

## Doctoral thesis in brief

THE DISSERTATION OF DOCTOR  
IN LITERATURE

Nguyễn Mạnh Hoàng. *Nôm poems of Trịnh lords*

*Major: Vietnamese literature*

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Nôm poem - the Vietnamese poetry stream that imprinted national specifics is a important composition of the Vietnamese literary history in medieval age. Its development process and achievements have been attracted by researchers from different perspectives: authors, works, development history, genre structure, nature and mobility trends in genre,... However, the flourishing of Nôm poem during Lê Trung Hưng reign with the works of Trịnh lords has not been thoroughly studied. Although Nôm poems of Trịnh family have been highly appreciated by Lê Quý Đôn, Phạm Nguyễn Du, Phan Lê Phiên, Phan Huy Chú... yet due to objective and subjective reasons, till now this poetry stream has not drawn much interest of academic scholars, literary readers, thus the texts have been investigating. With these reasons, the author selected the study of 'Nôm poems of Trịnh lords' contributing to narrow the gap in researching the development process of the Tang prosody Nôm poetry, to complement and to reinstate the growth of one part,

one unique royal literary stream in the history.

Beside the introduction, conclusion, references, appendices, the structure of the dissertation consists of 4 chapters.

Chapter 1: *Literature review on the study topic of the dissertation.*

Chapter 2: *Prerequisites for the formation of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords.*

The feudal state of Đại Việt under Lê-Trịnh reign consisted of dual power apparatuses. The Court (with 'lục bộ' - six ministries) headed by Lê King, the Lord Palace (established 'lục phiên' - six board) hold by Trịnh Lord. This was a very special institution in Vietnam feudal history - the dual leaders with Lê King - Trịnh Lord. Basically, the Đại Việt nation has some periods of comparatively stable socio-economic conditions, cultural-literary development, although there were civil wars between Lê - Mạc, Trịnh - Nguyễn, revolts, notably the separation of Đàng Trong - Đàng Ngoài (the North and the South).

The culture in Lê - Trịnh upheld and linked the Lê's ideology from XV century with the Confucianism basic of all political and social institutions. The literacy of Lê Trung Hưng reign still inherited from the Later Lê dynasty early period (Lê sơ) in XV century. This was the very Đại Việt literature

reflecting the spirit of a healthy nation with many masterworks. The Sino-literary was a main stream, but the Nôm literary was also very flourished. Trịnh lords were busy with political issues, however, they were well aware of restoring and constructing culture and society. Notably, they paid much attention to the literature and learning. They thought that literature has the function of politics, moral philosophy; literary composition also has the nature of art establishing the ruling power, has been an effective medium of indoctrinating, teaching the state ruling. These were the prerequisites for the formation of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords.

The stream of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords has great authors: Trịnh Căn, Trịnh Cương, Trịnh Doanh, Trịnh Sâm served as the important milestones. The Nôm poems of Trịnh lords both upheld, developed the achievements of the previous period with the masterpieces as *Quốc âm thi tập* (Anthology of poems written in the national language, Nguyễn Trãi), *Hồng Đức quốc âm thi tập* (Anthology of poems written in the national language of Hồng Đức reign, Lê Thánh Tông and famous literary authors in Hồng Đức reign), *Bạch Vân quốc ngữ thi tập* (Anthology of poems of Bạch Vân written in the national language, Nguyễn Bình Khiêm),...and contributed to foster the development of the Nôm poems in later periods with the fames of Hồ Xuân Hương, Bà Huyện Thanh Quan, Nguyễn Khuyến, Tú Xương... Although there hasn't been the pinnacle art

achievement, or quintessence, or finding a way for national literary breakthrough, the stream of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords kept the stable development rhythm avoiding the interruption and notably contributed to the Nôm improvement.

### Chapter 3: *The content specifics of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords.*

The stream of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords imprinted the nuance of the royal culture; most of them have the characteristics of example, conditioning of the medieval age; imprinted the emotion of Confucianism: *ngôn chí* poems (indicated the will), *tụng ca* poems (indicated the complimentary), *khuyến giới* poems (indicated the encouragement) and lyrical poems...

*Ngôn chí* poems targeted mainly the *đạo* (the Confucianism ideology of politics and moral) but the *tình* (sentiment). This was the kind of 'khẩu khí' (speaking manner) poem expressed the majesticalness and the style of kings and lords. In the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords, the political and moral ideologies, ethics were closely interdependent with each others, this element was a medium for that element and vice versa, that element was the orientation for this element. All of these have been implemented widely in the works by the literary authors of Trịnh family.

*Tụng ca - khuyến giới poem:* The inspiration covered the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords was to extol clear sighted kings, sages, wealthy and stable society

and to educate and disseminate the Confucianism morality. Trịnh lords wished to express the inheritability of the royal dynasty of Lê Thánh Tông in Hồng Đức reign: considering Confucianism as spiritual corner stone, as an ideal model of religious practice and utilizing literature as an effective and useful medium to propagandize that ideology. Besides the aim at upholding family discipline, creating kind relationship among relatives, the human philosophy advising the ethics of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords also targeted at many different subjects and relations in the society. Being the rulers, who wished to do the nation prosperous and peaceful, Trịnh lords composed poems to honor the sages and philosophers, to encourage the officials and soldiers, to console the high ranking mandarins, envoys for fulfilling their tasks and responsibilities... This content was mainly stipulated with the requirements of political, military and specific situations. The reciprocation trends and reality satisfaction in the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords were also well expressed.

*Lyrical poems:* The royal and extolling characteristics has not totally constrained the aesthetic values of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords, furthermore, from the other perspective, this poetry stream has many verses denoting sense of beauty in writing about natural sceneries, landscapes of the country. Lyrical poems of Trịnh lords has their own attractiveness, not only because of the truthfully emotion but also of highly

polished penmanship. The lyrical poems under the inspiration of scenery's beauty, denoting individual confidence also implied the ideology and extolling a prosperous and peaceful dynasty.

#### Chapter 4: *The artistic specifics of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords.*

The art of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords was fairly polished and diversified. Trịnh lords have utilized most of aspects of medieval literary prosodies in general, and Nôm poetry prosody in their works. Trịnh lords have importantly contributed to the art of Nôm poetry in many aspects: genre (Tang prosody Nôm poetry, Nôm poems with six-word verse followed by an eight-word line meter, seven-seven-six-eight word meter and the 'khúc ngâm', 'hát nói' poems (Vietnamese elegies); language (national language, life language, borrowed language, academic language); penmanship (symbolic, conditioning and realistic, philosophical. On the contrary, the art of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords reflected comparatively fully a certain number of the basic aspects in the Nôm poetry in particular and the Vietnamese medieval Nôm literature in general.

The art of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords also confirmed the literature talents, the high level of knowledge and culture of the rulers-literary authors - reflecting the cultural panorama of the period that they were in service. From this point, the shape and sound, features and achievements attained by the contemporary Đại

Việt nation under the ruling (de facto) of Trịnh lords could be explainable.

Studying Nôm poems of Trịnh lords in the direction of 'family's school of poetry', the thesis learns comprehensively Nôm poetry stream of Trịnh lords, from genre, from the premises of history-society to culture-literature, from the era factors to individual factors of the authors, from the content features to the artistic specifics. Thereby, the thesis identifies a certain number of unique features and affirms the contribution of this stream in the Vietnamese medieval poetry history.

*Firstly*, the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords were formed in the foundation of comparatively stable feudal society with flourishing art and culture, with the base of Confucianism ideology, upholding the artistic achievement of the Tang prosody Nôm literature (poetry); the Trịnh lords' authors were brought up from the social status of politicians-poets-confucianists and then, they turned to reflect the very socio-cultural, ideology and status foundations.

*Secondly*, studying the features of the Nôm poems of Trịnh lords can point out that main inspiration of this stream imprinted the royal nature, i.e. extolling the dynasty, affirming, dignifying the merits, the favour in ruling the people, or writing poems under the inspiration of scenery's beauty of mountains and rivers, temples and pagodas, natural landscapes denoting the pride of cultural objects of the country. The idea contents often focus on the main issues: the viewpoint of self-improvement, household management, state governing, the three moral bonds and five constant virtues; teaching, encouraging the servants and high ranking officials; the joy and status of dhyana... These themes reflect the specific historical, political, cultural context of the Việt nation in Lê Trung Hưng reign.

The thesis was successfully defended at institutional PhD thesis defense committee held in Graduate Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, June, 2015.

*by TK.*