


BALANCING FEUDAL LEGACIES AND SOCIALIST ASPIRATIONS: VIETNAM'S ETHICAL TRANSFORMATION

Huong Thu Thi Nguyen¹

Academy of Journalism and Communication (AJC)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3938-3831>

E-mail: nguyentthuong2507@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

This study examines the enduring influence of Confucian ethics on Vietnam's new morality, shaped by revolutionary and socialist ideals. Confucianism, with its emphasis on moral values, social harmony, and hierarchical relationships, provided the foundation for Vietnam's traditional morality during the feudal era. However, its remnants, including patriarchal structures and rigid hierarchies, present challenges to modern democratic and socialist aspirations. Employing a qualitative research design, this study analyzes primary texts, including Confucian classics and Hồ Chí Minh's writings, alongside secondary academic sources. Through thematic content analysis, the research explores the interplay between traditional Confucian values and modern ethical constructs, highlighting their dual role as both a moral cornerstone and a potential barrier to progress. The findings underscore that while Confucian ethics offer valuable guidance for governance, education, and societal cohesion, their feudal origins must be critically reevaluated to align with contemporary goals of equality and social justice. The study concludes by proposing strategies to retain the strengths of Confucian ethics while addressing their limitations, demonstrating how Vietnam can integrate its cultural heritage with revolutionary and modern principles to build a harmonious and progressive society.

KEYWORDS: Confucian ethics; Vietnamese cultural heritage; Hồ Chí Minh thought; Moral transformation; Socialist principles.

¹ PhD in Philosophy from the Academy of Journalism and Communication. She is a senior lecturer of philosophy and of Department of Political Affairs and Student Support at the Academy of Journalism and Communication, Hanoi, Vietnam.

Introduction

Confucianism, established by Confucius (551–479 BCE), originated in ancient China but traces its foundational ideas to the Zhou Dynasty (Guo, 2024b; Tran, 2024; Zhu, 2021). As a philosophical system, Confucianism emphasizes moral values, social harmony, and hierarchical relationships, profoundly influencing the cultural, political, and moral frameworks of East Asian societies, including Vietnam (Ly, 2021; Nguyen, 2022; Pham; Nguyen; Nguyen; Do *et al.*, 2023). During Vietnam's feudal era, Confucianism shaped its moral code and societal structures through the *Three Fundamental Bonds* (lord-retainer, father-son, husband-wife) and the *Five Constant Virtues* (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, fidelity) (Lan, 2022). These ethical principles defined governance, family roles, and interpersonal relationships, embedding themselves into Vietnam's cultural fabric.

Despite Vietnam's transition to modernity and the revolutionary changes brought by socialist ideals, the influence of Confucian thought persists in societal norms and ethical practices (Jamieson, 2023; Riveros Lozano, 2021; Taylor, 2007). Critics argue that this legacy presents both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, Confucian ethics continue to provide a moral foundation for personal and societal conduct. On the other, their feudal origins contribute to lingering issues, such as hierarchical rigidity and gender inequality, which conflict with modern aspirations for equality and progress (Lan, 2022; Tran, 2024).

This study seeks to explore the enduring impact of Confucian ethics on the development of Vietnam's new morality, which has been reshaped by revolutionary ideals and socialist principles. By examining the interplay between traditional Confucian values and modern ethical constructs, the study highlights the dual role of Confucianism: as a cornerstone for moral development and as a potential impediment to social progress (Tran, 2024).

The primary objectives are threefold: first, to analyze the principles of Confucian ethics and their historical impact on Vietnamese society; second, to assess the positive and negative influences of these ethics on Vietnam's new morality; and third, to propose strategies that preserve the beneficial aspects of Confucian values while addressing their limitations. This research focuses on key philosophical concepts, their historical context, and their practical implications, contributing to an understanding of Vietnam's cultural and ideological evolution.

Literature review

Confucian ethics form the foundation of a system designed to foster harmony and moral conduct in society (Frederickson, 2002; Li, 2006; Nguyen, 2024; Yuan; Chia; Gosling, 2023). Central to this system are the Three Fundamental Bonds and the Five Constant Virtues. The Three Fundamental Bonds define hierarchical relationships essential for social order: the bond between lord and retainer, father and son, and husband and wife. These relationships emphasize loyalty, filial piety, and marital harmony, as described in "The Analects" and further expounded by Chinese ancient thinkers like Mencius and Xunzi. The Five Constant Virtues—benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity—serve as guiding principles for personal and societal conduct, as documented in the "Book of Rites" and "The Analects" (Doan, 1950; Ge, 2020; Guo, 2024a; Quang, 1994). These ethical pillars laid the groundwork for governance and personal behavior in Confucian societies.

Confucianism's Role in Vietnamese Feudal Society

In Vietnam, Confucianism was not merely a moral philosophy but also a state ideology

(Nguyen; Cao, 2022; Vu; Yamada, 2024). From the Ly to Nguyen dynasties (1010 - 1945), Confucianism provided the framework for governance and societal organization (Ly, 2021; Tho, 2016). The hierarchical structure it prescribed, coupled with its emphasis on loyalty and filial piety, helped sustain the feudal system. Confucian rites and rituals were deeply embedded in Vietnam's cultural fabric, influencing everything from family life to political decision-making (Nguyen, T. M. H.; Nguyen, A. C., 2024; O'harrow, 2021; Quang, 1994). This ideological dominance reinforced the feudal order while fostering a sense of collective moral responsibility.

Transitioning Morality: Ho Chi Minh's Revolutionary Shift

The shift from Confucian-based traditional morality to revolutionary morality in Vietnam marked a significant transformation in societal values. Traditional Confucian morality, with its rigid hierarchies and emphasis on loyalty to authority (Jamieson, 2023; Luo, 2023; Vu; Pham, 2021), began to give way to a new moral framework rooted in socialist principles and national independence. Ho Chi Minh's thought played a pivotal role in this transition, advocating for a morality that prioritized the collective welfare and revolutionary goals over feudal allegiances (Levan, 1989; Nguyen, P. T.; Nguyen, Q. T., 2024).

This pragmatic shift, critics assert, was essential for dismantling feudal legacies that stifled social mobility and gender equality. Yet, some scholars argue that this reinterpretation risked diluting the foundational moral rigor of Confucian ethics, replacing it with utilitarian ideals aligned with revolutionary needs (Luo, 2023).

Ho Chi Minh's Pragmatic Approach to Confucian Ethics

Ho Chi Minh's perspective on Confucian ethics exemplified a critical and pragmatic synthesis. While acknowledging Confucianism's limitations—particularly its patriarchal norms—he emphasized its enduring virtues, such as self-cultivation and morality, as integral to leadership and governance (Ho, 1995b; Nguyen, 2024). His reinterpretation of loyalty (*trung*) as loyalty to the nation and filial piety (*hiếu*) as a commitment to the people demonstrates his nuanced adaptation of these principles for revolutionary purposes (Ho, 1995b).

Critics of his approach argue that Ho's selective retention of Confucian ideals risked alienating traditionalists who viewed such reinterpretations as deviations from authentic Confucian thought. However, supporters assert that his pragmatic application ensured their relevance in a rapidly changing socio-political landscape.

Ethical Leadership: The Cornerstone of Ho Chi Minh's Philosophy

Ho Chi Minh's insistence on ethical leadership, rooted in Confucian virtues like benevolence (*nhân*) and integrity (*liêm*), further underscores his critical engagement with Confucian ethics (Ho, 1995a). His assertion that “A revolutionist must have morality, without morality, no matter how talented he is, he cannot lead the people” reflects a synthesis of Confucian emphasis on moral rectitude and Marxist-Leninist ideals of collective welfare (Ho, 1995a, p. 252).

While Confucian ethics have historically shaped Vietnamese governance and morality, their adaptation under Ho Chi Minh illustrates the dynamic potential of ideological synthesis. By critically reinterpreting Confucian principles to align with revolutionary goals, Ho Chi Minh preserved their moral essence while addressing the socio-political challenges of modern Vietnam. This pragmatic approach highlights the enduring relevance of Confucian values in fostering

ethical governance and societal transformation.

Methodology

This section details the methods and procedures utilized in the research, allowing for comprehensive understanding and potential replication by other scholars. The study employs a qualitative research design, chosen to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the historical and philosophical impacts of Confucian ethics on Vietnamese morality. This design aligns with the study's objectives by enabling a nuanced analysis of textual sources, historical documents, and philosophical frameworks.

The research focuses on historical and philosophical texts as primary data sources, including Confucian classics such as *The Analects* and *The Book of Rites*, and Vietnamese political and moral writings, particularly the works of Ho Chi Minh. This textual analysis is supplemented by secondary sources, including academic commentaries and historical records, to provide a well-rounded understanding of the subject.

The study's procedures involved a systematic review of the identified sources. Key themes and ethical constructs—such as the Three Fundamental Bonds and the Five Constant Virtues—were identified, classified, and analyzed for their relevance to both traditional Vietnamese morality and modern revolutionary ideals. These steps ensured a robust comparison between Confucian values and the evolving ethical landscape in Vietnam.

Data analysis was performed through thematic content analysis, which allowed for the systematic interpretation of qualitative data, emphasizing patterns, meanings, and relationships between traditional and modern ethical systems. The choice of this method ensures detailed and replicable findings.

Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the research process. Since the study was primarily textual and did not involve human subjects, formal ethical approval was not required. However, all sources were cited appropriately to maintain academic integrity.

Results and discussions

1. The Confucian Ethical Perspectives: An Argumentative Examination

Confucian ethical perspectives represent one of the most enduring philosophical frameworks in Eastern thought, grounded in moral introspection and designed to promote individual virtue and societal harmony. However, the application of these principles reveals a dual narrative: while fostering social cohesion, they also entrenched rigid hierarchies and gender inequalities that limited individual autonomy and social progress.

At the heart of Confucianism lies the Three Fundamental Bonds and the Five Constant Virtues, which collectively provide a blueprint for personal conduct and societal organization (Quang, 1994). These principles are not merely moral guidelines but deeply embedded mechanisms for maintaining hierarchical order. Critics argue that this moral architecture, while functional in feudal contexts, perpetuated systemic inequalities, particularly regarding gender and class (Doan, 1950; Ge, 2020).

Confucianism organizes human relationships by defining explicit ethical standards for each type of relationship, based on the conviction that humans exist within a network of interdependent societal roles. This categorization of human relationships is a defining feature of Confucian thought, manifesting in multiple dimensions:

Moral Relationships. Confucianism highlights the dichotomy between the “gentleman”

(junzi) and the “petty man” (xiaoren). The gentleman symbolizes moral excellence, superior education, and an elevated societal standing, whereas the petty man represents individuals of ordinary intellect and limited moral development. This distinction forms the basis for Confucian social hierarchies, reflecting class and moral stratification.

Social Labor. The division of labor in Confucianism differentiates between manual (physical) labor and intellectual labor. Intellectual labor is regarded as a pursuit of the gentleman, while manual labor is relegated to the petty man. This reveals a clear bias, as manual labor is often undervalued and deemed unworthy of respect within the Confucian framework.

Political and Social Hierarchies. Confucianism underscores the importance of relationships between the ruling class and the ruled, including lord-retainer and mandarin-civilian dynamics. These hierarchical relationships reinforce governance structures rooted in loyalty and obedience, further entrenching societal order.

Family and Social Institutions. The family occupies a central role in Confucianism, with specific responsibilities assigned to each member. Key relationships include those between father and son, husband and wife, and elder and younger siblings. Friendship is also recognized as a critical bond, characterized by trust, mutual support, and loyalty.

Confucianism’s systematic categorization of relationships culminates in the Three Fundamental Bonds and Five Constant Virtues, which serve as guiding principles for individual conduct and social cohesion. These ethical standards aim to cultivate “human behavior” by establishing a moral order that permeates all aspects of life.

The Three Fundamental Bonds

The Three Fundamental Bonds delineate the relationships between lord and retainer, father and son, and husband and wife. Each bond is governed by specific ethical requirements:

Lord and Retainer. The lord must demonstrate benevolence, while the retainer is obligated to exhibit unwavering loyalty. During the Qin Dynasty (221 - 207 BCE), this bond evolved into a rigid, one-sided structure, where the lord’s authority was considered absolute and divinely ordained (Doan, 1950).

Father and Son. This bond highlights the father’s duty to nurture and guide, while the son is expected to display filial piety—a virtue that entails deep respect, care, and obedience toward one’s parents. Filial piety is central to Confucian ethics and is regarded as the foundation of familial harmony (Quang, 1994).

Husband and Wife. The husband is expected to love and provide for his wife, while the wife must obey and support her husband. This relationship reflects the patriarchal nature of Confucian society, wherein women held a subordinate status and were expected to adhere strictly to their roles (Quang, 1994; Yuan; Chia; Gosling, 2023).

The Five Constant Virtues

The Five Constant Virtues—benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity—serve as the cornerstone of Confucian moral philosophy. Together with the Three Fundamental Bonds, they provide a comprehensive framework for ethical behavior, often summarized as “*Tam cương, ngũ thường*” (three bonds, five constants) (Quang, 1994, p. 134).

Benevolence (Ren) is the principle of love and compassion toward others, rooted in respect and virtue. Confucius described benevolence as “loving people” (Doan, 1950, p. 21), emphasizing its role in fostering harmonious relationships. Benevolence also encompasses respect for elders and filial piety, linking familial love with broader social harmony. Confucius outlined five key

aspects of benevolence: respect, tolerance, faith, diligence, and kindness (Doan, 1950).

Righteousness (Yi) refers to moral integrity and justice, guiding individuals to act ethically in all circumstances. Confucius declared, “The person seeing the righteous work but not doing it is not called a brave man” (Doan, 1950, p. 24). Righteousness is thus a fundamental virtue that shapes moral courage and societal norms .

Propriety (Li) involves adherence to rituals, social norms, and moral discipline. It governs behavior within hierarchical structures and fosters respect for tradition and authority. Confucius emphasized propriety as essential for maintaining societal stability, asserting, “Without studying propriety, there is nothing to stand firm” (Doan, 1950, p. 1). Propriety governs rituals and social norms, serving as a stabilizing force. However, its rigid enforcement has been accused of stifling creativity and reinforcing class hierarchies (Ge, 2020; Quang, 1994).

Wisdom (Zhi) embodies the ability to discern right from wrong and apply ethical principles judiciously. It requires continuous learning, reflection, and self-awareness to achieve moral clarity and sound judgment (Doan, 1950).

Fidelity (Xin) signifies loyalty, trustworthiness, and sincerity, particularly in interpersonal relationships. It fosters mutual trust and strengthens bonds of friendship. Confucius stated, “We want the elderly to be happy, friends to be faithful, and children to be taken care of” (Doan, 1950, p. 25). Wisdom and Fidelity emphasize discernment and trust, forming the basis for interpersonal relationships. While universally lauded, their interpretation often excluded marginalized groups, reflecting Confucianism’s feudal context (Nguyen; Cao, 2022).

In short, the Confucian ethical framework, exemplified by the Three Fundamental Bonds and Five Constant Virtues, provided a robust moral foundation for ancient Chinese society. These principles facilitated self-cultivation, familial harmony, and societal stability. Though initially conceived for a feudal context, their enduring influence continues to shape moral values and governance across East Asia. Confucian ethics thus remain a vital reference point for understanding traditional and modern societal dynamics.

The Confucian emphasis on hierarchical relationships has faced substantial criticism. Its dichotomy between the “gentleman” (junzi) and the “petty man” (xiaoren) creates a stratified moral order that mirrors societal class divisions (Quang, 1994; Yuan; Chia; Gosling, 2023). Intellectual labor, associated with the gentleman, is celebrated, while manual labor is undervalued, perpetuating a bias against physical work (Doan, 1950). This moral elitism, while reinforcing governance structures, limited social mobility and exacerbated class inequality.

2. The New Morality of the Vietnamese Nation

Morality, as a form of social consciousness, reflects the realities of the society and class from which it originates. It evolves alongside historical and societal transformations, aligning with the values of the most advanced and progressive classes of the time. In modern Vietnam, this morality is intricately tied to the working class, reflecting its ideals and revolutionary struggles (Ho, 2002). This new morality is not merely a continuation of tradition but a transformative force shaped by Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh’s thought, embodying both historical depth and contemporary relevance.

Revolutionary Morality: A New Ethical Paradigm

Hồ Chí Minh defined revolutionary morality as “new, great morality” that transcends personal ambitions and aligns with the collective interests of the Party, the nation, and humanity (Ho, 2002, p. 252). This morality emphasizes absolute loyalty to the people, unwavering

dedication to the Party's goals, and prioritization of collective well-being. Critics of revolutionary morality argue that its focus on collectivism risks diminishing individual autonomy. However, proponents contend that its emphasis on solidarity and selflessness is essential for overcoming social and economic inequalities (Nguyen, 2024).

This morality is not static but dynamic, evolving through Vietnam's revolutionary practices. It unites political and moral qualities, integrating national and class interests into a cohesive ethical framework. This perspective underscores that revolutionary morality is not only a goal but also a driving force for societal transformation, bridging traditional values with modern revolutionary needs (Tran, 2024).

Loyalty to the Country, Piety to the People. Traditional Vietnamese ethics emphasized loyalty and filial piety as cornerstones of moral conduct (Quang, 1994). Hồ Chí Minh elevated these values to address modern challenges, redefining loyalty to the country as a commitment to national defense and development, and piety to the people as a revolutionary obligation to serve and prioritize their well-being (Tran, 2024). Critics argue that this reinterpretation risks oversimplifying complex individual loyalties. However, Hồ Chí Minh's synthesis demonstrates how traditional ethics can inspire modern governance.

Loving People, Living and Caring for One Another. This principle builds on Vietnam's tradition of humanity and compassion, emphasizing care for the poor and oppressed (Nguyen; Cao, 2022). Hồ Chí Minh exemplified this value, advocating for a society where all people enjoy freedom, education, and sufficiency. While critics highlight potential ideological biases in defining compassion through revolutionary goals, this moral framework prioritizes equity and inclusivity, addressing systemic injustices (Ho, 2002).

Industriousness, Thrift, Integrity, Uprightness, Public-Spiritedness, and Selflessness. These virtues represent the backbone of revolutionary morality. Industriousness and thrift, rooted in traditional Confucian ethics, are reinterpreted to reflect revolutionary self-reliance and simplicity (Doan, 1950; Tran, 2024). Integrity and uprightiness reject corruption and emphasize fairness, while public-spiritedness and selflessness prioritize collective welfare. Critics note that such moral imperatives can be difficult to enforce universally. However, Hồ Chí Minh argued that persistent cultivation of these virtues is essential for building an equitable society (Ho, 2002).

A Pure International Spirit. Revolutionary morality extends beyond national boundaries, fostering solidarity with oppressed nations and global progressive forces. Hồ Chí Minh combined patriotism with internationalism, countering chauvinism and racism. While detractors suggest that internationalism could dilute national priorities, Hồ Chí Minh demonstrated how global solidarity strengthens national resilience and fosters a shared vision of justice.

Transformative Role of Revolutionary Morality

The new morality of Vietnam serves as a foundation for creating socialist citizens, uniting political, ethical, and social goals. It prioritizes the transformation of old social structures, advocating for national liberation and socialist construction. Critics often challenge the practical implementation of such morality, arguing that systemic barriers can hinder its universal adoption (Vu; Pham, 2021). Yet, Hồ Chí Minh's emphasis on continuous cultivation and education underscores its potential to drive meaningful societal change.

Revolutionary morality, as articulated by Hồ Chí Minh, represents a synthesis of traditional Vietnamese ethics and modern socialist principles. While rooted in historical traditions, it transcends feudal limitations, fostering values that align with the working class and the goals of national and global progress. This morality is not merely an ethical ideal but a transformative force, essential for building an equitable and resilient society. By emphasizing

loyalty, compassion, and solidarity, revolutionary morality addresses both national and global challenges, demonstrating its enduring relevance in modern governance and social transformation.

3. Impacts of Confucian Ethics on Vietnam's New Morality

From its inception, Confucian ethics provided a robust moral-political framework that significantly influenced Vietnam's socio-political landscape. Originating in China, Confucianism became a dominant force in Vietnam, shaping governance, education, and cultural values (Chen, 2024; Liu, 2024; Nguyen, N. T.; Nguyen, Q. T., 2024). However, the impact of these ethical principles on the new morality of the Vietnamese nation reveals both commendable contributions and lingering challenges, making a critical evaluation essential.

Positive Impacts on Vietnam's New Morality

Wisdom from Tradition. Hồ Chí Minh once stated, “Although Confucius is feudal and his doctrine contains errors, there are valuable elements in it that we should learn” (Ho, 1995b, p. 46). This sentiment underscores the revolutionary leader's pragmatic approach to adapting traditional values. Stripped of their historical limitations, Confucian principles remain a source of ethical guidance for personal and societal conduct. Critics argue that such selective adaptation risks distorting Confucian teachings, yet Hồ Chí Minh demonstrated that these values could inspire moral clarity in governance (Tran, 2024).

Confucian Ethics and Human Nature. Confucian philosophy presents varying views on human nature: Mencius believed in its inherent goodness, while Xunzi argued the opposite (Nguyen; Cao, 2022; Sung, 2021). Hồ Chí Minh synthesized these perspectives, emphasizing education and moral cultivation as determinants of character. His assertion, “Good and evil are not qualities inborn; more often than not, from education they flow” (Ho, 1995a, p. 383), highlights the transformative power of education. This pragmatic perspective aligns with revolutionary ethics, which prioritize education as a tool for societal progress (Ho, 2000a).

Morality in Governance and Revolution. Confucian texts like *The Great Learning* assert, “Virtue is the root, wealth is the top” (Yuan; Chia; Gosling, 2023). Similarly, Hồ Chí Minh emphasized that morality is indispensable for leadership: “Without morality, no matter how talented, one cannot lead the people” (Ho, 1995a, p. 252-253). Critics suggest that excessive reliance on moral governance may undervalue legal frameworks. However, Hồ Chí Minh demonstrated that ethical leadership could coexist with legal rigor, strengthening revolutionary movements and governance structures (Tran, 2024).

Loyalty and Filial Piety. The Five Constants, particularly loyalty and filial piety, were redefined by Hồ Chí Minh to suit revolutionary needs. He advocated loyalty to the fatherland and filial piety to the people, extending these virtues beyond familial relationships to promote societal welfare (Ho, 2000a). For example, these values were institutionalized in the People's Army of Vietnam's motto: “Loyal to the country, pious to the people” (Ho, 2000b, p. 640). Such reinterpretation demonstrates the adaptability of Confucian virtues in fostering collective solidarity.

The Gentleman Ideal and Harmonious Society. Confucianism's concept of the “gentleman,” characterized by virtues like benevolence and integrity, inspired Hồ Chí Minh's vision for revolutionary leadership (Quang, 1994). He encouraged revolutionaries to embody these qualities, emphasizing self-sacrifice and moral steadfastness (Ho, 1995b). Similarly, Confucian aspirations for a harmonious society resonated with revolutionary ideals. Critics note that

Confucian harmony often masked systemic inequities, yet Hồ Chí Minh reimagined it as a framework for creating equitable and classless societies (Tran, 2024).

Negative Legacies of Confucian Ethics on Vietnam

While Confucianism's hierarchical relationships established order, they also entrenched feudal values. The Three Bonds emphasized absolute authority in familial and societal structures, fostering patriarchal and authoritarian attitudes (Tian, 2025). These remnants continue to challenge Vietnam's democratic and socialist aspirations by perpetuating familial and societal inequalities.

Nepotism and Favoritism. Confucianism's emphasis on familial loyalty often led to nepotism, undermining meritocratic principles. This practice persists in modern Vietnam, where favoritism and cronyism erode institutional integrity and public trust (Zhu, 2021). Critics argue that addressing such issues requires systemic reforms to prioritize merit over personal relationships.

Patriarchal Structures and Authoritarianism. Confucian patriarchy granted excessive power to family heads, reinforcing gender inequities and authoritarian tendencies (Tian, 2025). These structures hinder efforts to build a democratic society. Critics highlight how traditional rites, such as filial piety, have been manipulated to justify authoritarian governance, necessitating a critical reevaluation of these practices (Vu; Pham, 2021).

Conflict with the Rule of Law. Confucianism's reliance on moral governance often clashes with modern legal systems. While moral governance was effective in feudal contexts, it can undermine the principles of a socialist rule of law by prioritizing personal virtue over institutional accountability (Yuan; Chia; Gosling, 2023). Critics contend that balancing ethical leadership with legal frameworks is essential for modern governance (Tran, 2024).

Class Distinctions and Bureaucracy. Confucianism's distinction between "gentlemen" and "petty men" fostered social stratification. These hierarchies contributed to bureaucratic arrogance and isolation among officials, undermining revolutionary ideals (Nguyen; Cao, 2022). Critics argue that dismantling such attitudes requires concerted efforts to democratize governance and reduce social disparities.

The influence of Confucian ethics on Vietnam's new morality is both profound and complex, encompassing valuable contributions and persistent challenges. On the one hand, Confucian principles provide a moral foundation for governance, education, and societal cohesion. On the other, their feudal remnants hinder democratic and socialist development. Hồ Chí Minh's critical reinterpretation of Confucianism exemplifies how these values can be adapted to align with revolutionary ideals. By addressing the negative legacies of Confucianism while retaining its ethical strengths, Vietnam can continue building a moral framework that supports its socialist aspirations and democratic progress.

Conclusion

This study explored the enduring influence of Confucian ethics on Vietnam's new morality, which is shaped by revolutionary and socialist ideals. Confucianism, with its emphasis on moral values and hierarchical relationships, provided the foundation for Vietnam's traditional morality during its feudal era. Despite its positive contributions to personal virtue, societal harmony, and governance, Confucianism also perpetuated feudal hierarchies, patriarchal attitudes, and nepotism, posing challenges to modern democratic and socialist development.

The findings highlight that while Confucian ethics offer valuable moral guidance, their

feudal remnants can hinder Vietnam's efforts to build an equitable and progressive society. This underscores the importance of critically reevaluating traditional values, retaining their beneficial aspects, and addressing their limitations.

Limitations of the study include its focus on textual analysis, which may not fully capture the nuanced ways in which Confucian values influence contemporary Vietnamese society. Future research could investigate the lived experiences of individuals and communities navigating these ethical frameworks, providing a more holistic understanding.

Ultimately, this research demonstrates the dual role of Confucian ethics as both a foundation for Vietnam's moral development and a potential barrier to its progress. By striking a balance between tradition and modernity, Vietnam can continue shaping a moral framework that aligns with its revolutionary goals and fosters a harmonious, democratic society.

References

- CHEN, W. How was the feudal rule in the Han Dynasty Positively Affected by Confucianism? *Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication Studies*, 1, n. 5, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.61173/jy8fmg65>.
- DOAN, T. C. (ed.). *Analects*. Sai Gon: Tri Duc Tong Tho, 1950.
- FREDERICKSON, H. G. Confucius and the Moral Basis of Bureaucracy. *Administration & Society*, 33, n. 6, p. 610-628, 2002. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399702336002>.
- GE, C. Moral Thought in the Field of Society. In: GE, C. (Ed.). *View of Moralization: Study on Confucian Moral Thought*. Singapore: Springer, 2020. p. 129-178. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3090-6_4.
- GUO, Q. Confucian Idea of Public and Private. In: GUO, Q. (Ed.). *The Spirit of Chinese Confucianism*. Singapore: Springer, 2024a. p. 239-289. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4799-7_6.
- GUO, Q. An Overview of Confucianism. In: GUO, Q. (Ed.). *The Spirit of Chinese Confucianism*. Singapore: Springer, 2024b. p. 11-64. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4799-7_2.
- HO, C. M. *Ho Chi Minh: Complete Works*. Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 1995a.
- HO, C. M. *Ho Chi Minh: Complete Works*. Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 1995b.
- HO, C. M. *Ho Chi Minh: Complete Works*. Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2000a.
- HO, C. M. *Ho Chi Minh: Complete Works*. Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2000b.
- HO, C. M. *Ho Chi Minh: Complete Works*. Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2002.
- JAMIESON, N. L. *Understanding Vietnam*. California: Univ of California Press, 2023. 0520916581
- LAN, P. T. The role of confucianism in education of the Nguyen dynasty in Vietnam in the first half of the 19th century. *Revista on line de Política e Gestão Educacional*, 26, n. Esp1, p. e022027, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.22633/rpge.v26iesp.1.16503>.
- LEVAN, H. J. *Cultural foundation of Ho Chi Minh's revolutionary ideology*. 1989. PhD (PhD) -, Northwestern University Disponível em: <https://www.proquest.com/openview/f290ffe19fbfb4dd90d4b501318ec0f7/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.
- LI, C. The Confucian ideal of harmony. *Philosophy East and West*, p. 583-603, 2006.
- LIU, Y. On the Supremacy of Confucianism and the Periodization of Confucian Classics Learning in the Han Dynasty. *Asian Studies*, 12, n. 1, p. 87-112, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.4312/as.2024.12.1.87-112>.
- LUO, G. Traditional Ethics and Moral Development. In: LUO, G. (Ed.). *Traditional Ethics and Contemporary Society of China*. Singapore: Springer, 2023. p. 405-484. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-0256-9_14.
- LY, H. T. Impacts of Confucianism on Vietnamese culture. *International Communication of Chinese Culture*, 8, n. 3, p. 347-361, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40636-021-00228-y>.
- NGUYEN, N. T. Traditional morals of the nation-motivation to educate and fostering youth to develop a prosperous and happy country in present-day Vietnam. *Conhecimento & Diversidade*, 16, n. 42, p. 247-269, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.18316/red.v16i43.11673>.
- NGUYEN, N. T.; NGUYEN, Q. T. The Religious Aspect of Confucianism during the Ly-Tran Dynasties, Vietnam. *Griot: Revista de Filosofia*, 24, n. 2, p. 234-246, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.31977/grirfi.v24i2.4815>.
- NGUYEN, P. T.; NGUYEN, Q. T. The philosophy of human emancipation in Ho Chi Minh's ideas and its contemporary relevance in Vietnam. *Kalagatos*, 21, n. 1, p. eK24009, 2024.

- NGUYEN, T. M. H.; NGUYEN, A. C. Specific cultural values affect basic political activities in Vietnam. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10, n. 1, p. 2404622, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2404622>.
- NGUYEN, T. Q. Perspectives on human beings in Chinese philosophy and its historical significance to the cause of educational innovation in Vietnam currently. *Argumentos - Revista de Filosofia*, 28, p. 82-94, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.36517/Argumentos.28.8>.
- NGUYEN, T. Q.; CAO, T. H. T. Political-social ideas in the philosophy of Xunzi. *Synesis*, 14, n. 1, p. 142-156, 2022.
- O'HARROW, S. Vietnamese women and Confucianism: creating spaces from patriarchy. In: WAZIR, K. W. (Ed.). *Male and female in developing South-East Asia*. London: Routledge, 2021. p. 161-180. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003135203-10>.
- PHAM, L. T.; NGUYEN, T. V.; NGUYEN, H. T.; DO, H. T. T. *et al.* Between Communitarianism and Confucianism: Charles Taylor and the Confucian Concept of Self in Comparative Perspective. *Bogoslovni Vestnik*, 83, n. 3, p. 553-566, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.34291/BV2023/03/Pham>.
- QUANG, D. *Confucianism in the past and present*. Hanoi: Publishing house of Culture, 1994.
- RIVEROS LOZANO, C. M. Vietnam's Confucianism within the Dynamics of Globalization. *México y la Cuenca del Pacífico*, 10, n. 30, p. 169-188, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.32870/mycp.v10i30.732>.
- SUNG, W. Cultivating Goodness or Manifesting Goodness: Two Interpretations of the Mencius. In: ANGIER, T. e RAPHALS, L. (Ed.). *Skill in Ancient Ethics: The Legacy of China, Greece and Rome*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021. p. 203-220.
- TAYLOR, P. Modernity and Re-enchantment in Post-revolutionary Vietnam. In: TAYLOR, P. (Ed.). *Modernity and re-enchantment: Religion in post-revolutionary Vietnam*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Singapore, 2007. p. 1-56. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812304568-003>.
- THO, N. N. Confucianism and humane education in contemporary Vietnam. *International Communication of Chinese Culture*, 3, n. 4, p. 645-671, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40636-016-0076-8>.
- TIAN, K. Confucian interpersonal relationships and family ethics and its contemporary value. *Trans/Form/Ação*, 48, n. 3, p. e025009, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0101-3173.2025.v48.n3.e025009>.
- TRAN, T. T. M. Confucianism and Hồ Chí Minh's Thought. *Amazonia Investiga*, 13, n. 83, p. 24-35, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2024.83.11.2>.
- VU, M. T.; PHAM, T. T. T. Still in the shadow of Confucianism? Gender bias in contemporary English textbooks in Vietnam. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, p. 1-21, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2021.1924239>.
- VU, T. M.; YAMADA, H. The impacts of Confucianism on gender inequality in Vietnam. *The Journal of Economic Inequality*, 22, n. 1, p. 165-184, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10888-023-09584-8>.
- YUAN, L.; CHIA, R.; GOSLING, J. Confucian Virtue Ethics and Ethical Leadership in Modern China. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 182, n. 1, p. 119-133, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-05026-5>.
- ZHU, Y.-T. *A panoramic history of traditional Chinese ethics*. 1st ed. Singapore: Springer, 2021. XXXIV, 337 p. 978-981-16-1252-7. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-1252-7>.

Autor(a) para correspondência / Corresponding author: Huong Thu Thi Nguyen. nguyenthuong2507@gmail.com