

DOCTORAL THESIS IN BRIEF

NGUYEN THANH NAM. *Education in the later Le dynasty - primitive period (1428-1527) from a cultural perspective*

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The later Le dynasty - primitive period (1428-1527), especially during the reign of King Le Thanh Tong, was one of the periods with several important changes in all aspects of social-economic life, rising as an powerful nation in Southeast Asia. The reigning monarchs in this period paid much attention to education, especially the training and the use of mandarins to develop the country. Education in the later Le dynasty - primitive period has left many valuable legacy, which took a pulse, rooted and developed in the flow of national culture.

The thesis "Education in the later Le dynasty - primitive period (1428-1527) from a cultural perspective" by Nguyen Thanh Nam clarifies the educational content and characteristics in this period as well as its shining values and draws useful references to the present.

Apart from the introduction, conclusion, references and chapter 1 overviewing the previous research and theoretic basis, the main content of the thesis is presented in three chapters (from chapter 2 to chapter 4).

Chapter 2: Overview of the later Le dynasty - primitive period and description of its education

The later Le - primitive period was founded as a result of the ten-year tough resistance (1418-1427), which indicated the unity of Vietnamese people from 938 to the moment of resistance breakout. The state apparatus of this dynasty was born as an unavoidable consequence of the historical context in order to solve the problems of the contemporary society.

On the educational ideology, the Le kings leaned towards Confucianism, in which the Sung Confucianism was promoted as a state orthodox ideology with the strategic slogan "The Respect for Confucianism is the top Priority" (stone stele at the Temple of Literature - 1442). Confucianism in the later Le dynasty gradually transformed to suit the social context.

During the later Le dynasty, educational institutions were represented by the imperial decrees in relation to educational activities. Right after the country was in peace, King Le Thai To paid attention to encouraging the offspring of the captain-rank officers and above to pursuit learning. By the 15th Hong Duc year (1484), King Le Thanh Tong ordered to erect the stone steles inscribed with the names of Confucian doctoral laureates who passed the imperial examinations from the 3rd Bao Dai year (1442) to the 40th Canh Hung year (1779). Later, the imperial court consistently issued orders specifying each exam, the subject of the exam, the time of entering the regional exam sites (*thi Huong*)... In general, the educational institutions of the later Le

dynasty promulgated specific regulations in three major aspects: the selection of talents who passed the examination only; the examination was held once every three years; engraving the names of those who passed the doctoral examinations on the stone steles to honour their merits.

With the policy of encouraging Confucian scholars and a well-established regime of examination, King Le Thanh Tong simultaneously achieved two goals: selecting the talents to work for the state apparatus, transferring the power from the aristocracy to the bureaucracy; making the Confucianism deeply penetrate into the society, affirming that the state was associated with the rule of civil mandarins and in conformity with the Confucianism political ideologies.

Shortly after the establishment of the royal dynasty, Le kings started building the school system to train talented people. The Temple of Literature - National University (University for the Sons of the Nation) and the schools were repaired and restored at the court and districts, respectively. The school system in this period was open for both the descendants of the imperial officers and common people. There were schools at the districts and classes at the communes.

The educational content in this period is identical from the National University to the regional, district and commune public schools throughout the country, which was demonstrated in three aspects, i.e. lecturing, writing and remarking. Textbooks in this period were printed timely with a sufficient quantity, including not only the Four Books and Five Classics,

but also the Book of Filial Piety, the Precious Mirror of the Enlightened Heart - Mind, Three-word Book, Preliminary Five-word Poetry, etc.

The Le dynasties attributed an importance on organizing the examinations to select talents to become mandarins. The first exam, called *thi Hương*, was a regional examination held once every three years. Those who passed the regional exam went to attend the national examination (*thi Hội*) in the capital for a doctorate. Candidates whose high marks in rank list from up down would pass the regional exam, were classified two kinds: top group of the list had title *Hương cống* (licentiate), the seconds of the list had the title *Sinh đồ* (high-school graduate), the top highest scored passers of this exam had title *Giải nguyên*. And the Royal Court examination (*thi Đình*) presided over by the king in the capital to choose the top-placed, first doctor. By 1448, there were three degrees in results of this examination with the title *Tiến sĩ cập đệ* (three most successful candidates of the highest-ranking group, *Trạng Nguyên, Bảng Nhãn, Thám Hoa*), title *Tiến sĩ xuất thân - Hoàng Giáp* (the second grade doctoral laureates) and *Đông Tiến sĩ xuất thân* (the third grade laureates). It is worth noting that the construction of examination areas, the organization of examination supervising and marking councils in the later Le dynasty was implemented very seriously and extensively. The later Le dynasty set strict regulations on the examination time, candidates and supervisors, examination areas, examination supervising and marking, etc.

Chapter 3: Cultural heritage of the education in the later Le dynasty - primitive period

Tangible heritage: Soon after taking the throne, King Le Loi rearranged the National University in the capital and schools in all regions and districts. By 1483, King Le Thanh Tong continued to expand the National University to become a Thai Hoc courtyard (Doctoral Quarter), which was a large institution including a large lecture (Minh Luan house), west and east classrooms, a storehouse for wooden printing blocks and two sets of three 25 room dormitories. There stood two great halls outside were stone steles inscribed with the names of the new doctoral laureates.

The architectural heritage of the Temple of Literature in the later Le dynasty - primitive period is conveyed in the system of brick-and-mortar walls and the steles remain standing upon stone tortoises. In 1484, with the policy of promoting Confucianism and recognizing scholars who passed the Royal Exams, King Le Thanh Tong erected the first seven stone steles with the record of the 1442 Royal Exam at the Temple of Literature - National University. At present, there are remaining 82 stone steles on the right and left sides of Thien Quang well (the Well Heavenly Clarity). Out of these remaining 82 steles, the earliest stele was erected in 1484 engraved with the names of doctoral laureates of the 1442 royal exams (the 3rd Bao Dai year) while the last stele was made in 1780 to record the history of the examination in 1779 (40th Canh Hung year). There are

12 steles inscribed with the names of doctoral laureates of the later Le dynasty - primitive period.

Intangible heritage: An emphasis on the benefits of learning and on respect for teachers and talent right from this period has shaped the Vietnamese education tradition which became the pinnacle in the reign of King Le Thanh Tong. During his 39 years' reign, he held 12 national examinations to choose 501 doctoral laureates (there were 29 national examinations to choose 988 doctoral laureates in the later Le dynasty - primitive period. These numbers were larger than the sums of both Ly and Tran dynasties. Education has created a team of qualified scholars who were capable of taking on the great responsibilities of the country, namely Luong The Vinh, Do Nhuan, Than Nhan Trung, Thai Thuan, Ngo Si Lien, etc.

One of the most important values of institutionalizing the education in the later Le dynasty - primitive period was the policy of encouraging talents. Right after taking the throne, King Le Thai To made a royal speech about holding an examination to choose talents to serve the country. While the kings of the previous dynasties mainly selected the mandarins by merits in their ruling apparatus, King Le Thanh Tong promulgated the policies of appointing an educated person who passed the examination, and at the same time rewarding the mandarins for their merits.

The education and examination system of the later Le dynasty - primitive period trained a number of talented people for the

prosperous feudalism at that time. It also produced many prominent writers, poets, historians and great men of culture who was the master of the scholarship culture with a significant contribution to the national culture in the fields of literature, history, geography, mathematics and medicine, etc.

This period included two famous mathematicians, Luong The Vinh and Vu Huu. Medicine was also highly developed with two well-known figures, namely Phan Phu Tien (also a historian) and first-rank doctoral laureate Nguyen Truc.

King Le Thanh Tong and the Tao Dan group (a group of 12 poets was formally recognized by the court) composed several poetry collections. The compilation of history books of the later Le dynasty - primitive period had new innovations associated with the names of Phan Phu Tien, Ngo Si Lien, Vu Quynh, etc. In addition, this period legated some valuable historical and geographic masterpieces and series. Some aspects of the art were considerably developed, reflecting the significant changes in the course of the national art history. In 1437, the king order the court minister Nguyen Trai to oversee the work on the musical instruments and the training in royal court music and dance. King Le Thanh Tong also established an unit in charge of folk music.

One of the most important politic achievements of the later Le dynasty - primitive period was the legal system and the birth of the Hong Duc Code, which was considered the most systematic laws of this dynasty. It is the oldest and

most comprehensive law ever existed in Vietnam.

Chapter 4: Education in the later Le dynasty - primitive period in the flow of the national education

The education in the later Le dynasty - primitive period had more significantly developed aspects than that in the Ly - Tran dynasties. One of the most important values was the introduction of a set of four criteria that a feudal education aimed to achieve. First criterion was to train a team of well-educated, erudite people governed by the Confucian thought, learning with practice. The second criterion was to train the decorum intellectuals. The third criterion was to train the intellectuals who were dedicated to the assigned missions and loyal to the kings and the court. The fourth criterion was to train a staff having legal knowledge and good sense of law observance.

Studying several administrative documents such as royal edicts and speeches, records and materials related to the education in the later Le dynasty - primitive period, it can be seen that this period established a system of educational philosophies imbued with humanities and attached to the reality of life. The education in the later Le dynasty - primitive period promoted the good values of the Confucianism on the basis of traditional cultural values of the nation to build the educational content and curriculum. The educational philosophies in this period included learning with practice, which means that knowledge must be used in work and in real life.

To the later Le dynasty - primitive period, the main purpose of education was to choose talented people for the administrative apparatus of a bureaucratic centralized-feudal state. However, the nature of education always has the function of enlightenment. Therefore, keen learners at that time were not only encouraged to become a mandarin to change life, but also to become a decorum and erudite one if they did not want to be involved in politics. The lifestyle of benevolence and righteousness, gratitude to parents and grandparents, respect for the elderly and consider the young, and deep affection of hometown country were highly appreciated. Thanks to the Confucianism education in this period, the gentlement who always adhered to the Three moral Bonds and Five constant Virtues, became the typical model of this age. In addition to moral values for men, this Confucianism education also introduced ethical standards for women, namely the Three Obediences and the Four Virtues.

In order to inherit the educational values of the later Le dynasty - primitive period, the thesis draws on four following lessons:

- Focus on developing human as a subject of the educational activity and cultural creativity.

- Preserve the traditional elements in education, and constantly absorb the cultural values of humanity for educational development.

- Identify an appropriate educational philosophy to promote education in Vietnam.

- Closely link between education and training and the use of human resources, while continue to innovate education in accordance with modern day development.

The thesis was successfully defended before the institutional-level thesis council at the Hanoi University of Culture in 2017.

*Introduced by
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