

Vietnamese Clan Regulation Documents at the Institute of Sino-Nom Studies

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Abstract: *Aim at research on Vietnamese clan regulation documents currently archived at the Institute of Sino-Nom Studies, we have created a list of clan regulations that are scattered in other documents (mainly in genealogical records) to analyze and point out its characteristics from these documents's size and title; to date these texts by textology method; to determine the distribution range of the clans that possessed regulations from the perspective of historical toponymy. Based on these research archivements, this article makes conclusions about the volume, titles, geographical distribution and historical characteristics of these archives.*

Keywords: Sino-Nom Documents, Text, Regulations of Clan, Clan, Cultural History

Introduction

Ancestor worship in Vietnam is considered an indigenous belief. However, the available written documents of the Vietnamese clans show that this belief is practiced within the clan framework (the clans are influenced by Confucianism, which is clearly characterized by the facts that children follow their father's surname and their status is determined according to the main line of descents). This feature has produced a system of family documents and print materials including genealogical records, clan education, clan regulations, inscriptions in ancestral house, last wills, funeral orations, horizontal lacquered board and antithetical couplets,... recorded on various materials

such as paper (documents or books), stone (inscriptions), wood (horizontal inscribed board), bronze (bronze books or horizontal inscribed board), etc. These documents and materials belonging to the clan could be compiled by a noble individual or group in the clan, reflecting the whole clan's culture and daily life. Clan regulations, among others, are estimated to receive little research interest.

Clan regulations, a form of customary law, recorded the rules for the clan members to observe (Mai Thu Quynh, 2017), which could be either included in the genealogical records or inscriptions, or compiled into separate regulation books or inscriptions. Due to the difference of recording materials, clan regulations

written on paper usually has a larger capacity and takes up a larger number than that written on stone. Apart from documents and materials with different content and quality are currently kept far apart by the clans, several clan regulations are archived in one spot by the Institute of Sino-Nom Studies. This paper explores and introduces clan regulations kept at the Institute of Sino-Nom Studies to get an overview of this type of literature, thereby providing additional references for economic, thinking, cultural and political studies of Vietnam localities from the genealogical approach. For example, regulations on the use of land for ancestral or nursing homes could be used as research data on land issues; regulations on the contribution and use of the clan funds could be used as research data on monetary issues; regulations on ancestor worship modes are the basis for studying religious, belief and cultural issues; regulations on educational grants are the basis for studying educational issues, etc. The document research and analysis results show that the Institute of Sino-Nom Studies has currently given shelter to 35 clan regulations written on paper, of which mainly (33 copies) are included in genealogical records, a very few (2 copies) is split and assigned with different numbers. These 35 copies are scattered in the repository, covering labels of A and VHv (their duplications are assigned with the label of VHC), and numbered intermittently from 647 (A.647) to 2807 (A.2807). These are regulations of great families that produced several famous nobles in Vietnamese history. In general,

this group of documents has the following remarkable features.

1. The volume of clan regulations

Capacity of clan regulations is diverse and without any compulsory rules, in which the shortest is a page, the longest is the whole book. Some versions are divided into articles, others are not. For the former ones, the least four-article version belongs to Tran clan in Binh Vong village, Thuong Phuc district, Thuong Tin prefecture (now Binh Vong village, Van Binh commune, Thuong Tin district, Hanoi city); the most 48-article version belongs to Nguyen clan in Tuong Mai village, Tuong Mai commune, Thanh Tri district (now Tuong Mai ward, Hoang Mai district, Hanoi city).

Chinese characters were primarily used to record a regulation. Besides, Nom characters also were applied when writing the names of the land and some local objects that were not in Chinese. Both Chinese and Nom characters in these texts are written in the regular, standard and legible style of writing (楷書 *Kai shu* writing style). The grammar is clear, close to Vietnamese grammar. These textual and grammatical characteristics can be explained by the function and purpose of clan conventions. Accordingly, they are written documents to help clan members know what to do. It is aimed at a large number of family members; therefore, it should be written in a way that is easy to read, understand, and memorable to observe.

Besides, the majority of clan regulations excluded the editor's name, which could be explained by the general provisions of the rights and obligations of the clan members, and that was often the product

of a collective of individuals with high education attainment or status in the clan.

2. The titles of clan regulations

Survey results show that, out of these 35 regulations, there are only 02 versions with no title, and the other 33 can be divided into two categories: category one consists of one-section regulation assigned with one title; category two covers regulations having more than one section and each section is assigned its own title. For the best understanding, we listed and surveyed all the section headings of the regulations in the category two and all the titles of the regulations in the category one.

Based on such survey principle, the statistical results are as follows: there are 17 titles using the word 例 (literally, rule), 03 titles using the word 約 (literally, regulation), 01 title using both words 例 (rule) and 約 (regulation), 01 title using the phrase 券 例 (literally, statute), 05 titles using the word 券 約 (literally, regulation), 01 title using the phrase 券 稿 (manuscript rules), 01 title using the phrase 交 書 (book of obligations), 01 title using the phrase 交 詞 (statement of obligations), 01 title using 式 (awareness of obligations), 01 title using the phrase 公 簿 (common book of obligations).

These are words and phrases in the titles help identify the type of document as the one showing the general rules of a clan as soon as it is within reach. However, there are also titles that do not help, such as 監生黎全城訓誡子孫篇 (Giám sinh Lê Toàn Thành huấn giới tử tôn thiên, *Student Le Toan Thanh instructs his descendants* or *Genealogical Records of Le clan*), 太保黎相公香火田池土宅

(Thái bảo Lê tướng công hương hỏa Điền Trì thổ trạch, *Regulations by Le Literary Mandarin (Thái bảo)¹ on ancestral home, pond and residence lands*), 追遠壇昭穆議 (Truy viễn đàn chiêu mục nghị, *Rules of ancestor worship*), 本支姓氏名字說 (Bản chi tính thị danh tự thuyết, *About our clan's surname, given name, and style name*), 阮何氏祀事錄 (Nguyễn Hà thị tự sự lục, *Records of Nguyen Ha clan's Offering Sacrifices*), 阮何氏忌田 (Nguyễn Hà thị kỵ điền, *Sacrificial Land of Nguyen Ha clan*). Or sometimes there exists the titles using words that indicate other types of documents, such as 本支譜記 (Bản chi phả kí, *Genealogical Records of our Clan*), 清穆堂名譜 (Thanh mục đường danh phả, *Records of Thanh Muc Hall's titles*), which makes it possible to misinterpret the type of document by skimming it.

Thus, it can be seen that titles of clan regulations could or could not contain words or phrases that refer to the type of document, but the number of titles containing these words of reference makes up a bigger proportion. The words and phrases commonly used in titles of clan regulations are 例 (rule), 券 約 and 約 (regulation). Besides, the length of a regulation title is not fixed, but ranges from 01 to 11 words, in which four-word titles occupy the most number (18 copies), long titles containing from 09 to 11 words only consists of 05 copies, or the ones containing less than 04 words only includes 03 copies.

¹ Thái positions in Lý dynasty in Vietnam: Tam thái for the three literary mandarins (Thái sư, Thái bảo and Thái phó), and Thái úy for the martial mandarin.

3. The distribution of clan regulations accorded with their owners, geographic space and historical time

The clan regulations archived at the Institute of Sino-Nom Studies belong to the clans, regions and times as follows.

- 1) Regulation of Bui clan in Dong Ap village, Thinh Liet commune, Hoang Mai province, Thanh Tri district (now Thinh Liet ward, Hoang Mai district, Hanoi city), written in the 3rd year of Vinh Huu reign (1737).
- 2) Regulation of Bui clan in Quang Cong commune, Thanh Dam district (now Dinh Cong ward, Hoang Mai district, Hanoi city), not dated.
- 3) Regulation of Do clan in Quang Xuyen village, Dai Quan canton, Dong An sub-prefecture, Khoai Chau prefecture (now Quan Xuyen village, Thanh Cong commune, Khoai Chau district, Hung Yen province), written in the 3rd year of Tu Duc reign (1847).
- 4) Regulation of Do clan in Thinh Quang ward, Vinh Thuan sub-prefecture, Hoai Duc prefecture (now Hang Bot ward, Dong Da district, Hanoi city), written in the year of Yin Earth Ox of Thanh Thai reign (1889).
- 5) Regulation of Do clan in Binh Vong village, Binh Duong sub-prefecture, Ung Thien prefecture (now Binh Vong village, Van Binh commune, Thuong Tin district, Hanoi city), written in the reign of Minh Menh, corrected in the reigns of Thieu Tri and Thanh Thai.
- 6) Regulation of Hoang clan in Da Si village, Thanh Oai district (now Da Si village, Kien Hung ward, Ha Dong district, Hanoi city), written in the year of the Yin Fire Rooster of Thanh Thai reign (1897).

- 7) Regulation of Le clan in Mai Trai village, Thanh Mai commune, Thanh Phong sub-prefecture, Quang Oai prefecture (now Mai Trai village, Van Thang commune, Ba Vi district, Hanoi city), written in the 9th year of Gia Long reign (1810).
- 8) Regulation of Le clan in Hoa Binh village, Yen My district (Hoan Long district, Hung Yen province), not dated.
- 9) Regulation of Ngo Thi clan in Ta Thanh Oai village, Ta Thanh Oai commune, Thanh Oai district (now Ta Thanh Oai village, Thanh Tri district, Hanoi city), first version was written in about late 1792 to before 20/02/1793.
- 10) Regulation of Ngo Thi clan in Ta Thanh Oai village, Ta Thanh Oai commune, Thanh Oai district (now Ta Thanh Oai village, Thanh Tri district, Hanoi city), second version was written in the 4th year of Quang Trung reign (1791).
- 11) Regulation of Nguyen clan of Dich Ngo section in Ha Dinh village, Nhan Muc commune, My Dinh canton (now Nhan Muc village, Nhan Chinh ward, Thanh Xuan district, Hanoi city), written in the 1st year of Minh Menh reign (1820) and in the 10th year of Duy Tan reign (1916).
- 12) Regulation of Nguyen Ha clan in Da Si village, Thanh Oai district (now Da Si village, Kien Hung ward, Ha Dong district, Hanoi city), not dated.
- 13) Regulation of Nguyen Huy clan in Phu Thi commune, Gia Lam sub-prefecture, Thuan An prefecture (now Phu Thi commune, Gia Lam district, Hanoi city), not dated.
- 14) Regulation of Nguyen clan in Dong Tac village, Tho Xuong district (now Dong Tac street, Trung Tu ward, Dong Da district,

Hanoi city), written in the 10th year of Thanh Thai reign (1898).

15) Regulation of Nguyen clan in Tuong Mai village, Tuong Mai commune, Thanh Tri district (now Tuong Mai ward, Hoang Mai district, Hanoi city), written in the 5th year of Minh Menh reign (1824).

16) Regulation of Nguyen clan in Huong Khe village, Doi Trang commune, Co Dinh canton, Nong Cong sub-prefecture, Tinh Gia prefecture (now Nua town, Trieu Son district, Thanh Hoa province), written in the 8th year of Thanh Thai reign (1896).

17) Regulation of Nguyen clan in Nhan Ai village, Van Canh commune, Tu Liem district (now Hau Ai village, Van Canh commune, Hoai Duc district, Hanoi city), written in the 18th year of Tu Duc reign (1865).

18) Regulation of Nguyen clan in Tam Ky village, Hoa Cau commune, Van Giang district (now Xuan Cau village, Nghia Tru commune, Van Giang district, Hung Yen province), written in the 3rd year of Canh Hung reign (1742).

19) Regulation of Nguyen clan in Van Trai village, Van Trai commune, Thuong Cung canton, Thuong Phuc sub-prefecture, Thuong Tin prefecture (now Van Trai village, Van Phu commune, Thuong Tin district, Hanoi city), written in the 1st year of Thanh Thai reign (1889).

20) Regulation of Nguyen clan in Xuan Tao village, Dong Ngac commune, Tu Liem district (now Xuan Tao ward, Bac Tu Liem district, Hanoi city), written in the 1st year of Dong Khanh reign (1885).

21) Regulation of Nguyen clan in Bat Trang commune, Gia Lam sub-prefecture, Thuan An prefecture, Kinh Bac parish (now Bat Trang village, Bat Trang commune, Gia

Lam district, Hanoi city), written in the 19th year of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1963).

22) Regulation of Nguyen clan in Dich Vong commune, Tu Liem sub-prefecture, Hoai Duc prefecture (now Dich Vong ward, Cau Giay district, Hanoi city), written in the year of the Yin Earth Rooster of Tu Duc reign (1849).

23) Regulation of Nguyen clan in Dong Ngac commune, Tu Liem sub-prefecture, Quoc Oai prefecture (now Dong Ngac ward, Bac Tu Liem district, Hanoi city), written in Tu Duc the year of the Yang Metal Monkey (1860).

24) Regulation of Nguyen clan in No Ban commune, Thanh Tri district (now No Ban village, Lien Phuong commune, Thuong Tin district, Hanoi city), written in the 3rd year of Vinh Thinh reign (1707).

25) Regulation of Pham clan in LUong Ngoc village, Binh Giang district, Hai Duong province (now Luong Ngoc village, Thuc Khang commune, Binh Giang district, Hai Duong province), written in about 1890-1945¹.

26) Regulation of Pham clan in Dong Ngac commune, Tu Liem sub-prefecture, Quoc Oai prefecture (now Dong Ngac ward, Bac Tu Liem district, Hanoi city), first version was written in 1875.

27) Regulation of Pham clan in Dong Ngac commune, Tu Liem sub-prefecture, Quoc Oai prefecture (now Dong Ngac ward, Bac Tu Liem district, Hanoi city), second version was written in the 23rd year of Tu Duc reign (1869).

¹ 1890-1945: See the section for date identifying below of the paper for a better view of the date of this regulation.

28) Regulation of Phan clan in Dong Ngac commune, Tu Liem sub-prefecture, Quoc Oai prefecture (now Dong Ngac ward, Bac Tu Liem district, Hanoi city), first version was written in the 32nd year of Canh Hung reign (1771).

29) Regulation of Phan clan in Dong Ngac commune, Tu Liem sub-prefecture, Quoc Oai prefecture (now Dong Ngac ward, Bac Tu Liem district, Hanoi city), second version was written in the 16th year of Minh Menh reign (1835).

30) Regulation of Tran clan in Binh Vong village, Thuong Phuc sub-prefecture, Thuong Tin prefecture (now Binh Vong village, Van Binh commune, Thuong Tin district, Hanoi city), written in 1912.

31) Regulation of Tran clan in Kim Hoang village, Van Canh commune, Huong Canh canton, Tu Liem sub-prefecture, Hoai Duc prefecture (now Kim Hoang village, Van Canh commune, Hoai Duc district, Hanoi city), first version was compiled in the reign of Thieu Tri, corrected in the reigns of Tu Duc and Duy Tan.

32) Regulation of Tran clan in Kim Hoang village, Van Canh commune, Huong Canh canton, Tu Liem sub-prefecture, Hoai Duc prefecture (now Kim Hoang village, Van Canh commune, Hoai Duc district, Hanoi city), second version was compiled in the reign of Thieu Tri, corrected in the reigns of Tu Duc and Thanh Thai.

33) Regulation of Tran clan in Binh Lang commune, Thuong Phuc, Ha Noi province (Binh Lang village, Thang Loi commune, Thuong Tin district, Hanoi city), written in the 4th year of Thanh Thai reign (1892).

34) Regulation of Truong clan in Ha Dinh village, Nhan Muc commune, Thanh Tri

district (now Ha Dinh ward, Thanh Xuan district, Hanoi city), written in the year of the Yang Earth Monkey (?)¹.

35) Regulation of Vu clan in Hai Boi village, Vinh Tuong prefecture (now Hai Boi commune, Dong Anh district, Hanoi city) written in the 16th year of Vinh Thinh reign (1720).

It can be seen that 35 clan regulations surveyed belong to the clans, namely, Bui, Do, Hoang, Le Ngo, Nguyen, Pham, Phan, Tran, Truong, and Vu. Nguyen clans, among others, compiled their own regulations most, which possibly because the number of people with the last name Nguyen accounts for higher percentage compared to the number of Vietnamese people with different surnames.

If considering the current provincial administrative unit as criteria for analyzing spatial distribution characteristics of clans who owns regulations, Hung Yen province has three copies, Hai Duong province has one copy, Thanh Hoa province has one copy, Hanoi city has 30 copies. This shows that the surveyed clan regulations all belong to the clans living in the northern plains and midlands of Vietnam, in which the largest number of regulations appear in Hanoi.

Regarding the chronology, it can be seen that the date of a regulation could be the time of composing, but it could also be the time of further correction, or the time it was duplicated, or the time it was written down (put on paper the rules that have been passed down orally and previously observed). Whether it is the time of composing,

¹ The year of the Yang Earth Monkey (?): See the section for date identifying below of the paper for a better view of the date of this regulation.

correction, duplication, writing down, the date has a common meaning to mark the time of the clans possessing the surveyed regulations. Out of the 35 regulations surveyed, 29 are explicitly dated, the remaining six are undated. However, among the latter, we have identified dates and some important information of the two regulations as follows.

(i) Regulation of Truong clan in Ha Dinh village, Nhan Muc commune, Thanh Tri district (now Ha Dinh ward, Thanh Xuan district, Hanoi city) dates to the year of the Yang Earth Monkey, and refers to the administrative unit “Hanoi province”, which indicates that it was written in the year of the Yang Earth Monkey in the late Nguyen dynasty, so we have identified the date of this regulation is 1848.

(ii) Besides, the regulation of Pham clan in Luong Ngoc village, Binh Giang district, Hai Duong province (now in Thuc Khang commune, Binh Giang district, Hai Duong province) was written separately into a book, not included in their Genealogical Records. The book excludes the date of composing and author. The *Bibliography of Vietnamese Sino-Nom Documents Heritage* (Tran Nghia and Francois Gros, 1993: 540) does not mention these two information either. When reading the content, we discovered pages 4a and 4b, article 03 about the regulations for honoring the person who passed the exams in the family as follows: 有英山教授養庵公解官退居修家譜訓子侄... 接之者有父安布政使魚堂公以孤貧好學早占危科顯官當朝為吾族之冠冕... (After Sir Duong Am holding the position of Anh Son Prefecture Education

Commissioner had retired, he returned home to revise his family annals and teach his descendants...; next Sir Ngu Duong holding the position of Administration Commissioner of Nghe An Province, who used to be a poor studious student, soon won the high position in the imperial civil examination and became a grand madarin - the two are heads of our clan...

Who was Sir Duong Am used to be Anh Son Prefecture Education Commissioner, what kind of person was Sir Ngu Duong holding the position as Administration Commissioner of Nghe An Province? We looked up the dictionary of notables and found: “Sir Duong Am used to hold the position of Anh Son Prefecture Education Commissioner” named Pham Hoi (范會) (Nguyen Q.Thang, Nguyen Ba The, 1991: 722; Trinh Khac Manh, 2019: 102), and “Sir Ngu Duong used to hold the position of the Administration Commissioner of Nghe An Province” named Pham Hi Luong (范熙亮) (Nguyen Q. Thang, Nguyen Ba The, 1991: 730; Trinh Khac Manh, 2019: 337). Pham Hoi and Pham Hi Luong were recorded in the Regulations of Pham clan in Luong Ngoc village as elites in the past, which shows that Pham Hoi and Pham Hi Luong were from the same Pham clan in Luong Ngoc village. Besides, the fact that the two men were called “sage” of the clan also proves that this regulation was written after the two of them had died. The regulation, available at the Institute of Sino-Nom Studies today, was collected by the French School of Asian Studies (EFEO), which means that it was added to the library before 1945. Accordingly, we can deduce the date of this regulation

is about 1890-1945. After reading the regulation of Pham clan in Luong Ngoc village and referencing other documents, we have some conclusions as follows:

Firstly, Pham Hoi and Pham Hi Luong are from the same clan, both of them were born in Tho Xuong district (now Hoan Kiem district, Hanoi city) but have their origins in Hoa Duong commune, Duong An district, Hai Duong town (later changed to Luong Ngoc village, Binh Giang district, Hai Duong province, now it is Luong Ngoc village, Thuc Khang commune, Binh Giang district, Hai Duong province).

Secondly, the *Luong Ngoc Pham toc pha uoc* (良玉范族譜約), *the Regulation of Pham Clan in Luong Ngoc Village*, assigned with the number A.1344, currently archived at the Institute of Sino-Nom Studies is a document dating to the end of Nguyen Dynasty (1890-1945) and is Pham clan's regulation in Luong Ngoc village, Thuc Khang commune, Binh Giang district, Hai Duong province.

It can be seen that apart from 04 documents that are currently unknown; there are 05 documents dated the Le Trung Hung era, 02 dated the Quang Trung era, 25 dated the Nguyen Dynasty, 01 dated from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The earliest document is the Regulation of Nguyen clan in No Ban village, Lien Phuong commune, Thuong Tin district, Hanoi city¹, dated 1707 (in the 3rd year of Vinh Thinh reign). The latest document is the Genealogical Records of Nguyen clan in Bat Trang village, Gia Lam district,

Hanoi city dated 1963 (the 19th year of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam).

4. Conclusion

In general, the Institute of Sino-Nom Studies has currently archived a total of 35 clan regulations of different volumes. The main character used to record them is Chinese. Nom character was used to record the names of native places and special local objects that were not in Chinese. Both was written in the regular, standard and legible style of writing (楷書 *Kai shu* writing style). The grammar is clear, close to Vietnamese one. Regulation titles are different in length, ranging from 01 to 11 words, which is not necessary to include the most common genre-specific terms such as 例 (rule) or 券約 and 約 (regulation). These regulations belong to 11 clans, of which the Nguyen clans account for more. If regulations are classified based on geographical space, they are distributed in the northern plains and midlands (Hanoi, Hung Yen, Hai Duong) and North Central (Thanh Hoa) of Vietnam, and accounts for the majority in Hanoi. If considered by dynasties, most of these regulations belong to Nguyen dynasty and the latest one is in the time of Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

These features mentioned above show that clan regulations in the Sino-Nom bibliography are customary legal documents which is in a variety of forms, rich content, and possibly a good reference for Vietnamese literature and language research in the eighteenth-twentieth centuries. Determining the chronology of accompanying genealogies, studying the history of migration and division - merging

¹ Regulation is included in *Genealogical Records of Nguyen clan*, Institute of Sino-Nom Studies, No. A.2450.

of the clans; the distribution of regulations according to geographical space and historical time could partly indicate the development of the clan model in the localities in the eras. These clan regulations not only help to give an overview of the types of customary law of the Vietnamese clans, on the economic and cultural life of those clans, but also provide additional knowledge and the scientific basis for studying local history and the history of Vietnamese thoughts □

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