

## **THE COLLECTION OF “HAGIOGRAPHY, CANONIZED CONFERMENT” IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES LIBRARY**

NGUYỄN LÊ PHƯƠNG HOÀI<sup>(\*)</sup>

### **I. The introduction of the collection**

Together with *Monarchal Reputation Conferment* (Sắc phong), *Hagiography*, *Canonized Conferment* (Thần tích, Thần sắc) have completed the picture of Vietnam's historical heritages. *Hagiographies* are stories of genies who are worshipped in villages and communes. *Canonized Conferment* are rules issued by King, who is the representative of feudal government, to communes for their worshipping. These stories were written and edited in Sino or Romanization Vietnamese by distinct scholars. Stories are quite diversified and interesting when mixing historical events with folk tales. They are about heroes who debated invades then created the new villages or new jobs, and even were genies of rivers and oceans...

In 1938, French and Vietnamese researchers who studied on ethnographic did a survey on genies who were worshipped in Vietnamese villages under the name of “Hội khảo cứu phong tục”. They also studied on praying rules

in each village across the country. The survey collected the reports of dignitaries with all written records of hagiographies, the state-established and praying rules, and each village's characteristics such as procession, gifts and forbidden rules... This special source of documents were stored and secured in the École française d'Extrême-Orient, and now are in the Social Sciences Library.

The collection contains 13,211 books with 230,000 pages, which are hand - written (Hồ Sĩ Quý, Vương Toàn, 2011) with the full list of all stories about genies worshipped in temples across Vietnam. They are highly valuable for doing researches on Vietnam's old customs and traditions

- *About the format:* Records of “Hagiography, Canonized Conferment” are filled in based on the questionnaires and answers. Some villages listed all the questions then answered them while

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<sup>(\*)</sup> MA., Institute of Social Sciences and Information.

others directly filled their answers in the questionnaires. Most of them are in Romanization Vietnamese, except some villages' or genies' names were in both Sino characters and Romanization Vietnamese. Also, some of stories had two versions, in Romanization Vietnamese then translated to Sino characters or Demotic script (TTTS 1585<sup>(\*)</sup>) - *Hagiography, Canonized Conferment of An Biên village, canton Quan, Hải Phòng*). Some of the records even included French together with national language, Sino characters and Demotic script (*Hagiography of Hội Sơn village, canton An Lương, Duy Xuyên district, Quảng Nam province*). Beside the list of *hagiography*, there were many versions which copied whole sắc phong in Sino characters and Demotic script. *Canonized Conferment* are the records of promotions issued by Vietnamese Kings in the feudal period to villages on Kings' birthday celebration or important occasions. These records were written on a special kind of paper and sealed by King. Original records were highly protected in lacquer wooden boxes which were kept in harem. However, some of the records were lost or destroyed due to wars or fires. As a result, list of *hagiography* attached with promotion records which are stored in the Social Sciences Library now become more precious for not Vietnamese villages, researchers and also cultural management. Because they have important roles in researches, verification,

conservation and restoration of Vietnam cultural and historical heritages.

**About the content:** A *hagiography* or a *canonized Conferment* has short introduction and ending. The opening part is normally the names of writer and the origin of the record. The ending part is the commitment to the correct information with full name, age, signature as well as the verification of communes' dignitaries. The main body is divided into 3 parts as followed: *The story about the genie; the state-established documents for Saints, Genies and rules of worship.*

+ *The story about genies are the most interesting part of a record which describe about these genies.* 13,211 records are 13,211 stories of various genies who are worshipped in 13,211 villages. The survey result also pointed out that many records have a similar way of telling stories between village. They are normally long stories while some of records had a short introduction then go straight to the content. Documents also have the explanation about genies as being created by land and sky, for example:

“With more than 2,000 years of reign, Hùng King (known as Vietnam's Saint) built a long history and big country as the foundation of the ancient palaces; the long sealine and established his religion, helping people and managed 15 tribes which was called as Triệu Tổ đất Bách Việt. There was a poem written as below:

*Mở mang Nam Việt từ Kinh Dương  
Nhất thống sơn hà mười tám vua*

<sup>(\*)</sup> Inventory Code in the Social Sciences Library.

*Mười tám đời truyền thiên cổ tại  
Ức niên hương hỏa, ức niên thom*

(Meaning: Nam Việt was established from Kinh Dương and the country was reigned and prosperously developed through 18 Kings)

There was a story when Hùng's dynasty finally ended then the following dynasties were born such as Đông Tây Hán, Ngô, Tấn, Tống, Tề, Lương. A person named Bí from Lý's family and lived in Thái Bình province. He had skills in both literay and military strategy and was promoted to be Lương Giám in Cửu Đức district. Also, there was another officials named Tiêu Tư who managed the region of Giao Châu. He was very strict to people and his henchmen were also very cruel and brutal toward everyone in Cửu Châu. It was the reason why Lý Bí raised the troops in Cửu Đức as a way to help people. At this time, Northern side was fighting againts Tiêu Tư while Southern side set up the power in Lâm Ấp. One day, King sent his soldiers to Hải Dương (old name was Hồng Châu) of Cẩm Giàng, district<sup>(\*)</sup> Thượng Hồng allowed his soldiers to rest when they arrived Bình Lãng camp. He found out the good location of this place, hence, he ordered all people in this region to build camps with the purpose of preventing Lương enemy in the future. At about 11 pm to 1 am, King dreamed of 3 men who dressed formal and said to him that he was Đô Thiên. The other two were Tả Kiên Thần Đại Đô, and Hữu Kiên Thần Đại Đức.

<sup>(\*)</sup> Phủ: a feudal administrative unit.

He was the one who managed the Southern sky and now willingly went to hell and fight againts the enemy. After fishing his words, he shouted loudly and rode a horse to Mạn Đông but suddenly saw an yeallow cloud like a path of silk in red and looking down to that region. After that, three men just dissappeared. When the King woke up, he realized it was a speacial dream and the date was January 9th. Next day morning, Lương enenmy surround whole area but our soldiers were the winner and even arrested the enemy's head general as well as collected a lot of weapons. King realized that there was support from troops in hell so that his soldiers defeated the enemy. King also annouced that Bình Lãng camp was a sacred place and not allow people in. People built a temple to worship Đô Thiên and the other two on his left and right side.”  
(*Stories of Bình Lãng commune of Cẩm Giàng, Hải Dương province*).

Some other *thần tích* however had a short introduction then went straight to the content of the story. For example, it is *Canonized Conferment in Tiêu Xá village, Gia Bình district of Bắc Ninh province* (TTTS 2459/60):

“Why having stories like this?”

There was a period of Hùng King when most of Vietnam were separated and destroyed; King Ngô Tôn Quyền in Hoan Châu picked Loa as the capital of new country. It is Thanh Hoa city now and the old name was Châu Ái. There was a man Trang Nguyễn married to Ngoạn Trần, a woman in his village. He was a rich but kind man and very nice to

people. He was over 50 while his wife was about 40 but they did not have son. As a result, they decided to go to a far place to ask for a son and one day, they came to Tây Thiên temple in Tam Đảo mountain. They stayed in the temple for 3 nights but did not have any dream so they ask for going back home. After a day, they were in Thuận An of Gia Bình commune in Tiêu Xá village. They stayed and slept at a restaurant here and saw an old man dressed like a King sitting on a cloud. There were 3 eggs in his hand and he read a poem as below:

*Tam noãn thân long phó Nguyễn gia*

*Tướng hồi vi bảo kế sơn hà.*

*Thiên niên trường tại thiên giang chủ.*

*Tiêu Xá chi tân phúc nhật gia.*

He flew up to sky right after reading the poem” (*Hagiography, Canonized Conferment Tiêu Xá village, Gia Bình district of Bắc Ninh province, 1938, page 660-661*).

+ *The state-established documents for Saints, Genies* has listed fully and very detailed of the personal background (the main content of the *hagiography, canonized conferment* story) including hometown, achievements for public and all of his awards and promotions.

Example:

“The King heard of him leaving then ordered the troops back to the place where he flew to the sky and built a temple for worshipping him. King also agreed to let people in Đĩnh Tú, Thượng Khê, Thái Khê of Nghĩa Bang to have temples for him.

He was promoted as Trung Á Đại Vương and colors as red and yellow were forbidden in festival.

He was also promoted as Hùng kiệt Trác vĩ Hộ quốc An dân Đại vương and allowed people in Đĩnh Tú, Thượng Khê, Thái Khê belong to Nghĩa Bang camp to build temple for worshipping.

Up to the period of King Đinh Tiên Hoàng, he came to the temple at the first week of January every year to show his respect to the sacredness of the Big King. The reason was when King Đinh stayed in the temple, he was rescued and it became an annual rule.

Again, the temple was so sacred that many Kings picked it to visit in many years later.

In the period of King Trần Thái Tông, Nguyên enemy was surrounded when they came to the capital. Trần Quốc Tuấn therefore asked genies in the temple who helped to defeat the Ô Mã Nhi enemy before. King Thái Tông is named for Linh ứng Anh triết Đương lộ Hiển hựu Đại vương.

In the period of King Lê Thái Tổ, he defeated Liễu Thăng enemy of Ming Dynasty to achieve the peace for country. King Thái Tổ said the temple symbolized for a King then ordered to build a temple in Đĩnh Tú, a part of Thượng Khê region belonged to Thái Khê of Nghĩa Bang camp.” (Nguyễn Tá Nhí and Nguyễn Văn Thịnh, 2010, page 9).

+ *The rules of worship* were a full package of answer for all rules, formats, regulations and restrictions when doing worship. Some stories directly provided

the answers while some others listed both questions and answers. The rules were basically listed as followed:

What things are needed for worship King?

Where to worship?

How to restore and repair the place?

What are the restrictions?

How to communicate?

In village, how to worship the King?

Which date is linked with the story?

Which date is linked with the weather?

What are the offerings?

Who will have to change and where is the source of fund?

After worship, how to share the offerings?

If there is anyone who make mistakes, how to punish??

What are the changes of worship?

Is there any changes of worship in recent years?

The changes of offerings (what were used before and what will be used for now?).

The offerings are given to who first? Is there any changes?

How many people can join in?

Is there any changes in keeping themselves clean, eat vegetarian, no alcohol, etc., before the ritual?

Is there any changes of the restrictions?

It could be seen like each story will provide information of religions and traditions and customs of a province. Collections are highly valuable for reference of provinces which would like to create rules and cultural daily life of local people in that province. It is also

the evidence for temples' restoration. The collection is the precious document for cultural researchers, historian and those who study on ethnology of Vietnam. As a result, the collection is attractive with many readers and researchers.

## **II. The reality of management, preservation and exploration of collections of Hagiography, Canonized Conferment in the Social Sciences Library**

In recent years, The Social Sciences Library keeps focusing on management, preservation and exploration of these document sources.

### ***About the management and protection:***

The collection is now stored and arranged by the name of location. In each unit, documents then are divided by descending level of location (provinces and lower level units). Documents which belong to a village will be put in a volume. Although they are stored and protected carefully but still partly were destroyed over the years. The survey pointed out that those records, which were hand – written, basically are in the original status but the papers become yellow. This led to the ink and letters are not very clear now. These stories were hand-written and protected to keep its original version but the papers faded and cracked so the letters were not very clear. The statistic showed that 30% of them were easy to be torn; 24% of them have papers faded into yellow due to the high acidity; also, 10% of them were moldy (Nguyễn Thị Minh Trung, Trần Thị Kiều Nga and Nguyễn Lê Phương Hoài, 2011, page 3). The reason is

because of lacking of space and suitable conditions for preservation. Paper quality was low due to old technology and using too much chemicals as suffix so when the acidity is high, the paper will be yellow and cracked.

The other reason is the usage of human. Today, the library does not provide the original version for readers. Over the half of decade, the collection were used by thousands of readers, however, the way of using led to many damages to the collection. Copying the documents into many other collections or moving them to many places also led to the damaged conditions, especially during the War and library's head quarter movement.

***About the organization of exploration:***

The library has edited and published the list of *Hagiography, Canonized Conferment of Vietnam* so that they can protect these records in long term and facilitate the demand on doing research and exploring the valuable document sources. They also build the database of this list then convert them into digital version. As a result, individuals and organizations can look up and achieve information through the LAN net of the library..

**III. Recommendation on the management and protection of exploring and promoting the values of collections about Hagiography, Canonized Conferment**

Protection and promotion of values of collections about Thần tích, Thần sắc are essential for Library of Social and Sciences which help researchers and readers in learning more precious

information and documents about history, traditions, customs and culture. This also develops and improves the efficiency of the library. In order to achieve the well management and protection, we have some recommendation as followed:

- The collection needs to be stored in a wide space with separate cases and should be well-equipped and in good condition. Records should be kept in acid-reducing layers of paper before packing them into boxes.

- Checking often and fixing or restoring the hư hỏng in a soonest time or making copied version with insurance. If there are any damages, which require the professional maintainance, so contact with the professional centers if needed.

- Creating rules and documents about the approaching method for readers as well as the techniques of document protection.

- For the digital records, it is necessary to do research on security for the best protection.

- Hagiography, *Canonized Conferment* are hand-writing documents in Chinese characters or Demotic script. Reading, pronunciation and translation will face a lot of difficulties due to the letters faded over the time. As a result, some of cases are wrongly understood or translated. Therefore, the library should type the hand-writing parts then translate to Vietnamese as the foundation of publishing books. These would be useful for researchers, management as well as interested individuals and organization □

## References

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6. *Hagiography, Canonized Conferment of Bình Lãng commune, Cẩm Giàng, Hải Dương province* (1938) is now stored in The Social Sciences Library.
7. *Hagiography, Canonized Conferment of Tiêu Xá commune, Gia Bình, Bắc Ninh province* (1938) is now stored in the Social Sciences Library.

(tiếp theo trang 60)

TẠ NGỌC TẤN, LÊ QUỐC LÝ (Editors in chief). **Reform, enhance the effectiveness of state-owned enterprise, ensuring the major role of state in socialist-oriented market economy.** H.: National Politics Publishing House, 2012, 628 pages., Vb 50608.

State enterprise has always been a key issue in theory and practice of socialist-oriented market economy in the world in general and at Vietnam in particular. To reform, enhance productivity and business result of state-owned enterprises, ensuring the major role of the state in the socialist oriented market economy requires the solving of many issues in the perception and practical actions of leaders,

managers, business managers, and employees. The book consists of 4 parts. Part1 contains discussions of places, roles, the nature and importance of state-owned enterprises in the socialist oriented market economy as well as the implementation of all those roles in the current state enterprise system.

Part 2 contains analyses, multi-dimensional comments of the reality of Vietnamese state enterprises under the scope of auditing, investment agencies, research institutions, as well as insiders.

Part 3 are specializes in various aspects of state enterprises such as employees, banks, operating model...

Part 4 are researches on foreign countries to draw out valuable lessons for Vietnam.

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