

**Vietnamese Sociology in Socio-Political Context: Historical Sociology, Content and
Textual Analyses**

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

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ABSTRACT

Vietnamese sociology in socio-political context: historical sociology, content and textual analyses

Anna Nhung Vu

The aim of this thesis is to provide a bird-eye's view of Vietnamese sociology since its formation in the early 1980's. This thesis traces the genesis of Vietnamese sociology by examining the transformation of the culture of learning and the intellectual class within the context of social change through various epochs of Vietnamese history. A working model of historical sociology, namely "epochal synthesis" is then used to study the relationship between historical processes and the culture of learning to identify the main traits of Vietnamese sociology at the moment of its conception.

Another aspect of this thesis is to identify the changing pattern of Vietnamese sociology following the implementation of *Doi Moi* in the mid 1980's by examining the sociological writings of Vietnamese sociologists. Results of content and textual analyses confirm the softening though not the complete abandonment of the core values of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. This is indicative of a new direction of moving away from nomothetic and deterministic theorizing, a broadening of perspectives, and the application of multiple sociological frameworks for social research.

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Lastly, I thank my family, my husband Joseph, my son Joey and the Spetzlers for their enduring love and support throughout my academic journey.

Dedication

*This thesis is dedicated to Dr. Bertram Spetzler and Clarine
Spetzler, my wonderfully loving foster parents,
with all my love, gratitude, and admiration.*

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THESIS

a) Introduction

The discipline of sociology has had a long and rich tradition in many Western countries such as the US, Canada, Britain, France, and Germany. In Vietnam on the other hand, sociology is a newly emergent phenomenon that was only institutionalized and implemented for little over two decades¹, about the same time that this country began to open up to Western economic and globalizing processes by adopting the economic reform policy of *Doi-Moi*². Literature written on the history of sociology in Western countries seems readily available while scholarship on the history of Vietnamese sociology has thus far been absent. In order to confirm this assertion, I have conducted extensive research in numerous academic journals both in English and in Vietnamese. This fact is further confirmed by my key contact at the Institute of Sociology in Hanoi who is also the head researcher in the Department of Rural Sociology. In one of our conversations he revealed that: "no one has written about the history of Vietnamese Sociology in Vietnam" (Google Talk on Feb. 27th, 2009). One cannot help but wonder why this academic discipline, which is particularly important to the study and understanding of all human interactions and social realities, was not established earlier, or later for that matter.

At first glance, it appears that the emergence of Vietnamese Sociology is borne out of, and therefore connected to Vietnam's historical process of *Doi-Moi* adopted in the

¹ Sociology was taught in South Vietnam before 1975; however no direct records could be located. The term Vietnamese Sociology hereafter refers to the discipline established by the Unified Vietnam.

² Translated as "Renewal" or "Renovation".

mid 80's to transform Vietnam's centralized economic system to a market economy with socialist orientation. Closer examination, however, reveals that such a connection is more complex in that *Doi-Moi* was likely part of something bigger – something that extends well beyond the boundaries and control of Vietnam that has been at work since the 16th century according to scholars such as Wallerstein (Wallerstein, 2006). The question then becomes how does the establishment of sociology in Vietnam fit into this wider scheme of things? Moreover, the entire country of Vietnam is officially ruled by a one-party government since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, which adopts Marxism-Leninism as its theoretical foundation and relies on historical materialism to study and explain all aspects of social life and societal developments - How then, one might also ask, is sociology practised in Vietnam given the multitude of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches that the discipline offers outside the boundaries of Vietnam? And, have these perspectives and approaches *shifted* over time to account for the rapid social changes that are taking place in the country – changes that require different ways of looking at and explaining social phenomena?

Due to their educational attainment and the place that they occupy in the social hierarchy of Vietnamese culture, Vietnamese sociologists are considered as a part of the intellectual class, who, following Bourdieu (1988), possess a certain amount of “cultural” capital that enables them to control and dominate the “production of the corps” (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 88). It is therefore important to examine the issue concerning the position of the intellectual class in society in relation to historical processes. To be sure, this issue has been dealt with by many thinkers and sociologists such as Antonio Gramsci and W. E. B. Du Bois. In brief, for Gramsci, the intellectuals, particularly those to whom

he refers as “organic” intellectuals, which will be later discussed, are indispensable elements of society and that they should provide “moral” and “political leadership” (Gramsci, 1971); to Du Bois, education is crucial in the transformation of consciousness to achieve “higher aims of life”, and not merely for “industrial training” for the purposes of “work and money” as was advocated by Booker T. Washington (Du Bois, 1999 [1903], pp. 30-40). In addition to these views, Vietnamese culture also places education paramount to other concerns.

This thesis seeks to study the emergence of Vietnamese sociology as a social phenomenon rooted in the culture of learning of the intelligentsia³ and the impacts of historical transformative processes on its development. The central question that the thesis poses is: to what extent and in what ways does Vietnamese sociology relate to historical processes of change, and how do these processes affect the main traits or attributes, and possible trends of Vietnamese sociology?

This thesis contends that the historical processes of change, to a large degree, have transformed the Vietnamese learning culture, and the position of the intelligentsia in society, or intellectual class, is continuously being renewed by these broader historical processes and therefore contributed to the formation of Vietnamese sociology. Further, the nature of the relationship between historical processes and Vietnamese sociology is fluid and dynamic, i.e., elements that helped the formation and transformation of Vietnamese sociology can also be formed and transformed by it.

³ The term “intelligentsia” here refers to the intellectual elites who are commonly perceived as part of the ruling or “bourgeois” class. However, the *land reform* program applied in the North in 1956 and in the South in 1976 put an end to this notion of “bourgeois” intellectuals (Buttinger, 1958; Fitzgerald, 1972). Thus, the Vietnamese intellectuals are considered “working class” or “organic” intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971) after these two historical periods.

The goal of this thesis, therefore, is to capture a bird's eye view of the history of Vietnamese Sociology and to hopefully produce an introductory picture of the discipline in Vietnam. In so doing, it hopes to contribute to the larger sociological body of knowledge on the historical development of this discipline in distinct societies and/or nations, and to thus serve as a point of reference for future research.

b) Thesis Overview

The thesis is organized into seven chapters: Chapter one contains a brief introduction and an overview of the thesis. Chapter two provides a brief history of Vietnam and its inhabitants. Chapter three is on theory that begins with a discussion of historical sociology, a sociological orientation that combines both history and sociology to study the formation and transformation of modern societies. This section focuses on discussing the main propositions, problems and limitations of historical sociology. Bourdieu's monumental study of the academia *Homo Academicus* is also discussed, together with the assessment of the applicability of Bourdieu's work in certain aspects of this thesis. For theoretical perspective, the world-system theory developed by Immanuel Wallerstein is selected to provide a theoretical paradigm within which to study the emergence and development of the modern capitalist world-system which encompasses the development processes of all nation-states. Accordingly, Vietnam's adoption of *Doi Moi* and the formation and development of Vietnamese sociology are analyzed under this perspective.

Chapter four discusses methodology. The thesis employs three approaches: historical sociology, content analysis, and text analysis. Historical sociology relies on historical records and documents as sources to analyze social phenomena such as social

change and the formation of social institutions. In this thesis, I focus on the formation of the intellectual class within the context of socio-cultural changes that occurred in various epochs throughout Vietnamese history. The historical process of *Doi Moi* also qualifies as an important “social time” for it has brought about major changes to the country’s education system, including the establishment and development of Vietnamese sociology. Content analysis is used to examine and organize published articles produced by Vietnamese sociologists into thematic groupings for further investigation. Textual analysis focuses on doing close reading and in-depth analysis of a selected sample of articles chosen based on specific criteria which are discussed in the chapter. The goal here is to look for different traits and possible trends of Vietnamese sociology.

Chapter five is the application of “epochal synthesis” as a model of historical sociology that organizes along three main topics: (i) Epochal Characteristics – giving a more detailed description of the period; (ii) Effects on Socio-Cultural Processes – analysing how the epoch influences developments in the socio-cultural spheres; and (iii) Culture of Learning and the Role of the Intelligentsia – focusing on the development of learning systems and the role of the intellectuals in the transformative process. The epochs under analysis are: the Chinese domination which started in 111 B.C. and lasted approximately 1000 years; the French colonial period, which started in the mid 19th century until 1954; the Vietnam War that began after French colonialism and ended in 1975; and *Doi Moi*, Vietnam’s “perestroika”, officially adopted in 1986. Finally, an overview of the discipline of sociology in Vietnam, which was established in this period, will conclude the chapter

Chapter six presents the results and analysis of collected articles. The results indicate the followings: during the period prior to *Doi-Moi* (1986), sociology followed a more rigid model of Party ideology and well-defined boundaries in theoretical perspective and research methodology due in large part, to the intensified political climate as Vietnam was in the “rebuilding” phrase when the Vietnam War ended in 1975. The period after *Doi-Moi* up to 1996, which includes the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Vietnam’s ASEAN membership, the Asian financial crisis and the establishment of full diplomatic relation between Vietnam and the United States, saw a softening of ideological rhetoric and greater openness to a wide range of explanations and theoretical influences in the explanation of social phenomena. And lastly, from 1997 to present, Vietnamese sociology is geared towards expanding the scope of theoretical abstraction and broadening the boundaries. This includes being less ideologically oriented and deterministic but rather more open to western styles and tendencies. Finally chapter seven will conclude the thesis with a few remarks and research recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: VIETNAM, THE LAND AND ITS INHABITANTS

The study of the history of Vietnam is of vital importance to students of sociology, for the following reasons: It was in Vietnam that the Mongols were held in check, after having conquered China and most of Europe in the 13th century; it was in Vietnam in 1954 at the battle of Dien-Bien-Phu, that France was defeated which effectively ended its colonial aspirations; it was in Vietnam in 1968 that the Tet offensive provoked the worldwide protest against American imperialism; which mushroomed into a world-revolution (Wallerstein, 2006) evident in the student protest in

France – which helped to establish Bourdieu’s intellectual dominance with his studies of the academia (Bourdieu, 1988), as well as in the United States that fundamentally challenged the existing social order and changed people’s way of thinking and acting. The protest movements of 1968 signalled for the first time that history was siding with the minority groups and the marginalized people (Wallerstein, 2006); it was in Vietnam that America suffered one of its most humiliating defeats (after having out-spent, and out-powered the North Vietnamese army), forcing a rethinking of political and economic strategies of domination. These are, by all standards, impressive feats that beckon one to take a closer look at Vietnam and the Vietnamese people.

With a land area of just about one fifth of the size of Quebec, Vietnam is a small South East Asian country with a population size ranked 13th in the world at 88 million⁴. Located on the south-eastern extremity of the Asian continent bordering the South China Sea, Vietnam shares borders with China in the North, and with Laos and Cambodia in the West. The length of the country spans 1,650 km end-to-end on the North-South axis, whereas the low land coastline which gives the country its distinctive “S-shape” extends over 3,260 km from the Red River delta in the North to the Mekong delta in the South⁵.

Due to the pronounced lack of literature and records there are several conflicting versions of history describing the genesis of Vietnam as a land and its people. Prominent scholar Tran Trong Kim (Tran, 1971 [1929]), and even some contemporary scholars treated the question of origin along symbolic and mythical lines. For instance, the popular legend “Lac Long Quan – Au Co” tells a story of a couple giving birth to 100

⁴ Source: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (2009). *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision. Highlights*. New York: United Nations.

⁵ Source: <http://countrystudies.us/vietnam/33.htm>

eggs, half of the offspring followed their father “Lac Long Quan” to settle in the lower valleys to become the Kinh people; the other half remained with their mother “Au Co” to inhabit the mountainous and highland regions to form various tribes which are the ethnic minorities today⁶ (Tran, 1971 [1929]; Sardesai, 1992; Huu, 2001 [1697]). The Vietnamese believe that their history dated from the Hong Bang period (2897 BC to 258 BC), however much of that history has been discarded by recent scholarship (Buttinger, 1958, pp. 67, 72-74). In “Vietnam A History” historian Stanley Karnow (1983) concurs, pointing out that this fantastic aspect of history is rather common among nations. He suggests that the Vietnamese folklore that speaks of a “legendary kingdom ruled by mythical monarchs” serves to “demonstrate that their national roots run as deep as those of China, their traditional rival” (Karnow, 1983, p. 99). However, Joseph Buttinger (1968), another noted expert, views the question of Vietnamese origin from an ethnic/genealogical perspective according to which the Viet people are seen as essentially a “non-Chinese Mongolian immigrants into the Red River Valley” who “mixed with and gradually absorbed the Austro-Indonesian stock thus producing a number of new racial mixtures” (Buttinger, 1968, pp. 8-9), and that the Vietnamese – and to a lesser extent, the Muong – are the only ones that survived and prospered in the country of their origin. This point of view is not as popular in Vietnam, partly because further research is required to uncover evidence that either supports or refutes the claim, and partly because it undermines the sense of unity of all ethnic groups as members of one family. This sense of unity is not forged by a literal search for historical truth but by the invention and maintenance of a symbolic history of myths and legends. Furthermore, myths and

⁶ This would be the most popular story of all Vietnamese legends and myths. Children learn of the story through popular songs and plays taught in kindergarten.

legends provide the literal bases for many popular expressions. For instance the above mentioned legend signifies a common mother for all Vietnamese, hence the word “people” or “Đồng Bào” which literally means “from the same womb”. This popular term is employed when a speaker is addressing a crowd which s/he refers to as members of the same family, regardless of economic class, gender, age, and social status. There is a very famous story about these words, as told in the textbooks of Vietnamese children today: On September 2, 1945 the day Vietnam declared its independence, President Ho Chi Minh asked the multitude of people gathered in the vast square if they were able to hear him clearly. When the word “Dong Bao” – not just a plain “you” as in English – was uttered, it was told, the people were moved to tears⁷. Together with Confucian precepts, Vietnamese culture fosters the notion that the social order follows the family organizational structure, which is extremely important as it provides the working model for the family, the village, and the even the State (Fitzgerald, 1972, p. 15).

Like many other great nations in all continents of the world, the people of Vietnam developed a centralized political system quite early in their history dating back to the era of Chinese domination (from 111 B.C to 938 A.D) that was largely influenced by Confucian traditions (Fitzgerald, 1972). The rule of the central power was not absolute however, due to an ancient custom of respecting local traditional practices⁸ (Mus, 1952, p. 23). This early power-sharing arrangement involved a well organized political structure developed deep within every level of government. The self-appointed and self-governed local political structures acted as liaisons between the central power

⁷ The Declaration of Independence ceremony can be view online on YouTube with keywords “tuyen ngon doc lap 2-9”

⁸ In Vietnamese it is called “Phép vua thua lệ làng” translated literally as “The King’s edict lose out to the village’s custom”.

and the people, thus making life at the bottom of the political ladder well insulated from the turbulence that often accompanied power struggles at the top. The mechanism that linked each member of society with one another can be found in a tremendous respect for social harmony, a high degree of commitment to communal life which was required by the intensive use of cooperative labour during harvest times, and most of all, the utmost reverence towards their ancestors with the practices of ancestor worship (Buttinger, 1958, pp. 41-42; Fitzgerald, 1972, p. 20; Mus, 1952, pp. 23-25).

The Vietnamese are proud of their history, which seems to contain more episodes of wars than those of peace. Firstly, their sense of identity as an indomitable people and their land as an independent nation (Turley & Selden, 1993) has “emerged in conflict with consolidation” (Womack, 2006, p. 5). In a sense, the prolonged periods of foreign domination worked in favor of the Vietnamese as they demanded continuous and concerted effort to regain or retain independence, and episodes of internal strife which they had to overcome. Secondly, this very cohesive and heightened sense of identity has often enabled quick mobilization and is the main source of power against foreign domination. The Vietnamese could therefore fight many wars with infinite patience and very limited means, often without assistance from the outside. Thus, many great powers – from the great Chinese dynasties and the all powerful Mongols of distant past, to the French and powerful Americans of recent memory – all have wanted to occupy Vietnam through the use of force, yet all have come and gone, albeit grudgingly and not without a defeat handed to them (Schulzinger, 1997, pp. 3-5).

The Vietnam War (or the American War as it is known in Vietnam) was the first war that was brought into American living rooms on primetime television (McLaughlin,

2008). The sheer monstrosity of the war was as such that until today the word “Vietnam” for many Americans does not signify a country, but an ugly war which they have been trying to forget. In fact, the notion of Vietnam as “war” was so widespread that it is quite difficult to conceive of Vietnam in any other context without bringing in some reference to it⁹. Of course, Hollywood’s propensity to glamorize and glorify some aspects of the war through motion pictures¹⁰ depicting American exploits almost exclusively does exacerbate the notion of Vietnam as a war, but it is quite true also that the Vietnamese themselves have relied on the exact same narrative to boost their sense of nationalism and to reinforce their own sense of identity. The end of the war also represents a new beginning and a new chapter of nation-building now waiting to be written. It turned out to be a more difficult task than anyone had anticipated, especially those in power, full of confidence as victors of a long war. We will examine the causes for this later in the “*Doi-Moi*” section.

Today, the majority of the Vietnamese population (95%) consists of people less than 65 years of age, and more than 70% of the population are rural dwellers whose main occupation is in agricultural production¹¹. While this still puts Vietnam in the category of an agrarian country the urban centers of Hanoi in the North and Ho Chi Minh City in the South have seen tremendous development fuelled by the influx of foreign capital investments in the past decades (GSO, 2007). The official language is Vietnamese i.e., Quoc Ngu, developed by a French Jesuit missionary¹² in the 17th century from

⁹ My many visits to our university library confirms this fact as the section on Vietnam is mostly about war.

¹⁰ This can be seen in movies such as *Platoon* (1986), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), and *Heaven and Earth* (1993).

¹¹ CIA Worldfact Book; viewed on-line May 26th, 2009

¹² Alexandre de Rhodes (1591-1660) who published a first Vietnamese-Portugese-Latin dictionary (Rome:1651).

alphabetising “Chữ Nôm” which was itself a Vietnamese dialect of Chinese Han language¹³. The demands for bilingual Vietnamese to work in the tourism industry and businesses in recent decades have made learning and using English increasingly popular and favored as the second language. French once was popular, but has been on the decline since the French retreated from Indochina in 1954.

It might be worth noting that until the Chinese began their quest for territorial expansion and introduced the Vietnamese to a system of writing, Vietnam was mainly an oral society, which explains the importance of customs and traditions and the manner in which myths and legends are preserved and passed on for generations (Tran, 1971 [1929]; Buttinger, 1958, pp. 74-78).

Today, Vietnam has one of the fastest growing economies in the world. The economic growth of the last 25 years has borne fruits to the extent that extreme poverty and hunger have been drastically lessened or eradicated as indicated in the UN Millennium Goals reports. The GDP per capita has been increasing steadily, from US\$1,850 in 2000 to over US\$3,000 in 2007 according to CIA World Factbook. The economic success is due in part to the stability of the political system, which has remained largely unchanged since the conclusion of the Vietnam War. What the future holds for millions of young people of today’s Vietnam will depend on how the processes of change that have been in place for decades are handled. The consequences of these changes will manifest themselves in many areas of social life, which will require detailed understanding and knowledge. Such will be the tasks of Vietnamese sociology, about which this thesis seeks to study.

¹³ Chu Nom is near extinction as new generations do not have a chance to learn it, due to its complexity and its connection with the history of Chinese domination, and is therefore seen as outdated. Emperor Khai Dinh (1885-1925) had declared the Quoc Ngu to be the official language in 1918.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

a) Historical Sociology

The origin of historical sociology can be traced back to the founding of the discipline itself since, according to Theda Skocpol, “in a basic sense, sociology has always been a historically grounded and oriented enterprise” (Skocpol, 1984). In this respect, the works of the generally recognized founders of sociology, namely August Comte, Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber are all related in relation to history. In other words, historical sociology claims inheritance to an impressive tradition, therefore making the comprehensive exposition of its features and methodology all the more difficult, if not impossible to render, within limited space.

As the label implies, the domain of historical sociology is situated between history and sociology, and as a result, according to Delanty and Isin, the works of prominent figures such as Marx and Weber “combined explanatory with interpretive methods; they were pre-disciplinary, being neither exclusively historical nor exclusively sociological” (Delanty & Isin, 2003). The authors add that “neither Marx nor Weber ...saw himself as a sociologist: Weber, influenced as he was by the German historicism, came to sociology relative late in his life, and Marx was not exposed to sociology as such” (ibid, p, 1).

Skocpol¹⁴ defines historical sociology as “research devoted to understanding the nature and effects of large-scale structures and fundamental processes of change”

¹⁴ Theda Skocpol received her B.A. in Sociology in 1969 at Michigan State University where she first encountered comparative history by reading Barrington Moore’s *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. As a graduate student at Harvard from 1969 to 1975 she took seminars with Moore and worked with S. M. Lipset, Daniel Bell, George Homans, and Ezra Vogel. She currently is the Victor S. Thomas Professor of Government and Sociology and Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University. (Sources: Skocpol’s *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology* and Harvard University’s Sociology Department website, URL: <http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/soc/faculty/skocpol/>)

(Wagner, 2003). In the historical context of almost exclusively of European and North American societies, these large-scale structures are understood as states and capitalism, whereas fundamental processes of change imply democratization, bureaucratization, commoditization as well as revolution as a crucial form of change (Ibid). There can be found in the annals of historical sociological writings evidence in support of Skocpol's interpretation. Alexis de Tocqueville's works, *La democratie en Amerique* and *L'ancien regime et la revolution* with key words such as "democracy", "regime", "revolution", Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* along with Marx's *Capital* offer perfect examples of authors' focus on large scale structural changes and societal transformations. Early Twentieth century writings such as Nobert Elias's *Civilizing Process* and Karl Polanyi's *Great Transformation* offer insights into the transformative processes with warnings of "social consequences", namely, the break down or erosion of social relations that results from a "self-regulating economy" (Polanyi, 2001 [1944], p. x). The devastation of World War Two brought upon the world by the Fascist regimes of Germany and Italy – and Imperialist Japan – shifted the focus of traditional historical sociology to the study of totalitarianism exemplified by Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1969). Contemporary historical sociologists such as Charles Tilly and Theda Skocpol "aimed at consolidating the approach and securing it a legitimate place within the discipline of sociology" (Wagner, 2003) at a time when intense debate regarding methodological approaches occurred with "rather stifling outcomes" (Ibid)¹⁵. On the theoretical front, the debate has been no less intense - questioning the

¹⁵ In the preface of *Vision and Method of Historical Sociology*, Skocpol recounts a story of 'one especially articulate participant repeatedly proclaimed that "historical sociology has no methods"' p. x.

commitment of historical sociologists to sociological theory when they fail to have a “general theory” at the starting point to guide their research (Quadagno, 1992).

The debate on methodology that took place among historical sociology practitioners is in fact recent compared to the “widespread and sometimes acrimonious methodological debate among historians and sociologists as to the boundaries and relationship between the two disciplines” that began in the early 1960s with E. H. Carr’s *What is History* and continued to Anthony Giddens’s *Central Problems in Social Theory*, 1979 (Scott & Marshall, 2005 [1994]). Whereas history tends to focus on the descriptive aspect regarding individual events to produce narratives, sociology tends to focus on grander, greater issues and phenomena in order to generalize and theorize about them. The inherent problem (i.e., validity and reliability) with historical sociology lays in its reliance on historical records or materials as sources, since one of historical sociology’s defining characteristics is its focus on societal transformation from traditional to modernity. The problem becomes apparent when other factors such as intention and motivation of the documents’ authors are taken into account, in that what they write may reflect their own views rather than the pertinent historical facts. Furthermore, the research questions posed by sociologists can be remotely or even unrelated to the contents and contexts of available records; therefore it poses a challenge to gather historical records that are relevant to the research. These are only few of many problems pertaining to the issue of quality of sources that historical sociologists must face in their work. Interestingly, according to the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, “despite of this methodology controversy – or perhaps one should say fuelling it, some of the most prominent works in recent years have been within the domain of historical sociology”

(Ibid). The examples cited here include Barrington Moore's *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1969), Michel Mann's *The Source of Social Power* (1986), Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolution* (1979) and Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Modern World System* (1974, 1980).

It seems, then, that the difficult task of qualifying appropriate "data" for research has not deterred historical sociologists and scholars in varying fields. Indeed, scholars such as Barrington Moore and his work on dictatorship and democracy and Hannah Arendt and her work on totalitarianism (Wagner, 2003), have found a systematic way to overcome it – Michel Foucault for instance produces his version of history by subjecting the historical accounts to critical analysis of power and power relation; others (e.g., Moore, and Skocpol) rely on using critical comparison of what they call "causal regularities" (i.e., using similar sets of causes to explain historical processes in different countries) (Skocpol, 1984). In the process, methodological approaches are developed together with various 'research strategies' for the application of theory, concepts and comparisons in their research, as represented in Figure 1.

The Uses of Theory, Concepts, and Comparisons. (Source: Skocpol (1984): 363)

	<i>Apply a General Model to Explain Historical Instances</i>	<i>Use Concepts to Develop a Meaningful Historical Interpretation</i>	<i>Analyze Causal Regularities in History</i>
<i>Single Case</i>	Erikson Schwartz	Thompson Starr <u>Wallerstein</u>	Skocpol article
			Gouldner
<i>Multiple Cases</i>	Smelser	Bendix Geertz	Brenner Hamilton Skocpol book Moore
	←Tillys	Anderson	Frederickson Tillys→

Figure 1. Research Strategies in Historical Sociology

While the schema suggested here represents research strategies followed by historical sociologists, it does not represent what can be termed as working models for research whose descriptions are succinctly summed up by the insightful Charles Tilly.

In his presentation at the 2006 Annual ASA Conference held in Montreal, Charles Tilly, a prominent and well-respected among historical sociology practitioners, outlined three working models of historical sociology: Epochal Synthesis, Retrospective Ethnography, and Critical Comparison. The conference paper was later published in the journal *The American Sociologist* in December 2007 issue (Tilly, 2007). The methodological framework of “epochal synthesis”¹⁶ was developed by Pitirim Sorokin¹⁷ whose arrival at Harvard in 1930 contributed to the creation and building of the “most important sociology department in the United States (Ritzer, 1983, p. 52). Epochal Syntheses puts emphasis on constructing “grand historical schemes” in which to place smaller-scale social phenomena that need explanations. This model of historical research does not focus on the actions and motives of social actors; instead it relies on characterizing large historical epochs that can then be used to study social change and to make generalizations about societal development (Tilly, 2007). By contrast, Retrospective Ethnography developed by George Homans¹⁸, studies social phenomena at the micro level or from the “ground up”, through observation and ethnographic writing of

¹⁶ The term “Epochal Synthesis” is a product of Tilly’s deduction in thinking of Sorokin’s works that captures the essence of Sorokin’s methodology. It does not appear as ‘model’ in Sorokin’s works.

¹⁷ Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968) author of *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, published between 1937 and 1941, was a first chairman of the department of sociology at Harvard. (Ritzer, 1983). Sorokin was a prolific writer as evident in the impressive collection of books, essays and commentaries on a wide range of sociological topics spanning several decades. Since he employed multiple methodological approaches to his works, both qualitative and quantitative, and acquired a reputation of gathering and analyzing extensive amount of data, it appears to be an impossible task to reduce Sorokin’s works in terms of what he favoured as methods for social investigation.

¹⁸ One of Homan’s best known works “*English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century*” (1941) uses the method of retrospective ethnography.

social life and social interactions of individual actors (Ritzer, 1983; Tilly, 2007). Retrospective Ethnography attempts to explain historical events using “current understanding of social processes” to show how those events “fit into a known range of variation” (Tilly, 2007). And finally, as the term indicates, Critical Comparison, developed by Barrington Moore Jr.’s, compares different historical experiences and conditions, and the ways they interact with one another to produce certain political outcomes in different countries (Nichols, 2007; Tilly, 2007)¹⁹. Judging from the regular usage of critical comparison approach among researchers in contrast to the decline of the other models, it appears that this model is widely accepted and practiced today (Skocpol, 1984; Delanty & Isin, 2003; Tilly, 2007).

Historical sociology covers a wide range of subjects in its attempts to study the large-scale structures within the context of change, which leaves the study of the academia a focus of specialists. The science of studying the academia reaches new heights with the emergence of Bourdieu’s *Homo Academicus* (1988), in which Bourdieu makes it a subject of study the intricate roles of the academics in the maintenance and reproduction of the French intellectual and political elite. It should be noted here that Bourdieu conducts his sociological study of the academia from the ethnological perspective. The concept of *capital* is perhaps one of Bourdieu’s major contributions to the science of studying academia (Bourdieu, 1988). This concept is used to explain the growing tensions in French higher learning institutions that resulted mainly from the bankruptcy of resources due to the influx of student enrolment in the decades prior to the 1968 student revolt (ibid). The need to *quickly* hire new faculty members posed a

¹⁹ The method used in Barrington Moore’s book “Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy” (1969) became what is now considered “critical comparison” in social sciences.

challenge to the existing order and structure of French university system (ibid).

Bourdieu's notion of *capital* has a much wider context and implication than one would normally conceive. According to Bourdieu, there are several categories of capital including, social capital, economic capital, and cultural capital (ibid). Cultural capital (such as prestige, knowledge, recognition, honor, etc.) is a recurring theme in Bourdieu's work, particularly when he conducted extensive studies on the culture and politics among the faculties in French university institutions. In Bourdieu's view, the greater the amount of cultural capital one has, the better his/her position to not only exert influence, but to also reproduce conditions that maintains the status quo (Bourdieu, 1988). In the academia, this type of cultural capital is seen as academic capital that enables the individual or group of individuals to exercise power and control over the "reproduction of the corps" (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 84) – i.e., process of choosing and accepting who gets in or not, or as Bourdieu calls it: "the agencies of reproduction" (ibid). Over time, such practices reinforce and further ensure the hierarchical position within the academia (ibid).

Bourdieu's concept of capital provides useful insights to the study of academic culture. However, his work is not entirely applicable to this thesis for several reasons. Firstly, the scope of this thesis is to study the emergence of a discipline, whereas Bourdieu's work is concerned with the maintenance and reproduction of the entire academic culture. Secondly, the university system in Vietnam is facing a crisis of a different sort, i.e., presently Vietnam has a total of 2,286 professors – 320 of whom are full professors, 1966 are associate professors – for a population of 1.7 million university students according to the latest statistics that was reported in the *Vietnamnet* on 24th of August, 2009 on a recent conference organized by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education

and Training (MoET)²⁰. This translates to 744 students per professor, whereas in Canada, the ratio is 20 students to one professor²¹ – clearly there is a huge shortage of professors, which makes the task of “choosing” unnecessary. Secondly, Vietnam’s educational system is almost entirely state-run and state-managed, which means that the decision making process and inner workings of the university system are dictated by the state. Thirdly, the scope of this inquiry does not include extensive fieldwork and life-history research that Bourdieu was doing for his studies of the academia which included a very different set of variables (i.e., ‘demographic indicators’ and ‘indicators of inherited or acquired capital’) that he examined in order to draw a linkage to the “reproduction of the corps” (Bourdieu, 1988). At the moment, the aim of this thesis is to provide a *broad* overview of Vietnamese sociology that involves a macro approach of investigation which focuses more on the formation and development of the discipline and its relations to the socio-economic conditions of Vietnam, which is still changing at a rapid pace. Given these reasons, Vietnam’s university system cannot be compared to that of France and the academic culture that Bourdieu was writing about, which was already firmly established and well structured. In the future, as Vietnam’s university system is more developed and with bigger scope and greater resources, Bourdieu’s work will for sure be much more applicable and relevant, and would serve as a great model to emulate.

b) World-system Theory

Emmanuel Wallerstein started his academic career as an “Africanist” (Ragin, 1984) having completed his doctoral dissertation on “The Road to Independence: Ghana and the Ivory Coast” and with two published books on African independence, he became

²⁰ Source: <http://vietnamnet.vn/giaoduc/2009/08/864997/>

²¹ Source: <http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/STAT/indic02/indic02A/ia02114.pdf>

a recognized voice for African independence among the American academic circle. During this time, Wallerstein's theoretical orientation was still loosely connected to theory of Modernization and Structural-Functionalist tradition, which were main-stream among American universities. Despite of his reliance on modernization theory (i.e., a theory that concerns with the "process of becoming modern" or "the development of modernity") (Scott & Marshall, 1994), Wallerstein had always been politically-oriented in his sociological writings. However, according to one account, Wallerstein "decided that he could not understand modern Africa without understanding capitalism" (Burke, 2003). Wallerstein's inquiry into the origin of capitalism led to his celebrated 1974 book "The Modern World-system". By this time, he had abandoned his tenure position at Columbia University and came to McGill University, whereby after a brief stay, he finally went to SUNY Binghamton New York to help found the Fernand Braudel Centre in 1976 along with his friend and close collaborator Terrence Hopkins. This was where he continued to broaden his empirical base and advance the world-system's perspective. At the heart of Wallerstein's theory is the assertion that "capitalist is theft on a global scale" (Ragin, 1984, p. 277).

Within the academic world, world-system theory stands between the fields of historical sociology and economic theory (Martines-Vela, 2001). The main idea behind this theoretical framework is the idea that there is a singular and dynamic capitalist world-system or world-economy that has been at work since the 16th century. The innovative idea of changing the unit of analysis from the nation-state and national to "world-system" (Wallerstein, 2006) constitutes a fundamental break with traditional sociology. Such an idea affords Wallerstein the ability to synthesize two dominant

theoretical approaches of the 1960's: dependency theory, advanced by Frank (1978) and modernization theory (Martines-Vela, 2001), which is perhaps, one of Wallerstein's major scholarly contributions.

According to Wallerstein, the world-system is defined as: "a social system, one that has boundaries, structures, member-groups, rules of legitimation, and coherence. Its life is made up of the conflicting forces which hold together by tension and tear it apart as each group seeks eternally to remould it to its advantage..." (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 347). The world-system is organised into three economic zones based on the "multicultural territorial division of labor": the core states (developed countries), the periphery (underdeveloped countries), and semi-periphery (countries that act as buffer zone between core-periphery) (Wallerstein, 1974; Wallerstein, 2006). This division of labor refers to the forces and relations to the production processes whereby the core countries own more core-like production processes (i.e., technology) and are able to produce "quasi-monopolized" products (e.g., patents) which are then exchanged for "truly competitive" products (i.e., products that are labor-intensive) produced by countries in the periphery (Wallerstein, 2006). When the exchange takes place, it produces a condition of "unequal exchange" – a systematic transfer of surplus from the periphery to the core zone - thus allowing countries in the core to continuously expand and accumulate capital. Countries in the periphery, due to their weak position (vis-a-vis their relation to the production processes) and the structural constraint of the world-economy, are in a difficult position to improve their "subordinate" status (Chase-Dunn & Grimes, 1995; Martines-Vela, 2001). Perhaps the most important point to take note is that the

wealth of capitalist country is “critically dependent” on the exploitation of countries in the periphery (Ragin, 1984).

World-system perspective has had its shares of criticisms over the years, which Wallerstein has tried to address in his book *World-Systems Analysis* (2006). One of the main criticisms made against world-system theory stems from cultural sociologists, most notably Stanley Aronowitz, is its “superstructure” based analysis of the world that derives only from the economic sphere and disregards the sphere of culture altogether (Aronowitz, 1981; cited in Wallerstein, 2006). Another criticism is the claim that world-system is just another “grand narrative”, viewing the world from a large-scale theoretical perspective based on the state and interstate level and their relations to the capitalist world-economy, which that may not reflect the true reality (Skocpol, 1977, cited in Wallerstein, 2006).

Although Wallerstein uses history and places great emphasis on “processes” to theorize about the development of the modern world-system, he seems to have overlooked the concept of “space”, which according to David Harvey, is crucial in understanding the process of accumulation and uneven development (a process that as can be inferred, results from “unequal exchange”) (Harvey, 2006). Harvey warns against treating space as “an absolute framework for social action”, rather it should be seen as “relationally and relatively” - as “actively produced and an active moment within the social processes” - so that it provides other possibilities in which different ways capital accumulation creates space can be seen (Harvey, 2006, p. 77). Harvey does not allude to the exclusivity in the “absoluteness” or “relativeness” of spaces and times upon which one builds his/her material reality, rather he recommends making connecting the two so

that to get a better sense of one's social and, material life and the ways in which to construct different "geographical imagination" (Harvey, 2006, pp. 147-148). Despite these criticisms and/or shortcomings, Wallerstein's reliance on history, stressing specifically Braudel's notion of the *longue durée*, which Wallerstein defines as "the duration of a particular historical system" (Wallerstein, 2006) is especially useful in that it enables me to examine Vietnam's long history in a "truncated" or bloc-like fashion, in order to trace and analyze the various historical epochs (vis-a-vis the world-system) in which to draw relevant events that are related to my topic of investigation.

Using the world-system perspective, in this thesis, I will attempt to trace and analyze the emergence and development of the intellectual class throughout the various historical epochs of Vietnam beginning with French colonization, the Vietnam War, and Doi Moi. Within the world-system theoretical framework, Chinese Domination does not fall into the world-system since the epoch took place before the world-system was put in place. However, this period provides background knowledge to the understanding of the formation of the intellectual class. The event of *Doi Moi*, which signalled Vietnam's official joining of the world economy, will be a special focus as its emergence has precipitated the conception of Vietnamese sociology.

Since the formation of Vietnamese sociology is part of the changing socio-cultural landscape it is indeed a concern if in fact Vietnamese sociology can be manipulated to be an instrument of the capitalist world economy. The possible convergence of interests from the part of the Vietnamese governing apparatus and the capitalist world-system places the practice of sociology in a difficult position, such that even the choices of

subject of study, for instance, can be severely influenced by forces other than the production of knowledge for its own sake.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

a) Epochal Synthesis

In order to study Vietnamese Sociology as a social phenomenon within the historical sociological tradition, it is necessary to use all three working models: Epochal Synthesis, Retrospective Ethnography, and Critical Comparison as they would better facilitate researchers to fully capture the main traits of Vietnamese Sociology and its growth as a discipline within specific historical processes. Historical sociology is particularly relevant in terms of looking at the ways in which historical processes affected the development of sociology as an academic discipline and conversely, how sociology has responded to these historical changes. However, due to the limited scope of this thesis, time constraints, and lack of resources, it was more feasible to employ Sorokin's model of historical sociology, i.e., Epochal Synthesis, for this project. Therefore, the goal of this thesis is limited in providing an overview - a sort of introduction or broad stroke - to the history of Vietnamese sociology and its development vis-a-vis other social phenomena that fall under the wider historical processes or epochs such as imperialist expansion and globalization. More specifically, my intention is to conduct a preliminary study into this historical phenomenon - from its inception up to the present time - to ascertain relations or connections between sociology and historical events that took place inside Vietnam and in the world. The question raised here is how and in what ways the

institutionalization and implementation of Vietnamese Sociology is related to Vietnam's historical processes of change.

As a research model, "Epochal Synthesis" has not been very popularly received over the years. It is a research model that is part of the historical sociological tradition which studies social phenomena on a large, macro scale. Criticism levelled against it mainly points to the lack of objectivity when a researcher "picks and chooses" specific historical events to fit into his/her already constructed "grand schemes" or epochs, which in turn forces him/her to have to eliminate or disregard those that do not seem to "fit". Additionally, Sorokin's "macro-oriented approach", i.e., his "broad social theorizing and material gathering on a large scale" (Sandstrom, 2008) is also being criticized for not considering "relations" between historical events, once they have been chosen and placed under the constructed epoch. Tilly (Tilly, 2007) further notes that Sorokin's historical research model does not question the "motives, emotions, and states of consciousness" of social actors who affect and influence events to happen. However, this is not difficult to conceive, according to Tilly, since taking those "feelings" into consideration would make the already constructed grand scheme "an awkward base for explanation" (Tilly, 2007).

While I am in full agreement with the above criticisms of Sorokin's historical research model, I remain supportive of his conception of "historical epochs" as it provides the necessary framework for a systematic organization of events in history so as to help researchers in their attempts to analyze and draw meanings from such events. It goes without saying that "in order to reflect on our present, we need to look back on our past". Such is the case with the work of scholars such as Wallerstein and Skocpol (Skocpol, 1984; Wallerstein, 1974), all of whom in one way or another have relied on

using different periods in history in which to ground their research. In other words, their theories focus on the specific historical timeframes or epochs, which they then gathered support or searched for components to fit into these epochs. Foucault is yet another scholar who draws on historical materials to theorize and analyze his concept of power and its relations to knowledge and multifaceted forms of domination within society (Gutting, 1994).

Sources on the history of Vietnam were chosen based on their availability. It should be mentioned that unlike sources on the Vietnam War, sources on Vietnamese history were quite limited and were not very current. It was also observed that books written by Western authors (i.e., Buttinger and Fitzgerald) followed a more analytical approach whereas those of Vietnamese authors were strictly a chronology of events. In particular, the book “Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu” (Huu, 2001 [1697]), chronologically recounted Vietnamese history until the 17th century. Another popularly cited book “Vietnam Su Luoc” (Tran, 1971 [1929]) organized events in Vietnamese history according to specific epochs (e.g., 1000 years of Chinese Domination) until French colonialism. The epochal organization of this later source was a logical selection for this thesis to critically examine Vietnamese history up until French colonialism, and until the present, I relied on books written by Western authors.

It should be made clear that this thesis is not intended to evoke the criticisms that have been directed towards Sorokin’s model of historical research methodology (as I have discussed in earlier in this section) - rather, the project took those very same criticisms as its starting point. More specifically, in this thesis, I began by developing the grand schemes or epochs already constructed by theorists whose theories I have discussed

in the previous chapter. These in turn, necessarily entailed assemblages of smaller events which are the constitutive parts of the epochs.

But how are these grand schemes or historical epochs identified? And on what basis are they chosen? To help answer these questions, I rely on another concept developed by Sorokin, that of “social time” (Sorokin & Merton, 1937). Time, to an individual “is an inbuilt biological mechanism controlling our behavior” and that “time is personal, it comes from within” (Kaku, 2006). The way we perceive time depends on our state of mind, as in the expression “time flies when we are having fun”.

In the early years of American sociology, the concept of time was poorly developed. But from the early 80’s onwards, it really has become very sophisticated nonetheless due to scholars such as Fabian (Fabian, 1991). In the article entitled “Social Time: A Methodological and Functional Analysis”, Sorokin and Merton questioned the adequacy of the concepts of “astronomical or calendrical time in the study of the motion or change of social phenomena” (Sorokin & Merton, 1937). After analyzing notions of time in various fields such as philosophy, psychology and economics, the authors point out that these disciplines have developed their own sense of what time means to them, and that the concept of astronomical time, or time on the clock, is not always applicable.

Social time is not uniform, infinitely divisible and continuous but is interrupted by “critical dates”. This thesis utilizes the qualitative aspect of social time, which involves determining and selecting the “critical dates” in Vietnamese history in order to reduce it to successive epochs. These epochs are formed because they represent periods of significant social interest relating to historical processes in which they operate. In the history of Vietnam, we can identify two important historical processes: the first is

identified as territorial expansion which would apply to the thousand years of Chinese domination and the century of French colonial rule; the second is seen in the never-ending process of capital accumulation that characterizes the ever expanding global domination by neoliberalism. This would apply to the *Doi Moi* era up till the present time. In between these epochs was the Vietnam War, which was basically a transitional period: the end of US hegemonic power and the beginning of the new mode of Western imperialism through economic domination. Let us refer back to Vietnam's adoption of *Doi Moi* as a case in point.

As can now be understood, if *Doi-Moi* was Vietnam's capitulation to Western economic and globalizing processes, then in this context, it was a "component" that fit into the grand globalizing scheme (i.e., the capitalist world-system). A host of policy changes were implemented under *Doi Moi*, which understandably, led to changes in all spheres of Vietnamese society. The need for the state to study issues related to social change made the institutionalization and implementation of sociology more urgent and necessary. In placing Vietnamese Sociology on the same timeline or plane as other social phenomena occurring under the historical process of *Doi-Moi*, we can infer that sociology, to a certain extent, has some relation to other occurrences in the sense that emerging social issues necessitate new sociological studies and subjects of inquiry – (whether these sociological studies are to serve specific interests are debatable points and are not within the scope of this inquiry). This is logical since any changes in one sphere of society (e.g., economic policy changes) would likely affect the others (e.g., educational institutions). For example, as the economic condition of the country improved due to the influx of foreign investments, more resources became available for increased government

spending in areas such as education and other social programs. The questions which once again I wish to raise are how does the development of Vietnamese Sociology relate to other historical events that fall under the larger historical process of *Doi Moi*? And in what way has *Doi-Moi* affected or influenced the development of sociology? How has Vietnamese Sociology responded to such influences? The answers to these questions are both complex and often well-hidden within the writings of Vietnamese sociologists. Thus a part of this thesis was devoted to close examination, careful reading, and analysis of scholarly productions by Vietnamese sociologists, which will be further discussed below.

b) Content and Text Analysis

This section focuses on studying the discipline of sociology by means of using content and text analysis. Content analysis is one of the methods used in sociological research to gather and organize the content of texts that are being studied. *Content* refers to “words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated” (Newman, 2003, p. 310). It is the systematic grouping, counting, eliminating and recording of textual records in order to produce a description of the content in a broad and symbolic manner following established rules (i.e., organizing texts according to date of publication or sociological categories²²) in order to ensure objectivity and acceptable academic standard. The method is especially useful when the research project involves a large volume of texts that would render in depth and detailed analysis impossible.

²² These sociological categories or concepts can be found using sociological encyclopaedia or dictionary so that to ensure objectivity and reliability.

Textual analysis is another step in the research process and it often follows content analysis. It is a method of doing research that enables the researcher to delve deeper into the actual texts (through close and analytical readings) after they have been systematically selected in content analysis. This involves techniques such as counting the presence and frequency of certain key words, themes, or concepts as well as to draw out meanings or messages conveyed by the authors. The aim of textual analysis is to interpret and to make sense of these meanings and messages in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the context and social condition under which such texts are produced. To put it more succinctly, textual analysis tries to “make meanings out of meanings” (McKee, 2003).

The choice of content and textual analysis appears to be suitable for the present thesis for three main reasons: firstly, the volume of literature collected is large (over 1,600 entries); secondly, it is appropriate to study a subject from a distance and in which case I am “at a distance” in relation to Vietnamese sociology; and thirdly, I would like to be able to discern the changing patterns of Vietnamese sociology from the analysis of frequency, intensity, trends, and direction of certain key words, references, theoretical constructs in the literature.

The ultimate goal here is to define the main characteristics of Vietnamese sociology based on how the discipline has interacted with the numerous historical changes it has faced since its conception; to learn of how sociology is perceived and practiced by Vietnamese sociologists with reference to what would be considered as “common practices”; to discern whether Vietnamese sociology share a common genealogy with its “western” counterpart or if western tendencies are present in

Vietnamese sociology; to determine the degree of influence that the State's ideology/policy has on the work of Vietnamese sociologists.

i. Establishing Contact & Journal Selection

Through some initial research on-line, I was able to confirm two academic institutions in Vietnam that have sociology departments: the Institute of Sociology (IoS) in Hanoi, and the University of Social Sciences & Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City (H.C.M.C). Contact information of faculty and staff is available on the websites of both institutions. I elected to contact the Department Head and a few Professors in both locations through emails sent around January 2008 to introduce myself and my research topic. The responses received only came from the IoS and were all positive in terms of Professors expressing their enthusiasm about the topic and offering their assistance. Emails sent to Professors in H.C.M.C were either returned or failed to produce a response. Through further research and my on-going contact with a key contact in Hanoi, the reason for this lack of response, I believe, was that the sociology department in H.C.M.C is still very much in its development stages and thus may not be as organized as the IoS, or it may lack the resources to deal with "non-pressing" matters such as answering a student's email from overseas.

The selection of journals was rather a simple task as there is currently only one existing sociological journal in Vietnam: The Vietnamese Sociological Review that included all of the sociological writings, most of which were written by Vietnamese authors who began writing and publishing in 1983, about the same time that the IoS was established. This journal is available on-line through the IoS website and has a list of over 1,600 article titles, mostly in Vietnamese. Many of the articles published from 1988

to 1997 are in PDF format and they can be accessed for reading, downloading, and printing. The remaining articles, the IoS states, will soon be uploaded and available through its website. In order to turn the content of the IoS journal into a collection of works that reflects Vietnamese sociology, articles of non-Vietnamese sociology content first had to be eliminated. This was accomplished by running a query using authors' last names as filter. I then selected articles written by Vietnamese authors and discarded articles that were not relevant, i.e., articles translated into Vietnamese and written by Western/Eastern Bloc sociologists about their societies. As for the co-author articles, I selected articles that were written about Vietnamese sociology or Vietnamese society. This list was then manually entered into Microsoft Word computer program, organized systematically by authors' last names, titles of the articles, and year of publication. Secondly, based on article titles, which gave clues as to what they were about, I chose to retain only those that are actual articles – short reports, minutes of meetings, summaries and proceedings of conferences, as well as duplicates were eliminated.

The compiled list of over 1300 articles after this "clean-up" was then exported onto Microsoft Excel, and was further organized in two ways: first in alphabetical order by author family name, and second, by year of publication in ascending order beginning with the earliest year. This system of organizing the materials, which involved going over all the titles of the articles and names of the authors several times, proved to be very useful: first it provided me with a good sense of what the literature was about, secondly it helped to concretize my research questions and also aided in posing new ones.

The majority of the articles were written in Vietnamese. A small number of article titles had been translated into English but the texts themselves remained in the

original Vietnamese language. Due to this large volume of texts, I chose not to have a written translation for each article title into English as this task would have been extremely time-consuming and unproductive, especially when often times, meanings tend to get “lost in translation” from one language to another and therefore would have made little sense. Instead, each article title was carefully examined in order to grasp its overall meaning and to establish a general sense of what the article was about prior to placing it under the appropriate category to be discussed below.

In order to make this large volume of texts more manageable and useful for statistical analysis and to have a better visual examination, articles were coded using the following steps: First, I used the book *Encyclopaedia of Sociology* by Edgar F. Borgatta (second edition, volume 1, 2000) as a reference to search for potential subject descriptors or subject categories under which each article could fall or fit into. A total of 9 categories were created: Education, Vietnamese Sociology, International Sociology, Methodology, Social Problems, Theory, Development/Policy, Demography, and Culture. The title of each article was then carefully examined and subsequently placed under the appropriate category. For instance, if the title of an article indicates that the subject is on “housing issue”, the article is then placed under the category “demography”. This step I referred to as “first order of coding”. In the case where an article falls into both categories²³, it is put in both categories.

In the “second order of coding”, the categories mentioned above were further broken down into sub-categories in order to more accurately reflect the contents of the articles. This was achieved by carefully and critically evaluating each of the 1300 articles once again and assigning each one yet another detailed descriptor. For example

²³ This rarely happened with the articles that were examined for this thesis.

after an article was placed under the main category "Demography", the article was given another descriptor within that same category (e.g., housing, population, health & health care, aging & elderly, rural/rural development, marriage & family, and family & family planning). It should be mentioned that in some instances, even though articles were placed in different categories initially ("first order of coding"), they may fall under the same sub-categories ("second order of coding"). This occurred more frequently with articles in the categories "Development/Policy" and "Demography".

Using the statistical computer program SPSS, descriptive statistics were performed so that I could quantitatively analyze and visually describe some basic features and simple summaries of the collection of articles. The articles were first grouped into different historical epochs, again based on the year they were published. In this case, articles were placed under these timeframes: Pre-*Doi-Moi* period (1986 and before); Ten years after *Doi Moi* (1987 – 1996), which includes the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 and US-VN Normalizing Relation in 1996. And finally, the period after 1997 would include Vietnam's WTO membership in 2006, marking the country's integration into the world-system. This part of the inquiry focused specifically on answering two questions: who were some of the most prominent authors, and which areas of research did these authors most frequently explore.

Going beyond the thematic organization of the content analysis described above, a sample of texts was chosen for close and critical²⁴ reading. My objective here is to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the sociological writings of Vietnamese sociologists. More specifically, I wish to produce an interpretation of the

²⁴ Critical reading involves active engagement with the texts and going beyond what the texts say through reflection and constant going back to the research questions.

meanings of the texts, as explained by the authors (i.e., making meaning out of “meaning”), and the context and social conditions under which such work was produced.

The historical events chosen above represent some of the most significant and profound changes in Vietnam and also of the world since they also fall under the wider historical processes following the epochal synthesis model, specifically the capitalist world-system which according to Wallerstein (2006), have been unfolding over long periods of time. In the context of Vietnam, some of these events, i.e., *Doi Moi*, signalled a major shift in political ideology, economic policy, and the overall cultural landscape of the country that have transformed people's ways of life, their attitude, and patterns of thinking and acting (Kolko, 1997). In recent decades, one issue that emerged from these societal transformations is the internal conflict stemming from Vietnam's on-going effort to modernize and to integrate into the global community. It is met with the pressure of remaining "traditional" and maintaining the country's "own identity" - in other words the challenges of finding the "right" balance between traditional and Western trends and values (Nilan, 1999). Seen in this light, such tensions can have great consequences for the work of Vietnamese sociologists as the profession itself, calls for the need to remain "value-free" particularly in the way sociological issues are approached (e.g., theory and methodology) and analyzed. Such a concern was something that I was especially interested in finding out when conducting textual analysis. In particular, I focused on investigating the extent to which the writings of sociologists speak to historical processes as well as the extent to which the events/processes themselves inform sociological writing in Vietnam.

Relying on the already established historical epochs that I have laid out above, a list of the most prominent authors, i.e., those who had the greatest number of articles published in that specific period, was selected. I next searched for areas of research or categories (as mentioned in the 'content analysis' section above) that the authors focused on most often. And finally, after having narrowed down the list, articles were chosen for textual analysis.

Articles published prior to 1988, which the IoS has not yet made available in PDF format on its website, were requested by writing to my key contact person. The majority of the requested articles were subsequently sent and received over the period of several weeks. Those that I could not obtain were not sent because they were no longer available from the archives of the IoS. The articles were then reviewed with special attention paid to looking at the kinds of theories and methodologies that Vietnamese scholars relied on to conduct their research. Additionally, the language employed and the manners (e.g., styles of writing, language use, and tonality) in which sociologists communicate their points both explicitly and implicitly, were also examined. The meanings and messages that emerged from these articles were then compared to those written in another historical period in order to identify their differences and similarities and the ways in which the writings may have changed over time and how these changes reflect the wider historical processes of the country.

ii. Difficulties and Ethical Concerns

The timing of the initial contact was carefully planned to coincide with the "Tet" (Lunar New Year) celebration, which normally falls between the middle and end of January of every year. Given my Vietnamese background, I felt that this was an ideal

time to initiate contact as it provided a good “opening line” in my letters. After all, a “Happy New Year” greeting seemed to provide my letter with a congenial “opening line”. It should be mentioned that even though this was a holiday period, where normally people are not around the office to answer emails, in Vietnam, it seemed quite the reverse as there seemed to be an affinity towards, and a keen interest in, modern technologies. In recent years, Vietnam has seen an explosion in internet usage, especially among young people and the academic community, and more households in Vietnam now have computers and are equipped with internet connections.

Email exchanges were carried out in English even though I am fluent in Vietnamese both in speaking and writing. This was done primarily for practical purposes in terms of my level of comfort and familiarity with using “sociological” terminology and in formal writing. As with any task taken up for the first time, which often entails a certain degree of uncertainty and apprehension, communication was no exception. I was mindful of how best to approach Vietnamese professors so that our conversation could be easily understood and at the same time, be kept as professional and impersonal as possible. Being a person from Vietnam who regularly keeps up-to-date with current issues and events there, I am keenly aware of the strong presence of social hierarchy, especially with professors, who are held in high esteem in Vietnamese culture. Hence, I realized that it would be necessary to use language in a careful and respectful manner when communicating with my contacts.

The English language, with its impersonal pronouns such as "you" and "I", seemed ideal to use for identifying oneself and addressing one's interlocutor, regardless of gender, age, or professional title. Vietnamese language on the other hand, requires an

individual to carefully establish his/her position (in relation to the other person) in order to appropriately choose the "right" Vietnamese pronouns, which can be many words depending on the person's gender, age, and status. This was difficult to achieve given our conversation was conducted through cyberspace and not face-to-face.

One limitation in using English as my main mode of communication is that faculty and staff in Vietnam may not be as fluent in English and thus could have been reluctant to respond to my emails. However, given the advantages mentioned above, I felt that using English was still the better option. Lastly, I was also mindful that due to the political climate in Vietnam people may be hypersensitive to certain issues. Thus all exchanges were carried out with great forethought and sound judgment.

Due to the nature of the topic and my background as Vietnamese, I also made sure that I engaged in reflexivity and self-reflection in my communication with my contacts as well as throughout the process of conducting research. This entailed my being aware of my positionality (e.g., personal background, presumptions, circumstances, and biases) in order to achieve the best possible degree of objectivity in my investigation, evaluation, and analysis of research materials.

CHAPTER 5: EPOCHAL SYNTHESIS

The objective of this chapter is to trace the historical origin of Vietnamese sociology and its main traits at the onset of its establishment. As Vietnamese sociology is embedded within the culture of learning in the same way as the culture of learning is embedded in the socio-cultural context, it follows that studying the transformation of Vietnamese socio-cultural conditions in successive epochs will shed lights on the

characteristics of Vietnamese sociology. The epochs examined here include: (a) Chinese domination, which covers Vietnamese history from the first century B.C. to the tenth century A.D.; (b) French Colonialism which started from the mid nineteenth century until 1954; (c) the Vietnam War from 1954 to 1975; and (d) the period of Doi Moi, an ongoing reform process implemented since the mid 1980's.

a) Chinese domination

One of the most famous Vietnamese proverbs is “ca lon nuot ca be”, which literally translates to “big fish swallows small fish”. Such cultural expression accurately describes the mechanism for territorial expansion²⁵ under which the Han ruler Han Wu Ti (Buttinger, 1968, p. 26) in a bloodless affair forced into submission the Viet Viceroy who had ruled what is now northern Vietnam, thus beginning a thousand year period of Chinese domination.

In order to appreciate the historical importance of this period (as well as subsequent historical events to be presented in this chapter) it might be useful to examine the followings: (i) epochal characteristics of Vietnamese society in terms of the transformative process of the political, economic and social structures from previous arrangements; (ii) The major influences of the epoch in terms of socio-cultural development of the Vietnamese people, and (iii) the institution of learning and the status of the intelligentsia to illustrate the possible two-way relationship, i.e., the ways in which social change influence the learning culture and the ways in which Vietnamese intellectuals influence social change.

²⁵ The Vietnamese themselves pushed southward in a relentless effort to expand their own territory which was completed only in the 18th Century. This process saw the annexation of the Champa Kingdom in the Central part of Vietnam as well as the fertile Mekong delta which used to belong to Cambodia (Buttinger map, p.50).

i. Epochal Characteristics:

The early period of Chinese domination was marked by the emergence of a few great Chinese governors (Tich Quang, Nham Dien) (Tran, 1971 [1929]) who taught the Vietnamese the Chinese techniques of rice cultivation, which involved the use of the plough and irrigation. They also opened schools to teach the Vietnamese Chinese language, writing, ideas, and the so called “civilized customs”²⁶ (Buttinger, 1968, p. 28). The Chinese governors acted on the orders of the Chinese Court, and to do so they had modeled the Vietnamese political structure after the Chinese. The effect of this political arrangement was to establish the paramount position of China as a colonizing state and Vietnam as a tributary state. Even when China no longer ruled Vietnam directly, Vietnam rulers still felt compelled to offer tributes, and to ask for blessings from the Chinese emperor in cases of succession or any major changes in the Vietnamese court. This was done in order to keep the Chinese emperor “happy” and thus to prevent further invasion. Needless to say, it was an enduring task, for it lasted well in to the late 19th century.

Economically Chinese domination brought with it increased productivity by the introduction of new and more effective rice cultivation techniques and a host of other technical innovations. Further, a closer connection with China also facilitated the building of infrastructures, such as roads and other means of communication, which furthered trades between the two sides. The Vietnamese peasants might not have reaped the benefits, for they were the ones who would be most taxed and exploited, but for a

²⁶ This type of language use is prevalent in historical writings of earlier period, I use it in quotation to illustrate the distinction between the ‘raised’ and ‘unraised’ consciousness. I suppose we now have our consciousness ‘raised’ thanks to the works of sociologists, particularly those belonging to feminist movement.

privileged few, these times afforded the opportunity to absorb, what considered at the time, more advanced cultures and learning (Schulzinger, 1997, p. 5). As for the remaining few, the persistence of a separate cultural identity gave rise to a distinctive political identity, notions of nationhood with political aspiration (ibid). These few who Buttinger called “hereditary local chiefs” (Buttinger, 1968) were fearful that their social status was being threatened by the Chinese reform efforts. Hence it was in their interests to take a position against Chinese rule which developed into open rebellion especially when provoked by the brutality and oppressive behavior of certain Chinese governors, though most would prove to be unsuccessful.

Socially the emergence of a new social class - the privileged Chinese-trained autocrats and aristocrats - altered the social fabric of Vietnamese society. In the interests of territorial expansion and to permanently absorb Vietnam as a Chinese province, it was necessary for the Chinese to impose Chinese culture on Vietnam beginning with the institutionalization of Confucian teachings as the standard of learning, and as the requirement for educational attainment (Tran, 1971 [1929]). This meant that those who had absorbed Chinese ways of life through learning were also those who found themselves acting as educators and standard bearers of the new social structure that now had begun to rise to prominence. Through gaining economic advantages over the rest of the population, this newly formed elite class gradually replaced the once powerful local hereditary chiefs, although they managed to survive assimilation by maintaining a delicate balance between keeping their ancient customs and antagonizing the Chinese rulers. Karnow and Tran point out that these Vietnamese mingled with the Chinese ruling elite so as to avoid the fate of those who retreated to the mountainous or remote

regions and often ended their lives in obscurity, while preserving their identity (Karnow, 1983; Tran, 1971 [1929]). There were also the descendants of the Chinese bureaucrats who had earlier emigrated to work in the Chinese administrative apparatus, some of whom later integrated themselves through intermarriage and adoption of local customs with the larger Vietnamese population to become the local lords. As the result of the proximity between the Chinese rulers and the masses, the line separating the two cultures became blurred. With the passage of time some of the localized Chinese became more and more Vietnamese – completely in most cases (known as Sino-Vietnamese), while some selected to retain the essential Chinese customs and traditions whose descendants are still living in pockets scattered around the country. For the well-to-do Chinese-trained ethnic Vietnamese, while the economic gap between them and the peasants remained wide, they ultimately returned to their own roots and became more conscious of their identity. This group of Vietnamese played key roles in historical events culminated in the overthrow of the Chinese domination in the 10th century²⁷. The historian Buttinger sums it best:

“...despite all these factors, and a thousand years of military, administrative, and propagandistic efforts notwithstanding, the Chinese failed completely in their attempt to assimilate the Vietnamese. One probable reason for the failure was the long history of the Vietnamese. The roots of their culture probably reached deeply into their pre-Chinese past....It is the story of Chinese rule which contains the final explanation for the ethnic durability of the Vietnamese: When the Vietnamese, after many unsuccessful attempts, finally broke away from China, they had forever passed the stage, when a people can become anything other than its own riper self.” (Buttinger, 1968, p. 29)

²⁷ Curiously the man who would be successful in ending the Chinese rule came from a localized Sino-Vietnamese elite class. Ngo Quyen was not identified as Chinese by Tran Trong Kim, but he was implied as such by both Buttinger and Karnow.

ii. Effects on Socio-cultural Transformations

It is difficult to argue with the proposition that any system under an excessively long period of domination is bound to be changed or deeply affected by it. In addition, since social and cultural practices are established over a “longue durée”²⁸, they have the appearance of being timeless, and ubiquitous. These practices are intricately linked with the modes of production, and relations between social classes are often founded on such basis, which in this instance refers to agriculture (wet-rice farming) and cooperative labour. As mentioned above, the process of social stratification had begun early in Vietnamese history in terms of land ownership (i.e., some had more agricultural land than others). However, the spirit of cooperation among autonomous communities had always been higher in such rural settings as people relied on each other for support and economic survival due to the practices of wet rice farming (Buttinger, 1958). Such unity, when infused with Confucian ideas of social harmony became a potent force because of its quick mobilization against foreign invaders (ibid). According to Buttinger, “...no culture ever developed stronger family bonds or greater degree of solidarity among the people of the same village” than the Vietnamese, and “the unity of Vietnam is like the ‘unity of a chain’” (Buttinger, 1958, p. 42).

To what extent has the process of fusing Vietnamese traditional beliefs and customs with Chinese cultural and social values helped define the characteristics of the Vietnamese? This is a question that can be difficult to answer. It is a question of logic that when one contemplates the historical development of Vietnamese culture, one must also at the same time, raises the question of its origin and the extent of Chinese influence.

²⁸ Concept favoured by Fernand Braudel which refers to a “structure time that was long-lasting and reflected continuing (but not eternal) structural realities” (Wallerstein 2004:97)

Owing to the hierarchical order which established China as the colonial state, there is little doubt that many of the traditional cultural practices of the Vietnamese today originated within the context of Chinese domination. For instance, many generations of Vietnamese learned the Chinese classics as parts of their preparation for entrance examination into the public service²⁹ i.e., becoming civil servants; These Vietnamese popularized the wisdom of a social order which governs all relations as prescribed systematically by the maxims of Confucianism and Taoism, a way of life that stresses the philosophy of harmony between man and man and man and nature.

For those who sought alternative systems of belief there was Buddhism which was making its way to China from India. In the South, the Hindu-influenced Kingdom of Champa presented yet another perspective on life. But in the end it was the Chinese influence that had the most impact on the development of Vietnamese culture. To be sure, such influence came from the imposition on the Vietnamese the more developed political structures, economic systems, and technical knowledge - all of which had been more or less welcomed; however the Chinese were less successful in removing the fundamental notion of Vietnamese cultural distinctiveness due to the fact that the Chinese were in Vietnam for a very apparent reason: to create and transfer wealth back to China. In the process the Chinese managed to impoverish the peasant population to such an extent that their efforts to improve the infrastructures of the country or the transfer of certain agricultural technologies did little to quell the source of discontent.

This persistence of a distinct identity – and its resemblance to what one might call a collective inferiority complex – has been both a blessing and a curse: it produces a very complex set of conflicting values which served as a source of strength and unity in

²⁹ This practice continued until early 20th century when the French abolished it.

times of war, as well as the very reason for the appearance of meekness and internal discord in times of peace (Karnow, 1983). This unique cultural feature of the Vietnamese is something that should be taken into consideration in order to gain a better understanding of Vietnamese historical processes. Thus in the 1950s, the French sociologist Paul Mus once warned “against the convenient notion that the Vietnamese peasants were a ‘passive mass’, only interested in their daily bowl of rice, and terrorized into subversion by agents” (Karnow, 1983, p. 99). Unbeknownst to the French political class, the Vietnamese, peasants and elites alike, had had their aspirations for nationhood forged a long time ago.

A millennium is indeed a long time, but in this case, it can be argued that the Vietnamese did survive Chinese domination and emerged as an independent nation. They have been able to resist attempts at Chinese assimilation whilst learning and absorbing the valuable Confucian teachings; their openness to different religious and moral systems – so long as these systems do not contradict the practices of ancestor worship, further complements and enhances their social structure, contributing to a more diverse and colorful culture.

iii. Culture of Learning and Status of the Intelligentsia:

Under the Chinese mandarin exam system, learning in Vietnam was reduced to memorizing, reciting, and documenting events and phenomena as they happened, rather than applying analytical skills and interpretation (Nakayama, 1995 cf. Zink, 2009). This mode of learning has persisted throughout history and has been frequently criticized by

contemporary commentators as one of the aspects of learning to be thoroughly reformed³⁰.

During the millennia from 111 BC to 938 AD, Vietnamese young men yearned for the "Mandarin posts", part of the Chinese bureaucratic system designed to serve the interests of China by maintaining and reinforcing the state's authority (Nakayama, 1984; Woodside 2006 cf Zink, 2009). These administrative positions required individuals to be well educated with a strong command of classic Confucian philosophy, classic literature, ritual and religion (Furnivall 1943; cf Zink, 2009). Candidates who passed these examinations were not only guaranteed good government posts and rewards (in the form of farmland ownership), but were also accorded tremendous respect, honour, and pride. In other words, passing these exams was taken as their passport to "fame and fortune", to be celebrated not only with one's immediate family, but also extended family members and the entire community³¹.

Under Chinese rule, the Vietnamese learned to compete through a system of academic examinations³². The Chinese school system, although not well developed according to today's standards, was far more instrumental in instilling a sense of pride in success and achievements, a sentiment that had appeared lacking. Later periods (during the brief Ming rule in the 15th century) witnessed the Chinese attempting to destroy the foundation of learning by the confiscation of important books written by Vietnamese scholars and historians in the centuries after independence. It showed that Vietnam, and

³⁰ Such articles can be found in the education section of popular websites such as Vietnamnet.vn or Thanhnien.com.vn

³¹ Due to the cohesive social structure an academic success of one was also considered as an important achievement of the family clan. This practice still occupies an important place in contemporary Vietnamese society.

³² Top graduates have their names engraved in memorial steles, such as those preserved in Temple of Literature, Hanoi. See figure 2.

its budding culture populated by the emerging intellectual upper class, had finally come into its own, such that even the Ming, one of the most successful of all Chinese Dynasties, considered them worthy rivals.

In *Fire in the Lake* (1972), Fitzgerald recounts this tale:

“When a French steamship was sighted off the shores of Vietnam in the early nineteenth century (or so the story goes) the local mandarin-governor, instead of going to see it, researched the phenomenon in his texts, concluded it was a dragon, and dismissed the matter.” p. 12.

In summary, the main traits of the intellectual class of this epoch can be summarized as being formed by court mandarins or the upper class of society who were educated in the traditional system of learning centering on Confucian teachings. As such, the intellectuals tended to be resistant to change as it was their perceived responsibility to uphold tradition.

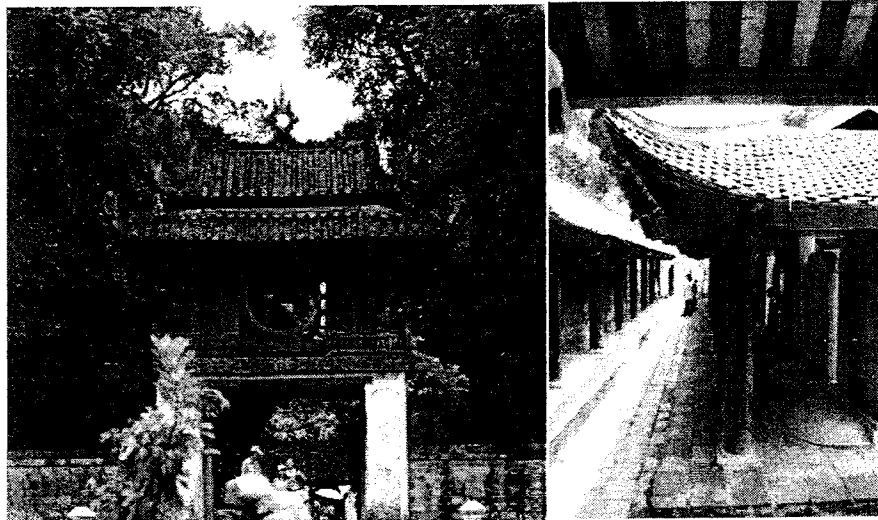


Figure 2. Temple of Literature and Steles of 'Tien Si' - Hanoi

b) French colonialism

In retrospect, it was an error of judgement on the part of the Vietnamese court to underestimate the potential threats posed by the French who came to Vietnam in the 16th

century. At first, all signs pointed towards a warm and welcoming attitude which the Vietnamese had shown all foreign merchants looking for an opportunity to trade. Indeed, Louis XIV of France penned a letter dated 10 of January 1681 to the Prince of Tonkin in which the “Sun King” expressed his great pleasure in having good relations with him, and that he wished to obtain protection for those who had embraced Christianity. But Louis XIV went further, saying “We are even quite convinced that, if you knew the truths and the maxims which it teaches, you would give first of all to your subjects the glorious example of embracing it”. The King of Tonkin replied: “As regards your wish that we should cooperate in propagating your religion, we do not dare to permit it, for there is an ancient custom, introduced by edicts which formally forbids it” (Brenda & Larkin, 1967, pp. 86-87).

The founding of the Nguyen Dynasty by Prince Nguyen Phuc Anh in 1802 would not have been possible without French assistance. On behalf of the Prince, a sympathetic French Bishop³³ secured with the French court an agreement to send an expeditionary force to assist the Prince in his power struggle (Karnow, 1983, p. 106). However, the agreement fell through because the Count de Conway³⁴ refused to execute the terms of the agreement (Ho, 2008; Buttinger, 1958). Had that agreement been carried out, France would have gained control of the port city of Faifo (present day Hoi An) and Con Lon island (Poulo-Condore) in addition to the monopolistic control of all trade which in effect would have made Vietnam a French colony much earlier and without resorting to force. Nonetheless, Ba-Da-Loc, as Pierre Pigneau de Béhane was known in Vietnamese, did secure a sufficient amount of arms and other important support from many French

³³ Pierre Pigneau de Béhane, Bishop of Adran

³⁴ Commander of French forces based in India.

military expatriates which enabled the Prince to conquer the whole country from the Tay Son brothers. But when religious persecution intensified under the reign of Minh Mang³⁵, who succeeded Gia Long, and continued into the Thieu Tri and Tu Duc's rule, the French decided to intervene. It must be noted that the persecution of Christians had begun earlier in the 17th century by various Vietnamese rulers who felt that Christianity was a subversive religion which sought to undermine the traditional belief system that they inherited from their ancestors. The decision to colonize Vietnam therefore had more to do with territorial expansion and imperialism, which had been the practices of European powers of the epoch, than with the persecution of Christians.

As it was, using the pretext of imprisonment and persecution of French missionaries as well as local Catholic converts, France invaded Vietnam with naval assault from 1858-62 and slowly gained control over parts of Vietnam and eventually succeeded in establishing direct rule over the country (Tran, 1971 [1929], pp. 202-235; Sardesai, 1992, pp. 33-44).

i. Epochal Characteristics:

In Buttinger's view, French domination of Vietnam was characterized as "systematic exploitation for the benefit of France" that was guided by the principle of putting "immediate profits before long-term economic considerations" (Buttinger, 1972) both in terms of people (labour) and natural resources. Heavy taxation policies were implemented, which prevented and often excluded the Vietnamese from owning property. Natural resources were depleted and agricultural land was used to grow crops for direct

³⁵ Prosecutions against the new religion has in fact started during the "Trinh-Nguyen phan tranh" period (in this period, Vietnam was divided into two parts, North and South reminiscent of the provision of the Geneva Accord in 1954, ruled by the Trinh Lord in the North and the Nguyen Lord in the South).

exports (Buttinger, 1958). Reinvestment was rare, if any took place at all, and evidence suggested that for the majority of Vietnamese, life under the French rule was reduced to peasantry and was worse than the living conditions one hundred years earlier (ibid).

French rule was “often incompetent, usually inconsistent³⁶, and regularly harsh” (Schulzinger, 1997, p. 4). The Nguyen emperor was allowed to continue occupying the palace in Hue, but France limited his power by controlling all taxation and had the final say in all matters. Election of local councils was permitted, but the actual power of these councils was limited. However, this allowed for the development of local elites who were intimately tied to the French rulers. This situation has some similarities with the distant past under Chinese domination where such an elite class emerged as a result of the close collaboration with the occupying power. These elites also took advantage of their position to benefit themselves (ibid: 6); such a situation led to a drift between local Vietnamese and Vietnamese elites, between those who cooperated with the French and those who remained opposed to such collaboration. The French deftly manipulated such divisions to consolidate their grip on power.

The common feature of colonialism was to subjugate the colonized people to a life of slavery³⁷, in order to fulfill the primary objective which was to maximize the exploitation of natural resources and labour and to transfer the wealth of the colony back to the homeland. Slavery and indentured life induced suffering and discontentment. The source of this discontentment lay even deeper than the apparent suffering borne by the

³⁶ Except for certain cities like Hanoi, Hai Phong and Danang where the French had direct rule, the rest of the country was under protectorate, which meant the Vietnamese mandarins still employed in the political system under the direction and supervision of the French colonial authority.

³⁷ The notoriously harsh and even deadly working conditions on rubber plantations, or the monopolistic practices of controlling the production of salt backed by threats of severe punishment are examples of life of “slavery”. In effects, the material production of the country is geared for the enrichment of the colonial masters.

disenfranchised Vietnamese, and that was the automatic disdain and resistance to any foreign domination; and for the first few decades of French rule this source of discontentment was kept in check by the sheer brutality of the French colonialists. At the end of the 19th century the arrival of the French Governor General Doumer generated a flurry of activities aimed at transforming the colony into a more prosperous place, financed by a loan of 200 million Francs from the French State (Tran, 1971 [1929]). Doumer and his successor, M. Beau, were credited with having improved the country's infrastructures, and the health-care and educational systems. The Doumer period saw a disruption of the traditional lifestyle as more and more peasants became landless labourers. Many ended up working in rubber plantations or coal mines where the working conditions were extremely harsh (Karnøw, 1983), or employed to build the railroad system, and various public projects initiated by Doumer at the time.

Nevertheless, the actions of these Governors were intended to make the colony more productive in the service of France rather than the improvement of the life of ordinary Vietnamese, and as such they did little to quell the tide of discontent that would rise to become waves of nationalism and anti-colonial movements.

Socially the century of French rule catapulted Vietnamese social structures into modernity by abruptly altering traditional arrangements (i.e., introducing a new system of learning and the social division between the Christians and non-Christians), and by infusing them with a hybrid social system organized according to Christian values rather than Confucian teachings (e.g., giving reverence to God rather than to the father of the family or ancestors). The contrast between the traditional lifestyles and the newly developed social structure was instrumental in the fragmentation of society whereby the

once cohesive structure of rural society had now been transformed into multiple segments based on creed, class and political affiliation. The Vietnamese had finally arrived at a crossroads in reference to their ability for cultural absorption. What resulted was a deeply divided society with a pro-modern, pro-French culture and ultimately pro-western ideas and values pitched against those who would fight to preserve the traditions of the past. Although Vietnam's experience with *capitalism* under French *colonialism* was painful, it however was crucial in germinating anti-colonial sentiments as well as in cultivating a strong sense of nationalism, which contributed to various national liberation movements that began in the early 20th century (Buttinger, 1972).

The final defeat of the French at the battle of Dien Bien Phu (1954)³⁸ marked the first time a colonized people were able to gain back independence by overthrowing colonialism by force. Following this extraordinary event, other colonies rose up against French colonial rule, such as those in Algeria and Cameroun. The decline of colonialism was imminent, and only two years later, the Suez crisis marked the official end to the era of colonialism (Schulzinger, 1997).

ii. Effects on Socio-cultural Transformation

The French considered the Vietnamese as a backward people to be "civilized", which they termed as "*mission civilisatrice*" (Laffey, 2000). As such, the notion of having the obligation to bring civilization to the colonies was shared by many in France, and other colonizing countries. At the forefront of this mission was the support given by the various organizations, namely the Chamber of Commerce from the city of Lyon, hence the phenomenon of Lyonnais Imperialism discussed by John Laffey (Laffey,

³⁸ This is a famous battle that is cited in most books written about Vietnamese history.

2000). Compared with French society of the time there was little doubt as to what the Vietnamese had to learn in order to keep up with the many political, social, cultural and technological developments that had propelled many European powers to attain a more advanced position. For many Vietnamese, especially the intelligentsia, the quick adaptation of French knowledge and culture would provide the way to disentangle themselves from the colonial yoke. This is not hard to understand since such adaptation helped to diminish the “differences” that provided legitimacy for colonial rule, the very “yoke” of colonial discourse, as well as furnished the Vietnamese with greater realization of their “advancing” position. This was the view pioneered by notable intellectuals such as Phan Chau Trinh, Pham Quynh, who advocated changes in social practices, i.e., polygamy and divorces, and lent support to the French effort in overturning Vietnamese laws which they considered as obsolete (e.g., polygamy was outlawed and divorce limited). In general there was some support for the modernization of society in terms of propagating modern ideas and values; however this was rather an exception, being one of the very few legacies of colonialism which may be regarded positively.

Unfortunately, the overriding concerns for economic gains outweighed other social considerations, because the real objective of colonialism was the transfer of wealth from the colonies to the colonizing countries. The Vietnamese also had ample opportunity to witness the brutality of the so called “civilized” people, thus there also existed an element of doubt as to the veracity and values of Western learning. This sentiment slowed down the process of transformation and provided common ground for unity among resistant forces.

The French also contributed to the deepening of the social and cultural differences between the three regions of Vietnam as a result of their administrative policy. Under French colonialism, the three regions were named Tonkin (North), Annam (Central), and Cochinchina (South). The differences in the regions could be recognized in dialects and cultural characteristics. However, they were subtle and often were not apparent to a “non-Vietnamese”³⁹. Using these regional differences to its advantage, French colonial power imposed different governing administrative bodies and treated each of the three regions as separate entities. The development of the young Vietnamese language was greatly affected by this polarization. Regional differences in dialects became more pronounced and led to the permanent fragmentation of Vietnam in terms of their ability to think of themselves as a whole. This problem persists until present day, though in some way it could be taken as a positive process for it serves to enrich and diversify an otherwise static culture.

iii. Culture of Learning and Status of the Intelligentsia:

It was not until the advent of French colonization (1858-1954) that Vietnam was forcibly introduced to a new system and method of learning, one that was taught in *French* and was more technical and scientific in order to help fuel the country's economy, and thus to benefit France (Furnivall, 1943 cf. Zink, 2009). Apart from the modest goal of teaching people to read and write, there were movements to send students abroad to study in various French universities and upon returning these educated Vietnamese played an important role in modernizing the system of learning which appeared to be backward and outdated. Some of these returnees found work within the colonial system,

³⁹ As a Vietnamese I can attest to this fact in terms of the differences in thinking and interaction.

but there also were those who did not condone the harsh treatment of the common people brought on by the French. They actively sought ways to change the existing structure, through various methods, thus becoming revolutionary leaders of the anti-colonial movements. And so long as they provided leadership, the masses followed; for it was deeply inscribed in the traditional social order of “SI, NONG, CONG, THUONG”⁴⁰; Si (intellectuals) were the most respected in Vietnamese social pyramid (Goodman, 1973).

The 19th century witnessed the emergence of Hegel, Comte, Marx, Nietzsche, Durkheim, Simmel, and Weber, to name a few (Ritzer, 1983), (there is little doubt that the growing recognition of sociology as a discipline was due in large degree to the works of Marx, Durkheim and Weber). Additionally, revolutionary ideas also emerged that were highly contested, as per Charles Darwin’s 1859 book “On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection”, and Marx’s Capital (1867). The growth in knowledge production in the West appeared to coincide with the growth in its economy. For instance, in France, the industrial sector has expanded enormously during 1870’s, creating increasing demands for overseas markets or “outlet for surplus goods” (Buttinger, 1958, p. 377) These demands were translated into France’s resolve to the total conquest of Indochina, which they succeeded in 1883 (Ibid.).

During the First World War, colonial administration sent 100,000 Vietnamese workers and soldiers to France (Buttinger, 1958) forming a sizable Vietnamese overseas community which led to greater understanding of France as a republic as opposed to the French colonial project on the part of the Vietnamese expatriates. After the Second World War ended in 1945, as the West was experiencing a crisis of self doubt (Thompson, 1968), the pressure to dismantle the old colonial order started to grow first

⁴⁰ Si: intellectuals; Nong: farmers; Cong: tradesmen; Thuong: merchants.

among progressive intellectuals, and later to the political class, or “writers and politicians, taking pains to dwell on the failures of French colonization”(Ibid. p. 441) in the words of Virginia Thompson, which created a favourable condition for students from the colonies to engage in various anti-colonial activities. One of them, though not a student, would become a leader of the world’s most successful anti-colonialist movement and in the hearts and minds of many, a father of the nation. His name was Nguyen Ai Quoc, who was later known as Ho Chi Minh (Duiker, 2000; Quinn-Judge, 2002).

As it was under colonialism, Vietnam finally had direct access to learning in the French school system right at home. Bright students were selected for further study in France, and some went privately at the expense of their families. Japan also attracted a large contingent of students at the urging of the prominent scholar and revolutionary Phan Boi Chau. These western-trained (Japan was also considered “western” to some extent) intellectuals upon returning presented a sharp contrast within the “Si” community, i.e., between themselves and those who were traditionally educated. In looking at the makeup of the old intellectual class⁴¹, as one scholar observes, it is not difficult to see the new Si class displacing the old ones; and as the usage of Quoc Ngu and French language becomes enshrined in the law, the old Si class is relegated to irrelevance, and thus the transition from the old learning system to the new one has been accomplished (Lam, 1967).

The one person, an intellectual, exemplifies the plights of the intellectual class during the colonial period was Mr. Nguyen Van Vinh (1882-1936). Despite being one of the most important reformers and educators who played a key role in promoting the

Vietnamese language at the turn of the twentieth century, Mr. Nguyen is not a household name in Vietnam, and as Goscha (2004) points out there has not been much written of him both in Vietnam and in France due to what Goscha terms the “complexity of colonial modernity”.

The post-1945 Vietnamese nationalist historiography considers Nguyen Van Vinh as a French collaborator, and as such his legacy is understandably nonexistent; whereas Nguyen Van Vinh’s glaring absence in French studies of Vietnamese literature, culture and colonialism is harder to explain (Goscha, 2004). From what one can gather, Nguyen Van Vinh was instrumental in the development of the modern Vietnamese language and a strong advocate for modernization of Vietnamese society through his essays, translation of literary works and his career as the early pioneer of Vietnamese journalism. The following abbreviated biography was taken from *nguyenvanh.net*, which I translated and corroborated with Christopher Goscha’s article.

Mr. Nguyen was born in Hanoi from a poor family of seven children; at the tender age of eight years old he was sent to work in a French translator-training school *Collège des Interprètes* (his work involves pulling two rows of fans to ventilate the class room). As he was always present in class when lessons were given, he displayed an extraordinary concentration and curiosity which attracted the attention of the headmaster. At the end of the 1893 school year, the headmaster, Mr. D’Argence, asked Vinh to take the exam, which he passed...Thereafter, the headmaster asked for a special scholarship on Vinh’s behalf, and the following school year Vinh was accepted into the program. Vinh graduated first in his class, and started his career as a translator for the French colonial government. From 1896-1906 he worked at various consulates, managed to start a

family, started teaching, writing, translating books, learning English, Chinese and the new Quoc Ngu language.

From March to August 1906, he went to Marseille, France to attend the Colonial Exhibition. He later visited Paris and while there he joined the Ligue des Droits de L'homme, and became the first Vietnamese to join a human rights organization. It was from this trip that Vinh deeply realized the precarious situation of Vietnam in general and the existing educational system in particular. Upon his return, Vinh resigned his government post and became an editor/publisher of one of the first Vietnamese newspapers, "Dang Co Tung Bao", and a few other magazines and newspapers. He helped send students abroad to learn and at the same time, advocated the use of the Quoc Ngu at home. He assisted in the founding of many schools, among them the famous "Dong King Nghia Thuc"⁴² which developed into a political movement. He called for the total abolishment the Chinese form of writing and other traditional customs and practices which he considered "anti-progress"⁴³. The King's edict in 1918 formally recognized Quoc Ngu as an official language was largely due to Mr. Nguyen van Vinh's effort.

Mr. Nguyen represents a bridge joining the cultures of the East and the West, and for that he stands alone, in my assessment, among the intellectual class of his time. It was largely due to his efforts that the transformation of the intellectual class from traditional to modern took place. He was not among the intellectuals who opposed colonialism through violent means; he was not aloof or being indifferent to the harsh reality of colonial rule; he was most certainly not a collaborator with French colonial

⁴² "Free School of Tonkin" which became the "centre of anti-French agitation" (Buttinger, 1958).

⁴³ In a series of articles published in 1907, Vinh did not mince words when he talks about the need for urgent reform in culture and education.

power. He stood together with the people and demanded changes, both from the colonial authority as well as from the people. Especially from the people, he urged them to learn, because without learning there could not be social progress. In a sense, he mirror what Du Bois demanded from the authority and the newly emancipated in America at about the same time.

In Du Bois' view, education is seen as much more important than merely to provide job training (Du Bois, 1999 [1903]). Du Bois points to the importance of learning, in particular higher learning, for black people after they had been emancipated in the late 19th century. In his book, Du Bois was especially critical of Booker T. Washington's program of "industrial education", calling it a "gospel of work and money". For Du Bois, it was perhaps more important to educate black people about life, who they are, and their potentials in order to help raise their level of consciousness and thus to help them emerge from behind the "veil" (Du Bois, 1999 [1903]). As mentioned, at the time of Du Bois' writing, Vietnam was still under French colonialism, and that the set of challenges faced by black people yearning for higher learning were different than their Vietnamese contemporaries. In the United States, the emancipated blacks faced discrimination and segregation, however, they were at least able to obtain an education because the educational system had been established – Du Bois himself was a Harvard graduate. In fact they could also set up their own universities (e.g., Tuskegee). The Vietnamese on the other hand, had to go to foreign countries, mostly France, to pursue higher education. Those that were fortunate to go formed a new intellectual class, many of them, after having absorbed new ideas and knowledge, became leaders of anti-colonial movements. We can therefore discern the division within the intellectual class (i.e., those

who worked for French colonial administration and those who belonged to the anti-colonial movements). To account for such division an explanation is required, and for this we turn to the Gramscian concept of the intellectual class.

According to Gramsci, intellectual class is divided into two categories: “traditional” and “organic”. The “traditional intellectuals” are classified as professionals based on their occupation (i.e., doctors, professors, and authors). They hold certain social status and position in society, and are often recognized by all members of different social classes. These intellectuals are considered “bourgeois class” intellectuals. The notion of “bourgeois” here refers not to the “functions” that intellectuals perform, rather it implies the ideas or agenda that they promote that are directly aligned with the interests of the ruling class (Gramsci, 1971). By contrast, “organic intellectuals” are “thinking and organising elements” from a particular class of society and are less distinguished by what they do (Gramsci, 1971, p. 3). These intellectuals are considered “working class” intellectuals and can be found in all classes of society - for according to Gramsci, “all men are philosophers”, that everyone has an intellectual capacity of his/her own and “functions” differently in society (ibid). To put it more simply, Gramsci aims to erase the notion of class that is often being attached to the definition of intellectuals. “Organic” intellectuals, in a general sense, act as mediators between the “traditional intellectuals” and the masses, to provide political and moral leadership, and to help raise the level of revolutionary consciousness (ibid). To be sure, Gramsci’s categorization of the intellectual class is an attempt to solve the theoretical problems posed by Marxist-Leninist doctrine concerning the concept of the intellectual class within the context of socialist revolution which points to a clear distinction between the intellectuals and the

“proletariat”. Nonetheless, it seems to me that the leadership role of the intellectual class to which Gramsci refers was vital to the task of modernizing Vietnamese society – an urgent task indeed, given that 90 percent of the population was illiterate at the beginning of the twentieth century⁴⁴. Furthermore, there is an issue with understanding the general attitude and relations of the intellectual class vis-à-vis the colonizers, which provide ground for their patterns of thinking and acting under French colonialism. To explain the complexity of this phenomenon, I draw on some concepts espoused by Bhabha (1994).

Ambivalence is one of the main concepts Bhabha uses to describe the antagonistic relationship between the colonizer and colonized subjects under colonial rule. This relationship is important to identity construction for both parties for they are interdependent, i.e., one relies on the other for its own existence (Bhabha, 1994). The identity of the colonizer, which becomes the ground for her/his authority, arises out of the “narcissistic demand” in how the colonizer should be addressed and that the *Other* “should authorize the self, recognize its authority..., its references and still its fractured gaze” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 98). Such demands when not met, Bhabha explains, becomes sites for “oppositional political impulses” and possible resistance when colonized subjects returned the “gaze” of authority in a challenging manner (Moore-Gilbert, 2000, p. 458). Bhabha refers to this as “mimickry” which has two functions: (1) as strategy of power that serves to “consolidate hegemony by inducing colonized subjects to imitate the forms and values of the dominant culture” (Moore-Gilbert, 2000, p. 459); (2) as strategy for resistance in that by acquiescing to the demands of the colonizers, the *differences* between the colonizer and colonized subjects disappeared, which undermines the identities of both parties since they are dependent on such differences for recognition and

⁴⁴ This figure was taken from the writings of Mr. Nguyen Van Vinh whose biography I translated above.

validation (ibid). The ambivalence nature of this relationship which requires constant negotiation creates what Bhabha calls the “third space”, an in-between space where the new identity (of the colonized subject) is constructed – one that it is a “hybridity” of the colonizer and the colonized – a kind of “bricolage/pastiche” that comprises of the “pick-and-mix” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 238).

Based on these ideas, we can see how tremendously difficult it was for the Vietnamese intellectuals to on the one hand, “mimick” the French and on the other hand, to retain their own identity. Moreover, they had to deal with the accusation of being “collaborators” from the general population. However, the fact that some intellectuals (e.g., Phan Chu Trinh and Nguyen Van Vinh) were able to take what they “mimicked” and used it to help “modernize Vietnam in a Western way” and in effect, helped put Vietnam on a par with the “modern world” (Goscha, 2004) was, in my view, one of the greatest contributions to Vietnamese society. The very nature of “ambivalence” in colonial discourse helped open a “third space” where the voices of the *other* could be heard. In my opinion, colonial discourse can be detrimental if it is applied for the wrong purpose (i.e., to serve the European colonial project). However, it can also be a great tool when use by the indigenous people, particularly the intellectuals, in that it helps foster progress by providing a point of reference and a sense of who they are (as perceived by an outsider).

c) The Vietnam War

As the French colonial power suffered its final defeat in the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the Geneva Conference was convened to decide on the future of the former French Indochina. The terms of the accord that followed effectively divided the country

into two Vietnams: the North or the DRV (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) received backing from the then Soviet Union and China, and the South or the RVN (Republic of Vietnam), received support from the U.S (Buttinger, 1972; Fitzgerald, 1972; Karnow, 1983; Kolko, 1985; Schulzinger, 1997). The U.S involvement in Vietnam and its subsequent military action were carried out in order to serve the U.S policy of “containment”, a measure to contain or stop the spreading of Communism, which the U.S feared was overtaking Asia. In addition, there was a growing worldwide support of decolonization. As stated in “A Time for War”, under the Truman Doctrine, “the U.S pledged to assist ‘free peoples’ everywhere ‘in maintaining their freedoms’” (Schulzinger, 1997, p. 39).

Foster (2006) has a different view of the U.S role in Vietnam. The Vietnam War, according to him, was engaged not so much to “contain” the spread of Communism, since there was no indication of the Soviet Union and China’s “global expansionary tendencies” and “third world revolutions” were pretty much “indigenous affairs” (ibid; 108). Thus, the U.S involvement in Vietnam shows its deep-rooted imperialistic tendencies, an inherent characteristic of capitalism, which “accepts no bounds to its expansion” and has been reflected in U.S foreign policy ever since (ibid; 109). Foster’s analysis of the war seems to be in agreement with supporters of anti-American Imperialism.

According to Buttinger (1972), the costs, casualties and destruction resulted from the war were as follows: in Vietnam alone, there were 3.6 million tons of bombs dropped - compared to 2 million tons dropped in World War II, and 1 million tons dropped during the Korean War. For the whole of French Indochina (including North and South

Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia), the total tonnage of bombs dropped was 6.2 million – an average of 300 lbs. of bombs per person in those three countries and 22 tons per square mile (ibid). Apart from the human casualties, Vietnam’s landscape also sustained tremendous ecological damage from bombs and napalm, and forests were defoliated (ibid). An approximate 72 million liters of herbicides were sprayed over 12% of forest area and 5% of agricultural land, which caused long-term health effects and made subsequent economic recovery more difficult (Beresford, 1988). American forces withdrew from Vietnam in 1972 having suffered more than 58,000 casualties; and in 1975 North Vietnam defeated South Vietnam. The country was now reunited under the Communist government of North Vietnam.

i. Epochal Characteristics:

The Vietnam War “helped shape the contours of world politics after the era of European domination” (Schulzinger, 1997, p. 3). Depending on one’s perspective, the politics of the Vietnam War can be viewed from different angles. On the surface it was a war to prevent the spread of Communism and to preserve the freedom of the people in the South. This view was propagated by the Americans and the South Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese on the other hand, maintained throughout the war that they had the obligation to fight for the reunification of the country, and that their war was a just war. For the Chinese and the Russians, aside from the obvious reason of political affiliation, they were in fact involved in another war, the Cold War with the US. Thus it was in their interest to help defeat the Americans right inside Vietnam for it would greatly damage the American prestige and image. To put it in Wallerstein’s words: “to keep the American hegemonic power in check” (Wallerstein, 2006). The defeat of the Americans in

Vietnam confirms the maxim that whoever has the time will eventually win the war. The Vietnamese had “time” on their side, for Vietnam was (and is) their country; they did not have a time limit per se in which they needed to “finish” and “get out”. The Americans on the other hand, could not afford to stay permanently and had to withdraw. The conclusion of the war signalled for the first time that Vietnam was now an independent nation in the complete sense of the word.

As with other wars in the past (e.g., World War I and II), the economic production process of the country was often disrupted, Vietnam was no exception. During the war, the economy of the North was geared toward supporting the war effort. The labour shortage resulted from general mobilization severely affected economic development. The North also suffered bombing and mining of Hanoi and the port city of Haiphong (Schulzinger, 1997; CIA, 1974) which caused considerable damage. Overall, it was quite obvious that the pace of economic development in the North was laborious and slow, and therefore massive external support was necessary. According to a declassified document, the total economic and military aid to North Vietnam from the USSR and China from 1968 to 1973 totalled 2.455 billion US dollars and 2.21 billion US dollars respectively (CIA, 1974). In the South, areas that saw heavy fighting were heavily devastated while the relatively unaffected large cities enjoyed an upgrade in their standard of living as the economy mushroomed with vast infusions of American aids and supplies. The economy of the South therefore continued to develop, and by the end of the conflict had become much stronger compared to the French era. As the economy of the South was completely dependent on the American commitment, its prosperity could be characterized as artificial. As Fitzgerald (1972) put it:

“A certain number are used to the luxuries of the West and the freedoms of a Western-dominated city. ..These new city people have no capital – most of the money the United States invested in Vietnamese officials and businessmen has flown to safer investments abroad – and they have no industrial skills. They are not producers, but go-betweens who have engaged in nothing but marketing and services. The American war has altered them and rendered them helpless.” (p. 434)

In both regions, the war created the propensity to depend on foreign aid. This was perhaps one of the most profound and long-lasting effects of the war since it had thwarted the sense of self-reliance and self-confidence of the people. And when the socialist experiment of the 1970's did not proceed according to plan (Duiker, 1985), it further destroyed the fragile sense of confidence already weakened. Indeed, many of today's economic problems can be traced to this phenomenon, and it is of vital importance that measures to reinstate that sense of confidence and self-reliance be carried out in practical terms, such as finding creative ways to deeply appreciate local creations and products, and at the same time assist the Vietnamese business community to overcome its reservations to compete on the world stage.

Socially in the North, the Marxist-Leninist ideology essentially abolished all forms of social classes, and various programs such as land reforms and collectivization further reinforced this ideology (Fitzgerald, 1972; Duiker, 1985). This represented a complete reorganization of the social structure hitherto known to the populace. In the South, it appeared that the spirit of *laissez-faire* capitalism has taken a hold of society, producing a vibrant entrepreneurial environment (ibid). The surplus of American dollars and the uneven distribution of wealth further underscored the division between the urban and rural population. The urban population was keen on adopting American culture and values, while the rural population remained in austerity (ibid). And for the duration of the war it appeared that the people of the South possessed but two sets of culture. The

sting of life under occupation and the desire for genuine independence drove many Southerners to go north during the grace period provided by the Geneva Accord. They would later form the National Liberation Front (NLF), a guerrilla force euphemistically known as the Vietcong⁴⁵ that fought both the Americans and South Vietnamese during the war (Fitzgerald, 1972; Truong, 1986).

ii. Effects on Socio-cultural Transformation

Even though the war created material and moral dependency on external sources⁴⁶, its effects lingered long after the war had ended. As mentioned earlier, a new social phenomenon of external dependency seemed to have been formed, i.e., a shift in attitude and the tendency to look for solutions to problems and challenges outside of one's own domain⁴⁷ (Fitzgerald, 1972). According to Fitzgerald, the war brought about "division and paralysis" among the lives of the Vietnamese and had created "social and economic chaos" (ibid, p.437). The lack of confidence and self-esteem leads to the fixation on anything foreign - therefore when faced with difficulties the Vietnamese tended to look to the outside first instead of trying to resolve issues from within⁴⁸. And despite all the best efforts of the new government there were many in the South who would not buy into the new reality. This attitude might have contributed to the exodus of

⁴⁵ In Vietnamese "Vietcong" simply means "Vietnamese Communist".

⁴⁶ Material dependency is self-evident, while moral dependency refers to the support given by the Communist allies to North Vietnam and to a lesser degree from the Americans to the government of South Vietnam.

⁴⁷ This change of attitude is in sharp contrast with Vietnamese culture in the past where they were independent and self-reliant.

⁴⁸ This is my own observation that I have deduced based on reading daily news about Vietnam as well as through my fieldwork interaction with the Vietnamese and field notes taken during my recent trip to Vietnam

perhaps millions of “boat people”⁴⁹ leaving the country in search of a better life elsewhere.

The early days of reunification also witnessed a slate of measures aimed at curtailing certain cultural and religious practices supplanted by more internationally celebrated events such as Labour Day, May Day, Women’s Day, etc. In the domain of arts and literature the dominance of the Party ideology was absolute. There was still art and culture but now it was firmly placed in the service of the State and the people. The “pre-1975” Vietnamese arts as well as “Western” (American) cultural expressions were strictly forbidden as they were thought to “weaken human emotions” and “demoralize” people’s way of life (Dat, 1995). In keeping with the pursuit of building socialism, Vietnam decided to follow a different path of socio-cultural development. This path seemed to diverge from the cultural practices of the past, taking Vietnamese society to an unknown, uncharted territory. Recently there has been a return of many traditional celebrations and festivals, and even some religious ceremonies are being encouraged. Perhaps this is an indication of profound changes that have occurred. As the war came to an end in 1975, the Communist North Vietnamese emerged victorious, and Vietnam has since remained a communist country. It is therefore important to render a brief exposition on Marxism-Leninism, the official state ideology.

Marxism-Leninism was developed by Lenin who adapted Marxian concept to the condition of Russia and led the country to its successful Bolshevik Revolution in 1917⁵⁰ According to Lenin, Marx’s vision of class consciousness in industrialized countries which he hoped would lead to a violent revolution and the eventual overthrow of the

⁴⁹ This term is widely-used in the English language to refer to the Vietnamese refugees who began to flee Vietnam in the late 70’s to seek political asylum.

⁵⁰ Source: New World Encyclopedia http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Info:Information_pages

ruling class and the downfall of the capitalist system was not successfully realized. He further posited that the imperialist/colonialist powers had craftily avoided such revolution by exporting their surpluses to the colonies in return for resources and raw materials. And although Marx did acknowledge the phenomenon of colonization at the time, he was not “concerned with the condition of the colonies” (Frank, 1978, p. 3). Neo-Marxist such as Andre Frank further argued that since “Marxist analysis of capitalist development has examined primarily the mode of production in the capitalist metropolis”, we therefore cannot “simply transpose Marxist categories from the interior of the metropolis to the interior of the colonies” (ibid: 5). Thus, instead of addressing the problem of class struggle only in industrialized countries as Marx did, Lenin dealt with the "colonial question", shifting focus to countries that have not yet experienced industrialization and calling for a revolution that included the intellectuals, who were to act as vanguard to lead the peasants (rather than the workers) to a revolution.

Another important aspect discussed by Lenin is his theory on new imperialism, which he described as “the highest stage of capitalism”, to explain the condition of advanced capitalist development. In Lenin’s view, the condition of over accumulation of wealth and capital in industrialized countries necessitates the need for these countries to go outside of their nation-states boundaries to seek markets and resources. More importantly, Lenin stressed the “interimperialist rivalry among the great powers” so that in their process of expansion, they no longer only seek to compete with one another but to monopolize the global markets (Foster, 2006, p. 71). Lenin referred to this as “monopoly capitalism”, the “highest stage of capitalism” in which alliances are formed

between the major players, i.e., large firms and financial institutions, to control and to dominate the state and the economy (ibid).

With regard to the Vietnamese colonial experience, Marxism-Leninism provided the theoretical and ideological foundation for various nationalist and anti-colonialist factions in the country during this historical process. Lenin's advancement of Marxism to accommodate the colonial and peasant question was crucial in helping the Vietnamese to achieve "revolutionary consciousness", which led to the eventual overthrow of French colonial power in 1954 (Kolko, 1985).

The Vietnam War provides yet another illustration to Lenin's theory on new imperialism. The American's involvement in Vietnam was not so much about capitalist expansion "in Vietnam" but more so about the geopolitical relations. As stated by Foster: "the objectives in Vietnam were dedicated to the maintenance of imperialism as a system" (Foster, 2006, p. 164) – thus, while the US publicly announced its commitment of support for the former South Vietnamese in their fight for freedom and democracy, and to prevent the domino effect of Communism, in reality it was strategically aligning itself between the two major world powers: China and Russia, in order to gain dominance and control over the Pacific Rim region. Once again, Lenin's theoretical claim lends credence to Vietnamese realization and understanding of the underlining purposes of the American's involvement in Vietnam, which served to heighten the sense of solidarity and "revolutionary consciousness" among the Vietnamese and helped them to prevail over the world's most powerful nation.

Marxism-Leninism has helped the Vietnamese to finally win their independence, and has remained the scaffolding on which Vietnamese society is built. In truth,

Marxism is taken as a science in Vietnam that serves to explain, not only all societal developments but also the very existence of the Vietnamese Communist Party (Fitzgerald, 1972).

iii. Culture of Learning and Status of the Intelligentsia:

During the war, a large portion of manpower and material resources in the North were devoted to the war effort (Van Arkadie & Mallon, 2003) that left little for the development of other social programs. Nonetheless the education system did receive some attention evidenced by the regularity of students being sent for higher learning in the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries. More fundamentally, the education system and its curriculum now reflected the new direction of learning, i.e., one based on the model of the Socialist state such as the Soviet Union and China (Zink, 2009). For this reason, the educational system in Vietnam developed in two different directions. In the South, the educational system tended to be more developed due to the abundance of resources generated by the influx of the American aid (Fitzgerald, 1972). The establishment of many major universities in the South, e.g., University of Hue, Da lat, Van Hanh, Can Tho, signalled the flowering of the Vietnamese educational system on the basis of diversity and complexity (Zink, 2009). The main difference between the newly created system and the one established during the French rule was that the Vietnamese had finally taken charge of the founding of the schools as well as devising the curriculum. The national language (Quoc Ngu) was also starting to mature and came into its own in the arts and literature as well as inside the education system. Compared to the North, southern schools were relatively open in attitude, providing a safe cover for anti-government protests. During this epoch, the aim of most students was not only learning

how to read and write, but to finish secondary education at a minimum, and perhaps to go on to post secondary learning. Many did indeed fulfill that lofty goal, and went on to enlighten the population.

The intelligentsia in this epoch was also divided on the question of loyalty and ideology. In the North, the suppression of the two independent newspapers – the Nhan Van and Giai Pham in 1958⁵¹ leading to the forced re-education or re-indoctrination of over 500 intellectuals (Hoang, 1964; Abuza, 2001) which effectively put a limit on intellectual freedom. In the South, one could find more diversity in opinion among the intellectual class. Protests against the government, e.g., the Buddhist protests against the Diem regime, or the student demonstrations against corruption, were common events (Fitzgerald, 1972). The American influence over the Southern regime might have been a contributing factor in the granting of individual rights and freedom. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the period from 1954 to 1975 was a period of growth in the southern learning culture, characterized by diversity and fostered by an atmosphere of openness and intellectual freedom.

d) *Doi Moi*

Immediately after the war, in an effort to transform Vietnam into a socialist state, many drastic measures were implemented. Policy decisions such as the creation of joint state-private enterprises in modern industry, collectivization of agriculture land and production, and bringing domestic circulation of goods under state control through state trading network and pricing systems (Beresford, 1988, p. 63) proved ineffective as they

⁵¹ This event is known as “Nhan Van-Giai Pham Affair”; some prominent writers and intellectuals have now been rehabilitated and their works published, most notably the poet Tran Dan, Hoang Cam, the philosopher Tran Duc Thao among others. Source: BBC Vietnamese.com , 22 January 2007.

generated conflicts of interest between three groups: individuals, cooperatives and the state (ibid; 115). Individuals because they lack the materials and incentives to produce; cooperatives because of the pressure from the state to produce more and sell for less; as the result, the state failed to achieve increases in the supply of goods and materials necessary for industrialization and export programs (ibid). In short, Vietnam's attempt at socialist transformation, following the Soviet model, (i.e., advancing society directly from colonialism and semi-feudalism to socialism without passing through a period of capitalist development) did not materialize and the country fell into a major economic crisis (Dahlstrom, 1988).

However, these were not the only contributing factors that led to the economic collapse, since the US led trade embargo effectively isolated Vietnam economically from normal trading relations with other Western nations (Kolko, 1997). Such a measure has been used repeatedly in the past to punish nation states, which necessarily means that it has to work. To better grasp the gravity of such a measure, one can think of some contemporary examples such as at the end of the Gulf War I, the sanctions imposed by the US and the UN against the Saddam regime, some claimed, resulted in hundreds of thousands of infant deaths due to the lack of such basics as milk and medicine (Pilger, 1999). Another example is the recent UN imposed sanctions against North Korea for carrying out missile testing in 2006 and again as recently as June 2009, designed to punish the North Korean government (Lederer, 2009), which could also endanger the lives of ordinary citizens.

In the mid 1980's, to counter the economic devastations and growing social unrests brought forth by the ill-fated policy, Vietnam embarked on the road to recovery

by embracing the economic reform policy of "*Doi Moi*", or "renovation" (Arkadie & Mallon, 2004; Grinter, 2006). *Doi Moi* was often dubbed as "the little sister of Perestroika", the "restructuring" policy adopted by the former Soviet Union under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev aimed at helping to arouse the sluggish Soviet's economy and an inefficient government system (Kobelev, 2007). Unlike *Doi-Moi*, Perestroika began with the adoption of "Glasnost" or "openness" policy that brought radical changes in the political and social spheres. In particular, Glasnost's goal was to counter Stalin's repressive system by encouraging "a more permissive atmosphere toward ideological challenge" as well as promoting the initiatives to think "outside of Marxism-Leninism", and to a greater extent, even "in opposition to it" (Turley & Selden, 1993). The Vietnamese policy of *Doi-Moi* on the other hand, focused mainly on economic reform at the onset, and favored a process of gradual changes and maintaining political stability (ibid). Thus, while the reform policy of *Doi-Moi* in Vietnam is seen by many as similar to the restructuring policy of Perestroika of the former Soviet Union, it differed significantly with regard to the sequence and pace of reform measures implemented.

As the official reform policy adopted by the Sixth Party Congress of the Vietnam's Communist Party (VCP) in 1986, *Doi Moi* has been a subject of study by scholars of various creeds over the past two decades. The corpus of works {e.g., Kolko (1997), Beresford (1988, 2008)} that has since emerged tends to view *Doi Moi* as a turning point in modern Vietnamese history - an event marking the start of the transformative process, which has catapulted Vietnam into the global economy. While the goal of *Doi Moi* was to reform the economy and to lead Vietnam towards market capitalism, the country's leadership was very cautious in pointing out the distinctive

character of Vietnam's "market economy", which was "Market Economy with Socialist Orientation" (Kolko, 1997); Turley & Selden, 1993). As will be later discussed, this economic hybrid, which some referred to as "state-initiated capitalism", produced a host of problems in both theory and practice, with which the VCP had to grapple then and continues to have difficulty resolving today.

Doi Moi was a comprehensive set of policy changes designed to stimulate Vietnam's stagnant economy resulted from the 30-year long war (1945-75), and to address the difficulties of the subsequent peacetime period in terms of the country's social, political, and human conditions (Kolko, 1997). In particular, the task of reunifying the two sides, North and South Vietnam, with very distinctive characteristics both in cultural practices and political ideologies at the end of the war, coupled with the leadership's hasty decision to engage in socialist transformation and the US economic embargo, made economic recovery not only challenging but economic growth almost impossible (Turley & Selden, 1993). For instance, the food output per capita took a plunge (from 273.9kg in 1976 to 238.5kg in 1978) in the late 70's when large scale agricultural cooperatives were adopted as part of the "socialist construction" (ibid:6). The situation became so serious that one of the Vietnamese Communist Party leader, Le Duan, tacitly admitted the failure of the party to "realize the difficulties and complexities of the advance to socialism from a primarily small production (read: private enterprise) economy" (Grinter, 2006) Thus drastic measures and a coherent strategy needed to be taken to save a bankrupt economy. Economic restructuring, or the reform policies of *Doi Moi* in this case, with which other socialist countries (i.e., those of the former Soviet Bloc) had experimented and had served as examples for Vietnam, was seen as *the* "way

out" of the country's worsening crisis and the only way to offer any hope at "catching up" to the rapid economic development of other neighboring countries (ibid). In the larger context, *Doi Moi* was also viewed as Vietnam's best opportunity, and even as *the* requirement to modernize and to integrate itself into the world economic community (ibid).

The principle goal of *Doi Moi* was to focus on economic development by opening up the country for foreign trade and investments (Nilan, 1999). Some of the major policy changes included the decollectivization of agriculture, elimination of state subsidies and price controls, abolition of internal checkpoints to allow for a free flow of market activities, a reduction of the State's restriction, and an increase in autonomy for private enterprises (Turley & Selden, 1993). The impact of these reform measures produced mixed results. On the one hand, Vietnam saw an influx of foreign investments in areas such as tourism, building construction, heavy and light industry and agriculture (Nilan, 1999), and on the other hand, *Doi Moi* intensifies economic inequalities between regions, class and different market sectors. For instance, regions that had more natural resources and capital were able to take greater advantages of the market economy. Similarly, households in urban areas, where there were more commercial activities, benefitted much more from reform than those in rural settings (Turley & Selden, 1993).

i. Epochal Characteristics:

Politically the conception of *Doi-Moi* can be found on both sides of the ideological divide. For left-leaning intellectuals, the yearning for a successful application of socialism had its origin during the Vietnam War, which epitomized the anti-systemic movement opposing the forces of US imperialism (Foster, 2006). In this regard, *Doi-Moi*

represents a set of corrective measures designed to avert the economic crisis, which had been engulfing the country since the end of the war. The decision to reform taken by the country's leadership revived a stagnant economy, thus enabled Vietnam to avoid the collapse that befell other socialist states of Eastern Europe in the early 1990s. And as long as Vietnam kept its adherence to certain principles of socialism while finding its own ways to balance the conflicting demands of modernization and social preservation, it would deserve continued support.

On the other side of the political divide, however, the American defeat in Vietnam represents a serious setback to the cause of American imperialism and the ideology of Neoliberalism. For them, *Doi-Moi* represents the vindication of the belief that the American involvement in Vietnam was somehow justified, since a socialist Vietnam has now been forced to change its economic alignment in order to be included in the capitalist world economy. *Doi Moi* also presents an opportunity for a new neoliberal experiment, "a laboratory for the introduction of a very different set of economic principles" (McCargo, 2004, p. 1) - much like Chile in the 1970s.

To both of these camps, *Doi-Moi* and the ensuing transformation of Vietnam's economy have largely been studied as localized events, as a case of drastic measures taken in response to a crisis. This view supports the argument that *Doi-Moi* was brought about only to fix what was deemed to be non-functional, rather than systemic in nature. In fact, it has also been suggested by some authors (Wurfel, 1993; McCargo, 2004) that reform efforts had commenced much earlier than 1986, but these efforts did not receive enough support within the VCP to be sustained; therefore they are now regarded as false starts. This observation seems to validate the point made above, i.e., reform measures

corresponded to the need to overhaul the economic system that had been applied since reunification in 1976, a mistaken policy as admitted by the party, which had produced less than the desired results.

Closer examination, however, reveals that a significant part of the economic problems that the socialist state of Vietnam confronted in the latter part of 1970s and early 1980s has not been of its own making such as inclement weather condition which affected agricultural production (Sardesai, 1992). And as David Harvey points out in *Spaces of Capitalism* the 1970s was the decade that witnessed the rise of neoliberal ideology in the UK and the US (Harvey, 2006, pp. 11-50). We learned of the famous slogan "TINA" - There Is No Alternative (Chang & Grabel, 2004, p. 1; Wallerstein, 2006, p. ix) – that captured the spirit of the decade. In Britain, Neoliberalism was spreading its influence on the global landscape, and globalization was the new creed to which, as they believed, there was no alternative. Against this background, it appears logical to conceive of *Doi-Moi* as a process designed to integrate Vietnam into the modern world-system under globalization, and not just as a shift in domestic economic policy. If this was the case, one should expect it to work in tandem with other measures imposed on Vietnam by various international organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank, in order to facilitate the transformative process.

ii. Effects on Socio-cultural Transformations

Under the World-system perspective (Wallerstein, 2006), *Doi-Moi* though conceived of as a domestic policy could be interpreted as the “peripheralization” of Vietnam under globalization. Accordingly, the need for market expansion and capital accumulation requires the core countries (with capital and technical advantage), to seek

out those in the periphery to exploit their subordinate position through measures such as the imposition of loan conditions or investments and trade demands. As such *Doi Moi* was not really a turning point, but a pro-systemic process of exogenous origin over which the Vietnamese would have little or no control. The question is how does globalization influence the socio-cultural processes of Vietnam? The picture is now becoming more apparent after 30 years of *laissez-faire* capitalism, below are a few examples:

In terms of demography: the drastic movement of people from the countryside to urban centers in search of employment opportunities in the new production zones created a demographic crisis, which had a profound effect on the quality of life and the environment in the urban centers. Furthermore, this also created a shortage of labour in rural areas, which in turn negatively impacted the overall production output (Dang, 1998; Lai, 1998).

In terms of income distribution: the wages set by the State are below any acceptable standard, resulting in increasing poverty for workers, while benefiting the owners/investors. These workers cannot contribute positively to the growth of the economy due to the low wages earned, thus further adding to the general degradation of the standard of living of the country as a whole⁵².

In terms of Structural Adjustment Programs demands by international lending institutions: the IMF and The World Bank are instruments of control. These institutions have been created to serve funding countries and not the countries they are supposed to help. There has been enough evidence to argue that many of the economic crises in the indebted countries happened as a result of demands made by the IMF or the World Bank

⁵² The current minimum wage in Vietnam is 650,000 dong per month or \$37.00 US (\$1US = 17,770 Vietnamese dong), starting 1/2009. Source: VN Express. (To put this in perspective: 1kg. of rice costs \$1 US).

with respect to the terms of the loans and the repayment of such loans. Joseph Stiglitz has written extensively on this question, and forcefully argued against some of the practices of these international lending institutions (Stiglitz, 2007). And being a former World Bank official as well as a Nobel Prize laureate in Economics, he certainly has the credentials to make the case⁵³.

In terms of the UN's Millennium Goals: my analysis has revealed that even during the Vietnam War, the education system of Vietnam has improved passed the point of merely achieving secondary education. In fact learning how to read and write would characterize the situation of the education system during the early French colonial rule. After a decade of socialist experiment, however, the situation of the school system has deteriorated to such a degree as to make these Millennium Goals applicable. The UN's Millennium Goals with respect to universal primary education is in reality a setback for a country that had once passed this mark of mediocrity.

iii. Culture of Learning and the Emergence of Vietnamese Sociology:

At the conclusion of the War, there was a surge of interest in higher learning in the North as students now no longer had to face the reality of war and more material resources could now be earmarked for education. In the South, the situation was in sharp contrast. In an effort to purify the educational system from "capitalist influence", the Communist cadres were charged with the task of "reeducating" the teachers from the old regime. Those who found themselves employed were paid well below the inflation rate, thus forcing them to "moonlight" with supplementary jobs. By the 1980's, the majority

⁵³ Many articles on Economic and Globalization can be found on his website: "josephstiglitz.com".

of these teachers had either resigned or fled overseas (Turley & Selden, 1993), creating a brain drain and a vacuum that proved impossible to fill.

The rapid economic growth of *Doi Moi* inevitably led to the need for new form of knowledge, skills, and qualifications. However, eight years into this reform period, the country's leadership recognized the slow pace of change due in large part to the lack of a qualified and trained work force (Duggan, 2001). Thus reform in education was deemed necessary and considered a national priority. As a result, the guiding principle:

"investment in education is investment for development" became the *modus operandi* and subsequently in 1994, Vietnam extended the policy of *Doi Moi* and officially implemented education reform measures. In an official government report, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) reiterated its commitment to education reform as followed:

"Renovation in education and training is an important part of the renewal of the state. The basic task of renovation in education is to shift from meeting the needs of a multi-sector, state-managed, socialist oriented market economy...Investment in education and training must be regarded as one of the main targets for development. Conditions must be created to allow education to serve socio-economic development more actively" (MoET 1995:14).

The initial strategy of education reform was aimed at reducing the number of subjects taught in school, (which totaled 13 subjects in one school day for a 6-day week), to make education more accessible to the population, and thus, more responsive to the demands and requirements of the labor market. This effort was followed by other changes such as building more schools and adding more teachers (Duggan, 2001). The effects of reform measures were apparent. For example, in lower secondary school (grade 5-9), there was a 100% increase in student enrolment rate between 1991/92 and 1997/98 academic year. In post-secondary education, similar results were also found: a

63% increase in university enrolment between 1999/2000 and 2006/07 academic year (MoET 2007). However, it should be stressed once again that the emphasis in post-secondary education was to train people for the job market. Thus, unlike the social sciences, language training and fields in engineering, computer science, and business management were increasingly promoted and sought after by students (Nilan, 1999).

To further its effort to improve the education system as well as the desire to join the world community, Vietnam adopted another program in conjunction with the UN: The Millennium Development Goals, aimed at helping poor countries in various aspects such as providing universal education and improving educational quality. One of the targets that this program aimed to achieve was to increase the net enrolment rate in primary school to 97% by 2005, which Vietnam nearly accomplished, and to 99% by 2010 (UN and MoET websites).

At the Seventh Party Congress, the intelligentsia was for the first time, included along with workers and peasants in an alliance that formed the basis of the Communist Party (Turley & Selden, 1993). As this event took place five years after the announcement of *Doi Moi* (the Sixth Party Congress), the leadership perhaps for the first time realized the important contribution of the intelligentsia in the successful implementation of government programs. In this context, it can be interpreted as the resurgence of the “Si” class in the social ladder.

After having conducted an extensive review of sociological literature, both in Vietnamese and English journals, it is important to point out that as far as the History of Vietnamese Sociology is concerned, there has not been any literature written about this subject nor any study conducted on the matter. Vietnamese sociology was given

permission to establish first in Hanoi (North Vietnam) in 1983, and more than a decade later in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly known as Saigon, South Vietnam) in 1997.

The birth of Vietnamese sociology is credited to the foresight of Professor Vu Khieu⁵⁴ (Trinh, 2003, p. 19)⁵⁵, the former Deputy Head of the Vietnamese Committee for Social Sciences, who led the effort to establish a Sociology Section at the Academy of Social Sciences in Hanoi in 1977 – two years after North and South Vietnam were reunited. In its initial stage, the sociology department was set up with less than 10 researchers, many of whom had backgrounds and trainings in fields *other* than sociology (ibid, p. 8). In 1978, sociologists were given the mandate to carry out research on "Social Aspects of Housing Issues", despite their lack of training and resources (ibid). During this period, housing issues and the problems associated with urbanization and population migration were some of the major concerns that the government of Vietnam was facing at the end of the Vietnam War.

These government-funded projects signaled for the first time, that social issues were systematically studied and analyzed in Vietnam using sociological tools and methods of inquiry. The study results provided the government with statistics needed for urban planning and housing programs. They also helped in formulating various social and economic policies at the time when the country was confronted with the enormous challenges and difficulties of the post war reconstruction and transformation of Vietnamese society. Furthermore, this database also became an important teaching tool

⁵⁴ Professor Vu Khieu is 93 years old and is the oldest member among the intellectual circle in Vietnam today. He is a prolific writer and is still very active with academic activities despite having no formal education beyond high school level.

⁵⁵ Professor Trinh Duy Luan is the current Head of the Institute of Sociology.

for Vietnamese sociologists as they tried to gather more support and recognition for the discipline (Trinh, 2003).

The need for more sociological expertise was soon realized and from the period of 1978-83, foreign social scientists, mostly from the Soviet Bloc countries, were invited and brought into Vietnam to give lectures and provide research training for the country's budding sociologists (Trinh, 2003). In short, the genealogy of Vietnamese sociological tradition is traceable to the influence of the former Soviet Union and the now defunct Eastern Bloc, which is in perfect alignment with Vietnam's political and ideological affiliations.

One major step forward for the development of sociology in Vietnam took place in September 1983 when the country's leadership granted permission for the establishment of the Institute of Sociology (IoS) in Hanoi, following a promulgation of the Decree No. 96/HDBT of the Ministerial Council (Trinh, 2003, p. 9). This same Decree also gave birth to the establishment of the Institute of World Economics and Politics (IWEP)⁵⁶, the South East Asian Institute, and Institute of Traditional Culture. This suggests that social change in areas of economic, society and culture was anticipated by the Vietnamese leadership in tandem with the *Doi Moi* economic reform policy. Information gathered through the IoS website indicates that the Institute of Sociology is not an independent institution, but rather operates under the shadow of the Vietnamese Social Science Committee, which oversees other disciplines such as literature, history and economics. The fundamental mission of IoS is stated as follow:

“To carry out sociological research, contributing scientific foundations for the development of socio-economic policies and social administration of the government and Communist Party;

⁵⁶ Source: <http://www.rsis-ntsasia.org/people/members/member-iwep-vn.html>

To provide postgraduate education in Sociology, according to the government decision and regulations of Ministry of Education and Training, contributing to the development of sociology in Vietnam;
To provide consultancy services relating to sociological knowledge and methods" (Trinh, 2003)⁵⁷

The implementation of the economic reform policies of *Doi-moi* in 1986 was a major historical transformation for Vietnam that greatly influenced and affected Vietnamese society. Scientific research, particularly in the social sciences, was deemed critical and vital to the overall development of the country (Dahlstrom 1988) especially since the fast pace of social change presented the country's leadership the challenges and demands that were not fully anticipated. Such challenges and demands stemmed not only from the country's own population but also from international aid from donors and foreign investors, who by virtue of their investments, were in a greater position to exert influence in economic policy and investment programs (Beresford, 2008). This realization was reiterated at the 6th Party Congress in 1986 when the country's leadership set out:

"To bring into full play the motive force of science and technology: to closely combine social sciences and technological sciences: all scientific and technological work must be geared to implication of objectives of economic and social development, of natural defense and security..." (Vietnam Weekly, Dec.1986, pp. 6-7).

As sociology gained more recognition and support, exchanges and co-operations with the external scientific community, particularly those working for international agencies and NGO's were also encouraged. Thus the Sociological Review was set up in 1983, about the same time with the establishment of the IoS, to help these efforts (Trinh, 2003). Some of the earliest works published in the Sociological Review were theoretical

⁵⁷ English translation taken from IoS website:
http://www.ios.ac.vn/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=96&Itemid=69&lang=english

articles concerning the role and position of sociology in Vietnam's social science system. Moreover, due to the fact that sociology was still a relatively unknown field of study and was often (and still remains) misunderstood as *social work*, much effort in these early writings was also devoted to providing the definition, the description, and the task of sociology.

Notwithstanding the relatively brief history of Vietnamese sociology and the challenges and difficulties that Vietnamese sociologists face, the discipline seems to be showing signs of promise. At the Institute of Sociology, many research projects are being conducted by Vietnamese sociologists, and collaborations with sociologists and institutions from the West are encouraged. In its website, the IoS stated its mission as follow:

“to push up and enhance human resource training by selecting and assigning young researchers for post-graduate study in Australia, USA, Sweden, Japan, and France. That is good opportunities for Vietnamese sociologists to gain contemporary sociology knowledge from developed countries. These high-skill research staffs trained in many different countries have opened new prospects for the IOS's research activity, improved research quality, expanded international cooperation with many research projects supported by international organizations” (IOS website)⁵⁸.

The inception of sociology in Ho Chi Minh City began in 1995 when sociology courses were taught under the auspices of the Philosophy Department at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH), one of several affiliated members of the Vietnam National University (USSH website). As Vietnam continued on its path of economic development and social transformation, the demand for greater knowledge and understanding of Vietnamese society also grew. This in turn strengthened the position of sociology as more Vietnamese university students became interested in sociology and the

⁵⁸ This is a direct quote as written on the IoS Website.

rate of enrolment also began to grow. Faced with this increasing demand for sociology, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), in a Decree No. 67788/KHTC, granted permission for the USSH to *develop* the undergraduate sociology program in October 1995 (ibid). More than one year later, in January of 1997, sociology was allowed to be separated from the Philosophy Department and was granted an independent status within the USSH. A major turning point for sociology in the South took place on the 26th of December, 1998 when the discipline was finally recognized as a field of study in university and was *officially* institutionalized and implemented in a Decree No. 438/QD/DHQG/TTCB (ibid).

While the development of sociology takes a form of an institution in the North, sociology in the South takes a different path of development. Since its almost unnoticeable beginning that included only one person in 1995, Dr. Tran Chi Dao, the department of sociology in Ho Chi Minh City has shown a steady increase in its successful training of students at all three levels: B.A, M.A, and Ph.D. In 1998 for example, the department produced a total of 5 graduates. Four years later in 2002, the number of graduates increased to 15. In 2003, 16 students had graduated with sociology degrees. The number continued to increase to 20 in 2004 and 22 in 2005. Last year (2008) however, the number of graduates dipped for the first time, to 19. A possible explanation for this drop may be attributed to the lack of resources that the institution is facing, particularly for a discipline that is still struggling to establish itself and its position among the many fields of study which are still considered more “practical” to a majority of Vietnamese students. Another possible reason may be also due to the relocation of students to Hanoi in order to continue their studies at the IoS, an institute which

specializes in research and training students only at the M.A and Ph.D levels (IoS website). This information cannot be confirmed until fieldwork and interviews can be carried out in Vietnam, however that is beyond the scope of this thesis therefore further research is necessary.

In line with other Communist countries such as China, Vietnam places great emphasis on using its education system which the leadership considers to be the most effective venue to promote the country's political ideology (Nguyen, 2002). Articles published in the social science journals reflect this trend as they "contain more political documents than West-European social science journals" (Dahlstrom, 1988). In addition, these journals also embrace the views of social scientists from the former Soviet bloc countries, which support the policy and position of these countries, while condemning the "imperialistic and expansionistic tendencies of USA and China"⁵⁹ (ibid). Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the collapse of the socialist systems, for ideological reason, Vietnam would understandably gravitate towards the Chinese sphere of influence.

In Ho Chi Minh City, even though sociology has a much more recent history that began more than a decade later than sociology in Hanoi, the discipline shows great promise and a strong commitment from the faculty to move forward. Evidence from the department's "Stated Mission" indicates that apart from the obvious task of further development through active recruitment and training of more Vietnamese sociologists, there is also the need to adapt and adopt a more "updated" approach both in theory and in methods of conducting research in order to be more "in-tune" with the 21st century

⁵⁹ There was a brief border war between China and Vietnam in 1979, during which the Vietnamese accused China of pursuing an expansionist policy. Relations between the two countries have been normalized and such language has been forgotten.

scientific community and to better understand and provide explanations of “current” social issues in Vietnam (USSH website). This information did not clearly state as to what “standard” it was referring. One can only assume that perhaps it would be “western sociology” since the discipline is considered a “western import”.

The brief overview of Vietnamese sociology indicates that unlike western sociology which is deeply rooted in diverse philosophical traditions, sociology in Vietnam is not based on the same philosophical foundation, inheriting instead the state ideology of Marxism-Leninism. Vietnamese sociology is thus cannot be said to have developed different “school of thought”. Furthermore, Vietnamese sociology is shown to exhibit traits that are purpose-driven and deterministic in nature, due to its role as an advisory body for the State where studies are used to inform decision-making process.

CHAPTER 6: SAMPLE COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

a) Content Analysis

i. 1982 - 1986

Table 1a. Frequency Distribution of Articles Published 1982 - 1986

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	% Change From Previous Year
1982	12	3.9	3.9	-
1983	65	21.2	25.1	441.7
1984	65	21.2	46.3	0.0
1985	92	30.0	76.2	41.5
1986	73	23.8	100.0	-21
Total	307	100.0		

The above table shows the frequency distribution of all articles published by Vietnamese authors from 1982 through 1986. The year 1986 was chosen as the cut-off point due to the fact that the economic reform policy of *Doi-Moi* was adopted in Vietnam in the latter part of that year, signalling the beginning of a very important and profoundly transformative process. It is interesting to note also that although sociology was established in 1983, some authors began writing a year earlier. One has to wonder about the background and training of these early authors, as well as the nature and content of their texts, given the fact that Vietnam had not even implemented sociology as a separate academic discipline in its system of universities and colleges. The development of sociology, as reflected in the amount of published articles, made a significant jump in 1985 when the number of published articles increased from 65 articles in the first two years of the establishment of the discipline (1983 and 1984), to 92 articles – an increase of more than 41%. After this initial growth, the production of articles in 1986 saw a significant drop: from 92 articles down to 73 articles, or a 20% decrease in production compared to the previous year.

Table 1b. Areas of Concentration of Articles Published 1982 - 1986

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
CULTURE	66	21.5	21.5
DEMOGRAPHY	94	30.6	52.1
DEVL P/POLICY	24	7.8	59.9
EDUCATION	4	1.3	61.2
INTL SOCIOLOGY	8	2.6	63.8
MASS MEDIA	3	1.0	64.8
METHODOLOGY	10	3.3	68.1
SOCI NEWS	2	.7	68.7
SOCI. RESEARCH	2	.7	69.4
SOCIAL PROBLEM	6	2.0	71.3
THEORY	54	17.6	88.9
VN SOCIOLOGY	23	7.5	96.4
YOUTH	11	3.6	100.0
Total	307	100.0	

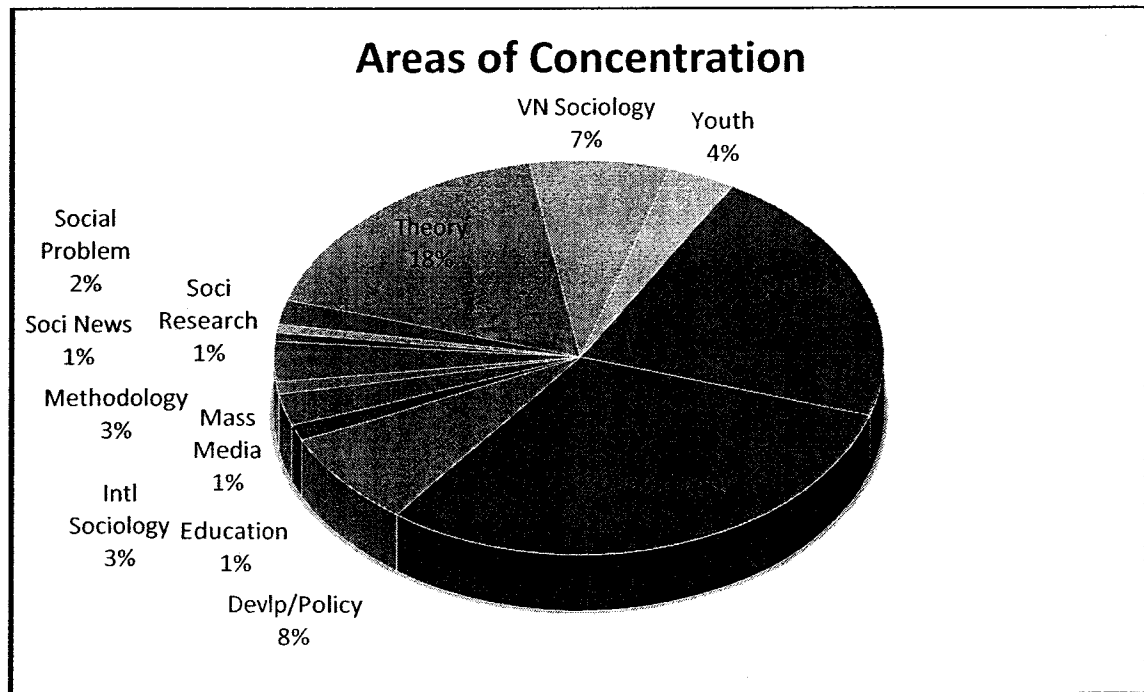


Figure 3. Areas of Concentration of Articles Published 1982 - 1986

Table 1b shows that “Demography” was the first main area of concentration with 94 articles, making up 30.6% of the total production in this period. The area of “Culture” had the next largest number of articles published with a total of 66 articles or 21.5%. And finally, “Theory” was the third main area of concentration with 54 articles or 17.6%. The focus on “Demography” is not hard to explain since from the moment of its inception, sociology was given the mandate from the government to conduct such studies. Furthermore, the fact the Vietnam had just come out of the war, it is expected that population movement would be a common issue.

When looking at these same three main areas by year, table 1c below indicates that 1985 was the year that had the most number of articles published in both “demography” (36 articles) and “culture” (29 articles). Correspondingly, 1986 comprised of 24 articles in “demography” and 10 in “Culture”. And 1984 also showed relatively similar results with 19 and 12 articles respectively. However, in the area of “theory”, 1984 had the most number of published articles with 17 in total, followed by 14 articles in 1986, and finally 13 articles in 1985. If we consider these numbers in relation to the total number of articles published in each of those years, the difference is quite significant. For instance, 17 out of 65 articles published in 1984 concentrated on “theory” which makes for a total of 26%. In 1985, 13 articles out of 92 translate to 14%; and finally in 1986, 14 out of 74 articles focused on “Theory” equates to 19%. As can be seen, “theory” played a very prominent role in Vietnamese sociology in this early period.

One possible explanation for this is that “theory” is regarded as foundational and fundamental to the formation of an academic discipline, particularly one that draws significantly on theory to study and analyze social phenomena. Thus in order for a

discipline to develop and advance, sociologists needed to have firm backgrounds and a solid understanding of theory. Another possible explanation is that due to the one-party system which requires Vietnam to follow Marxist-Leninist doctrine exclusively, and the fact that the country was in a “rebuilding” phrase⁶⁰, “theory” might have been considered of greater importance in terms of providing explanations which needed to be widely disseminated both in educational institutions and to the wider population.

To the adherents of world-system perspective however, the strong emphasis on theory during this period seems to indicate that Vietnamese sociology has not undergone the transformative process that was starting to take root in the economy. It should take a few more years for the changes to reach the social sphere of education and research.

Table 1c. Areas of Concentration by Year of Publication 1982 - 1986

	PUBLICATION YEAR					
	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	Total
CULTURE	1	12	14	29	10	66
DEMOGRAPHY	3	19	12	36	24	94
DEVP/POLICY	1	4	7	3	9	24
EDUCATION	0	0	3	0	1	4
INTL SOCIOLOGY	1	3	2	0	2	8
MASS MEDIA	1	1	0	1	0	3
METHODOLOGY	0	3	1	1	5	10
SOCI NEWS	0	0	0	1	1	2
SOCI RESEARCH	0	0	1	0	1	2
SOCIAL PROBLEM	0	1	1	2	2	6
THEORY	1	9	17	13	14	54
VN SOCIOLOGY	3	10	4	3	3	23
YOUTH	0	3	3	3	1	11
TOTAL	12	65	65	92	73	307

⁶⁰ After the war ended in 1975, North and South Vietnam were reunited under one-party system, the Vietnamese Communist Party. This was not an easy task as many scholars (e.g., Kolko) have pointed out as South Vietnam had been living under “democracy and capitalism” with the French and American.

Table 1d. Prominent Authors by Areas of Concentration 1982 - 1986

	CULTURE	DEMOGRAPHY	DEVL/POLICY	EDUCATION	INTL SOCIOLOGY	MASS MEDIA	METHODOLOGY	SOCI NEWS	SOCI RESEARCH	SOCIAL PROBLEM	THEORY	VN SOCIOLOGY	YOUTH	Total
VŨ, KHIÊU	16	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	4	-	31
TAP CHI XHH	-	3	-	-	2	-	2	-	1	-	4	9	-	21
ĐANG, CANH KHANH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	11
CHU, KHAC	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	6
PHONG XHH ĐT	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
NGUYEN, HOANG MAI	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	5
NGUYEN KHANH TOAN	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	5

Table 1c is the break-down of research concentration per year in the five year period from 1982 – 1986. The statistics show that three areas were most prominent: Demography with 94 articles followed by Culture with 66, and finally Theory with 54 articles in total. Table 1d is a cross tabulation of most prominent authors by areas of research concentration. Here the table shows that author Vu Khieu, one of the most prominent intellectuals in Vietnam, was most active with 31 articles published. The Tap Chi Xa Hoi Hoc is second with 21 articles. However, this was a special issue put together by the Institute of Sociology (IoS) that comprises the work of many authors whose names were not specified and thus it was not possible to determine which author(s) contributed the most. Dang Canh Khanh was the third most prominent author with 11 articles published, all of which focused on theory.

Table 1e. Frequency Distribution of Prominent Authors 1982 - 1986

	Frequency	% of Total Publications
Vũ, Khiêu	31	10.1
Tạp Chí Xã Hội Học	21	6.8
Đặng, Cảnh Khanh	11	3.6
Chu, Khắc	6	2.0
Phòng XHH Đô Thị	6	2.0
Nguyễn, Hoàng Mai	5	1.6
Nguyễn, Khánh Toàn	5	1.6

Table 1e shows the most prominent authors with their published articles. Author Vu Khieu ranks first with 31 articles, followed by author Dang Canh Khanh. The latter author concentrates his writing mostly in the area of “Theory” while author Vu Khieu focuses on “Culture”. As was previously mentioned, Professor Vu Khieu is considered the founding father of Vietnamese sociology who has deep concerns for Vietnamese culture and history. In a recent address at a conference organized by the UN, he stated that “culture has not only been a factor in development but also a *sin qua non* for the survival of a nation”⁶¹ At the time of this study, these two authors are most prominent members of the IoS in terms of their contributions to the Vietnamese Sociological Journal, and thus can be said also to the foundation of Vietnamese Sociology.

⁶¹ Source: <http://www.unesco.org/dialogue/delhi/khieu.html>

ii. 1987 – 1996

Table 2a. Frequency Distribution of Articles Published 1987 - 1996

Publication Year	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	% Change from Previous Year
1987	20	4.1	4.1	-
1988	25	5.2	9.3	25.0
1989	63	13.0	22.4	152.0
1990	57	11.8	34.2	-9.5
1991	27	5.6	39.8	-52.6
1992	47	9.7	49.5	74.1
1993	60	12.4	61.9	27.7
1994	63	13.0	74.9	5.0
1995	47	9.7	84.7	-25.4
1996	74	15.3	100.0	57.4
Total	483	100.0		

Table 2a shows that 1996 was the most active year for Vietnamese sociologists in which 74 articles were published, making up a total of 15.3% for the period covering 1987-1996. The total number of articles published in 1996 is almost the same with the total articles published in 1986. Comparing the total production in 1986 (73 articles – shown in table 1a), there was a significant drop in 1987 (20 articles). One reasonable explanation for this was the fact that changes in Vietnamese society under the banner of *Doi Moi*, were not yet immediately felt, and possible the lack of statistics for sociologists to work with also contributed to the sizable decrease in the number of articles published.

In 1991, once again there was another anomaly in production -- a drop from 57 articles to 27 articles. The collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 was a major turn of events for Vietnam since the two countries shared a common political system and were close ally. Thus it was not difficult to understand the effect that it had on Vietnamese society.

The year 1996 was seen as a significant marker for Vietnam that marked the ten-year anniversary of *Doi Moi*, Vietnam's admission to ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and the lifting of US embargo, all of which could be seen as the deepening of Vietnam's integration into the wider political and economic community. The increase in publication of Vietnamese sociologists for this year was likely a reflection to changes in Vietnamese society due to these historical processes. This was followed by 1989 and 1994 both years with 63 articles or 13%. Finally, the years 1990 and 1993 had the most number of articles published at 57 and 60 total, or a similar 12% for each year.

Table 2b. Areas of Concentration of Articles Published 1987 - 1996

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
-	1	.2	.2
CULTURE	36	7.5	7.7
DEMOGRAPHY	183	37.9	45.5
DEVELP/POLICY	87	18.0	63.6
EDUCATION	3	.6	64.2
INTL SOCIOLOGY	6	1.2	65.4
MASS MEDIA	2	.4	65.8
METHODOLOGY	18	3.7	69.6
SOCI. RESEARCH	6	1.2	70.8
SOCIAL CHANGE	2	.4	71.2
SOCIAL PROBLEM	31	6.4	77.6
THEORY	75	15.5	93.2
VN SOCIOLOGY	28	5.8	99.0
YOUTH	5	1.0	100.0
TOTAL	483	100	

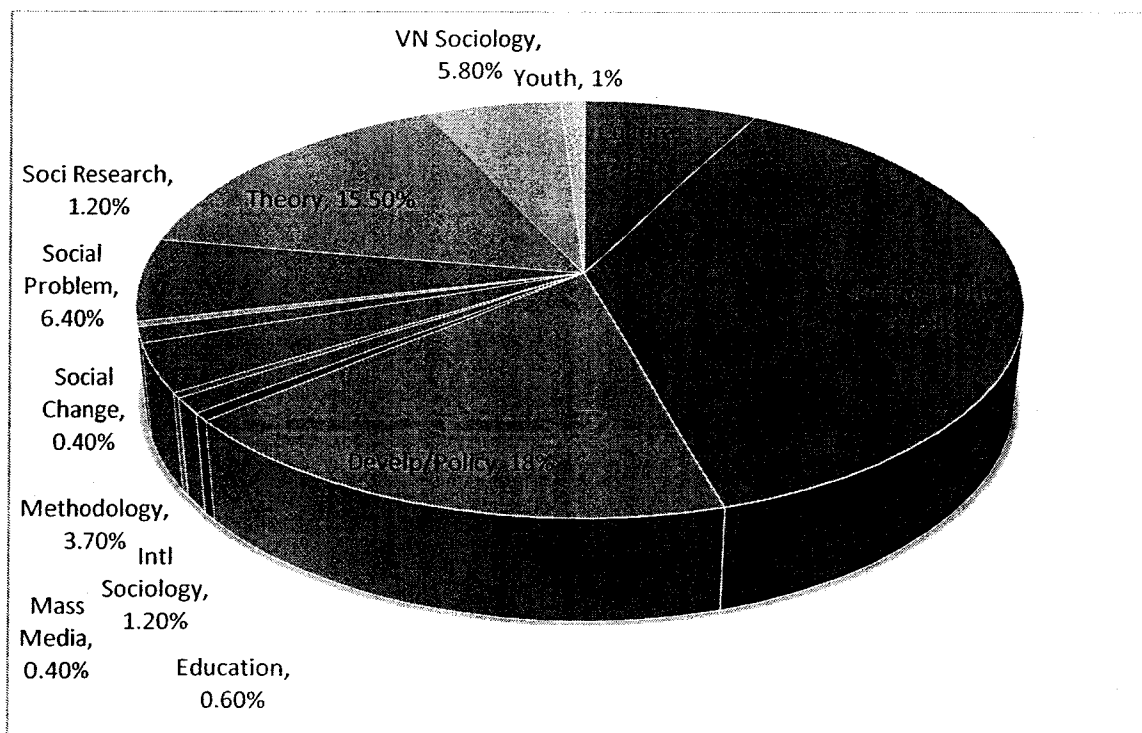


Figure 4. Areas of Concentration of Articles Publish 1987 - 1996

Table 2b shows once again that “Demography” is still the most concentrated area of research with a total of 183 articles, making up 40% of the total. Development/Policy” is next with 87 articles or 18%, and finally, “Theory” occupies third place with 75 articles for a 15.5% total. It is worthwhile to note that the three areas: “Education”, “Mass Media”, and “Social Change”, all received almost no attention at less than 1%. The lack of research in these areas indicates the political climate of a one-party system which does not allow dissent or differences in opinions. Therefore, the reason for the neglect of the topic “mass media” can easily be understood. As for “Education”, Vietnam began to implement education reform measures in 1994 as part of the *Doi Moi* strategy, thus the educational system was undergoing changes and there could have been insufficient records for research purposes. In the area of “Social Change”, Vietnam’s official ideology of Marxism-Leninism serves as a credible explanation for its neglect. According to this ideology, Communism, which is the final stage in the evolution of human society, requires the creation of a classless society where everything is collectively owned and everyone enjoys an equal share of wealth and resources. “Change” would counter such a utopian ideal, and therefore, this area of research might not have received much attention.

Table 2c. Areas of Concentration by Year of Publication 1987 - 1996

Keywords primary * Pub Year Crosstabulation											
	Publication Year										
	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	Total
-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
CULTURE	1	4	5	9	2	1	3	3	3	5	36
DEMOGRAPHY	3	5	22	24	14	25	23	31	18	18	183
DEVLP/POLICY	3	7	12	13	7	6	12	8	8	11	87
EDUCATION	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	3
INTL SOCIOLOGY	1	-	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	6
MASS MEDIA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	2
METHODOLOGY	1	3	3	2	1	2	-	5	1	-	18
SOCI. RESEARCH	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	1	2	6
SOCIAL CHANGE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
SOCIAL PROBLEM	-	-	1	1	-	-	11	6	3	9	31
THEORY	9	4	14	4	-	6	9	3	11	15	75
VN SOCIOLOGY	1	2	4	3	2	3	-	4	2	7	28
YOUTH	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	5
TOTAL	20	25	63	57	27	47	60	63	47	74	483

Table 2c illustrates that apart from 1987 and 1988, the number of articles on “Demography” all falls under double digit numbers, indicating that it is an area of research that is of great concern to Vietnamese sociologists. An interesting case to note here is in the area of “Theory”, there was no article published in 1991. This can be reasonably attributed to the historical event of the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, which was very much a shock to the Communist world and the theory of Marxism-Leninism was essentially placed under fire. It is understandable that Vietnamese sociologists would shy away from discussing the very foundation of the political system, and may have just resorted to the “wait and see” mentality. Additionally, the overall scholarly output of sociologists also slowed down considerably to 27 articles total, compared to other years in this historical epoch, which saw a steady progression in production since 1987.

The drastic decline in ‘theory’ articles coupled with the increase in demography demonstrate the emergence of social issues connected with market economy, which are precisely the predicted outcomes of neoliberal policy.

Table 2d. Frequency Distribution of Prominent Authors 1987 - 1996

	Frequency	Percent
Tương Lai	24	5.0
Phạm, Bích San	13	2.7
Trịnh, Duy Luân	11	2.3
Nguyễn, Đức Truyền	9	1.9
Bùi, Thế Cường	8	1.7
Tô, Duy Hợp	8	1.7
Đỗ, Minh Khuê	7	1.4
Đoàn, Kim Thắng	7	1.4
Mại Văn Hai	7	1.4
Vũ, Tuấn Huy	7	1.4
Đào, Thế Tuấn	6	1.2
Đỗ, Thái Đồng	6	1.2
Mai, Quỳnh Nam	6	1.2
Nguyễn, Quang Vinh	6	1.2
Tôn, Thiện Chiêu	6	1.2

Table 2d. Points to Tuong Lai as the most visible author with 24 articles published in this period, follows by Pham Bich San with 13 articles, and Trinh Duy Luan with 11 articles. It is important to note that this list was reduced to include only authors who contributed 6 articles or more. There were many authors who published only one article in this period thus indicating that these authors are likely not involved in sociology on a full time basis and that their academic background and training might not have focused on sociology.

iii. 1997 – Present

Table 3a. Frequency Distribution of Articles Published 1997 - 2007

Publication Year	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	% Change From Previous Year
1997	66	12.6	12.6	-
1998	60	11.4	24.0	-9.1
1999	47	9.0	33.0	-21.7
2000	51	9.7	42.7	8.5
2001	53	10.1	52.8	3.9
2002	41	7.8	60.6	-22.6
2003	52	9.9	70.5	26.8
2004	37	7.0	77.5	-28.8
2005	43	8.2	85.7	16.2
2006	51	9.7	95.4	18.6
2007	24	4.6	100.0	-52.9
Total	525	100.0		

Table 3a illustrates that 1997 and 1998 have the most number of articles published with 66 and 60 total. The year 2004 shows a decrease in the number of publication with 37 articles total. In 2007, there are only 24 articles published. However, this is largely due to the fact that at the time of my sample collection, the IoS was still working at uploading its collection starting from the earliest year, thus not all of the most recent articles were yet made available on the IoS website.

Table 3b. Areas of Concentration of Articles Published 1997 - 2007

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
CULTURE	31	5.9	5.9
DEMOGRAPHY	133	25.3	31.2
DEVL/POLICY	142	27.0	58.3
EDUCATION	6	1.1	59.4
GENDER	6	1.1	60.6
MASS MEDIA	7	1.3	61.9
METHODOLOGY	18	3.4	65.3
SOCI. RESEARCH	1	.2	65.5
SOCIAL CHANGE	5	1.0	66.5
SOCIAL PROBLEM	41	7.8	74.3
THEORY	89	17.0	91.2
VN SOCIOLOGY	44	8.4	99.6
YOUTH	2	.4	100.0
Total	525	100.0	

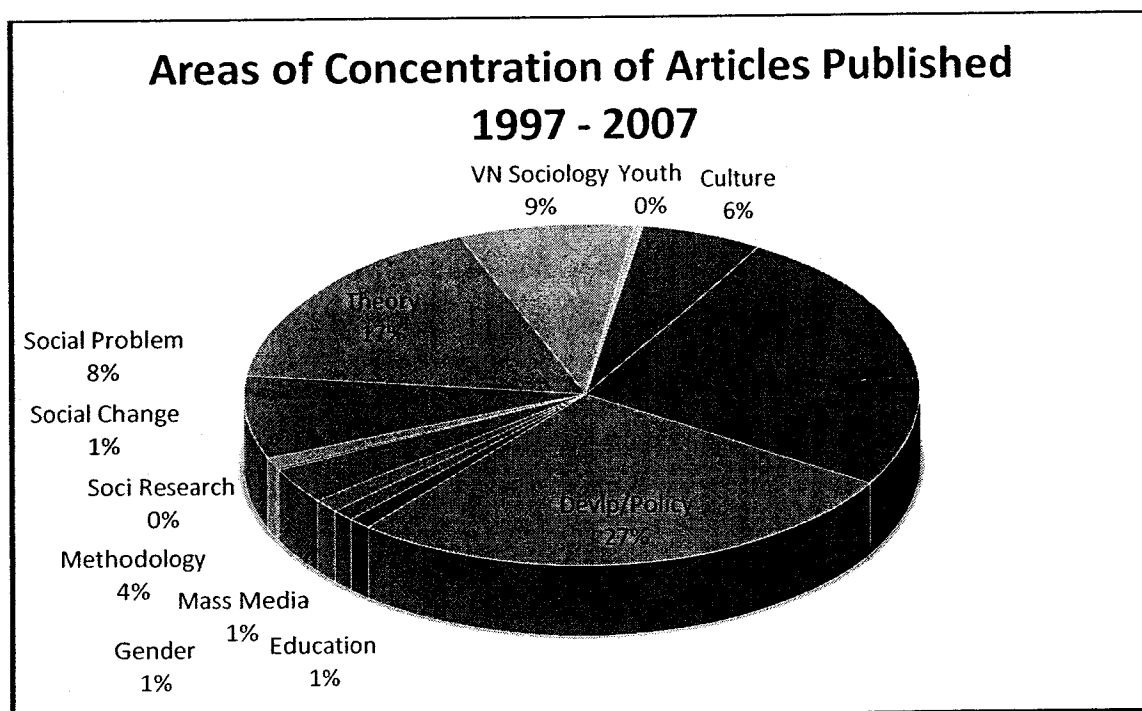


Figure 5. Areas of Concentration of Articles Published 1997 - 2007

Quite unlike the previous two periods in which “Demography” featured prominently as the area of research that Vietnamese sociologists concentrated on the most, Table 3b shows that in these last ten years (1997 – 2007), “Development/Policy” surpassed “Demography” with 142 articles or 27% compared with 133 articles in “Demography” or 25%. The one important event that took place in this historical epoch was the official signing of Vietnam’s membership to join the World Trade Organization on January 2007 – an event for which Vietnam had to prepare many years in advance before the membership application was approved. While membership gives Vietnam greater access to overseas markets, it also comes with conditions that often involve policy changes (i.e., imports tariffs cut) with which Vietnam must comply. In this context, it is not hard to understand the increased research emphasis on “Development/Policy” in this period.

Table 3c. Areas of Concentration by Year of Publication 1997 - 2007

Keywords primary * Pub Year Crosstabulation												
	Publication Year											Total
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	
CULTURE	6	4	1	3	1	0	3	7	2	2	2	31
DEMOGRAPHY	9	21	23	20	13	10	7	6	8	14	2	133
DEVLP/POLICY	17	17	10	11	14	9	15	13	12	14	10	142
EDUCATION	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	6
GENDER	2	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	6
MASS MEDIA	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	7
METHODOLOGY	3	0	1	1	4	4	1	0	3	1	0	18
SOCI. RESEARCH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
SOCIAL CHANGE	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5
SOCIAL PROBLEM	8	2	1	3	5	3	3	4	3	5	4	41
THEORY	13	11	7	5	6	10	9	4	12	9	3	89
VN SOCIOLOGY	7	2	3	5	9	1	12	2	1	1	1	44
YOUTH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
TOTAL	66	60	47	51	53	41	52	37	43	51	24	525

Table 3c confirms the point made above that the number of articles in “Development/Policy” surpasses “Demography” for the first time in all three periods. Moreover, the years leading up to 2007, specifically in 2003, 2004, and 2005; there is a reverse trend in areas of focus, i.e., switching from “demography” to “development/policy”.

Table 3d. Frequency Distribution of Prominent Authors 1997 - 2007

	Frequency	Percent
Bùi, Thế Cường	13	2.5
Trịnh, Duy Luân	12	2.3
Trương, Xuân Trường	12	2.3
Mai, Quỳnh Nam	11	2.1
Nguyễn, Đức Truyền	11	2.1
Nguyễn, Hữu Minh	11	2.1
Tô, Duy Hợp	11	2.1
Bùi, Quang Dũng	10	1.9
Tương Lai	10	1.9
Đặng, Nguyên Anh	9	1.7
Đỗ, Thiên Kính	9	1.7
Mai, Huy Bích	8	1.5
Bế, Quỳnh Nga	7	1.3
Lê, Ngọc Hùng	6	1.1
Mai, Văn Hai	6	1.1
Vũ, Tuấn Huy	6	1.1
Bùi, Đình Thanh	5	1.0
Nguyễn, Đức Chính	5	1.0
Phạm, Xuân Nam	5	1.0
Trần, Hữu Quang	5	1.0

Table 3d shows a relatively even frequency distribution of prominent authors in their publication for the first half of the list. Notice that many of the same authors are also most visible in the previous period. It would certainly be fascinating to learn about the life history of these authors and its relationship to their interests in sociology.

iv. Summary

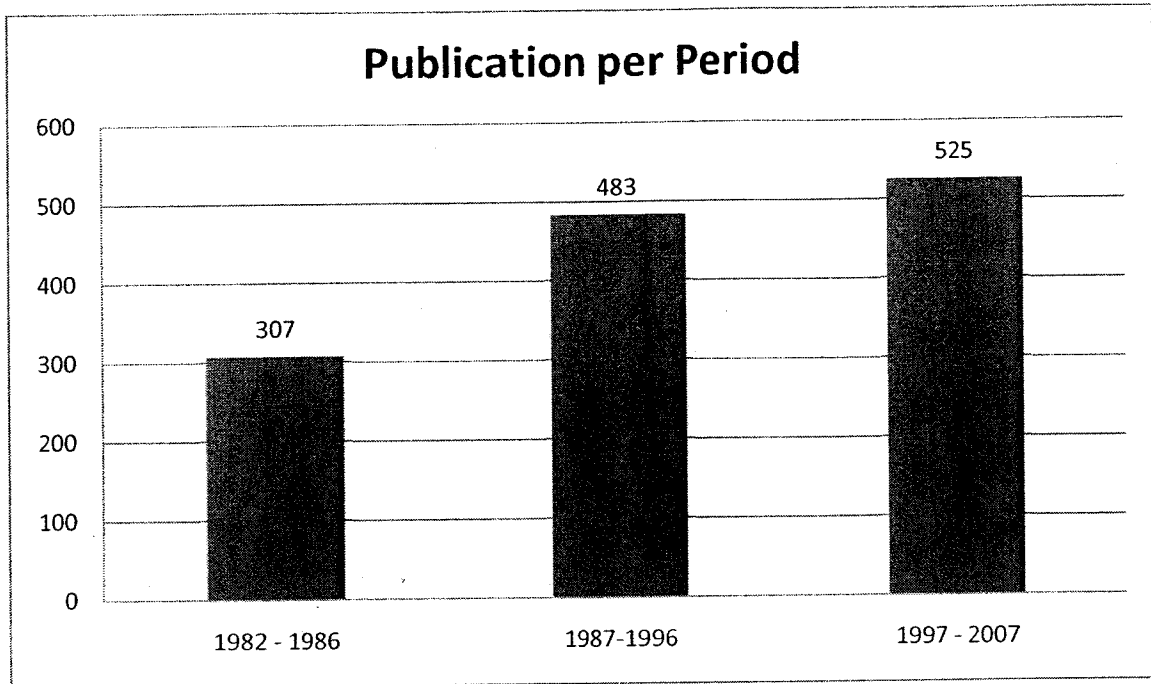


Figure 6. Publication per Period

We can see that the amount of production increases consistently over the three periods analyzed. Figure 6 shows the total number of articles published in each of the three periods. In the first period (1982-86), there are 307 articles total; from 1987-96, the number increases to 483; and finally, from 1997-2007, a slight increase to 525 articles are shown. Taken together, there are 1315 articles published over the period of 25 years, which averages about one article per week. While the steady increase does indicate growing support and recognition, the results do point to the severe shortage of sociological writings in Vietnam at the present time.

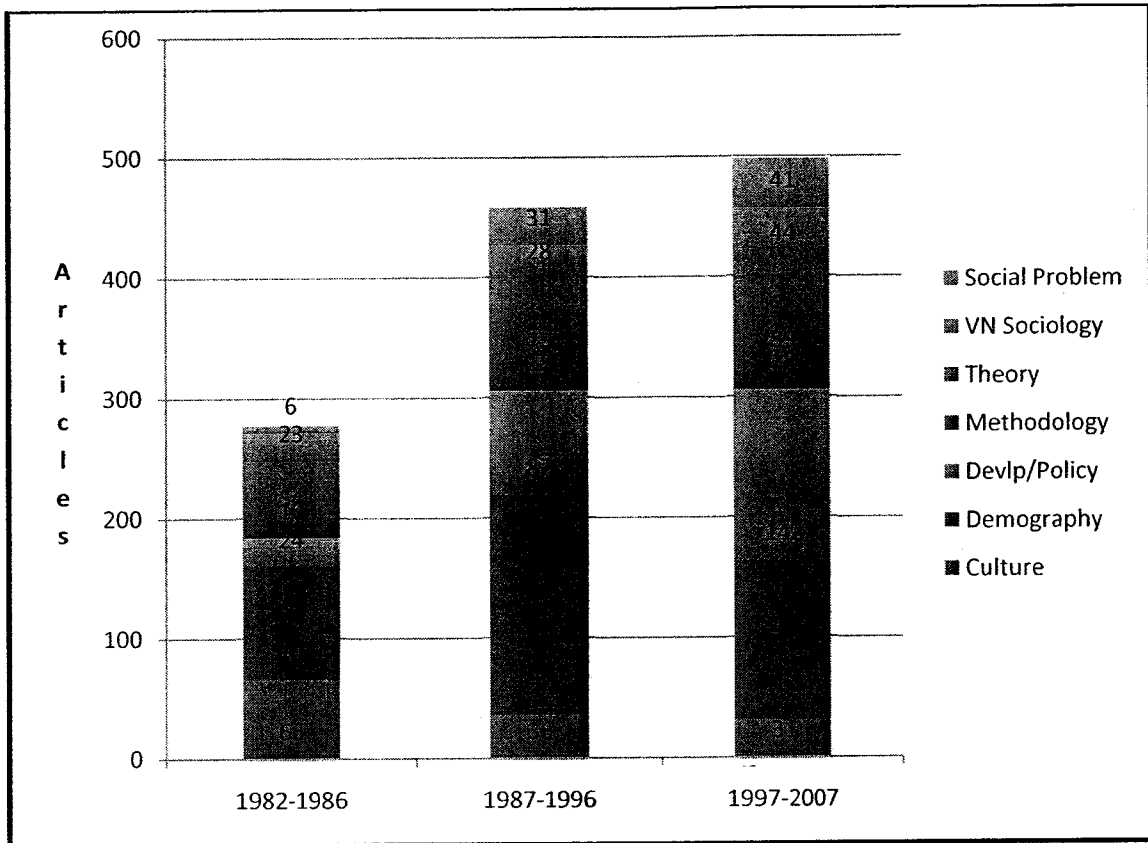


Figure 7. Distribution of Main Areas of Concentration per Period

Figure 7 illustrates the breakdown of areas of concentration in the total amount of articles published in each period. “Demography” is the main area of focus, although it is surpassed slightly by “Development/Policy” in the third period. Another noticeable feature is the significant decrease of articles in the area of “Culture” – dropping from 66 in the first period to 36 in the middle period, and again to 31 in the last period. On the other hand, “Social Problem” shows a reverse trend: increasing from 6 articles, to 31, and then again to 41 articles. This is not difficult to understand since any kind of development that takes place in the country (e.g., Vietnam’s adoption of *Doi Moi*), often carries heavy price tag.

Figure 8 is an illustration of the percentage of areas of concentration in each period. We can clearly see once again, that demography is of major concern for Vietnamese sociologists. Development/policy also shows a consistent increase, while areas such as youth, social research, and mass media are barely visible.

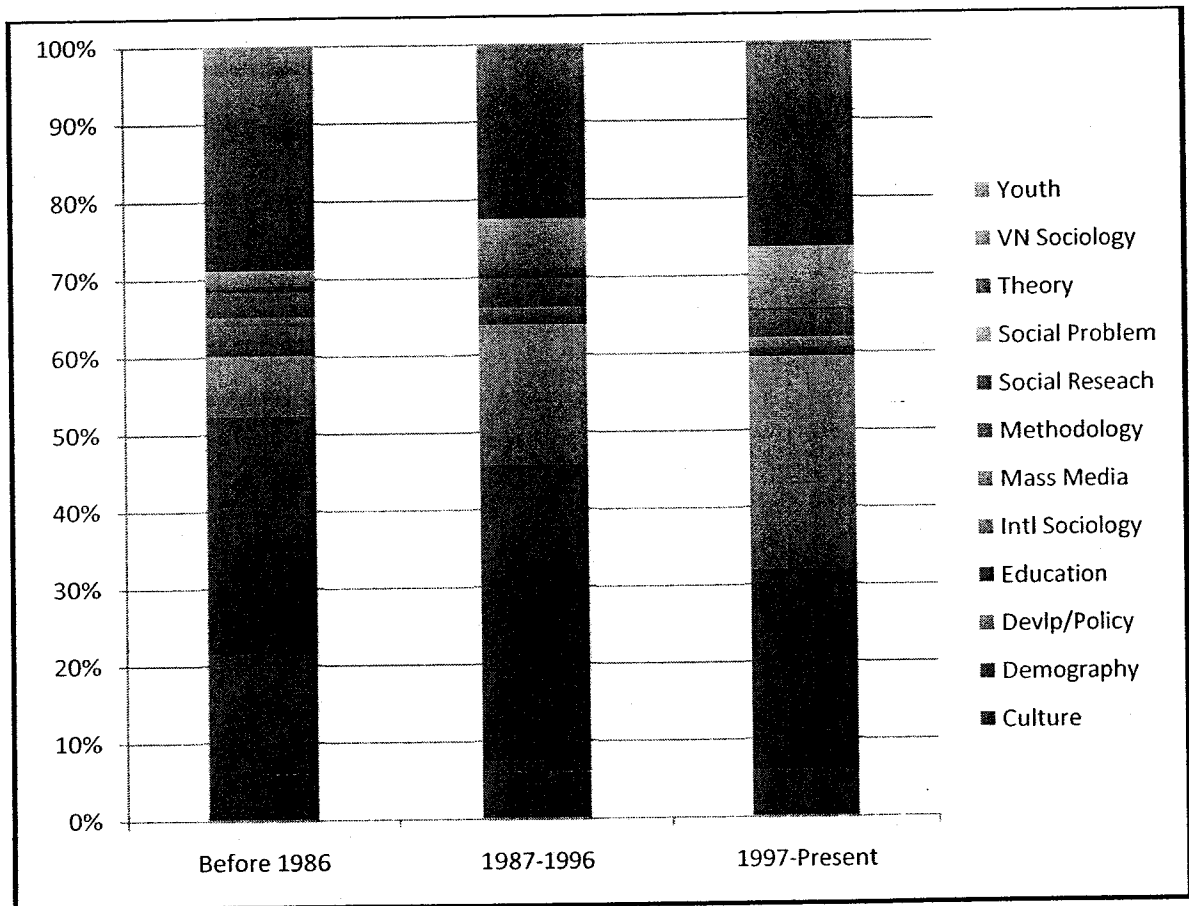


Figure 8. Percentage of Areas of Concentration per Period

b) Textual Analysis

Table 4a. Sample Articles Coding Table

Code Of Articles	Names of Authors	Pub. Year	Titles of Articles	Translations of Titles
1	Vu Khieu	1983	Xa Hoi Hoc, Vu Khi Sac Ben Tren Tran Dia Tu Tuong	Sociology, Sharp Weapon on the Ideological Battleground
2	TCXHH	1983	Xa Hoi Hoc La Gi?	What is Sociology?
3	TCXHH	1983	Dieu Tra Xa Hoi Hoc.	Sociological Research
4	Vu Khieu	1986	Truoc Thanh Qua Cua 5 Nam Nghien Cuu Khoa Hoc Ve Nha O	On the Result of the 5 Years Scientific Study on Housing.
5	Vu Khieu	1986	Co Cau Xa Hoi Hoc va Su Menh Cua Ngươi Tri Thuc Vietnam Hien Nay.	The Constitution of Sociology and the Role of the Vietnamese Intelligentsia Today.
6	Vu Khieu	1986	Co Cau Xa Hoi Hoc cua Gioi Tri Thuc Vietnam Thoi Xua.	The Constitution of Sociology Among the Vietnamese Intelligentsia of the Past.
7	Dang Canh Khanh	1985	Cach Mang Thang Tam va Su Phat Trien cua Xa Hoi Hoc O Vietnam.	The August Revolution and the Development of Sociology in Vietnam.
8	Dang Canh Khanh	1986	Cuoc Dau Tranh Tu Tuong Tren Linh Vuc Xa Hoi Hoc Hien Nay.	The Battle of Ideology in Sociology today
9	Dang Canh Khanh	1985	Tinh Lich Su Trong Phe Phan Xa Hoi hoc Tu San.	The Historicity of Criticism of Capitalist Sociology
10	Vu Khieu	1987	Khoa Hoc Xa Hoi Tren Linh Vuc Tu Tuong va Van Hoa	Social Sciences on Aspects of Ideology and Culture.
11	Dang Canh Khanh	1987	Su Tham Nhap cua Xa Hoi Hoc Tu San Vao Mien Nam Vietnam Truoc Giai Phong va Viac Phe Phan No.	The Penetration of Capitalist Sociology in South Vietnam before the Revolution and its Criticism.
12	Tuong Lai	1995	Khao Sat Xa Hoi ve Phan Tang Xa Hoi -Co So Ly Luan va Phuong Phap Luan	Sociological Study on Social Stratification – Theoretical Bases and Methodology.
13	Mai Quynh Nam	1995	Du Luan Xa Hoi, May Van De Ve Ly Luan va Phuong Phap Nghien Cuu	Public Opinion, Issues on Theory and Research Method.
14	Trinh Duy Luan	1995	Chung Quanh Chu De Cach Mang Thang Tam va Su Bien Doi Xa Hoi	On the Topic of August Revolution and Social Change
15	Nguyen Duc Tryen	1995	Van De Nong Dan – Tu Duy Khoa Hoc va Tu Duy Cach Mang	Issue of Farmers – Scientific Consciousness and Revolutionary Consciousness
16	Trinh Duy Luan	1995	Tac Dong Xa Hoi Cua Doi-Moi O cac Thanh Pho Vietnam	Causes of Doi-Moi in Cities in Vietnam
17	Pham Bich San	1995	Hoan Thien Cong Tac To Chuc va Nghien Cuu Khoa Hoc O Vien Xa Hoi Hoc	Towards the Task of Organization and Scientific Research at IoS

18	Bui The Cuong	1995	Xa Hoi Hoc va Nhung Bien Doi Xa Hoi Trong Qua Trinh Cong Nghiep Hoa va Hien Dai Hoa Dat Nuoc	Sociology and Social Change in Industrialization and Modernization of Vietnam
19	Nguyen Duc Truyen	1995	Vai Cam Nhan Ve Xa Hoi Hoc Nong Thon O Vietnam Qua Khu va Hien Tai	Some Thoughts on Rural Sociology in Vietnam Past and Present
20	To Duy Hop	1995	Dac Diem Tiep Can He Thong Trong Xa Hoi Hoc	Characteristics of Systematic Application in Sociology
21	Vu Tuan Huy	1994	Nhung Khia Canh Cua Su Bien Doi Gia Dinh	Aspects of Family Changes
22	Trinh Duy Luan va Nguyen Quang Vinh	1996	Tac Dong Kinh Te- Xa Hoi cua Doi Moi Trong Linh Vuc Nha O Do Thi Vietnam	Economic Impact of Doi-Moi on Urban Housing in Vietnam
23	Tuong Lai	1999	Tiep Can Xa Hoi Hoc Doi Voi Nhung Van De Kinh Te Xa Hoi Trong Tien Trinh Doi Moi	Sociological Approach to Socio-Economic Issues in the Process of Doi Moi
24	Bui The Cuong	2003	No Luc Tap The va Phong Trao Xa Hoi O Vietnam Trong Thoi Ky Cong Nghiep Hoa va Hien Dai Hoa: Mot Thoi Khao Nghien Cuu	Collective Actions and Social Movements in Doi-Moi Period
25	Bui The Cuong	2003	Den Voi Cac Ly Thuyet Xa Hoi Hoc: Quan Diem Tien Hoa	On Social Theories: An Evolutionary Viewpoint.
26	Bui Quang Dung	2004	Ly Thuyet Marxist va Xa Hoi Hoc	Marxist theory and Sociology
27	Do Thien Kinh	2005	Bat Binh Dang Ve Giao Duc O Vietnam Hien Nay	Education Inequality in Current Vietnam

Table 4b. Cross Tabulation Grid per Sample Articles

	Reference to the party (VCP)	Reference to Marxism-Leninism	Reference to dialectic historical materialism	Problematisation of observable phenomenon / Is there an argument made?	Any reasons given or factors identified as sources of problem	Reference to Western sociology	Reference to Western sources	Citations provided	References to Vietnamese sources	Length of articles
1	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	10
2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	6
3	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	5
4	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	5
5	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	6
6	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	10
7	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	4
8	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	6
9	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	9
10	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	13
11	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	14
12	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	21
13	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	6
14	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	4
15	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	2
16	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	9
17	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	3
18	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
19	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	9
20	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	6
21	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	23
22	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	16
23	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	13
24	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	14
25	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	11
26	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	11
27	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	8

The table above shows that of the articles written during or before 1986, which are from 1-9, almost all made references to the Party, Marxism-Leninism, and Historical Materialism. Interestingly though there were very few references made to Western Sociology and Western authors. Providing citations did not seem to be a common practice in academic writing during this period as more than half of the articles published did not have any citations. Articles published in the second historical epoch, from 1987-1996 saw a marked decrease in references made to the Party, Marxism-Leninism, and Historical Materialism. For example, out of 22 articles examined, only 6 references made to the Party, 7 references made to Marxism-Leninism, and only 5 references made to Historical Materialism. Compared to before 1986, references made to Western Sociology and Western authors occurred more often in this period. From 1997 until the present, the earlier trend seemed to have reversed as almost no references were made to the Party, Marxism-Leninism, and Historical materialism. On the other hand, there were many references made to Western Sociology and Western authors, and including citations seemed to have become more common

Comparing the three periods, Vietnamese Sociology seems to be veering toward the direction of expanding and broadening of sociological perspectives, away from but not abandoning altogether, the core values of Marxist-Leninist doctrines. This is evident in articles written from the early years. In particular, articles written by Vu Khieu and Dang Canh Khanh are heavy with party rhetoric and dialectical reasoning, using words such as “our party” and “Marxism-Leninism” repeatedly. Western sociology is described as “capitalist” sociology, referring especially to the United States and its allies. There seems to be a very strong sense of “us vs. them” in these early writings which indicates a

clear effort to construct an identity for Vietnamese sociology. Vietnamese society is perceived to be under the threat of capitalism; thus the mission of Vietnamese sociologists is to provide the state with the tool and “weapon” (in the words of author Vu Khieu) to counter such forces. To have a better sense of what Vietnamese sociology was like in this early period, one can think of it as similar to the experience of watching a movie where the ending is already been written. In this way, Marxism-Leninism is the “ending” of Vietnamese sociological inquiry and the “in-between” just need to be altered or adjusted to fit the conclusion.

As Vietnam incorporates itself into the capitalist world-system under *Doi Moi*, Vietnamese sociology also indicates this “opening-up” approach to account for the fast changing socio-economic condition in the country. However, one might say that it is rather a “cautious” opening-up. This new tendency is indicative of the relation between the developments of Vietnamese sociology with the historical process of *Doi Moi*. The changing trend of Vietnamese Sociology through time is reflected with the slogan of *Doi Moi*: “Kinh Te Thi Truong, Dinh Huong Xa Hoi Chu Nghia”, which translates to “Market Economy with Socialist Orientation” – market indicates the need for openness, and socialist orientation indicates the need for preservation.

Thus although Vietnamese Sociology has become more open to other perspectives, its core values of Marxism-Leninism remains intact – such is the tension facing Vietnamese sociologists. The fact that today’s economic reality makes it increasingly difficult for countries like Vietnam to remain “antisystemic” and to “resist the pressures for ‘structural arrangement’ and opening frontiers” (Wallerstein, 2006) is another illustration that there need to be a diversity in perspectives and approaches in

sociological research. How then, do Vietnamese sociologists resolve such tension, i.e., opening up without stepping outside of the “boundary”? Based on the table above, it seems that they have found a way: The work of Vietnamese sociologists has shifted to studying practical observable social phenomena and producing reports that meet the demands of the Party or various funding agencies and organizations, which often record only things that are observable and measurable rather than providing in-depth analysis or raising critical questions. In effect, Vietnamese sociology can be described as being “made for demand”. Seen in this light, the scholarly production of Vietnamese sociologists can be thought of as a form of co-operation with the Party or businesses and institutions. Over time, such co-operation would tend to become “naturalized” following Neves (Neves, 2009) and that the “convergence of interests” (between sociologists and the Party or other organizations) produced the condition of hegemony where the ideas and agendas of the Party/organization are continually promoted and imposed – occurring interestingly, “without recourse to force, but rather through ‘the manufacture of consent’” (Igoe, Neves, & Brockington, 2009).

The new direction of Vietnamese sociology in terms of explaining social phenomena veers away from the Marxian concept of historical materialism while it is precisely the current changes in relations to the production processes and material living standards that may have required the application of such method. In truth, many Western sociologists continue to find Marxist and Neo-Marxist concepts and methodologies useful in explaining social phenomena. This cross-over appears illogical and perplexing: the swapping of positions between the Marxist and Western sociologists.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REMARKS

In this thesis, I showed the formation of Vietnamese sociology was part of the social transformation process affecting the culture of learning and the status of the intellectual class. Further, the connection between the institutionalization and implementation of Vietnamese sociology and *Doi Moi* provides a linkage to the wider historical processes to the extent that it becomes a part of the historical processes. At the moment of conception, the main traits of Vietnamese sociology reflect a changing socio-cultural environment which is being transformed by the historical process of *Doi Moi*.

The results from content and textual analysis identify the pattern and possible trends in the way sociology is practiced in Vietnam, i.e., moving away from a more deterministic and functionalist tendency to a greater openness and diversity in sociological perspectives.

Observing from a world-system perspective (Wallerstein, 2006), Vietnam's integration into the capitalist world-economy seems to present a paradoxical approach and is therefore problematic. On the one hand, the official ideology of Marxism-Leninism governs the political realm whereas capitalism regulates and controls the economy. However, a critical analysis of the world-system theory points to the power and strength of the economic influences of the capitalist world economy such that it can accommodate all different cultures and political systems and ideologies. Nevertheless, the perceived tensions from the two opposing value systems will certainly influence the way society is constituted and transformed.

This preliminary study on the main traits of Vietnamese sociology and the effects of historical processes on its formation and transformation reveals promising prospects

for future research. Indeed, it will be a fascinating and rewarding endeavor to carry this project further by combining other methodologies within the historical sociological tradition in order to paint a more complete picture of Vietnamese sociology.

Additionally, life history research – with its focus on Vietnamese sociologists to learn about their life experiences as practitioners of sociology – will also be an exciting research topic that would provide greater understanding of Vietnamese sociology.

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