



**THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SALIENT VIETNAMESE
ZEN MASTERS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF
BUDDHISM DURING LY AND TRAN DYNASTIES**

**Ven. Nguyen Ngoc Minh
(Thich Minh Duyen)**

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment Of
The Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
(Buddhist Studies)

Graduate School
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The Graduate School of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University has approved this thesis entitled "*The Contributions of Salient Vietnamese Zen Masters to The Development of Buddhism During Ly and Tran Dynasties*" as a part of education according to its curriculum of the Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies.

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Abstract

This is a qualitative research three objectives: (1) To study the conditions of problem of Buddhism in Vietnam before Ly and Tran dynasties; (2) To study salient Vietnamese Masters during Ly and Tran dynasties; (3) To study the contributions made by Salient Vietnamese Zen Masters to the development of Buddhism during Ly and Tran dynasties.

This research shows that after becoming independent in 938 from Chinese, conditions of problem about politics, economy after wars so weak and Ngo, Dinh, Tien Le dynasties which were three short dynasties cannot play a vital role for the development of Buddhism during these dynasties. And then, many salients Vietnamese zen Master and Buddhist Kings who had contributions to the development of Buddhism in Ly and Tran dynasties. The Buddhist King was considered as the most tolerant King in history of Vietnam. The King always took care of the life of people, prisons,

and even enemies. The reason for this was because the King was taught the teachings of Buddha and lived with the people from his childhood. As a result, King contributed greatly to the development of Buddhism during his reign, Zen Masters as well as Buddhist Kings contributed to many aspects of society such as politics, culture, arts, economy, and education. Therefore, Buddhism in both Ly and Tran dynasties was very developed in all of fields, this is the most glorious dynasty in feudal history of Vietnam. The historians called this was golden age of Vietnamese Buddhism.

Acknowledgement

his thesis is submitted to the International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC) at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Art in Buddhist Studies. First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Most Ven. Prof. Dr. Phra Brahmapundit, the rector of MCU and the president of the International Association of Buddhist Universities (IABU), to Most Ven. Prof. Dr. Phra Rajapariyatkavi and Ven. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Phra Hansa Dhammhaso, the acting director of IBSC for setting up the International Programme in Buddhist Studies. I am very thankful to have the opportunity to study under IBSC at MCU. And I would like to express my appreciation and thankfulness for those who taught and supported me during the course of my study.

Then, my deepest gratitude goes to Ven. Dr. Phra Somphong Khunakaro, the chairman of my Master's Degree Supervisory Committee. Next, I am very sincerest gratitude for the help of Asst. Prof. Dr. Sanu Mahatthanadull, a member of my Supervisory Committee and also a lecturer of IBSC as well as Faculties Buddhism. I would like to say thanks to general guidance and most helpful advice.

I would like to express my thanks to my teachers of English for helping me write this research grammatically.

The last and the most important saying, I would like to express my great master, my parents, all of my teachers, and supporters who gave me life and supported me on the way to get wisdom of Buddhism.

Ven. Nguyen Ngoc Minh

List of Abbreviations

A.D	: Anno Domini
B.E	: Buddhist Era
BPS	: Buddhist Publication Society
C.E	: Christian Era
Ed.	: Editor
Etc.	: Et cetera/ and others
HCM	: Ho Chi Minh
Ibid.	: ibidden/ in the same book
MCU	: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University
M.A	: Master of Arts
No.	: Number
Op.cit.	: Opera citato/ as referred
P(p).	: Page (s)
Pub.	: Published, publication
S	: Sanskrit
Tr.	: Translator
USA	: United States of America
Vol(s)	: Volume(s)
Ven	: Venerable

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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Problems

Buddhism was originally started in India and propagated to neighboring countries. Firstly, Buddhism was spread to western Asian countries then to Tibet, China, Korea, Japan and south Asian countries. Vietnam is one of the countries in this effective scale.¹ According to many historians, Buddhism arrived in Vietnam directly from India by Business men at that time. Therefore, the word of “Buddha” was directly translated to Vietnamese “Bụt”. Buddhism was introduced to Vietnam in the first century CE². Going through many ups and downs as well as events of Vietnam history, Buddhism has gone with the Vietnamese nation during 2000 years. Especially, under the Ly and Tran dynasties from 10th – to 14th century, Buddhism became state religion contributing considerably to the glorious career of the nation and it was called the golden age of Vietnamese Buddhism and feudal system. The big question for this is that why did Buddhism develop gloriously during Ly and Tran dynasties?

Firstly, conditions of problem about politics, economy, thought in Ngo, Dinh, Tien Le dynasties which were three short dynasties before Ly and Tran dynasties played a vital role for the development of Buddhism during these dynasties. After becoming independent in 938 from Chinese, Kings of Ngo, Dinh, Tien Le dynasties supported Buddhism with all their heart, and appearing of famous Masters such as Khuong Viet, Phap Thuan. However, Buddhism could not develop in these dynasties because of many reasons.

¹Thich Mat The, Viet Nam Phat Giao Su Luoc (**Brief History of Buddhism in Vietnam**), (Da Nang: Minh Duc Press, 1970), p.5.

²Nguyen Lang, Viet Nam Phat Giao Su Luoc (**Essay on the History of Vietnamese Buddhism**), (Ha Noi: Literature Publishing House, 2000), p.9.

At first, the reign time of these three dynasties were very short. For instance, Ngo dynasty lasted 21 years with two kings, Dinh dynasty lasted 12 years with two kings and Tien Le dynasty lasted 29 years with two kings. Secondly, Vietnam had a lot of civil war and war fighting against Chinese at that time such as disorder among twelve armies in the end of Ngo dynasty, the war fighting against Chinese in the beginning of Tien Le dynasty. Therefore, economy in these dynasties was very poor so having no time for Vietnamese people to think about religion and thought, they spent most of time for the independence of nation and the survival of themselves. Thirdly, after the death of emperor Le Dai Hanh in 1005, his sons fought together for the throne, finally the winner was Le Long Dinh. However, his own entertainment was killing.

According to historians, he executed prisons by using straw grass to tie on the body of prisons then burned until they died. Or asking Chinese, Lieu Thu Tam, used short and blunt knife to cut. The result of this is that the prisons screamed painfully and the king smiled with pleasure. Moreover, he also broke sugarcane on the head of Buddhist monk, Quach Ngang and feigned accidentally to make monk's head bleeding after that he smiled happily³. This is the reason why people called him as the most notorious tyrant in Vietnamese history. At that time, Buddhism had to face many difficulties because of this tyrant.

When the king Le Long Dinh died in 1009, under the support of Venerable Van Hanh⁴ and Dao Cam Moc, Ly Cong Uan who was palace guard commander ascended to throne. Ly Cong Uan was known as the founder of Ly dynasty, beginning of golden era in Vietnamese history

³Le Manh That, *Lich Su Phat Giao Viet Nam (History of Buddhism in Vietnam)*, Vol.I, (Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 2006), p.521.

⁴Zen Master Van Hanh's date of birth was unknown. At the young age, he was extraordinarily intelligent. He left home at the age of 21. He died on the full moon night of 1018. See Le Manh That, *History of Buddhism in Vietnam*, op.cit., p.523. Zen Master Van Hanh, one of the most excellent intellectual at that time, had a good relationship with Le Dai Hanh (941-1005) who found the First Le Dynasty (980-1009) and helped this outstanding talent king to resist the invasion of Tong in the north and Chiem Thanh in the south. See Le Manh That, *History of Buddhism in Vietnam*, op.cit., p.549.

with great achievements about economy, politics, education, arts, religion... Ly dynasty lasted 216 years with 9 kings and laid down a concrete foundation for the nation of Vietnam. All the Kings of the Ly dynasty impregnated the teachings of the Buddha, so they supported Buddhism with all their heart.

In addition, there were many salient Zen Masters appearing in this period such as Venerable Van Hanh who was eminent monk with deep knowledge and morality. Venerable Vien Thong who was imperial teacher. These salient Masters have had many contributions in politics, education, culture... which made Buddhism developed in this period. For example, Zen Master Van Hanh suggested the King Ly Thai To moving capital of Vietnam from Hoa Lu to Dai La, gave advice to the king for politics or economy and built a lot of temples nationwide, other masters opened schools to teach the teachings of the Buddha and general knowledge for Buddhist monks and civilians.

Moreover, Ty Ni Da Luu Chi Zen sect⁵, Vo Ngon Thong Zen sect⁶, Thao Duong Zen sect⁷ were three main sects in Ly dynasty. Especially, the third one which had scholarly tendency and significant impact on the Kings, government officials and intellectuals was born in Ly dynasty. The last King of Ly dynasty was princess because her father,

⁵The founder of this Zen sect is Zen Master Ty Ni Da Luu Chi who came from the south of India. Firstly, he went to China in 562 AD, finally came into Dai Viet in 580 AD. This Zen sect received mostly effect from India, so it was handed – down in nineteen generations from 580 to 1213 AD. See Nguyen Lang, **Essay on the History of Vietnamese Buddhism**, (Ha Noi: Literature Publishing House, 2000), pp.111 – 115.

⁶Zen Master Vo Ngon Thong who came to Dai Viet from China in 820 established this Zen sect. Vo Ngon Thong Zen sect was handed – down in four centuries (from 9th to 13th century) with seventeen generations and received deep influence of China Buddhism. See Nguyen Lang, **Essay on the History of Vietnamese Buddhism**, op.cit., pp.148 & 175.

⁷Zen Master Thao Duong who came from China was arrested by King Ly Thanh Tong in Champa while he was carrying on missionary work in this country. After the King recognized that he was Zen Master, he was nominated for teacher of the prince. And then, he established Thao Duong Zen sect. this Zen sect included six generations and had deep influence to two prior Zen sects. See Nguyen Lang, **Essay on the History of Vietnamese Buddhism**, op.cit., pp.179-183.

the King Ly Hue Tong, did not have son. Under the arrangement of Tran Thu Do, Ly Chieu Hoang got married with Tran Canh, then abdicated for him. Therefore, Tran Canh was the first King of Tran dynasty. Tran dynasty lasted 157 years with 12 Kings and led the Vietnamese people to carry out a war of resistance against Mongol Yuans three times successfully in 1258, 1285, 1288. For this reason, this is the most glorious dynasty in feudal history of Vietnam. According to many historians, Tran Nhan Tong, the third king of Tran dynasty, is the most cleared-sighted King in history of Vietnam. This King also became a salient monk in 1299 and established Truc Lam Zen sect⁸ which is one of meditation schools developing in Vietnam nowadays. Truc Lam Zen sect which was combination of three Zen sects in Ly dynasty was the unique sect in Tran dynasty.

Under the support of the government, Buddhism in this dynasty was very developed in many fields. Moreover, with the appearance of famous Zen Masters such as Tran Thai Tong, Tue Trung Thuong Sy, Huyen Quang, Phap Loa. They had special position in Buddhist, some monks taught Dhamma and meditation, others contributed to politics and social activities. The specific characteristic of Tran Buddhism was entering the world: Buddhism served spiritual life as well as social life. Therefore, Buddhism in both Ly and Tran dynasties was very developed in all of fields, the historians called this was golden age of Vietnamese Buddhism.

1.2 Objectives of the Research

1.2.1 To study the conditions of problem of Buddhism in Vietnam before Ly and Tran dynasties.

1.2.2 To study salient Vietnamese Masters during Ly and Tran dynasties.

⁸The founder of this Zen sect was a famous King, Tran Nhan Tong, who has led the Vietnamese people to carry out a war of resistance against Mongol Yuans successfully, brought the peace and prosperity for Vietnamese at that time. Tran Nhan Tong, Phap Loa and Huyen Quang were three outstanding patriarchies in this sect. see Nguyen Lang, **Essay on the History of Vietnamese Buddhism**, p.279.

1.2.3 To study the contributions made by Salient Vietnamese Zen Masters to the development of Buddhism during Ly and Tran dynasties.

1.3 Statements of the Problems Desired to Know

1.3.1 What are the conditions of problem of Buddhism in Vietnam before Ly and Tran dynasties?

1.3.2 Who are salient Vietnamese Masters during Ly and Tran dynasties?

1.3.3 What are the contributions of Salient Vietnamese Zen Masters to the development of Vietnam Buddhism during Ly and Tran dynasties?

1.4 Scope of the Research

1.4.1 Scope of sources of scripture

This research will be focused on primary sources, Tipitaka, commentaries printed books, the magazines, encyclopedias, handouts, etc. which their contents and commentaries relate to the history of Vietnam and Buddhism in Ly and Tran dynasties and Buddhism in this period. The research also bases on the data which collected from origin books and electronic devices such as PDF books, E-books, internet, etc.

1.4.2 Scope of the content

This thesis will be following to each object that has shown in the table contents such as studying conditions of problem of Buddhism in Vietnam before Ly and Tran dynasties, studying who were famous or salient Masters and their contributions to the development of Buddhism during these two dynasties...to show deeply mean in every chapter.

1.5 Definition of the Terms Used in the Research

1.5.1 **Contributions** refers to the contributions on education, arts, economic, politics, religion and help this Buddhism to develop gloriously during Ly and Tran dynasties.

1.5.2 **Salient Vietnamese Zen Masters** mean famous Masters appeared during Ly dynasties, namely Ly Thai Tong, Ly Thanh Tong, Van Hanh, and Tran dynasties, namely Tran Thai Tong, Tran Nhan Tong, Tue Trung Thuong Si, Phap Loa, Huyen Quang .

1.5.3 **Buddhism** refers to both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism was spread to Vietnam in the 1st century and became state religion during Ly and Tran dynasties.

1.5.4 **Development** means development of Buddhism during Ly and Tran dynasties means successfulness in spreading the teachings of Buddha to all Vietnamese people as well as the development about education, religion, politics, arts, economy, etc.

1.5.5 **Ly Dynasty** refers to one of feudal dynasties in Vietnamese history. This dynasty was established when Ly Cong Uan came to the throne in 1009. Ly dynasty lasted 216 years with 9 generations.

1.5.6 **Tran Dynasty** refers to the most glorious dynasty in feudal history of Vietnam. This dynasty began when Tran Thai Tong acceded to the throne in 1225. This dynasty lasted 157 years with 12 Kings.

1.6 Review of Related Literature and Research Works

Some research works on Vietnam history and Buddhism in the 10th -14th century period. They outline the problems of Buddhism in Vietnam before Ly and Tran dynasties as well as the history of salient Vietnamese Master during Ly and Tran dynasties. Especially, they also present the contributions of these Zen Masters to the development of Buddhism in Vietnam at that time.

1.6.1 Le Manh That, **History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, Vols. II, and III (Lich Su Phat Giao Viet Nam tap II, III), Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 2006⁹.

Abstract: In this work, the author provides a lot of information about Vietnamese Buddhism which is unknown to most Vietnamese people and history of Vietnamese salient Masters. According to this book, Vietnamese Buddhism can be divided into three periods. The first period is from beginning to Ly Bon came to the throne and established the state of Van Xuan. The second one is from the establishment of Phap Van Zen School to the end of Tran dynasty. And the last one is from Le dynasty to modern time. Moreover, this work has been highly appreciated by Vietnamese historians.

1.6.2 Thich Thanh Tu, **Vietnamese Zen Masters** (Thien Su Vietnam), Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 1995¹⁰.

Abstract: This book shows history of Zen Masters in Vietnam from beginning to 18th century. This is a useful book to study salient Master in Vietnam during Ly and Tran dynasties.

1.6.3 Thich Mat The, **Brief History of Buddhism in Vietnam** (Viet Nam Phat Giao Su Luoc), Da Nang: Minh Duc Press, 1970¹¹.

Abstract: This book presents history of the Buddha, the history of China Buddhism. Especially, this work states the development of Vietnamese Buddhism through feudal dynasties. From the first century to the twentieth century CE, many historical researchers highly evaluate its value. Therefore, the work was regarded as the key text for many scholars who researched Vietnamese Buddhism shortly after its publication.

⁹Le Manh That, **History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, Vols. II, and III (Lich Su Phat Giao Viet Nam tap II, III), Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 2006, p. 334.

¹⁰Thich Thanh Tu, **Vietnamese Zen Masters** (Thien Su Vietnam), Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 1995, p. 53.

¹¹Thich Mat The, **Brief History of Buddhism in Vietnam** (Viet Nam Phat Giao Su Luoc), Da Nang: Minh Duc Press, 1970, p. 123.

1.6.4 Le Manh That, **A Complete Work of Tran Nhan Tong** (Toan Tap Tran Nhan Tong), Ho Chi Minh City: General Publishing House, 2006¹².

Abstract: It is said that this is the first and very valuable work about the biography of Tran Nhan Tong who was the third King of Tran dynasty and the Truc Lam Zen School which was established in Tran dynasty by Tran Nhan Tong.

1.6.5 Le Manh That, **A Study of Collected Prominent Figures of Zen Garden** (Nghien Cuu Thien Uyen Tap Anh), Ho Chi Minh City: Phuong Dong publishing House, 2005.¹³

Abstract: In this work, the author rewrites the biography, activities distributions of sixty-eight Vietnamese Masters to Vietnamese society. Thien Uyen Tap Anh was implicitly admitted that this is very valuable work not only about literature but also about history, philosophy, folk culture...¹⁴Therefore, this work plays an important role in history of Vietnamese Masters and culture. There would be very little known of Vietnamese culture without this book.

1.6.6 Nguyen Lang, Viet Nam Phat Giao Su Luan Toan Tap [**A Complete Work of the Historical Interpretation in Vietnamese Buddhism**]. Ha Noi: Literature Publishing House, 2014¹⁵.

Abstract: in this book, Nguyen Lang has supplied serious documentations and general view about Buddhism history of Vietnam from beginning to the modern for the cultural, literature researchers and scholars who pay attention to Vietnamese Buddhism history. After publication, this work has become a key text for researchers and appeared

¹²Le Manh That, **A Complete Work of Tran Nhan Tong** (Toan Tap Tran Nhan Tong), Ho Chi Minh City: General Publishing House, 2006, p. 178.

¹³ Le Manh That, **A Study of Collected Prominent Figures of Zen Garden**, (HCM: Institute of Vietnam Buddhist Research, 2005, p. 267.

¹⁴Ngô Đức Thọ-Nguyễn Thủy Nga, tr. **Prominent Figures of Zen Garden**, (the sub – Institute of researching Buddhism and literature publishing house, 1990), p.5.

¹⁵Nguyen Lang, Viet Nam Phat Giao Su Luan Toan Tap [**A Complete Work of the Historical Interpretation in Vietnamese Buddhism**]. Ha Noi: Literature Publishing House, 2014. p. 184.

in learning life of scholars. Moreover, this work was highly appreciated by not only scholar but also reader. One of the reasons for this is that the author of this book is famous Zen Master in Vietnam and the world, Thich Nhat Hanh, he chose mode of presenting flexibly between writing and commenting history.

1.6.7 Le Manh That, **Collection of Vietnamese Buddhist Literature** vols. II, and III (Tong Hop Van Hoc Phat Giao Viet Nam tap II, III), Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 2001¹⁶.

Abstract: These two works are analysis and comments of the author about famous authors and literature works of Buddhism from the 1st century to 20th century, especially in Ly and Tran dynasties. Additionally, the author has also showed many interesting discoveries which have been little known by majority of readers.

1.7 Research Methodology

This thesis is a documentary research. Therefore, research process can be divided into the main stages as follows:

1.7.1 Reading and collecting all the concerned documents, then analyzing the raw data as well as systematize the collected data in a carefully noted structure.

1.7.2 Constructing the overall outline of the research paper and writing manuscript.

1.7.3 Collecting data from all the sources in which the information about Buddhism development, famous monks and lay Buddhists, history of Ly and Tran dynasties as well as the contributions of salient Zen Masters to Buddhism including related history books and stories.

1.7.4 Analysis and synthesis

¹⁶ Le Manh That, **Collection of Vietnamese Buddhist Literature** vols. II, and III (Tong Hop Van Hoc Phat Giao Viet Nam tap II, III), Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 2001, p. 255.

1.7.5 Conclusion and suggestion for further research.

1.8 Advantages Expected to Obtain from the Research

After finishing the study, the following results and advantages may be obtained:

1.8.1 Knowing the conditions of problem of Buddhism in Vietnam before Ly and Tran dynasties.

1.8.2 Knowing salient Vietnamese Masters during Ly and Tran dynasties.

1.8.3 Understanding the contributions of salient Vietnamese Zen Masters to the development of Vietnam Buddhism during Ly and Tran dynasties.

Chapter II

The Conditions of Problems of Buddhism in Vietnam before Ly and Tran Dynasties

More than one-thousand years been controlled by north feudal dynasties, Vietnam has begun independent era be under the leadership of three first dynasties such as Ngo dynasty (939-968), Dinh dynasty (968-981) and former Le (981-1009).¹⁷ However, Vietnamese nation will have continued struggling for the independence and freedom of their country as fighting against the disorder among twelve armies at their home and the war fighting against Tong dynasty of China.

2.1 The Establishment and Conditions of the Problem of Buddhism in Ngo, Dinh, Tien Le Dynasties

2.1.1 Ngô dynasty

Firstly, Ngo dynasty was founded by Ngo Quyen who is son-in-law of Duong Dinh Nghe. In 938, Ngo Quyen stationed his men at the estuary of the Bach Dang River where the sea routes entered the plain and where he prepared to receive the Southern Han fleet with iron-tipped poles planted in the bed of the river. When the Southern Han fleet arrived, it was trapped on the poles as the tide fell and was annihilated; the heir to the Southern Han throne perished, and that was the end of Southern Han ambitions in An Nam¹⁸. After the battlefield victory at the Bach Dang estuary, Ngo Quyen claimed royal status and proposed to found a dynasty of his own. He organized a court with titles, ritual

¹⁷Trong Kim, Tran, **Brief History of Vietnam**, (Thanh Hoa: Thanh Hoa Publishing House, 2006), p. 87.

¹⁸K. W. Taylor, **A History of the Vietnamese**, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.46.

etiquette, and dress code modeled on imitation of imperial practice the current at the various regional capitals in the north. Furthermore, he set his capital north of the Red River at the ancient site of Co Loa¹⁹. According to many historians, the battlefield victory at the Bach Dang estuary has been considered very important in the history of Vietnam. Firstly, Ngo Quyen killed the traitor, Kieu Cong Tien, to take revenge for his leader, Duong Dien Nghe. Secondly, fighting against aggressor to open an independent era for the nation. All success achieved by Dinh, Le, Ly, Tran dynasties afterward had to thank to this victory of Ngo Quyen. However, the founder of Ngo dynasty died so early in 944. In the other words, the reign time of Ngo Quyen was just six years. This is also one of the main reasons that why Vietnam would be in troublous condition at latter time.

After the decease of Ngo Quyen, Duong Tam Kha who was his brother-in-law and a son of Duong Dien Nghe, proclaimed himself king although Ngo Quyen had him help his sons in ruling the state when he was sick. Thus, the eldest of Ngo Quyen son, Ngo Xuong Ngap, had to leave home and was protected by a powerful family in Tra Huong²⁰. Duong Tam Kha brought people from the southern provinces into the court and pushed aside the men of Giao, he also adopted another son of Ngo Quyen, Ngo Xuong Van. Therefore, Ngo Xuong Van remained under Duong Tam Kha's tutelage.

In 950, Duong Tam Kha forced Ngo Xuong Van to fight small group in Thai Binh province. When they had got half way, Ngo Xuong Van told everyone that my father had been a good king, unfortunately passed away early, Duong Tam Kha had appropriated the throne which was disloyal. Therefore, we had to come back to fight again him now, how about your idea? Everyone agreed with his idea and came back to depose Duong Tam Kha²¹ and banish him at the south of the Red River.

¹⁹Ibid, p.47.

²⁰Trong Kim, Tran, **op. cit.**, p. 89.

²¹ Si Lien, Ngo, **The Complete History of the Dai Viet**, vol. (Ha Noi: Culture and Information Publishing House, 2004), p.182.

This is a reason why men from the southern provinces were pushed out of the royal court.

After deposing Duong Tam Kha, Ngo Xuong Van ascended to throne, named Nam Tan Vuong, and had solidier welcome with high regards his elder brother, Ngo Xuong Ngap, in order to manage the state together. In the other words, this was a two-headed monarchy. This period is called latter Ngo dynasty by Vietnamese historians. When the eldest brother died in 954, the younger announced himself as a vassal of Southern Han. However, this had no help for him, the state was divided into many group fighting together, the king had to repress rebellions. Especially, Nam Tan Vuong repressed Duong and Nguyen villages in Thai Binh province in 965 and was killed in an ambush.²²

All in all, the reign time of Ngo Quyen was six years (939 – 944), then Duong Tam Kha usurped the throne in six years (945 – 950), the latter Ngo dynasty lasted fifteen years (951 – 965). It is clear that, Ngo dynasty lasted twenty-seven years with three kings.

2.1.2 Đinh dynasty

After Duong Tam Kha usurped the throne of Ngo family, there were twelve warlords who wanted to become a leader and unite the state all over the country such as:

1. Ngo Xuong Xi withholds Binh Kieu
2. Do Canh Thac withholds Dong Giang
3. Tran Lam withholds Bo Hai Khau
4. Kieu Cong Han withholds Phong Chau
5. Nguyen Khoan withholds Tam Dai
6. Ngo Nhat Khanh withholds Duong Lam
7. Ly Khue withholds Sieu Loai
8. Nguyen Thu Tiep withholds Tien Du

²² Ibid., p.184.

9. Lu Duong withholds Te Giang
10. Nguyen Sieu withholds Tay Phu Liet
11. Kieu Thuan withholds Hoi Ho
12. Pham Bach Ho withholds Dang Chau²³

Twelve armies began appearing in 945, fought over the throne and created internal strife which lasted nearly twenty years. Twelve internal strifes fought against together constantly which made Annam crisis-struck, Annam citizens poverty – stricken, the economy miserable, military weakness. The researcher will discuss every problem in this period of time in the next part of this chapter. Annam was a nation torn by political strife, this was a good opportunity for Chinese government to invade Annam again. Therefore, Dinh Bo Linh who was one of twelve leaders thought that if he had not united the nation soon, Annam would have become slavery of southern Han. Additionally, Tran Minh Cong who was kind – hearted and tolerant, were an outstanding leader in twelve internal strifes nationwide at that time.

Especially, the most important thing recognized by Dinh Bo Linh was that Tran Minh Cong was aware of the nation destiny, this is a reason why he has adopted Dinh Bo Linh as his son in law and let him control his military power.²⁴ This combination has strengthened the power of Dinh Bo Linh and finally he defeated the other 11 lords by means of an adept mixed strategy of warfare and diplomacy to unite the country in 968, so everyone called him with the title Van Thang Vuong, which means “King of Ten Thousand Victories”. This victory played a vital role in liberating Vietnamese nation because there are no appearance of Dinh Bo Linh, it is difficult for Vietnamese people to escape from invasion of Chinese government again.

After subduing all political opponents, he sent envoys to the Southern Han court to establish and expand relations provisionally acknowledged the Dinh family’s authority in Annam. At this year, Dinh

²³Ibid., pp. 185-186.

²⁴Si Lien, Ngo, ed., **op. cit.**, p.187.

Bo Linh became the king of Annam, he did not proclaim himself emperor or commander in-chief of allied armies as previous leader. Therefore, Dinh Bo Linh was the first king to found centralism feudal state in Vietnam.

After unifying the country and bringing peace back to the land, he renamed the country “Dai Co Viet”²⁵ and appointed men to important positions such as Dinh Dien, Nguyen Bac, Le Hoan...Furthermore, he filled administrative positions with Buddhist monks such as Ngo Chan Luu, Truong Ma Ni, Dang Huyen Quang, who were subordinate to government and imperial control. In addition, Dinh Bo Linh reformed the administration and the armed forces of Vietnam and established a royal court with a hierarchy of civil and military servants in order to strengthen the foundations of the new state. The organization of his state was a form adapted from the Chinese model which was familiar to the Viets.

Additionally, He always kept peaceful relations with China as subordinate status and agreed to pay tribute to the Chinese emperor every three years in return for recognition of the sovereignty of Dai Co Viet and its ruler as King of Giao Chi, a title which expressed a theoretical relationship of vassalage in submission to the empire, so he achieved permanent independence from China. In term of justice system, treason was punishable by being cooked in a vat of boiling oil or by being fed to a caged tiger, so as to provide a deterrent to all.²⁶ The biggest mistake of Dinh Bo Linh in his life was removed his eldest son Dinh Lien from the throne as he had decided choosing his second son, Dinh Hang Lang. This was also the reason of the death of Dinh Hang Lang.

²⁵Dai is a word of Chinese origin meaning “great”. Co is a Vietnamese word, written with a phonetically appropriate Chinese character, also meaning “great”. The name Dai Co Viet endured until 1054, when the word Co was removed by the third king of the Ly dynasty. This hybrid expression for “great”, Dai Co, is peculiar to the early independence period and reflects a creative development of the vernacular idiom for political purposes. The use of a Chinese character to render the Vietnamese word Co is another early example of Nom, Vietnamese character writing. See Keith Weller Taylor, **The Birth of Vietnam**, (US: University of California Press, 1991), p.281.

²⁶Si Lien, Ngo, ed., **op. cit.**, p.193.

Unfortunately, Dinh Bo Linh and his eldest son were killed by a servant in 979.²⁷ There are a lot of different opinions about this event. According to information in historical documents, the reason for the servant killed the king and his eldest son while they were sleeping in the palace courtyard was because of strange dream of the killer. However, many historians said that this event had relation to an illicit love between the queen and a high – ranking courtier. This event has driven Annam a crisis about politic as well as economy and be liable to lose their country and war. Nevertheless, it has no much relations to the topic of this thesis, the researcher will not investigate deeply the reason of this issue instead of its consequence.

2.1.3 Tiền Lê dynasty (Early Le dynasty)

After the death of Dinh Bo Linh and his eldest son, general, Nguyen Bac and commander-in-chief of the army, Le Hoan agreed Dinh Tue, the youngest son of Dinh Bo linh, succeed to the throne and the Dowager Empress Duong Thai Hau assumed the role of empress dowager and military commander-in-chief Le Hoan was made regent because of his age.²⁸ However, the Song Chinese Emperor wanted to take advantage of the turbulent situation in Dai Co Viet in order to reestablish Chinese control over the country and he sent an army to invade Vietnam. In this crisis, the Dowager Empress Duong Thai Hau threw her support to Le Hoan, commander-in-chief of the army and let him step up to the throne as a new king in order to confront the Song army. As a result, Le Hoan stepped into the power vacuum, dethroned Dinh Tue and married his mother, Duong Thai Hau and declared himself Emperor at Hoa Lu in 980.²⁹ It was the end of Dinh dynasty which lasted twelve years with two kings, and beginning of the Early-Le dynasty, so called in order to distinguish it from the Later Le dynasty established in the 15th century by Le Loi.

²⁷Ibid, p.199.

²⁸Ibid, p.209.

²⁹Trong Kim, Tran, **op. cit.**, p.96.

Le Hoan who was orphaned while he was very young was born in 941 into a poor family in Ha Nam. Fortunately, he was adopted by a local official who belonged to Le family. Le Hoan matured to manhood when the country was fractured into the domains of twelve independent warlords. Le Hoan became a military general under Dinh Bo Linh's eldest son, Dinh Lien, to carry out dreamt of saving the nation. When Dinh Bo Linh reunified the country, he became the commander-in-chief of Dinh dynasty's armed forces.

It was no longer after Le Hoan's usurpation of the throne that an ambassador of the Song dynasty came to Hoa Lu. The ambassador demanded Le Hoan's immediate submission to the emperor of Song, promising that if he complied with the demand, he would be shown clemency and threatening that if he did not comply, it would soon be too late regrets. A diplomatic chess match ensued. Le Hoan sent an emissary to China in the name of the deposed Dinh Toan; the emissary pretended that Dinh Toan was still the head of the country and offered submission in the name of Dinh dynasty. Emperor attempted to lull Le Hoan into neglecting his military preparations by sending news that he would be willing to accept the submission of Dinh Toan. Le Hoan, however, was not fooled.³⁰ The Song dynasty thus launched their invasion in 981 and Le Hoan was success in this war by recruiting and training many new soldiers and copying Ngo Quyen's strategy of booby-trapping the river with long sharpened stakes that were out of sight beneath the surface of the water at high tide. However, he still kept peaceful relations with China as subordinate status by payed tribute to the Chinese emperor in order to keep the north border of the country secured.

After the Chinese invasion having been turned back, Le Hoan mounted a punitive expedition the Indic kingdom of Champa because this country has taken advantage of chaotic condition of Dai Viet to launch an unsuccessful maritime expedition against Hoa Lu because of a storm after the death of Dinh Bo Linh. Especially, when the threat of the Chinese invasion in the north, Le Hoan sent an ambassador to Champa to establish

³⁰ Ibid, p.96-97.

friendly relations but the king of Champa, Parameshvaravarman, had the ambassador arrested.³¹ Le Hoan has earned many loot from this war such as women from the king's entourage, gold, silver and other precious objects.

In term of military, Le Hoan divided the country into districts and sub districts and appointed a group of senior officials to help him in managing the civil and military affair of the state. Le Hoan allowed several of his sons become provincial governors, with the authority to collect taxes and to have personal armies. The core of the army was the forbidden palace guard and each member of the guard had the words 'army of the son of heaven' tattooed on his forehead in Chinese characters. In addition, he maintained the spectacular forms of punishment devised by Dinh Bo Linh such as handling over to a ferocious tiger, or casting into a vat of boiling oil.

In term of religion, Le Hoan relied on network of outstanding Buddhist monks such Van Hanh, Do Thuan, Khuong Viet³²... as advisors and administrators. These Buddhist monks also helped the king in diplomacy and proposed some wise policy to rule over provinces and districts after war. For example, a Chinese diplomat, Ly Giac, came to Dai Viet in 987. Le Hoan assigned a learned monk named Do Thuan to impersonate a menial servant and to impress the Chinese diplomat with his literary acumen, and thus to convey the impression that the ordinary people of the realm were skilled in Chinese poetry and speech. Ly Giac saw to geese swimming in the river and to impress the ferryman with the intellectual ability of China immediately composed a couplet:

*There: wild geese, swimming side-by-side,
Staring up at the sky!*

³¹Si Lien, Ngo, **op. cit.**, p.212.

³²Emperor Dinh Tien Hoang summoned Khuong Viet to the capital for an audience. Dinh Tien Hoang was impressed with him and honored him with the rank Tang Thong (General Supervisor of Monks). It was Dinh Tien Hoang who granted him the sobriquet Khuong Viet Thai Su (the Great Master Who Brings Order to Viet). Khuong Viet continued to hold the same rank under the reign of Le Dai Hanh. See Cuong Tu, Nguyen, **Zen in Medieval Vietnam: A Study and Translation of the Thien Uyen Tap Anh**, (US: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p.77.

To which Master Do Phap Thuan added two lines to complete the quatrain:

White feathers against a deep blue

*Red feet burning in green waves.*³³

Moreover, under the reign of Le Hoan many new temples were constructed in the capital of Hoa Lu and Nhat Tru pagoda was typical example.

In term of economy, Le Hoan tried to promote the development of agriculture in the country. Therefore, he revived an ancient Chinese ploughing ceremony in 987, it means he ploughed into the first field. And other later Vietnamese dynasties followed his example in celebrating the ploughing ceremony. Additionally, Le Hoan was the first king creating the network of canals to serve agriculture development. He also ordered extensive construction of a system of road and ordered the casting of bronze coins.

More than 24 years reigning the country, Le Hoan died in 1005 at the age of 64. If Dinh Bo Linh had choose his son for prince position too soon, Le Hoan had designated his eldest son as his successor too late. Additionally, each son of Le Hoan commanded a private army and the consequence of this is his sons fought together for throne in nearly one year.³⁴ As a result, the country had no leader at that time and this made military and economy so weak. It is so lucky for Dai Co Viet because of having no invasion at that time.

Le Long Viet, his eldest son, occupied the throne for only three days before being murdered by thugs sent by his younger brother, Le Long Dinh. Le Long Dinh thus was the new leader of the country, but many historic documents pointed out that he was a cruel and despotic ruler. For example, he executed prisons by using straw grass to tie on the body of prisons, then burned until they died. Or asking Chinese, Lieu Thu

³³Minh Tue, Thich, **The Brief of Vietnam Buddhism**, (HCM: Saigon Publishing House, 1993), p.144.

³⁴Si Lien, Ngo, **op. cit.**, p.226.

Tam, used short and blunt knife to cut. The result of this is that the prisons screamed painfully and the king smiled with pleasure. Moreover, he also broke sugarcane on the head of Buddhist monk, Quach Ngang and feigned accidentally to make monk's head bleeding after that he smiled happily³⁵.

According to Complete annals of Dai Viet, Le Long Dinh was one of the most brutal and sadistic rulers during Vietnam's dynasty era. This was reason why he was not popular with the people and the high officials who served him. The consequence for his life was getting disease and contracting hemorrhoids and lying down while held court, so the people called him Le Ngoa Trieu. Finally, he died at the age of 24 and this was the end of Anterior Le dynasty after 29 years to reign the country during three generations of king.

Table 1: The Kings of Three Dynasties

	Name of Kings	Year of reign	Details
Ngô Dynasty	Ngô Quyền	939 – 944	Tiền Ngô Vương
	Dương Tam Kha	945 – 950	Dương Bình Vương
	Ngô Xương Văn	951 – 965	Nam Tấn Vương
Đinh Dynasty	Đinh Bộ Lĩnh	968 – 979	Đinh Tiên Hoàng
	Đinh Tuệ	979 – 980	Đinh Phế Đế
Tiền Lê Dynasty (Early Le dynasty)	Lê Hoàn	980 – 1005	Lê Đại Hành
	Lê Long Việt	1005	Lê Trung Tôn
	Lê Long Đinh	1005 – 1009	Lê Ngoạ Triều

³⁵ Ibid, p.232-233.

2.2 The Conditions of Problem in Ngo – Dinh – Tien Le Dynasties

During three first dynasties, Ngo, Dinh, and Tien Le dynasties, the county had to face to many difficulties after more than one thousand years being ruled by Chinese. Building a defensive military government model in order to the foundation of the new state was a natural reaction and historic mission.

2.2.1 Politics and Economy

a. Politics Aspect

There were many armed conflicts between feudal lords who each ruled an area of territory and the new state. Especially, twelve warlords divided the country among themselves and began to fight one another after the death of Ngo Quyen in 944. It is possible to say that this was a period of chaos and civil war after independence day. During the period of that time, the country had no leader and the economy was too weak because of uninterrupted war. As a result, poverty and unsafe situation were popular plight nation-widely.

In 968, Dinh Bo linh defeated the other eleven lords, thereby taking control over the country and moving the capital to Hoa Lu with many reasons. The firstly reason was that Hoa Lu located in a flat valley between steep limestone mountains that would be especially difficult to attack. This was a perfect place in order to protect the new state against other lords and invasion of Chinese. Moreover, Dinh Bo Linh ordered the construction of ten sections of earthen walls that were approximately 10m high and 15m thick to block the gaps between the limestone mountains. It is clear that the purpose of choosing Hoa Lu³⁶ as capital and army base is

³⁶The capital of an independent Vietnamese kingdom between 968 and 1009. Located on the southern edge of the Red River Delta in what is now Ninh Binh province, Hoa Lu was the birthplace of Dinh Bo Linh. After declaring himself emperor in 968, he moved the national capital from the ancient city of Co Loa in the heart of the Red River Delta to Hoa Lu, partly for defensive reasons (it was located in a valley surrounded by low mountains and far from China) and partly because it was outside of the area of traditional pro-Chinese sentiment in the province of Giao to the

for security. However, geographical position and natural conditions were not good for the development of economy and culture.

Many historians criticized Dinh Bo Linh who created the justice system in which treason was punishable by being cooked in a vat of boiling oil or by being fed to a caged tiger. However, according to the researcher, this was a suitable method for cruel and unkind character of citizens at that time.

For above political and social situation, the kings needed the helps and advisory of religion theory in order to have suitable diplomatic policy with the enemy inside as well as outside country. The kings chose Buddhist theory as decisive thought in order to reign the people and drive away the effects of Chinese politics, culture on Dai Co Viet. Dinh Bo Linh was a pious king, he set the monk's class and established a priest order for Buddhism in 973, headed by the most Venerable Ngo Chan Luu who belonged to fifth generation of Vo Ngon Thong sect.

He respectfully called Venerable Ngo Chan Luu as Khuong Viet which means who was the model for the Viets. The priest systems stood by the king and helped him to reign the country. Moreover, Le Hoan assigned a learned monk named Do Thuan to impersonate a menial servant and to impress the Chinese diplomat with his literary acumen, and thus to convey the impression that the ordinary people of the realm were skilled in Chinese poetry and speech. From this event, the king of Chinese would think that the Vietnamese were so knowledgeable; so, using invasion to control over Dai Co Viet again was impossible. This thus was a wise policy of the king.

b. Economy Aspect

Regarding economy, agriculture played a vital role in economy activities in three dynasties, Ngo – Dinh – Tien Le. Most of cultivated lands belonged to the court and famers were divided fields to cultivate and to do the tilling. The duty of farmers was to pay taxes for the country

North. See Bruce M. Lockhart, William J. Duiker, **The A to Z of Vietnam**, (Singapore: Scarecrow Press, 2010), p.164.

and to join military services when the king needed. Furthermore, when the king ordered to construct the big project such as palace, walls, transportation the farmers had to participate. Luckily, the kings in three dynasties always encouraged to develop agriculture. For example, Le Hoan revived an ancient Chinese ploughing ceremony, in which the ruler of the country ploughs the first field in 987.

Additionally, irrigational works was also paid attention by the kings. Canals were dredged in many places in order to irrigate the fields and facilitate traffic by boat and the state allowed to transported by the boat on important wharves.³⁷ Furthermore, the road traffic system was expanded and there were many guardrooms on the main road. The crafts such as pottery, weaving, mining, ironmaking, bronze casting were encouraged to develop by the state.³⁸ According to historic document, all state had a good harvest in 987.

However, the country was always in a critical situation because of civil war and invasion. For instance, after the death of Ngo Quyen the country was in a chaotic situation of twelve warlords, the people had to leave their home and farm land to go to new place. This made the life of the people becoming more difficult and hold back the development of economy. On the other side, it was an opportunity for the people to cultivate new lands. Additionally, on the death of Dinh Bo Linh, the Chinese emperor taken the advantage in order to invade Dai Co Viet again. Therefore, young people had to join the army to protect the country. The economy could not be improved as lack of labor force. The same situation occurred when Le Hoan died in 1005, his sons fought over the throne, so the country had no ruler for a long time. All in all, the country went through many kinds of war and the reign time of clear-sighted kings was so short, so the economy of Dai Co Viet had lots of trouble to develop.

³⁷Trong Kim, Tran, **op. cit.**, p.94.

³⁸Ibid., p. 95.

2.2.2 Culture and Thought

a. Culture Aspect

Vietnam was heavily influenced by Chinese culture in all areas such as politics, religion, government, social and moral ethics and arts due to a millennium of Chinese rule. This was a hardship time for the survival of Vietnam and Vietnamese culture, because after controlling over the country the Chinese rulers tried their best to ravage and exterminate Vietnamese culture and thought and made no distinction between China and Vietnam. However, the ancient Vietnamese always preserved the cultural character and long-standing customs of the country, especially popular culture in small villages behind the forest of bamboos.

Regarding religious beliefs, Vietnamese have acquired religions from India and China such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, but still maintained their ancestor worship traditions, traditions of respect for their heroes, the elderly and women. Although Confucianism has been spread to Vietnam for a long time and became prevalent in some historical periods, Confucianism was not welcomed by the people in Ngo – Dinh – Tien Le dynasties because this religion was derived from China which has invaded and oppressed the state for a long time.

Moreover, the teachings of Confucianism included many non-human principles such as over-elevating the king's rights and fatherhood, respecting for men, despising women, conservatism, dogma... which only affected the upper classes of the society. On the other hand, Buddhism with the teachings about compassion and meditation was very familiar with the majority of the Vietnamese. Furthermore, the Buddha taught that life is impermanent, suffering and humans have to deliverance from all the trammels of life, the bondage of the passion by themselves. No one can bless or curse others. This teaching was very suitable with the people of Dai Co Viet at that time because they were trying their best in order to break out of the rule of Chinese. After escaping from Chinese rule, the kings chose Buddhist theory as decisive thought in order to reign the people and rejected the China's religion, Confucianism. This pointed

out that both the kings and people wanted to show independence will and there was a close interrelation between Buddhism and the fortune of the nation as well as the life of the people.

b. The Thought

Buddhism has been spread to Vietnam since the beginning of the millennium by Indian traders and developed strongly and richly in the fifth century. There was a Buddhist center, Luy Lau, which was as big as Buddhist center in China at that time.³⁹ Buddhist monks and nuns established schools and lectured on the teachings of the Buddha everywhere. Therefore, the thought of the people has been permeated the spirit of Buddhism, this was reflected in the life of peace, freedom, loving of beauty and protecting and helping one another in time of distress. There was no difference among the people in the same country, this is a simple and deep philosophy of the Buddhism and the people of Dai Co Viet have understood clearly this teaching. Moreover, they have practiced it by uniting all people in order to fight against invasion of Chinese.

It is general knowledge that combination between Buddhism and native faith created the distinct culture character of Vietnam. Buddhism infiltrated with folk beliefs without reaction and hesitation as water permeates the earth because folk beliefs do not oppose Buddhist beliefs. This combination created benefits for both of beliefs. In terms of native culture, it has been enriched by Buddhist cultural elements. On the Buddhist side, the process of accepting native faith did not lose general idea of liberation of Buddhism. Furthermore, integrating with native culture would enable Buddhism to deepen its root in the new land and establish its role in the nation fortune.

Firstly, Buddhism was harmonious with the tradition of ancestor worship of Vietnam. Ancestral worship was a type of traditional belief began from the very early time in the history of Vietnam and very popular with Vietnamese. All people always worshiped their ancestor

³⁹Nguyen Lang, **History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, (Hanoi: Literature Publishing House, 2000), p.27.

such as grandparents, father and mother in their family, then extended to village and country such as paying respect to the founder of one occupation or a hero of the nation. Therefore, it has become a traditional custom and played an important role in the spiritual life of the people.

The harmony between Buddhism and ancestor worship tradition was reflected in ceremonial elements of Buddhism. At that time, monks besides organized retreats and took care everything in temple, they were often invited by the people to go to their house in order to organize funeral, or treat for their patient. This combination has created a close-knit pack between Buddhism and the native culture.

Secondly, Buddhism was harmonious with the worship of mother which is a folk faith integrated step by step by many beliefs from early time. The life of the people depended on the nature, hunting and gathering. Until the economy of agriculture including cultivation and animal husbandry was developed, the people had to rely on the nature. However, the nature is sometimes abnormal which made the people encounter many difficulties in their life or it has become angry to take away all that served their lives. And gradually, the people have observed natural phenomena, formed a consciousness of natural force and accompanied by the adoration of natural phenomena such as the god of mountain, the god of river, the god of sea...

At the first time Buddhism was spread to Vietnam, it quickly adapted in order to suitable with local culture, especially the worship of Mother. This became a spiritual food of Vietnamese farmers by customizing Buddhism and became a part of it.

After ascending the throne, Dinh Bo Linh immediately invited the Zen Masters to control the country not only because of their proficiency in education but their spiritual life which would lead the spirituality of the people to happy life. The king of Dinh dynasty highly respected for monks, especially for the leader of monks and his teacher, Ngo Chan Luu.⁴⁰ The king always came to learn about spiritual teachings

⁴⁰Manh That, Le, **A Study of Collected Prominent of Zen Garden**, (HCM: Institute of Vietnam Buddhist Research, 2005), p.334.

and discussed all fields in order to how to control well the country. On the death of Dinh Bo Linh, Dai Co Viet was likely to be invaded by Chinese, Zen Master Ngo Chan Luu directed and supported Le Hoan came to the throne to lead the people struggle for the independence and freedom of the country.

Furthermore, before going into battle, the king invited the master Van Hanh to inquire about expedient and how the soldiers be announced and the master Van Hanh affirmed that the king would gain a victory in one week.⁴¹ If Le Hoan was the king who represented all people to close the door of slave in the part, Buddhist monks opened the prosperous and glorious door in the future. This is a main premise for the prosperous development of Ly and Tran dynasties in the future.

In terms of historical significance, the victory of Ngo Quyen on Bach Dang river marks a momentous and tremendous turning-point in the history of the nation. This event ended the darkening period more than one thousand years depending on China and opened a freedom and peaceful era. However, Ngo Quyen ascended the throne and his reign was too short, so he did not have time to build and develop the country. Then Duong Tam Kha and two Crown Prince contested for throne, and the state was divided by twelve warlords, war be in everywhere, so it was difficult to cultivate the culture. Dinh Bo Linh confiscated twelve warlords to throne, but reigned for twelve years and then be murdered by a servant. The Song dynasty in the north invaded Dai Co Viet again. Le Hoan put enemy to rout and ascended throne, but Tien Le dynasty just lasted for 29 years. Three dynasties, Ngo – Dinh – Tien Le just lasted less than 70 years totally while there were a lot of civil wars and invasion from the north. The acquirement and development about culture as well as thought thus were limited.

⁴¹Thanh Tu, Thich, **Meditation Masters of Vietnam**, (HCM: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 1995), p.53.

2.3 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, Ngo, Dinh and early-Le dynasties were three first dynasties of Vietnam for getting independence from China in 938. conditions of problem about politics, economy, thought in Ngo, Dinh, Tien Le dynasties which were three short dynasties before Ly and Tran dynasties played a vital role for the development of Buddhism during these dynasties. After becoming independent in 938 from Chinese, Kings of Ngo, Dinh, Tien Le dynasties supported Buddhism with all their heart, and appearing of famous Masters such as Khuon Viet, Phap Thuan.

However, Buddhism could not develop in these dynasties because of many reasons. At first, the reign time of three these dynasties were very short. Secondly, Vietnam had a lot of civil war and war fighting against Chinese at that time such as disorder among twelve armies in the end of Ngo dynasty, the war fighting against Chinese in the beginning of Tien Le dynasty. Therefore, economy in these dynasties was very poor so having no time for Vietnamese people to think about religion and thought, they spent most of time for the independence of nation and the survival of themselves. There were many conditions and problems during three dynasties before Ly and Tran dynasties such as the time of reigning, wars, condition of the economy which made a tremendous impact on the development of Buddhism in Ly and Tran dynasties. In other words, they were limitation and also premise for the prosperity of Buddhism during the 10th – 14th centuries which was carried out by salient Masters in chapter three.

Chapter III

The Salient Vietnamese Masters During Ly and Tran Dynasties

In this part of the thesis, the researcher presents some salient Vietnamese Master who had many contributions to the development of Buddhism as well as the prosperity of the country during the 10th – 14th centuries.

3.1 The Salient Vietnamese Zen Masters and Eminent Kings in Ly Dynasty

During Ly dynasty, there were many famous monks who contributed every part of Buddhism at that time. However, in this paper the researcher just shows some salient masters such as (1) Ly Thai Tong, (2) Ly Thanh Tong, and (3) Van Hanh because of the limit of the research.

3.1.1 King Ly Thai Tong

Ly Thai Tong who acceded to the throne in 1028 when he was twenty-eight years old was the posthumous title of Ly Phat Ma, also known as Ly Duc Chinh.¹ According to the Complete History of Dai Viet, Ly Phat Ma was born with 7 moles in the shape of the big dipper on the back of his neck. Additionally, at that time in Truong Yen district, a buffalo suddenly changed his horns. The owner of the buffalo was worried because he thought that was a bad luck. A fortune teller in Cau Dong chanced on him and said: “This is an omen of innovation; it does not involve in you and you do not need to worry”.²

¹Trong Kim, Tran, **op. cit.**, p.102.

²Si Lien, Ngo, **op. cit.**, p. 263.

Ly Phat Ma was the eldest son of the King Ly Thai To³ and according to the King's last will, Ly Phat Ma would be new King after his father death. However, there were many members in his family and every member also had a talent for military commander. Additionally, when his father was alive, he did not only entrusted him with an important task as leader on battlefield but other brothers were assigned the task to quell rebel troops and all of them achieved a lot of great success. Therefore, when the King Ly Thai To has just passed away, other his brothers sent their troops around the royal palace in order to struggle for the throne with crown prince.

Ly Phat Ma knew clearly their plot, so he decided to protect the royal palace and had a discussion with his officials to solve the problem. He said that: "He was so sad; he did not want brothers fight over the throne as not having organized the funeral for the King". However, his officials agreed that "we should teach them a lesson by fighting together". When the battle between the Crown Prince and the brothers began, Martial art General Le Phung Hieu, one of officials of Ly Thai Tong, glared at Prince Vo Duc Vuong and shouted that "you eye the throne, contempt the King forget the favor of the Late King, contrary to the moral principles between the King and the mandarins, so Phung Hieu has to use this sword".⁴ After that, he galloped his horse to Vo Duc Vuong and slashed him to death in the battle. Other princes had to run away because of terrifying.

After crushing, a rebellion led by two of his brothers challenging his throne by his father's advisers and defeating another unsatisfied brother in Hoa Lu by himself. In 1028, Ly Phat Ma ascended the throne at the age of twenty-eight with title name, Ly Thai Tong. To avoid the fighting over the throne, Ly Thai Tong tried to think about a suitable form, a spiritual therapy in order to tie everyone together. Thus,

³This was Ly Cong Uan, who came from the province of Bac Ninh. He was proclaimed emperor at the beginning of 1010, and is known by his posthumous title, Ly Thai To. See G. Coedes, **The Making of South East Asia**, (US: University of California Press, 1966), p. 83.

⁴Trong Kim, Tran, **op. cit.**, pp.102-103.

he built Dong Co temple and stipulated that annually, all mandarins had to go to the temple and performed ceremonial oath: “A child needs to be respectful; a subject need to be faithful; Unfaithful and disrespectful people will be punished by the God”. Those who did not attend this ceremonial oath would be caned.⁵

Ly Thai Tong built the basic bureaucratic infrastructure for the Ly dynasty and was considered one of the greatest kings and emperors in Vietnamese history. Moreover, Ly Thai Tong was a tolerant King with not only the people of Dai Viet but enemy. For example, being tolerant Ly Thai Tong did not punish the two brothers who fought over the throne with him and restored the positions.⁶ In addition, during crop failure or famine, or after combating enemies, the king offered tax breaks in two or three years for people. So, people were happy and wholeheartedly followed him. He also was interested in agricultural development. Thus, Ly Thai Tong rejected his officials’ advice and plowed the land himself during the spring plowing ceremony in 1038. One of the reasons making Ly Thai Tong become a tolerant king is he was well trained from his childhood. When he was young, his father built his son’s palace outside of the inner palaces so that the son could communicate with the mandarins and people and accumulated the living experience.

In term of suppressing, Ly Thai Tong was a strategist of genius and won a lot of victories. In 1044, Champa aggressors disturbed at the southern border, so Ly Thai Tong decided to attack the capital of Champa and the Cham king, Jaya Sinhavarman II, was killed. The amount of the plunder was considerable and the people of Cham were killed innumerable. To show mercy, Ly Thai Tong issued an order “should not kill the Cham, if someone continued killing, certainly they would be punished”.⁷ In the northern border region, the Nung rebelled against the court, self-proclaimed King, named the country and sent troops disturb the people. Therefore, Ly Thai Tong led the army to quell the rebels by

⁵Si Lien, Ngo, **op. cit.**, p.267.

⁶Ibid, p.266.

⁷Manh That, Le, **History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, Vol. II, (HCM: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 2006), p.334.

himself and captured the leader of the rebels and his wife and children. However, another son, Nung Tri Cao escaped and continued to revolt, the king had to send the troops to fight against and captured him. Being tolerant, Ly Thai Tong spared death for him because the King had killed his relatives. Nevertheless, Nung Tri Cao still wanted to proclaim himself king and disturbed some regions in the south of Song dynasty. Finally, he was defeated and killed by this dynasty.⁸

In terms of reigning the country, Ly Thai Tong combined laws and virtues to reign. In 1042, King Ly Thai Tong ordered to write the laws which is the first written laws of Vietnam.⁹ This opened up a new era for the legislative history of Vietnam. A special feature of this written law was king Ly Thai Tong advocated teaching the people, not penalties. For example, the king stipulated that the offenders could pay money for atoning the crime. This proved that the king was influenced by compassion and wisdom of Buddhism deeply. Unfortunately, these laws were robbed and destroyed by the Northern enemy later.

In terms of Buddhist construction, Ly Thai Tong has bequeathed for Vietnamese culture generally and Buddhist culture privately an important cultural heritage, One Pillar pagoda. This temple was constructed by the emperor in 1049 according to his dream. Ly Thai Tong dreamt that he met the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, who handed him while seating on a lotus flower. Thus, the court has told a monk named Thien Tue to build a pillar in the middle of a lotus pond, similar to the one he saw in the dream.¹⁰

3.1.2 King Ly Thanh Tong

Ly Thanh Tong who was the eldest son of King Ly Thai Tong with name, Ly Nhat Tong was born on February 25, 1023. After ascending the throne, his father conferred him as Crown Prince when he was five years old. Ly Thanh Tong was good at many fields such as

⁸Trong Kim, Tran, *op. cit.*, pp.104-105.

⁹Si Lien, Ngo, *op. cit.*, p.280.

¹⁰Ibid, p.288.

literature, history, music, and also martial arts at that time.¹¹ According to the tradition of Ly dynasty, Ly Thanh Tong has been soon brought out of the capital citadel in order to live near to the residents for twenty-seven years. This time was long enough for him to understand the hardship of the people. This was the reason why Ly Thanh Tong was considered as one of the most talented and benevolent emperors in Vietnamese history.

According to Brief History of Dai Viet, during bitterly cold weather, thinking of all the miserable people, especially the inmates in freezing prisons, the king felt very sad. At that day, the king said to all the mandarins in the court; that “I still feel cold although I wear fleece and stay in palaces with fireplaces; what about the people who are detained in prison without judging, kept in chains and suffered from hunger and coldness. They could die of coldness, so the situation is very merciful”.¹² Then, Ly Thanh Tong order to provide all the blankets in the warehouses to the prisoners to fight against the coldness, and give them two meals a day. Another time, the king found out that the cause of the crime of the offender was due to lack of understanding of the law. In the case, Ly Thanh Tong pointed at his beloved daughter, princess Dong Thien standing next to him and told the warden that “my love toward common people equaled that toward his daughter. I feel sympathetic to the offenders who violate the law because of lacking of understanding of the laws. From now on, any law needs to be popularized carefully and all the crimes need to be commuted”.¹³ Therefore, Ly Thanh Tong was highly respected by the people and the country had a lasting peaceful time.

Ly Thanh Tong practiced the teaching of the Buddha during his life and applied it in reigning the country. The king was considered as second patriarch of Thao Duong sect¹⁴. Moreover, the king has ordered to build a lots of temple, and cast many Buddha statues and bells. Especially, the king got everyone to build Bao Thien tower which was seventy

¹¹Manh That, Le, **History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, Vol. III, (HCM: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 2006), p.18.

¹²Trong Kim, Tran **op. cit.**, p.106.

¹³Ibid, p.107.

¹⁴Manh That, Le, **op. cit.**, p.83.

meters in high and included twelve floors in 1057.¹⁵ This tower was one of four very important things of Dai Viet at that time.

During twenty years reigning the country, Ly Thanh Tong has left many marks for the construction and development of Ly dynasty by assertive and darling steps. There were there noticeable and important things during his reign such as renaming the name of the country, building the Temple of Literature, expanding the country to the south.

Firstly, after coming to the throne, Ly Thanh Tong has changed the name of the country from Dai Co Viet to Dai Viet¹⁶ which means the country is as big and strong as Song dynasty in the north. This name lasted 723 years in Vietnamese history and the king started for a period of independence, peace and prosperity of the country.

Secondly, Ly Thanh Tong make people build the Temple of Literature or Temple of Confucius in 1070 and statues of Confucius and his four best disciples such as Yan Hui, Zengzi, Zisi, and Mencius and seventy-two other statues of Confucian scholars were painted.¹⁷ This is the first national university of Vietnam, thus offering ceremonies, study sessions and the strict exams of the Dai Viet were taken in here.

Thirdly, after stabilizing the nation the king decided to strengthen the army by naming titles for each part of the army and dividing his main cohort into 100 small groups. These groups were arrayed into four larger groups: left, right, front and rear with supports of cavalries and trebuchets.¹⁸ The organization of the army under Ly Thanh Tong' reign was so famous that Song dynasty was interested in learning the way he organized the army. The Cham usually disturbed in the area near the border between two countries, thus Ly Thanh Tong decided to led an army in order to defeat Champa in 1069 and he was successful in

¹⁵The thirteen-level Bao Thien tower, the highest tower in Thang Long in the thirteenth century, was constructed by Cham prisoners, who carved the three characters Dao Li Thien on the top level. See Tac, Le, **An Nam Chi Luoc**, (Thuan Hoa: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, 2002), pp.41-42.

¹⁶Si Lien, Ngo, **op. cit.**, p.294.

¹⁷Ibid, p.298.

¹⁸Ibid, p.295.

this war by burning the capital and capturing the king of Champa. After that, the king of Champa implored Ly Thanh Tong to release him in exchange three areas known as Dia Ly, Ma Linh, and Bo Chinh.¹⁹

3.1.3 Zen Master Van Hanh

Van Hanh (938 – 1025) who has made considerable contribution in establishing the Ly dynasty was a Vietnamese Buddhist monk. He became a Buddhist monk when he was twenty – one years old with Zen Master Thien Ong in Luc To temple. He was well known as the most supporter for the king Le Hoan of Le dynasty and also as the important teacher and supporter for the King Ly Thai To who was the founder of Ly dynasty. He was considered as foreteller at that time because he could predict the future of Ly Cong Uan (Ly Thai To) and others in the first time meeting them.²⁰

The first emperor of Le dynasty, Le Hoan, payed respect to him and saw him as imperial teacher. Whenever having important thing related to the fortune of the nation, the king always asked the Master Van Hanh relied on his predicting ability. Moreover, Van Hanh has used this ability in order to put Ly Cong Uan on the throne. According to Le Van Sieu, there should be no doubt. The architect, whose perception is broad and profound, should be Master Van Hanh. He had made Le dynasty more important. He never missed his Buddhist practices, but meanwhile, he had utilized his talent for the nation. He had liberated from finical practicing rules of Buddhism. He must have realized that the most effective way of influencing people with Buddhism is by influencing the government. He did not follow Kung Tzu's footsteps by carrying a scripture and wandering everywhere in the country without employment. He also did not follow other scholars who preferred to sit in the tent to teach students the Way. And he did not do sitting meditation in stillness

¹⁹Manh That, Le, **op. cit.**, p.66.

²⁰Manh That, Le, **A Study of Collected Prominent of Zen Garden**, (HCM: Institute of Vietnam Buddhist Research, 2005), p.266.

like Bodhisattavas. He engaged in the society with the only goal: propagate Buddhism through politics.²¹

Furthermore, Van Hanh has proposed the idea of moving the capital from Hoa Lu to Thang Long (Ha Noi) because he realized failures of Dinh and Le dynasties. And now, this capital still is an important location of the nation. It is clear that Master Van Hanh has made a great contribution to the civilization and prosperity of Ly dynasty and Buddhism during this era. Therefore, the king Ly Nhan Tong wrote a praising paean to praise the ability and virtue of Zen Master Van Hanh:

His knowledge of three periods was profound

His words were like prophecy

Co Phap, where hometown was

Aspired to build the nation²²

(Vạn Hạnh dung tam tế

Chân Phù cổ sấm cơ

Hương quan danh Cổ Pháp

Trụ tích chấn vương kỳ)

Before 1975, there was a university in southern Vietnam named Van Hanh University. At present, many district of cities in Vietnam have the name "Su Van Hanh" in memory of a Zen master who has recorded many imprints in the history of the nation.

²¹ Van Sieu, Le, **The Civilization of Vietnam**, (Hanoi: Labor Publishing House, 2003), p.77.

²² Manh That, Le, **op. cit.**, p.268.

Table 1: The list of names of Masters in Ly dynasty

	Name of Kings	year	Details
Ly dynasty	Lý Phật Mã	1028 - 1054	Lý Thái Tông
	Lý Nhật Tông	1054 - 1072	Lý Thánh tông
	Nguyen family	938 - 1025	Zen Master Vạn Hạnh

3.2 The Salient Vietnamese Zen Masters and Eminent Kings in Tran Dynasty

Some famous masters during Tran dynasty presented in this part of paper was Tran Thai Tong, Tran Nhan Tong, Phap Loa, Huyen Quang, Tue Trung Thuong Si. The researcher shows the biography of their life, becoming a monk and contributions to Buddhism.

3.2.1 King Tran Thai Tong

Tran Thai Tong was the founder of Tran dynasty in Vietnamese history. He was born in 1218 during the last years of the Ly dynasty and his real name was Tran Canh. Under arrangement of Tran Thu Do, the font commander of citadels of Ly dynasty and his uncle, Tran Canh married to Ly Chieu Hoang, the last Queen of the Ly dynasty. After that the Queen abdicated the throne for him and he became the founder of Tran dynasty with title Tran Thai Tong in 1226.²³

Tran Thu Do made an important contribution in ascending to the throne of Tran Thai Tong or replacing of the Ly dynasty over the Tran dynasty. However, in 1237 Tran Thu Do forced Tran Thai Tong to marry to Princess Thuan Thien who had been pregnant for three months with his elder brother, Tran Lieu because of the continuity of the dynasty. This made Tran Lieu taking his army to Cai river in order to rebel and Tran

²³Manh That, Le, **A Complete Work of Tran Thai Tong**, (HCM: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 2001), p. 32.

Thai Tong left the capital for Yen Tu mountain to find the freedom for himself.

Tran Thai Tong arrived the mountain and met Zen master Dao Vien. Overjoyed, the Great Master greeted him with these words: “The old monk that I am, who has retired into the midst of forest, whose body is nothing but skin and bone, who lives on wild herbs and berries, drinks from the stream and wanders among the trees, has a heart as light as the clouds and unburdened like the wind. Your Majesty has left your sumptuous palace to come to this remote place. May I ask you what compelling need has prompted you to make this journey?”. The new emperor answered in tears that: “I am very young, my parents are no longer in this world and here I am alone reigning over the people without any support. I think that thrones have always been fragile and so I have come to this mountain with my only desire that of becoming a Buddha”²⁴

The Great master replied: “No, the Buddha is not to be found in this mountain, he is in our hearts. When the heart is at peace and lucid the Buddha is there. If your Majesty has an enlightened hear, you immediately become the Buddha, why then seek elsewhere”

After that Tran Thu Do and the court came to the mountain and beseeched the king to return the palace. The refused this, thus the Great Master took his hands and said that: “since you are king, the will of the kingdom must be also your will, the heart of the kingdom must be your heart. The whole kingdom now asking you to return, how can you refuse? These is however one important thing you should not forget when you are back in your palace: studying the sacred books”.²⁵

After this meeting with the Great Master, Dao Vien, Tran Thai Tong tried his best to study Buddhist scriptures and apply philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism in reigning the country although he was very busy. As a result, Tran Thai Tong was considered as Zen Master and had great

²⁴Lang, Nguyen, **History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, (Hanoi: Literature Publishing House, 2000), pp. 219-220.

²⁵Ibid, p. 222.

influence in taking shape the idea of Tran Nhan Tong in order to establish Truc Lam sect afterwards.

Additionally, in term of literature, the founder of Tran dynasty was the best writer and contributed a number of enormously works for literature of Buddhism and the nation. The King was considered as Zen mastered at that time. The reason for this was that when he was young, his uncle, Tran Thu Do compelled him to divorce his wife and to marry the wife of his brother. Tran Thai Tong didn't agree with that, so he escaped from palace for Yen Tu mountain²⁶. After that, the King spent much time to study Buddhism and wrote many works on Buddhism such as:

Thien Tong Chi Nam

Luc Thoi Sam Hoi Khoa Nghi

Kim Cuong Tam Muoi Kinh Chu Giai

Binh Dang Le Sam Van

Khoa Hu Luc

Thien Tong Chi Nam was the first book on Buddhism of the King-Master. Today, this work was lost because of time, but one part of it was included in Khoa Hu Luc. Similarly, Kim Cuong Tam Muoi Kinh Chu Giai which means annotations for the sutra Kim Cuong Tam Muoi was lost except the preface. Luc Thoi Sam Hoi Khoa Nghi was a book presenting the repentance rites according to six moments of the day. This work is practiced by the Master Thich Thanh Tu who is the leader of Truc Lam Zen sect and his disciples in Vietnam today. Khoa Hu Luc was a collection of articles written by Tran Thai Tong in different periods. Through this book, everyone can realize the King-Master as deep knowledge scholar who tried to lead people to Buddhist practice.

Besides, Tran Thai Tong was known as heroic emperor because he has led Dai Viet fighting against Mongol invasion in 1258 successfully.²⁷ According to many historians, the battle with Dai Viet was

²⁶Manh That, Le, **op. cit.**, p. 34.

²⁷Ibid, p. 93.

the first failure of Mongol army in Asia in campaign of conquering all over the world. Being a strong army at that time, Tran Thai Tong agreed to send tribute every three years to the court of the Mongol Empire although Dai Viet has forced the Mongols to retreat.

In 1258, Tran Thai Tong put his son, Tran Hoang on the throne with title, Tran Thanh Tong and the king became Retired Emperor.²⁸ From now, the emperors of the Tran dynasty often enthrone his sons because of two reasons. Firstly, this prevented his sons from fighting over the throne as earlier dynasties. Secondly, they had time to teach the new king how to reign the country and they had more free time to practiced meditation and study Buddhist scriptures.

3.2.2 King Tran Nhan Tong

Tran Nhan Tong named Tran Kham was the third emperor of the Tran dynasty, reigning over the country from 1278 – 1293. Tran Nhan Tong was quite intelligent and fond of learning. He read many kinds of book and mastered both Buddhist scriptures and other public writing such as musical rules, astronomy, military tactics²⁹... The king often discussed the Buddha meditation and philosophy with high official Tue Trung who was respected highly as a teacher by the king.³⁰

Tran Nhan Tong was promoted as Crown Prince when he was sixteen years old. However, he did not like it, because he wanted to practice meditation by himself in peace and try to reject it three times by promoting his younger brother³¹, but the King Tran Thanh Tong has refused this. Although he married the oldest daughter of Queen Nguyen Tu and had happy life with her, his mind was interested in Zen and he still preferred to become a monk. Thus, he decided to leave the palace to Yen Tu mountain at midnight. He arrived at Thap temple in Dong Cuu mountain in the early morning and rested in here because of tiredness.

²⁸Ibid, p. 94.

²⁹Si Lien, Ngo, **op. cit.**, p. 451.

³⁰Lang, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p. 281.

³¹Thoi Nhiem, Ngo, **True Record of Three Patriarchs**, (HCM: Institute of Vietnam Buddhist Research, 1995), p. 59.

The abbot of this temple offered food for him when noticing his extraordinary characteristics. However, his father got the news and urged his men for searching. Finally, Tran Nhan Tong had to come back the palace with no choice and ascended the throne in 1279.³²

Although being so busy after ascending the throne, Tran Nhan Tong still maintained his mind peaceful to practice meditation. He often went to Tu Phuoc temple inside the palace in order to study the teachings of the Buddha and practice meditation by himself.³³ Furthermore, King Tran Nhan Tong preferred vegetarian foods, thus his body was slim. His father noticed his health condition and asked for the reason. After listening the answer from his son, the retired emperor Tran Thanh Tong in tear mourned, “I am already old. I always count on you. How could you do it? How could you continue the duty of our ancestors by doing that? King Tran Nhan Tong listened in tears also.³⁴

In the year of 1285, the Mongolia decided to invade Dai Viet for second time.³⁵ Thus, the king had to put aside his religious interests to concentration on the national defense. Aware of the dangerous situation, both the King and people had to be united to prepare for the obvious and inevitable war. During this period of time, there were two significant conferences which were saved in Vietnamese history.³⁶ Firstly, the conference of all high-rank generals and officials at Binh Than. Secondly, the conference of all senior citizens at Dien Hong to discuss strategies for national defense. Finally, the King and citizens of Tran dynasty has achieved a victory in this war. Furthermore, the leader, Tran Nhan Tong, swept the invaders out of Dai Viet when they invaded the country for third time in the year of 1288. This pointed out Tran Nhan Tong was a talented emperor and great leader in Vietnamese history. After the war, the king ordered to relax the taxing policy, relieve the poor and postpone

³²Manh That, Le, **A Complete Work of Tran Nhan Tong**, (HCM: Institute of Vietnam Buddhist Research, 2006), p. 35.

³³ Thanh Tu, Thich, **A Study of Three Truc Lam Patriarchs**, (HCM: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 1997), p. 23.

³⁴Manh That, Le, **op. cit.**, p. 36.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 53.

³⁶Thanh Tu, Thich, **op. cit.**, p. 26.

the military campaign against Laos so that the country could recover after two fierce wars, several famine and natural disasters.

The great king, Tran Nhan Tong, handed over the throne to his son Tran Anh Tong and held the title Retired Emperor in 1293. During the following six years, the Retired Emperor stood behind his son to support him in reigning the country. Tran Nhan Tong ordained as a monk and stayed in Yen Tu mountain and focused on ascetic virtues³⁷. Therefore, the king was known as the title The Great Ascetic Monk. Tran Nhan Tong compiled the principles of all popular sects at that time such Ty Ni Da Luu Chi, Vo Ngon Thong, Thao Duong to establish a new Zen sect called “Truc Lam Yen Tu”³⁸. After that, the master built temples established meditation centers, schools in order to teach for other monks and the public.

The first Patriarch went to the palace and passed on the Bodhisattava-precepts³⁹ to the emperor Tran Anh Tong and officials in 1034. This year, he travelled around the country in order to advise the people abolish places which worshiped inappropriately and teach them the practice of ten precepts⁴⁰. On the first day of the new year festival of 1038, the Zen Master chose his disciple, Phap Loa, as his official Dharma-successor and became the Second Patriarch of Truc Lam school⁴¹. On the same year, the Master came back the palace to visit and

³⁷ Bhadantacariya, Buddhaghosa, **Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification)** Trans by Bhikkhu Namamoli, (Taipei: Singapore Buddhist Meditation Center, 2003), p. 59. Thirteen kinds of Ascetic Practices being (1) the refuse-rag-wearer, (2) the triple-robe-wearer, (3) the alms-food-eater, (4) the house-to-house seeker, (5) the one-sessioner, (6) the bowl-food-eater, (7) the later-food-refuser, (8) the forest-dweller, (9) the tree-root-dweller, (10) the open-air-dweller, (11) the channel-ground-dweller, (12) the any-bed-user, (13) the sitter.

³⁸Lang, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p. 280.

³⁹Donald, S. Lopez, **Buddhism**, (Allen Lane, London: The Penguin Press, 2001), p. 156. In the Mahayana Buddhism, a Buddhist vows to preserve fifty-eight precepts, including ten major ones and forty-eight minor ones.

⁴⁰Narada, **A Manual of Abhhidharma**, (Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1979), pp 10-1. Refraining from (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) committing adultery, (4) lying, (5) speaking harshly, (6) speaking divisively, (7) speaking idly, (8) being greedy, (9) being angry, (10) having wrong views.

⁴¹Thanh Tu, Thich, **op. cit.**, p. 36.

advise his sister who was seriously ill and wished to see him before her death. When being informed this news, the Master told Phap Loa that “Time has come for me, therefore, I want to make a long-term plan”. After arriving the Ngoa Van mountain from the palace, the Master said to two monks who took him to the mountain “after going down the mountain, try your best to cultivate Buddhist doctrines to escape the cycle of birth and death”. Then, the Master told his disciple, Ven. Bao Sat that “It is the time for me to go.” Bao Sat asked “Where are you going, Master” The first Patriarch said a Zen gatha:

Nothing was created

Nothing was terminated

If that is understood

The Buddha will always in presence

Where should there be the coming and returning?

(Nhất thiết pháp bất sanh

Nhất thiết pháp bất diệt

Nhược năng như thị giải

Chư Phật thường hiện tiền

Hà khứ lai chi hữu?)

Ven. Bao Sat asked “What does it mean by no birth and no termination?”. The First Patriarch slapped Bao Sat in the face and scolded: “Stop speaking nonsense”⁴². After that, the Master passed away in the posture of lion when he was fifty-one years old.

All in all, Tran Nhan Tong was not only talented and benevolent emperor of Tran dynasty but outstanding Zen Master. He has combined principles of three Zen sects in that time to establish a true Vietnamese Zen sect, Truc Lam, and made a great contribution in development of Buddhism in that era. Moreover, the Master has left a

⁴²Lang, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p. 309.

variety of works such as: Thien Lam Thiet Chuy Ngu Luc, Dai Huong Hai An Thi Tap, Tang Gia Toai Su, Thach That Mi Ngu

3.2.3 Zen Master Phap Loa

Phap Loa who was considered as second patriarch of Truc Lam zen sect was born in 1284 with real name Dong Kien Cuong. He had this name because when his mother was pregnant she tried to abort him, but this work was not successful. The reason for this was she had eight daughters already. At young age, he portrayed intellect and dignity. He would never make malicious speeches and had no interest in eating meats⁴³.

Phap Loa became a monk when he was twenty-one years old with the Great Master Tran Nhan Tong when the first patriarch travelled around to perform teaching and abolish places with inappropriate worshipping. For the first meeting with Phap Loa, the Great Master Tran Nhan Tong said: “this man has virtue. He should later be able to propagate Buddhism. Come here...”⁴⁴. Then, Phap Loa ordained ten precepts and was sent to study with the most venerable Tanh Giac at Quynh Quan temple. Being intelligent, Phap Loa showed many questions about Dharma with the most venerable, but there was no answer for him.

The mind of Phap Loa was opened and some questions was answered by himself when he read the dialogue between the Buddha and patriarch Ananda asking seven questions about the mind. After that, he wanted to go to the first patriarch place to study. This was opportunity for him to raise questions to the first patriarch, the more questions he asked, the more awakened he was. Phap Loa wanted to examine his understanding about Buddhism, he presented three verses to the first patriarch but Tran Nhan Tong criticized it and he tried to ask two more questions and was told to learn by himself. During this time, Phap Loa studied the Dharma by himself, especially Surangamasamadhi-nirdesa-

⁴³Ibid, p. 313.

⁴⁴Thanh Tu, Thich, **op. cit.**, p. 366.

sutra.⁴⁵ At the mid of that night, Phap Loa got enlightenment when seeing the extinction of the light in his room⁴⁶.

He ordained bhikkhu and bodhisattava precepts in 1305 with the title Phap Loa. In 1038, after expounding Dharma for king Tran Anh Tong and high officials at Sieu Loai temple. The first patriarch of Truc Lam sect announced Phap Loa officially become the abbot of Sieu Loai temple and second patriarch of Truc Lam sect. Moreover, the first patriarch gave him more than two hundred suttras and requested king Tran Anh Tong to donate hundred acres of land to the temple.⁴⁷

Phap Loa played an important role in developing Buddhism at that time. According to the order of king Tran Anh Tong, the second patriarch appointed Bao Sat to write “Dai Tang Kinh” in 1311.⁴⁸ Two years later, Phap Loa laid out the position of each monk and the list was recorded in a book and was revised against in every three years by himself. Furthermore, many people from the queen, princess to royal members considered Phap Loa as their teacher, so they donated land, gold, money to him in order to build more temples, make more Buddha statues and publish more scriptures including 1300 big and small Buddha statues, two big monasteries, five towers, 200 Buddhist schools, 15.000 disciples.⁴⁹In addition, he wrote many famous works such as:

Essential Study of Zen Doctrine (Tham Thien Chi Yeu).

Commentary on the Mahaparinirvana-Sutra (Kim Cuong Trang Da La Ni Khoa Chu).

Commentary on Saddharmapundarika-Sutra or Lotus Sutra (Phap Hoa Kinh Khoa So).

⁴⁵Chan Nguyen, **Buddhist Dictionary**, (Hue: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, 1999), p. 419. The Sutra has only been preserved in the Chinese version, and the original Sanskrit text was lost. This Sutra has strongly influenced the Mahayana Buddhism in China. It emphasizes the importance of Samadhi to attain enlightenment, and has been popular in Zen’s schools.

⁴⁶Thanh Tu, Thich, **op. cit.**, p. 367.

⁴⁷Ibid, p. 368.

⁴⁸Dai Tang Kinh included 1.422 items, 6.010 volume and were bound in 587 books. See Lang, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p. 315.

⁴⁹Thanh Tu, Thich, **op. cit.**, pp. 370-371.

Commentary on Prajnaparamita-Sutra or Wisdom-Sutra (Bat Nha Tam Kinh Khoa So).

Commentary on the Mahaparinirvana-Sutra (Niet Ban Dai Kinh Khoa So).

Commentary on the Lankavatara-Sutra Four Volumes (Lang Gia Tu Quyen Khoa So).

Rites for Ceremonies held by Kings for Assistance to the Nation (Nhan Vuong Ho Quoc Nghi Quy).

On Buddhist Affairs (Phap Su Khoa Van).

Collection of Buddhist Texts to Help Dharma Students (Do Mon Tro Thanh Lap).

Phap Loa pleasantly passed away at the age of forty-seven in 1330 after writing the last verse for Huyen Quang, his assistant:

Terminating all factors of this self is pleasantness

Forty years plus are just a long dream

Just remember, not to ask

With the moon and cool wind, there it opens wide.⁵⁰

(Muôn duyên cắt đứt, một thân nhàn

Hơn bốn mươi năm giấc mộng tràng

Nhấn bảo mọi người thôi chớ hỏi

Bên kia trăng gió rộng thênh thang.)

3.2.4 Zen Master Huyen Quang

Huyen Quang who was born in 1254 was the third patriarch of Truc Lam sect⁵¹ at Van Tai village of Bac Giang province. When he was young, he looked abnormal with his intelligence. Additionally, his parents

⁵⁰Lang, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p. 329.

⁵¹Lang, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p. 331.

loved him so much and taught him literature as well as engaged him in other learning activities. As a result, Huyen Quang earned a first doctoral degree in the reign of king Tran Thanh Tong when he was twenty-one years old. At the same year, the king wanted him to marry Princess, Lieu Nu, but he refused. Later on, he was appointed as an official to work as a diplomat in the foreign affairs ministry in conjunction of greeting Chinese ambassadors who quite respected his skillful talent as well as his deep and large knowledge of literature.⁵²

One day, Huyen Quang attained the Dharma talk of Zen Master Phap Loa with the king Tran Anh Tong. Suddenly, he was awakened to say “being an official, I could reach to fairyland. If I attained the way, I could reach to Pho Da mountain. The fairyland in this world is just at immortal level, but the western realm is the Buddha realm. The wealth and nobility are like autumn leaves or summer white clouds. What is there for me to hold on to?”⁵³. After that, he resigned as a government official and decided to become a Buddhist monk at Vinh Nghiem temple with the title Huyen Quang.

With his profound Dharma knowledge and wise, thousands of Buddhists from all places gathered for Dharma knowledge and the Master was assigned to lecture at various places. Moreover, Master Huyen Quang was responsible for editing and composing other writing like Chapters of Buddhist Scriptures (Chu Pham Kinh), Collection of Buddhist Literature (Cong Van Tap). In 1317, Master Huyen Quang was bequeathed a Zen transmission from Zen Master Phap Loa and became the third patriarch of Truc Lam sect.

During the life of the Master, he opened a Buddhist center to teach the Dharma for thousands of monks. Besides, he also printed Buddhist texts for free distribution and performed charities for the poor. He also established the Dai Bi temple located west of his house in 1313 in order to take care of his parents at the old age and studied Buddhist

⁵²Ibid, pp. 333-334.

⁵³Thanh Tu, Thich, **op. cit.**, p. 534.

scriptures. The Master passed away at the age of eighty in Con Son temple.

3.2.5 Zen Master Tue Trung Thuong Si

Tue Trung Thuong Si was born in 1230 with the birth name of Tran Tung. He was the eldest son of Tran Lieu, who was elder brother of the king Tran Thai Tong. In addition, he was elder brother of the Queen of Dai Viet at that time, Nguyen Thanh Thien Cam who was wife of king Tran Thanh Tong and mother of king Tran Nhan Tong and of the famous general-saint Tran Hung Dao⁵⁴. Especially, he was Zen teacher of king Tran Nhan Tong, who later became a monk and founded the Truc Lam Zen school.

Tue Trung Thuong Sy played several vital roles in Vietnam society during thirteenth-century. Firstly, as a governor, he has led resistance against three Mongolian invasions, thus the king promoted him as commander of Thai Binh seaport.⁵⁵ Secondly, being a layperson, Tue Trung Thuong Si lived a life mixed with common people and meditation. He helped learners to calm their mind and planted the seeds of Dharma. Especially, being a Zen Master, he had strong influence on the king, royal members and the founder of Truc Lam Zen sect. He was a man of character at the young age because he was not interested in fame and power and interested in Buddhism, especially meditation.⁵⁶ He entered the joy of meditation every day after understanding the lecture of Zen Master Tieu Dao⁵⁷. It is clear that some words from Tue Trung were not in line with the Buddhist teachings. For example, when asked by King Tran Nhan Tong “How can people break from bad karma, when they have habits of eating meat and getting drunk?”

⁵⁴Thanh Tu, Thich, **A Study of Tue Trung Thuong Si**, (HCM: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 1997), p. 58.

⁵⁵Lang, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p. 255.

⁵⁶Ibid, p. 59.

⁵⁷Tue Trung was the most brilliant disciple of Tieu Dao who belonged to the fourth generation which propagated religion in the Yen Tu mountain. See Tai Thu, Nguyen, **The History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, (Hanoi: CRVP, 2008), p. 127.

Tue Trung answered: “in case someone is standing and doesn’t know that the king suddenly is walking past behind him, and he throws something that hits the king. Is he scared? Is the king angry? Those two things are not related to each other. You should know that.”

Then Tue Trung continued with his two short poems, as follows:

*All things are impermanent
 Having a doubt in mind will make a sin manifested.
 Since the beginning of time, there has not been a thing
 Neither a seed nor a bud
 (Vô thường các pháp hạnh
 Tâm nghi tội liền sanh
 Xưa nay không một vật
 Chẳng giống cũng chẳng mầm)
 When you face the scenes every day
 Just know that all scenes come from your mind
 Realizing that the mind and scenes are originally empty
 You will see the enlightenment in all places
 (Ngày ngày khi đối cảnh
 Cảnh cảnh từ tâm sanh
 Tâm cảnh xưa nay không
 Chón chón ba la mật)*

Tran Nhan Tong asked: “thus, for what reason we have to keep the precepts strictly”.

Tue Trung smiled in silence. King Tran Nhan Tong insisted an answer. Tue Trung made another two short poems.

*Keeping precepts and having patience
 Only invite sinfulness, not merit*

*If you want to know beyond both sinfulness and merit
 Just live beyond both keeping precepts and having patience
 (Giữ giới cùng nhẫn nhục
 Chuốc tội chẳng chuốc phước
 Muốn biết không tội phước
 Chẳng giữ giới nhẫn nhục)
 Just like someone climbing the tree
 You are looking for danger, not aware that you are safe now
 If you don't climb the tree
 How could the wind and moon affect you?
 (Như khi người leo cây
 Tron an tự cầu nguy
 Như người không leo cây
 Trăng gió có làm gì?)*

Tue Trung then told the king “don't tell that to bad people”⁵⁸.

Another day, King Tran Nhan Tong asked about the essence of Zen, Tue Trung replied: “Reflect inwardly to see the essence of yourself. Don't follow other ways”⁵⁹. As a result, Tran Nhan Tong got enlightenment and later became a monk and found Truc Lam Zen sect which is the largest Zen school in Vietnam now.

Another example for this, the Queen Mother held a royal banquet and saw Tue Trung eating meat, she asked: “you practice meditation, and now you eat meat. How can you become Buddha? Tue Trung replied Buddha is Buddha, and I am what I am. I don't need to be Buddha and Buddha doesn't need to be me. You probably heard the

⁵⁸Thanh Tu, Thich, **op. cit.**, pp. 61-63.

⁵⁹Ibid, p. 63.

words from old sages, “Manjusri is Manjusri; enlightenment is enlightenment”⁶⁰.

In 1291, Tue Trung Thuong Si got a little sick and put a wooden bed in the center of the empty hall, lay down on his right side, and closed his eyes. Seeing it, his wife, companions and servants cried out loud. Tue Trung opened his eyes and said “Birth and death are natural. Why do you cry and feel resentful, making noise around my true nature?”⁶¹. After those words, Tue Trung died gently.

Table 2: The List of Names of Masters in Tran Dynasty

Tran Dynasty	Trần Cảnh	1225 - 1258	Trần Thái Tông
	Trần Khâm	1278 - 1293	Trần Nhân Tông
	Đông Kiên Cường	1284 - 1330	Zen Master Pháp Loa
	Lý Đạo Tái	1254 - 1334	Zen Master Huyền Quang
	Trần Tung	1230 - 1291	Zen Master Tuệ Trung Thượng Sĩ

3.3 Concluding Remarks

Ly Thai Tong was a great emperor of the Ly Dynasty. For more than thirty years of reigning, king Ly Thai Tong has consolidated the rule of Ly dynasty, against the dangers of division, rioting, encroachment in order to make Dai Co Viet strong. Especially, king Ly Thai Tong had an immensely kind and generous heart or treated everyone with tolerance because the court was effected by the compassion of the Buddhism, the state religion at that time. During the reign of Ly Thanh Tong Dai Viet became a developed country in the economy and a strong one in military. Because, the third king of Ly dynasty was so talented and benevolent.

⁶⁰Ibid, p. 59.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 64

Zen Master Van Hanh who was supported Ly Cong Uan, the founder of Ly dynasty on the throne. Moreover, the master advised King Ly Thai To move the capital city to Thang Long which not only created glorious development during Ly and Tran dynasties. Tran Nhan Tong considered as talented and great leader and the most famous monk in the history of Vietnam was the third King of Tran dynasty. Tran Nhan Tong considered as talented and great leader and the most famous monk in the history of Vietnam was the third King of Tran dynasty. The master has complied the principles of three main sects at that time to establish Truc Lam Zen sect which still develops in Vietnam nowadays. The first Patriarch of Truc Lam sect travelled around the country to spread and advise the people practicing along with the teachings of the Buddha.

All in all, the biography and historical events related to the salient Masters during Ly and Tran dynasties were stated clearly in this chapter. Basing on their time and condition of living, the researcher will present the contributions of those famous Masters to the development of Buddhism in next chapter.

Table 3: The contributions of the Kings and Zen Masters

	Name of Kings	year	Details
Ly dynasty	Lý Phật Mã	1028 - 1054	Lý Thái Tông
	Lý Nhật Tông	1054 - 1072	Lý Thánh tông
	Nguyen family	938 - 1025	Zen Master Vạn Hạnh
	Trần Cảnh	1225 - 1258	Trần Thái Tông
Tran dynasty	Trần Khâm	1278 - 1293	Trần Nhân Tông
	Đông Kiên Cương	1284 - 1330	Zen Master Pháp Loa
	Lý Đạo Tái	1254 - 1334	Zen Master Huyền Quang
	Trần Tung	1230 - 1291	Zen Master Tuệ Trung Thượng Sĩ

Chapter IV

The Contributions of Salient Vietnamese Zen Master to The Development of Vietnam Buddhism in The Period of 10th - 14th Centuries

The philosophy of Buddhism had a strong attachment to the spiritual life of Vietnamese during the long history. Especially, it has contributed to many aspects such as politics, culture, economy, literature and art from 10th to 14th century. As well as, Zen Masters have contributed their ability to the development of the country and this is the most glorious period in the history of developing the state in every aspects and fighting aggressors in the feudal history of Vietnam. On the other hand, Buddhist Kings supported for the development of Buddhism in spreading the teachings of the Buddha.

4.1 The Contributions of Zen Masters Towards Politics and Diplomacy

4.1.1 Politics Aspect

With liberation philosophy of Buddhism and knowledge of Zen Masters, Buddhism affected not only on common people, but on Kings, mandarins, especially on their policies of governing the country. It is clear that how Buddhism affected on Vietnamese political life through changing power from Early – Le dynasty into the Ly dynasty. In this change, Zen Master Van Hanh played an important role because he has arranged a political movement when recognizing the degradation of Early– Le dynasty. One side, Master Van Hanh handed down a prediction that in the future, a king with last name Ly will appear at Co Phap

village.¹ Moreover, according to Thien Uyen Tap Anh, this message was predicted by Dinh Khong two hundred years ago. Other side, Master Van Hanh connected to the high-ranking mandarin of the court, Dao Cam Moc and told him his idea. Therefore, the change of power from Early – Le dynasty to Ly dynasty occurred very advantageously. Furthermore, he proposed the idea of moving the capital city from Hoa Lu to Thang Long (Ha Noi today) after coming to the throne.² This opened a new development era for Vietnam and many later dynasties could not find out any place which is more advantageous about economy and politics than Thang Long. In the presence, Thang Long still is an important location of the nation.

In addition, the monk Da Bao played an important role in politics. According to Thien Uyen Tap Anh, after having been enthroned, Ly Thai To often invited the monk Da Bao to the imperial palace for consultation on religious problems and generously remunerated him. Even during discussions of political affairs, the monk was allowed to take part in.³ Sometimes, the Kings asked the monks how to govern the country. For example, the imperial preceptor Vien Thong gave the following advice to King Ly Than Tong: “the people are like material things. If they are put in a peaceful place, they will be peaceful. If they are put in a dangerous position, they will become dangerous. All depends on their master’s behavior. If the master’s love conforms to men’s hearts, he will be beloved as their parents, admired as the sun and the moon, and so he will put his people in a peaceful position. Whether the country is at peace or in trouble, all depends on its public officials. If the latter are good public servants, the country will live in peace. If not, the country will live in trouble.

By experience, it can be seen that among the previous rulers, none has made the country rise without employing great men, nor made the country fall without employing little men. But the origin of a

¹Manh That, Le, **A Study of Collected Prominent of Zen Garden**, (HCM: Institute of Vietnam Buddhist Research, 2005), p.267.

²Lang Nguyen, **op. cit.**, pp.141-143.

³Manh That, Le, **op. cit.**, p.182.

country's rise and fall is not a pretext that comes instantly, but only gradually. The universe can't be suddenly cold or hot to the season spring or autumn. It is the same for the Kings. They are powerful or crumble gradually on condition that they have performed good or evil actions. The last time Kings have known all that, so they imitated heaven in incessantly cultivating their virtues aimed at bettering themselves, or they imitated earth in incessantly cultivating their virtues aimed at pacifying the people. To correct oneself, one must be careful in one's heart, be afraid as if walking on thin ice. To pacify the country, one must respect one's inferior, must be afraid as one holds worn reins. Doing so, one will inevitably be powerful. Doing the contrary, one can't avoid failure. Power or crumbling comes progressively.⁴

The founder of Ly dynasty, Ly Cong Uan was brought up since childhood in a monastery and trained to be talented man by Zen Master Van Hanh. It is thus not surprising the ruler of this dynasty were ardent supporter of Buddhism, after coming to the throne and as soon as the new capital city of Thang Long was formed, Ly Thai To ordered establishing eight monasteries at Thien Duc prefecture and repairing all damaged village temples all over the country.⁵ In 1018, two envoys Nguyen Dao Thanh and Pham Hac were sent to the Chinese court of the Northern Song Emperor (998 – 1022) to collect the three Baskets of Buddhist Canon (Tripitaka) which was recopied in 1023 and was then deposited in Dai Hung library.⁶ The king also assisted people to become monks, so the number of monk increased rapidly at that time. According to Thien Uyen Tap Anh, the monk, Da Bao, had more than one hundred followers in Kien So pagoda located in Phu Dong, Ha Noi.

During the mid-11th century in the Trung Minh pagoda located on Thien Phuc mountain (Tien Son, Ha Bac) where Thien Lao was the resident monk, "There were more than one thousand believers who

⁴Tai Thu, Nguyen, **The History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, (Hanoi: CRVP, 2008), pp.93-94.

⁵Manh That, Le, **History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, (HCM: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 2006), p.120.

⁶Upendra Thakur, **Some Aspects of Asian History and Culture**, (Asia: Abhinav publication, 1986) p.173.

transformed his pagoda into an animated Buddhist gathering”. The monk Nguyen Hoc had more than one hundred followers in his Quang Bao pagoda. The monk, Dao Hue had more than one thousand followers in his Quang Minh pagoda. And in the Thanh Tuoc pagoda located on Du Hy mountain, where the monk Tri Bao cloistered, follower-inhabitans were so numerous that the pagoda seem to be a market.⁷ Some mandarins also left their home to become Buddhist monks and was respected by King and the society. In 1024, Chan Giao monastery was built in the city for meeting, chanting and doing penance.

Additionally, his son, the King Ly Thai Tong (1028 – 1054) also venerate Buddhism, he ordered construction of hundreds of monasteries, including Dien Huu pogoda⁸ (One Pillar Pagoda – the symbol of Hanoi nowadays). As the Buddhist King, the rulers of Ly and Tran dynasties used Buddhism as a mean to link human mind, and to strengthen the country against invasion forces. In fact, Buddhism reached its climax during this period. The court had policy of allotting cultivated land for monasteries and considered monasteries as economic unit. Many monasteries were built by Kings, Queens and mandarins with huge structures and specific architecture during Ly dynasty. Moreover, Kings of Ly dynasty also showed their prosperity and devout by casting four symbols of Buddhism and also seen as four types of weapons of Vietnam at that time such as Bao Thien tower, Quy Dien bell, Smiling Buddha statue in Quynh Lam temple, Pho Minh cauldron.⁹ The four kinds of weapons were destroyed later by war.

Under the contributions of Zen masters to politics and the support of Kings, Buddhism in Ly dynasty developed rapidly and

⁷Tai Thu, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p. 91.

⁸Ibid, p. 116.

⁹Four great objects famous bronze products such as Bao Thien tower, Pho Minh caldron, Buddha’s statue in Quynh Lam pagoda, Quy Dien bell were recorded in the written document and handed down among the people. Until Le and Nguyen dynasties (in 15th – 20th centuries), bronze products still occupied an important position in spiritual life as well as simple daily living life of Vietnamese peope. See Mai Hung, Pham, **National Museums of Vietnam**, (Hanoi: Cultural and Information Publishing House, 2001), p. 115.

influenced deeply not in the life of the people but in the rule policy of Kings. Kings of this dynasty often promulgated tolerant political policy with their people and enemies instead of using torture such as hot cauldrons of oil, tiger caves to punish criminal of Early – Le dynasty.¹⁰

For example, the founder of Ly dynasty abolished all instruments of torture in prisons and built hundreds of Buddhist monasteries in order to teach knowledge and virtue for the people. In addition, the third King of Ly dynasty, Ly Thanh Tong was considered as the most hearted King in Vietnam history. When thinking about prisons in winter, the King told all mandarins in the court that “I still feel cold although I wear fleece and stay in palaces with fireplaces; what about the people who are detained in prison without judging, kept in chains and suffered from hunger and coldness. They could die of coldness, so the situation is very merciful”. Another time, when recognizing the lack of understanding about the laws of the people, the King pointed to his daughter and said: “my love toward common people equaled that toward his daughter. I feel sympathetic to the offenders who violate the law because of lacking of understanding of the laws. From now on, any law needs to be popularized carefully and all the crimes need to be commuted”.¹¹ For enemy, the King Ly Thanh Tong did not kill King of Champa – Che Cu and ordered that “if someone kills Cham people, they will be punished seriously” in the battle between Dai Viet and Champa in 1069.¹² Additionally, the King Ly Thai Tong pardoned Nung Tri Cao who rebelled against the court in the north border two times because the King has killed his relatives. It showed clearly that Buddhism has great influence on Kings of Ly dynasty. Kings treated with the people by a merciful and gladness spirit, thus bringing the knowledge of Buddhism into the daily social political life effectively.

If Kings of Ly dynasty needed talented Zen Masters with their knowledge in Buddhism and society, diplomatic skills in order to help the

¹⁰Lang, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p. 200.

¹¹Trong Kim, Tran, **op. cit.**, p. 107.

¹²Manh That, Le, **History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, Vol. III (HCM: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 2006), p. 114.

court. In other ways, Buddhist priest interfered directly in political issue. Kings of Tran dynasty controlled political affairs by themselves. However, Buddhist's spirit helped Kings connect the people together to defeat Mongolian invaders three times. For example, the Buddhist priest Kings, Tran Nhan Tong, inherited the Buddhist knowledge from forefathers and applied the closing's people policy and democratic policy effectively. In fact, when hearing the Mongolian invaders near to the border of Dai Viet in 1284, the King decided sharing the political role for all people by convening a Dien Hong meeting to ask the respected elders among the people whether to fight the invaders or not.¹³ All attendees at this meeting agreed with one mind "fighting, fighting and fighting" which created a strength of the nation to defeat the invader. The King knew that just asking idea of the elders in case of emergency, he could know the will of all people because the elders could have imparted and encouraged the spirit of defending the nation to all people. And Dai Viet was known as a strong nation by defeating Mongolian, the strongest nation in the world at that time in 1285 and 1288 by unifying the mind of the people. We can't say that Buddhism had not a strong attachment to the spiritual life of Vietnamese. The influence of Buddhism made Vietnamese society in these two dynasties develop strongly militarily.

Weekday, Buddhist priests and Kings practiced meditation and learned the teachings of the Buddha, especially not kill life of other animals. However, when the nation was invaded, they also participated in fighting against invaders to defending the country. This was special point of Buddhism in Ly – Tran dynasties, religion traveled with the nation. This brought peace to the society and the nation. As a result, the people in this society would help Buddhism develop in every aspect. According to Le Quat, a Confucian described how Buddhism spread in Vietnam during Tran dynasty: "how could Buddhism influence people in such a way that it's profound and prolong? From monarchs to typical people, everyone is generous with their spending on anything that relates to Buddhism. Today, if they could make donation to build a temple, they are quite delighted.

¹³Manh That, Le, **A Complete Work of Tran Nhan Tong**, (HCM: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 2006), p. 51.

It's like they have a voucher for money return. Thus, at everywhere, people voluntarily believe and follow. At any residential area, there is a Buddhist temple. If it's ruined, they remodel it. If it's collapsed, they build a new one. The bell or gong towers are also built. They built it so easily and their belief is quite strong. I started reading at small age and studied the history and present, therefore, my religious is not bad. But I still can't make everyone trust me. From the North to the South that I traveled, I have rarely seen learning centers. I feel embarrassed by these Buddhist flowers. This is the reason that I write this memo".¹⁴

In Tran dynasty, there was a meditation Master who was layperson instead of a monk. He was Tue Trung Thuong Si who was a governor and one of famous military generals who led resistance against three Mongolian invasions. In young age, the Masters was uninterested in fame and power, so he did not participate the court. To be brilliant, gentle and a man of character, Tue Trung Thuong Si often had Buddhist conversation with Zen Master Tieu Dao who was considered as his teacher. Although he was a layperson, he practiced meditation and study the Buddhist texts, and entered joy of meditation every day. Moreover, he had deep knowledge in Buddhism and understood clearly the path the Buddha gone. Everyone at that time considered him as special Zen Master because he lived with common people in order to plant the seeds of dharma.¹⁵ The Master also was teacher of many Buddhist monks who all shown the profound meaning of his advice in dharma and given some useful ways to calm the mind.

When the nation was in danger, meditation Master, Tue Trung Thuong Si, closed temporarily his meditation door and joined military to defend the nation and protect the peace life of the people. He was a governor of Hong Lo in the war with Mongolian invaders.¹⁶ With his intelligent and resolute mind, he helped the Kings and citizens in Tran dynasty win glorious victory by the strongest military at that time. After

¹⁴Lang, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p.320.

¹⁵Thanh Tu, Thich, **A Study of Tue Trung Thuong Si**, (HCM: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 1997), p.80.

¹⁶Ibid, p.58.

war, Tue Trung Thuong Si got promoted as commander of the Thai Binh seaport, but the Master decided to come back his peaceful place to practice meditation and study the teachings of the Buddha again. Being a Zen Master, Tue Trung Thuong Si had strong influence on the founder of Truc Lam Zen sect, the King Tran Nhan Tong.

We can see clearly that Zen Master Tue Trung Thuong Si was a symbol of engaged Buddhism.¹⁷ In peace, the Master put religion closely in social life and took full advantage of studying Buddhist texts. However, when the nation was in danger, the Master was ready close the texts, open the robe, put the war dress on and go to the battle with the fearless spirit of sacrifice for the freedom and independence of the country.

In the other hand, some great Kings in Tran dynasty became a Buddhist monk after leading Dai Viet army and people fighting against the invaders. Taking Tran Thai Tong for example, he directly participated and led the people in resistance against Mongolian for the 2nd and 3rd times with his son, King Tran Nhan Tong.¹⁸ After winning the victories in 1285 and 1288, the King decided to stay at Bac Cung, became a Buddhist monk and devoted to study the philosophy of Buddhism and wrote books.¹⁹ As a result, many writings of Tran Thai Tong in Buddhism are rare documents for researchers nowadays studying the thought and history of Buddhism in Tran dynasty. Although, becoming a Buddhist priest, the King often took interest in controlling the nation and helped the new King in solving nation problems as an adviser.

Another example for this was King Tran Nhan Tong who was a hero, famous King, poet and founder of Truc Lam zen sect. During his reign, the King organized two famous conferences which leading victories in battle of Dai Viet. The first one was Binh Than conference in 1282 between the King and officers in the court to discuss stratagem for the war and the second one was Dien Hong in 1284 between the King and elders all over the country to ask them whether fighting or not. The King

¹⁷Lang Nguyen, *op. cit.*, pp.258-265.

¹⁸Manh That, Le, *A Complete of Trai Thai Tong*, (HCM: Institute of Vietnam Buddhist Research, 2005), p.19.

¹⁹Ibid, p.122.

was proposing a unity policy through these conferences in order to fight against the invaders and since established a long period of peace and prosperity over the country.

Later on, Tran Nhan Tong abdicated the throne for his son, King Tran Anh Tong, focused on studying Buddhist scriptures, and supported the new King in new role. Six years later, after reading many books and understood thoroughly the teachings of the Buddha, Tran Nhan Tong decided to ordained as a Buddhist monk and stay in Yen Tu mountain.²⁰ About this event, some historians said that King Tran Nhan Tong chose Yen Tu Mountain to practice meditation because of political purpose. They showed that this mountain with the high of 1068 meters located at important place where can observe any commotion of enemy in the north border. However, most of historians and scholars do not agree with this idea. They pointed out that Tran Nhan Tong was a great King and hero of Dai Viet, there was no reason to become a border guarding soldier. In addition, the purpose of becoming a Buddhist monk of the King was to attain enlightenment as a Buddha in order to bring happiness for gods and human beings.

There were many reasons for the King to choose this mountain to practice meditation. Firstly, Yen Tu was Old Mountain with strong magnetic force, which effect positively to practitioners. This place was where practiced of many famous Zen Masters in the past such as Dao Vien, Dai Dang, Tieu Dao, Hue Tue ... Secondly, this mountain was hometown of Tran dynasty, so Tran Nhan Tong decided to come here to lead a religious life was not surprising.

Tran Nhan Tong practiced meditation in Yen Tu mountain for long time, after that the master travelled around the country to advise the people to give up superstition and receive the ten precepts which taught by the Buddha for Buddhists. Especially, the Zen Master often advised his son, the King Tran Anh Tong to give up alcohol and entertainment

²⁰Manh That, Le, **A Complete of Tran Nhan Tong**, (HCM: Institute of Vietnam Buddhist Research, 2006), p.178.

and focus on the life of the people and manage the nation.²¹ It is clear that, being a Buddhist monk, the Founder of Truc Lam school always tried his best to spread the liberation teachings and bring compassion and intelligent philosophy into the life, being a retired King, Tran Nhan Tong wanted to bring the comfortable and peaceful life for the people and train his son becoming a good new King. All in all, the influence of Zen Master Tran Nhan Tong to politics at that time was remarkable.

Additionally, in 1301 the Master travelled to Bo Chinh province in the south border of Dai Viet, afterwards travelled to neighboring country, Chiem Thanh in order to bring peace to those who suffer, faith to those who doubt and returning those who have strayed to the correct path. When hearing this news, the King of Champa, Che Man prepared foods and offering and welcomed the Master into the imperial city respectively.²² The relationship between the Master and the King was very good because the King respected the Zen Master as hero who fought against the Mongolian invaders successfully and his compassion for the citizens of Dai Viet and Champa.

In this visiting, Zen Master Tran Nhan Tong promised to marry his daughter, Princess Huyen Tran for the intelligent and fortitude King of Champa and in turn, the King donated two provinces Chau O and Chau Ly as betrothal gilts.²³ Some people said that the political purpose of the Master was the land of these two provinces. However, the Master recognized that the relationship between two countries was necessary but be in danger. Being a Buddhist monk, Tran Nhan Tong wanted to bring happiness into the life because liberation must also continue to release people from pain, the sufferings of life, server the source of our suffering and happiness is not in power or reputation. It is clear that if a war had happened between Dai Viet and Champa, the people of these countries would have been certainly miserable, so Master Tran Nhan Tong arranged this marry in order to strengthen the diplomatic relationship between two countries. Therefore, final purpose of the Founder of Truc

²¹Ibid, p. 180.

²²Ibid, pp.180-182.

²³Lang Nguyen, *op. cit.*, p.283.

Lam Zen sect was to prevent wars and bring peaceful life for everyone as the Prince Siddhartha Gautama in India more than two millenniums ago.

In conclusion, Tran Nhan Tong not only was a political visionary, but also a gifted military leader, not only a diplomat but also he was full of ideas, a writer, poet, not just a King, but also a Priest, not just the culture, but also an excellent Zen Master.

4.1.2 Diplomacy Aspects

In terms of diplomacy, there were many famous Buddhist monks who were considered as the spiritual leaders of the court and country, especially diplomacy with other countries by their knowledge and languages. For example, Master Ngo Chan Luu who was offered the very meaningful mark means Master of the nation by the King took part in political directly during Early – Le dynasty and the beginning of the Ly dynasty. In 986, the ambassador of China visited Vietnam. To lessen the arrogance of Chinese emperor and to elevate their respect to Vietnamese, the King assigned Master Do Phap Thuan disguised as a ferryman, to ride the ambassador across the river and Master Khuon Viet would greet him at the palace.²⁴

On the river, noticing a pair of geese floating Ly Giac recited two verses:

A pair of geese side by side

Looking up to the skyline

Immediately, the Master rejoined:

White feathers expose in the deep blue sea

*In green waves, their red feet paddle.*²⁵

The ambassador was very surprised to quickly rejoinder of talented ferryman. And in the palace, the ambassador was seen the deep knowledge of Khuong Viet advisor. Thus, before leaving Dai Viet, the

²⁴ Si Lien, Ngo, **op. cit.**, p. 210.

²⁵ Manh That, Le, **op. cit.**, p.261.

ambassador of China has expressed his respect by a poem and Zen Master Khuong Viet also made a poem as a rejoinder.²⁶ It is very clear that Zen Master played a vital role in diplomatic policy of Vietnam at that time.

During Ly and Tran dynasties, Buddhism not only had strongly impact on publishing democracy policy, closing the mind's people to fight against the invader and using compassion in politics but also influenced noticeably on arts of Vietnam in this period of time. When most of Kings were pious Buddhist and supported for the development of Buddhism, creativeness on works of art on Buddhism, especially monasteries and statues was encouraged. Therefore, this enriched the culture of Vietnam. In this thesis, the researcher will focus on two kinds of art, architecture and sculpture, which were developed in 10th – 14th century.

4.2 The Contributions of Zen Masters Towards Arts and Culture

4.2.1 Arts Aspects

Monasteries or pagoda plays an important role in the life of Vietnamese and it became symbol of Vietnamese villages a long time ago. Most of villages in Vietnam have at least one pagoda in the center. When constructing a monastery, people often embedded Buddhist signs as wheel of law and oriental or special signs at that time as dragons on the top of the monastery. Therefore, everyone can recognize a pagoda from a distance easily.

Firstly, most of pagodas, statues, epitaphs, bells in Ly dynasty were constructed near to landscape or sightseeing. Kings of this dynasty built many monumental pagodas, so some Confucians did not like it. After coming to the throne, the founder of Ly dynasty ordered to build more than 300 pagodas all over country and recovered all ruined pagodas in villages. In 1016 two pagodas, Thien Quang and Thien Duc were built. Chan Giao pagoda was built in 1024 and in 1036 the King Ly Thai To

²⁶ Ibid, p.161.

held a ceremony for the Dai Phat Nguyen statue. Moreover, 1000 Buddhist statues, 100 Buddhist pictures and more than ten thousand flags was prepared for the La Han festival in 1040.²⁷ This showed that there were large number of artists and architecture and sculpture were very developed at that time. Continuously, Ly Thai To arranged to cast a Smiling Buddha statue with copper weighing 7560 kg placed at Thien Phuc institute.²⁸

After succeeding to the throne in 1031, Ly Thai Tong ordered to construct 150 village pagodas. In 1041, the King built the Tu Thi Thien Phuc monastery in Tien Du Mountain.²⁹ In 1049, the King Ly Thai Tong who was childless dreamed that Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva sitting on a lotus flower and handing him a baby son. After that, the King married a peasant girl that the King met on the way of travelling and she bore him a son. A monk named Thien Tue told Ly Thai Tong that the emperor should build a pagoda which was erected a pillar with lotus flower on the top in the middle of a pond, similar to the King dream in order to gratitude for this. Therefore, the King decided to construct the temple in 1049, named Dien Huu, meaning long life³⁰. During Ly dynasty, royal ceremony on the birthday of Gautama Buddha was held annually in this temple. Afterward, the King would free a bird to pray peace and happiness for country. One Pillar pagoda which was known as symbol of Vietnam Buddhism nowadays had special architecture with creative idea in the middle of the 11th century. This pagoda was designed by a lotus blossoms in a muddy pond, the symbol of purity, rising out of a sea of sorrow. This temple covered Buddhism philosophical ideology and art contents.

In autumn, in the ninth month of the fifth year of the Long Phu era (1105), two white pointed towers were added to the Dien Huu pagoda. King Ly Nhan Tong ordered the pagoda renovated, to make it more beautiful than before. He had a small lake dug around the pagoda called

²⁷Ibid, p.196.

²⁸Si Lien, Ngo, **op. cit.**, p. 278.

²⁹Lang Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p. 197.

³⁰Si Lien, Ngo, **op. cit.**, p. 288.

Linh Chieu lake. The lake in turn was surrounded by an ornately carved and painted path. Another lake, Bich Tri, was dug around the path with a parabolic bridge linking the two sides. In the courtyard in front of pagoda, a tower was erected. On the first and fifteenth days of every month and the eight day of the fourth month, the King prayed and carried out a Buddhist bathing rite at the pagoda. This ceremony became a routine over time.³¹

The founder of Ly dynasty has just moved the capital city to the new place, Thang Long, so Ly dynasty noticed to set up culture and art of the nation. Most of pagodas were built in places close with the nature to create a comprehensive landscape with mountains, rivers, trees and the building. The reason for artists choosing charming landscape to build temples was to respect the beautiful and supernatural character. Take Phat Tich pagoda as example, this pagoda located in the hometown of Ly King, Bac Ninh province, were built on a large surface. The third King under the Ly dynasty Long Thuy Thai Binh year the fourth (1057) built the tower, the statue was covered with gold with a height of six meters. On the front bench, there ten animals; in the rear, there was a dragon lake; at the upper corner, there was a picture of a phoenix, a dragon hand to touch the sky.³² Ten animal statues which are ten meters high, including a lion, elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, and a horse. Each type has two statues, lying on a lotus base carved from big blocks of stone. All of them have been kept in the pagoda till now.

There were many-stories towers during the Ly dynasty and the pagoda and tower architecture in this period was symmetrical and parallel, with all structures constructed around a central axis. For example, the Sung Thien Dien Linh tower in the Doi pagoda (Ha Nam Ninh) was thirteen stories high. The Chieu An tower at the Linh Xung pagoda (Thanh Hoa) was nine stories high. The tower at Phat Tich pagoda (Ha Bac) was ten stories high and 8.5 meters wide on each side. The Van Phong Thanh Thien tower in Chuong Son was built on a

³¹Mat The, Thich, **Brief History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, (Hue: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, 1996), p. 123.

³²Tai Thu Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p. 117

pedestal nineteen meters wide and much higher than the Phat Tich tower.³³

The Ly Dynasty art had the distinctive spirits which related to the beauty of Buddhist architecture such as carved stone used of wood pillars, tubular tile carved flowers and leaves, and ridge-tile carved dragons. The roof of pagodas was carved with flowers and dragons and the walls of pagoda were often covered with picture. For example, the walls of the Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh pagoda, “there were paintings suggesting the principle of karma and laws of cause and effect, and depictions of thousands of fantastic and illusory transformations”.³⁴ The walls of Linh Xung pagoda were reputedly “painted with beautiful scenery, Buddhist images, ever-changing forms and uncountable pictographic designs”.³⁵

Other special architecture of art and Buddhism in Ly dynasty was Buddha statues which were erected within pagodas and towers. There were three stone statues in Ly dynasty which remained today. Firstly, the statue in Phat Tich Pagoda in Ha Bac is the most beautiful with 1.87 meters high.³⁶ Secondly, the statue in Mot Mai pagoda in Ha Son Binh which was accepted as Amitabha Buddha in Wester Land of the Blessed carved into its lotus-crowned lion-shaped pedestal. According to Thien Uyen Tap Anh, the monk named Tri Bat who asked his followers to build a large ceremonial altar and to erect a large stone statue of Amitabha was a member of the 12th generation of Ty Na Da Luu Chi Zen sect. This sect was influenced by the Pure Land sect and believed in the “Western Land of the Blessed” and in the Buddha Amitabha. Third one can be found in the Ngo Xa pagoda in Ha Nam Ninh.

³³Cao Xuan Pho, **The Chuong Son Tower during the Ly’s Reign**, (Ha Noi: Archaeology Review No.5, 1970), pp. 48-63.

³⁴Epigraph on the stele of the Sung Nghiem Dien Khanh pagoda, **Literature under Ly Tran’s Reign** (Book 1), (Ha Noi: Literature Publishing House, 1997), p.376.

³⁵Epigraph on the stele of Linh Xung, **Literature under Ly Tran’s Reign** (Book 1), *op.cit.*, p. 363

³⁶Lang Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p.197.

Beside the Buddha Amitabha, Maitreya Buddha often considered as other name Tu Thi and Da Bao Nhu Lai often associated with the Saddharmapudarika sutra³⁷ were also worshipped during Ly dynasty. According to Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu, in 1041 King Ly Thai Tong went to the Tien Du mountain to watch the construction of the Tu Thi Thien Phuc monastery. Upon returning to the capital, he ordered 7,560 kilograms of copper to be used to sculpt statues of the Buddha Maitreya and two other Bodhisattvas and to cast a bell for use in the monastery.³⁸ The name of Da Bao Nhu Lai was noticed twice in an inscription on a stele found at Sung Thien Dien Linh tower.

In Ly pagodas, Sakyamuni was considered as the present Buddha, Maitreya was considered as a future Buddha and Kasyapa was considered as a past Buddha. This made three generations of the Buddha, which was worshipped in pagodas. Take Sung Nghiem Dien Khanh pagoda in Thanh Hoa for example, “in the middle sits Sakyamuni, the Buddha of the present, at one side sits Kasyapa, the Buddha of the solemn and glorious past, and the other sits Buddha Maitreya, the Buddha of the brilliant future”.³⁹

The architecture and sculpture of Buddhism in Tran dynasty was very prosperous because it followed the great heritages from the Ly dynasty and developed by self-improvement and self-strength with impressive achievements. Some pagodas from Ly dynasty were renewed by Tran dynasty such as One-pillar pagoda, Bao Thien tower, Khai Nghiem pagoda, Linh Te tower, etc., and some Buddhist centers under Ly dynasty such as Phat Tich pagoda, Quynh Lam pagoda, Hoa Yen pagoda, Pho Minh Towe, ect., Beside that, some big pagodas and towers such as Huong Tich pagoda, Hoa Long pagoda, Thong pagoda, Hang pagoda, Boi Khe pagoda, Binh Son tower, ect., were newly built.

³⁷The “Kien Bao Thap Pham” in Dieu Phap Lien Hoa related that in the East, there was a country name Bao Tinh where the Buddha Da Bao lived. When he was just a Bodhisattva, he made a great vow. It was that after becoming Buddha and entering Nirvana, his tower would appear to hear the prayer anywhere the Lotus sutra was preaches. See Tai Thu, Nguyen. **op. cit.**, p.123.

³⁸Si Lien, Ngo. **op. cit.**, p.278.

³⁹Tai Thu, Nguyen. **op. cit.**, p.119.

The Kings spent much money to cast a number of small and big statues during the Tran dynasty. For example, King Tran Nhan Tong appointed people to cast three statues in copper such as Amitabha, Sakyamuni, Maitreya Buddha with a height up to 17 feet when coming to the throne.⁴⁰ It is common that there was a dragon which represents human's ideology of flexibility and a lotus which is symbol of nobility, Buddhism, and imposingness in pagodas and towers under Ly-Tran age.

All in all, under the golden age of Vietnam Buddhism was developed strongly and prosperous. Therefore, Buddhism made significant contributions to architecture and sculpture of the nation during this period.

4.2.2 Culture Aspects

Under the sincere support of Kings and inheriting the traditions and culture in the past. Buddhism during Ly and Tran dynasties strongly developed in many aspects and enriched the culture and literature of Vietnam in this period of time. In this paper, the researcher will only discuss on Vietnamese language and festivals in term of culture.

In term of culture, language is symbol of culture and play a vital role in presenting the culture of a nation. To be aware of this, during Tran dynasty, Kings, Buddhist monks, scholars tried to create Vietnamese language which depended on but different from Chinese. It is clear that if a nation depends on culture of other country, especially language, it will be in danger of losing their country because language is mean in order to spread policy of government, impart knowledge for all people. In the reign of King Tran Nhan Tong, Vietnamese was used together with Chinese in official documents of imperial court.⁴¹ Zen Master Tran Nhan

⁴⁰Manh That, Le, **op. cit.**, p.37.

⁴¹During the thirteenth century the Vietnamese devised a written form for their language based on Chinese characters. It is called Nom (or Chu Nom) and is sometimes referred to as demotic writing. The earliest extant Nom inscription, on a temple stele at Bao An in the north of the country, is from 1209. The first piece of literary writing of Vietnamese is considered to be the 1282 Kingly explanation of his ordinances to his subjects by Tran Nhan Tong. See Ping Chen, Nanette Gottlieb,

Tong opened a new period in history of Vietnamese literature with poems in national language. Take “Songs of the Realization of the way and Taking Delight in Religion while Dwelling in the Worldly Life for example, both of this were oldest works preserved in Vietnam history and they were new philosophy in Buddha teachings which has had a remarkable influence on millions of Vietnamese during Tran dynasty and following centuries.⁴²

Festivities, which are a part of the culture, help the people maintain and preserve the national culture. The Buddhist spirits during Ly and Tran dynasties was showed through Buddhist activities and celebrations which created unique cultural characteristics in this period. According to historic documents, some Buddhist festivals were organized annually during Ly and Tran dynasties as the Buddha’s bath and Buddha’s birthday (eighth day of the fourth lunar month) in One Pillar pagoda, the Wandering manes day (15th day of seventh lunar month, the vassa three months summer retreat).⁴³ In addition, festivals often were held during the construction of pagodas, towers or the casting of bells. For example, in 1118 the festival of the Thousand Buddhas was held for the Thang Nghiem Thanh Tho pagoda’s inauguration. In 1119, a celebration took place to mark the completion of the Tinh Lu pagoda. In 1123, an inauguration festival was held for the Phung Tu pagoda and another for the Quang Giao pagoda in Tien Du. In 1121 a ceremony for the inauguration of the Sung Thien Dien Linh Tower in Doi Son was held. In 1127, the Trung Hung Dien Tho pagoda was inaugurated.⁴⁴

According to the stele on the Sung Thien Dien Linh tower, before the inauguration, pagoda servants always embellished palanquins and vehicles and swept dust. Sandal smoke hovered above the country like clouds. Flags and gonfalon flew everywhere, in all directions. Bells and tom-toms resounded loudly. Gongs and cymbals echoed noisily. In front of the procession, there was the rattan vehicle of the Buddhist altar

Language Planning and Language Policy: East Asian Perspectives, (Japan: Routledge, 2013), p. 173.

⁴²Manh That, Le, **op. cit.**, pp. 352-368.

⁴³Minh Tue, Thich, **op. cit.**, p. 171.

⁴⁴Lang Nguyen, **op. cit.**, pp. 196-197.

and in the rear, there was the imperial palanquin, monks, nuns, etc., The King seriously read the litany and at the end bowed his head in thanks to Heaven. The palace women stood with a shy air. After the prayers they offered milk for dancing and singing. Vegetarian food with white rice was offered to hungry passer-by. Money was distributed generously to poor people from everywhere.⁴⁵ It is clear to imagine how the atmosphere at the inaugural ceremonies was held. Some activities were preserved until in pagoda festivals in Vietnam nowadays.

4.3 The Contributions of Zen Masters Toward Economy and Education

4.3.1 Economy Aspects

The economy of Vietnam during Ly and Tran dynasties was mostly agriculture and handicraft which need a number of labor, it is clear that the number of Buddhist priest increased day by day in this period. Therefore, the influences of Buddhism to the economy of Vietnam were considerable.

Under the advice of Zen Master Van Hanh, the founder of Ly dynasty decided relocated the capital city from Hoa Lu to Thang Long (Ha Noi, today) where was in a better position for self-defense purpose with many natural canals, rivers, mountains.⁴⁶ Therefore, the economy would be developed more easily than Hoa Luu because of much large population, more fertile agricultural lands and ready-to-use transport systems.

During these two dynasties, monks created products in order to feed themselves and forsaken spirits. And the Kings of these two dynasties donated many rice fields for pagodas. For example, King Ly Thai Tong ordered the construction of more than one hundred rice fields for pagodas in the fourth year of Long Thuy Thai Binh era (1057). The

⁴⁵ Tai Thu, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p.117.

⁴⁶ Si Lien, Ngo, **op. cit.**, p.241.

Kings of Ly and Tran dynasties often donated farms for pagodas festivals of casting bells or statues of Buddha.

In addition, the Queen mother Linh Nhan offered 72 contiguous Vietnamese acres of rice fields, situated in the Man De region belonging to the two hamlets of Cam Truc and Thu Giang in Cam Giang district. The inhabitants enjoyed their harvests for generations. Those rice fields were offered to the cult of Buddha and were exempt from taxation⁴⁷. Moreover, most of mandarins who followed their Kings example, and some lay people also donated land for pagodas. According to the stele of Bao An pagoda (Me Linh, Ha Noi), erected in 1209, a man with the family name Nguyen granted to the pagoda many rice fields: “On all 126 acres, rice was grown to make rice-cakes to feed monks, three acres were given pagoda keepers, and the remaining part was given to the inhabitants for pagoda festivities, and for alms to forsaken spirits”⁴⁸. As a result, the cultivated lands, rice fields and wealth of pagodas increased day by day and some places very far from the pagodas, thus King Ly Nhan Tong authorized high-ranking officials to function “de cu”, pagoda wealth-managers.

Most of lands belonging to pagoda were farmed by monks who were living in the pagoda or the pagodas shared the rice fields for the poor people who did not have land for cultivating. And when harvesting the poor people gave one part of production to the pagoda as donating. This sharing of cultivating land helped the poor improve the quantity of their life because they were exempt from taxation. Therefore, they would try their best to cultivate. According to Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu, monks was given many offerings by Buddhist believers from many regions.

Additionally, many monks in Ly dynasty were allowed to charge rent and tax peasants. For example, the monk Man Giac in Giao Nguyen pagoda was allowed to tax the wealth of 50 families. According to Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu, the monk Minh Khong, who after having successfully cured the King Ly Than Tong, was allowed to charge rent

⁴⁷Tai Thu, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p. 91.

⁴⁸Ibid, p. 117.

and tax two hundred families and was exempted from having to pay rent and taxes himself. Most of Buddhist monks at that time exempted taxes for the poor, so Buddhism had a closed relation with the people.

The economic development during Ly dynasty thanks to the Buddhist Kings who published policies such as tax reduction, building dykes and strictly prohibiting of killing buffalos and oxen.⁴⁹ For example, King Ly Thai Tong advised the people to use local-made handicraft products in order to not rely on imports from the Chinese merchants.⁵⁰ Especially, King Ly Nhan Tong ordered to build Co Xa dyke in Red river to protect the capital city and crops of the people from unexpected floods.⁵¹ As a result, the harvests were little destroyed by natural disaster.

In summary, pagodas during Ly and Tran dynasties had great contribution to the economy of the nation and the economic influence of pagoda further strengthened Buddhism's position in Vietnamese society.

4.3.2 Education Aspects

Education is essential part for the development of the country as well as Buddhism, thus in the period of peaceful time, both Kings and Buddhist masters tried to establish and impulse the development of educational system.

Zen Masters opened many schools in order to teach knowledge for Buddhist monks and lay people. During Ly dynasty, temples and monasteries were also schools and Zen Masters were also teachers.⁵² Everyone went to temples to study language, knowledge and Buddhism philosophy. For example, Ly Cong Uan was brought up by Ly Khanh Van Master and educated to become talented person by Van Hanh Master in Luc To temple. To Hien Thanh and Ngo Hoa Nghia were educated by the Master on the Cao Da mountain.

⁴⁹Si Lien, Ngo, **op. cit.**, p.323.

⁵⁰Ibid, p.276.

⁵¹Ibid, p.316.

⁵²Minh Tue, Thich, **op. cit.**, p.182.

Many Zen Master during Ly and Tran dynasties had a thorough knowledge of three traditional religions in Vietnam including Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism such as Khuong Viet, Van Hanh, Vien Thong, Man Giac, etc.,⁵³ Therefore, the Zen Masters have used the knowledge of Confucianism about society and politics in order to teach for their students under the spirit of Buddhism. As a result, the students who became Kings or mandarins could control the country both policy and spiritual aspect.

In 1070, Ly Thanh Tong ordered people to build the Temple of Literature or Temple of Confucius and statues of Confucius and his four best disciples such as Yan Hui, Zengzi, Zisi, and Mencius and seventy-two other statues of Confucian scholars. The purpose of the King was to choose talented people in order to help Kings in ruling the nation and using Confucianism to spread Buddhism because most of monks at that time were good at both Buddhism and Confucianism philosophy. In fact, Buddhist monks have applied the teachings of the Buddha skillfully, thus they amalgamated ideologies and propagated the true Dharma. The knowledge of Confucianism taught in the spirit of Buddhism played an important role in the domain of learning and ruling the nation during Ly and Tran dynasties.

4.4 The Impacts of Salient Vietnamese Zen Masters To The Development of Vietnam Buddhism In The Period of 10th – 14th Centuries

4.4.1 Buddhist Schools

The history of Vietnamese Zen was founded by the Indian Zen master Vinitaruci. Three Zen schools emerged before the time of the Trúc Lâm School was the Pháp Vân, Kiến Sơ, and Thảo Đường. In referring to Buddhism in the Trần dynasty (13th century) one needs to mention the Trúc Lâm (Bamboo Grove) Zen school. At the beginning of the 13th century, the three major Zen schools were Pháp Vân, Vô Ngôn Thông

⁵³ Lang Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p.190.

and Thảo Đường. However, they merged gradually into one big school named the Yên Tử. Under the strong influence of Buddhist thinkers Trần Thái Tông and Tuệ Trung Thượng Sĩ, the merger of these three schools led to the Yên Tử Zen School's development into the Zen Trúc Lâm School; the only Zen school in the Trần dynasty. This period was considered the age of the Mono-school Buddhism.⁵⁴

According to several historical accounts, there were in total 23 patriarchs in the tradition of the Yên Tử School. King Trần Nhân Tông was the sixth patriarch. Shortly after being ordained as a Buddhist monk, he renamed Trúc Lâm School and thereby becoming the first patriarch of the Trúc Lâm School, but he still considered himself to be the sixth patriarch of the Yên Tử School.⁵⁵

This was clear for Master Trần Nhân Tông, Buddhism is life, without discriminating segregation. Buddhism is a progress of seeking the truth but the truth is not in Buddhism, it is in life. Buddhist-Dharma is like a finger pointing to the moon, like a raft taking people across the sea. So, even the dharma we must let go, just to liberate. And also this sutra emphasizes the thought “all dharmas are Buddha-Dharma”. Thence, we are not surprised at the policy of ‘Awakened in the Dust of Life’ of Master Trần Nhân Tông.

Before the theory of ‘Awakened in the Dust of Life’, King Trần Thái Tông, who established the basic thought of Trúc Lâm Meditation School, chose Sutra of Diamond and Commentary on the Diamond Sutra as the basis for arguments explaining the mind, performing the internal life before a situation of national history for a future prosperity of the nation. According to the principle of causation of the thoughts of Hua-Yen sutra, prajna (wisdom), Perfect Enlightenment, every individual cannot exist independently, without relation with others. Especially in the period of the whole nation when we were building and developing on every field, more relations are to be solved and and dealt with. Master

⁵⁴Nguyen Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

⁵⁵ **Meditation in Tran dynasty**, (TPHCM: Institute of Vietnam Buddhist Research, 1992), p. 397.

Trần Nhân Tông advocated to complement with some more viewpoints summarized from the above Mahāyāna sutra to be a basis for arguments to form the doctrine of ‘Awakened in the Dust of Life.

Master Trần Nhân Tông established Truc Lam Meditation School and advocated engaging actively. Chinese Zen School advocated “It is not established on words”, Truc Lam Meditation School still study sutras as a basis to practice to liberation. Many Zen masters, who have studied, preached the dharma-Zen on the basis of both the esoteric tradition and the teaching of the scriptures together. People should return to the reality of here and now. Using ‘the mind of the view’ or the mind of right mindfulness to see and know what are happening means to see condition-things and no-condition-things understood thoroughly by Master Trần Nhân Tông in “Thuong Si’s Behaviors”: “I mix with the secular, harmonize with light, and never hurt or go against anything, anybody.” In the first session, he affirmed:

“I sit in the city, feel like a monk in mountains and forests, see all karma calming down, and enjoy the peaceful self-nature. For a half day, the body and mind are free.”⁵⁶

The spirit of actively engaging of Trần Nhân Tông Meditation is manifested through two contents. He brought Buddhist philosophy into social life, use meditation to serve life, bring faith into life. The characteristic of Truc Lam Buddhism is to enter life; Buddhism serves life: to emancipate spiritually and socially. Those two aspects of life relate to each other and modify each other.

4.4.2 Vietnamese Society

Being the victorious one produces enmity. The conquered one sleeps unhappily. The one at peace, giving up victory and defeat, sleeps happily.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Nguyen Giac, ed. op.cit., p.24.

⁵⁷Dhp.201; K.R. Norman tr., **The Word of the Doctrine (Dhammapada)**, (Oxford, PTS, 1997), p.30.

So, the best method must be to find every peaceful means to end differences in views and clashes. According to the Buddha, only boundless compassion, extreme wisdom, civil obedience, tolerance, forgiveness, true loving is able to suppress with pleasure every hate and selfishness, and thereby lead to lasting peace, and end the terror war, so this world will be covered with beautiful damask.

Regarding to religious beliefs, Vietnamese have acquired religions from India and China such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, but still maintained their ancestor worship traditions, traditions of respect for their heroes, the elderly and women.

On the other hand, Buddhism with the teachings about compassion and meditation was very familiar with the majority of the Vietnamese. Furthermore, the Buddha taught that the life is impermanent, suffering and the humans have to deliverance from all the trammels of life, the bondage of the passion by themselves. No one can bless or curse others. This teaching was very suitable with the people of Dai Co Viet at that time because they were trying their best in order to break out of the rule of Chinese. After escaping from Chinese rule, the kings chose Buddhist theory as decisive thought in order to reign the people and rejected the China's religion, Confucianism. This pointed out that both the kings and people wanted to show independence will and there was a close interrelation between Buddhism and the fortune of the nation as well as the life of the people.

Buddhist monks and nuns established schools and lectured on the teachings of the Buddha everywhere. Therefore, the thought of the people has been permeated the spirit of Buddhism, this was reflected in the life of peace, freedom, loving of beauty and protecting and helping one another in time of distress. There was no difference among the people in the same country, this is a simple and deep philosophy of the Buddhism and the people of Dai Co Viet have understood clearly this teaching. Moreover, they have practiced it by uniting all people in order to fight against invasion of Chinese.

It is general knowledge that combination between Buddhism and native faith created the distinct culture character of Vietnam.

Buddhism infiltrated with folk beliefs without reaction and hesitation as water permeates the earth because folk beliefs do not oppose Buddhist beliefs. This combination created benefits for both of beliefs. In terms of native culture, it has been enriched by Buddhist cultural elements. On the Buddhist side, the process of accepting native faith did not lose general idea of liberation of Buddhism. Furthermore, integrating with native culture would enable Buddhism to deepen its root in the new land and establish its role in the nation fortune.

Firstly, Buddhism was harmonious with the tradition of ancestor worship of Vietnam. Ancestral worship was a type of traditional belief began from the very early time in the history of Vietnam and very popular with Vietnamese. All people always worshiped their ancestor such as grandparents, father and mother in their family, then extended to village and country such as paying respect to the founder of one occupation or a hero of the nation. Therefore, it has become a traditional custom and played an important role in the spiritual life of the people.

The harmony between Buddhism and ancestor worship tradition was reflected in ceremonial elements of Buddhism. At that time, monks besides organized retreats and took care everything in temple, they were often invited by the people to go to their house in order to organize funeral, or treat for their patient. This combination has created a close-knit pack between Buddhism and the native culture.

Secondly, Buddhism was harmonious with the worship of mother, which is a folk faith integrated step by step by many beliefs from early time. The life of the people depended on the nature, hunting and gathering. Until the economy of agriculture including cultivation and animal husbandry was developed, the people had to rely on the nature. However, the nature is sometimes abnormal which made the people encounter many difficulties in their life or it has become angry to take away all that served their lives. And gradually, the people have observed natural phenomena, formed a consciousness of natural force and accompanied by the adoration of natural phenomena such as the god of mountain, the god of river, the god of sea...

At the first time Buddhism was spread to Vietnam, it quickly adapted in order to suitably with local culture, especially the worship of Mother. This became a spiritual food of Vietnamese farmers by customizing Buddhism and became a part of it.

4.4.3 Political Issues

In both Ly and Tran dynasties, Buddhism became the state religion of Vietnam, thus the whole country from Kings to the people followed the Buddha, taking refuting, keeping moral disciplines, chanting, meditating. As a result, the people had a life with peaceful, harmony and pure spirit.

According to the *Thánh Đấng Ngũ Lục* [Recorded Sayings of the Saints], in *Giáp Thìn* (1304) the King “wandered through villages, teaching the people to practice the Ten Good Things and give up superstitious beliefs.” The fact that the Ten Good Things⁵⁸ were introduced to the people reflected evidently the political view of Buddhism in Vietnam, which had been formulated and collected in the *Collected Teachings of the Six Pāramitās* more than a thousand years before. It may be said to be the most ancient Buddhist text known in our country, in which Buddhist thought and national tradition have been successfully mixed. Since its propagation, the text has unceasingly asked the leaders of the nation to apply the Ten Good Things as the basis of “national law” and “national policy”. And King *Nhân Tông* was the first to respond to this appeal.⁵⁹

Integrating teachings of the Buddha through the national security policy, the Kings of Ly and Tran dynasties have conquered the hearts and minds of the people by virtue instead of rule. The doctrine of non-self has created a harmonious and simple life for human beings, but created an extremely powerful force on political life. Therefore, both the two dynasties existed for a long time. Ly dynasty lasted more than two

⁵⁸Refraining from 1. killing, 2. stealing, 3. sexual misconduct, 4. lying, 5. slander, 6. coarse speech, 7. frivolous chatter, 8. greed, 9. hatred, 10. false views.

⁵⁹Dao Sinh, tr., *Trần Nhân Tông-A Biographical Study*, op.cit., p.181.

hundred years from 1010 to 1225 and Tran dynasty lasted nearly two hundred years from 1226 to 1400. It can be said that this is the peak of Vietnamese Buddhism and also the most powerful country in the history of Vietnam. Buddhism has given the Vietnamese at that time a strong belief in self-reliance in order to live beautifully in the spirit of Right Understanding, Right Thought and Right Livelihood. This was the reason for the brilliant development of Ly and Tran dynasties with political, economic and cultural achievements.

Under the contributions of Zen masters to politics and the support of Kings, Buddhism in Ly dynasty developed rapidly and influenced deeply not in the life of the people but in the rule policy of Kings. Kings of this dynasty often promulgated tolerant political policy with their people and enemies instead of using torture such as hot cauldrons of oil, tiger caves to punish criminal of Early – Le dynasty.⁶⁰

Moreover, most of leaders in the past have gotten power by the sword, manipulated the people by violence. In the Ly – Tran era, all King acceded to the throne without fighting, most of court officials and the people agreed with the changes. What power has created a powerful country? whether loving kindness, compassion, inner joy, detachment of Buddhism were imbued from the King to the people. The emperors of the Ly – Tran dynasties have combined the rule of law and moral rule in order to rule the country. For example, after Ly Cong Uan crowned as a devout Buddhist, he immediately ordered the destruction of all the instruments in the prison and the construction of new temples in the country. Additionally, Ly Thanh Tong who was the third King of Ly dynasty, one time pointed at his beloved daughter, princess Dong Thien standing next to him and told the warden that “my love toward common people equaled that toward his daughter. I feel sympathetic to the offenders who violate the law because of lacking of understanding of the laws. From now on, any law needs to be popularized carefully and all the crimes need to be commuted”.

⁶⁰ Lang, Nguyen, **op. cit.**, p.200.

In addition, the third King of Ly dynasty, Ly Thanh Tong was considered as the most hearted King in Vietnam history. When thinking about prisons in winter, the King told all mandarins in the court that “I still feel cold although I wear fleece and stay in palaces with fireplaces; what about the people who are detained in prison without judging, kept in chains and suffered from hunger and coldness. They could die of coldness, so the situation is very merciful”.⁶¹

For enemy, the King Ly Thanh Tong did not kill King of Champa – Che Cu and ordered that “if someone kills Cham people, they will be punished seriously” in the battle between Dai Viet and Champa in 1069.⁶² Additionally, the King Ly Thai Tong pardoned Nung Tri Cao who rebelled against the court in the north border two times because the King has killed his relatives. It showed clearly that Buddhism has great influence on Kings of Ly dynasty. Kings treated with the people by a merciful and gladness spirit, thus bringing the knowledge of Buddhism into the daily social political life effectively.

Master Trần Nhân Tông built the country by way of taking the initiative of loving conciliation. He commanded to burn all evidences which could accuse people of the complicity with the aggressors. For the enemies who lost the war, disgraced by the loss, the king treated them nobly and extraordinarily, which surprised his soldiers and the losers had to resign themselves with adoration for the immense righteousness and generosity of the King of Dai Viet country. For more than five hundred years, few Vietnamese have been able to suppress their emotions at the image of the King Trần Nhân Tông taking off his military robe to cover Sogatu’s corpse in the war of 1285.⁶³

When peace was restored in the country, King Trần Nhân Tông exempted people from taxes, looked after the economic development,

⁶¹Trong Kim, Tran, op. cit., p.107.

⁶²Manh That, Le, **History of Buddhism in Vietnam**, Vol. III (HCM: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 2006), p.114.

⁶³Ngo Si Lien, ed., *Dai Viet Sử Ký Toàn Thư [The Complete History of the Dai Viet]*, op.cit., p.512; Dao Sinh, tr., **Trần Nhân Tông-A Biographical Study**, op.cit., p.271.

extended areas of cultivation, and built irrigational systems to serve agriculture. He would advise love for the people, and respect for their contributions to the country. The Complete History of the Great Viet wrote: “The king often made journeys around and commanded escorts not to drive people away. Back to the royal place, the king said: “Every day servants are by my sides. When the country has misfortunes only they will follow me.”⁶⁴ Clearly, King Trần Nhân Tông took care of and showed affection and gratitude to the lowest caste in society, keeping in mind their services.

In summary, the uniqueness and creativity of Buddhism in Ly – Tran dynasties was that it always absorbed the good and left the bad to create an innovation society. This was the most prominent feature of Buddhism in the Ly dynasty during the early centuries of independence and self-reliance. Indeed, Buddhism has contributed significantly to the establishment of national independence in the history of the country and the teachings of the Buddha affected on the rule policy of Kings in both dynasties.

4.5 Concluding Remarks

Under two dynasties ly and tran zen masters contributed for the development the nation. there were many famous Buddhist monks who were considered as the spiritual leaders of the court and country, especially diplomacy with other countries by their knowledge and languages. For example, many Buddhist monks worked as advisors for Kings in diplomacy with foreign countries, governing the nation and fighting invaders. Additionally, most of Kings and mandarins of Ly and Tran dynasties were Buddhists and had deep knowledge in Buddhism in order to become great leaders of Vietnam.

In summary, the contributions of Zen Masters to many aspects such as politics, culture, art, economy, education, etc., created the prosperity or the golden age of Buddhism during the 10th – 14th centuries. Moreover, these contributions made Buddhism very important in the

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.532.

glorious career of the nation and in the Vietnamese people. This was very vital reason why Buddhism continued to exist and become the most important and biggest religion in Vietnam today.

Chapter V

Conclusion and Suggestion

The purpose of this research is to study the development of Buddhism during 10th – 14th centuries. Especially, the researcher focused on the contributions of Vietnamese Zen Master to many aspects of society and made Buddhism developed. To beginning, the establishment and conditions of problem of Buddhism in dynasties before Ly and Tran dynasties was analyzed clearly to recognize why Buddhism could not develop strongly in these dynasties. Then, the researcher studied the life and achievements of some understanding Zen Master as well as Buddhist Kings in Ly and Tran dynasties. Finally, the contributions of these Masters and Kings to the development of Buddhism would be analyzed in many aspects such as politics, arts, culture and literature, economy, and education.

5.1 Conclusion

Firstly, Buddhism, one of largest religions in the world today, was established by Shakyamuni Buddha more than 2500 years ago in India. This religion was spread to Vietnam through two main ways, the first one is from India to Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia then came to the south of Vietnam, the second way is from India to Tibet, Korea, Japan, China and the north of Vietnam in the first century. During Ly and Tran dynasties, Buddhism became state religion of Vietnam and this is the golden age of Buddhism. Zen Masters played an important role in developing Buddhism in this period, thus the researcher wanted to show how the Zen Masters contributed to the development of Buddhism during 10th – 14th centuries.

There were three reasons which studied by the researcher made Buddhism as well as the nation not develop in three dynasties before Ly

and Tran dynasties. The short reign time was the first reason for this. The total reign time of Ngo, Dinh and Early Le dynasties was 61 years. Moreover, these dynasties had to fight against Chinese to protect the independence of the nation and quell the revolts. Therefore, the Kings did not have much time in order to stabilize and develop the nation. It is clear that religion just develops as the nation is stable. Finally, these dynasties were controlled by notorious tyrant as Le Long Dinh.

Secondly, the researcher also presented some understanding Zen Masters and Buddhist Kings who had contributions to the development of Buddhism in Ly and Tran dynasties such as Khuon Viet, Van Hanh, Ly Thai Tong, Ly Thanh Tong, Tran Thai Tong, Tran Nhan Tong, Phap Loa Huyen Quang, Tue Trung Thuong Si, etc., The Buddhist King, Ly Thai Tong was considered as the most tolerant King in history of Vietnam. The King always took care of the life of people, prisons, and even enemies. The reason for this was because the King was taught the teachings of Buddha and lived with the people from his childhood. As a result, Ly Thai Tong contributed greatly to the development of Buddhism during his reign, especially the construction of pagodas and towers, casting of the bells. One of architectural works of Ly Thai Tong still remained today is One Pillar pagoda in Ha Noi which is the symbol of Vietnam Buddhism.

The king Ly Thanh Tong who was considered as second patriarch of Thao Duong Zen sect practiced the teachings of the Buddha every day and applied it in reigning the country, made the nation developed in economy and strong in military. The King decided to rename the name of country from Dai Co Viet to Dai Viet, build the Temple of Literature to improve the education of Vietnam. King Ly Thanh Tong has also built many temples and casted Buddha statues and bells.

Zen Master Van Hanh who was considered as imperial teacher in Early – Le dynasty helped and supported Ly Cong Uan, the founder of Ly dynasty on the throne before the corruption of Early – Le dynasty. Moreover, the master helps the King to solve issues related to the fortune of the nation and advised King Ly Thai To move the capital city to Thang

Long which not only created glorious development during Ly and Tran dynasties but for prosperity of latter dynasties. Zen Master Van Hanh played a vital role in development of Buddhism during Ly and Tran dynasty.

Tran Canh after marrying the last Queen of Ly dynasty, Ly Chieu Hoang became the founder of Tran dynasty with name Tran Thai Tong. The King spent much time to study Buddhist scriptures and applied it in daily life and reigning the country. Tran Thai Tong composed many important works related to Buddhism such as Khoa Hu Luc, Thien Tong Chi Nam, Luc Thoi Sam Hoi Khoa Nghi, Kim Cuong Tam Muoi Kinh Chu Giai etc., thus the King was considered as Buddhist Master and had great influence on Tran Nhan Tong who established Truc Lam Zen sect afterwards. In term of emperor, he was heroic King in Vietnam history because he led Dai Viet fight against the strongest army at that time, Mongolians successfully. Another special man who was considered as Zen Master though he lived a lay person also had great influence on idea and meditation thought of Tran Nhan Tong. He was Tue Trung Thuong Si who was very important in Vietnam society and Buddhism during thirteenth century. Being an outstanding Master, he planted the seeds of Dharma for his learners and many practitioners received him as meditation teachers including Tran Nhan Tong.

Tran Nhan Tong considered as talented and great leader and the most famous monk in the history of Vietnam was the third King of Tran dynasty. In term of emperor, the King led Vietnamese fighting against the invaders two times in 1285 and 1288 by uniting all people by two important conferences, Binh Than and Dien Hong. After fierce wars, he took care of the people by reducing the tax and relieving the poor. Being on the throne, Tran Nhan Tong always practiced meditation every day in order to make his mind peaceful. Six years later handing over the throne to his son, the retired emperor became a Buddhist monk and went to live in Yen Tu mountain. Then, the master has complied the principles of three main sects at that time to establish Truc Lam Zen sect which still develops in Vietnam nowadays. The first Patriarch of Truc Lam sect travelled around the country to spread and advise the people practiced the teachings of the Buddha. Master Tran Nhan Tong also composed many

Buddhist works such as Thien Lam Thiet Chuy Ngu Luc, Dai Hai An Thi Tap, Tang Gia Toai Su, Thach That My Ngu, etc.,

Phap Loa was one of disciple of Tran Nhan Tong and considered as the second Patriarch of Truc Lam Zen sect. He was very intelligent monk, so he studied Buddhist scriptures by himself. When he understood any teachings of the Buddha, he presented verses to ask the first Patriarch, the more questions he asked, the more awakened he was. After Master Tran Nhan Tong passed away, Phap Loa played a role as the leader of Sangha in Vietnam at that time and he did well his role to contribute to the development of Buddhism in this period. Phap Loa announced his disciple, Huyen Quang officially become the third Patriarch of Truc Lam Zen sect. when he was twenty-one years old, he earned a first doctoral degree and became a government official in the reign of King Tran Thanh Tong. After becoming a Buddhist monk with the name Huyen Quang, Master had contributions to the development of Buddhism such as opening Buddhist center to teach Dharma for everyone, printing Buddhist text and constructed pagodas.

Finally, the researcher presented the contributions of Zen Masters as well as Buddhist Kings to many aspects of society such as politics, culture, arts, economy, and education. As a result, the Kings of Ly and Tran dynasties and the people supported for the development of Buddhism in this period. For politics, Zen Master Van Hanh played main role in changing of power from early-Le dynasty to Ly dynasty and moving the capital city to Thang Long. Furthermore, Venerable Da Bao and Vien Thong gave useful advice how to become a good King and how to govern the country well to King Ly Thai To and Ly Than Tong. There were many monks such Khuong Viet, Ngo Chan Luu, etc., who were good at diplomacy at that time. During Tran dynasty, many Kings became Buddhist monks such as Tran Thai Tong, Tran Nhan Tong etc., in order to practice meditation and contribute their ability to the development of the nation and Buddhism. For arts, many pagodas, statues, epitaphs and bells were constructed and casted in Ly and Tran dynasties, some of them were still remained today. This was proving for the prosperity of Buddhism during this period and unique characteristic of Ly, Tran Buddhism. For culture, Buddhist monks and Kings was

intellectuals in that time, thus they were composers for Vietnamese language which depends on Chinese. This expressed the will of independence and self-control of the nation. Additionally, lots of festivals were held during the constructions of pagodas, Buddha statues, and the casting of bells which created unique cultural characteristic in this period. For economy, Buddhists and monks were the main labor for the economy of agriculture and handicraft, so the influences of Buddhism to the economy of Vietnam during 10th – 14th centuries.

Basing on the research documents, knowledge and the techniques from this thesis, the researcher wants to suggest some topics which relate to the main idea of this research.

5.2 Suggestion for Further Research

The researcher would like to suggest further research on study of the positive and negative influences of recent Vietnam government to the development of Vietnamese Buddhism in 21st century. This thesis will be valuable for us to recognize the relationship between politics and religion. The second topic related to this research is the development of Truc Lam Zen sect from the independent day of Vietnam up to now. The researcher suggests to study this topic because there were many topics studying Buddhism in Ly, Tran dynasties or about Tran Nhan Tong and Truc Lam Zen sect etc., no topic on Truc Lam school in Vietnam today. Truc Lam school is considered the largest school about meditation and very developed under the lead of Master Thich Thanh Tu nowadays in Vietnam. In addition, the thesis would be a valuable document in history in the future.

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