

Outline of the literary process of the Cochinchina region

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Abstract: *Though emerging rather later compared with the Tonkin (Đàng Ngoài) literature, the Cochinchina (Đàng Trong) literature was not ever a “lagger” but proud of its significant values and identities. In Vietnamese literature history, literature in the southern region in general and that of the Cochinchina in particular tended to lead in experimenting with genres, including the academic Nôm, văn, and tuồng (in the medieval period), newspapers, academic journals, short and long stories, and adaptation (in pre-modern period), with which it expanded influences on the literature of the north. Without a solid understanding of the literature of the south, one can hardly grasp the diverse and colorful development of Vietnamese literature as a whole. On this premise, the article provides an overview of the literary development in Cochinchina.*

Keywords: Process, Tonkin Literature, Cochinchina Literature, Vietnam Literature

1. Introduction

Since the 17th century, Vietnamese literature had diverged into two literary regions-Tonkin (Đàng Ngoài) and Cochinchina (Đàng Trong)-with their own characteristics and rules. That was when a pattern emerged: on the one hand, such diversion helped deepen the nuances and diversity of each region; on the other hand, exchanges and interactions between the regions also helped solidify a national literary foundation. Such reality requires researchers to find out the unique “code” of each regional literature in different times and understand the unity of such diversity, the basis upon which could enable us

to identify what is a national literary foundation.

Yet, for a long time, literature of the south in general and literature of Cochinchina in particular has not been evaluated fairly. Most studies have relied solely on specific literary achievements to assess a literary region, leading to a tendency to underestimate the Southern literature compared to the rich tradition of Northern literature. Some have even gone so far as to claim that “the Southern literature has no past¹”. Although over time Southern

¹ Speech by Tran Thanh Hiep, a lawyer and literary critic of the group “Creativity” (See: Nguyen Van Trung, 2015: 22)

literature has been reevaluated by successive generations of scholars, due to the difficulties in accessing and processing materials, general interest in Southern literature, and specifically the literature of the Cochinchina period, has fallen short. Thus, this study aims to provide an overview of the literary trajectory of the Cochinchina period.

2. Terminologies

2.1. *Cochinchina - the appellation of a new territory*

During the Trinh - Nguyen period of conflict, the two feudal families controlled the North and South regions, with the Gianh River (also known as Linh Giang, within the territory of Quang Binh province) serving as the boundary; the area from the Gianh River inward was called *Đàng Trong/Đường Trong* or *Cochinchina*, also known as *Nam Hà* (lit. southern river) during that time, and the area from the Gianh River outward was *Đàng Ngoài/Đường Ngoài*, or *Bắc Hà* (lit. northern river), known internationally as Tonkin. Therefore, the terms *Đàng Trong/Đường Trong - Đàng Ngoài/Đường Ngoài*, or *Nam Hà - Bắc Hà*, essentially held historical significance during the 17th-18th centuries. On the other hand, in our view, the formation and existence of the concept of Cochinchina went hand in hand with the existence of the notion of the Nguyen lords. Despite experiencing several decades of turmoil and decline¹, Cochinchina

persisted due to various reasons. A portion of intellectuals and common people in Gia Dinh continued to recognize the Nguyen as the legitimate dynasty. After Nguyen Anh retook Gia Dinh in 1788, the culture in this area underwent significant transformation. Gia Dinh swiftly became the cultural and political center under Nguyen Anh's administration. In reality, the idea of Nguyen's power and status as lords still prevailed, even fervently believed by the majority of inhabitants in the Southern homeland. Therefore, it wasn't until the ascension of Gia Long and the completion of the unification of the north and the south in 1802, both practically and politically, the two-century-long reign of the "Nguyễn Lords" ended, and the nostalgia for Cochinchina was forced to cease, along with the literary works reflecting its influence.

2.2. *Cochinchina literature*

The term "Cochinchina literature" used in this study refers to the works-written in both Nom and Han scripts-that were created in the geopolitical region of Cochinchina, or specifically southward of the Gianh River (geographically speaking), in the period from 1600 to 1802. However, not every work written in this region can be counted as belonging to the Cochinchina literature. Tabulating the works in that manner would be too simplistic!

In our view, one of the key factors in creating a literary "region" must be the common characteristics of the fundamental elements of literature; these include a system of aesthetic ideas and literary concepts, themes, central images, genres, and language. Nonetheless, all of these criteria depend heavily on the dynamics of the creative subject, namely the type of

¹ In 1774, the Le-Trinh forces, commanded by Hoang Ngu Phuc, drove the Nguyen lords into Gia Dinh. In the area known as "Đàng Trong cũ" (the former Cochinchina), there existed three main political powers: the ruling authority of the Le-Trinh (from Phu Xuan outward), the Tay Son forces, and the Nguyen lords (although weakened and faded).

authorship. In other words, the formation of common characteristics that constitute a literary region largely depends on the creative subject, or the collective of authors. Thus, delineating a literary region is directly related to determining the coordinates of the authors. This is particularly relevant in the case of Cochinchina literature, a literary landscape born on a piece of land that frequently experienced spatial expansion and changes in population demographics. From our perspective, an author can only be considered a Cochinchina author when they wrote with the consciousness of being a Cochinchina person. They might have been born and raised in Cochinchina, exposed to the atmosphere, culture, politics, and education of Cochinchina since childhood (thus, they are Cochinchina people by nature), just like the 18th century authors, regardless of whether their thoughts were oriented towards the Nguyen lords (like Nguyen Cu Trinh, Ngo The Lan, Nguyen Duong Hao, Pham Lam Anh, and Hoang Quang) or the aspirations for the Trinh lords (like Ly Minh, Le Duy Trung, etc.). They might be Northerners who migrated to Cochinchina early on, carrying primarily the creative experience of Tonkin, but they were willing to detach themselves from the Le-Trinh regime, instead turning towards serving the Nguyen lords, actively engaging and harmonizing with Cochinchina, seeing it as their living space and the precursor of the future, such as Dao Duy Tu and Nguyen Huu Dat. They might have emigrated from China, or their ancestors might have been Chinese, but they had spent enough time to bond, integrate, and understand life in Cochinchina, forsaking their ancestral homeland sentiments, and considering Cochinchina as their homeland, as the

Fatherland, such as the descendants of Mac, Trinh Hoai Duc, and Ngo Nhon Tinh, to name a few.

With this conceptualization, we do not consider all authors and works that appeared in the Southern region during the 17th and 18th centuries to belong to the Cochinchina literature. Take for instance, the case of Venerable Thich Dai San from Guangdong (who stayed in Cochinchina for a year to disseminate Buddhism), or officials from Tonkin who came to serve after Hoang Ngu Phuc crossed the Gianh River, driving the Nguyen lords into the South (such as Le Quy Don, Pham Nguyen Du). Although they once resided in the land of Cochinchina, documenting customs, culture, and religious devotion of the local people (as seen in *Hải ngoại ký sự* (“Overseas Chronicles”) by Thich Dai San), recording the history of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam, talents, literature, products, and customs (as seen in *Phủ biên tạp lục* (“Miscellaneous Records”) by Le Quy Don), their mindset was to record what they had observed in foreign land. Their time spent in this land was too short to leave any significant imprint; hence, their works essentially belonged to and were influenced by the creative tradition of another land. Furthermore, after the Tay Son dynasty seized Phu Xuan and made it the capital, the Nguyen lords retreated to Gia Dinh, particularly after Nguyen Anh established his position there, two main political centers emerged: Phu Xuan and Gia Dinh. A large portion of the population in Gia Dinh still wholeheartedly believed in the Nguyen lordship, as the Cochinchina consciousness was strongly and firmly affirmed. Thus, the literary works that emerged in Gia Dinh during this period

continued the tradition of Cochinchina literature from the previous era. Meanwhile, the literary figures and intellectuals of the Tay Son dynasty in Phu Xuan, who (i) inherently did not share the Cochinchina consciousness, (ii) never considered themselves as Cochinchina people, and (iii) even less so did they have a mindset that distinguished between Cochinchina and Tonkin (such as Nguyen Van Danh, Le Ngoc Han), cannot be regarded as authors of Cochinchina literature. Furthermore, their works carry a different tone, closely associated with the Tay Son spirit, unlike the common tone of Cochinchina literature over the two centuries. Their compositions belong to a different literary tradition, which many researchers have designated as “literature of the Tay Son era”.

3. The developmental stages of Cochinchina literature

3.1. From the early 17th century to 1672

From the early 17th century to 1672, the literary authorship in Cochinchina were intellectuals and Confucian scholars originating and raised in the North, but chose the path to serve the Nguyen lords in the South, exemplified by figures such as Dao Duy Tu (1572-1634, Thanh Hoa), Nguyen Huu Dat (1604-1681, Thanh Hoa). While being raised in the North promised to shape authors with a traditional cultural and literary background, which would create distinct advantages in producing renowned works in the early stages of Cochinchina literature compared to the preceding era (from the perspective of objective influence), the authors’ decision to follow the path of the Nguyen family was entirely subjective. This choice was not solely driven by circumstances (such as Dao Duy Tu not being promoted in

Tonkin due to his humble origins as the son of a mediocre court singer), but also the result of contemplation and clear direction with aspirations for personal and societal advancement, aiming to assert one’s true talent amidst the era’s circumstances.

The enthusiastic engagement of intellectuals injected a youthful and dynamic vitality into literature. The transition and integration from the rich literary tradition of Tonkin into Cochinchina were gradually experienced through the works of Dao Duy Tu. Although he did not have a prolific literary career like the grand accomplishments of other literary masters, with only two works, *Ngọa Long cương văn* and *Tu Dung văn* (written before 1627), in the context of the scarcity and stagnation of Cochinchina literature throughout the centuries (since the Vietnamese migration southward), Dao Duy Tu deserves to be honored as the “source igniter, pathfinder” (Bui Duy Tan, 2000: 35), setting an important precedent for the Cochinchina literary scene.

In addition to the two aforementioned introductory works, not many works from this period are known. These include *Hoa Vân Cáo Thị* by Nguyen Huu Dat, as well as several poems like “Trần Ninh trận phú”, “Văn khảo tế quân Nam chết trận Trần Ninh”, and “Văn ỷ tế quân Bắc chết trận Trần Ninh” whose authors are unclear. Additionally, some works were later transcribed by Nguyen Khoa Chiem in *Nam triều công nghiệp diễn chí*, with a general introduction stating “Contemporaries wrote that...”. Among these works, *Hoa Vân Cáo Thị* may forever remain elusive. Most of these works are closely related to the theme of battlefield, featuring prominent images of noble warriors, fortresses under

siege, warriors holding out for the right time, and a fervent desire to meet the lord to showcase their talents. This reflects literature's response to the most significant historical developments in Cochinchina at that time: the consolidation of military forces oriented towards independence and opposition to the Le-Trinh authority.

3.2. From 1673 to 1777

Whereas prior to 1672, the number of authors in Cochinchina was relatively low, with only a few figures from Tokin "willingly migrated" into Cochinchina, then from 1673 onward, when the North and South "suspended hostilities" after the devastating battle at the Tran Ninh pass, Cochinchina literature marked the beginning of a new era. The absence of war provided favorable conditions for cultural and educational development, stimulating the growth of the intellectual class, predominantly the Confucian scholars. In the mid-18th century, within the Cochinchina administration, literary aristocrats emerged alongside martial aristocrats. The writing community became more diverse with profound scholarly knowledge. Nguyen Huu Hao (son of Nguyen Huu Dat) "entertained himself with literature during peaceful border times, wrote the story *Song Tinh Bất Dạ* ('The Inseparable Lovers' Fate)' in national script, which was orally transmitted by people", often engaged in discussions about Buddhist teachings with Thich Dai San through letters. Nguyen Quang Tien who "had extensive scholarly knowledge and excelled in poetry" composed *Cầm đường xuân khúc* ("Spring Songs of the Camellia Path") and *Vịnh thiếu nữ phong* ("Ode to the Young Lady's Grace"). Vu Xuan Nung "was profound in

Confucianism and had extensive literary knowledge". Nguyen Khoa Chiem "was skilled in literature, and once compiled the book *Nam triều công nghiệp điển chí* ("Official Records of the Southern Court") circulated during his lifetime". Vu Dinh Phuong "was skilled in literature", "read extensively in historical classics, was very proficient in military writings". Le Xuan Chinh composed the poem "Bán phàm các" ("Ordinary Affairs") which earned him the highest score in the Confucian study examination (known in Vietnamese as *Văn chức*) in 1702. Nguyen Dang Thinh "had broad knowledge in literature", "was a renowned literary figure in his time, and all official documents during the reign were written by him", with notable works such as *Hiệu tào thi tập* ("Collection of Poetry by the Court Eunuch"), *Chuyết Trai văn tập* ("Collection of Prose by the Itinerant Scholar"), *Chuyết Trai vịnh sử tập* ("Collection of Historical Poems by the Itinerant Scholar"). Nguyen Dang Tien (Nguyen Dang Thinh's younger brother) "was skilled in literary composition, excelling in national script poetry", and his *Minh Khiêm thi tập* circulated during his lifetime. Nguyen Cu Trinh - Dang De's son - "excelled in poetry", "started writing at the age of eleven, skilled in composing poems and essays with a refined literary style"; all official documents after King Phuc Khoat's enthronement (1744) were written by Cu Trinh; during his tenure as Advisor to Gia Dinh, he often exchanged poems with Admiral Ha Tien Mac Thien Tu, with "calm and beautiful words", producing works like *Đạm Am thi tập* ("Collection of Melancholic Verses"), *Sãi Vãi* ("Sorrowful Lamentations") and *Quảng Ngãi thập nhị cảnh* ("Twelve

Scenes of Quảng Ngãi”). Dang Duc Thuat “was widely knowledgeable in poetry, excelling in historical studies”, revered as “the genealogist of the Dang family”. Nguyen Duong Hao and his wife Pham Lam Anh (the only female poet known in Cochinchina) were famous for their poetry collection *Chiến cổ Đường* (“Epic of the Tang Dynasty”), which contained “many strong and powerful verses”. Hoang Quang “excelled in literature, skilled in national script poetry”, composed the stirring poem “Hoài Nam khúc” (“Ballad of Nostalgia for the Southern Land”). Le Dat “was diligent in literature”. Nguyen Huong “had a great reputation in literature”, “had a poetry collection circulated during his lifetime”. Ngo The Lan had early achievements in creative pursuits, gaining fame with the poetry collection titled *Phong trúc tập* (“Bamboo and Pine Collection”). Le Quang Dinh was not only a talented writer but also excelled in painting competitions, among many more (National History Institute, 1995).

Not only did the native Vietnamese authors “mature in situ”, but Cochinchina literature during this period was also supplemented by a significant number of individuals with profound Confucian traditions - the Minh Huong people (descendants of Ming dynasty immigrants who settled in southern Vietnam during the 16th and 18th centuries). These people could be entirely Chinese like those who arrived in the early waves of migration (e.g., Tran Thuong Xuyen, Duong Ngan Dich, Mac Cuu), or “mixed-race” with a Chinese father and Vietnamese mother (e.g., Mac Thien Tich, Trinh Hoai Duc, Ngo Nhon Tinh). Over time, by living together with the native population, they had assimilated into the

local culture, participated in education, and taken civil service examinations under the administration of Cochinchina. They became purely Vietnamese in their awareness, in their perspectives, and many later became high-ranking officials, holding important positions under the Nguyen dynasty. The emergence of this group of authors has provided Cochinchina literature with a significant source of strength, helping maintain connections with traditional literature while also incorporating more international elements in the regional context of that time.

Alongside the Confucian scholars, who were the most prominent authors at that time, Cochinchina literature also saw the participation of the Nguyen dynasty lineage, nobles, and clergy.

Contrary to the glorious historical records in the South, the literary career of the Nguyen dynasty is rather modest. Among the nine Nguyen lords, only one Han poem praising “Cửa Tư Hiền” (“Gateway to Virtuousness”) by Lord Nguyen Phuc Thai is recorded, along with some works by Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu, and a Ming poem by Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu lamenting the death of the Zen master Ta Nguyen Thieu¹. Among them, notable is His Excellency Emperor Nguyen Phuc Chu, evaluated as the “most skilled in writing”, leaving behind “many artistically and humanly

¹ The *Đại Nam historical record*, volume VI, “Cao tăng liệt truyện” (Records of Eminent Monks), contains an epitaph, claiming to be composed by His Excellency Emperor Nguyen Phuc Chu, for the passing of the Zen master Ta Nguyen Thieu. However, according to the author of the Buddhist History of Hue, Master Nguyen Thieu passed away in 1728, while Nguyen Phuc Chu died in 1725, so it is likely that this epitaph was actually composed by Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu.

valuable poems”, and being a “great author” of Vietnamese literary history in the 18th century (Nguyen Q. Thang, 2007: 74-75). Among the descendants of the lords, only Prince Tu, also known as Dan (the eighth prince of Lord Nguyen Phuc Nguyen), “read widely in history books, excelled in national script poetry”. Because of being favored by the Great Emperor, he was envied by many people, so he requested to withdraw from the official position, not attending court, “indulging in moonlight and wind, composing poems for pleasure, including the “*Hoa tình truyện*” (Flower Love Story) in national script poetry, with very sorrowful words, which were passed down orally”; unfortunately, it was lost. Nguyen Phuc Duc, the eldest son of Phuc Tu, “was good at poetry, well-versed in music law, and it is said that the ‘Southern Tune’ was his creation” (National Historical Institute of Nguyen Dynasty, 1995). Additionally, there are no further records of the literary works of the Nguyen lords and their descendants.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Cochinchina was a devout Buddhist land. Alongside territorial expansion efforts and economic development, the Nguyen lords were also devout Buddhists, focusing on building and renovating temples, inviting monks from China to preach Buddhism, and acquiring Buddhist relics, scriptures, and statues. The presence of many esteemed monks not only invigorated Buddhism in Cochinchina but also added a significant force of exemplary intellectuals, virtuous legalists, and adept practitioners of the Triple Teachings to the community of authors and intellectuals in Cochinchina. However, apart from inscriptions on wooden boards hanging in temples like Thap Thap - Di Da

of monk Dao Nguyen and the Nom poem “*Phân ly từ*” (“Parting Words”) by monk Thiet Kien - Lieu Triet, the literary legacy of most monks mainly consists of verses of transmission or blessings before their passing, reflecting their views on human life, Zen thoughts of enlightenment, as seen in the verses of monk Nguyen Thieu - Sieu Bach, monk Minh Hai - Phap Bao, monk Thiet Dieu - Lieu Quan, to name a few.

Literature in Cochinchina during this period also had an equally important part, which was the contribution of Catholic literature. Based on the available sources, it can be affirmed to some extent that “this is a literary genre that uniquely demonstrates both the maturity of the national culture and a new step in Vietnamese literature”. The authors of this literary genre must undoubtedly be priests - clergy, many of whom were also “Confucian scholars well-versed in the traditional literary genres of Vietnamese feudal literature”. Unfortunately, being “members of a community frequently facing the risk of being placed outside the law” (Cao Tu Thanh, 2007: 318, 326), Catholic authors in Cochinchina were almost completely erased from Vietnamese literary history. Vietnamese literary history only records the name of the priest Lu Y Đoan (Louis Doan, ?-1678) in Quang Ngai with the work *Sấm truyền ca* (“Thundering Proclamation”), composed around the year 1670, written in Nom script, in lines of six and eight syllables (or six-eight style), adapting the first volumes of the Bible. Unfortunately, the original text has been lost. The preserved texts (all transcribed into the Vietnamese romanized script) only contain the complete first volume of *Tạo đao kinh* (Genesis) and part of the

first volume of *Lập quốc kinh* (Exodus). The remaining works included in the *Văn và tuồng* (“Collection of essays and dramas”)¹ are all anonymous.

It can be seen that there is a significant difference in the number of authors and literary works between the two periods before and after 1673. The years from 1673 to 1777 can be considered the most brilliant period of literary development in Cochinchina with a diverse and abundant team of authors and a rich volume of works in terms of content and genre. Fundamentally, the group of Confucian authors remained the most important and influential intellectual figures, dominating and shaping the literary landscape of the region. As a result of the new atmosphere in the new land, the Confucian authors embarked on their mission with an attitude of “optimistic service” and “faithful service”, which still accounted for a large number. Therefore, it is understandable why the themes of honoring leadership figures and praising nature, corresponding to the two fundamental important images of noble scholars and natural landscapes, are highlights of the literature of this period. However, alongside the active Confucian authors, in the literature of Cochinchina in the late 18th century, there were also hidden Confucian authors, typical examples being Vo Truong Toan, Ngo The Lan, Tran The Xuong, Nguyen Dang Dan, Le Dat, Dang Duc Thuat, etc. Although they did not leave behind as much work, it was

enough to reflect a stage of development of the Confucian scholars of that era, considering literature not only as a means of “transmitting the teachings” but also as a “realm of life” for them to “express” and “fulfill” themselves.

3.3. From 1778 to 1802

During the period from after the Nguyen lords fled to the South until Nguyen Anh regained control of the Southern region (in 1788), Vietnamese literature in the South of the Gianh River continued to uphold the tradition of Cochinchina literature in many aspects, especially in the inspiration of praise and honor for leadership figures. A typical work of this period is *Hoài Nam khúc* (“Ballad of Nostalgia for the Southern Land”) by Hoang Quang. He belonged to the class of people living in the Tay Son region but supported the Nguyen lords, and his heart always sang the song of longing for the South, envisioning the achievements in founding the nation by the Nguyen family.

While the literary works continuing the tradition of Cochinchina literature in Thuan Quang seem quite scattered and weak compared to the works imbued with the Tay Son spirit, in the Gia Dinh - Dong Nai region, the Cochinchina literary consciousness appears quite resolute and robust. Until the end of the 18th century, Gia Dinh became the sole vibrant center on the literary map of Cochinchina with a diverse creative force. Some chose the path of “withdrawing from officialdom to attain literary mastery”, like Vo Truong Toan (with his renowned *Hoài cổ phú* or “The Ballad of Nostalgia”, famous for a time), Dang Duc Thuat (with his poems “Thập sách” or “Ten books” and “Quy sơn thập vịnh” or “Ten Verses Upon Returning

¹ Imprimerie de la Mission, Saigon, 1899. The book gathers many Catholic literary works from the 18th-19th centuries, printed in Quoc ngu (Vietnamese romanized script), but according to researcher Cao Tu Thanh, they were certainly transcribed from original Nom script manuscripts.

to the Mountains”¹). Some displayed heroic spirit in resisting Tay Son, such as Lam Tan (through his poem “Đề Lễ công từ” or “Poem on the Occasion of the Celebration” at Nguyen Huu Canh’s temple). Figures from Ha Tien such as Tran Nam Lai, who later settled in Tran Bien, were also renowned poets of that era². Not to mention Ky Son Diep Minh Phung, Phuc Son Vuong Ke Sinh, Hoi Son Huynh Ngoc Uan, the “Tam gia” (“Three Talents”) Trinh Hoai Duc - Ngo Nhon Tinh - Le Quanh Dinh. All of them constituted a creative force - an intellectual class “with the ability and the need to create literature, and more importantly, they stood at the starting point of self-awareness about the need for literary creation” (Cao Tu Thanh, 1988: 60). It’s worth noting that among the prominent literary and cultural figures of Gia Dinh at that time, many hailed from Minh Huong origin, such as Vo Truong Toan, Trinh Hoai Duc, Ngo Nhon Tinh, Huynh Ngoc Uan, Diep Minh Phung, Vuong Ke Sinh, etc. They all contributed to integrating Han-Nom literature of Gia Dinh into the national literature, concluding the process of establishing the Vietnamese cultural map with three major axes: Thang Long - Phu Xuan - Gia Dinh. The latter rose to become the cultural center of the entire Southern plain and, in literary terms, became the center that

inherited the most and the “purest” (Cao Tu Thanh, 1988: 76) achievements of Cochinchina literature over two hundred years, especially in terms of content and creative inspiration.

4. Conclusion

An overview of the literary process in Cochinchina reveals that, despite uneven development in different periods, Cochinchina literature fundamentally reflects the compatibility between literature and history. While the period from 1600 to 1672 saw literary activities closely associated with the Northern themes, the period from 1672 to 1777 saw literary content linked to the Southward expansion campaign. Regardless of the era, Cochinchina society always relied on the leadership and guidance of the intellectual class, leading to the exaltation of leadership figures as prominent subjects in literature. The period from 1778 to 1802 marked a “revival” of the purest Cochinchina values. Literary centers gradually shifted southward, in parallel with the nation’s then southern expansion. Overall, there was an imbalance in the structure of literary works, with verse seeming to dominate prose, and theoretical activities appearing weaker compared to creative endeavors. These factors shaped the complexion of Cochinchina literature during this period, exhibiting both similarities and distinctive features compared to contemporary Cochinchina literature □

¹ This work is currently not found, but according to Trinh Hoai Duc in the poem “Lament for Đặng Cửu Tư”, the footnote section mentions the names of these two works (Cited in: Le Quang Truong, 2012: 23).

² Although his works have not been found to date, in the poem “Lament for Trần Nam Lai” by Trinh Hoai Duc written in 1786, the following lines demonstrated that his poetic talent and calligraphic skills were immense: “In Gia Dinh, he was a master of calligraphy/ In Ha Tien, he was a great of poetic talent” (Cited in: Le Quang Truong, 2012: 23).

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