



# The Strategies of King Nguyen Phuc Chu to Vietnamese Social Development Through The Buddhism Thoughts (1691 – 1725)

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## Abstract

In order to establish a powerful government and comfort the people, the Nguyen dynasty chose Buddhism as the spiritual backbone of Dang Trong society. Under the protection of the Nguyen lords, the Buddhism in Dang Trong gradually flourished, and the development of Buddhism had a repercussion on the Nguyen dynasty's rule policies. The spirit of Buddhism became one of the important prerequisites for the reign of the Nguyen Kings and successful implementation of the process of expanding and development of the country. Under the reign of King Nguyen Phuc Chu, Buddhism flourished as a state religion of the Nguyen dynasty, and he used its as the standard for social morality, and his contributions positively to the national development and it helped him make great things in Vietnamese social history at that time.

So this article showed the context of Vietnamese society in Middle Seventeenth to Last Eighteenth Century. And finally the artical proceeds the strategies of King Nguyen Phuc Chu for Vietnamese society's development through the Buddhism thoughts, and his contributions for the development of Vietnamese Buddhism.

*Keywords:* Nguyen Lord, Nguyen dynasty, King Nguyen Phuc Chu, Dang Trong (Southern Vietnam), the Buddhism in Dang Trong.

## Introduction

In the process of development, any dynasty has its own historical contexts, so placing a historical figure on the objective changes of the times is an opportunity to return to history something close to really. Particularly in the process of opening the territory from king Nguyen Hoang (1524 - 1613) to King Nguyen Phuc Chu (1675 – 1725)<sup>1</sup>, historians have agreed upon the basics of this process, that is shaping to be a political, cultural and religious life based on Buddhist thoughts; including a sufficient society, a flexible and harmonious policy, and most important is a well-defined development territory.

In 1691, King Nguyen Phuc Chu had reigned the country, He was the 6<sup>th</sup> King of nine Kings of the Nguyen dynasty (1558 -1777) in Southern Vietnam. He was the King devout Buddhism very high compared to the previous and later Kings, who took refuge the Triple Gems and observed Bodhisattva precepts with Zen master Thach Liem. Nguyen Phuc Chu who has keen political vision plus the ideological influence of Buddhist ethics, helped his imperial executive, made great achievements in the political sphere as well as in religious activities (for Buddhism), and was a clement virtue man, was political leaders talented. He represents the Nguyen dynasty developing country to become powerful and prosperous both economic and political, and peaceful society.

At that time, Buddhism became the center point, the sight of the Nguyen kings. It has a position and an important role that can determine the fate of the Nguyen dynasty in its early days, because the Buddhism has the role establishing peacefulness and national unity power. Therefore, the Nguyen kings chose Buddhism as a strategy in the process of establishing and expanding their territory<sup>2</sup>. Since then, Buddhism has received strong protection from the Nguyen kings, and it has grown steadily. The development and prosperity of Buddhism under the reign of King Nguyen Phuc Chu, it has recorded the great contributions of the predecessor kings in general and King Nguyen Phuc Chu in particular<sup>3</sup>. So what is the influence of Buddhism on the strategies of King Nguyen Phuc Chu on economy, politics and social development in Cochinchina (Vietnamese southern)?

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<sup>1</sup>Danny Wong Tze Ken & Champaka Monograph 5. (2007). **The Nguyen and Champa During 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century – A Study of Nguyen Foreign Relations**, France: International Office of Champa Publishing House. p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Nguyen Lang. (2014). **A Complete Work of Historical Interpretation of Vietnamese Buddhism**, (Vietnamese Version), Ha Noi: Literature Publishing House. p.584.

<sup>3</sup>Nguyen Tai Thu, Minh Chi, Ly Kim Hoa and Ha van Tan. (2006). **The History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, USA: Institute of Philosophy – Vietnamese Academy of Social Science Press. p.185.

### **1. Research Objective**

1. To study the historical background of Vietnamese society in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

2. To study the strategies of King Nguyen Phuc Chu for the development of Vietnamese society through the Buddhism thoughts.

3. To study the basic contributions of King Nguyen Phuc Chu to the development of Vietnamese Buddhism.

### **2. Research Method**

This article is a documentary research, and it is studying the data from both primary and secondary sources from the Mahāyāna Buddhist Tipiṭaka, commentaries and the related historical books. And then all data collected are used to analyze and appreciate the influence of Vietnamese Buddhism to the strategies development of king Nguyen Phuc Chu on Vietnamese society.

### **3. Research Results**

The article is a research of the contributions of king Nguyen Phuc Chu on the development of Vietnamese society in the last 17<sup>th</sup> and the middle 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. But the main scope of it focuses on the historical background of Vietnamese society at that time, the strategies of King Nguyen Phuc Chu for the development of Vietnamese society through the Buddhism thoughts, and finally the basic contributions of King Nguyen Phuc Chu to the development of Vietnamese Buddhism.

Throughout this article, readers can understand more about the setting of the Buddhism and society in Vietnam before and after of the reign of king Nguyen Phuc Chu, the new methods and policies to help Vietnamese Buddhism overcome the darkest period, as well as the prosperous development of Vietnamese society, which opened a new turning-point for Buddhist and social development in Vietnam in the last centuries.

## The Context of Vietnamese Society in Middle Seventeenth to Last Eighteenth Century

At the time, Vietnam under the rule of the Latter Le dynasty (1428-1789), was also the time that the country is suffering from chaos by the civil wars and foreign invasion<sup>4</sup>. Especially the civil war was fought in the court of the Latter Le to scramble for power. As in 1522, General Mac Dang Dung held all the powers in the post – Latter Le dynasty<sup>5</sup>. From the dispute between the faction has been strained, leading to the establishment of hostility between two governments: the Mac dynasty government in the North and in the South of the Latter Le dynasty (Thanh Hoa province to the South)<sup>6</sup>. Since then, the war between the Mac dynasty and the Latter Le dynasty lasted about 46 years (1546-1592). And Finally, Mac dynasty was destroyed by Le dynasty in 1592<sup>7</sup>.

So, from the chaos of country, and the division of the factions in the Latter Le dynasty, has created many internal contradictions, standing before these events, the Latter Le dynasty expressed helplessness and weakness. Therefore, for the safety and survival for himself, General Nguyen Hoang had suggested from the Le Royal for he went to the town of Thanh Hoa<sup>8</sup> (southern Vietnam) to guard the frontiers in 1558. Afterward, he formed the Nguyen dynasty in 1600<sup>9</sup>, here. To beautiful to history of the Nguyen dynasty, king Nguyen Phuc Chu was the sixth generation of the Nguyen dynasty, was a man who had many innovative strategies, especially for the society and religion (Buddhism) in the South of Vietnam, and he left many impressive achievement, stirred in the current political wave. He was regarded as a brilliant political leader, a clear-sighted king of country, as a devout Buddhist.

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<sup>4</sup>Cao Huy Giu, tr. (2006). **The Complete History of Dai Viet** (Vietnamese Version), Vol.II, Ha Noi: Culture and Information Publishing House. p. 513.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.534.

<sup>6</sup>Before the internal wars occurred in Vietnam, Latter Le dynasty established in Thang Long capital in Northern Vietnam. But after the struggle had happened between Latter Le and Mac dynasty, and Latter Le dynasty has been defeated by the adversary, therefore Mac dynasty had occupied Thang Long capital and Latter Le dynasty had withdrawn from the North and they have occupied in Thanh Hoa province (it was the south of Thang Long capital).

<sup>7</sup>Cao Huy Giu, tr. Op.cit., p.647.

<sup>8</sup>Thuan Hoa: including Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Thua Thien Hue province.

<sup>9</sup>Cao Huy Giu, tr. Op.cit., P.687.

Since above the social context, the Vietnamese Buddhism of the previous dynasties of Nguyen was impacted by that, and it had been declined, and was clearly showed in the period of the Latter Le dynasty (1428-1527)<sup>10</sup>, and especially, last period of the Latter Le dynasty, due to two main reasons were discrimination and boycott of the Confucianism, at this time the Confucianism had great influence in politics, therefore, they did not hesitated to repress the Buddhism<sup>11</sup>, such as the depravation of few Buddhist monks. Thus, in those days, The Buddhism has just played an important of religious belief<sup>12</sup>. However, in king Le Chieu Tong dynasty (1573 -1599) in the North and king Nguyen Hoang dynasty (1558 -1599) in the South then the Buddhism began renaissant signal again, because it was supported by the Nguyen Kings<sup>13</sup>. And, afterward there was king Nguyen Phuc Chu whom had the most Buddhism's devotion rather than other Nguyen kings and he had play a part of the revival movements and development of Vietnamese Buddhism.

In fact, Nguyen dynasties's existence was over two hundred years in which king Nguyen Phuc Chu reigned 34 years, and his great contributions to Vietnamese society and Buddhism<sup>14</sup>. It was a vital hyphen of the recovery age between two stages of its before and after, those are from 15<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century; these are the great declining periods of Vietname. So, the contributions of king Nguyen Phuc Chu was a great milestone, and thanks to it, Vietnamese Buddhism and society overcome many challenges and the darkest period.

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<sup>10</sup>The Latter Le dynasty (1428-1527). According the Vietnamese history. It is including two period. The first period (1428-1527), this dynasty has been declined by the internal war of Vietnam, and then, the second period (1528-1789), this dynasty beginning rehabilitated agian. See Venereble. Thich Mat The. (1970). **Essays on The History of Vietnamese Buddhism** (Vietnamese Version), Da Nang: Minh Duc Press. Pp. 171-175.

<sup>11</sup>Nguyen Tai Thu. Op.cit., p. 168.

<sup>12</sup>Venereble.Thich Mat The, Op.cit., pp. 172-173.

<sup>13</sup>Thich Minh Tue. (1993). **A Brief History of Vietnamese Buddhism** (Vietnamese Version), Ho Chi Minh: Ho Chi Minh City Buddhist Association Press. p. 412.

<sup>14</sup>Nguyen Tai Thu. Op.cit., p. 89 & p.147.

## **The Strategies of King Nguyen Phuc Chu for Vietnamese Society's Development Through the Buddhism (1691 – 1725).**

When the Nguyen dynasty on the new takeover beginning Thuan Hoa and gradually expand in the south, the Nguyen dynasty confronted with a social context completely new, including many indigenous culture capital deeply influenced by India civilization, Champa, Khmer and other ethnic minorities, and some migrants from the North to the South which has brought many cultural influences of confucianism<sup>15</sup>. First of all, Nguyen dynasty as well as king Nguyen Phuc Chu how to avoid the cultural and religious conflicts leading to conflict politics, to mobilize the power of national unity, and to ensure the country's development. So, at this time, they must have suitable strategies for this resolutions. Only two elements most importance can decide existence and development of dynasty Nguyen, that are culture and religion (Buddhism). This is first strategies that dynasty Nguyen want to execute first of all, which showed as follows:

### **1. The Culture:**

The culture is national soul, to be a humanity's ideology, if the culture was propagated successfulness and development but the economics – politics of a country have just developed. So, from the beginning of the Nguyen dynasty, they were recognized the importance of traditional culture in Vietnam. It was the bridge to create the strength of national unity, and to impact of the development of the country. Therefore, the Nguyen dynasty encouraged the people to promote the spirit of traditional culture bearing bold Vietnamese identity (now there were many different cultures: Indian culture, Khmer culture, Champa culture, ect...) in which Buddhist's culture given most prominence by the Nguyen Lords and king Nguyen Phuc Chu those promoted and created conditions for the development of Mahayana Buddhism, it become a familiar religion of the Vietnamese people. Because the Buddhism has great impacted to Vietnamese society customs - habits at that time.

King Nguyen Phuc Chu's government has cleverly to know the times and preserving and developing the traditional culture of the people in their new territorial area. It is worth mentioning was the successor and promoted, that were flexible and highly creative power to make up the Vietnamese traditional culture more and more power and integration, a culture

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<sup>15</sup>Le Binh Phuong Luan. (2015) **The Buddhism History of Hue Province Under Nguyen Dynasty** (Vietnamese version), Vo.III, No.2, Science and Technology Review – Hue Science University, Press. Pp.98-99.

that is always bold ethnic Vietnam. Because, when Nguyen dynasty has just established on the early period, which has impacted by many other cultures, and the Nguyen dynasty confronted with a social context completely new and difficult<sup>16</sup>. However, the Nguyen dynasty has received skillful points or beneficial in indigenous culture for its development.

Moreover, king Nguyen Phuc Chu has incorporated successfully the cultural ideas of Buddhism with Taoism and Confucianism in his ruling. The using of Mahayana Buddhism as the State Religion for the reing of king Nguyen Phuc Chu not only moral support of Vietnamese traditional ideas on new land to expand the south but also the means to tolerated the ideology and the new culture, avoiding the cultural conflicts leading to conflict war<sup>17</sup>. With the doctrine of compassion and selflessness of buddhism which was easy pardon and to receive all other cultural traditions, and created harmonization between religion's culture each other. Thus, Mahāyāna Buddhism is seen as a means to tolerate new ideologies and cultures and was the basis for ideology and spirituality in the reign<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, for the inheritable and selective responsibility, King Nguyen Phuc Chu brought Buddhist culture into the orthodox culture of the nation as well as folk culture to a climax and flourishing period, and created national unity power for the build and developments' process of the country.

## **2. The Religion – Buddhism.**

At the time, in Dang Trong (the Southern Vietnam) has many other religions and cultures (as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, ect. Meanwhile, the Catholicism has banned spread), but to accord with the policy and customs – habits of new government of Nguyen royal family that only the Buddhism can be satisfy this things. Thus, the Buddhism has becom the orthodox religion of Nguyen dynasty, but its foundation and development was along the same process of expanding the southern border of Vietnamese. For the reign of King Nguyen Phuc Chu, this dynasty had a strong influence on the development of Buddhism, he made many important contributions to the Buddhist Renaissance at that time and on the contrary.

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<sup>16</sup>Le Binh Phuong Luan. Op.cit., Pp.98-99.

<sup>17</sup>Historical Science Community of Vietnam. (2008). **Nguyen Lords and The Nguyen Royal Dynasty in Vietnamese History From 16<sup>th</sup> To 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries** (Vietnamese Version), HaNoi: The World Publishing House. Pp.45-46.

<sup>18</sup>Historical Science Community of Vietnam, Op.cit., P.46.

With three main reason that king Nguyen Phuc Chu has chosen Buddhism for his developing strategy as follows:

Firstly, in this period Confucianism's feudalism was decadent in the politics, the Later Le dynasty regime was also degraded because the Later Le dynasty adopted Confucianism to govern; so Nguyen Phuc Chu dynasty did not want to repeat the old path; Moreover, in the new land of the Nguyen dynasty, the follower Confucianism was very limited to compare the Buddhist, and it is not unsuitable for rule here. Because the Confucianism was said that Nguyen Government was a breakaway government, do not orthodox reign for the Later Le dynasty in the Northern Vietnam, that will reduce everyone's faith for Nguyen dynasty in the Southern Vietnam. So they decided to take Buddhism as the foundation for themselves developing strategies.

Secondly, this was a new land, poor and flood victims by the war, so they needed comfort, refreshing spirit, and the Nguyen dynasty considered only to see Buddhism can do that and fitting in here.

And thirdly, as the new completely territory was less Confucian; it was very difficult to build community solidarity, while the majority of people had Buddhist beliefs here, which was a favorable feature for the Nguyen dynasty easily called upon the unity of the peasants<sup>19</sup>. Especially during this period, the Ming Dynasty was overthrown and created the Manchu Qing dynasty in China. The Qing dynasty's defectors left the country, including the Zen masters, most of whom came to South Vietnam to establish oneself and to propagate the Buddhism<sup>20</sup>. The Zen master who came to Vietnam brought with them new spiritual forms, most notably was Lam Te Zen school and Tao Dong Zen school<sup>21</sup>. So, king Nguyen Phuc Chu want to found on prestige and influence of the Zen Master of this sects, to call upon the Chinese come back his government, to make more military and united power. The reception of Lam Te and Tao Dong Zen School was a strategy very wise and correctible of the government of king Nguyen Phuc Chu.

Thereby, it was shown that from the beginning the Nguyen dynasty have identified Buddhism as the foundation for the building of national unity for the process of national

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<sup>19</sup>Nguyen Khac Thuan. (2010). **The Cultural Course of Vietnam From Beginning to 19<sup>th</sup> Century** (Vietnamese version), Ho Chi Minh City: Vietnamese Education Publishing House. Pp.635-636.

<sup>20</sup>Li Tana, edit. Nguyen Nghi, tr. (2014). **Nguyen Cochinchina – Southern Vietnam in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries** (Vietnamese version), Ho Chi Minh City: Young Publishing House. Pp. 115 – 119.

<sup>21</sup>Nguyen Lang. Op.cit., Pp.608 – 621. And Nguyen Tai Thu, edit. Op.cit., Pp. 197 – 201.

expansion and development. Only Buddhism can build a philosophy of peace. Therefore, in order to establish a unity or peaceful society of the Nguyen dynasty, King Nguyen Phuc Chu also had to use Buddhism, and there was no other religion. Thus, Buddhism was received by the masses in new cultures as a new mental and spiritual nourishment, replacing the psychic dependence structure of monotheistic or polytheistic religions, which was heavy on superstition and fear.

Afterward, King Phuc Chu was the one who made Buddhism of most developing and prosperous, was the first initiator in the Nguyen dynasty's history of the Buddhist revival movement in the south during his reign. Also from first base that Nguyen dynasty chose Buddhism as its fulcrum for the benefit of the process of establishment and development of the country about both economics and politics.

## **The Basic Contributions of King Nguyen Phuc Chu to the Development of Vietnamese Buddhism**

To be the responsibility to Lay devout Buddhist for Buddhism's recovery after many years declined, king Nguyen Phuc Chu has supported devotion to the Buddhism through a lot meaning deeds in each of region of the Buddhist activity for the aim of Buddhist revival movement in Vietnam. So, during the reign of king Nguyen Phuc Chu, the Vietnamese Buddhism got the golden age in the last century.

### **1. For the Revival of Vietnamese Buddhism**

In the history of Buddhism in Vietnam, the main causes leading to the decadence of Buddhism as well as during the Latter Le dynasty (1428 - 1789) to the Nguyen dynasty (1558 - 1777) by the heavy stigmatization of Confucianism with Buddhism, to be called religious conflict, and in addition there were cases where Buddhism was abused and monks were serious depraved<sup>22</sup>. However, during the reign of King Nguyen Phuc Chu (1675-1725), Buddhism was strongly supported by the government as well as from prominent Zen masters such as Zen Master Nguyen Thieu, Thach Liem and Zen Master Lieu Quan in the South. And in the north, there was Zen Master Chan Nguyen, Chuyet Chuyet, Minh Hanh and Zen master Huong Hai, as well as the Le Kings and Trinh lords (at that time, the Le dynasty

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<sup>22</sup>Nguyen Lang. Op.cit., pp.486-488. And Nguyen Tai Thu. Op.cit., pp. 168-169.

issued a decree prohibiting the spread of Christianity, and strive to support Buddhism)<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, Buddhism has had much better than before.

For the reign of King Nguyen Phuc Chu, this dynasty had a strong influence on the development of Buddhism, King Nguyen Phuc Chu made many important contributions to the Buddhist Renaissance at that time, and here are some key points that Nguyen Phuc Chu has made in the Buddhist revival, as follows:

(1) Interested in building infrastructure for Buddhist pagodas: This is the first thing King Nguyen Phuc Chu prioritized and executed when he became the king, and he had supported money for publishing Three Collections of Buddhist Canon from China to Vietnam over 1,000 books in 1714.<sup>24</sup>

(2) Calling upon and encouraging the prominent monks in the country and abroad to spread Buddhism, in which the most prominent were the three Zen Masters: Nguyen Thieu, Thach Liem and Lieu Quan<sup>25</sup>.

(3) Development of educational facilities: The king cared about the training of monks and nuns to preserved and developing Buddhism. Thus, he combined with many Zen masters to regularly organized Buddhist events of educational nature and to create a learning environment for monks, for preparing personnel resources for the next step of the process revival of Buddhism.

(4) The king encouraged people to study Buddhism for improving their lifestyle morals. And the king who became the link between Buddhism and Lay people.

(5) Prioritizing the propagation and development of Buddhism: he banned Catholicism (1699), except the Confucianism and the Taoism, but these two religions were not encouraged as Buddhism.

(6) The king issued many Buddhist protectionist policies: In order for Buddhism to be spread widely, the king issued policies to protect and opening for Buddhism, such as the non-payment of pagoda land taxes and grant land for the temples to plow, financial aid, the law to protect Buddhist monks, not to harm the pagoda's properties, ect... And besides, he also did a lot of other meaningful things.

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<sup>23</sup>Nguyen Lang. Op.cit., p. 538 & p. 599. And Nguyen Hien Duc. (2006). **Vietnamese Buddhism History Under Trinh – Nguyen Dynasty: Buddhism History in Dang Ngoai (The North)**, (Vietnamese version), Vo.I, Vietnam: Ho chi Minh City of General Publishing House. pp. 611 - 613.

<sup>24</sup>Nguyen Lang. Op.cit., p. 615 and p. 631

<sup>25</sup>Le Thanh Khoi. Op.cit., p. 341.

Thus, from the above characteristics, let us see that if the kings of the previous dynasties were the first to lay the foundation step of Buddhism in Cochinchina, then King Nguyen Phuc Chu was the one who made Buddhism the most developing and prosperous, was the first initiator for the Buddhist revival movement of the Nguyen dynasty's history in the south during his reign. All created a unique appearance and identity of Buddhism in the South during this period.

## **2. For the Buddhist Education**

In order to maintain and develop the Buddhism of Cochinchina, as a foundation support for the process of developing the border and unifying the country for a long term ; One of the major Buddhist events emphasized by the Nguyen kings were the organization of Buddhist education events of great influential that open up the gospel-based training of monks to maintain the Buddhism system . As in 1695, King Nguyen Phuc Chu teamed up with Zen Master Thach Liem to organize the Buddhist events very large to train and purge monks over 1,000 people<sup>26</sup>. Besides, the king was encouraged by Zen Master Thach Liem, so he set up the National Study Center as a place for training and studying for everyone, including the monks<sup>27</sup>.

For Buddhism, the spread of Buddhism, the selection of virtuous monks were considered great Buddhist works, because it was the basis for promoting the inner strength of Buddhism in the spread of the truth Dhamma. Therefore, the problem and urgency for the development and revitalization of Buddhism in the South, King Nguyen Phuc Chu invited the eminent monks to teach and impart the Bhikkhu precepts to the monks. As a result, the Buddhist education was strongly rebellion against and promoted the development of Buddhism, especially two Zen schools: Lam Te and Tao Dong<sup>28</sup>.

Thus, through the Buddhist events that took place in 1695 and later years, Buddhism under the reign of Nguyen Phuc Chu actually created a human resource to increase talented monks for Buddhism, to serve the spread of Buddhism at that time. On top of that, the Buddhist of Cochinchina have had the opportunity to interact with the Chinese Buddhist culture in the early stages. At the same time, the King began to create the Buddhist belief in the reassuring of people.

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<sup>26</sup>Nguyen Lang, Op.cit., p. 616.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 627.

<sup>28</sup>Thich Mat The, Op.cit., pp. 186 - 207.

### 3. For the Buddhist Culture

If the predecessors laid stones for the foundation of Cochinchina Buddhism, then King Nguyen Phuc Chu was the one who made Buddhism the most expanded and prosperous in the history of Buddhism in Vietnam during the reign of the Nguyen dynasty. With the merit of building temples, promoting Buddhism, supporting monks and nuns. All created new forward step of Buddhism in this period.

With a lot of Buddhist rituals have also developed with spiritual philosophy that created a beauty in folklore and contributed to promoting the development of Vietnamese national identity. In general, asserting his supreme power, King Nguyen Phuc Chu has combined the cultural philosophy of the Buddhist with the culture of the nation into a sharp weapon in the governance of his country. As a result, it has had a tremendous impact on the dramatic and profound development of Buddhist culture in the south, including art architecture culture and spiritual culture.

### 4. For the Buddhist Sites

First of all, he has developed and inherited the heritage before, and then he built very many the temples and organized the Buddhist events a lot of in his territory. As in 1691 has just ascended the throne, he built My An Pagoda (Tuy Van mountain – Hue province). In 1695, the king invited Zen Master Thach Liem from China to spread the Dharma and held the big festival in Hue province. This was a Buddhist event that made the country famous after he had been ruling for four years<sup>29</sup>. In 1710, King Nguyen Phuc Chu restored and found great copper Bell (over 3000kg) at Thien Mu Pagoda in Hue province<sup>30</sup>. In 1711, he built Van An Pagoda in Phuoc Tuy (Vung Tau city today). In 1715, the king restored the Kinh Thien in Thuan Trach (Quang Binh province). In 1716, the king restored and issued a sign for the Thien An Pagoda in Quang Ngai as “Sac Tu Thien An Temple”. In 1721, Giac Hoang Pagoda (Phong Dien-Hue) was built, and many well-known pagodas were built and restructured in Thuan Hoa<sup>31</sup>. Around 1708-1725 he built the Tam Bao Pagoda in Ha Tien province, ect .... From the tolerant and open policies of King Nguyen Phuc Chu, where many Buddhist pagodas were restored and built by himself quite beautifully spread the territory of the Nguyen dynasty.

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<sup>29</sup>Nguyen Lang. Op.cit., pp. 615 - 616

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 631.

<sup>31</sup>Nguyen Hien Duc. Op.cit., p. 16.

And during the reign of King Nguyen Phuc Chu who a devout Buddhist, he devoted himself to the foundation of the new pagodas, translation centers, and Buddhist monks training center, to facilitate the development of Buddhism. And the movement to revive Buddhism was launched by King Nguyen Phuc Chu, many events as well as many Buddhist activities have been happening a lot and often<sup>32</sup>. On this basis, it has directed Buddhism to go a step further, that is, to expand the spread of Buddhism to the end of south Vietnam. In particular, with the encouragement and invitation of the Nguyen dynasty to the monks to the new land for evangelism and social comfort. So, when the Nguyen dynasty expanded its territory to how far the pagodas and monks were present there, this was also the opportunity for Buddhism to expand its vast base and scope of diffusion.

## Conclusion

Vietnam, in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, was the existence of feudal corporations under the rule of the Latter Le dynasty in the North, the most prominent about social and political have the civil war between the feudal power to fight for power. And while a new dynasty was formed that is the Nguyen dynasty in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in South Vietnam, it created a new historical identity for Vietnam, although a newly established of dynasty independent with the Latter Le dynasty in the North, but it occupied a unique place in Vietnamese history. And they succeeded in the process of building and expanding its territory, contributing to the change of Vietnam's appearance during the last two centuries and they have created a powerful country in terms of economy, culture, politics and education. All this things have achieved by wise strategies of king Nguyen Phuc Chu who seen the chance in the future for his reign through culture and religion on the foundation of Buddhism. And he left many impressive achievement, stirred in the current political wave. He was regarded as a brilliant political leader, a clear-sighted king of country. Besides, king Nguyen Phuc who was very understanding the teaching of Buddhism and meditation thoughts. With his thinks on how to bring Buddhist morality into real life, in order to bring practical benefits and peace to the country, and he is doing so that.

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<sup>32</sup>Nguyen Lang, Op.cit., p. 616 & pp. 629 - 631.

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