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Confucian Literati and Long-run Development in Northern

## Vietnam

## **ABSTRACT**

Following Max Weber's thesis, studies have suggested that Confucianism could impede economic growth despite its positive effects. In this paper, we revisit the impact of Confucianism on long-run development in a less explored context – northern Vietnam. Using the variation in Confucian literati across 217 historical districts between the Primitive Le and Nguyen dynasties (1426 CE - 1919 CE), we find that districts with greater exposure to Confucianism have experienced better economic outcomes over the past century. The result is robust to controlling for a battery of confounders and using the distance to exogenously located hermit scholars as an instrument. We show that the impact of Confucianism can be attributed to the persistence of a culture of respect for education and norms of collective action, which facilitated human and social capital accumulation, public goods provision, and economic transition.



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