Contesting National Identities:
The Changing Imprints of Street Names in Hồ Chí Minh City (Sài Gòn), Vietnam*

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Abstract

In this paper we try to approach the issue of contesting national identities by exploring the change of street names in the largest city of Việt Nam, Hồ Chí Minh City or Sài Gòn, from the French colonial to the post-colonial period. Sài Gòn was the first Vietnamese city where the French colonial regime implemented the modern naming system for streets. Before the period of French colonization most of the streets in Vietnam had no official names. The French set up their street-naming system to imprint the contemporary French national and imperial identity on the urban symbolic landscape. After decolonization, both the Republic of Việt Nam (RVN) and the Socialist Republic of Việt Nam (SRV) followed the street-naming principles of the French to interpret their own Vietnamese national identity. Although both the postcolonial regimes highlighted the independence and identity of Vietnam by naming streets after historical figures, there were a few variations in their contents. The RVN attempted to legitimatize its regime by emphasizing the role of the Nguyễn dynasty,

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whereas the SRV did so by asserting contemporary political leadership.

I. Introduction

In recent decades the study of place-naming or toponomy has moved on from the traditional focus on etymology and taxonomy to the political implications of naming (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, & Azaryahu, 2010: 453). Hence, place-naming is all about questions of power, culture, location and identity (Nash, 1999: 457). In other words, naming place such as street names not only has the purpose of orientation but is also used to commemorate key events or personalities from national history to expresses the ideology of the dominant authorities. Therefore, street names possess a powerful symbolic importance in displaying a particular political identity (Light, 2004: 154). Since street names serve as a tool for a political regime in expressing its political identity, a newly established political regime would usually change them to suit its own purposes. Therefore, the renaming of streets is a common practice used to inscribe new narratives of national history and identity onto the urban landscape (Light, 2004: 155), which is what is known in toponymic scholarship as the "critical turn", which addresses the crucial issue of the politics of place-naming on national and cultural identities (Rose-Redwood et al., 2010: 455).

Hồ Chí Minh City was previously known as Gia Định 嘉定 under the Nguyễn 阮 court before the French occupied the city in the mid-19th century and later changed its name to Sài Gòn.[1] Therefore,

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[1] The French navy attacked the port of Đà Nẵng 沱㶞 (today's 峴港) in 1858 and then occupied Gia Định 嘉定 in the next year. In 1860, the Nguyễn court of Vietnam sent governor-general Nguyễn Tri Phương 阮知方 (1800–1873) to command the armed forces to reoccupy Gia Định. Nguyễn later built the Kỳ Hòa fortress in Gia Định to fight against the French. However, the French military attack of 1861 captured Kỳ Hòa and completely occupied Gia Định (Trần, 1960: 201–203). It is believed that the etymology of Sài Gòn is that Sài and Gòn are the Sino-Vietnamese words meaning "firewood, lops, twigs, palisade" (柴) and "stick, pole, bole" (棍) respectively. This name may refer to either the many kapok plants that the Khmer people had planted nearby or the dense and tall forest that once existed around the city

its street names have been considerably changed three times, first by the Union of Indochina or French Indochina (*Đông Dương thuộc Pháp*, 1887–1954), then by the Republic of Việt Nam (RVN, *Việt Nam Cộng Hòa*, 1955–1975), and finally by the Socialist Republic of Việt Nam (SRV, *Cộng hòa Xã hội chủ nghĩa Việt Nam*, from 1976 until the present).

Regarding the study of street-naming in Vietnam, most has focused on etymology and taxonomy. A quick look at the on-line sources related to the street names of Sài Gòn reveals the monograph, *The changing of street names in Sài Sòn from 1928 to 1993 (Những thay đổi tên đường phố của Thành phố Sài Gòn từ năm 1928 đến 1993)* by Nguyễn Công Tánh (2007). The book focuses on both the etymology and the changing street names followed by the various political regimes. There is also Trần Ngọc Quang's *Sài Gòn and the old street names (Sài Gòn và những tên đường xưa)*(2009), which is an anecdote on the changing street names of Sài Gòn and reveals the author's sentiments on toponymic change.

This paper attempts to explore the issue of contesting national identities by analyzing the street names of Hồ Chí Minh City, the largest city in Việt Nam, from the colonial regime to the post-colonial one. The aim of this paper is to investigate how the respective governments have used street-naming to imprint their own visions of national identity. The source materials that we use are from the collection of Sài Gòn's street names by Nguyễn Tấn Lộc, the maps of Sài Gòn in 1928 from the website *Sommaire*, the map of Sài Gòn published by the National Geographic Service of Việt Nam in 1958 (from the digital archives of the University of Texas Libraries), and the map of Sài Gòn published by South Publisher (*Nhà xuất bản Nam Bộ*).
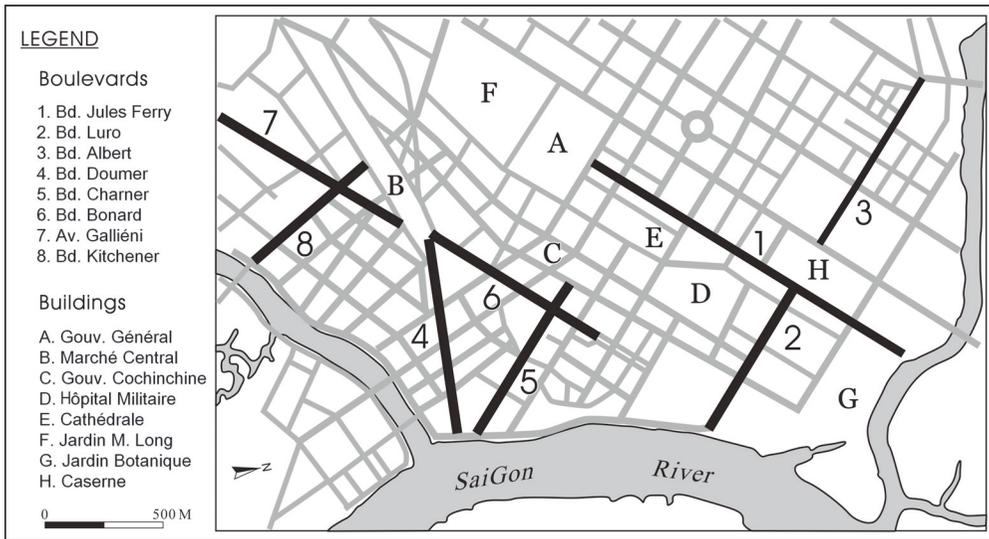
To analyze the street names, first we divide the street names into 3 stages based on the political regimes. Then we divide the street names in each stage into 2 categories, street-naming after what

(WIKIPEDIA: Ho Chi Minh City, n. d.).

happened in the designated streets versus street-naming unrelated to the history of streets. We treat the latter as the spatial representations of the various ideologies imprinted by the political regimes.[2] In other words, we will focus on the second category to examine what kind of criteria for street-naming were utilized by subdividing them into the naming principles of people, things (incl. battles, events, organizations movements etc.), ideology, geography, history, and others. Then, in the following sections, we will address what kind of principles the various regimes used for street-naming, and also which the important ones are that express the power and identity of each regime. In addition, attention is given to how the different regimes used street names to promote their ideologies and built their own colonial and national identities.

In addition, the streets in Sài Gòn or HCM City can be divided into boulevards or avenues on the one hand and common roads on the other hand. The boulevards are in the central area, where most of the administrative buildings, markets, and churches are (See Map 1). The authorities named the boulevards and avenues after more important things than the common roads. Therefore, by examining the street-naming of the boulevards and avenues, we can figure out the most important ideas that each political regime would like to convey. All the boulevards and avenues are only given names after people, battles and events, and ideas or slogans, by which the political regimes could demonstrate clearly what they thought most crucial to them (see Table 1). [3]

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[2] However, this does not mean that we treat street names belonging to the first category as bearing no political implication as promoted by the different political regimes.

[3] Table 1 is based on the maps of Sài Gòn in 1928, 1958 and 1995 (Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, n. d.; Bản Đồ Thành Phố Sài Gòn Vào Năm 1995, n. d.).

LEGEND

Boulevards

1. Bd. Jules Ferry
2. Bd. Luro
3. Bd. Albert
4. Bd. Doumer
5. Bd. Charner
6. Bd. Bonard
7. Av. Galliéni
8. Bd. Kitchener

Buildings

A. Gouv. Général
B. Marché Central
C. Gouv. Cochinchine
D. Hôpital Militaire
E. Cathédrale
F. Jardin M. Long
G. Jardin Botanique
H. Caserne

Map 1. Boulevards and Avenues in Sài Gòn under the French Colonial Regime

Table 1. The Principles of Street-naming for Boulevards and Avenues

Regimes	Peoples	Battles and Events	Ideas or Slogans	Total
Union of Indochina	8	0	0	8
RVN	20	0	2	22
SRV	15	2	0	17

II.   Street Names under the French Colonial Regime

The streets and quarters in Gia Định Thành (Citadel of Gia Định) have gradually been developed and expanded since the citadel was built in the late 18th century (Bản đồ Gia Định 1815, see WIKIPEDIA: Trần Văn Học, n. d.).[4]   However, most of the streets in Gia Định, as well as in

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[4] In 1788, Nguyễn Phúc Ánh 阮福暎 (1762 - 1820) reoccupied Gia Định from the Tây Sơn 西山 regime. Later, in 1789, a citadel called Gia Định Kinh (Citadel of Gia Định) was built. In 1790, Quy Sài Gòn (Citadel of Gài Gòn) was built based on Citadel of Gia Định. Sài Gòn was Citadel of Gia Định

the other cities of Việt Nam, bore no official names before the era of French colonization. When the French took over Sài Gòn in the mid-19th century, they remodeled the city on the European style and endowed it with the title "Paris in the Orient". New infrastructures such as churches, schools, hospitals, and traffic systems were established and named in French.

Sài Gòn was the political headquarters of the French colony in Cochinchina. To the French, it was a place of unique importance since the city symbolized their central control of the hegemonic process by which the French built their colony. Consequently, when the French conquered Sài Gòn, the colonial regime rapidly started to engrave its presence on the urban landscape, and the naming of streets was one of the ways in which the French colonial regime imprinted their own national identity on the colony.

Among the 347 street names in Sài Gòn under the French colonial regime, we can divide them into street-naming after what happened in the designated streets (19.6%) versus street-naming unrelated to the history of streets (80.4%). Then we can further regroup the latter into 5 categories as follows: people (e.g., Vietnamese and French figures), things (e.g., battles, events, organizations, movements etc.), ideologies (e.g., ideas or slogans), geography (e.g., place names), and history (e.g., dynastical titles), (see Table 2).

As for all of the street names in Sài Gòn during the French colonial period (Table 2), the largest number (47%) were named after Frenchmen, whereas their Vietnamese counterparts made up just 3%. Street-naming after people also displayed a specific spatial order, which follows the above-mentioned boulevards and avenues versus common roads. There were 7 boulevards and 1 avenue, and most of

from 1790 to 1801. After recapturing Phú Xuân 富春 from the Tây Sơn regime, Nguyễn Phúc Ánh enthroned himself as the Emperor of Vietnam with the title "Gia Long" 嘉隆. Since then Gia Định lost its role as political center but still prospered as the biggest commercial city of Vietnam.

them were swiftly given the names of contemporary French Prime Ministers, the Governor-General or General of French Indochina or Cochinchina, and one famous missionary in Indochina. For example, *Boulevard Jules Ferry* was named after the Prime Minister of France from 1880 to 1881 and from 1883 to 1885. *Boulevard Paul Doumer* was named after the Governor-General of Indochina from 1897–1902. *Boulevard Bonard* was honored Louis-Adolphe Bonard (1824–1852), the French admiral who served as the first official military governor of Cochinchina.

Table 2. **The Principles of Street-naming in Sài Gòn during the French Period**

Principles			Sum	Percentage (%)
Happening on the spot		Names of immigrants' original places	6	1.7
		Representation of space	59	17.1
		Original village names (past place names)	3	0.9
Not happening on the spot	People	Vietnamese figures	10	2.9
		French figures	164	47.5
		People from other countries	2	0.6
	Things	Battles and events	14	4.1
		Organizations and movements	0	
		Others (e.g., warships and merchant vessels)	3	0.9
	Ideology	Ideas or slogans	4	1.2
	Geography	Place names in Vietnam	3	0.9
		Place names in France	7	2.0
		Places the French colonized	2	0.6
		Place names in other countries	5	1.4
	History	Titles of Vietnamese dynasties	0	
	Others	Numbers and unknown	63	18.3
Total			**347**	**100.00**

On the other hand, 156 roads were given the names of less important persons such as another French missionary in Vietnam, famous French scientists and novelists, and the French colonial officials and soldiers. It also attracted our attention that many French people who were born and grew up in Sài Gòn and who later went to serve in the First World War and then died in Europe had streets named after them: *rte. Pierre*, *rte. Léon Combes*, *rte. Frères Guillerault* et al. Since most of them were considered native to the city, this indicates that the French colonial regime endeavored to promote them as role models for their colonial subjects in Indochina by commemorating those who died in the distant European war. In addition, Vietnamese who worked for the French colonial government or contributed to French colonial business also had streets named after them: *r. de Đỗ Hữu Vị*,[5] *r. de Trương Minh Ký*[6] etc.

The 2nd category are important things from the regime's perspective. Street names such as *rte. Verdun*, *rte. Douaumont*, *rte. Champagne*, *rte. Ky Hoa*,[7] and *rte. Harmand*, which were the names of battlefields where the French had been victorious in Europe and in Indochina, illustrate this point.

The 3rd category is the ideology promoted by the colonial regime. Terms such as *colonial (colonial)*, *république (republic)*, *nationale (national)*, and *impérale (imperial)* were considered important concepts.

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[5] *Đỗ Hữu Vị* 杜有位 was a combat pilot and died for the French army in the First World War. Union Indochina once issued a post stamp in his name. A street in La Faux, Picardie of France still bears his name. See Mathilde Tuyết Trần (2012).

[6] *Trương Minh Ký* 張明記 (1855-1900) was an interpreter for French colonial officials, and a teacher of *Collège des interprètes* and *Collège des administrateurs stagiaires*. In 1889 he was appointed as the interpreter for the delegation of Hue imperial ambassador to France to attend the Magic Circus in Paris.

[7] The battle of Kỳ Hòa on 24 and 25 February of 1861 was an important French victory in Cochinchina. This campaign began as a punitive expedition and ended as a French war of conquest. The war concluded with the establishment of the French colony of Cochinchina, which eventually led to nearly a century of French colonial dominance in Vietnam.

The 4th and 5th categories relate to geography and history. The French colonial government simply brought place names from France and other colonies to celebrate its achievements. Thus we have *rte. Paris*, which is the capital of France, and *r. de Phnom Penh*, which is the capital of Cambodia, part of Indochina, appearing in Sài Gòn City.

Indeed, during this period we cannot find any street names in Vietnamese other than those named after the aforementioned Vietnamese individuals. All the streets in Saigon were named in French, and it is certain that linguistic expressions were used to define the French nation in the urban areas where they exerted their control most effectively.[8]

III. Renaming Streets in the Post-colonial Period, 1955–1975

In the post-colonial period, after the Việt Minh gained control of North Vietnam, the Sài Gòn government is commonly referred to as "South Vietnam", after the Geneva Conference in 1954. The government was replaced by the Republic of Vietnam when Bảo Đại (保大, 1913–1997) was deposed by his Prime Minister Ngô Đình Diệm (吳廷琰, 1901–1963) in 1955. Ngô maintained Sài Gòn as the capital.

After the colonial government collapsed, the new political regime replaced the public symbols of the streets with new ones to assert its political independence. Street-renaming was the main component for the creation of new public symbols (Gill, 2005: 480). The street names in HCM City experienced two rapid changes after decolonization, one in 1955 with 97% changed, and the other in 1976 with 26% renamed. On the other hand, the periods from 1955 to 1975 and 1977 to 1996

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[8] After World War Two, the French established the State of Vietnam under Emperor Bảo Đại in 1950, which lasted until the year of 1954. According to Nguyễn Công Tánh (2007), only one street changed its name, from *Boulevard Lagrandière* to *Boulevard Gia Long*, perhaps because the State of Vietnam was an associated state within the French Union.

saw the addition of new street names, around 33.5% and 20% respectively, as the total number of streets increased.

In 1955, the newly established RVN immediately renamed Sài Gòn's streets. All the street names in Sài Gòn changed from French to Vietnamese. Only one street maintained the name of a Frenchmen, *Albert Calmette*, an immunologist, to commemorate his contribution to a vaccine against tuberculosis. Table 3 shows the principles of street-naming by the RVN.

Table 3.   The Principles of Street-naming under the RVN (1955–1975)

Principles			Sum	Percentage (%)
Happening on the spot		Names of immigrants' original places (people's identities)	1	0.2
		Representation of space	21	4.2
		Original village names (past place names)	32	6.5
		Vietnamese figures	3	0.6
		French figures	0	0
Not happening on the spot	People	Vietnamese figures	381	77.4
		French figures	1	0.2
		People from other countries	5	1
	Things	Battles and events	11	2.2
		Organizations and movements	7	1.4
	Ideology	Ideas or slogans	7	1.4
	Geography	Place names in Vietnam	8	1.6
		Place names in France	0	0
		Places the French colonized	1	0.2
		Names of countries	1	0.2
	History	Titles of Vietnam's dynasties	1	0.2
	Others	Numbers	3	0.6
		Unknown or no names	13	2.6
Total			**496**	**100.00**

If we compare the principles of street-naming in Sài Gòn between the French colonial period and that of the RVN (Tables 2 & 3), a similar pattern for street-naming can be observed. Before the French period, most streets in Vietnam had no official commemorative names, since the Vietnamese feudal regimes did not apply the modern naming system. Therefore, the postcolonial Vietnamese government followed their colonial precedent of street-naming principles, but the contents that expressed national identity changed.

Concerning the commemoration of people, the Vietnamese figures increased rapidly from 3% to 77.4%, whereas the French ones decreased from 47% to 0.2%. As for the spatial order of these street names, at this time the boulevards and avenues extended from the central area to the nearby commercial area, and the number increased to 20 (see Map 2). They were named after Vietnamese legendary heroes, e.g., *boulevard Hùng Vương* 雄王 (Hùng King—title of kings of Văn Lang 文郎 under the Hồng Bàng dynasty*), Boulevard An Dương Vương* 安陽王 (title of the King of Âu Lạc 甌雒), and famous Vietnamese kings, generals, and mandarins. For instance, *Trần Quang Khải* 陳光啓 (1241–1294) was the grand chancellor of the Trần Dynasty and *Trần Quốc Toản* 陳國瓚 (1228–1300) the Supreme Commander of Đại Việt 大越 during the Trần Dynasty. They were the two key commanders of the Đại Việt army in the war of resistance against the Mongolian invasion in the 13th century. *Lê Lợi* 黎利 (1384–1433) was the Emperor of Vietnam and founder of the later Lê Dynasty. He is considered to be the most famous figure in Vietnamese history and one of the greatest heroes. *Nguyễn Hoàng* 阮潢 (1525–1613) was the first of the Nguyễn Lords of Đàng Trong 塘中 (the Interior) [9] of Việt Nam in the 17th century, and it was the Nguyễn Lords who expanded Việt Nam's territory to Sài Gòn. *Hàm Nghi* 咸宜

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[9] According to Li Tana, the term appeared in Alexandre de Rhodes's *Dictionarivm Annamiticvm, Lvsitanvm, et Latinvmope*, published in 1651. This term was likely coined by the southerners in the 1620s (Li, 1998: 12).

(1871–1943) and *Đồng Khánh* 同慶 (1864–1889) were the Emperors of Nguyễn's dynasty from 1884 to 1885 and from 1885 to 1889, respectively. Both were under the French protectorate. Other roads also carried the names of other kings, generals, mandarins, and poet from different dynasties; from the Lý dynasty (1009–1225)*: Lý Chiêu Công Uẩn* 李公蘊, *Lý Chiêu Hoàng* 李昭皇, *Lý Thường Kiệt* 李常傑 etc.; from the Trần dynasty (1226–1400): *Trần Thái Tông* 陳太宗, *Trần Thánh Tông* 陳聖宗, *Trần Nhật Duật* 陳日燏, *Trần Khánh Dư* 陳慶餘 etc.; from the Lê dynasty (1428–1527): *Lê Thánh Tông* 黎聖宗, *Nguyễn Trãi* 阮廌 etc.; from the Nguyễn dynasty (1802–1945): *Gia Long, Minh Mạng* 明命, *Thiệu Trị* 紹治, *Tự Đức* 嗣德, *Lê Văn Duyệt* 黎文悅, *Nguyễn Hữu Cảnh* 阮有鏡 etc. Some roads were named or renamed after scholars or intellectuals who were thought to have made contributions to Vietnamese culture, even though they were considered to have collaborated with the French colonial government, e.g., *Paul Của street, Phạm Quỳnh* 范瓊 *street*,[10] and *Trương Vĩnh Ký* 張永記 *street*. Moreover, *Calmette*, who was French but was thought to have made contributions to the development of Vietnam in the field of health, had his name retained. In addition, the authorities also celebrated people from other countries who were thought to have had a positive influence on Vietnamese society in general. Thus we had Chinese historical figures such as *Khổng Tử* 孔子 (Confucius), *Mạnh Tử* 孟子 (Mencius), *Lão Tử* 老子 (Laozi), and *Trang Tử* 莊子 (Zhuangzi), whose philosophical ideologies were regarded as important to the traditional society of Vietnam. One of streets was named after J. F. Kennedy (1917–1963), who was the 35th President of the United States, from 1961 to 1963, since he supported Ngô Đình

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[10] *Phạm Quỳnh* (1892–1945) was a courtier of the Nguyen Dynasty and a monarchist who supported the adhering to traditional Vietnamese customs in the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. He was considered a pioneer in promoting the use of Vietnamese instead of French words to reason and write theoretically.

Diệm's regime's fight against the *Democratic Republic* of *Vietnam (North Việt Nam)*.
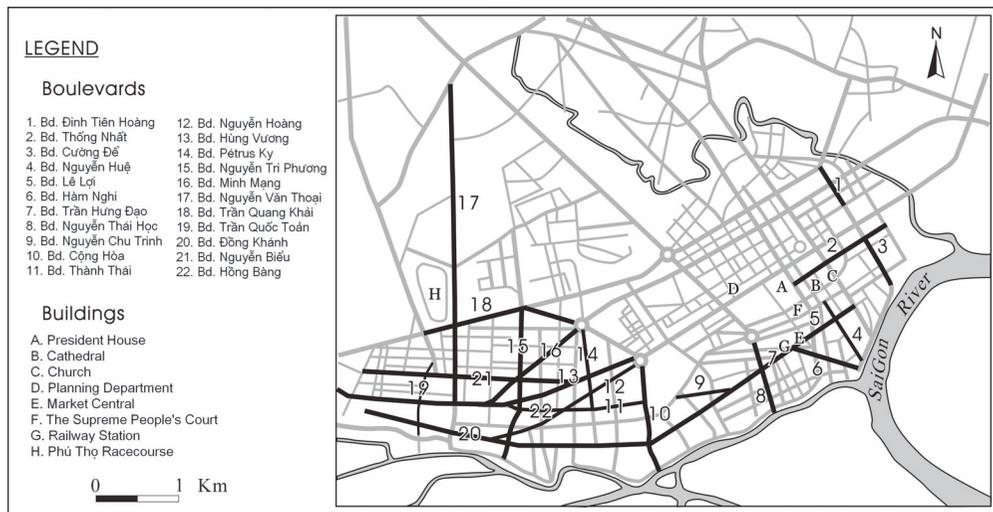
Map 2.   Boulevards in Sài Gòn under the RVN

As for the 2nd category, the RVN authorities also commemorated famous events or battles in Vietnamese history. For instance, *Chương Dương* 章陽 is the name of the battle between Đại Việt and the invading Mongols (Nguyên Mông) in the 13th century, while *Bạch Đằng* 白藤 is the river where most of the important battles took place in the history of Vietnam's struggle against domination by China from the north.

Thirdly, street names also reflected the ideology promoted by the leaders of the RVN. For instance, *Cộng Hòa* 共和 (Republic) was used name the boulevard, and other roads bore the term of *Tự Do* 自由 (Free), *Công Lý* 公理 (Justice) etc.

As for street names derived from geography and history, *Phú Thọ* 富壽 is the capital where the legendary Hùng Kings established the state of Văn Lang. *Hồng Bàng* 鴻龐 is the title of the dynasty which is believed to be the legendary beginning of Vietnamese history.

IV. Street-renaming in 1976: Redefining the Vietnamese National Identity

After the communists took over Sài Gòn on April 30, 1975, Việt Nam turned into a completely communist state, with the South overrun. In 1976, Sài Gòn was officially renamed Hồ Chí Minh City. Meanwhile a lot of streets were renamed by the new authorities in order to both de-commemorate the previous regime and celebrate the new national identity (see Table 4).

Table 4. The Principles of Street-naming in the SRV (1975 and Onwards)

Principles			Sum	Percentage (%)
Happening on the spot		Representation of space	25	4
		Original village names (past place names)	64	10.7
		Vietnamese figures	2	0.3
Not happening on the spot	People	Vietnamese figures	418	68.8
		French figures	4	0.7
		People from other countries	2	0.3
	Things	Battles and events	13	2
		Organizations and movements	10	1.6
	Ideology	Ideas or slogans	25	4
	Geography	Place names in Vietnam	26	4.2
		Names of countries	1	0.2
	Others	Numbers	7	1.2
		Unknown	10	1.6
Total			**607**	**100.00**

If we compare Table 3 with Table 4, although the number of Vietnamese figures in street-naming has increased, the percentage has decreased from 77.4% to 68.8%, whereas that of ideas/slogans and

Vietnamese place names increased both in number and in percentage, from 1.4% to 4% and from 1.6% to 4.2% respectively.

Among all the streets, 26% were renamed. Table 5 shows what kinds of street names had been removed or replaced. Concerning the erased street names, most had previously been named after Vietnamese figures (82%) and ideas or slogans (4.4%). Those renamed streets are mostly Vietnamese figures (89%) and organizations and movements (3.8%). Concerning the new streets, most were named after national or local figures (28%), the names of villages that the streets belonged to (22.5%), ideas and slogans (20%), and place names in Việt Nam (15%).

**Table 5.　Changes of Street Names from the RVN to the SRV**

	Street names being erased (%)	Street names being replaced (%)	Street names being added (%)
Name of immigrant original place (people identity)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Representation of space	4 (3)	3 (2)	5 (4.2)
Name of village that the streets belong to	0 (0)	2 (1.5)	27 (22.5)
Vietnamese figures	111 (82)	117 (89)	34 (28)
People from other country	3 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Battles and events	0 (0)	2 (1.5)	2 (1.6)
Organizations and movements	0 (0)	5 (3.8)	0 (0)
Ideas or slogans	6 (4.4)	0 (0)	24 (20)
Place names in Vietnam	1 (0.7)	2 (1.5)	18 (15)
Names of countries	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Others	8 (6)	0 (0)	10 (8.3)
Total	**135 (100)**	**131 (100)**	**120 (100)**

As for the boulevards and avenues, their total number in 1976 decreased from 22 to 17 (Table 1) because some of them became either merged or downgraded to common roads (see Table 6 and Map 3).[11]

Table 6. The Changing Names of Boulevards under Each Regime

Union of Indochina	RVN	SRV
Jules Ferry	*Thống Nhất* 统一	*Lê Duẩn* 黎筍
Luro	*Cường Để* 彊柢	*Tôn Đức Thắng* 孫德勝
Albert	*Đinh Tiên Hoàng* 丁先皇	
Doumer	*Hàm Nghi* 咸宜	
Charner	*Nguyễn Huệ* 阮惠	
Bonard	*Lê Lợi* 黎利	
Galliéni	*Trần Hưng Đạo* 陳興道	*Trần Hưng Đạo*
	Đồng Khánh 同慶	
Kitchener	*Nguyễn Thái Học* 阮太學	
	Nguyễn Cư Trinh 阮居楨	
	Cộng Hòa 共和	*Nguyễn Văn Cừ* 阮文渠
	Thành Thái 成泰	*An Dương Vương* 安陽王
	Nguyễn Hoàng 阮潢	*Trần Phú* 陳富
	Hùng Vương 雄王	
	Petrus Ký 張永記	
	Nguyễn Tri Phương 阮知方	
	Minh Mạng 明命	*Ngô Gia Tự* 吳家嗣
	Nguyễn Văn Thoại 阮文話	
	Trần Quang Khải 陳光啓	*Ba tháng hai* 二月三日
	Trần Quốc Toản 陳國瓚	
	Nguyễn Biểu 阮表	*Nguyễn Chí Thanh* 阮志清
	Hồng Bàng 鴻龐	
		Điện Biên Phủ 奠邊府

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[11] Map 3 is based on Bản Đồ Thành Phố Sàigòn Vào Năm 1995, Bản đồ du lịch (Tourist Map, Saigon ville in 1995)(n. d.).
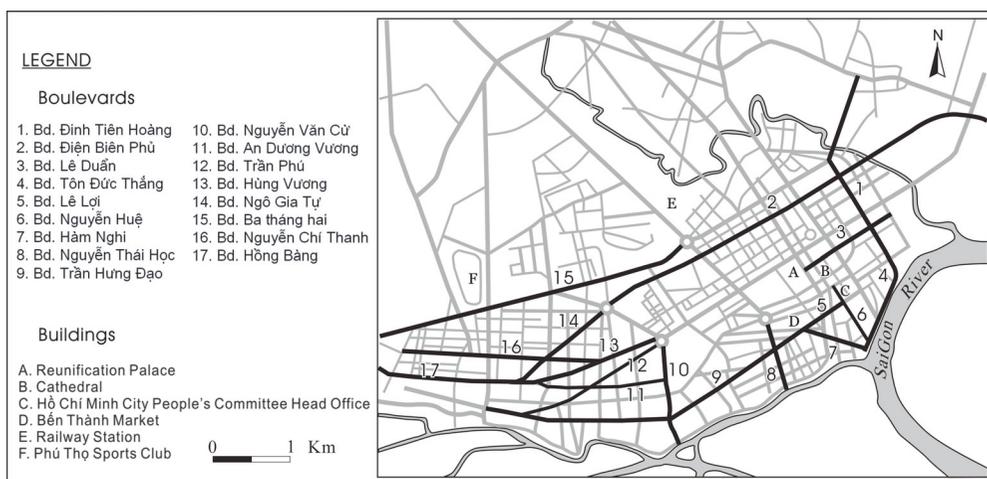
Map 3.   Boulevards and Avenues in Sài Gòn under SRV

Among the 17 boulevards and avenues in the year 1976, 15 were named after people and 2 after events or battles. The number of boulevards commemorating people also decreased from 20 to 15. In the previous stage, most boulevards had been named after Nguyễn Lord, Nguyễn's King or Nguyễn's generals who helped Nguyễn Ánh to fight against Tây Sơn (e.g., Bouleverd Nguyễn Hoàng 阮潢, Đồng Khánh 同慶, Nguyễn Văn Thoại 阮文話 etc.). The new regime renamed them after General Secretaries of the Vietnamese Communist party. Thus we had *Trần Phú* 陳富 (1904–1931), who was the first General Secretary of the Communist party from 1930 to 1931; *Ngô Gia Tự* 吳家嗣 (1908–1935), who was the General Secretary of the Communist party in the South in 1930; *Nguyễn Văn Cừ* 阮文渠 (1912–1941), the General Secretary of the Communist party from 1938 to 1940; *Lê Duẩn* 黎筍 (1907–1986), the General Secretary of the Communist party from 1976 to 1986 etc.

Concerning the battles, events, organizations, and movements, street names given by the previous regime were mostly retained, but new ones were also added. The new regime had two boulevards renamed for the said principle. *Ba tháng hai* (February 3) is the date

when the Vietnamese Communist party was established in 1930, which asserts the leadership of the Communist party over the country. *Điện Biên Phủ* 奠邊府 (1954) is the glorious victory of the Việt Minh communist-nationalist revolutionaries in Indochina, leading to the end of the French colonization in Vietnam as well as the total independence of the Democratic Republic of Việt Nam (DRV) in the North.

Regarding the common roads, the majority of street names with figures being deleted are also those who were affiliated with the Nguyễn dynasty: *Gia Long, Minh Mạng, Thiệu Trị, Tự Đức, Phan Huy Ích* 潘輝益, *Võ Duy Nghi* 武惟儀, *Lê Văn Duyệt, Phan Thanh Giản* 潘清簡 etc., because to the Vietnamese historian in the North (1954–1975) Việt Nam was colonized by the French due to the weakness of the Nguyễn dynasty. The streets with the names of Vietnamese people who collaborated with the French (e.g., *Phạm Quỳnh, Trương Vĩnh Ký* etc.) were also renamed. These street names were replaced by the names of famous martyrs in the Indochina war or Vietnam[12] war: *Huỳnh Khương An* 黃康安 (1912–1941), *Huỳnh Văn Bánh* 黃文掰 (1920–1969), *Lê Thị Riêng* 黎氏蓮 (1925–1968), *Lê Thị Hồng Gấm* 黎氏洪錦 (1951–1970), *Lê Văn Sĩ* 黎文士 (1910–1948), *Võ Thị Sáu* 武氏秀 (1935–1952) etc. Writers, poets, song writers or scientists who were thought to have contributed significantly in the Indochina war or Vietnam war such as *Lê Anh Xuân* 黎英春 (1940–1968) and *Hoàng Văn Thụ* 黃文授 (1909–1944) also had streets named after them. Attention should also be paid to the naming of streets after Frenchmen such as *Louis Pasteur* and *Alexandre de Rhodes*, who contributed either to the founding of bacteriology or to the modern written Vietnamese in Latin script.

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[12] The Vietnam war is a term first used by the U.S. and its allies, and being internationally accepted. Nevertheless, Vietnam coins the war as the resistance against America (*Kháng Chiến Tranh Chống Mỹ Cứu Nước*) or the American war (*Chiến tranh Mỹ*).

Streets named after ideas or slogans promoted by the previous regime were mostly deleted: *Dân tiến* 民主進步 (Progressive democracy), *Cộng hòa* 共和 (Republic) and *Liên Minh* 聯盟 (Alliance), while some were retained, such as *Công lý* 公理 (Justice) and *Tự Do* 自由 (Freedom). The boulevard named after *Thống Nhất* 統一 (Unification) was also changed to *Lê Duẩn*, but the term *Thống Nhất* was moved to another new street. As mentioned above, the number of street names in this category increased from 7 to 25. A lot of new ideologies such as *Cách mạng* 革命 (Revolution), *Thành Công* 成功 (Success), *Chiến thắng* 戰勝 (Victory), *Giải phóng* 解放 (Liberation), *Độc Lập* 獨立 (Independence), *Dân chủ* 民主 (Democracy), *Đoàn kết* 團結 (Unity), *Chí công* 志公 (public-spiritedness) and *Tái Thiết* 再設 (Reconstruction) were added to the street names. These terms expressed the great achievements of the SRV under the leadership of the Communist party and were proclaimed as the standards of socialism.

New street named after battles and events were affiliated with victories or important events recognized by the SRV. Examples are *Cách Mạng Tháng Tám* (August Revolution) in 1945, meaning the end of the Vietnamese feudal regime, resulting in the birth of the DRV, and *Xô Viết Nghệ Tĩnh* (Nghệ Tĩnh Soviet, 1930-1931), implying the first anti-French movement under the leadership of the Communist party. *Hai sáu tháng ba* (March 26th) commemorates the date when the Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union, the largest socio-political organization of Vietnamese youth led by the Communist Party, was established.

There have been no street names with the titles of Vietnamese dynasties after 1975. However, the number of Vietnamese place-names has increased significantly from 8 to 26. Seven street names of the RVN were retained. Among the newly added street names, more than half were from the North. Most of them imply a

landscape filled with significant historical meaning from the North of Việt Nam. For example, *Ba Vì* 巴維 are the mountains in Hòa Bình 和平 which are regarded as the ancestral mountains of the Vietnamese. *Thái Bình* 太平 is the province which reached its production peak of rice yield (5 ton/ha/year) in 1966 under Socialist-building in the North of Việt Nam.

In short, the SRV erased those promoted by the RVN and honored those which were associated with the communists and reunification (Table 7). However, we should note that many of the added street names are simply for the purpose of identification in order to reflect the development and expansion of the city. For instance, Table 5 shows that 22.5% of newly developed streets were named after villages after they had been incorporated into the city.

Table 7.　Examples of Street Name Change after 1976

	Street names being deleted	*Street names being added*
Vietnamese figures	*1. Nguyễn lords and Nguyễn kings* *2. Nguyễn's generals who helped Nguyễn Ánh to fight against Tây Sơn* *3. The famous generals/mandarins of the Nguyễn dynasty* *4. Vietnamese who collaborated with the French*	*1. General Secretaries of the Communist party* *2. Famous martyrs in the Indochina war and Vietnam war* *3. Writers, poets, song writers, and scientists who had made contributions in the Indochina war or Vietnam war*
Ideas or Slogans	*Dân tiến (Democracy and progression), Công lý (Justice), Cộng hòa (Republic)*	*Cách mạng (Revolution), Chiến thắng (Victory), Giải phóng (Liberation)*
Battles and Events		*1. Date that Việt Nam communist party or its organizations were established* *2. Battles/events in fight against either French or American*
Place names in Vietnam	*Bắc Việt (The North of Việt Nam)*	*Famous place names in the North of Việt Nam*

V. Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the naming and renaming of streets by the colonial and post-colonial regimes to interpret the competing national identities promoted by each.

Street names were something of a modern Western innovation (Azaryahu, 2001: 30), and in most cases are one aspect of what scholars define as official nationalism, the governmental policy of imposing a national sentiment on its population (Anderson, 2006: 101). The French brought in the practice of street-naming after they set up the colonial government in Sài Gòn. The majority of streets were named after contemporary things that connected the French and Sài Gòn. Only 0.5% of the streets were named after the titles of Vietnamese dynasties. Street names are also associated with the areas where the French government was colonizing. Street-names thus were organized to illustrate the idea of the nation/colony-building project of the French.

The RVN followed by erasing most of the "colonial" street names and gave Vietnamese names to streets, which signified a complete break from the colonial past and the beginning of a new nation-building project. Later, when the SRV took over Sài Gòn, the new government used a similar strategy by de-commemorating the symbols of the previous regime.

Since the two post-colonial regimes shared similar anti-colonial historical memories, they celebrated many of the same things in street-naming. 99% of street names were changed when the RVN took over the French colonial regime (1955) but only 26% street names were changed when the SRV later took power. However, it is important to note that the subsequent post-colonial Vietnamese regimes basically followed the street-naming principles practiced by the French, by naming streets after people, battles, events, organizations, movements, and ideologies.

Although the principle of street-naming after people is quite popular, the SRV did not follow most of the socialist countries in East Europe, which named streets after international communist leaders or prominent figures from the USSR such as *Vladimir Ilyici Lenin* and *Iosif Visarionocivic Stalin* in Bucharest and Romania (Light, Nicolae & Suditu, 2002). It is surprising to see that no such names existed in HCM City after 1975. This suggests that the SRV adopted a nation-building strategy by placing more stress on its own land, people and the past rather than on foreign things.

Furthermore, if we look at the naming of boulevards, we can clearly see what kind of political ideology each regime wanted to propagandize. Most under the French colonial regime were named after French political leaders and were scattered around the political center. As for the two post-colonial regimes, most of the boulevards named by the RVN were after the kings, mandarins or generals of the Nguyễn dynasty. It is evident that the RVN used the strategy of highlighting the Nguyễn dynasty, which was considered the first Vietnamese dynasty in the southern part of Việt Nam, to symbolically legitimatize the RVN in the South. However, under the subsequent Socialist regime, most of the names associated with the Nguyễn dynasty were renamed after the communist party leaders. Thus, while we have the RVN, whose strategy was to employ the previous dynastic tradition to convey the sense of historical continuity for the purpose of legitimizing its regime, the subsequent SRV changed this strategy by using the same pattern as French Indochina had done, by asserting political leadership as the central idea.

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競逐的國族認同：
越南胡志明（西貢）市的街道名變遷

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摘要

　　本文藉由法屬時期至獨立後的越南第一大都市胡志明（西貢）市街道命名變遷，討論不同政權的國族理念。在法國人建立殖民政權前，大多數的越南街道並無正式名稱，西貢是第一個由法國人以現代街道命名體系命名的越南都市；法國人將法蘭西認同烙印於西貢的街道名。越南獨立後，舊南越政府（越南共和國）與統一後的越南政府（越南社會主義共和國）皆追隨法屬時期以人名為主、事物與口號為輔的街道命名方式，闡述其越南國族認同。先後兩個統治西貢的越南政府，雖然都藉由歷史人物等來強調越南的獨立與國族認同，但其內涵有些小差異；從街道命名可見南越政府企圖藉由阮朝人物來強調其接續前朝政權的正統性，而統一後的社會主義政權雖不走前東歐共產國家的國際路線，卻以類同於法屬時期的當代政治人物方式來突顯其國族認同。

關鍵詞：胡志明市、西貢、街道命名、國族認同、地名學