

Investiture Beseeching in Vietnam – China Diplomatic Relationship in Feudal Age

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Received: July 14, 2015 Accepted: July 28, 2015 Online Published: August 11, 2015

doi:10.5539/ach.v8n1p17

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ach.v8n1p17>

Abstract

Investiture beseeching between Vietnam and China Feudal Dynasties actually started in the 10th Century (Ngo Xuong Ngap Reign), after Vietnam had escaped over 1000 years Northern colony and domination by China Feudal Dynasty, gaining its full independence. This also meant that it was not until China faced military failure and had to return national sovereignty for Vietnam that they conferred kingship for Vietnam. In other words, *naturally*, Kingship conferring of China for Vietnam firstly confirmed the independence of Vietnam according to the defined rules among China and countries with tribute and consecration relationship. For Vietnam, whose border was adjacent to Great Feudal China and who used to be invaded by China for thousands years, investiture beseeching was always used as a diplomatic way to maintain friendship with this strong neighbor. This investiture beseeching lasted till time of Tu Duc King (Nguyen Dynasty) because Tianjin Agreement in 1885 between France and China permanently ended this mother country – vassal relationship between China and Vietnam.

Keywords: China, diplomatic, Feudal, investiture beseeching, Vietnam

1. Interface

In Regulations of Successive Dynasties by Subject-Matter, Phan Huy Chu was completely right when commenting that: *“In country governing, maintaining friendship with neighboring nation is a great task... Vietnam has a large Southern territory with good relationship with China, although we have our own scope of development, proclaiming Emperor internally and King externally and still suffering from investiture beseeching, this reality is reasonable”*(Phan, 1961). "This reality is reasonable" – this is Phan Huy Chu's parlance. Or in other words as current style, this is the realism in diplomatic policy with old China Great Feudal Country. The "reasonable" mentioned here by Phan Huy Chu actually is: if "big fish" China intends to "swallow" a "small fish" Vietnam, we are always ready to "welcome" and "escort" them. After Chinese people come home, Vietnam acts softly but strongly to force Chinese Feudal dynasties to respect. This is the dominative rule in diplomatic relationship between Vietnam and China through feudal dynasties. This rule is the starting point for all diplomatic activities of Vietnam at the time being, including investiture beseeching (i.e. request for beseeching investitures and kings) of Vietnam feudal dynasties towards China.

In feudal age, *investiture beseeching* is one of two most important activities (beside tribute activity) to build the diplomatic relationship between Vietnam and China. We can consider this as a special relationship, which by the world experiences exists only between China and neighboring countries among whom Vietnam is a typical example with all complicate and multi-sided characteristics. A question is raised that, which reason makes investiture beseeching become the most important activity in the Vietnam – China diplomatic relation in the feudalism. How did this activity take place? What is the essence of this activity like? Was Vietnam independent of or dependent on the Vietnam – China diplomatic relation in the feudalism? This is the main content in this article.

2. Research Contents

2.1 Cause of Investiture Beseeching in Diplomatic Relationship between Vietnam and China in Feudal Age

It can be said that in feudal age, after winning power, all kings of Vietnam had wishes to request Chinese emperors for king beseeching. The reason for king beseeching request from Vietnam feudal kings was because of the reality: Vietnam was a small country adjacent to a much bigger China feudal who always had intrigue of taking over Vietnam. Therefore, to ensure the security and maintain friendship with this giant neighbor, kings of our country

had to offer “soft”, “flexibility wins firmness” diplomatic directions, assuming to be an obedient vassal to request China for investiture beseeching. This policy also maintained the safety of the nation and royal dynasty by avoiding military confront with Qing Dynasty. Therefore, whenever an ambassador came back from China, the King always invited him to the palace, asking about the situation of Qing Dynasty. For example: In Gia Long King Dynasty, on December 1818, right after the ambassadors Tran Chan and Nguyen Huu Nhan came back from Quang Dong, the King asked them immediately about political and social changes of Qing Dynasty at the time being (Library of Nguyen Dynasty). Or in Minh Menh Dynasty, the King requested the ambassador to write *Journal Petition* stating in details what they saw and heard in China. On October 1832, though receiving not enough information from the ambassadors, the King requested officials in Hanoi to buy from Chinese traders and submit to the King *Kinh sao* (gazette of Qing Dynasty). Even “officialdoms had to seek information and report changes and pillaging actions of Qing Dynasty though not published in *Kinh sao* gazette,” (Library of Nguyen Dynasty). Obviously, right in the action of appointing an ambassador to China, Nguyen Dynasty showed their carefulness in preventing all invasions and provoking actions of Qing Dynasty.

Moreover, when asking China for beseeching investiture, besides national benefits, Vietnamese Kings also considered class’s benefits for their family because right from the beginning, they realized the necessity of confirming the orthodox, legalizing their existence, stabilizing “residents and mentality” and creating a strong support for their family’s long term interests. This meant they had to be conferred kingship by Chinese dynasty as soon as possible.

In addition, Kings in Vietnam feudal age acknowledged that: King beseeching from Chinese dynasty would confirm their role among other countries in the region. By then, Vietnam feudal dynasties could realize their wish: considering themselves as a smaller “China” in the South with vassal countries and equal to China in the North. This was clearest reflected in Nguyen Dynasty.

Meanwhile, China itself was always willing to accept investiture beseeching of Vietnamese kings because it was a mean, on one hand, to maintain friendship and continuity in the relationship between China and Vietnam, on the other hand, to keep the relationship between Chinese dynasty and Vietnamese dynasty as a vital demand in both political and economic interests. Therefore, after delegations of Vietnam came to China for investiture beseeching, Chinese kings appointed ambassadors to confer Vietnamese kings. In the system of vassal of Chinese dynasty, Vietnam became one of three countries (besides Northern Korea, Ryukyu) whom Qing Dynasty itself appointed an ambassador to confer kingship for the King (Choi, 2009).

For these above reasons, from Ngo Dynasty to Nguyen Dynasty, the first thing Vietnamese kings did right after coming to the throne was beseeching investiture from Chinese emperors.

2.2 Investiture Beseeching in Diplomatic Relationship between Vietnam and China Before 1802

Looking back the diplomatic relationship history between two countries, we can see that: kingship conferring by China for Vietnam King only started since the 10th Century after Vietnam had escaped from domination of Chinese feudal dynasty and won full independence. This also meant that China conferred kingship for Vietnam only when facing military failure and returning national sovereignty to Vietnam. Naturally, China’s kingship conferring for Vietnam firstly recognized the independence of Vietnam according to defined rules of China and countries with tribute and consecration relationship. Meanwhile, because Vietnam had borders adjacent to China Great Feudal Country and used to be invaded by China for thousands of years, Vietnam always used investiture beseeching as a diplomatic way to maintain friendship with this strong neighbor.

From the statistical table of occasions when Vietnamese ambassadors went to China for investiture beseeching and Chinese kings conferred investiture for Vietnamese kings from Ngo Dynasty to Tay Son Dynasty, it can be seen that: Investiture beseeching is an especially significant activity in diplomatic relationship between Vietnam and China which no dynasty ignored. Normally, when Vietnamese King passed away, the new king sent an ambassador to China to announce funeral and another ambassador for beseech investiture. These two ambassadors were led by two superior mandarins joining in the same delegation. China, after Chinese Dynasty received the petition from Southern Country, appointed two delegations led by two Chief Envoys, among whom one delegation was for conferring new king and one for sacrificing the dead king. One of two Chief Envoys was the Leader of two delegations. Ambassadors sent by Chinese Court brought the conferring diploma to Vietnam King. If new dynasty came to throne, the ambassadors also brought golden seal – representing the power of Chinese Dynasty. Then, king conferring took place in solemn ceremony in the capital (in Hoa Lu under Dinh and Le dynasties, in Thang Long under the later dynasties).

		- 1064: Conferring Prime Minister additionally.
		- 1067: Recommending Nam Binh King.
		- 1074: Conferring Ly Nhan Tong King as Giao Chi King.
		- 1086: Conferring the King as Nam Binh King.
		- 1130: Conferring Ly Than Tong King as Giao Chi King.
	- 1138: Ly Anh Tong King sent an ambassador to Tong Dynasty to pretext Than Tong's funeral.	- 1138: Conferring Ly Anh Tong King as Giao Chi King.
		- 1175: Exceptionally conferring the King as An Nam King.
		- 1177: Conferring Ly Cao Tong King as An Nam King.
5. Tran Dynasty (1225 - 1400)	- 1229: Tran Thai Tong King sent an ambassador to visit Tong Country.	- 1229: Conferring Tran Thai Tong King as An Nam King.
	- 1261: Tran Thanh Tong King sent an ambassador to visit Mongolia.	- 1261: Mongolia King conferred Tran Thanh Tong King as An Nam King.
		- 1262: Tong Dynasty conferred the King as An Nam King, conferred Emperor as An Nam Royal Highest.
	- 1290: Emperor (Thanh Tong) passed away. Dinh Gioi was sent to announce the death and beseech investiture.	- Nguyen Dynasty did not send an ambassador to confer kingship.
	- 1368: Tran Du Tong King sent an ambassador to visit Minh Dynasty.	- 1368: Minh Thai To King conferred Tran Du Tong King as An Nam King.
6. Ho Dynasty (1400 - 1407)	- 1403: Ho Han Thuong sent ambassadors to Minh Dynasty for beseeching investiture.	- 1403: Minh Dynasty conferred Ho Han Thuong as An Nam King.
7. Later Le Dynasty (1428 - 1527)	- 1427: Le Thai To King sent courtiers to raise plates of beseeching investiture for Tran Cao.	- 1427: Minh Dynasty conferred Tran Cao as An Nam King.
	- 1429: Le Thai To King sent an ambassador to beseech investiture.	- 1431: Conferring Le King the power of participating in An Nam National Affairs.
	- 1434: Le Thanh Tong King sent an ambassador to announce Thai To's death and beseech investiture.	- 1435: Minh Dynasty sent an ambassador to bring the diploma conferring Le King the power of controlling national affair.
	- 1442: Le Nhan Tong King sent an ambassador to announce Thai Tong's death and beseech investiture.	- 1443: Minh Dynasty sent an ambassador to bring the diploma for conferring the King as An Nam King.
	- 1460: Le Thanh Tong King sent an ambassador to beseech investiture.	- 1462: Minh Dynasty sent an ambassador to bring proclamation to confer the King as An Nam King.
	- 1497: Le Hien Tong King sent an ambassador to announce Thanh Tong's death and beseech investiture.	- 1499: Minh Dynasty sent an ambassador to confer the King as An Nam King.
	- 1504: Le Duc Tong King sent an ambassador to announce Hien Tong's death and beseech investiture.	- 1506: Minh Dynasty sent an ambassador to confer the King as An Nam King.
	- 1510: Le Tuong Duc King sent an ambassador to beseech investiture.	- 1513: Minh Dynasty sent an ambassador to confer the King as An Nam King.
8. Mac Dynasty (1527 - 1592)	- 1540: Mac Dang Dung sent an ambassador to Yen King for beseeching investiture.	- 1540: Conferring Mac Dang Dung as Head of Army Force, with yamen seal of secondary mandarin grade carved with word: An Nam Do Thong Su Ti.
9. Le Trung Hung	- 1597: Le The Tong King sent an	- 1598: Minh Dynasty conferred Le The Tong as Head of

Dynasty (1533 - 1789)	ambassador to beseech investiture. - 1637: Le Than Tong King sent an ambassador to beseech investiture. - 1646: Le Chan Tong King sent an ambassador to beseech investiture	Army Force of An Nam. - 1637: Minh Dynasty refused to confer, only granted reward. - 1647: Conferring Tran Than Tong (King's father at that moment) as An Nam King. - 1651: Conferring Trinh King as Vice King. - 1667: Conferring Le Huyen Tong King as An Nam King. - 1683: Conferring Le Hy Tong King as An Nam King. - 1719: Conferring Le Du Tong as An Nam King. - 1734: Conferring Le Thuan Tong as An Nam King. - 1761: Conferring Le Hien Tong King as An Nam King. - 1788: Conferring Le Chieu Thong as An Nam King.
10. Tay Son Dynasty (1789 - 1802)	- 1789: Quang Trung King delegated an ambassador to beseech kingship. - 1792: Quang Toan King sent an ambassador to announce funeral and beseech investiture.	- 1789: Conferring Quang Trung as An Nam King. - 1792: Conferring Quang Toan King as An Nam King.

However, despite of strict regulations, through the evolvement of investiture beseeching activity of Vietnamese Kings, it can be seen that the performance of investiture beseeching depended on the force comparison, potential and position of the two countries. From Ngo Dynasty to Tay Son Dynasty, all kings, after coming to the throne, sent ambassadors to China to beseech investiture. However, in some cases, Chinese Dynasty itself sent ambassadors to Vietnam to confer kingship and Vietnamese kings had not had to come to China for investiture beseeching. Typically, some kings in Tran reign ceded the throne without sending ambassadors to China for investiture beseeching, e.g.: Tran Thai Tong (1225 - 1258), Tran Thanh Tong (1258 - 1278), Tran Nhan Tong (1279 - 1293). Or at the first stage of nation founding, Chinese emperors only conferred kings in Dinh and Anterior Le reign as Control Consultant, Giao Chi King and then Nam Binh Vuong. In Ly reign, Ly Anh Tong was the first king conferred by Tong Dynasty as *An Nam King* (i.e. King of An Nam Country). This was the first time that Southern Country was called by the national name An Nam. It can be seen that the force correlation greatly affects diplomatic relationship between the two countries. In other words, diplomatic relationship is the mirror reflecting position and power of each country.

3. Investiture Beseeching in Vietnam – China Diplomatic Relationship in Nguyen Reign

3.1 Investiture Beseeching in Vietnam – China Diplomatic Relationship in Nguyen reign before French Colonialism Invaded Vietnam (1858)

Proceeding the tradition of previous feudal dynasties, kings of Nguyen Dynasty, after seizing power, all beseeched investiture from China.

The Compendium of Institutions and Administrative Cases of Dai Nam presents the routine of Vietnamese ambassadors to China and vice versa:

For Vietnam, Vietnamese ambassadors going to Qing Dynasty departed from Hue Capital to Hanoi, Bac Ninh, Lang Son and went through Nam Quan Pass to Guangxi by highway, then came into China's territory. Every province they went through had to delegate officials and elephants to escort (Cabinet of Nguyen Court).

Ambassadors of Qing Dynasty came to Vietnam through Nam Quan Pass to Bac Thanh (Ha Noi) by land, then came to Hue Capital by waterway at the wharfs: Bac Thanh, Nam Dinh, Don Thuy (Thanh Hoa), Ho Xa (Quang Tri) and then to Huong Giang Ferry (Hue). When coming home, the ambassadors of Qing Dynasty followed the reversed routine. In some cases, the ambassadors went to Bac Ninh by highway and came home by waterway (Compendium).

Vietnamese ambassadors followed this routine to come to China for investiture beseeching and vice versa. Chinese ambassadors – representatives of the Chinese Dynasty – also followed this routine to come to Vietnam to hold Conferring Ceremony for the first kings of Nguyen Dynasty.

Table 2. Statistical table of Vietnamese ambassadors in Nguyen Dynasty coming to China for investiture beseeching (1802-1858)

<i>No.</i>	<i>The year of coming to China for investiture beseeching</i>	<i>Leaders of ambassador delegations</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Mission</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1	1802	- Le Quang Dinh - Le Chinh Lo. - Le Gia Cat	- Head - Vice Head - Vice Head	Beseeching to confer kingship for Gia Long King and to change national name.	1/1804: The delegation came home.
2	1820	- Ngo Vi - Tran Ba Kien. - Hoang Van Thinh (Library of Nguyen Dynasty)	- Head - Vice Head - Vice Head	Announcing Gia Long King's funeral and beseeching to confer kingship for Minh Menh King.	At first, Nguyen Du was appointed as the Head. However, he died before the journey started. Ngo Thi Vi replaced Nguyen Du.
3	1841	- Le Van Phuc. - Nguyen Duc Hoat. - Bui Phu Phong (Library of Nguyen Dynasty)	- Head - Vice Head - Vice Head	Announcing funeral of Minh Menh King and beseeching to confer kingship for Thieu Tri King.	
4	1848	- Bui Quy - Vuong Huu Quang - Nguyen Thu.	- Head - Vice Head - Vice Head.	Announcing funeral of Thieu Tri King and beseeching to confer kingship for Tu Duc King.	

Source: National Library of Nguyen Dynasty: *True Records of Dai Nam*, Volume VI, VII, Education Publishing House; Sun (2005), p.80.

Table 3. Statistical table of Chinese ambassadors coming to confer kings of Nguyen Dynasty (1802 - 1858)

<i>No.</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Ambassadors of Qing Dynasty sent to Vietnam</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Mission</i>	<i>Place of conferring kingship</i>
1	1804	Led by Chief Ambassador Te Bo Sam	Provincial Judge of Quang Tay Province	Bringing edict, royal diploma and national seal to hold conferring ceremony for Gia Long.	Bac Thanh (Thang Long)
2	1821	Led by Chief Ambassador Phan Cung Thi.	Judge of Quang Tay Province	Bringing royal diploma to hold conferring ceremony for Minh Mang.	Bac Thanh (Thang Long)
3	1842	Led by Chief Ambassador Head Bao Thanh. (True records)	Judge of Quang Tay Province	Bringing royal diploma to hold conferring ceremony for Thieu Tri.	Bac Thanh (Thang Long)
4	1849	Led by Chief Ambassador Lao Sung Quang. (True records)	Judge (Mandarin of Justice) of Quang Tay Province	Bringing royal diploma to hold conferring ceremony for Tu Duc.	Phu Xuyen Capital City (Hue).

Source: Library of Nguyen Dynasty: *True Records of Dai Nam*, Volume VI, VII, Education Publishing House; Sun (2005), p.80.

The above table shows that in 1802 – 1858 period, after coming to throne, all kings including Gia Long, Minh Menh, Thieu Tri and Tu Duc sent ambassadors to China for investiture beseeching (in 1802, 1820, 1841, 1848). In

the first years of Gia Long Dynasty, tributes included: 2 kg of aloe, 2 pairs of elephant's tusk, 4 pieces of rhinoceros, 100 kg of frankincense, 200 kg of quickly burnt inferior incense, tender silk, plain silk, cloth (200 plates per each). From Minh Menh Dynasty afterwards, tributes decreased a half, including: 2 pairs of elephant's tusk, 4 pieces of rhinoceros, 50 kg of frankincense, 100 kg of quickly burnt inferior incense, tender silk, plain silk, cloth 100 plates per each (Compendium).

Four times Vietnamese ambassador delegations coming to China for investiture beseeching were followed by four times Chinese bringing seal of Qing Dynasty Emperor to hold conferring ceremony for Nguyen kings (in 1804, 1822, 1842, 1849). It can thus be seen that investiture beseeching of Nguyen kings and kingship conferring acceptance of Qing Emperor started from the demand of two countries with the aim at protecting benefits of the country and their own classes and families.

With such important meanings of investiture beseeching, kingship conferring ceremonies of Nguyen kings took place solemnly in Vietnam, from welcoming Chinese ambassadors to kingship conferring rites to rewarding and regaling after consecration ceremony. In details:

3.1.1 Ambassadors Welcoming Activity

When receiving the news that Chinese delegation was bringing royal diploma and national seal of Qing King to confer kingship, kings of Nguyen Dynasty mobilized all manpower to prepare the consecration ceremony, from articles, boats, palanquin, vehicles to welcoming ambassadors to building roads, bridges and halt stations, etc. Even the roads where the delegations passed by were all hung flowers at the gate and stuck red paper with two big words: "Respectfully welcome". On the province's wall was abundant of flags to welcome the delegations.

When Qing ambassadors came to the border pass, superior mandarins of the court and thousands of soldiers and escorts came to Nam Quan Pass to welcome. Typically in the third Gia Long year (1805), in the great ceremony welcoming Chinese ambassador to grant conferring diploma, Gia Long sent 3 receivers to the border pass who were important mandarins (2 civil mandarins and 1 military mandarin), 10 musicians, 30 soldiers with long sword and 3,500 mandarins and mobile, fixed soldiers, 30 male elephants and coolies to welcome right at Bac Ninh Border (Compendium).

On the way to the place of kingship conferring ceremony, series of stations or halt stations were built. These were luxurious houses for the delegations and escorts to take a rest. Typically in the halt station in Dong Dang in Minh Menh Dynasty, when Qing's ambassadors came in, the province mandarins ordered to bring many articles to welcome (Compendium).

If in Gia Long, Minh Menh, Thieu Tri reign, kingship conferring ceremony was hold in Bac Thanh (Hanoi), in Tu Duc reign, the King commanded Thanh's ambassadors to come to Hue for conferring kingship. In Hue Capital, Tu Duc also mobilized manpower and materials to prepare for welcoming Qing's ambassadors solemnly: "When Qing's ambassadors came to Huong River wharf, yellow flags were hung on the platform. Ground force was connected to naval force from this wharf to the halt station in the imperial city with rows of flags and lances and 200 public horses. New welcoming mandarins appoint staffs, assistants, secretaries and interpreters along with 12 mandarins at fourth and fifth grade kneeling at two road sides ..." (Compendium).

Especially, Kinh Thien Temple in the North City (in Gia Long, Minh Menh, Thieu Tri reigns) and Thai Hoa Temple in Phu Xuan – Hue (in Tu Duc reign) where the kingship conferring great ceremony was taken place were arranged carefully by the mandarins of Nguyen Dynasty. From the place to put incense, incense table, place for the King to kowtow to place for Qing's ambassadors and mandarins of the great ceremony to stand, all were fixed: "Before the ceremony, Ministry of Rites had arranged imperial palace in the middle of Kinh Thien Temple, incense table in the South of the palace, place for the King to kowtow in front of the incense table; place for Qing's ambassador to stand in the right of incense table, one in charge in the left of the palace, two interior soldiers, 1 receiving diploma and 1 receiving seal in the right side of the palace. 8 exterior soldiers stood in the North of the place, right and left of stone terrace and paving path" (Compendium).

These detailed records in the history showed the careful preparation to welcome Chinese ambassadors of the king and mandarins in Nguyen Dynasty. This, on one hand, showed the respect of Nguyen Dynasty with the delegations – representative of Qing Dynasty, on the other hand showed the importance of investiture beseeching for Nguyen Dynasty in the context at that time.

3.1.2 Kingship Conferring Great Ceremony

Following was the kingship conferring ceremony for Nguyen kings. All rites took place in Kinh Thien Temple and Thai Hoa Temple with strict sequence and solemn atmosphere.

Before the ceremony, all members of royal family and mandarins wore costumes and stood for waiting. On time of ceremony, as being arranged, the receiving mandarins along with imperial guards with enough equipages and music came to the temple and kowtowed imperial court. After a roll of drum, imperial-court welcoming rite from the halt station to the temple took place in strict sequence “close mandarins along with welcoming mandarins climbed on horses and preceded. Followed were imperial equipages, music, incense table, sword team, imperial court, palanquin of Qing’s ambassadors, palanquin, horses of counselors, horses or escorts, horse hammocks and interpreters. Naval soldiers came after to escort” (Compendium).

At that time, the King himself kowtowed solemnly right at the temple gate to welcome. Until the imperial court passed by, the King stood up and greeted mandarins. After the king and mandarins of Nguyen Dynasty and Qing’s ambassadors stepped into the fixed positions, the diploma receiving ceremony took place. At that time, all actions and behaviors of granting and receiving diploma followed the defined procedures, solemnly and formally. The King and mandarins of Nguyen Dynasty bowed lowly when announcing and receiving the diploma from Qing’s ambassadors, raised and handed to the diploma receiving mandarin. These actions showed the respect of the “vassal” with the diploma of Chinese “Son of the Heaven”. The respect in conferring ceremony was recorded truly through the eyes of foreigners at that time. Here is a paragraph describing kingship conferring ceremony of Qing’s ambassadors to the kings of Nguyen Dynasty recorded by Diocesan Pellesin and extracted by Cadiere in his writing in the Book *Friends of Hue Ancient Capital* in 1916: “On the fixed date of announcing the diploma, An Nam King along with the Prince and mandarins came to the guest house of representatives to hold the ceremony receiving documents from the Emperor and dragon casket. After kowtowing as procedures in front of conferred articles, the King came back to the palace. The conferring diploma in dragon casket and presents from the Emperor were placed in a separate carriage and brought to the palace. Chinese ambassador delegations were led by the Emperor’s pennant, drum and musicians. They passed through the main door, followed by presents. They stepped on stairs of the King palace where an incense table was placed in the middle with two tables at two sides. The middle table was to put presents from the Chinese Emperor. The King, prince and mandarins of An Nam kneeed three times, kowtowed nine times in front of these presents and then kowtowed in front of the table with conferring diploma to listen someone reading it. After completed reading, the diploma was put again on the table. The King then kneeed three times, kowtowed nine times again and stood up. Chinese ambassadors said goodbye. The King and escorts saw them to the door and came back to the palace...” (Dang et al., 1997).

Through the above detailed description, we can clearly see that: Kings of Nguyen Dynasty had to show modesty in implementing solemn rites and were even tired to receive the diploma from Chinese Emperor. The careful preparation and kowtowing behavior when receiving the diploma from representative of the Qing Dynasty were the specification of respect altitude according to the rites and rules of a “vassal” for the great Dynasty.

3.1.3 Regaling and Presents to Chinese Ambassadors after Conferring Ceremony

Not only regaling and giving presents for Chinese ambassadors right when coming to Vietnam, after the kingship conferring ceremony, kings of Nguyen Dynasty also rewarded and regaled these ambassadors copiously. According to *Compendium of Institutions and Administrative Cases of Dai Nam*: “Banquet was always regaled on ceremony day and returning day with a first-class big feast, 50 bowls per feast, 7 second-class feasts, 40 bowls per feast, 25 third-class feasts, 30 bowls per feast. The banquet was hold in 2 days after the ceremony. First-class feast had 16 dishes, second-class feasts had 12 dishes” (Compendium) with all kinds of rare and precious food. Besides, Nguyen kings carefully prepared hearty presents for Chinese ambassadors from Superior Ambassador to palanquin coolies and servants. Although the number of presents was different in different reigns, this number was not small and had real economic value. In terms of quality of presents, besides gold and silver, they were special products of Southern land and were selected very carefully, such as: rhino’s horn, elephant’s tusk, cinnamon, swallow’s nest, incense, chiffon, silk, etc. Besides, local mandarins also gave presents to Chinese ambassadors on the way to Nam Quan Pass.

Above all, we can realize the “modesty” of Nguyen kings and mandarins from the way of welcoming Chinese ambassadors, performing solemn kingship conferring ceremony, rewarding to regaling Chinese ambassadors after conferring ceremony with the aim at receiving investiture from the Chinese Emperor. This “modesty” itself reflected the importance of investiture beseeching of Nguyen kings. On one hand, it maintained the friendship between Vietnam and China, on the other hand, it ensured the official and regularized power of Nguyen Dynasty and served class power of Nguyen family in long term. This was the behavior assuming to be an obedient vassal and modesty with China which all Vietnam dynasties applied. However, the most solemn, costly and exhausted for mandarins and residents was in Nguyen Dynasty.

Therefore, in the first half of 19th Century, Nguyen kings maintained these traditional diplomatic rituals. Proceeding former kings in the history, first kings of Nguyen Dynasty sent ambassadors to China right after coming to the throne to inform the Chinese Emperor and beseech for investiture to regularize power. As a “superior” “great country” for “vassal”, Chinese emperors sent ambassadors to Vietnam bringing conferring diploma and organizing solemn kingship conferring ceremony in Vietnam Capital City (firstly in Thang Long Ancient Capital, then in Hue Capital City from Tu Duc reign).

3.2 Investiture Beseeching in Diplomatic Relationship between Vietnam and China since French Colonists Invaded Vietnam (1858)

Tu Duc, Duc Duc, Hiep Hoa and Kien Phuc kings ruled the power from 1858 to 1885. Similar to former Gia Long, Minh Menh, Thieu Tri and Tu Duc kings, Duc Duc, Hiep Hoa and Kien Phuc kings wished to be conferred kingship by Chinese emperor right after coming to throne to confirm their orthodox. However, investiture beseeching faced lots of difficulties in this stage.

After the death of Tu Duc, Duc Duc came to the throne (1883) but only 3 days after, the throne was discrowned by Ton That Thuyet and Nguyen Van Tuong. Hiep Hoa King succeeded the throne in the context all power was hold by these two usurpers and could be dethroned at any time. In such context, Hiep Hoa sent ambassadors to Qing Dynasty for investiture beseeching to enhance his position in 1883. However, at that time, Dong Kinh region (Bac Ky) was seized by French army, thus the highway could not be used. With this difficulty, Hiep Hoa entreated Qing Dynasty to go by seaway and was approved. However, Hiep Hoa was poisoned by Ton That Thuyet and Nguyen Van Tuong before doing so, thus investiture beseeching failed (Yu, 2009).

To Kien Phuc reign, the King sent ambassador to Qing Dynasty for investiture beseeching which was the last ambassador delegation of Nguyen Dynasty. However, Kien Phuc died for illness after a half of year on the throne. According, investiture beseeching of this King was unsuccessful.

Therefore, in this stage, although all kings had investiture beseeching expectation from Chinese emperor as a long-term tradition when coming to throne, this could not be implemented due to both subjective and objective reasons, mainly due to short time holding the power.

Therefore, similar to former feudal dynasties, Nguyen kings attached special attention to investiture beseeching from 1802 to 1885. From Gia Long, Minh Menh, Thieu Tri, Tu Duc to Duc Duc, Hiep Hoa, Kien Phuc kings, after coming to the throne, had common wish to be conferred kingship by Chinese emperors to confirm orthodox and regularize their existence, ensure security, maintain friendship with this giant neighbor and define their role with other countries in the region. However, this activity in this period had continuous variation due to constant change of historical context and of force interrelation between two countries.

It can be seen that in Gia Long, Minh Menh, Thieu Tri reign, Nguyen kings had to come to Bac Thanh (Hanoi) to receive conferring diploma of Qing Emperor and kingship conferring ceremony took place in Kinh Thien Temple. Up to Tu Duc reign, the King forced Qing ambassadors to Hue – Capital City of Nguyen Dynasty for conferring kingship and the ceremony took place solemnly in Thai Hoa Temple. This was not only a big change in an important diplomatic activity between Vietnam and China that time but also a great success in diplomatic affairs of Nguyen Dynasty. Tu Duc then had not to debase himself to Thang Long as former kings to receive conferring diploma of Chinese Dynasty. On the contrary, Qing ambassadors had to confer diploma for Nguyen kings right in Hue Capital City. Thus, the costs for journey could be saved, sudden events in the long journey of Nguyen kings could be avoided, Tu Duc King could confirm his orthodox in succeeding to the throne and “China had to completely admit a new dynasty separated from Le Dynasty: Nguyen Dynasty with independent mission in Vietnam history” (Nguyen, 2005).

In addition, if the journey of sending ambassadors for investiture beseeching and kingship conferring between two countries was favorable on both highway and seaway before 1858, this journey was obstructed by strong impacts of French colonists’ invasion in Vietnam after this year. Typically, in 1883, when Hiep Hoa King intended to send ambassadors to Qing Dynasty for investiture beseeching, highway could not be used because Dong Kinh (Bac Ky) region had been occupied by French army. Therefore, Hiep Hoa had to entreat Dynasty to permit seaway.

In addition to the intervention from the third factor as French colonialists, investiture beseeching and kingship consecration faced other difficulties after 1858 among which the short time of holding power of Nguyen kings could not be ignored (a king held power only for 3 days as Duc Duc King). As a result, if in the first half of 19th Century, the first kings of Nguyen Dynasty (Gia Long, Minh Menh, Thieu Tri, Tu Duc) sent ambassadors to China for investiture beseeching and received conferring diploma from the Chinese Emperor, after 1858, some kings could not beseech investiture due to holding power in too short time (such as Duc Duc, Hiep Hoa kings), some

kings sent ambassadors to China for investiture beseeching but died for illness before receiving conferring diploma (such as Kien Phuc King).

Therefore, compared to previous period, in the second half of 19th Century, investiture beseeching and kingship consecration – one of most important activities in Vietnam – China diplomatic relationship in feudal reign – experienced certain changes according to *decreasing trend*: Only Kien Phuc King sent ambassadors to China for investiture beseeching and no king (even Kien Phuc King) was conferred kingship after 1858.

3.4 *The Nature of Investiture Beseeching in Diplomatic Relationship between Vietnam and China in Feudal Reign*

Vietnam is a small country adjacent to the much bigger strong Chinese Monarchy and is regularly affected by expansion and seizing plot of China. Therefore, to ensure friendship between two countries and avoid blooding war, Vietnam's forefathers applied peaceful diplomatic practice with Vietnam's behavior natures for thousands of years. That is: Vietnam declared ourselves to be a small country, vassal, beseeching investiture and bringing tribute to China. This thought and diplomatic orientation were applied by all dynasties when behaving with neighboring China and Nguyen Dynasty was not an exception.

It can be said that, despite of being greatly affected by historical context of each specific stage, diplomatic relationship between Vietnam and China in feudal reign was generally built mainly on the base of investiture beseeching and tribute. This is considered as a special relationship between China and neighboring countries among whom Vietnam is evaluated as the most typical. Under the impact of Chinese philosophic thought, mainly Confucianism, Vietnam kings always placed their power granted by the "god" under the power of Chinese Dynasty and considered as proper with natural law in the relationship between big country and small country. In spite of proclaiming as "Emperor" with his people, Vietnam kings did not feel secured about their power inside the country and with neighboring countries until being recognized by Chinese Dynasty through conferring kingship diploma. Therefore, Vietnam kings always beseeched to be given kingship after coming to throne. Even in Nguyen Dynasty, although the Capital City was in Hue, the first kings of Nguyen Dynasty had to personally go to Thang Long to hold kingship announcement ceremony. Up until Tu Duc reign, this ceremony took place in Hue with solemn, costly rituals in accordance to traditional ceremonial sequence.

That is the appearance; however, how should we interpret *the natures of investiture beseeching and tribute*?

In the thought of Nguyen Dynasty – representative for the whole Vietnam nation at that time and also Vietnam's thought for thousands of years, the "independence" term means a peaceful country, no foreign aggression, clear fixed border between the South and the North and "dependence" means loss of independence, being invaded land, territory by foreign countries, being restrained, oppressed in all fields. Comparing this way of understanding and investiture beseeching, tribute activities at that time, these activities did not violate "independence" rule, i.e. not suffering from "dependence".

It is not by chance that, when commenting Vietnam – China relationship in feudal reign, Japanese scholar Tsuboi had to admit that: "Vietnam history is the history of independence affirmation with China" (Tsuboi, 1992) because standing behind the above allegiance assumption is constant effort to confirm and maintain real independence of Vietnam in the relationship with China. Therefore, although ambassadors of Vietnam court kneeed in front of Chinese emperor in Beijing as envoys of a "Vietnam King", leaders of Vietnam Country at that time proclaimed as Emperor, as "Son of Heaven" with their people and smaller surrounding countries – equal to Emperor of Chinese Dynasty. Especially, to prove Vietnam as "Southern Dynasty" equal to China "Northern Dynasty", Nguyen dynasty made constant effort to maintain vassal system in Southeast Asia where China had little relationship and force these countries to admit the greatness of Nguyen Dynasty as the way Nguyen Dynasty admitted Chinese Dynasty, at least in formal term. Accordingly, these colonial countries in the West and South had to receive conferring diploma from Nguyen Dynasty and submitted tributes as regulated by Nguyen Dynasty as the same way Nguyen Dynasty behaved with Qing Dynasty. Obviously, with the thought of strong superiority, Nguyen Dynasty considered itself as a "orthodox tradition and Confucianism protector" (Tsuboi, 1992), on one hand owing allegiance to Qing Dynasty, on the other hand considering itself as a "China in the South", i.e. in the central of Southern World, equal to Chinese neighbor in the North.

Moreover, despite of nominally "Son of Heaven" heading the "World", in fact, China knew very little about internal affairs of Vietnam at that time. Notices were just diplomatic rituals such as: this king came to the throne, another king passed away. Even in 19th Century, although France invaded Vietnam in 1858, up until 1870, Vietnam feudal court officially announced to China. Or Vietnam signed the Giap Tuat Agreement with France recognizing diplomatic dependence of Vietnam with France in March 1874, up until the middle of 1875, Qing Dynasty knew that from French colonists. Moreover, the agreement signing between Nguyen Dynasty and French

colonists regardless of permission or acceptance of Qing Dynasty reflected “formal” nature of the “Mother Country – Vassal” relationship between China and Vietnam at that time.

4. Conclusion

In peacetime, Vietnam’s leaders had conducted a clever practice in thousands of years, starting from Khuc Thua Du as “Real independence, nominal vassal” to get normal diplomatic relationship with such a big country as China, to hold fast to national independence and sovereignty. Investiture beseeching of Vietnam feudal dynasties with China also aimed at this supreme purpose.

In present context, when globalization and internationalization trend is attracting every country, peace, cooperation and development becomes the general trend of all countries all over the world, diplomatic work plays a significant role for all countries in holding independence and expanding relationship with other countries. Although the relationship with big countries is different in the past and at present, the behaviors bequeathed by Vietnam’ ancestors can suggest proper policies for us to behave with big countries in present context.

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