

Characteristics of Sino-Nom Funeral Orations in Binh Dinh province

Vo Minh Hai

Ph.D, Quy Nhon University

Email: minhhaiquynhon@gmail.com

Nguyen Thi Be

MA., Khanh Hoa University

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Abstract: *The authors introduce initial research findings of a literary genre of Binh Dinh's Sino-Nom literature based on the Sino-Nom funeral orations and information collected through fieldwork in Binh Dinh province. The findings highlight unique features of these Sino-Nom documents, a genre with a ritual function adopting sorrowful tone that has brought new cultural values into the development process of Binh Dinh's literature.*

Keywords: Sino-Vietnamese, Sino-Nom Literature, Sino-Nom funeral oration, Binh Dinh Literature

1. Introduction

Sino-Nom funeral oration, a genre of Sino-Nom literature, has been adapted from the Chinese genre of funeral oration. A funeral oration, from the cultural perspective, delivers the message of respect for heaven and the rule of law, bridging the natural and supernatural worlds and the past and the present. Each writing of the genre can be seen as a sincerely humanistic dialogue.

Twenty-seven worship and funeral orations¹ were collected during our three field trips to Binh Dinh province from October 2015 until May 2019. We noticed a large quantity

of Sino-Nom funeral orations in Binh Dinh province, yet this source of documents has not been paid adequate attention for study. There are four Chinese funeral orations for the Duke Tran Duc Hoa, the Grand Duke Dao Duy Tu, the Tran family in Canh Van, and the Dang family in Loc Trung. Six Sino-Nom texts include the funeral orations for Commandant of Backside Army Vo Tanh (the king's son-in-law) and Ngo Tung Chau - a scholar-official of Ministry of Rites (composed by Dang Duc Sieu), a wife's funeral oration for her husband (by Nguyen Trong Tri), a funeral oration for the mother, and other funeral orations for martyrs (by Dao Phan Duan), for a master (by the most venerable Bich Lien), and for forsaken spirits (by Tran Dinh Tan).

¹ Including four texts in Chinese, six texts in Sino-Nom, five texts in Sino-Nom that were transliterated into Vietnamese, and twelve texts in Vietnamese.

Regarding the funeral orations in Vietnamese, three documents at Binh Dinh Historical Archives Center are similar to those collected by Dang Quy Dich and by us in 2017. Three other documents gathered by Dang Quy Dich are also matching ours, making up six documents in total. None of them has been published in any research work. The rest of the series were collected at village communal houses, such as worship orations for *Quan đế* [Emperor Guan], *Thiên hậu* [Queen of Heaven], *Bốn Đầu Công* [God of Derivation], the bi-annual orations for spring and autumn, and the oratorical prayers for peace.

2. Thematic features of Sino-Nom funeral orations in Binh Dinh province

a) Endorsement of morality and social ethnics

Up to present, we have not encountered any funeral orations for the king made in the voice of his officials. Princess Le Ngoc Han delivered her funeral oration for Emperor Quang Trung in her capacity as his wife. Another funeral oration for Quang Trung was composed by Tran Dinh Tan but on behalf of the local people worshiping their emperor. Perhaps there had been a tacit convention that the king's officials were not allowed to deliver funeral oration for him. Throughout dynasties, Bureau of Imperial Affairs and Ministry of Rites were often in charge of this task.

Meanwhile, funeral orations for officials delivered by the emperor and the court were considered remarkable. It was a way to showcase the emperor's recognition and the court's tribute to officials of great merits. Those were the cases of Commandant of Backside Army Vo Tanh - the king's son-in-law and Ngo Tung Chau - a scholar-official

of Ministry of Rites. According to *Đại Nam thực lục* [Veritable record of Dai Nam], in June 1799, Nguyen Anh captured Quy Nhon citadel and changed its name to Binh Dinh. He then withdrew his troops to Gia Dinh and assigned Vo Tanh and Ngo Tung Chau to defend the citadel. In 1798, the Tay Son army led by Tran Quang Dieu sieged the citadel and Vo Van Dung guarded Thi Nai gate to block the Nguyen's reinforcements. In 1801, Nguyen Anh led his troops from the south to Binh Dinh and secretly informed Vo Tanh to leave the citadel to join him for the attack on Phu Xuan, the headquarters of the Tay Son army. Vo Tanh refused, however, and advised Nguyen Anh to seize the chance when he would stay and retain the Tay Son troops in Binh Dinh: "Only necessary to sacrifice my life for the exchange of Phu Xuan". The lord then relented in tears and led his troops away. After Phu Xuan was conquered, he sent Le Van Duyet and Le Chat to the rescue. However, when they arrived in Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh citadel was defeated. Nguyen Anh fell to deep sorrow and requested the Minister of Rites Dang Duc Sieu, on behalf of him, to compose a funeral oration for his dear officials - Vo Tanh and Ngo Tung Chau. This funeral oration is not merely a recognition of the sacrifices of Vo Tanh and Ngo Tung Chau for the greatness of the Nguyen, but a praise of their bravery and loyalty. Dang Duc Sieu honored the chastity and majesty of these two merits for the building of the Nguyen dynasty. In the words of the king, he consoled the spirits of these two loyal officials for their contribution to the beginning of a prosperous supremacy: "*Bóng tinh trung thấp thoáng dưới đàn, phong nghi cũ kiêu liêu bằng sái lệ; Cơ đặng định kịp chầy hẹn buổi, xót tướng doanh sao vắng bậc thân huân*"

[The loyal souls still linger here while companions are overwhelmed with grief; Now still the enemies to fight, leaving our grief aside when paying tribute to the King's beloved]

(Vo Minh Hai, 2019: 81)

Before Vo Thanh and Ngo Tung Chau, the scholar-gentry and notables in Binh Dinh province also contributed greatly to the southward conquest of the Nguyen lords. Tran Duc Hoa and Dao Duy Tu stood out among those. *Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện* [Biographies of Dai Nam, main compilation] specified their merits and the ritual procedures for them. The funeral orations in Chinese for both of them were the “appreciation of their competences and virtues as well as their contributions to the Nguyen’s foundation” (National Historiography Office of the Nguyen dynasty, 1999: 89).

The most pathetic funeral orations are those from wives for husbands (Princess Le Ngoc Han’s for Emperor Quang Trung; Tran Dinh Tan’s for her husband) and from children for their parents (Dao Phan Duan and Tran Trong Giai’s for their mother; Le Dinh Huyen’s for his father). The loyalty and filialness are the most remarkable attributes of these funeral orations. Dao Phan Duan, a holder of second-class doctorate, wrote a tearful funeral oration to say farewell to his dear mother:

“*Cha bước lên làng tiên cõi phật, ai đâu ngờ đến cuộc tang thương;
Mẹ gầy nên góc quế nhà lan, đừng sượng để đến lời cô quả...*”

[Father had travelled into the Heaven, carrying no expectation of this mourning; Mother built up our home for children to succeed, but now leaving us parentless]

(Vo Minh Hai, 2019: 202)

Funeral orations were also to worship masters (the most venerable Bich Lien’s oration) and family relatives (Tran Trong Giai’s for his aunt; Nguyen Chuan’s for his father-in-law; Huynh Ba Van’s for his mother-in-law). Those touching oratorical writings are derived from a sincere appreciation and compassion that carry the values of morality, loyalty, and dignity. This literary genre, despite being highly normative, exhibits the respect to deceased people and the principles of moral behaviors in the past society. Either the writers from Binh Dinh province or those who wrote about Binh Dinh’s figures, with their humanistic works, all value the loyalty and filialness of the people from “the land of martial arts and literature”.

b) Praise of patriotism and humanitarian spirit

The funeral orations in Binh Dinh province appreciate the patriotism in the association with the fights against foreign invasion. We found out from studying the collected Sino-Nom writings that funeral orations in Vietnamese were often for the ceremonies of historical events under the French resistance war and with the involvement of Binh Dinh’s scholar-gentry. Dao Phan Duan, as the Nguyen’s retired scholar-official, witnessed the collapse of the dynasty and the Japanese surrender to the Allies in 1945. He had a total confidence in the resistance war of the Vietnamese people and army, especially the Viet-Minh force. On June 22, 1946, the people of Tuy Phuoc district held a memorial service in the district township to commemorate the soldiers who lost their lives for the country. Dao Phan Duan on the occasion wrote a funeral oration in Vietnamese for the martyrs in the battle against the French reoccupation. He honored

the merits of those people and expressed his speculation over the long war with many hardships:

“Sông Vô Định đồng xương còn đỏ, lúc trời chiều khách thấy luống ngâm ngùi;

Đất Trường Bình giọt máu dâu dầy, khi nắng tắt người trông càng thảm thiết”

[The dead ambiance in Vo Dinh river at sunset leaving passengers in pity;

The numbing vibe of Truong Binh land in darkness shattering people's hearts]

(Dang Quy Dich, 2008: 87)

It was the spirit of patriotism that Dao Phan Duan praised for the bravery of the soldiers. Their sacrifice, in the words of Bieu Xuyen, was for the righteousness, for their people, and for their dignity.

Funeral orations were written to serve the ceremonies of worship, mourning, or commemoration. The composers, through their words and thoughts, want to convey the feelings of the existing people to those who pass away and to set good examples for the living through honoring the merits of the dead. Writings of the genre is also for promoting the spirit of patriotism and in favor of the people. The people in Binh Dinh province made no regrets for praising General Mai Xuan Thuong (1860-1887), a hero of the French resistance, for his contributions to the province. Dong Sy Binh, the interpreter of the Quy Nhon consulate, showed his condolence to the General through two verses filled with emotion and admiration:

“Bại trận nhi bất hàng, hùng tâm phiêu vũ trụ, đáo để chiến công lực kiệt, binh tàn, thể cô, tưng sử vận quốc hưng vong, liệt sĩ hồ cam hàm hận huyết;

Đoạn đầu du năng tiếu, nghĩa khí quán càn khôn, hậu lai chuyên chế vận la, nhơn vong sự một, na thức giá bang tinh trận, hậu nhơn thượng vị hích kỳ danh”

[Lost the battle but never surrendered, the mighty spirit known to the universe, being shattered and isolated with the defeated army, holding this grudge the soldier died for the country to persist;

Laughing at the death, the spirit pervading the heaven and earth, being chained, losing the lives and the battles, who tomorrow would understand today's sorrow]

(Vo Minh Hai, 2019: 102)

Mai Xuan Thuong was a righteous strongman who had sacrificed his life for the great cause, not as a surrender but a defeated general, because of the conspiracy of Nguyen Than and Tran Ba Loc. In *Nhân dân Bình Khê tế anh hùng Mai Xuân Thuồng* [People of Binh Khe commemorating the hero Mai Xuan Thuong], he was praised as the hero of the Can Vuong Movement in Binh Dinh province for his patriotic spirit and his sacrifice for the people.

“Mây Linh Đồng bơ vơ hồn tổ quốc, lạnh lùng mây lớp sâu giăng;

Nước Côn giang lai láng dạ hoài nhân, sụt sùi hai làng luy nhờ”

[Abandoned spirit of the fatherland floating in clouds surrounded Linh Dong, with layers of melancholy and coldness;

Torrential waves of nostalgia like the flows of Con river, tear drops dangling]

(Dang Quy Dih, 2008: 197)

In the surge of the heroic spirit of the Tay Son Rebellion, Mai Xuan Thuong became a major figure to the people in Binh Dinh province. This is evident in the worship orations filled with pride that live through the local generations: they deliver the orations at annual ceremonies on the full moon day of the 4th lunar month.

It can be said that the Sino-Nom funeral and worship orations in Binh Dinh province written during the French period were the

voice from the patriotic hearts. They are not just a declamation of grief, but the call for continuing fathers' fight for freedom and for the sacrifice of martyrs from the writers. Such oratorical works are considered the exhortation for the national resistance to invaders and for the glorious responsibility towards the nation.

c) Demonstration of profound sarcasm

Sarcasm here means making fun of or mocking someone. The funeral orations of this style, such as *Funeral Oration from Wife for Husband* (by Nguyen Trong Tri), *Funeral Oration for the Mice* (by Huynh Ba Van), or the *Funeral Oration for Opium* (by Nguyen Xuan Kieu), all are humorous and combined of different literary forms. The titles often imply the oratorical targets and the playfulness and satire as well. In *Danh nhân Bình Định* [Eminent Personalities of Binh Dinh Province] (1943), Bui Van Lang had collected such funeral orations which were written by Huynh Ba Van. Dang Quy Dich (2009: 76) in *Kẻ sĩ đất Bình Định* [Intellectuals of Binh Dinh Province] shared the information of his background: Huynh Ba Van was from Thanh Danh village, An Nghia canton, An Nhon prefecture. He passed the first-degree examination (*tú tài*) in 1903 and the second-degree examination (*cử nhân*) in 1906 at Binh Dinh examination field, but refused the appointment of the Nguyen's court to become a local physician for helping people.

Huynh Ba Van was the master of the funeral oration genre. Among his works, unfortunately, only seven texts are retained. His *Funeral Oration for the Mice* showcases a good sense of humor and adroitness. Together with Nguyen Trong Tri's *Funeral Oration from Wife for Husband*, they are the great works of their own kinds and both

deserve to be the treasures of Binh Dinh's satirical literature. The Funeral Oration for the Mice was a sarcastic anecdote of profiteers and swindlers who were "growing fat from enjoying the fruits of the people". Huynh Ba Van labelled them as the greedy "bipedal mice" living with generations. Amatory buddhist-monks were also included among those.

"...*Những tưởng sa vào chum nếp, no đã nút niềng;*

Nào hay chui xả bẫy chùa, kẹt đà chết giãy...

...Hay là gái mười ba cưu oán, sấm chà vi rình rập đã lâu ngày;

Hay là nợ chín chục còn nhiều, nạp lông vít đèn bồi trong một mảy..."

[Expected to fall into the rice tube, life to the full

Turned out to fall into mousetrap, struggle until dead

...

Stuck with young women, chancy for the honey trap

Entrapped the mouse tail, proven for the catch]

(Dang Quy Dich, 2008: 106).

Meanwhile, Nguyen Trong Tri - a former supporter of the Can Vuong Movement - always kept his consistent mind and continued writing despite his second-examination result rejected and being closely watched by the authorities. His works were voluminous in number but most of them had been lost. In the *Funeral Oration from Wife for Husband*, he condemned village bullies and persecutors at the time through the cry of a wife over her husband's death, leaving her and their children the heavy levies.

"*Thương là thương: ngân thuế phù đầu, cha đem về cho đứa lớn đứa nhỏ, mà nay*

cha bỏ con thơ chiu chít chón trôn hoan, diêu vọng Hành sơn vân sắc âm, cha hồi là cha!

Tiếc là tiếc: phì điền bao chiêm, anh bao cho em mẫu chín mẫu mười, mà nay anh bỏ vợ đại bỏ vợ nơi dương thế, diêu chiêm Tương thủy trước thành ba, anh hồi là anh!”

[What a pity: taxes collected more than the prescribed level that you used to bring home for us - your children, but now you left the moral life, only there dark clouds from afar surrounded the Hanh mount, oh dear father!

What a regret: only you to have occupied fertile fields, you had given me nine or ten acres, but now you left your wife in the living world, the bamboo hedges have grown over the Tuong river bank, oh dear husband!]

(Dang Quy Dich, 2008: 55).

Readers could not resist their laughs at the wife's compassion and regret for her husband because he could not guard their fortunes and fertile land anymore. The wittiness, however, also hides the author's worried mind of the circumstances at that time. Those funeral orations are the great literary works of incredible creativity and bitter sarcasm. It must have been unprecedented if they had been really read at some funeral in its time.

3. Literary features of Sino-Nom funeral orations in Binh Dinh province

a) Writing forms

We classified 71 Sino-Nom funeral orations collected in Binh Dinh province into three groups by writing form as follows: Chinese *fu* (30 orations in total, of which 10 texts in Chinese and 20 texts in Vietnamese); rhyming prose (seven Vietnamese texts); combined writing form (34 works in total,

of which 16 texts in Chinese and 18 texts in Vietnamese).

Chinese *fu* was a popular writing form of funeral orations. Indeed, a majority of funeral orations in Vietnamese had been composed in this form, with 32 texts out of 45 works in total. The remainder was shared equally for the rhyming prose and the combined form. Huynh Ba Van, Tran Dinh Tan and Dao Phan Duan are those among the writers with a large quantity of funeral orations in Vietnamese and most of them were written in Chinese *fu*. The two widely-used types of Chinese *fu* include Tang *fu* and couplet *fu*.

It is necessary to emphasize that funeral orations in Chinese were mainly composed in the form of Tang *fu*, which strictly followed the principles of Tang poetry. For example, in the funeral oration for the Duke Tran Duc Hoa in Chinese which was composed in the form of Tang *fu*, the (anonymous) writer applied precisely the principles for rhyming and meaning couplets.

“Thiên địa trù tinh, Càn khôn chung tụy.

Siêu nhiên đệ nhất anh hùng, Trác nhĩ bán thiên danh thế.

Tinh biểu hiển hoàng triều sắc tặng, đan thư vạn cổ trường huy;

Công đức thủy lục dã truy ân, tụy điển thiên thu phát thế”

[Predetermined by heaven and earth as the quintessence of the universe,

The one who transcends the world, becoming the great.

Reputation has been recognized for centuries.

The grace my imperial court was bestowed upon him to commend his merits and was recorded in the book of eminent personalities for forever being remembered.

People commemorated his grace and established the place of worship, so generations would retain the rituals.]

(Dang Quy Dich, 2008: 10)

While both *fu* and poetry help express emotions through rhymes and rhythms, they also differ from each other. If poetry delivers messages in condensed meaning, *fu* focuses more on highly descriptive details. Thus, funeral orations in Vietnamese in the form of couplet *fu* showcase their unique features. Taking the *Collective Funeral Oration for the Quach Family in Tay Son* as an example where Quach Tan, the author, had proven his cleverness in setting rhyming couplets and providing descriptive information.

“*Vốn họ ta thuộc dòng Mân Việt; đời đời nối dõi Văn Lang.*

Tài kinh doanh theo dấu Đào công, mấy phen dựng nghiệp cả”

[Our family originated from Man Viet lineage; descendants of Van Lang Entrepreneurship inherited from Precursor Dao; generations of the great career]

(Vo Minh Hai, 2019: 149)

Funeral orations are distinguished by their emotional expression with various tones, for which the ideal forms of writing should be *fu* and prose. Nevertheless, since funeral orations are often written in length in order to demonstrate full apprehensions of the living to the dead, some of Sino-Nom funeral orations had been composed in the poetic form of indefinite length, which does not really match with funeral orations indeed. The number of funeral orations in poetic form therefore is limited, only seven among 71 works collected. An illustration of this type is the orations for Buddhist ceremonies in *Mông sơn thí thực khoa nghi diễn Nôm* [Vietnamese-rendered

Mong Mount ceremonies of sharing and giving for the common good] composed by the most venerable Bich Lien as found in the 1922 inscription kept at Vinh Khanh pagoda, Cam Van hamlet, Binh Dinh province. This series includes seven funeral orations in Vietnamese for the dead people and forsaken spirits, written mainly in the traditional Vietnamese verse forms: *lục bát* [lit. six-eight] with alternating lines of six and eight syllables; and *song thất lục bát* [lit. double seven, six-eight] - a variation of *lục bát* - with a couplet of two seven-syllable lines followed by a six-syllable line and an eight-syllable line. The funeral orations written in these verse forms are rich in content and easy to read and memorize.

“*Đổ quỳên kêu suốt tàn canh,*

Máu hồng nhuộm mãi trên cành đào hoa.

Trước sau vương bá những là,

Hồn hương xin chứng tiệp hoa sẵn sàng”.

[The cuckoos crying all night long,

The blood was shed for the red color of peach blossoms

Forever to be on the throne,

Our offerings to the souls of the dead]

“*Lại thỉnh kẻ Ngũ Lăng tài tuấn,*

Phẩm hiền lương bách quận danh thân.

Ba năm quan tiết trong ngần,

Lòng son một tấm trung quân rõ ràng”

[Inviting the talent from Ngu Lang,

A great virtue of wide renown.

Three years in the office,

Showing uprightness with proven loyalty]

(Dang Quy Dich, 2008: 224)

The narrative tone of the *lục bát* style and the lyrical expression of the *song thất lục bát* style allow the audience to comprehend fully the messages about the natural marvels as well as the morality and wisdom in the mortal world.

b) *Phraseological features*

The phraseology of funeral orations is influenced by both the scholastic and popular culture of the classical Vietnamese literature. Binh Dinh's funeral orations in general and those written in Vietnamese in particular have their distinctive features compared to works of the same types from other localities. Meanwhile, funeral orations in Chinese always follow scholarly norms with citations from classical literature. The more clever wording and deeper meaning, the more artistic the writer is. In the *Collective Funeral Oration for the Tran Family in Canh Van* (by Tuy Phuoc), for instance, there were erudite verses as follows:

“Hữu khai tất tiên, vạn đại chi hiếu từ, nhi kiến,

Khắc xương quyết hậu, thiên thu chi công đức, bất thiên”

[Evidently, forefathers built up the lineage for successors of generations to live in filial affection;

Leaving good reputation for descendants, their legacy will be forever appreciated]

(Dang Quy Dich, 2008: 24)

The key phrases in these verses, like “hữu khai tất tiên” [forefathers built up the lineage] or “khắc xương quyết hậu” [descendants appreciate their legacy], were quoted from chapter “Chu Tụng” [Praise of the Zhou] in *Thi kinh* [the Tome of Poems]. Such phrases in Sino-Nom funeral oration had been widely used. We have listed a total of 1,040 cited phrases in 45 texts written in Vietnamese. Among those, there are 737 direct quotations (70.87%) and 303 adapted quotations (29.13%). It shows that the writers of funeral orations in Binh Dinh had studied and employed creatively the materials of classical Chinese and

Vietnamese literature in order to better the conveyance of their messages. Our phraseological study of Binh Dinh's funeral orations in Vietnamese also indicates the diverse sources of both direct and adapted quotations. The flexible adaptation of cited phrases in a more Vietnamese way appears to help the writer's ideas more attached and explicable to readers. This might be the reason why their writings had been popularized among the masses.

Besides, Binh Dinh's writers in early 20th century still employed old-fashioned words for composing funeral orations. Varieties of such nouns, verbs, pronouns, and adjectives also evidence the Vietnamization of Chinese words for clearer expression of individual emotions in their writings.

c) *Diversity and complexity of tones*

Funeral orations were written mainly for ritual activities so their tones indicate the solemnity, grief, and holy veneration. While the whole oration was filled with a solemn atmosphere, its beginning and end parts focus more on narration and mourning. As a rule, funeral orations often include honorifics like *Cung duy* [lit. dear (someone), showing respect to the god(s)/dead person(s)], followed by *Phục duy* [being prostrate in worship] and *Cẩn cáo* [lit. respectfully recount, a phrase used at the end of the oration]. The *Collective Funeral Oration for the Dang in Loc Trung*, for example, starts with *Cung duy tiên linh* [lit. Dear the sacred ancestors] and ends with *Thượng hưởng* [Respectfully offer the ancestors]. Similarly, the *Funeral Oration for the Duke Tran Duc Hoa* also add in *Cung duy tiên công* [lit. Dear the spirit of merits] and *Phục duy* and *Cẩn cáo*. Funeral orations written in Vietnamese also follow the same format in order to retain the solemnity and

direct the tones of speakers during ritual ceremonies: Opening with exclamations (“Than rằng”, “Hỡi ôi”, “Than ôi”) and ending with honorifics of commemoration. For instance, the beginning and ending parts of Tran Trong Giai’s *Funeral Oration for Mother* are as follows:

“Hỡi ôi! Núi Di trắng chên; Nhà huyền bóng xế.”

[Oh Lord! The moon tilted on the Di mount; overshadowing the house]¹

“Suối vàng hồn mẹ có linh, xin hưởng ba chung rượu lễ.”

[In heaven, the sacred soul of mother please receives our three offers of wine]²

(Dang Quy Dich, 2008: 137)

Similar patterns were employed in the funeral orations for mother/father/parent-in-law, for martyrs, and so forth. The ardent tone is a good way for the living to communicate with the dead.

Besides, the tone of pride was to show respect for the accomplishments of the deceased. Tran Dinh Tan’s funeral oration for Emperor Quang Trung had been composed with words of exhilaration:

“Một trận thắng Đống Đa oanh liệt, quân gia hùng mạnh biết là bao;

Tám vạn quân Sĩ Nghị rã tan, xương máu ngổn ngang đâu xiết kể”

[A glorious victory at Dong Da, proving how powerful the forces were;

Eighty thousands of fighters of Sun Shiyi³ lost, lying on the ground their dead bodies]

(Dang Quy Dich, 2008: 152)

Lastly, the sarcastic tone was also voiced in some funeral orations, though they are few in number. Laughers in these works is

directed towards bad practices and harms in life to alert people. Nguyen Xuan Kieu, because of his examination failure, had become indignant and opium-addicted. After overcoming his addiction, he wrote the *Funeral Oration for Opium* to forewarn of its detriment and advise people to stay away from it.

“Vây mới rằng quân tử sớm tri cơ;

Vây mới gọi anh hùng khi cải quá”

[A true man should foresee circumstances; A true man should make amends for mistakes]

(Dang Quy Dich, 2008: 68)

From ironical and satirical tones to strong sarcasm and then warning and recommendation, funeral orations have delivered positive messages towards building a peaceful life and improving people’s perception of wrongdoings and making atonement to become useful.

Conclusion

In brief, Sino-Nom funeral orations in Binh Dinh province had been developed throughout the local history. The collection and assessment of works of the genre contribute to a further clarification of the values of Binh Dinh’s Sino-Nom literature in the Southern Central of Vietnam.

In terms of contents and artistic features, funeral orations are considered the tribute to the forefathers and heroes for their contribution and sacrifice. In addition to their ritual role, such works in Binh Dinh province are distinguished by their tones of grief, irony and sarcasm as well as the complexity and diversity in writing styles. They also clearly demonstrate the factors of nationalization of exotic literary genres in Vietnamese medieval literature □

¹ The death of mother overshadowed the family.

² Wine is the must-have offering for worship.

³ A general-governor of the Quing dynasty in China.

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