

# Chapter III The Sinification<sup>1</sup> of the Vietnamese Village: Family Genealogy and Ancestral Hall

SHIMAO Minoru

## Introduction

Since the 1990s, Vietnam seems to be experiencing a revival<sup>2</sup> in the kinship system of patrilineal descent called *dòng họ*. This revival is proceeding in two directions. The first is a large scale, nationwide movement to tie various groups to common ancestors indentified as prominent historical figures. The second direction centers around home-villages, some of whose residents have left to live in urban areas and now want to place their patrilineages in the context of their birthplaces. Here we find attempts to re-compile family genealogies (*gia phả* 家譜<sup>3</sup>) and rebuild ancestral halls (*từ đường* 祠堂) by appealing to *dòng họ* members for the wherewithal to complete these projects. This latter direction is proceeding based on reviving the form of *dòng họ* as it existed before the socialist revolution. Therefore, any study of this phenomenon would demand an investigation of when and how the prerevolution *dòng họ* was first formed.

This chapter examines the history of one northern village (hereafter called BC) in Nam Định Province on the Red River Delta during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a span of time in which the village community was reconstructing its social

<sup>1</sup> For this chapter, this term indicates the process and effect of introducing ideas, institutions and methods modeled on Chinese patterns as important components of politics, society, and culture in surrounding areas of China. It does not necessarily imply systematic efforts to duplicate such patterns, but rather assumes the competence to use Chinese models flexibly and practically based on choice, recombination, revision, omission, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning *dòng họ*, see Bù [1996] and Mai and Phan [2000]. The term “revival” here is not necessarily the same as a complete restoration of the past form. Rather, we assume that every actor (individual or collective) who is interested in *dòng họ* selects some elements of the past form and uses them freely (sometimes modifying or fabricating them) according to his/its valuation of the past, need for it and ability to access it. After the revolution and before *đổi mới*, the prerevolutionary form of *dòng họ* was not employed actively, and there was no general inclination to do so. Today, since there is the freedom to use it, there have appeared actors reevaluating it as good, moralistic tradition.

<sup>3</sup> On the subject of family genealogy in Vietnam, see Yamamoto [1970] and Suenari [1995].

order,<sup>4</sup> in order to reconsider the possible ways available to local elites of early modern Vietnam to reorganize society and the actual choices that they made. The analysis will show that what happened in BC Village involved a group of local low ranking Confucian literati revising their history and reorganizing their social order by focusing on the principle of *dòng họ*. The purpose for rewriting their family histories through compiling and revising their genealogies was to tie together a group of people centered around newly build ancestral halls. Efforts continued even after French colonization and aimed at the further refinement of the system, the result of which was suspended after the revolution of 1945, but is now being revived in the present post-*đổi mới* (1986) era.

In a larger context, the reorganization process described herein corresponds to a new stage in the “Sinification” of the Vietnamese state and society revolving around Confucian ideas. Although the initial stage of Sinification occurred during the over 1000 year period in which Vietnam was placed under the direct rule of China (BC 110 through the early 10<sup>th</sup> century), the complete permeation of Confucian ideas and practice into Vietnamese society began in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with the implementation of the Chinese civil service examination system during the reign of Emperor Lê Thánh Tông (1460–97) [Phan 1999:32; Sase 1999; Yao 2001:213–22]. Then, from state-initiated Confucianization there seems to have occurred a more developed stage initiated by both government policy and efforts within the private sector from the late 17<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup> century [Le 1971:79–96; Chen 1992; Shimaō 2006, 2007, 2008]. For example, it was during this latter period that many books of family ritual (e.g., *Hồ Thương Thư Gia Lễ* 胡尚書家禮, *Tiếp Kinh Gia Lễ* 捷徑家禮, *Thọ Mai Gia Lễ* 壽梅家禮) were compiled based on the neo-Confucian ideas of Chu Hsi, including the institutions he laid down for mausoleum worship. Then under the Nguyễn dynasty, established in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a more fundamentalist Sinification movement promoted a re-Confucianization of Vietnamese society. Viewing these developments over a larger region, we find both the reforms in ritual implemented in China during the Ming period reign of Emperor Hongwu (1368–98) and the resulting custom among Chinese elite families to build huge ancestral halls and compile family genealogies [Ikezawa et al. 2001], combined with the beginning of mass Chinese migration into Southeast Asia from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century [Hasuda 2008; Ōta 2008], to have exerted a good deal of influence on the Confucianization of Vietnamese culture.

On the other hand, one must not ignore the heterogeneity of Vietnamese rural

<sup>4</sup> Between 1994 and 2004, Vietnamese and Japanese scholars conducted joint interdisciplinary fieldwork in BC Village. During this project, in the summers of 1994–97 and the winter of 1994, the team collected historical sources, which included family genealogies, inscriptions, imperial brevets, and oral traditions. Almost all documents were written in classical Chinese, but two family genealogies edited in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were written in modern Vietnamese. About this project, see Sakurai [2006].

society and the complexity of the village community [Phan 1992:75–99; Nguyễn 1996]. That is to say, there are not only differences that exist among the southern, central, and northern regions of Vietnam, but differences exist within the northern region itself. Although there are villages, like Qu nh Đôi (Nghệ An Province) and Mộ Trạch (Hải Dương Province), into which Confucian culture was incorporated as early as the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century [Papin and Tessier 2002], the same development occurred much later in most of the others. We can also identify a trend in the transmission of Confucian culture from the above-mentioned “developed” villages to “underdeveloped” ones over time. Moreover, the spread of Confucian culture in rural Vietnam by no means meant the eradication of existing Buddhist, Taoist, or indigenous cultural aspects. In other words, *dòng họ* constitutes only one element of rural social organization in Vietnam (alongside with such institutions as *hội* 会, *giáp* 甲, and *ngõ* 巷). This is why the present study will consider the contribution made to the village complex and the role played by the introduction of *dòng họ* at the hands of local Confucianists.

Judging from the research that has been conducted to date on the subject, the present chapter falls somewhere in between Vietnamese rural studies and the history of Confucian ideology in Vietnam. Such a research interstice has also been occupied by scholars examining such topics as the role of rural literati in the anti-French colonial movement [Nguyễn 1993; Shiraishi 1993:chap. 1; Tsuboi 1987:chap. 8], the influence of civil service examinations on rural Vietnam [Langlet and Quách 1994; Bùi and Nguyễn 2004], and Confucian ideas in relation to rural culture and moral values [Đình 1990; Phan and Nguyễn 1992]. Work on *dòng họ* and its relationship to Confucian ideas has already appeared in Phan [1999:34] and Vũ [2002:314–15], while the present chapter will delve more concretely and specifically into the historical development of that relationship.

This historical development can be divided into two periods: a pre-18<sup>th</sup> century stage of inter-factional struggle and a 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century stage marked by a stabilized society organized around common *dòng họ* kinship customs, the most important assets of which were the family genealogy and ancestral hall. This chapter will focus mainly on the latter period, in an attempt to clarify the reconstruction of the history and the re-socialization of *dòng họ* at the hands of local Confucianists, and thus hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the historical aspects of patrilineal descent in rural north Vietnam and the ability of that region to organize itself.

Before delving into BC Village’s past, it should be mentioned that at present (mid-1990s), it has a total of seventeen *dòng họ* lines of descent, each in possession of an ancestral hall. Three of the lines (the BH, V, and NT families) boast sizes of over 100 households each, while the others comprise 50 households or less. Twelve of the village’s *dòng họ* (*Thập Nhị Gia Tiên* 十二家先 [i.e., the NT, NĐ, NL, NN, NV-1, NV-2, NC, BH, BV, BD, V, T families]) also worship their founders at the

side of the village tutelary god in NT Shrine.<sup>5</sup> As will be described in detail later, the present social organization characterizing BC was first established at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 1. Village Disputes

Although the extant written source materials say nothing about the situation of the Vietnamese village prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, partial archeological data enables us to reconstruct a provisional “prehistory.” While there are traces of human activity in the region dating before the 10<sup>th</sup> century, systematic settlement only occurred from the 13<sup>th</sup> century on [Nishimura 2007, 2008]. This section will begin with a brief discussion of the early history gleaned from written sources, then go on to examine the conflicts and attempts to create order in village communities during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### 1.1. Early History: 14<sup>th</sup> through 16<sup>th</sup> Century

It is not certain exactly when a *xã* 社 was first set up during the Vietnamese dynastic era at BC Village to administer the two naturally formed settlements (*thôn*) of BC and TC.<sup>6</sup> The term “BC Xã” first appears in an epigraph dated 1573, which is the village’s oldest written record and the first chronicle of any type about it. However, there are later records that attempt to describe the situation during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, but empirically reliable records only exist from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century on. Of these later records, there is the BD family genealogy compiled in 1914,<sup>7</sup> which gives the following information:

- a. During the 14<sup>th</sup> century a literati, who “shook the world with his letters” (以文章鳴世), by the name of BDN came to BC from a family of intellectuals in NN Xã in Bắc Ninh Province to teach. In 1304, BM, the family head, passed the

<sup>5</sup> In many cases, a Vietnamese name is composed of three syllables, each of which can be transcribed by a single Chinese character, although present Vietnamese is written in Romanized form with diacritical marks. The first syllable (character) is the family name, the second the middle name, the third the personal name.

<sup>6</sup> The “*xã*” was the lowest level administrative unit of the Lê and Nguyễn dynasties [Sakurai 1987]. BC Xã consisted of two independent social units called BC *thôn* and TC *thôn*. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century both became *xã*. After the revolution, *xã* was reorganized into a larger scale unit, with contemporary *xã* encompassing several former *xã*.

<sup>7</sup> The process of compiling family chronicles will be examined in the next section.

metropolitan civil service examination<sup>8</sup> and his son BQG passed the regional examination in 1374.

- b. BDN and his son intermarried with women from NN Xã rather than BC. His two grandsons married women from BC with the family name N (the name N preceded the name B in BC Xã).

Also, according to the village's oral tradition,

- a. BU'Đ, by virtue of his exploits in the war of independence led by Lê Lợi against the Ming dynasty and his role as a high level bureaucrat in the early Lê dynasty, became worshipped as the tutelary (*thành hoàng* 城隍) of BC Village.

If it is true that a scholar did migrate to BC from Bắc Ninh,<sup>9</sup> this event could be looked upon as the starting point of the Confucianization of the village. Such an intellectual impact combined with victory in the war of independence could have brought about significant changes in the village's religious life and ritual practices.

Incidentally, today BU'Đ has been downgraded to an auxiliary spirit at NT Shrine, while the present tutelary is Dương Văn Nga, empress to Lê Đại Hành during the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Oral tradition has it that after the revival of the Lê dynasty, villagers met with serious difficulties in transporting rice to the capital and it was

<sup>8</sup> BM's success is confirmed as historical fact by the list of successful palace examination candidates cited in Ngô [1993:56].

<sup>9</sup> Based on the data presented in Ngô [1993], I have calculated the proportion of successful candidates (*tiến sĩ* 進士) in the provinces of the administrative divisions of 1993–97 to the total number of *tiến sĩ* in Bắc Hà (from Quảng Bình northward), where the examination was held during Lê dynasty. The results are as follows:

	Early Lê period	Mạc period	Late Lê period	Nguyễn period
Hà Bắc	18.5%	27.2%	13.6%	5.8%
Hải Hưng	28.4%	28.2%	22%	8%
Nam Hà	3.9%	3.2%	3%	12.1%
Nghệ An	1.2%	1.5%	4.7%	14.1%

During the early Lê period, the Nam Hà Region, which included old Nam Định Province, lagged behind in education; and Hà Bắc, which included old Bắc Ninh Province, was more advanced. During the Nguyễn period, the situation was reversed, suggesting that not only a cultural gap, but also economic opportunities could have induced the migration from Bắc Ninh to Nam Định, which at that time was a key access point to Tonkin Bay and bordered the agricultural frontier.

Dương Văn Nga who helped solve the problem, resulting in her replacing BU'Đ as the village tutelary.<sup>10</sup> The genealogy of the NL family (compiled 1907) describes Dương Văn Nga being the tutelary as early as 1675, and the earliest contemporary document acknowledging that fact is an imperial edict from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Although it is impossible to accurately determine the change in village tutelary during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was indeed a time of political upheaval, involving the decline of the Lê dynasty, its usurpation by the Mạc dynasty established in Hanoi, and its restoration in Thanh Hoa, which may be related to the disruptions in religious life as described in BC.

As a matter of fact, according to the epigraph of 1573, an important religious event did occur in the village during the Mạc dynasty era in the form of the building of a small Buddhist hermitage, HCA, by the villagers. The main promoter of the project was an elder by the name of VT and was supported by local leaders also with V surnames, thus informing us that the V name also existed in BC at the time. The erection of the hermitage, which is the first historical event chronicled by a contemporary source, is significant for this chapter in two respects. First, the Confucianization process of the 15<sup>th</sup> century did not proceed in any linear or exclusionary fashion, and the Mạc dynasty inherited the culture of the Lê dynasty Confucian literati [Đinh 2006]. Recent research into the epigraphy of the Mạc dynasty [Hu nh 2002] indicates that a confrontation did occur during that time between Confucian intellectuals and the adherents of popular Buddhism. There are many epigraphs commemorating the erection of Buddhist temples, on which are described attempts by Confucian intellectuals to explain the teachings of Buddhism within a Confucian framework, indicating the need felt on the part of the former to deal directly with popular inclinations towards the latter. The BC hermitage inscription, however, was authored by a Buddhist priest (T.T. Thiên-sư 禪師), and thus lacks any Confucian-oriented discourse; and there was also no apparent attempt by local Confucianists to become involved in the affairs of the hermitage, indicating relative weakness in the village's Confucian tradition at the time.

<sup>10</sup> Almost all the tutelary spirits of adjacent villages around BC Village are historical figures active during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Dương Văn Nga (BC Village)

Linh Lang Đại Vương, prince of Lý dynasty (TC Village)

Nguyễn Bạc, meritorious vassal of Đinh Tiên Hoàng (PC Village)

Phạm Bạch Hổ, one of the 12 Lords (*Sứ Quân* 十二使君) (DL Village)

(QL Village worships only the spirit of thunder.)

DL Village also has an oral tradition that Phạm Bạch Hổ protected the transport of rice to the capital. It is also possible that Dương Văn Nga is the original tutelary of BC and the worship of BU'Đ a later development.

Secondly, the villages listed on the epigraph were located in a number of local prefectures, leading us to conclude that during the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the hermitage was operating on a scale broader than BC alone, indicating rural Buddhism as having more regionally based congregations transcending principles of kinship.

### 1.2. Partition

During the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the civil war between north and south ended, and an attempt was made to rebuild a central Confucian political order [Taylor 1987]. However, in the north during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a weakening of the central government resulted in social unrest, including peasant uprisings, which in turn increased the amount of autonomy and self-sufficiency enjoyed in rural society. On the other hand, while rural Vietnam was able to take advantage of the north's participation in the Southeast Asian regional commercial boom of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the 18<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a return to an internally isolated economy [Sakurai 1991:339–53]. Within the national crisis that occurred during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, rural Vietnam can be described as follows from the plentiful archeological and historical evidence that remains. The archaeological evidence indicates that villagers filled in the lowlands around the village with earth and were from the 17<sup>th</sup> century on living in spatially larger dwellings [Nishimura 2007], marking a new historical development, which will be described in the remainder of this section and the next.

To begin with, today in XC hamlet there is a grave called Lăng Đá (Stone Mound) [Bùi 1992], in which NC Tr. was interred. According to the NC family genealogy (compiled 1966), NC Tr. lived between 1647 and 1702 and served as a Lê dynasty eunuch (*nội giám* 內監). On his retirement and return home, he became a powerful local leader, which is proven by the existing local epigraphy, but is not recorded in the Lê dynasty records. The oral tradition says that NC Tr. asked the villagers to worship him as one of their local gods, *hậu thần* 后神,<sup>11</sup> but was refused. So he decided to create a new social unit by dividing the village into Nh t Thôn 一村 (first village) and Nhì Thôn 二村 (second village), a division that exist-

<sup>11</sup> *Hậu* 后 was a popular folk custom of rural northern Vietnam from the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Village leaders often wished to be worshipped at the local indigenous shrine, temple, or Confucian shrine (*văn chỉ* 文址), where village literati worshipped the Confucian saints (*tiên thánh* 先聖), commemorated deceased successful candidates in the civil examination (*tiên hiền* 先賢), and they would donate to the village (or its other lower units). In some cases, their offspring would donate in their name. If villagers accepted the proposal, these leaders, both male and female, would be recognized as *hậu thần* 后神 (god in the afterlife), *hậu phật* 后仏 (buddha in the afterlife), *hậu hiền* 后賢 (Confucian saint in the afterlife).

ed up to the revolution. According to one local elder, the two villages were not divided geographically, but rather on the basis of two groups worshipping different tutelaries. Generally speaking, however, Nh t Thôn corresponds geographically to XA and XB hamlets, while Nhì Thôn corresponds to XC hamlet, the former worshipping Dương Văn Nga and BUĐ, the latter worshipping “King (Đại Vương 大王)”<sup>12</sup> Khe Cau Mang. Each village had its own assembly hall (*đình*), shrine (*đền*), temple (*chùa*), and theatre (*đàn hát*). About this incident, the NC family genealogy mentions only that NC Tr. was worshipped as the *hậu thân* of Nhì Thôn.<sup>13</sup>

However, the genealogy of the NĐ family (compiled 1905), who opposed NC Tr., mentions that turmoil did occur in the village. One of its members, NO, who was accomplished in martial arts and served the Lê dynasty as a soldier, heard of the attempt by NC Tr. to expand his influence in the village, while still in the field, and returned home to take the leadership the Nh t Thôn against NC Tr., which resulted in an armed clash. Then, NC Tr. made accusations against NO, who fled the village and appealed to his superior officer, proving the accusations to be false. While this alleged armed clash between the NCs and NĐs cannot be verified in the historical record, it seems correct to assume that NC Tr.’s attempt to expand his influence locally was the cause of BC Village’s partitioning. Two epigraphs containing the dates 1697, 1698 state that NC Tr. was accepted by the villagers of TC and QL as their *hậu thân*<sup>14</sup>; and another epigraph dated 1686 relates the interesting story of NC Tr.’s mother being designated that year as the *hậu phật* 后仏 of Nhì Thôn for her role in the rebuilding of the previously mentioned HCA hermitage into the upgraded HTT Buddhist temple. It seems that the operation of HCA, which transcended BC in serving a regionally wider religious congregation, was transferred from the V family to NC Tr. at that time.

In present day XC Hamlet, there is another grave, called Lăng Gạch (Brick Mound), where a person known as BQC is interred. According to the NC family genealogy, the inhabitant is none other than NC Th. (1697–1737), the youngest son of NC Tr.’s older brother. In the vicinity of Lăng Gạch, there are seven epigraphs that record BQC being designated as *hậu thân* and *hậu hiền* 后賢, and his wife and mother as *hậu phật*, indicating that during the 1730s NC Th. made attempts to expand his sphere of influence in the region. The memorial built in 1731 by the Association of Officials and Literati (Quan viên Tư văn 官員斯文) (of BC Xã,

<sup>12</sup> *Đại vương* 大王 is a common honorific title for Vietnamese deity.

<sup>13</sup> The document contains only a translation into Vietnamese verse of the classical Chinese inscription erected in 1691. There is no original. The verse is rather obscure, but the inscription was apparently erected to recognize NC Tr. as a *hậu thân* by the elite members of Nhì Thôn.

<sup>14</sup> I have verified inscription of QL (1698), but not the inscription of TC (1697). Information about the latter is based on a report by Bui Văn Tám [1997:172].

which included both Nh t Thôn and Nhì Thôn) recognizes that NC Th. was worshipped as *hậu hiền*.<sup>15</sup> This designation indicates that his authority stemmed not from recognition by the community at large, but as a Confucian intellectual. That same year he was also recognized at the *hậu thân* of TL Village in QL Xã, indicating that the rise of NC Th. did not originate from intra-village division, but rather inter-village successes. Another epigraph, on which the year of its erection can not be deciphered, states that NC Th. became the *hậu thân* of neighboring TC Xã sometime during the Vĩnh Hựu era (1735–39). It also states that in 1731, NC Th.'s mother was recognized as the *hậu phật* of all four *giáp*<sup>16</sup> of Nh t Thôn and his wife as the *hậu phật* of two *giáp* of Nh t Thôn in 1735, indicating how he expanded his influence to the rival village of Nhì Thôn through the Buddhist activities of the women in his family. In 1737, NC Th. was accepted as the *hậu thân* of Nh t Thôn, a fact that is contained in the genealogy of the rival NĐ family. That same year the Association of Officials and Literati of TX Tổng (canton), which included BC Xã<sup>17</sup> elected NC Th. as its chairman and earmarked NC Th. for worship as its *hậu thân*; but we should mention that Nh t Thôn and Nhì Thôn were not re-united.

### 1.3. Various Aspects of Ancestor Worship

While noticing how the general crisis in 18<sup>th</sup> century northern Vietnam influenced *dòng họ* lines of descent on the village level, one also observes a response on the part of rural families in the form of strengthening their internal organizations. This section will focus on developments in the aspect of ancestor worship within *dòng họ* during the 18<sup>th</sup> century from the available, albeit fragmentary, narrative.

#### 1.3.1. The B Family

The earliest record in BC related to ancestor worship is the last will and testament of one BBT and spouse NTT dated 1553, a copy of which is now attached to the BD family genealogy. The document provides for an inheritance to their first-born

<sup>15</sup> Before the revolution, a Confucian shrine (*văn chòi*) was operating in BC, and vestiges of it were visible in 1995. It is not known when it was built.

<sup>16</sup> *Giáp* was a lower unit in northern Vietnamese village before the revolution. According to the oral tradition, before the revolution, each “community” had four *giáp*. Its main function was to prepare for village rituals and assist at funerals.

<sup>17</sup> The Tư văn 斯文 Association originally should have consisted of Confucian literati, especially successful civil service examinees [Shimao 2008:62], but here we find a village leader with no academic degree being elected as its chairman, a fact implying that the *tư văn* was not an authentically Confucian.

son of 1) paddy (3 *mẫu* 5 *sào* 13 *thước* scattered over 20 locations) to pay for *huong hỏa* 香火 (incense and candlelight offerings), and 2) ancestral gravesites (6 *mẫu* 3 *sào* scattered over 24 locations). Another last will and testament dated 1645 and also attached to the BD family genealogy confirms that the provision for *huong hỏa* was in tact almost 100 years later, showing the leadership role played by first-born sons in the performance of ancestral rituals. However, during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, such efforts became more and more difficult as internal conflicts arose within family organizations.

According to the preamble to the BD family genealogy, the 17<sup>th</sup> century marked a stage at which the B family organization grew beyond the boundaries of BC Village, when BDD married a woman from neighboring DL Xã and one of their sons, BN, moved in with the mother's family in DL and formed a branch family of the Bs. However, during the Vĩnh Thịnh era (1705–19), BGD and his son BTL, the heads of the main line of the B family, were unable to raise the wherewithal for *huong hỏa* and maintain the family gravesites. Instead, the forest land bordering the gravesites was cleared and reclaimed as pasture, arable, and residential land, an act which gave rise to disputes among the main line and branch families in BC and DL. The conflict, which began with the cousins of BGD purchasing the family's *huong hỏa* land and digging up gravesites to reclaim them, lasted for two generations and involved the branch families of BD and DL bringing joint litigation against the main line before the local magistrate. According to the complaint documenting the litigation, which is also attached to the BD family genealogy, it was the DL branch that was the most proactive party in settling the problem, making the incident an inter-village affair. The incident was only the beginning of the B family woes. After the main line lost the civil suit, its members left BC and migrated south. Then at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the Quang Trung era (1788–92) of the Tây Sơn dynasty, when BTN threw his support in favor of the revival of the Lê dynasty, the villagers, fearing reprisals from the Tây Sơn government, lodged a complaint against BTN with the magistrate. While the outcome of the case is not known, a few years later, after BTN's reinstatement, the B family was in ruins, as many of its members had either changed their surnames or middle names or moved to other villages.

There is another document attached to the BD genealogy concerning more litigation in a long, drawn out land dispute.<sup>18</sup> What is important here is that when the dispute was finally settled at a family assembly in 1799, there was a group of people in attendance who claimed to have originated from one "DLC" and now formed three separate branch families. However, according to the related epigraphy and BH genealogy, DLC and his descendents were members of the BH family, not the BD family. The fact of documentation related to the BH family appearing in the BD

<sup>18</sup> For more details, see Yao [1999].

genealogy indicates that reorganizing the *dòng họ* system was by no means a simple, straightforward task.

### 1.3.2. The NĐ Family

According to the NĐ family genealogy, it was at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that NĐV, member of the family's seventh generation since its founding, embraced Confucian ideas. NĐV had four different teachers and made a name for himself as a writer. One of those teachers, PTK, who was invited to the village from a neighboring prefecture, had passed the regional civil service examination and thus earned the academic title of *huong công* 鄉貢 (later *cử nhân* 舉人), as his father had done. He also served as the prefecture's governor. NĐV formed a close bond with PTK and his family, taking the daughter of PTK's older brother as a concubine. PTK not only taught the NĐ family Confucian ideas, but was also the greatest influence in designing the family's ancestral rituals, by transmitting to them the knowledge and methods of *phong thủy* 風水 (*feng shui* geomancy). NĐV asked PTK to determine auspicious locations for the gravesites of his father (date unknown), his mother (in 1746), and his branch's ancestor (in 1747). NĐV was passionately involved in the education of his children, as evidenced by his son borne by PTK's niece, NCM, who became an outstanding scholar and was made head of the family due to the fact that NĐV's first wife had borne only a daughter. NCM took the regional civil service examination in 1779 and was awarded the lower level degree of *sinh đồ* 生徒 (later *tú tài* 秀才), which was the NĐ family's first.<sup>19</sup> He was also appointed the village's arbitrator, settling the above-mentioned NC family dispute, and, as will be described in the next section, he strongly urged village families to compile their own genealogies.<sup>20</sup>

Despite such emphasis on Confucian education, it must be pointed out that the worship of matrilineal ancestors continued in BC. For example, the parents of NĐV's concubine, who died without giving birth to a son, were brought to BC for burial, and her father and grandfather (PTK's older brother and father) were worshipped as NĐ family ancestors.

<sup>19</sup> An examination of the BC Village genealogies reveals that at the stage of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there were three other villagers who received degrees in the regional examination: BD (*sinh đồ*), BDC (*sinh đồ*), and BHC (*huong công*).

<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, according to the family genealogy, in his later years, he devoted himself to Buddhism because a Buddhist woman had cured an intractable disease through shamanistic methods. It seems that popular rural Buddhism at that time may have been amalgamed with indigenous folk belief.

### 1.3.3. The NL Family

The genealogy of the NL family relates a small, but noteworthy, event that happened during the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was during that time that NLB and other family members built a Taoist altar for worship, shunning Confucian ritual and ignoring the anniversaries of ancestor deaths. Here we find evidence of possible resistance on the part of villagers to the rise of Confucian ideas and practice. However, the genealogy goes on to relate that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the NL family revived its observation of anniversaries of ancestor deaths.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. Reorganization of the Village Order

After falling into a state of chaos during the era of the Tây Sơn dynasty, BC Village faced with the question of how to restore order in the community. On the national level, after the founding of a dynasty in Hue by Nguyễn Phúc Anh in 1802, the new state was faced with the difficulty of integrating the territory of its former enemies. For the purpose of efficiently mobilizing the minimum necessary resources of rural northern Vietnam, it was decided that the existing *xã* (*thôn*) autonomous social units would be kept in tact [Sakurai 1987].

What this public recognition of their autonomy forced the villagers of BC to do was to strengthen their *xã* social order.

This section will describe exactly how the Confucian leaders of BC went about doing just that.

<sup>21</sup> It should be pointed out that the religious and intellectual triangle of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism in northern Vietnam is not a simple interrelationship. In 1663, the central government released the Forty Seven Articles of Enlightenment, in which it severely criticized Buddhism and folk belief (shamanism). In 1751, the articles were released again and translated into Vietnamese with *chữ nôm* script, although they were not embraced by the people, according to *Khâm Định Việt Sử Thông Giám Cương Mục* 欽定越史通鑑綱目 (Imperially ordered annotated text completely reflecting the history of Việt) [q41:14b–15a]. On the other hand, during the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Ngô Thì Nhâm, a famous literati interpreted the teachings of the Trúc Lâm Zen sect within a Confucian framework. Ngô Thì Sĩ, another famous literati, built a cave shrine named Tam Giáo Từ 三教祠 at Lạng Sơn, where all sorts of statues, Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian are enshrined even today. Recently, Ōnishi Kazuhiko has studied a case in which a Buddhist monk was conducting Taoist rites during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Then, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Confucian local elite erected Taoist altars and organized séances. Historically, it seems that the relationship between Confucianism and other belief systems by Buddhism or Taoism fluctuated between exclusion and assimilation [Tr n 1986; Hoàng 1993; Đào 2000; Ōnishi 2007; Nguyễn 2008].

## 2.1. *The Genealogy Compilation Campaign*

One way of reviving the village was the compilation of the genealogies of its *dòng họ* lines. Exactly how this was done is described in the preambles to those same genealogies.

### 2.1.1. *The BD Family*

It was in the early spring of 1807 that the then BD family head DNC became disturbed about the confusion that existed about the origins of the family and called the family members together to commemorate the meritorious deeds of its ancestors. He then set about collecting information on each branch of the family and revising its “old genealogy.” The compilation work, which was carried out according to the empirical principle of “what is believable will be told as such, what is dubious will be told as such,” was fraught with difficulty, given the fact that the family had been broken up by the destruction caused in the Tây Sơn era wars, to the extent that ancestral gravesites could not be confirmed, despite the existence of the old genealogies. Therefore, it was decided to record only the most recent information that could be verified. Consequently, the new genealogy identified four generations dating from great-grandfather PAPQ and divided them into three branch families arranged in generational succession. In the process, DNC had to give up hope of reconstructing the pre-17<sup>th</sup> century family tree.

### 2.1.2. *The NĐ Family*

According to the preamble to its genealogy, the NĐ family lost track of its gravesites and the commemorative names of those interred there. Even the family head did not know them, let alone the other members. During the winter of 1809, NCM, who belonged to the collateral line of the first branch, called the family elders together, requesting that they bring with them “records of ancestors.” Then he went out in the field to confirm the gravesites indicated in those records. Consequently, five generations (including NCM’s) including four branch families, three of which had worshipped the family ancestors, were identified. The successor of one of the branches, that stemming from GTC, could not be traced.

Like the BD family, the NĐ genealogy covered only the most recent of its generations; however, unlike the BDs, the NĐs did make an attempt to identify its oldest ancestors. Consequently, while ancestors at least nine generations removed had been worshipped collectively, meaning that they had no individual graves or posthumous names, VV, a member of the eighth generation was discovered in a “com-

piled ledger” dated 1709. After a discussion of what to do in case the main line was unable to perform ancestral rituals, it was decided that the collateral line could stand in for it; and NCM’s son NXT was put in charge of implementing the newly found rituals.

The preamble also touches upon two difficulties faced in compiling the genealogy. The first involved many of the “branch records” collected that only recorded date of death and posthumous name and failed to mention gravesite locations and the order of succession. What this suggests is that such a method of recording ancestors was the genealogical custom in pre-18<sup>th</sup> century BC Village. The second difficulty concerned middle names. According to the genealogy, traditionally, to the family name of the main line of descent, N, was added the middle name Đ; however, over time family members had arbitrarily taken such middle names as K (NK) and X (NX), making it very difficult to trace them. While it is interesting to the researcher that the family focused on Đ as opposed to other middle names, in practice, it was not a very effective method in compiling a genealogy of exactly what people comprised the NĐ branch families.

### *2.1.3. The NN Family*

According to the NN family genealogy (completion date unknown<sup>22</sup>), the family held a gathering in 1809 for the purpose of compilation, reflecting the crisis that it was facing at that time. Since the key to distinguishing themselves from other “N” families was the middle name N, the first question was whether there were any irregularities in that middle name. Furthermore, neither the order of succession of known ancestors, nor most of their posthumous names and gravesites were known. Consequently, the compilers were forced to begin with three gravesites that only the family head could managed to remember. First a survey of the existing written records was conducted, producing four different sources. After a month of study, it was discovered that the family founder had been one TG, of the seventh generation removed. As to the reason why TG was decided upon, no records prior to TG existed, and five of his sons could be indentified as the heads of branch families, so they and their descendents were arranged in generational succession.

### *2.1.4. The NL Family*

It was in 1811 that the NL family held a gathering of its leaders to compile its

<sup>22</sup> The chronicle was compiled by the grandson (NNN) of NNS, who was referred to as living person at the time the preface was written in 1809.

genealogy. The work began with an historical examination of family names N having the middle name L, by interviewing the oldest living residents of the village. The first informant was the above-mentioned NĐ family's NCM, who reported that the NL family ancestors originally had the surname "L." Then, at the time BC Village began worshipping Empress Dương Văn Nga, it changed its name to NL out of awe for the dynasty name L (Lê). The NL ancestors had been a line of public officials and Confucian literati involved in local government, as evidenced by the existence of the family name in the old local records. However, the NL investigators had their doubts about NCM's testimony and interviewed a second informant, an elder of the L family in neighboring TC Village, who confirmed NCM's story. In addition, it seems that the L family of TC had split off from the L family of BC and that the BC Ls had in fact changed their name to NL. The interviewer was also impressed with how similar the facial features of this TC Village L was to his own.

On the other hand, the written records were not very helpful. Although one source confirmed that the family name had been changed to NL in 1675, overall, its ancestry could be traced back only as far as one DUC, only seven generations removed. Consequently, the NL genealogy turned out to be a detailed family tree from the time of DUC to the present, with no information about branch families.

#### 2.1.5. *The BH Family*

The preamble to the most recent (sixth edition of) the genealogy of the BH family, which was compiled in the early 1990s, reports only that the first compilation was done by BVH, the seventh generation scion of the fourth offshoot of the second branch family. If this BVH is the same individual who is mentioned in the B family inscription erected in 1839, we know that the BH genealogy was compiled somewhat later than the rest of the village families, during the Ming Mạng era (1820–41).

#### 2.1.6. *The Synchronic Character of Genealogy Compilation*

All of the above genealogies of families residing in BC Village were compiled at about the same time in the community's history, indicating a local trend. That is to say, all the families held gatherings, conducted surveys of their pasts, confirmed the groups that belonged in their family trees, and reconstructed their *dòng họ* systems. In the case of one group with the N surname, their middle name was used to iden-

tify kinship ties.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, in terms of timing, the NC Family did not follow this trend of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, waiting until 1894 to compile its first comprehensive genealogy. The compiler was VTĐ, who in 1892 passed the metropolitan civil service examination as *phó bảng* 副榜 (“subordinate list” degree holder). His relationship to the NC family was maternal,<sup>24</sup> but probably took on the task after returning to BC as a successful Confucian scholar and no doubt the most prominent kin to the NCs.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.2. Family and Village Law

In conjunction with the genealogy compilation trend during the Gia Long and Minh Mạng eras (1802–40), there were also attempts to write family bylaws and promulgate a village-wide legal code. Concerning the former, NCM of the NĐ family decided on the following bylaws, having his son NXT put them down in writing and distribute them to all the branch families, instructing them that these bylaws were to be the norms of behavior for the family for a long time to come.

- Upon the marriage of an NĐ women, she must pay the family 1 *mạch* 陌 of cash, in addition to betel and liquor.
- The family ancestral ceremony will be held annually on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of 12<sup>th</sup> month (lunar calendar).

In the NN family bylaws we find:

- Ancestral ceremonies will be held annually on Thanh Minh 清明 (third month of the lunar calendar) and Đông Chí 冬至 (winter solstice).
- Upon naming a new born child, none of the six characters of the posthumous

<sup>23</sup> The Nguyễn dynasty also used the middle name to distinguish a new group identity from the older one. The rule distinguished between descendants of Nguyễn Hoàng and his kin who had migrated south with him, also named Nguyễn Phúc, and descendants who remained at Thanh Hóa named Nguyễn Hữu [Katakura 1972:34–37].

<sup>24</sup> According to the NC family genealogy, VTĐ’s maternal grandfather enjoyed literature, believed in geomancy, and hired teachers to educate his children. Consequently, his descendants were able to attain lower degrees in the regional civil service examination. One of his son and two of his grand children were awarded *nhất trường* 一場 (first level) degrees (see note 35) and set up private schools. This genealogy is written in Roman characters, and contains no Chinese characters, and its author belonged to another branch. He expressed pride his ancestors took the trouble to learn Romanization and French early on, stating that the Confucian teachers in the family were old fashioned.

<sup>25</sup> We do not have any genealogical information about VTĐ’s branch family, except that he was more than capable of compiling a genealogy.

names of six ancestors in the third generation from the family founder are to be used.

- Upon the marriage of an NC woman, a ceremony will be held at the family ancestral hall, where an offering will be made to the ancestors of 1 *quan* of cash, in addition to betel and liquor.

The BH family bylaws, which were determined somewhat later, in 1839 state,

- Family gatherings will be held annually on Nguyễn Đán 元旦 (new year's day), Thanh Minh, Đoan Dương 端陽 (5<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month), Thường Tân 嘗新 (first fruits festival), and Đông Chí.
- Any family member who passes the civil service examination with the rank of *tú tài* will be awarded 5 *quan* in cash, with the rank of *cử nhân*, 10 *quan*.
- Any member marrying out of the family will make a cash offering of 1 *quan* to the family ancestral hall.

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a third sub-unit, B-Thôn, was created in BC, in addition to Nh t Thôn and Nhì Thôn<sup>26</sup>; and between 1806 and 1829, all three of these *thôn* established local ordinances,<sup>27</sup> dealing mainly with how yearly events were to be held and prepared for, but also included provisions regarding marriages and funerals.<sup>28</sup> This development can be viewed along with genealogy compilation as one link in the movement to strengthen family ties and reestablish the village order.

### 2.3. Ancestral Hall Construction: Origins

Records concerning the building of ancestral halls in BC Village date back to the early Nguyễn dynasty period. This section will examine epigraphical sources

<sup>26</sup> B Thôn seems to be related to the B family, especially its members living in XC hamlet. According to the oral tradition, B Thôn was a group that worshiped a woman of the B family, Bà Tổ Cô, who had died young but was worshipped for her miraculous power. According to Imperial Brevets of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this woman was called C.H. Công Chúa 公主 (honorific title for female spirits) and was a daughter of ĐLC, the progenitor of BH family. At the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, B Thôn was very active in worshipping C.H. Công Chúa, including the practice of “selling” weak and frail children to her in exchange for her protection. The many “sale” contracts that are stored in the family mausoleum contains not only the names of B family members of B Thôn, but also members residing in TC Village.

<sup>27</sup> These sources are held by the Hán Nôm Institute (Hanoi).

<sup>28</sup> There is a fragment of a village code, probably compiled in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which mentions other subjects, such as lending village funds, bonuses for successful civil service examinees, etc.

regarding the subject.

### 2.3.1. *The BH Family*

The BH family ancestral hall, which is presently located in the northern part of XA Hamlet, was, according to one of its epigraphs (dated 1839), originally an altar built for seasonal rituals in the home of the family's eldest son. It was moved to the present location in 1810, after the site was approved by geomancy. It is probably no coincidence that in general, the construction of new mausoleums occurred at the same time as the compilation of family genealogies, as part of efforts to reorganize the *dòng họ* system. However, in the case of the BHs, who we previously assumed to have been composed of the three B family branches gathered together by DLC in 1799, their *dòng họ* system of founder and successive branches was already known to date back before the Nguyễn dynasty period. If so, rather than strengthening family reorganization, the idea was to build firm foundations for ancestral worship.

In 1839, 20 years after the mausoleum was built, additions were made to the building and paddy was purchased to finance the whole facility's yearly upkeep. Again, it was at this time that the family genealogy was compiled.

### 2.3.2. *BH Family Second Branch's Second Offshoot*

Lining the west side of the BH family mausoleum is the ancestral hall of the second offshoot of its second branch and the gravesite of BHP. The memorial erected in 1867 next to the grave contains an epigraph describing BHP's career, which began with his passing the regional civil service examination of 1841 with the rank of *cử nhân*.<sup>29</sup> It was BHP who contributed the wherewithal to build the offshoot's

<sup>29</sup> After his success in 1841, BHP began to work as an apprentice (*hành tẩu* 行走) at Ministry of Finance (Hộ Bộ 戶部). After that, he was appointed as the district governor (*tri châu* 知州) of Vạn Ninh, Quảng Yên Province, on the coast near the Chinese border. He was given a good rating and continued to hold a number of positions in both the central and local governments. He showed special capabilities in the field law enforcement. In 1862, he was dispatched with troops to prevent a group of coastal bandits from attacking the citadel of Hải Dương Province, and was rewarded for his military success with the post of administrator (*bố chính sứ* 布政使) of Quảng Yên Province. However, the following year, he was killed in battle and was posthumously made governor (*tuần phủ* 巡撫). These and other facts of his life are contained in the Nguyễn dynasty biographies, *Đại Nam Chính Biên Liệt Truyện Nhị Tập* 大南正編列傳二集 (Collection of biographies of Nguyễn dynasty) [vol. 2, q34:6a–7a] and the dynasty's annals, *Đại Nam Thực Lục Chính Biên* 大南寔錄正編 (Chronicle of Nguyễn dynasty) [vol. 4, q24:7b; q26:26b–27a; q27:27b–28a; q28:15b–16a; q29:7b–8a].

ancestral hall, according to a record dated 1858. Although BHP was the second son of TCC, who was the offshoot's third eldest son, he inherited its ritual duties because TCC's elder brothers did not bear sons. The construction of the ancestral hall was requested by TCC in his last will and testament, lamenting that despite the fact that five generations had passed since PKC founded the offshoot, a hall still had not been built. The family finances continued to suffer until 2 or 3 years after TCC's death, when BHP's success in the civil service examination turned the tide.

After he was appointed as an official in the Ministry of Finance, BHP was in 1851 given leave to return to worship at the graves of his ancestors and took that opportunity to make plans with his elder brother to fulfill their father's wish to build a hall on the east side of the family's main hall. The hall was laid out to honor the second and fourth ancestors to the left and third and fifth ancestors to the right of the founder. Then in 1853, when BHP was promoted to the post of judicial commissioner of Quảng Yên Province, he donated the ritual paraphernalia and paddy for the upkeep of the hall. Although BHP was hailed as a local hero and family dignitary by virtue of being the first BC villager to hold provincial office, he seemed to have limited his activities to fulfilling only his father's wishes, since there is no record of him becoming involved in the BH family's overall ceremonial affairs. After his death in 1862 in the effort to quell banditry in Quảng Yên, BHP was buried beside the offshoot's mausoleum and two stone memorials were erected there to honor his nephew and son-in-law, who had died by his side. The memorial bearing his eulogy was erected in 1868, which contains the phrase "BHP's son BHT and his brothers decided on order from their mother..." 1) to never sell the gravesite, 2) to keep it clean and make necessary repairs, and 3) to honor BHP's nephew and son-in-law every year on Thanh Minh. This example of a wife and mother taking the initiative in the worship of her husband indicates the continuing presence of maternal authority in the BC *dòng họ* system.

### 2.3.3. *The NT Family*

Ancestral hall construction by the NT family resembled that of the BH family. According to an epigraph dated 1867, the NTs had been worshipping their ancestors at an altar in the first-born son's house from before the Gia Long era. Then in 1834, CTC conferred with other family elders and decided "having a family ancestral hall would make the line of descent clear and ensure that the worship of its ancestors would not be forgotten." An appropriate site was then chosen through geomancy and a hall was built to worship the NT founder along with the second ancestor and the founders of the three branch families. Paddy for the upkeep of the facility was also purchased, and additions were made to the building in 1867.

Similarly, around that same time, the third offshoot of the third branch built

its own ancestral hall on the grounds. The journal kept in that hall today was authored by NTU, who also was one of the authors of the above mentioned epigraph, records five generations of ancestors as far as the great great grandfather, mentioning that the founder and his son held minor government positions. It was the grandfather, CTC, who took the initial lead in building the NT family hall, which suggests that his offshoot was the leading family in the NT lineage. Like in the case of the BH family, NT lineage integration and branch integration took place side by side.<sup>30</sup>

#### 2.3.4. *The Diffusion of Hall Construction*

According the ND family genealogy, its ancestral hall was built sometime during the Minh Mạng and Thiệu Trị eras (1820–47). Moreover, during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at least three other mausoleums stood in BC Village.<sup>31</sup> Both the V and NC families were latecomers, the former building its hall in 1908, the latter in 1910. At the same time, the V family established detailed bylaws. From the 1920s on, the building and rebuilding of ancestral halls has become quite a trend in BC,<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> It is difficult to tell how much influence was exerted by the Chinese *ta tsung* (大宗)—*hsiao tsung* (小宗) system on *dòng họ*. According to Chinese ideas popular during Ming and Qing periods, descendants of a family's direct line of descent worshiped the family founder (始祖), while those of subsidiary lines worshiped those ancestors from great great grandfather's father (高祖) on down. It seems at first sight that the case of NT lineage follows Chinese pattern, but on further examination, it was not completely consistent with the Chinese model, for descendants of branch offshoots not only worshiped ancestors from the great great grandfather (高祖) on down at its own mausoleum, but also participated actively in the worship of the family founder (始祖) at the main mausoleum.

<sup>31</sup> The time of construction was estimated through interviews with village elders and their description on the ridgepoles, which remain in the present mausoleum.

<sup>32</sup> For example,

1922	Reconstruction	BH family branch
1925	Reconstruction	BH family branch
	Reconstruction	BH family branch
	Reconstruction	NL family branch
1926	Construction	NC family branch
1928	Reconstruction	BH family
1929	Reconstruction	BH family branch
1931	Reconstruction	NL family
1934	Reconstruction	BH family branch
1935	Construction	NT family branch
1936	Construction	NN family
1938	Construction	BH family branch
1940	Construction	NT family branch

establishing the practice as one way of integrating lineages and strengthening family ties.

#### 2.4. Genealogy Recompilation

Beginning in the early 1900s, efforts were begun in BC Village to revise and expand family genealogies compiled during the first half of the last century, during which village intellectuals were given free reign in utilizing the genealogy genre as a tool for lineage integration. The efforts began in 1902 as the NĐ family's second branch completed a genealogy of its own nodes and offshoots, because it was not satisfied with the total family record that already existed. Then three years later, the first branch followed suit and revised the 1809 genealogy, which stated as a pretext that the original which had been stored in the mausoleum since its construction during the Minh Mạng and Thiệu Trị eras had been damaged in a tropical storm of 1903.

In 1907, the compilers of the NL family added to the 1813 version information of the family descendents who had been born since that time.

The preamble to the BH family genealogy relates that revisions were made by BVH, the ninth generation of the second offshoot of the second branch who held the degree of *tú tài*, tenth generation BTT, who was certified in the first stage of the regional civil service examination, and BLD who passed the second stage of the examination. The fact that BLD was the third son of BHP's older brother suggests that the revisions were made at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It was in 1914 that the BD family completely revised its genealogy of the Gia Long era, which had been based solely on verifiable fact and thus resulted a rather shallow document. The genealogy was completely reconstructed, and the Gia Long version, called the "medieval genealogy," was edited into the "ancient version," to which all the post-Gia Long data was added, resulting in a document chronicling the family from BDN of the Trần dynasty (1225–1400). The documents described in Section 1.3 were attached. The previous strict rule that no document would be considered if it did not confirm the location of ancestral gravesites was loosened, and all written records were accepted. The documents attached to the genealogy included a family tree drawn up by BQD, who had earned the rank of *sinh đồ* in the civil service examination in 1712. It described the nodes from BDH to the present. The 1914 version traced the lineage back to founder BDN, the grandfather of BDH. Consequently, BDH's older brother, BUĐ, the village's former tutelary, was edited into a genealogy that described BC's oldest and most celebrated *dòng họ*.

One more noteworthy point about the BD genealogy was a change of wording in the preface from "Since the surname **B** was established" to "Since the surname **BD** was established," indicating new emphasis on the middle name "D."

Genealogies of the Gia Long era show other surname + middle name combinations besides BD. However, during the later 1800s, BD completely integrated the B surname. We find this same tendency in the BH genealogy. As indicated in Table 1, though, the BH family was not able to completely integrate the B surname, reaching only 80 percent dominance by the 11<sup>th</sup> generation.

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Members in B Surname Genealogies by Generation

Name	Generation			
	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>
B.H.	60 (45%)	107 (63%)	183 (73%)	319 (83%)
B.V.	51 (39%)	42 (25%)	46 (18%)	40 (10%)
Other	21 (16%)	21 (12%)	23 (9%)	27 (7%)
Total	132 (100%)	170 (100%)	252 (100%)	386 (100%)

### 2.5. Village Confucians

The promoters of genealogy compilation and ancestral hall construction in BC Village were a group of low level Confucian scholars, who will be examined in the present section. As mentioned previously, the conversion of the NĐs to Confucian ideas and practices was promoted by NDV, who, as we have already discussed, invited a scholar to the village to teach his children Confucian ways. NDV's son, NCM, who earned the rank of *sinh đồ* on the civil service examination and was called “Minh thanh Tiên sinh” 明誠先生 (Bright, Sincere Teacher) by the villagers, was the key person in the village's genealogy compilation movement. NCM's eldest son, NXT, who achieved the level of *nhất trường* (first stage) on the regional civil service examination,<sup>33</sup> was called Thụy lương Tiên sinh 瑞良先生 (Happy, Virtuous Teacher) by the villagers. According to the NĐ genealogy, his gravesite was geomanced by BDC, who held the academic rank of *tú tài*. Later, one Ngô trang Tiên sinh 午莊先生 moved the grave elsewhere, indicating interaction among the village Confucians. Thụy lương's son was awarded the academic rank of *tú tài* during the Minh Mạng era, his grandson passed the *nhì trường* (second) level during the Tự Đức era (1848–83) and his great grandson passed the *nhất trường* level during the

<sup>33</sup> The regional civil service examination in Vietnam consisted of three or four *trường* 場 (level or subjects). There were two ways of rating examinees: according to the results of each level (hence *nhất trường*, *nhì trường*, etc) or by the combined results of all levels. Such lower level Confucian literati took on the important role of educating on the village level and also acted as experts in practical knowledge, Y Nho Lý Số 医儒理数, which included medicine, education, geomancy (地理風水), and astrology (紫微斗数) [Shimao 2008:55–58].

Đồng Khánh era (1886–88).<sup>34</sup>

The nephew and son-in-law of BHP (highest academic rank of *cử nhân*), who all died together in battle, held the *khóa sinh* 課生<sup>35</sup> and *tú tài* ranks, respectively, indicating the importance of scholarly connections.<sup>36</sup> The editor of BHP's commemorative inscription was Phạm Văn Nghị (1805–80), a well-known scholar (*cử nhân* 1837, *tiến sĩ* 進士 1838) and bureaucrat of the time. He held the position of Nam Định's provincial director of education (*đốc học* 督学) and had many pupils, with whom he promoted reclamation projects in the coastal region and later formed an anti-French resistance organization [Nguyễn and Phan 1992]. BHP may have been one of his students, indicating a broader range of Confucian scholarly exchange beyond the village. Even before BHP earned the rank of *cử nhân*, the BH family had shown deep interest in Confucian learning, as indicated by the article in the family bylaws providing awards for successful civil service examinees. The beginning to the BH ancestral hall inscription states, "The family ancestral hall, which was first institutionalized by Chuzu, is now found among many Confucian families in this country."

Two points can be made from the above discussion. First, successful examinees at the most primary levels of the civil service system (*tú tài*, *nhì trường*, *nhất trường*, *khóa sinh*) played the most important role in converting BC Village to Confucian ideas and customs. Secondly, a regional network of Confucian scholars and their students was operating to form important social ties which transcended both kinship and intra-village relationships.

In conclusion to this section, regarding the "cultural level" of BC, during the Nguyễn dynasty period, the village produced three residents who passed the regional examination finals and became *cử nhân*, one of them passing the metropolitan examination as *phó bảng*. According the *Quốc Triều Hương Khoa Lục* 國朝鄉科錄 (Record of the successful regional civil service examinees under the current dynasty) roll of *cử nhân*, there were 2,346 villages that produced at least one *cử nhân* during the period; and based on the estimate by *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* 大南一統志 (Gazetteer of Nguyễn dynasty) of the 18,025 smallest administration units operating at the time, somewhere around 13 percent of them produced *cử nhân*. Moreover, the number of villages producing only one numbered 1,462, or 60 percent of the total, while only 58 villages managed to produce 10 or more. Therefore, we can conclude that BC Village was a stronghold for the Confucian elite during

<sup>34</sup> Concerning lower level Confucians of the V family, see note 26. On the BH lineage, see Section 2.4.

<sup>35</sup> Successful examinees of an achievement test called *khảo khóa* 考課 which preceded the civil service examination. They could be exempted from military service and corvée labor for 6 months or one year.

<sup>36</sup> According to local historian Bùi Văn Tám [1997:168], BHP studied with BDT, a *tú tài* degree holder in the village.

the period, but by no means a Confucian center of learning.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

The history and organizational aspects of the *dòng họ* system are related to two factors: having a common surname (succession) and having the same paternal ancestors (worship). The Trần dynasty frequently conferred its own name upon the most distinguished vassals, and the Lê dynasty emperors continued the practice until 1464, when Lê Thánh Tông took the dynasty name away from his vassals and ordered them to adopt the surnames of their ancestors. The reason given for this action was that taking the name of the dynasty was an expression of disrespect for one's ancestors [Katakura 1972:30–33].<sup>38</sup> Also during Thánh Tông's reign it became the custom among leading vassals to seek the help of the Confucian elite in erecting memorials with inscriptions aimed at transmitting to later generations their pioneering exploits in statecraft and urging them to follow their example [Yao 2001c, 2002].<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, it is impossible to state with any accuracy what influence these 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century developments had on BC Village; but during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, rituals for worshipping paternal ancestors and the *dòng họ* system of descent had become securely ensconced in the village order. Then as the influence of Confucian scholars grew stronger from the late 18<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the history and organization of *dòng họ* was further stabilized.

<sup>37</sup> The following villages are considered to be the Confucian super-elite villages of the Nguyễn period (numerals indicate number of *cử nhân* or above degree holders).

Hành Thiện (Nam Định)	85
Quỳnh Đôi (Nghệ An)	55
Đông Ngạc (Hà Nội)	44
An Đông (Hà Tĩnh)	41
Nhân Mục (Hà Nội)	31
La Hà (Quảng Bình)	31

Based on the information contained in *Quốc Triều Hương Khoa Lục*, we can also calculate the number of *dòng họ* that produced *cử nhân* holders. The number of those that produced more than two *cử nhân* (and above) was 577 and the number of *cử nhân* (and above) who had at least one relative attaining that degree was 1,544 and accounts for 30 percent of the total number of *cử nhân*. *Dòng họ* producing more than 5 *cử nhân* (and above) numbers 51, so we can conclude that there was no elite scholar family in BC Village.

<sup>38</sup> However, the practice was adopted by the later Mạc dynasty [Yao 2001b:235].

<sup>39</sup> Yao [2001a:227] is of the opinion that as a result, the families of these dignitaries began to enthusiastically compile their genealogies.

Whenever a Vietnamese talks about the *dòng họ* system, there is the likelihood that he will quote the words, “Whenever you drink the water, remember where it came from.” This chapter has been an attempt to describe exactly how the people of BC Village went about remembering “where *they* came from.” At one time, during a period of national chaos and local unrest, they even forgot their roots; but then a group of Confucian intellectuals appeared to help them retrace the source of the water they were drinking through such means as compiling genealogies, building ancestral halls, issuing family bylaws, and identifying middle names; and at times they were led to a source different from the original.

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