the subjective desire of both countries' court because it was strictly monitored and even objected by the French Colonialist. As a result, the tributary trade activity was restricted and interrupted during this period.

Like pre-1858 periods, tributes and offerings that Nguyen Dynasty's missions paid to Qing Dynasty were not merely a symbol but contained a really economic content. For example, in the 1880, Nguyen dynasty's mission led by Chief envoy Nguyen Thuat and Assistant envoy Tran Khanh Tien offered to the king of China the following tributes:

Two ivories
Two rhinoceros horns
45 kilograms of areca-nuts
600 hundred grams of frankincense woods
300 hundred grams of phoenix woods
100 native silks
100 canvas sheets
100 corduroy sheets (Many Authors, 1997, p.41-42).

Afterwards (12/08/1880), Rheinart – France's representative in Hue sent a letter to the Governor of Cochinchina and said that those tributes are less valuable, but his words were only an excuse and "self-comforted" the French in face of their helplessness in protesting against the regular tributary missions between Vietnam and the China at that time. In fact, it reflects political relations between two states that had hidden mutually-economic benefits.

In response to Nguyen Dynasty's tribute missions, Qing emperor always rewarded gifts. This was also a general rule that Qing Dynasty imposed on "tributary countries", including Vietnam. For instance, on an official trip to Beijing in 1870 (led by Chief envoy Tran Bich San and Assistant envoy Pham Hy Luong), Nguyen Dynasty's mission visited and offered gifts to Qing court for the purpose of investigating the situation of China and its policies against the invasion of the West. In return, Qing emperor gave items to Nguyen King: 8 cymbals for each embroidered and rough brocade, 8 bullions, 12 fine silks, 5 silk cymbals. The ambassador was awarded 3 bullions, 8 bundles, 5 silk cymbals, 5 fine silks, 2 silk cords. Both the member of entourage and mahout were given 5 bundles, 5 silk cymbals, 3 fine silks. In addition, the Ministry of Rites also had other gifts for the king and ambassador of Vietnam. Specifically, drugs, 40 ginsengs and 4 decanters were for the king; 10 drugs and 4 decanters were for the ambassador; 5 drugs and 1 decanter were for the entourage (Nguyen, 2005, Vol. V, p.85). Obviously, the tributes of Nguyen Dynasty and presents of Qing Dynasty are "specialty goods" of each country.

The exchange of tributes and gifts between two courts reminds us of the bilateral commodity exchange due to the economic development demand in the same

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region, despite the fact that the exchange of economic products is of unequal nature.

Apart from tributes and gifts for "Mother country" (China), Nguyen dynasty's missions often carried a lot of goods to trade with China because this is the most favorable way of trade: free of charge, duty-free… Always, goods that Vietnam' embassy sold in China usually are special items such as: natural gold, silver, cooper, frankincense wood, rhinoceros, elephant, dried areca, pepper, spruce wood, ebony, salt ... On the way back to the home country, Vietnamese ambassadors always bought a lot of specialties from provinces and cities of China, notably: Jiangnan silk, Jiangxi ceramics, Guizhou alcohol, Beijing herbal medicine, Hubei tea, Yunnan forestry products.

These purchased commodities and the Chinese emperor's gifts were transported to Vietnam smoothly. *Appendix of all the administrative documents of Nguyen Dynasty* book clearly recorded that: When returning home, the tributary missions were escorted by Chinese military forces and their goods and luggage were carried by local servants whenever they went through. Local authorities would be in charge of reporting to Qing dynasty about the journey of Vietnamese missions from leaving Beijing to crossing the border into Vietnam. Then, the government agencies near the border such as Lang Son, Thuy Vi, Binh Nguyen would appoint escorts to accompany the missions and goods to Hanoi. Here, goods and gifts would be preliminarily classified. Accordingly, the gifts of Qing court together with accompanying luggage of the missions and important goods would be brought to Hue capital. The bulky and less important ones would be temporarily controlled by the authority in Northern Vietnam (Bac Thanh) and after that would transported to Hue capital by waterway (State Archives Department, 1998, p.420). It demonstrates the superiority of tributary trade compared with other contemporary types of exchange and trade.

Besides the concurrently commercial activities, in this period, some Vietnamese missions were for purely commercial purposes under the direction of the central court. In particular, Tran Dinh Tuc and Nguyen Huy Te went to Hong Kong to give gifts on the occasion of the 60th birthday of Queen mother Tu Du in the 21st Tu Duc Year (1868) (Tran, 2007, p.303) or another Hong Kong trip to purchase goods for the court of Hoang Van Xuong in the 30th Tu Duc year (1877) (Tran, 2000, p.82). It is worth noting that under the influence and pressure of the Western science and technology, besides Vietnamese ambassadors bought goods from China, Nguyen dynasty appointed a person to buy a steam train in France since 1860 and then appointed Nguyen Thanh to bring agricultural products and handicrafts to attend the fair in Paris…

Especially, some Chinese economic sectors had been initially introduced into Vietnam during this period. The case of the ambassador Dang Huy Tru is a typical demonstration. After two mission trips to China in 1865 and 1867 for "situation reconnaissance", he not only purchased 239 guns, established many businesses in Hanoi to export goods to China and other countries but also learnt photography and imported it to Vietnam. *Cam Hieu Duong*[4] photography studio opened on 11/03/1869 in Hanoi and became the first studio in the history of Vietnam. Moreover, he opened the first printing house *Tri Trung Duong* (Pham, 1990, p.69).

In summary, in terms of trading activities of ambassadors, except for some trips for purely commercial purposes, the majority of trading activities were concurrently commercial activities in tribute occasions. Thus, it became an official exciting trade route between Vietnam and China for a long time. But such form of trade didn't develop strongly and constantly anymore in this period. Furthermore, goods in the tributary trade system were mainly luxury consumer goods used in court, with limited quantities; therefore, it couldn't be denied that this superior trade was more restricted than the folk one.

c) *Comments on some changes in "tributary trade" in Nguyen dynasty*

In general, the kings of Nguyen dynasty paid special attention to send tributes and gifts to Chinese emperors in period 1802-1885. "Tributary trade" was always associated. Therefore, the changes in tributary activities made new moves of tributary trade.

Firstly, the tributary activities took place less in period 1858-1885 and not as steadily and smoothly as before due to the strict control and obstruction of the French colonist, sometimes it was disrupted (period 1861-1867); as a result, the tributary activities were *not regular and continuous since 1858*.

Basically, the structure of tributary activities in pre-1858 periods unchanged after 1858. However, due to the strong development of the Western science and technology, Nguyen dynasty appointed ambassadors not only to China but also to France buy a steam train and ordered agricultural products and handicrafts to attend the fair in Paris… So, the structure of tributary trade in period 1858-1885 had certain changes.

[4] Name of the photography studio shows his intent to help offspring have died parents' picture to worship for filial piety.

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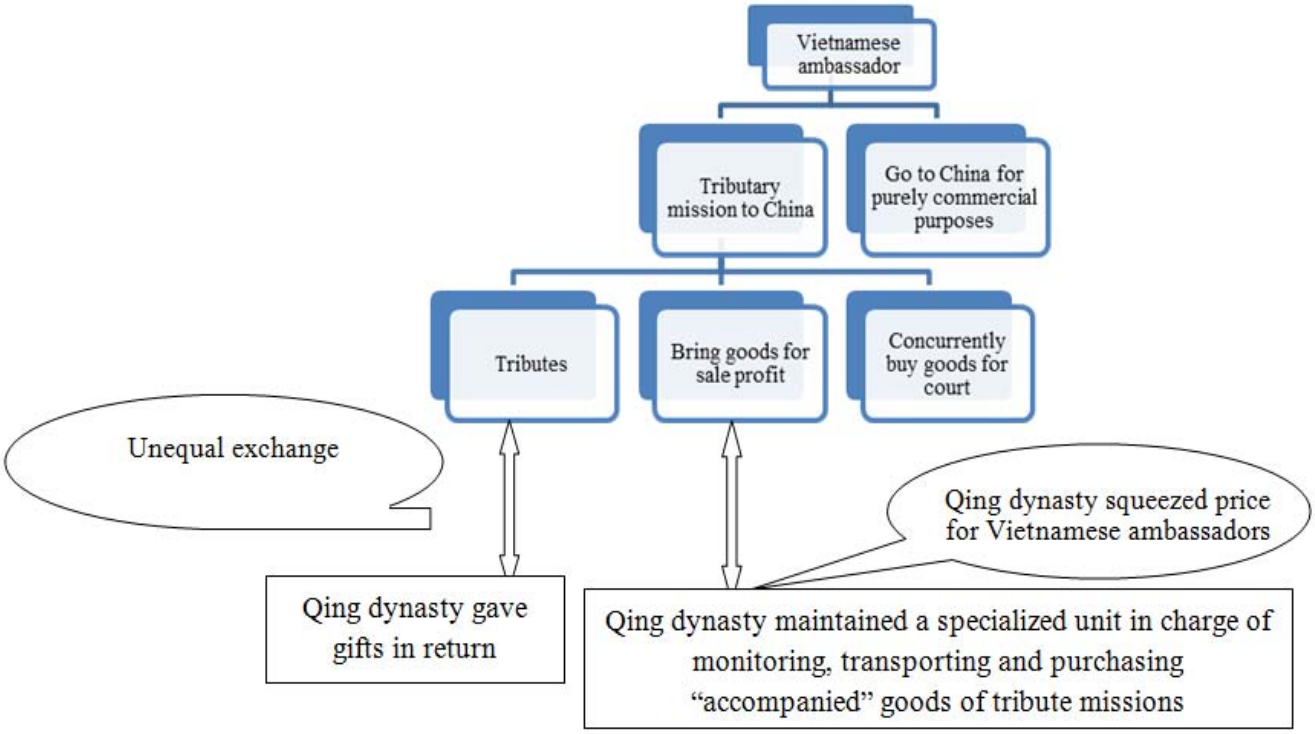


Diagram 1 : Tributary trade between Vietnam and China in period 1802 – 1858

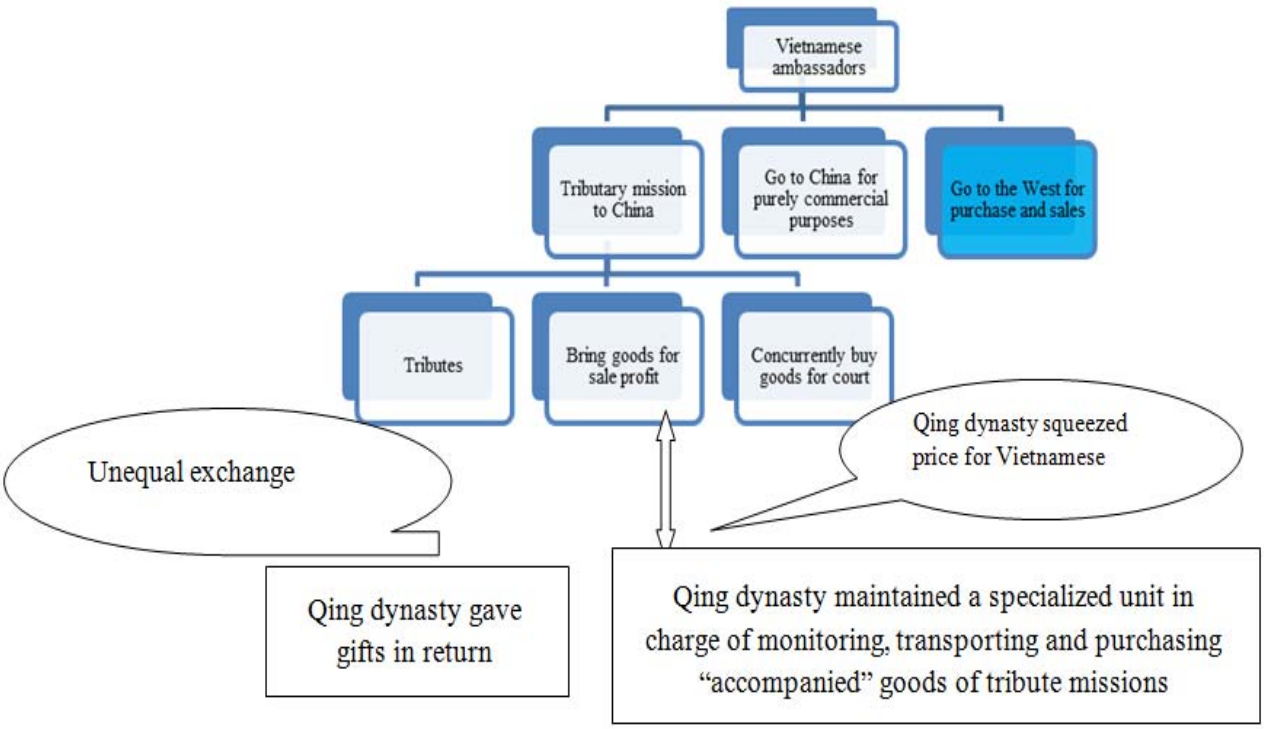


Diagram 2 : Tributary trade between Vietnam and China in period 1858 – 1885

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The post-1858 changes in tributary trade proved *the trade vision of Nguyen dynasty had been more broadened than before*, even though, such vision was still largely restricted within the limits of the East.

Besides, on the mission's trips to China in 1865 and 1867 led by Dang Huy Tru, *some Chinese economic sectors such as printing and photography had been initially introduced into Vietnam*. This was a new positive trend of tributary trade in the second half of the 19th century, which promoted the mutually economic – cultural exchanges between Vietnam and China in the feudal time.

V. General Comments

We can see that while business activities by road and by sea are international trade, mainly conducted by traders and border residents and purchased goods are popular items that people need, tributary activities is always regarded as an officially superior form of trade and purchased goods are mostly luxury consumer goods for senior officials of the court. Therefore, the limitation of this type of trade compared with informal folklore trade activities is something we cannot deny. Yet, with the unique advantage of it (free of charge, duty-free…), the road to China of the diplomatic ambassadors indeed become the exciting trade route between two countries in the feudal time.

However, both commercial and political relations between two countries through historical periods are ups and downs. This is lively demonstrated under the governance of Nguyen dynasty. In the first half of the 19th century (1802-1858), Vietnam-China diplomatic relations were still independent without external dominance or pressure, but in the second half of the 19th century (1858-1885), the France "factor" always affected all diplomatic activities between two countries, including tributary trade activity. Thus, during this period it didn't happen on a regular and smooth basis as before. It is due to two countries must confront with new threats to the life of the nation and the obstruction from the French colonialist.

In particular, if we look at tributary trade activities between China and Vietnam under the feudal time, the predominance and superior position belonged to China. That is the foreign trade restriction of Vietnam in the feudal time generally and also the weakness to be overcome in economic relations with neighboring China from past to present.

In spite of the foregoing weaknesses, the remarkable achievements of Vietnam-China economic relations in the feudal time, particularly "tributary trade" activity contributed to maintain and build a peaceful and strong diplomatic relationship between two countries in the tough historical context and laid a necessary foundation for the continuation and development of Vietnam-China economic ties in the subsequent periods.

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