

An Outline of Vietnamese Confucianism

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Abstract: Vietnam is one of the countries in Asia influenced by Confucianism. The study of Confucianism in Vietnam has an overview of the achievements of Vietnamese Confucianism on aspects such as literary, civil service examination system, and the political role of Confucian scholars, etc. This paper refers to another aspect of Confucianism in Vietnam that is Confucian philosophy. The author divides the paper into two parts; the first one introduces a brief outline of Confucian learning under Vietnamese imperial dynasties from 1009 to 1945; the second presents the content of philosophical works by Vietnamese Confucian scholars.

Confucianism was brought into Vietnam under the Chinese rule, through three periods:

- 111 B.C - 39: the Western Han and Eastern Han dynasties.
- 43-541: the Eastern Han, Three Kingdoms, Jin, Northern and Southern dynasties.
- 602-905: the Sui, and Tang dynasties.

During the first ten centuries of the Common Era, Vietnamese Confucian learning did not yet flourish, and Confucian scholars did not yet turn into a social stratum holding important roles. The excellent intelligentsia of that time was priests, especially eminent monks. While learning Chinese characters to read Buddhist sūtras, they absorbed Confucian learning. Thus, when the nation gained independence from China in the 10th century, under the Ngô (939-967), the Đinh (968-980), and the Lê (980-1009) dynasties, the elites supporting the imperial court were Taoist priests and Buddhist monks. Some lay disciples were well trained to become elites supporting the nation by eminent Buddhist monks like monk Khánh Vân and monk Vạn Hạnh (?-1018), who in turn taught Lý Công Uẩn (974-1028),

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who later became the founder of the Lý dynasty (i.e., Lý Thái Tổ, reigned 1009-1028). Under the reign of King Lý Anh Tông (1138-1175), monk Trí from mount Cao Dã taught *Thái Úy* (Defender-in-Chief) Tô Hiến Thành (?-1199) and *Thái Bảo* (Assistant Grand Tutor) Ngô Hòa Nghĩa, etc.

Vietnamese Confucian learning culminated from the 11th century, but gradually declined under the Nguyễn dynasty (1802-1945). Confucian learning paved the way for literati to become court officials via civil service examination system, helping to develop literature and enhance culture. Many former Vietnamese Confucian scholars were also authors who profoundly studied Confucian philosophy. Unfortunately, due to war after war, too many books were robbed and destroyed. Thus, their philosophical works were lost and almost nothing was left for later ages to study. Maybe the most prominent of Vietnamese Confucianism is not philosophical thoughts, but literature, civil service examination system, and the political role of Confucian scholars in history.

1. VIETNAMESE CONFUCIAN LEARNING UNDER IMPERIAL DYNASTIES

a. *The Lý dynasty (1009-1225)*

Vietnamese Confucian learning began flourishing. In 1070, King Lý Thánh Tông (reigned 1054-1072) had the *Văn Miếu* (Literature Temple) built, in which the statues of the Duke of Zhou, Confucius, and the Seventy-Two Worthies were worshipped.⁽¹⁾ In 1075, King Lý Nhân Tông (reigned 1072-1127) opened the first civil service exam called *Tam Trường* (Three-Round Exam) in which the best candidate was Lê Văn Thịnh. The King also set up *Quốc Tử Giám* (the Imperial College) in 1076, *Hàn Lâm Viện* (the Imperial Academy), and chose Mạc Hiến Tích as an Academician.⁽²⁾ Noted Confucian scholars under the Lý dynasty were Lý Đạo Thành (?-1081), Trương Bá Ngọc, Tô Hiến Thành (?-1179), etc.

b. *The Trần dynasty (1225-1400)*

King Trần Thái Tông (reigned 1226-1258) opened such exams as the *Thái Học*

⁽¹⁾ [Trần Trọng Kim 1971b: 99]. This footnote indicates that the above information is from a Trần Trọng Kim's book published in 1971, page 99. For the related source in details, see "Bibliography" at the end of this article.

⁽²⁾ [Trần Trọng Kim 1971b: 101].

Sinh (High College Student Exam) in 1232, the *Tam Giáo* (Three-Teaching Exam) in 1247, and the *Tam Khôi* (Three-Degree Exam) in 1247 to select *Trạng Nguyên* (the First Degree), *Bảng Nhãn* (the Second Degree), and *Thám Hoa* (the Third Degree). In that exam, Lê Văn Hưu (1230-1322) got *Bảng Nhãn* and later became the first Vietnamese historian who wrote *Đại Việt Sử Ký* (A History of Great Việt). The King also set up *Quốc Học Viện* (the Institute of National Learning) in 1253 to teach *Sishu* (the Four Books) and *Wujing* (the Five Classics).⁽³⁾

Under the reign of King Trần Duệ Tông (1373-1377), the *Thái Học Sinh* Exam was renamed as the *Tiến Sĩ* (Advanced Scholar Exam) in 1374.⁽⁴⁾

Under the reign of King Trần Thuận Tông (1388-1398), Lê Quý Ly (1336-1407) wrote a book titled *Minh Đạo* (Explaining the Dao) in 1392, then translated chapter *Wuyi* (Against Luxurious Ease) of *Shujing* (the Book of Documents) in 1394 to teach the crown prince, and *Shijing* (the Book of Songs) in 1396 to teach inner palace women.

Under the Trần dynasty, civil service exams helped to develop literature. Noted Confucian scholars included: Mạc Đĩnh Chi (1280-1346); Nguyễn Trung Ngạn (1289-1370) with *Giới Hiền Toàn Tập* (Giới Hiền's Complete Works); Trương Hán Siêu (?-1354); Chu An (1292-1370) with *Tứ Thư Thuyết Ước* (Concise Explanation of the Four Books), and *Tiểu Ấn Quốc Ngữ Thi* (Tiểu Ấn's Poems in the Nôm Script); Phạm Sư Mạnh (Chu An's student) with *Hiệp Thạch Tập* (Hiệp Thạch's Collected Works); Hàn Thuyên (or Nguyễn Thuyên) with *Phi Sa Tập* (Phi Sa's Collected Works), etc.

c. *The Hồ dynasty* (1400-1407), the Later Trần dynasty (1407-1413), and the period under Chinese Ming aggression (1407-1427)

Lê Quý Ly (1336–1407), also known as Hồ Quý Ly, overthrew the Trần dynasty and set up the Hồ dynasty. Chinese Ming aggressors robbed national archives and brought them to Jinling (Nanjing). They burnt whatever they could not take away, causing a terrible loss to Vietnamese culture. Under Ming aggression, Neo-Confucianism was brought into Vietnam.⁽⁵⁾

⁽³⁾ [Trần Trọng Kim 1971b: 124].

⁽⁴⁾ [Trần Trọng Kim 1971b: 124].

⁽⁵⁾ [Trần Trọng Kim 1971b: 212].

d. The Later Lê dynasty (1428-1788)

Under this dynasty, Confucian learning was highly valued as *quốc học* (national learning). Civil service exams helped to increase intelligentsia. In the capital there were *Quốc Tử Giám* (the Imperial College) and *Thái Học Viện* (High College). King Lê Thánh Tông divided the territory into thirteen *đạo* 道 (circuits). In most of the circuits on plains, public schools were set up; and exam regulations were also imposed. In 1463 about 1,400 candidates took Metropolitan Exam (*thi Hội*) and in 1475 the number of candidates mounted to 3,000. From the Lê dynasty on, high honour was bestowed upon exam-passers by kings: ceremonies of announcing advanced scholars' names (*lễ xướng danh*), taking them to their native villages (*lễ vinh quy*, literal sense means glorious return ceremony), and inscribing their names on stela houses at the Literature Temple.

Noted Confucian scholars under the Lê dynasty included Nguyễn Trãi (1380-1442), Lê Văn Linh, Bùi Cầm Hổ, Nguyễn Thiên Tích, Nguyễn Trục (1417-1474), Nguyễn Như Đổ (1424-1526), Lương Thế Vinh (1442-?), Đổ Nhuận, Thân Nhân Trung, Lương Đắc Bằng (1472-1522), Nguyễn Bình Khiêm (1491-1585), Phùng Khắc Khoan (1528-1613), Lương Hữu Khánh, Nguyễn Dữ, Giáp Hải (1515?-1585?), Nguyễn Mậu Nghi, Phạm Công Trứ (1600-1675), Lê Anh Tuấn, Nguyễn Công Hãng, Phạm Đình Trọng, Lê Quý Đôn (1726-1784), Lý Tử Tấn (1378-?), Nguyễn Mộng Tuân, Phan Phu Tiên (1370?-?), Ngô Sĩ Liên, etc.

e. The Tây Sơn dynasty (1778-1802)

After defeating the Chinese Ching invaders in 1789, King Quang Trung (reigned 1788-1792) set up *Sùng Chính Viện* (the Institute of Governance Veneration) and appointed La Sơn Phu Tử Nguyễn Thiếp (1723-1804) the head whose important duty was to reform Vietnamese Confucian learning. La Sơn Phu Tử finished translating *Xiaoxue* (Small Learning), *Sishu* (the Four Books), and *Wujing* (the Five Classics) into the *Nôm* 喃 script. King Quang Trung prematurely passed away, leaving his reform program unaccomplished.

f. The Nguyễn dynasty (1802-1945)

The learning bound up with civil service exams declined gradually. The French

colonialists conquered Vietnam and introduced European learning. Finally, the old-age exams based on Confucian learning terminated in the North (1915) and then in the Central of Vietnam (1918). ⁽⁶⁾ The termination was earlier in the South, after the French colonialists had occupied the whole Cochinchina (1862-1867).

2. PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS BY VIETNAMESE CONFUCIAN SCHOLARS

Under any dynasty, noted Vietnamese Confucian scholars always appeared and their fame was still recorded in history. Besides politically and economically supporting the country, former Confucian scholars also contributed to education and wrote literary works of all genres. Their abundant philosophical works expressed not only the traditional thoughts of Confucius, Mencius, the Cheng brothers (*Cheng I* and *Cheng Hao*), and Zhuxi, but also many of the Vietnamese point of view, showing their independent spirit or awareness against Chinese thoughts. Unfortunately, most of their works were lost or destroyed after several centuries of war.

Among many precious and rare reference books are *Văn Tịch Chí* (Descriptive Bibliography) in *Lịch Triều Hiến Chương Loại Chí* (Records on Administrative Systems of Successive Dynasties) by Phan Huy Chú (1782-1840) and *Tìm Hiểu Kho Sách Hán-Nôm* (Studying the Hán-Nôm Treasury) by Trần Văn Giáp (1902-1973) that list some extant books, helping posterity overview philosophical thoughts of former Vietnamese Confucian scholars. According to these two reference books, overlooking historical, geographical, and literary writings, some of their typical works on philosophy and education can be enumerated as follows:

(1) *Tứ Thư Thuyết Ước* (Concise Explanation of the Four Books, ten volumes, now lost) by Chu An (1292-1370) under the Trần dynasty. Chu An with his style of Linh Triệt, literary name of Tiều Ân, posthumous name of Văn Trinh, reverent name of Khang Tiết Tiên Sinh, was a native of Văn Thôn hamlet, Quang Liệt village, Thanh Trì district (now in the outskirt of Hà Nội). After passing the exam of *Thái Học Sinh* (High College Student), he did not want to get any official post but stayed home to teach. He was famous for high virtue and had students in large number. King Trần Minh Tông (reigned 1314-1329) invited him to hold the post of *Quốc Tử Giám Tư Nghiệp* (Director of the Imperial College). Under the reign of King Trần Dụ

⁽⁶⁾ [Trần Trọng Kim 1971a: 370].

Tông (reigned 1341-1369), he submitted a petition asking the king to behead seven crafty and flattering officials. Getting no response from the king, he quit his post and then lived in seclusion on mount Kiệt Đặc (later called mount Phụng Hoàng, Chí Linh district, Hải Hưng province). He was worshipped at *Văn Miếu* (Literature Temple) in December 1370.

(2) *Chu Dịch Quốc Âm Giải Nghĩa* (Yijing Explained in the Nôm Script, two volumes), also called *Chu Dịch Quốc Âm Ca [Quyết]* (Yijing Explained in Verse of the Nôm Script), was written before 1743 by Đặng Thái Phương [or Bàng] (1674-?) under the Later Lê dynasty. He used the 6-8-word verse to explain each line of sixty-four hexagrams of Yijing. For example, the first line of the first hexagram (i.e. *The Concealed Dragon Avoids Action*) was explained in verse as follows:

Nine at the first place means the concealed dragon,

At lower position, it should avoid action. ⁽⁷⁾

Đặng Thái Phương was a native of Uy Viễn village, Nghi Xuân district, Nghệ An province (later called Xuân Giang village, Nghi Xuân district, Nghệ Tĩnh province). After passing the exam of *Hoành Từ* at the age of twenty-two, he became the *Tri Huyện* (Magistrate) of Giáp Sơn district (in Hải Dương province), was promoted to *Hiệp Trấn* (Vice General), then to *Hiển Sát Sứ* (Justice Commissioner) of Thanh Hóa province. He was *Tham Nghị* (Consultant) of Sơn Nam province in 1743.

(3) *Tứ Thư Ngũ Kinh Toàn Yếu* (A Summary of the Four Books and Five Classics, fifteen volumes) by Nguyễn Huy Oánh (1713-1789) under the Later Lê dynasty. He was styled Thư Hiên with his literary name of Thạc Đình, a native of Lai Thạch village, La Sơn district, Nghệ Tĩnh province. He passed the *Thám Hoa* (the Third Degree of *Tam Khôi*, i.e., the Three-Degree Exam) in 1748, became *Đông Các Đại Học Sĩ* (Great Scholar in the East Hall), and was promoted to *Lại Bộ Tả Thị Lang* (Left Attendant Gentleman of the Personnel Ministry) as the Chief Envoy of a tributary delegation to the Ching China. Returning from China, he got titles *Bá* (Count) and then *Thạc Lĩnh Hầu* (Great Mount Marquis). After retirement, he was invited to join the imperial court again, and was promoted to *Đô Ngự Sử* (Censor-in-Chief).

(4) *Tính Lý Toàn Yếu* (A Summary of Nature and Principle, two volumes) also

⁽⁷⁾ [Trần Văn Giáp 1990: 221-228].

by Nguyễn Huy Oánh summarizes the essential of the *Four Books, Five Classics*, and *Xingli (Nature and Principle)*, his two books were very useful for civil service exam preparers.⁽⁸⁾

(5) *Thánh Mô Hiền Phạm Lục* (Recorded Sayings of Sages and Worthies, twelve volumes) by Lê Quý Đôn (1726-1784) under the Later Lê dynasty. He was styled Doãn Hậu with his literary name of Quế Đường, a native of Duyên Hà (or Diên Hà) village, Duyên Hà district, Tiên Hưng prefecture, Sơn Nam (now in Thái Bình province). He held the official post of *Thị Độc* (Reader-in-Waiting) of the Imperial Academy, was promoted to *Quốc Tử Giám Tư Nghiệp* (Director of the Imperial College), became Vice Envoy to China, got the title of *Dĩnh Thành Bá* (Clever Successful Count), and then held many important official posts. His posthumous titles were *Thượng Thư Bộ Công* (Imperial Secretary of Ministry of Works) and *Dĩnh Thành Công* (Clever Successful Duke). He left many works. In *Thánh Mô Hiền Phạm Lục*, he quoted the original sayings of sages and worthies, sorted them into twelve topics, and indicated the source of each quotation, for example, from *Yijing* (the Book of Change), *Shijing* (the Book of Songs), *Shujing* (the Book of Documents), *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* (The Spring and Autumn Annals with Commentary of Zuo Qiuming), *Liji* (Record of Rituals), *Daxue* (Great Learning), *Zhongyong* (Doctrine of the Mean), *Lunyu* (Analects), *Jiayu* (Family Sayings), *Haojing* (Book of Filial Piety), *Mengzi* (Mencius), *Zhuzi* (Zhuxi), *Guoce* (National Policies), *Guoyu* (National Sayings), *Shizhuan* (History and Tradition), *Xianru geyan* (Former Confucians' Maxims), etc.⁽⁹⁾

(6) *Thư Kinh Diễn Nghĩa* (the Book of Documents Expounded, three volumes) by Lê Quý Đôn in 1772. His preface reads:

“I have heard that governing a nation cannot lack political affairs and that critic often use the Book of Documents as basis. (...) Being ignorant and backward, but after many years of studying the Book of Documents intensively, I understand its profound meanings. Whenever reading it, I actually feel extraordinarily interested. When being moved with inspiration, I jotted down my random thoughts, providing evidence from old and present-day writings in order to verify the book of sages. The

⁽⁸⁾ [Trần Văn Giáp 1990: 229].

⁽⁹⁾ [Trần Văn Giáp 1990: 229-230].

essential of the Book of Documents are often pointed out herein so that a king's subjects must criticize themselves when reading this book. If finding good deeds, they should ardently imitate them. If finding any evil, they should be afraid and cautious. Thus, it may be very useful that they can perform their duties attentively and deserve to be in their positions. With examples of success and failure to be imitated and prevented in order to preserve peace and warn against downfall, this can be a pillow-book for the sovereign to apply the rule of virtue. I have also compared the similarities and differences in commentaries by former Confucian scholars, and rectified doubtful points ...”⁽¹⁰⁾

(7) *Dịch Kinh Phu Thuyết* (Superficial Explanation of the Book of Change, five volumes) by Lê Quý Đôn. His *Preface* reads:

“The Six Classics teach us to investigate things, extend our knowledge, seek sincerity in our thoughts, rectify our minds, cultivate ourselves, regulate our families, govern the nation, and establish peace in the world; but only the Book of Change sufficiently explains the affairs of heaven, earth, and man as well as the principles of all beings. (...) Confucius did not enjoy studying the Book of Changes until his old age. When revising the Six Classics, (...) he wrote the Ten Wings or Ten Commentaries on the Book of Change only. (...) He explained the Book without minding wordiness. That is his literature as well as his words on human nature and Heaven's course, chiefly to instruct present and later generations. How earnest he was! I have ever ventured to say that the course of heaven and earth is permanent by nature, but there are always endless alterations of fullness and emptiness, of rise and decline, of love and hatred, of union and separation. Though human beings and myriad of things are much complicated, they all can be represented by the three hundred and eighty-four lines of sixty-four hexagrams. Each line or each hexagram has its timely application. Confucianism taught us the art of living and pointed out good or bad, critical or safe situations. He used very precise images, including nothing beyond human relations and daily activities. (...) Now speaking of the Texts appended to hexagrams, (...) only one sentence or one word of Confucius can be applied endlessly. That is indeed his high virtue and great cause. Moreover, understanding the hexagrams profoundly and pondering upon the lines thoroughly,

⁽¹⁰⁾ [Trần Văn Giáp 1990: 230-232].

we can examine the course of Heaven, characteristics of things, and the deeds of the ancients. Both our words and actions should be sincere and righteous. At work or at rest, we should show respect and honesty in order to keep good and ward off evil. Isn't it the very intention of the sages at the beginning when establishing their teachings? Despite my ignorance and shallow learning, when reading with respect the sages' teachings, studying commentaries of Ch'eng I and Zhuxi, and pondering former Confucian scholars' remarks, I sometimes feel moved and then write some more words in five volumes, chiefly for self-cultivation and mistake reduction. I dare not say that it is an achievement. Alas! Writing cannot express words completely; words cannot express thoughts completely. The spirituality and clarity depend on the right man. Silent fulfillment, confidence that needs no words, depend on virtuous conduct.^(*) It is important that scholars studying the Book of Change should not only see images and memorize the texts, see transformations and memorize the prognostications, but also pay much attention to virtuous conduct in order to understand the sages' thoughts beyond their words.”⁽¹¹⁾

(8) *Âm Chất Văn Chú* (The Annotated Text of Unrevealed Virtue, two volumes) by Lê Quý Đôn. *Yinzhi Wen* (The Text of Unrevealed Virtue), popularly attributed to Wenchang Dijun (the God of Literature), is a treatise on moral retribution, including the thoughts of the Three Teachings. As said in his preface, his book was based on *Dangui Ji* (Cinnabar Cinnamon Records, four volumes) by Huang Zhengyuan under the Chinese Qing dynasty (1761) and *Yinzhi Wen Zhu* (The Annotated Text of Unrevealed Virtue, two volumes) by Song Si Ren also under the Chinese Qing dynasty (1776).⁽¹²⁾ Lê Quý Đôn wrote:

“Wenchang Dijun (the God of Literature) compiled a 541-character moral treatise. Ancient sages and worthies expanded its purpose to help people remember and try to follow it. Stories of moral retribution recorded under each section help people enjoy doing good deeds and dare not do evil ones. This treatise has a great importance to educating people.

⁽¹¹⁾ [Trần Văn Giáp 1990: 232-234].

^(*) “Writing cannot . . . virtuous conduct” found in *Great Treatise I* (Yijing): 書不盡言, 言不盡意. 神而明之存乎其人; 默而成之, 不言而信, 存乎德行. The English trans. by Richard Wilhelm.

⁽¹²⁾ [Trần Văn Giáp 1990: 235-236].

“(…) without assessing my capacity, I took these two Chinese books [by Huang Zhengyuan and by Song Si Ren], added some supplements, and put it in two volumes. In the explanation, I borrowed from either Huang’s or Song’s book. On narrating stories of retribution, sometimes I copied from other books as supplement, sometimes I omitted old notes and redundant words, changed footnotes, and rearranged topically two hundred and eighty-three items in total, provided that words are concise and the meaning is clear; affairs are explicit and the grounds distinct. First, this book is aimed at my self-vigilance and self-cultivation so that I can reduce my mistakes. Next, its purpose is also to educate my descendants as well as to advise literati to mend their ways in accordance with the rites, preserve virtue, and rely on benevolence so that they can become superior men rather than inferior men.

“(…) I venture to think that everyone has both the mind of the body and the mind of the spirit. The former is human desires; the latter is morality (or heaven truth). Human desires dominating us, we do evil deeds. Heaven truth conquering human desires, we do good deeds. (...) Thanks to this book, in regard to a family, they can enjoy happiness and prosperity. In respect to a state and even the world, habits and customs can be improved, resulting in peace. It is an extremely important truth which readers should keep with respect and follow.”⁽¹³⁾

(9) *Vân Đài Loại Ngữ* (A Collection of Sorted Sayings, four volumes) by Lê Quý Đôn. This book consists of nine topics whose first one entitled *Lý Khí Ngữ* (Sayings on principle and vital force) includes fifty-four items on universe and cosmology. Although chiefly relying on the Neo-Confucian cosmology, Lê Quý Đôn also has his himself view.⁽¹⁴⁾

(10) *Chu Huấn Toán Yếu* (A Summary of Zhuxi’s Teachings, five volumes) by Phạm Nguyễn Du (1739-1787) under the Later Lê dynasty. He was styled Hiếu Đức and Dưỡng Hiên with his literary name Thạch Động, a native of Đặng Điền village, Chân Phúc district, Nghệ An province. He held the official post of *Đông Các Đại học Sĩ* (Great Scholar in the East Hall) and then became *Đốc Đồng* (Supervisor) of

⁽¹³⁾ [Phan Huy Chú 1992c: 174].

⁽¹⁴⁾ [Trần Văn Giáp 1990: 257].

Note: *Vân* 芸 is a kind of fragrant grass, also called *vân hương* 芸香, whose leaves or flowers, if kept between sheets of paper, can protect books from worms. *Vân Đài* is an upstairs library where *vân hương* is used to kill worms. *Loại Ngữ* means sorted sayings.

Nghệ An province. He was a prolific author. On Confucianism, he also wrote *Luận Ngữ Ngụ Án* (The Analects in My Humble Opinion), etc. Based on *Jinsi Lu* (Records of Recent Thoughts) by both Zhuxi and Lu Zuqian under the Song dynasty, *Chu Huấn Toàn Yếu* includes more than six hundred items extracted from Zhuxi's original texts and arranged in topics.⁽¹⁵⁾

(11) *Xuân Thu Quán Kiến* (A Humble Opinion on the spring and autumn Annals, twelve volumes) by Ngô Thì Nhậm (1746-1803) under the Later Lê dynasty. As a son of Ngô Thì Sĩ (1726-1780), he was styled Hy Doãn with his literary name Đạt Hiên and dharma name Hải Lượng Thiền Sư (Zen Master Hải Lượng), a native of Thanh Oai village, Thanh Trì district, Hà Đông province. He held the official post of *Hiển Sát Phó Sứ* (Vice Juridicial Commissioner) in Hải Dương province and then was promoted to many other important official posts. Under the Tây Sơn dynasty he was *Thị Lang* (Attendant Gentleman), got the title *Tĩnh Phái Hầu* (Tĩnh Phái Marquis), and was Chief-Envoy of an envoy delegation to China. He was a prolific author. In *Xuân Thu Quán Kiến*, under each affair cited from The Spring and Autumn Annals by Confucius, he added some clear notes and gave its source such as from *Zuozhuan* (Commentary of Zuo), *Gongyang Zhuan* (Commentary of Gongyang), *Guliang Zhuan* (Commentary of Guliang), etc. with his own comments.⁽¹⁶⁾

(12) *Nhân Thế Tu Tri* (Man Should Know, eight volumes) by Cao Xuân Dục (1842-1923) under the Nguyễn dynasty. He was styled Tử Phát with his literary name Long Cương, a native of Thịnh Kháng (later called Thịnh Mỹ) village, Đông Thành district, Nghệ An province [another source says, Diễn Châu prefecture, Nghệ Tĩnh province]. He was *Học Bộ Thượng Thư* (Imperial Secretary of Education Ministry) and then *Tổng Tài Sứ Quán* (Supersivor-in-Chief of Historiography Institute), and got the title *An Xuân Tử* (Peaceful Spring Viscount). He was a prolific author.

In respect of *Wulun* (Five Relationships between state and citizens, parents and children, husband and wife, siblings, and friends) and *Shiyi* (Ten Righteousness, including kind parents, filial children, good elder siblings, meek younger ones, righteous husbands, obedient wives, benevolent seniors, safe juniors, virtuous rulers,

⁽¹⁵⁾ [Trần Văn Giáp 1984: 261].

⁽¹⁶⁾ [Trần Văn Giáp 1990: 234-235].

and loyal citizens), in the 1901 preface of *Nhân Thế Tu Tri* he wrote:

“Man must have Five Relationships and Ten Righteousness, so the topics of ethics and moral conducts are set first. Man must earn his living and do business, so the topics of occupation and situational contacts are set next. Man must cultivate himself and regulate his family, and then the topics of self-cultivation and family regulation are set. Man must contact others, so the topics of social contacts and consolation with protection are the last to conclude the book. Thus from Classics, History, Philosophers, and Anthologies, I picked out some moral sayings and particular affairs of the sages and worthies. Their good words and deeds were selected, sorted topically, and annotated. Even some evil deeds were also chosen from books for admonition.”

The book tells eighty stories occurring in China and Vietnam to advise people to do good deeds and avoid wrongdoings. ⁽¹⁷⁾ It may help readers understand Vietnamese people’s Confucian philosophy during a definite historical period.

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Vietnamese Confucianism did not refer to a kind of learning only for literature, civil service examinations, and poetic recitation. There has been a current of thought combining the Three Teachings with Vietnamese culture. All researches on Vietnamese Confucianism have been still preliminary so far because the greatest obstacle is the loss of many works by former Confucians throughout dynasties.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Caodaism appeared in South Vietnam with ritual music and traditional costumes. Its motto is *Nho Tông Chuyển Thế* (Confucian principles to be applied for a better world). To some extent, is it true that Caodaism can be regarded as renovated Confucianism in modern times?

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