

Korean - Vietnamese Comparative Literary Research in Republic of Korea over Past 30 Years and Prospects

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Abstract: Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research works started in the Republic of Korea (henceforth referred to as ROK) after diplomatic ties were established between ROK and Vietnam in 1992. Thus, this academic discipline has been carried out for a long time, nearly 30 years, and it is, therefore, necessary to review the achievements gained in this field of research. Through statistical and analytical methods referred to in this paper, the author summarises all relevant documents that are available in ROK, including: written books on, and translated versions of, Vietnamese literature; doctoral dissertations, and master's theses on Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research; and papers written on this topic which have been published in academic journals. Based on this data, research trends, research topics, and content have been analysed and consequently, some recommendations on Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research in ROK have been raised for the future.

Keywords: Korean - Vietnamese comparative literature, Vietnamese literature, Korean literature, translation of Vietnamese literary works, Vietnamese literary research.

Subject classification: Literature

1. Introduction

Since formal diplomatic relations were established between ROK and Vietnam nearly 30 years ago, exchange activities have been carried out vigorously in many areas, such as in economic, political, and cultural sectors, including translation of works and Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research. In particular, over the past few years a large number of books and translated versions of Vietnamese literature, as well as many research studies and dissertations have been published. This demonstrates the sterling efforts made to introduce Vietnamese literature into ROK. Aiming to find an answer to the question: "How has Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research been carried out over the past 30 years and what should be done about it in the coming time?", this paper focuses on

three main issues: *firstly*, the prospects of, and the need for, Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research; *secondly*, the position of Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research in ROK; and *lastly*, recommendations for Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research and the problems that need to be addressed in the future.

2. Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research: Possibility and necessity

First of all, Vietnam and ROK are regionally close to each other, and due to Vietnam being a border country with, and ROK's close proximity to China, both nations have been greatly influenced by the Han culture throughout history; consequently, they possess many similarities. However, the two countries have their own inherent cultural and socio-political characteristics, resulting in particular features which are clearly evident in their literary traditions. This is the first important factor that can be used to compare their literary works.

Next, we have to take into account the influence of Han culture on Vietnam and the Korean nation. The Korean Peninsula used to be formed of three ancient kingdoms: Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla. During this period, significant exchange activities were carried out with the feudal dynasties in China, according to "History of Three Kingdoms" (*Samguk sagi*) (Busik Gim, 2017, pp.102-108). During this period, tributes were often paid to China and children were sent there during the Han and Tang Dynasties to study Confucian knowledge, receive edicts on court organisation, or to be instructed in Han script in order to use it as the official script of the three kingdoms. Such exchange activities and the influence of Han culture lasted a long time until Korea's late Joseon Dynasty. Thus, literary works were gradually written in Han script and those works that are available today were written during Korea's medieval period.

Regarding the influence of Han culture on Vietnam, according to "Complete Annals of Dai Viet" (*Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*) the Han Dynasty dominated Vietnam from 110 BC (the year of *Tân Mùi*) and Shi-tai was appointed to be the Grand Administrator of nine districts. Jiaozhi was dominated by Chinese dynasties over thousands of years until the Ly Dynasty secured national independence (Ngo Si Lien, 2013, p.69). Chinese script was initially adopted in Vietnam after military general Shi Xie was appointed as the Administrator of Jiaozhi in AD 187. Throughout the feudal periods, Chinese script was considered the official script for writing historical documents and literary works in Vietnam, where Confucian education was also adopted. The government apparatus replicated the model applied by the feudal dynasties in China. The Temple of Literature, in Hanoi, was built in 1070 and the first Confucian court examinations were held in 1075. The royal court structure in Vietnam was influenced greatly by China's. Thus, Vietnamese feudal dynasties followed the Chinese model of governance and applied Confucian thought to rule the country, until the last feudal dynasty - the Nguyen Dynasty.

While studying and comparing the literary works of ROK and Vietnam, it is necessary to mention the influence Buddhism had on culture and literature in both countries.

Buddhism was introduced into the Korean Peninsula during the Three Kingdoms period. First, Shun-tao, a Chinese monk, moved from northern China to the ancient Korean kingdom of Ko-Guryo in AD 372. Then, monk Malananda came from Eastern Jin to Paekche to disseminate Buddhism. In the mid-15th century, Buddhism was introduced into Silla (김부식, 2014, p.510). Once Buddhism had spread to the Korean Peninsula, it played an important role in the spiritual life of local people and created a Buddhist-based culture that remains today.

Meanwhile, Buddhism was introduced into Vietnam in the first years of the Common Era (CE) brought via maritime routes from India and overland from China. Thus, two schools of Buddhism - Theravada (from India) and Mahayana (from China) - were introduced into Vietnam. The majority of followers practice the Mahayana tradition (Ngo Dai Dong, 2012, p.46) which is also the dominant Buddhist branch in Northeast Asian countries such as Japan and ROK. Throughout almost the entire period of national independence, sovereignty, and unity (from AD 905 to 1527), Buddhism was regarded as the national religion in Vietnam (Nguyen Khac Thuan, 2012, p.111) and its heyday was from the 10th to the 15th centuries. As the feudal dynasties developed, many famous and influential Buddhist monks helped formulate the political thoughts of prominent Vietnamese people. These monks included: Great Monk Do Phap Thuan and Great Monk Ngo Chan Luu, who played significant roles in helping King Dinh Tien Hoang and King Le Dai Hanh build the country; Great Monk Van Hanh encouraged King Le Dai Hanh to rise against and defeat the Song invaders in AD 981 and put Ly Cong Uan (King Ly Thai To) on the throne in 1009; Zen Master Man Giac (Ly Truong) was often consulted by King Ly Nhan Tong about national affairs; Zen Master Khong Lo and other monks. These monks not only influenced political life and disseminated Buddhist teachings, but they also composed literary works. The papers featured in the book titled “Collection of Outstanding Figures of Zen Garden” (*Thiền uyển tập anh*) show particular literary traits of the Ly and Tran Dynasties. This anthology can also be used to compare the contemporary books of poems written by Buddhist monks from the Korean Peninsula.

Moreover, in both ROK and Vietnam, Taoism and local religions such as Dao Mau (the worship of Mother Goddesses) in Vietnam, and Shamanism in ROK have also strongly influenced spiritual and cultural life.

Literary works written in Nom script in Vietnam and those written in Hangeul script in ROK can be used for comparing the literature between the two countries. Nom script was created during the 10th to 12th centuries. It gradually developed over the following five centuries and the 18th and 19th centuries were the glory days of literary works written in this script (Nguyen Van Hong, 2008, pp.835-839). Trying to extricate Vietnam from Chinese influence and heighten national self-respect, Vietnamese Confucian scholars created Nom script based on the radicals that make up Chinese characters. Many works of this literary movement were written in the sin-eight word distich metre, which is a traditional form of poetry in Vietnam, and focused on various themes deeply reflecting the socio-cultural viewpoints of the Vietnamese people. A major obstacle for ROK researchers

is that these literary works were written in Nom script. However, they can be compared with texts written in Hangul script, which was created by King Sejong in the 15th century; this is now the official writing system of ROK. The above-mentioned examples show the possibility of comparing literary works of ROK and Vietnam using historical, cultural, religious methods, and written script characteristics.

In the following part of this paper, the author explains why it is necessary to carry out literary comparative research between ROK and Vietnam. Jo Dong-il, a researcher in ROK wrote: “As things have changed by now, the opinions on traditional literary research should be changed as well. At present, it is not appropriate for researchers to opine thoughts that the literature of their own country is pre-eminent and disregard the literature of other countries. Now is not the time to argue whether it was good or bad to adopt Chinese characters in the past, but it is necessary to realise the position of Korean literature and its relationship with others in the region, or more broadly, in the world, so as to correctly identify its position. At the same time, research methods drawn from the Korean literary studies must be verified before applying them to the studies of Southeast Asian literature as well as world literature, in order to prove their appropriateness and contribution to the world literary research” (조동일, 1999, pp.13-24). In the context of the above-mentioned research feasibility, it is essential to carry out comparative research on Vietnamese and Korean literature.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the significance and effects of comparative literary research, researchers would benefit by widening the sphere of study and improving methodology. This would enable them to carry out more in-depth studies of the literature in their own countries as well as broaden their vision with regard to the literary traditions of other nations. Comparative literary research helps to highlight the relationship between literary and cultural phenomena. Viewing a country’s literature in a global context means researchers can make comparisons between two or more cultural systems. They can recognise the literary connections between different countries and how literature relates to other spheres. In regard to the thinking approach, comparative literary research suggests the pluralistic approach, which means acknowledging and accepting literary diversity (Ho A Man, 2011, pp.17-22). Comparative literary research helps people develop a more profound insight into the literature in their own country as well as that of other nations. As such studies provide viewpoints and opinions of other countries, researchers can realise and re-evaluate the literature of their own nations, while learning more about literary history and theories of other countries and thereby discover universal literary theories.

At present, the number of multicultural families in ROK is increasing; children from multicultural backgrounds account for the largest proportion of the total number of school children in the country. According to data from December 2019 provided by the ROK General Statistics Office, in 2018, 122,212 children came from multicultural families in the country, with Korean - Vietnamese families making up the largest proportion (35,568 children representing 29.1%) (Statistics Korea, 2019, p.146). In order to provide training in the Vietnamese language, culture, and literature, it is really important to conduct comparative

literary research to compile appropriate documents and books needed for teaching. Finally, comparative literary research promotes literary, cultural, and historical relations and exchange between the two countries, and in broader terms, strengthens relationships in the Sinosphere which also includes China and Japan.

3. Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research in Republic of Korea

This section focuses on analysing: (i) the current state of play in the fields of translation and publication of Vietnamese literary works in ROK, and (ii) Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research in ROK from 1990 to the present day. Based on data collected by the author¹, research works have been classified by type and decade into the following groups: 1) Vietnamese literature-related publications, including both written books and translated versions; 2) dissertations on the comparison of literary works between ROK and Vietnam, and 3) research papers on comparison of literary works between ROK and Vietnam which have been published in academic journals in ROK.

3.1. Vietnamese literature-related publications

From 1990 to 1999, there were just four books on Vietnamese literature written by Jo Dong-il, including *Introduction of the Third World Literature* (1991); *Nguyen Trai: Vietnamese Great Poet* (1992); *Forms and Changes of Narrative Poems Handed Down in East Asia* (1997); and *Northeast Asian Literature: General and Particular Features* (1999). Of these four, the second one, published in 1992, is a translated version by Jo Dong-il and Ji Jun-mo; the remaining three books focus on comparative literature and include the comparison of Korean literature with that of other countries in the regional system of reference, including Vietnam.

During the first decade after diplomatic relations between ROK and Vietnam were established, very few books on Vietnamese literature were published in ROK. However, from 2000 to 2009, seven books on Vietnamese literature were released in ROK, including the following six versions translated from Vietnamese to Korean: (i) “Selection of Wondrous Tales in Linh Nam” (*Linh Nam chích quái liệt truyện*) translated by Park Hy-byeong with the title “Mythologies and Legends in Vietnam” (2000); (ii) “Selection of Strange Tales” (*Truyện kỳ mạn lục*) also translated by Park Hy-byeong with the title “Miraculous Tales in Vietnam”; (iii) “Lament of the Soldier's Wife” (*Chinh phụ ngâm khúc*) translated by Bae Yang-soo (2003); (iv) “The Tale of Kieu” (*Truyện Kiều*) translated by Ahn Kyung-

¹ In this paper, the author just focuses on research papers on comparative literature without paying attention to research papers on Vietnamese literature or Vietnamese literary works on websites such as *naver.com*, or *daum.net*, academic journals such as KISS, DBPIA, or EARTICLE, as well as the e-libraries of the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, and the Korea University.

hwan (2004); (v) an alternative version of “The Tale of Kieu” translated by Choi Kyu-muk with the title “The Tale of Thuy Kieu” (2004); and (vi) “Vietnamese Folk Verses” (*Ca dao Việt Nam*) translated by Nguyen Ngoc Que and Jo Kyu-ik (2009). Meanwhile, the seventh and only book on the topic of comparative literature is titled “ROK-Vietnam Comparative Research on Fairy Tales” written by Jeon Hye-kyung (2006). Two versions of “The Tale of Kieu” were translated by two academics, published in 2004, with Ahn Kyung-hwan’s adaptation reprinted in 2015. Most of the books mentioned above were translated from Vietnamese publications that had been written in Chinese or Nom scripts; topics focused on various genres such as legends, fairy tales, folk verses and stories; one of the books focused on the comparison of the legends between the two countries. This shows that ROK researchers had started to pay more attention to Vietnamese literature. However, initial attention was given to those publications written in Chinese or Nom scripts in Vietnam, and it is clear that ROK researchers translated few typical works of Vietnamese literature.

From 2010 to 2020, publications relating to Vietnamese literature were released in ROK, including: (i) “Understanding of Vietnamese Literature” written by Choi Kwi-Muk (2010); three books of Vietnamese folk tales translated into Korean by Jeon Hyu-kyung such as (ii) “Folk Tales on Animals in Vietnam” (2012), (iii) “Folk Tales on Plants in Vietnam” (2013), and (iv) “Folk Tales on Heroes in Vietnam” (2013); (v) “Lac Long Quan and a Hundred of Children” translated by Nguyen Bich Ngoc (2012); (vi) “A Cricket’s Adventure” translated by Luu Thi Sinh (2013); (vii) and (viii) “Vietnamese Legends”, volumes 1 and 2, published by Smartmall (2013); (ix) “Vietnamese Mythology: Descendants of the Dragon” written by Im Jin-ho (2014); (x) “Luc Van Tien” translated by Jeon Hye-kyung (2017); (xi) “The Door to Literature” written by Choi Kwi-muk (2017); (xii) “Walking on the Cultural Road of Vietnam” written by Park Na-jong (2017); (xiii) “Vietnamese Cultural Interesting Features” written by Bae Yang-soo (2018); and (xiv), “Viet Nation: What We Need to Know” written by Jeon Hye-kyung (2018).

During this period, apart from translated versions, ROK researchers started publishing more books relating to Vietnamese literature. It shows the success of efforts invested in systematising, advertising, and introducing Vietnamese literary works to the country’s researchers as well as its readers. In addition to the support given to Korean - Vietnamese multicultural families, some books featuring folk tales have been translated by Nguyen Bich Ngoc and Sart Mal aimed at the target audience of Korean - Vietnamese children in ROK. However, since the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations, the amount of Vietnamese literature-related books available in ROK over the past nearly 30 years, including translated versions and written ones, remains quite modest.

3.2. Dissertations on the comparison of literary works between ROK and Vietnam

Regarding the period from 1990 to 1999, two doctoral dissertations and one master’s thesis were written on the comparison of literary works between ROK and Vietnam. In 1990, Choi Kwang-park wrote his doctoral dissertation “Comparative Research on Legendary

Novels in ROK, China, and Vietnam” at the University of Sungkyunkwan (SKKU). Jeon Hye-kyung’s master’s thesis on “Comparative Research on Fairy Tales in Vietnam and ROK” was written in 1991 followed by her doctoral dissertation “Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese Legendary Novels: Comparative Research” in 1994, Soongsil University.

Meanwhile, from 2000 to 2009, Nguyen Ngoc Que wrote his master’s thesis “Comparison of Narrative Styles on Women’s Sufferings Reflected in *Tale of Kieu* in Vietnam and *Tale of Chunhyang* in ROK” in 2009 at Soongsil University.

From 2010 to 2020, four master’s theses and three doctoral dissertations relating to Korean - Vietnamese comparative literature were published, including: (i) Lee Hyeon-jeong’s master’s thesis “Comparison of Filial Piety shown in Two Tales: *Tale of Shim Chong* in ROK and *Tale of Thoai Khanh Chau Tuan* in Vietnam” (2013) at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies; (ii) Bui Thi An’s master’s thesis “Comparison of Fairy Tales in ROK and Vietnam” (2017) at Busan University of Foreign Studies; (iii) Nguyen Ngoc Que’s doctoral dissertation “Comparison between Pham Thai’s Story *Comb and Mirror* and Kim Seo-heang’s *Samhan Seupyu*” (2018) at Korea University; (iv) Ngo Thi Phuong Anh’s master’s thesis “Tiger-related Cultural Comparative Research in ROK and Vietnam” (2019) at Busan University of Foreign Studies; and (v) Tran Thi Bich Phuong’s doctoral dissertation “Research on Teaching the *Tale of Chunhyang* to Korean Language Learners, Focusing on Comparison with the *Tale of Kieu*” (2019) at Seoul National University. (vi) In 2020, Ha Dong-hwan wrote his master’s thesis “Comparative Research on the Description of Faithful Characters in the *Tale of Chunhyang* and the *Tale of Luc Van Tien*” at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, and (vii) Kim Hye-sun wrote her doctoral dissertation “Comparing the *Tale of Kieu* in Vietnam with the *Tale of Jin, Yun and Qiao* in China” at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies.

Thus a total of 11 master’s theses and doctoral dissertations relating to Vietnamese literature have been issued in South Korea over the past 30 years, all focused on Korean - Vietnamese comparative literature. While very few dissertations had been written during the first two decades since bilateral relations were established, over the past 10 years there has been a slight increase in the number of researchers who pay attention to Korean - Vietnamese comparative literature.

Of the above-mentioned dissertations, two make comparisons between folk tales; and five relate to Vietnamese literary works written in Nom script. The Vietnamese compositions that have been used to make comparisons are those which had been translated from Vietnamese to Korean and published in South Korea.

3.3. Research papers on the comparison of literary works between ROK and Vietnam

From 1990 to 1999, only one paper was published in an academic journal. This was Jeon Hye-kyung’s paper “Comparative Research on Fairy Tales in Vietnam and ROK” featured in the *Literature Review* at Soongsil University (1998). In the second decade the

years 2000 to 2009, the number of such papers increased to ten, five of which were written by Jeon Hye-kyung and published in various academic journals such as the *Southeast Asian Studies Review* (2001) and several academic publications in Vietnam (2002, 2004, 2007, and 2009). Her papers focused mainly on the comparison of fairy tales and legends between ROK and Vietnam, such as: “Comparison of Korean Tale, in Which A Woodsman Was Turned into A Hen, with Story of Chicken in Vietnam” (2001); “Surveying Fundamental Consciousness of Korean and Vietnamese People by Comparing Legendary Tales of Animals” (2002); “Comparative Research on Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese Legendary Novels” (2004); “Comparative Research on Korean and Vietnamese Folk Tales, Based on Story of Mosquito and Story of Cow” (2006); and “Research on Korean and Vietnamese Consciousness by Comparing Story of *Kongjyu Patjyu* and Story of *Tam and Cam*” (2009). The remaining research papers include: Kang Ha-na’s “Comparative Research on Realist Writers in Vietnam and South Korea in Early 20th Century” (2001) published in the *Review of Vietnamese Studies*; Park Yeon-kwan’s “Comparative Research on Story of *Kongjyu Patjyu* and Story of *Tam and Cam*” (2002) and “Comparison of Tale of Woodsman and A Fairy and Story of *A Chuc (Vega) and Chang Nguu (Altair)*” (2005) published in the *Review of Vietnamese Studies*; Jeong Yu-jin’s “Women and Love in Legendary Tales in South Korea, China, and Vietnam” (2002) published in the *Review of Women’s Literature Studies*; and, Yoon Ju-pil’s “Comparative Research on Story of *Chaste Rat* in Vietnam and Story of *Onggojip* in South Korea” (2006) published in the *Review of Legendary Novel Studies*.

Nine research papers were published from 2010 to 2020, including: (i) “Research on Ethnic Characteristics in Korean and Vietnamese Folk Tales, Aimed to Get Understanding of Multi-cultural Society” (2010); (ii) “Research on Folk Stories about Species of Bird in South Korea and Vietnam” (2015) published by Jeon Hye-kyung and Kim Gun-tae in the *World Comparative Literature Journal*; (iii) “Comparative Research on Modernisation of Literature in Early 20th Century” (2012) published by Nguyen Thi Thanh Xuan in the *Review of Vietnamese Studies*; (iv) “Comparison of Fairy Tales in Northeast Asia for Korean Language Training: Based on Fairy Tales in South Korea, Vietnam, and Thailand” (2017) published by Ha Eun-ha in the *Review of Humanities Studies*; (v) “Cultural Communication and Understanding in Multi-cultural Families on Basis of Fairy Tales in South Korea, China, and Vietnam” (2018) published by Yang Min-jeong in the *Review of Korean Folk Story Studies*; (vi) “Comparing the Ancient Story *Thoi Khanh Chau Tuan* with the Story *Thoi Khanh Chau Tuan* in Verse and Nom Script” (2018) published by Lee Hyeon-jeong in the *Review of Vietnamese Studies*; (vii) “Research on Significance and Value of Education of Korean Culture and Language by Comparing the Literature in South Korea, Vietnam, and Uzbekistan” (2019) published by Lee Ga-won in the *Korean Review of Art Criticism*; and (viii) “Comparing Park Thae-won’s *Choenbeonpunggyeong* and To Hoai’s *Foreign Land*” (2019), published by Kang Ha-na in the *Review of Vietnamese Studies*.

Based on the above descriptions, one can arrive at the following conclusions: in the first period, very few research papers on Korean - Vietnamese comparative literature existed, but the number gradually increased during the subsequent 10 years. The vast majority of

these research papers, (15 out of 20) focused on comparing fairy tales between the countries and this reveals an imbalance in comparative research between different literary genres; it is also necessary to study other literary categories, not only fairy tales. Regarding the Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary researchers themselves, they are divided into four main groups, as follows:

The first group consists of those who graduated from the faculties of Vietnamese language or Vietnamese studies and became interested in Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research. Proficient in the Vietnamese language, they did their master's or doctoral dissertations in Vietnam or ROK, researching the comparison of literary works between the two countries. The researchers typically include Jeon Hye-kyung, Park Yeon-gwan, Bae Yang-soo, and Kang Ha-na. Being very skilled in Vietnamese, they are able to study the original versions of Vietnamese literary works. Taking advantage of their capabilities, they often work as lecturers in Vietnamese language or Vietnamese literature at the faculties of Vietnamese language or Vietnamese studies in ROK. They also translate typical Vietnamese literary works into Korean for a Korean readership. Hence, they have played a leading role in Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research, gaining notable achievements. They have carried out meticulous and precise research, laying foundations for subsequent researchers. The second group consists of those who graduated from the faculties of literary studies in ROK, not Vietnamese language-related ones. They have the advantage of their native knowledge of Korean literature. Some of them are also proficient in Chinese characters, so it is easy for them to access Vietnamese literary works written in Chinese script. Two particularly notable researchers to mention here are Jo-Dong-il and Choi Kyu-muk. Regarding documents not written in Chinese characters, researchers often focus on texts/papers written, for example, by foreign researchers in French or Japanese. Unfortunately, they rarely study documents written in Vietnamese by Vietnamese researchers. Reference to documents written by foreign researchers provides an objective view, but at the same time, it can lead to some biased opinions in appreciating and evaluating Vietnamese literary works.

While reading through research studies written by researchers in this group, the author found typing mistakes in citations taken from the original documents, although the research itself had been carried out very meticulously and methodically. These errors were probably made by the researchers themselves while citing texts from the reference material, or by the authors of the actual reference documents.

The third group consists of a handful of Vietnamese researchers who came to ROK for study once bilateral relations between the two countries had improved. Most of the Korean - Vietnamese comparative literature researchers are, or will become, lecturers at the faculties of Korean language or Korean studies based in Vietnam, and their master's theses or doctoral dissertations are mainly written in Korean. While these researchers are skilled in reading and understanding documents written in Korean, a weakness is their limited knowledge of Korean literature, as they did not graduate from faculties of Korean literature. It is also hard for them to comprehend literary works written in Chinese or Nom

scripts. Regarding competency in the Korean language, the Vietnamese researchers cannot compare with their Korean counterparts when it comes to writing papers or deciphering ancient documents which contain characters making up Chinese or ancient Hangul scripts. After graduating from university in ROK, they return to Vietnam to work as lecturers, but unfortunately, they stop publishing research papers in ROK. It would be good for such researchers to attend literature-related conferences held in ROK and Vietnam in the future after they have spent time carrying out research, and also when the exchange of literary research between the two countries has been promoted more.

The fourth group consists of Vietnamese literary researchers whose papers focus on Vietnamese literature and which have been published in academic journals in ROK. Their chosen topics often introduce or compare typical Vietnamese literary works with Korean texts translated into Vietnamese. These researchers are often university lecturers in literature with limited or no knowledge of the Korean language; however, they may know how to read and decipher Chinese characters and they are interested in Korean literature. Some of them have been invited to lecture at Vietnamese language faculties of universities in ROK while others have participated in the conference on Korean - Vietnamese comparative literature and consequently their discourses were published in academic journals in ROK. Papers written by researchers in this group are in Vietnamese with their abstracts translated into Korean or English. Hence, ROK researchers with no knowledge of Vietnamese have difficulty reading and understanding such studies. After reviewing the content, the author realises these papers do not provide in-depth research findings but mainly just give some initial comparative comments. Due to the Vietnamese researchers' lack of proficiency in the Korean language and probably the paucity of information on literary works in ROK, the papers show an imbalance when comparing literary works between the two countries and they focus more on analysing and commenting on the Vietnamese literary works.

4. Solutions for Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research

As mentioned in the above section, the author describes the development of Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research and gives some preliminary comments on groups of researchers, pointing out their specific advantages and disadvantages as well as the genres of their work. Meanwhile, two questions need to be addressed: "What will Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research be like in future?" and "What needs to be resolved in order to boost the development of this research?"

Firstly, the biggest hurdle for comparative literary researchers is how to access and decipher original documents, including Korean literature (written in Chinese and Hangul scripts) and Vietnamese literature (written in Chinese and Nom scripts, or *Quốc ngữ* - Vietnam's modern day writing system). To overcome this challenge, cooperation is needed in designing appropriate training methods, providing research funding, carry out translations,

and co-host international conferences on comparative literary research between ROK and Vietnam as well as with other countries in the region.

It is essential to train more ROK comparative literary researchers, who come from faculties of Vietnamese language or Vietnamese studies, and their Vietnamese counterparts working in faculties of Korean language or Korean studies in order to take full advantage of their language proficiency. In addition to writing research papers on comparative literature, these academics should also be involved in translating original literary works which would give readers in both countries access to much higher-quality translated versions. In addition to the original literary works, various other research documents should also be translated which will then build up a source of material for literary researchers who do not come from Vietnamese or Korean training faculties.

Owing to the ROK government's policy on encouraging the dissemination of Korean literature and culture to other countries and the efforts made by the Literature Translation Institute of Korea (LTI Korea), many Korean literary works have been translated and published in Vietnam in recent years. However, the number of Vietnamese literary works translated into Korean and published in ROK remains very limited. The author has not found many publications, such as Vietnamese-Korean literary dictionaries or Vietnamese research works translated into Korean, which can facilitate comparative literary research. Few typical works of Vietnamese literature exist that have been translated naturally by Korean scholars and published in ROK. Regarding this matter, the author assumes that there will be a market for significant comparative literary works and relevant translated documents only when the Government of ROK and research foundations pay more attention and make the suitable investment in this domain for researchers

Next, it is necessary to organise more scientific/academic conferences in which experts in language and literature from ROK, Vietnam, and other countries in the region (e.g. China and Japan) and globally can participate and share their experiences in comparative literary research. In the current context, such international conferences are important for gathering together leading literary researchers. Korean - Vietnamese translators/interpreters need to be involved to ensure presentations are made fully accessible to conference attendees. In addition, research papers need to be translated into Korean before they are published in academic journals.

Finally, the aforementioned discussions show that Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary works have focused on a number of genres such as: the comparison of folk literature, fairy tales, nation-founding legends, and other typical myths. Other genres of folk literature have not been featured in comparative research work such as folk verses, legends of a nation's heroic founders, stories on floods and territorial formation, and so on. For example, some Korean stories featured in the "History of Three Kingdoms" (*Samguk sagi*) or "Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms" (*Samguk yusa*) can be used as comparative topics with Vietnamese folk stories e.g. on the history of Vietnam in "Collection of Stories on Shady and Spiritual World of the Viet Realm" (*Việt điện u linh*) or legends and ancient folk tales in a "Selection of Wondrous Tales in Linh Nam" (*Linh Nam chích quái*) compared with similar genres in ROK.

One can also carry out comparative research on many other areas of literature. For example, Buddhist literature featuring many poems composed in Chinese script by Vietnamese and Korean Zen monks, who were influential in feudal dynasties. One such example is the “Collection of Outstanding Figures of Zen Garden” (*Thiền Uyển Tập Anh*) referred to previously in this paper. In regard to literature written in Chinese script, it is possible, for example, to compare “Selection of Strange Tales” (*Truyện kỳ mạn lục*) by Vietnam’s Nguyen Du with the collection of Chinese stories by Qu-You’s “New Tales Written while Trimming the Wick” (*Jiandeng Xinhua*; 剪灯新话), or comparisons between the literary works of famous Korean scholars whose literary output was written in Chinese scripts, such as Yi Kyubo and Lee Renlao with their well-known Vietnamese counterparts such as Chu Van An, Pham Su Manh, and Tran Nguyen Dan. Furthermore, one interesting topic is to compare the influence of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and other local faiths on literature to ascertain the similarities and differences of incorporating them into the formation of local cultures. This process provides new insights into the religions. When it comes to poetry, there were reclusive poets in each of the two countries. They were famous for the poems that showed their opinions about human life and social situations of the Confucian scholars after they led the life of a recluse. The comparison of their poems will provide us with another view about the thinking among those people. In Vietnam, such poets are Nguyen Trai and Nguyen Khuyen, etc. It will be interesting to research the works of those reclusive poets in comparison with the poems of the swashbuckling genre in ROK.

In regards to literature written in Nom script in Vietnam, Hangul script in ROK, and Chinese script in China, there are few comparative research works. Those that have been produced include the comparison between Nguyen Du’s “The Tale of Kieu” in Vietnam and “The Tale of Chunhyang” in ROK; the comparison between Pham Thai’s “The Comb and the Mirror” in Vietnam and Kim Seo-heang’s “*Samhan Seupyu*” in ROK; and the comparison of filial piety featured in the works of Vietnamese poet Luc Van Tien with Korean literary counterparts. In this area, however, many other literary works written in Nom script can be analysed in a comparative research with Korean literary works written in Hangul script.

In regard to modern literature, it is very interesting to carry out comparative research on the schools of literature and their standpoints that were adopted in ROK and Vietnam. As described above, Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research has focused mainly on folk and medieval literature. It should be widened to include the comparison of 20th century literary works with those from the first two decades of the 21st century, in order to meet the modern day demand for cultural and literary exchange between the two countries.

5. Conclusion

The author has reviewed Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research that has been carried out over the past 30 years in ROK, and highlights a number of major aspects. These include: the need for and prospects of Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary

research; the current context of relevant written and translated books, and research papers; and appropriate solutions to comparative literary research in the future.

Regarding Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research documents, the following have been produced during the past 30 years in ROK: 11 books (written and translated versions), 26 doctoral theses and master's dissertations, and approximately 20 research papers - this is quite a modest sum. To build on these achievements and spearhead future development, it is necessary to gather together researchers from both ROK and Vietnam and also to invest appropriately in this sphere. The author makes a number of recommendations: firstly, train more Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary researcher specialists and increase investment in translation and dissemination of Vietnamese literary works in ROK; secondly, international conferences on comparative literature should be held more frequently with the participation of academics from Vietnam and ROK, as well as from other countries such as China and Japan, etc., who are experts in the fields of comparative literature specifically and literature in general; and lastly, it would be a good idea for ROK and Vietnamese researchers to cooperate with one another in compiling a dictionary of Korean - Vietnamese literary works classified by period, genre, and other comparative criteria, which will facilitate comparative literary research. It is when such elements have been realised that the academic world can have high hopes for greater achievements in the discipline of Korean - Vietnamese comparative literary research in the future.

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