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THE VIETNAMESE MEMORY HERITAGE OF THE WAR AND THE SPIRIT OF COMPASSION

Le Thi Thanh Tam¹, Nguyen Dong Trieu²

Abstract. Sino-Nom Funeral Orations are both a functional literary genre and one with high artistic and ideological value. It is a genre reserved for people who passed away and is associated with Vietnam's history and society, as well as the patriotic wars and a way of life that includes gratitude. Thus, the Vietnamese Sino-Nom funeral orations are a treasured legacy. War and benevolence are prominent themes of these orations that make the genre highly moving. The article focuses on introducing, analysing, hypothesising, and confirming that the Vietnamese Sino-Nom funeral orations carry historical value in the country's medieval and modern periods, as well as present a precious heritage of war and the compassionate spirit of the Vietnamese nation.

Keywords: history of Vietnam, Vietnamese literature, literary genre, funeral orations, national cultural heritage, wars of liberation.

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Introduction

The concept of “văn tế” – a funeral oration – usually refers to the type of literature used in sacrifices to gods and spirits. Originally, the funeral orations were a functional genre that was read during general sacrifices, including those to heaven and earth, gods, saints, crops, the deceased (or in some cases, even living people), historical figures, and sacrificial offerings for relics. Later on, the form of an eulogy developed into a special division of Vietnamese literature with outstanding quantity, beyond the scope of a functional genre, reaching new heights of content, art, and ideological values.

The Sino-Nom funeral orations are a type of oration that originates from the classical Chinese literature. In Vietnam, it became one of the outstanding literary genres with many achievements. It is a genre that is very suitable for those fond of the Vietnamese culture. Further, the Vietnamese funeral orations have reached many achievements as the genre discusses the pain of war in the bloody historical periods of the nation.

The introduction of the genre of Sino-Nom funeral orations in Vietnamese literature has been an interest of many scholars since the beginning of the 20th century, as shown through works like

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“Arrangement of the first four ceremonies” (“*Dọn lễ bốn đầu*”) by Hoang (Huynh) Tinh Paulus Cua [1904] and newspapers such as *Nam Phong*, *Phu nu Tan Van*, and *Nong Co Min Dam*. In 1918, Phan Ke Binh released “*Viet Han Van Khao*” to discuss Chinese literature written in Chinese characters, and Vietnamese and Chinese philosophy, as well as the content, purpose, and style of literary culture. By 1939, Duong Quang Ham’s “Vietnamese Literature” (Ministry of Education’s textbook) also presented more details on literary styles and practices in the style of Tang poetry [Duong Quang Ham 1939: 63-66].

Since the 1990s, a number of other works on Sino-Nom literature and Vietnamese literature, including on funeral orations, were published. These works included “Vietnamese Poetry – Form and Genre” by Bui Van Nguyen and Ha Minh Duc [1971]; “The Basis of Sino-Nom Philology” by Le Tri Vien and a group of editors [1983], etc.

The article “Genre characteristics of literary funeral orations” [1998] by Ngo Gia Vo mentions the literary culture including the objectives, basic content, methods, expressions, style, and literary value of these orations. The author presented an important genre feature, which “is in the consciousness and purpose of composition of the literary author think about Vietnamese literature in the Middle Ages” [Phạm Tuấn Vũ 2007]. In “Characteristics of the genre system of patriotic literature in the second half of the 19th century in Vietnam” [2008], Nguyen Van The commented on the importance of the contemporary literature period from the end of the 18th century to the end of the 19th century. The works also asserts the position of Nguyen Dinh Chieu and his contributions to patriotic literature.

Materials of the research

We have compiled a list of 257 literary Sino-Nom texts from various sources, including undergraduate literature textbooks; collections and anthologies of poetry and literature by different authors; research books, newspapers, and magazines before and after 1975; field collection materials; and Sino-Nom documents of the Institute of Sino-Nom Studies (Ha Noi). In particular, the newspapers we use are such as *Nam Phong*, *Phu Nu Tan Van*, *Nong Co Min Dam*, *Dong Nai Van Tap*, and so on. Some major works from the library of the Institute of Sino-Nom Studies were also used for research.

In addition, sources collected from fieldtrips include:

- 1) An anthology of poems and texts handwritten at Nguyen Tong Mau, including 14 Sino-Nom texts.
- 2) The ritual practice, an anonymous and undated Sino-Nom book, consisting of many works of literary, collected in the Mekong Delta, including 52 literary texts that contain 30 articles in Nom script and 22 articles in Chinese.
- 3) Literature in Binh Dinh, an annotated collection translated by Loc Xuyen Dang, published by the Ethnic Culture Publishing House in 2008. A total of 32 cultural articles are divided into three parts. Part one consists of five articles in Chinese. Part two includes 23 essays on Nom and Quoc Ngu scripts. Part three includes four articles on Buddhist philosophy.

So, the research questions posed are:

Why does Vietnamese feneral oration appear most in the painful period of the nation?

Why does Vietnamese feneral oration represent the Vietnamese tradition of patriotism and compassion?

Research methods

Analyzing texts of Sino-Nom literature. The article uses many literary works that have been translated, introduced, and published in previous research and translation works. Regarding works with multiple translations, we compare them before deciding which version to use. We appreciate the efforts

of the translators and, hopefully, can use those clear translations. In case we feel dissatisfied with a translation, we translate it ourselves.

Historical and social research. Literature research is done in relation to history and society because the literature genre connects with political perspectives and people's daily life.

Our analytical and problem-solving approach is based on the **multi-system theory** and interdisciplinary research methods in cultural and literary studies. The topic of literature is related to religion, culture, and heritage conservation, and the article also shows the intersection of thinking systems within literary genres.

Discussion and results

Sino-Nom funeral orations for heroes and soldiers who died in patriotic wars

Patriotism is a core value that makes up Vietnamese traditions and dignity. That value is shown in a special way in literature where the writer has room to express many aspects of patriotism. The impressionism and interpretation of war in literature is an important highlight in the history of this genre.

The patriotic literature originates from history and is associated with major historical figures and events of the era. Such literature is both associated with sacrifices and achievements in battle, both tragic and heroic, and is associated with the living of intense lives. The patriotic culture was born in association with foreign invasions and the arduous fights of Vietnam's army and people. During the Ming invasion, patriotic literature bore remnants of the Later Tran dynasty. This form of literature appeared with Nguyen Bieu's works. In the Tay Son Dynasty, after defeating the Qing army, Vu Huy Tan (1749–1800) followed King Quang Trung's orders and wrote a liturgy for the death of the Qing Dynasty's generals and soldiers that died in battle. In local folklore, there is also a tradition of *Van Te Thien Trieu* (funeral orations for the Chinese dynasty) with the same theme as Vu Huy Tan's essay.

The above works often express mourning for the patriots and praise their spirit. Patriotic literature appeared more and reached a new height from the second half of the 19th century to the resistance war against the French (1945–1954) and showed multiple effects. The patriotic literature of this period strongly called on all classes of people to fight against the enemy and be a direct voice against the enemy. During this period, there were many excellent works of the typical authors, such as Le Khac Can with *Literature of the Generals* who fought against the French and were killed in battle; *Van Te Ong Cai Tri* (anonymous), and *Dieu Ton That Thuyet* (funeral oration for Mr. Ton That Thuyet) by Nguyen Thuong Hien (1868-1925). Especially noteworthy is the Nom literary cluster of the Southern author Nguyen Dinh Chieu, who composed the famous funeral orations. Nguyen Dinh Chieu once praised those who sacrificed themselves for the cause, condemning betraying the country: "It is better to die for loyalty and follow the ancestors in an honourable way, than to surrender to the French and painfully live with barbarians" [Nguyễn Đình Chiểu 1998: 78].

Patriotic literature also upholds the role of farmers, who both work and fight. History shows that the Vietnamese people both produced and fought the enemy, built the country and defended it, and were good in every aspect, but it was not until Nguyen Dinh Chieu that the role of the farmer was placed on a historical stature. In Nguyen Dinh Chieu's literary work, the peasantry was at least twice the main subject. The first time through the Can Giuoc philanthropist: Faced with the weakness and compromise of the Hue Court, the peasants strongly rose up against the French, truly mastering the struggle against aggression.

Generals Truong Dinh (1820–1864), Nguyen Huu Huan (1830–1875) were willing to give up their lives on the battlefield, proving to the enemy that the country in their hearts came first. They are gone forever, but the glorious victory remains. Even if the enemy slashed his stomach open, he would also consider it as a way of expressing his heart to contemporary and posterity. Their hearts were given to the people and the country are appreciated and handed down forever. These two epic consciousnesses make

the image of the general exude magnanimity, they are an important factor that enhances the tenacious and rebellious spirit of the “golden hearts”, brightening up the “pure of heart”.

At the beginning of the French colonial period, the spirit of reverence for the army was expressed in internal affairs through its characteristics associated with human rule and the teaching role of the court. Nguyen Dinh has repeatedly mentioned “God’s grace” in his literature: “An inch of land is grateful to God, and wealth for our country” [Nguyễn Đình Chiểu 1952: 75]. Through it, the author both praises the loyalty of the people and praises the teaching grace of the holy king. Human rule has brought people a satisfying life both materially and spiritually. Mandarins, soldiers, and other classes of people wholeheartedly served the court and strictly obeyed the law. Everyone at home, had at heart the desire to save the country, not to be afraid to sacrifice, and remain ready to rise up to fight the enemy to regain every inch of their homeland.

According to Nguyen Dinh Chieu, although the righteous people were considered by the court as an enemy, because they went against the policy of the court and were at fault with the French, but he believed that what the insurgents did was right in their hearts to support the king and help the country. It shows that he still respected the army and did not change his mind.

Honoring the martyrs from all times who “sacrifice for nation”

The spirit of compassion of Vietnamese is expressed first of all in their compassion for the scenes of frost, wind, earth and sky, arrows flying, bullets, and horse skin covering the corpses of soldiers in battle: “I have to throw myself away and early and late your liver is angry; your body must be exposed to cold weather, and my heart is sad” [Nguyễn Đình Chiểu 1998: 16]. The author spoke on behalf of the king to speak of the soldier's loyalty and patriotism, thereby affirming the king's understanding of the war and loyalty. That understanding as felt directly is the ladder of compassion.

The most moving are the words expressing pity in Nguyen Van Thanh’s sacrifices of martyrs. This sacrificial essay, in addition to its literary and historical value, also speaks to the reality of scenes of suffering and loss caused by wars, expressing the author's sympathy and compassion for the deaths of those who died in the war. soldier. The above sacrifice shows many emotions of Nguyen Van Thanh. It is not only the feeling of compassion of the living for the dead, but also the deep gratitude of the person who benefits from the blood sacrifice of the generals. It is not only the favor of a marshal for his subordinates, but also a loving heart like brothers and sisters in the same family.

The benevolence of the Vietnamese people through Vietnamese Sino-Nom funeral orations

Funeral Oration is a means by which the author expresses his love for the dead, not only for his loved ones but also for everyone. Therefore, the humanitarian spirit in literature is borderless; it is directed to all classes of people, regardless of ethnicity, caste or faction, spreading love to even melancholy souls.

Mercy on the victims of war

This is the scene of a good people suffering a disaster, which is depicted briefly and fully through literature of Nguyen Dinh Chieu: “Our people are on fire; The enemy presses the grease with all his might” [Nguyễn Đình Chiểu 1952: 85].

Relatives of the martyrs were also victims of the invasion: “It's sad that two old, sweet people rely on your hand to help, the deep love has not escaped the royal realm; thanks to the scene instead of the innocent, considerate children raised by the wife, fortunately, the dandelion tree sprouted again” [Nguyễn Văn Hầu 2012]. More poignant than the scene in Funeral Oration for Can Giuoc’s heroes: “In pain, the old mother cried and cried, the lamp flickered in the tent late at night; frustrated instead of a weak wife running to find her husband, the shadow drifted in front of the alley” [Nguyễn Đình Chiểu 1998: 78].

Phan Boi Chau ever affirmed the naturalness of patriotism: "Patriotism comes from the heart of heaven, who is unlucky; The love of the race still counts humans, so what's wrong with that?" [Phan Boi Chau 1990: 315]. Patriotism is human nature, resisting the enemy is not a crime. The colonialists and their henchmen oppressing patriots was a sin that cannot be forgiven by heaven and earth.

An author has clearly stated his attitude about wars: "Although grateful to the country, dying for national affairs, the servant has no regrets; But children are separated from their father, wives must be separated from husbands, and the war is inherent in hell" (The death sacrifice of the late General Thi Van, 2b, Investor). Every person who goes to war is a family that has to suffer separation. Sadness and anticipation, anxiety and worry weigh heavily on the hearts of fathers, mothers, wives and children.

Mercy on the victims of accidents, natural disasters or murder cases

The subject of literature has many people who are victims of deaths due to accidents or natural disasters or murder cases. The first are those who were harmed by the killer. Regarding the murders and robbers in Da Gia Thuong mentioned above, "*Kham Dinh Viet su Thong Giam Cuong Muc*" ("The Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting the History of Viet") of the National History Department of the Nguyen Dynasty recorded the following: "The summer of May (the year of Chinh Hoa 15, 1694) was arrested killing 52 wicked people in Da Gia Thuong commune". Da Gia Thuong commune is narrow and dangerous, with many caves and holes. The people of that commune set up separate contracts with each other, set up sentries to welcome passersby, or stayed in the commune. At night, they captured them, killed them, threw their bodies from the cliff, and plundered their possessions. This went on for more than 20 years; white bones piled up.

Someone wrote funeral oration for the lonely souls in Da Gia Thuong to comfort the soul in the cold. The sacrifice said, the number of people killed was up to 318 people. After the incident was discovered, the court directly punished the villains. But unjust deaths still make people unable to hold back their compassion. There are mournful lines for the victims: "No wonder Da Gia Thuong has many villains, daring in the middle of a peaceful day to cause serious crimes. Robbing in the middle of the road, killing at the door, no less brutal than a sailor; Thrown into the water, thrown into the mountains, crueller than tigers (...) Disappeared in the guest house, who knows where; Desperately cold land her soul, who begs for the island. What injustice does the ghost spend time; Embrace it when it's all over." [Nguyen Ta Nhi 2005: 15] At the same time, sympathize with their parents, brothers, spouses and children because of the sudden loss of a loved one: "Your parents, brothers and sisters are suffering, constantly dreaming about their faces; Your wife and children are tired of looking at them, panicking in front of the lights, thinking they are shadows." [Ibid.].

People died because of storms and floods. Phan Boi Chau was an author of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who contributed to the literary body with the largest number of works, and his content was also among the richest. In humanitarian content, he has a number of works documenting the reality of miserable life, covering man-made and natural disasters that people had to endure. During 1929-1931, the central region was continuously hit by floods and storms. One year, it was Nghe An and Ha Tinh, and the next year Binh Dinh and Phu Yen. Phan Boi Chau wrote several orations to sympathise with the people affected by the natural disasters in those regions.

In addition to the previously mentioned victims, people suffering from other accidents in life were also sympathised by the writer with genuine compassion. We have recorded a number of works and orations to the dead of such accidents, such as when a boat sunk at Hue [Phan Bội Châu 1990: 349] and people died because the city fell in Thuong Tu and others who died in a train accident at Da Bac [Ibid.: 366].

Mercy on the Chinese soldiers who died in Vietnam

Have pity on the victims of Chinese soldiers and soldiers who died in Vietnam. The humanitarian spirit in literature has a very noble expression of compassion for the Chinese soldiers who died in the invasion of our country. This case only appeared in two sacrifices published after the resistance war against the Qing army was completely victorious.

In 1788, at the request of Le Chieu Thong, the Qing army used the pretext of "supporting Le to destroy the Tay Son" massively to invade our country. King Nguyen Hue proclaimed himself emperor, set the date of Quang Trung, ordered his army to go out and directly confront the enemy army. The spirit of Tay Son was extremely strong, and soon defeated the invaders in the battles of Ngoc Hoi and Dong Da. The Ngoc Hoi – Dong Da campaign ended successfully, Tay Son entered to liberate Thang Long. Quang Trung King ordered subjects to establish security, distribute food and clothing to tens of thousands of soldiers who surrendered. The soldiers were brought back to the North, an altar was set up Vu Huy Tan was ordered to write a letter to express compassion and comfort for the dead soldiers of the Qing Dynasty battle.

The two liturgies above represent the two aspects of the public. The common point about the tactics of the two authors is to recreate the scene of the enemy's defeat to praise our troops. The images of "sea of blood and mountains of bones", "body built into a messy corner", "buried body of the Red River choking" in the Funeral Oration for Qing Dynasty's soldiers who died in battle or the act of "strangling" and "suicide" not only shows the tragic defeat of the enemy, but through it also shows the heroic spirit and determination to fight to the final victory of Vietnamese army.

The funeral oration of Chinese Dynasty has a very special feature: "I feel sorry for you, uncles!" In the first sentence, the author uses the word "uncle" to call the Qing generals who died in battle. Many sentences after this pronoun are repeated over and over again when referring to them. The author wants to show sincere compassion when considering them as relatives, like brothers and sisters. This also demonstrates our kindness and loving peace to the Northern neighbor.

The place where the invaders tried to aggressively kill became their own graves. From the king to the people with great tolerance and compassion, they all pity those who had to leave their bodies in a foreign land and become helpless souls, so they set up an altar to comfort them. The Chinese military officer who died in battle clearly stated the gesture of King Quang Trung: "My heart is generous with the people of the North, leaving the storehouse to cover the broken bones; Do not wander about the South sky, leave the foreign land, hurry back to the old country" [Mai Quốc Liên 1985: 139].

Mercy on the homeless and helpless souls

In medieval Vietnamese literature, the humanitarian spirit was not limited to humans. Even the hungry and destitute souls are objects of pity. A number of medieval and modern writers such as Ngo Thi Nham, Nguyen Ba Xuyen, Nguyen Du, Phan Boi Chau, Tran Dinh Tan... all wrote about the soul. Considering the specific object, the ghost mentioned in the literature is also a refugee, but in terms of content and meaning, the humanitarian spirit of the authors, especially Nguyen Du and Nguyen Ba Xuyen, is for the soul. The soul transcends personal grief, reaching out to a much broader range of thought.

According to the Buddhist concept, people after death will depend on the good and bad karma of their lives to lead them to the corresponding good and bad realms in which they will receive results. While we are still alive, what we receive now is the result of the *karma* we did in the past or in a previous life. After death, only sentient beings with extremely good karma will be reborn immediately, beings with extremely bad karma will be reincarnated in the realm of suffering or be sent to hell without interruption,

and for those who create bad karma, other must have a life of their soul. Thus, the lonely souls become also a living being of suffering.

Funeral oration for lonely soul has two forms. A form of spirit sacrifice in a narrow scope such as the Sang Dong fox sacrificed her soul in the soul of Ngo Thi Nham's farm in the Sang Dong camp, and the sacrifice of sentient beings by Nguyen Ba Xuyen in the Hoai Duc palace where the author had just arrived. A common form of sacrifice for all kinds of ghosts such as Van Sacrifice of Ten Kinds of Beings by Nguyen Du, Van Sacrifice of Souls by Tran Dinh Tan.

Among the medieval writers who wrote literary texts, Nguyen Du wrote little, but his work is considered outstanding and unprecedented. Nguyen Du's writing of the soul has a particularly important and typical content value. If it is said that the literary culture in medieval Vietnamese literature contains the great humanitarian spirit of the Vietnamese people towards all kinds of people, then Nguyen Du's funeral oration alone can cover all of that content. Through poorest funeral oration, Nguyen Du clearly shows that he is a person who always has a lot of love for his fellow human beings, for all people who are in trouble and lonely, regardless of their life time, they were rich and poor.

In particular, in our opinion, Nguyen Du's humanitarian spirit is not simply expressed with an altar, with mournful cries or invocations of the Buddha's compassionate power to save her soul, but it in two layers of deeper, more intrinsic content. The first layer of content: Emphasizing the element of equality among all people, all classes in society. Whether it is a supremely powerful king, a general "screaming loudly", a vizier "with a high hat" or a poor wanderer "laying on the ground" in the end all have the same end: death. Once dead, "who is better off and who is cowardly, and who is good and who is stupid" [Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1977: 128]. This content is meant to direct people to a more equal treatment and love for each other, just like the heart and desire of the author himself. The second layer of content shows the causes of suffering to avoid. The ghosts who are "lost in their species", "lost along the way" in the "inner area of the field", "in the countryside along the bush" are just situations that the author has selectively envisioned for us to see which is the suffering realm of the underworld. That realm is seen as a form of "reality" in the world.

Conclusion

Funeral orations in Vietnamese medieval literature are a great heritage, valuable in both thought and art. This genre is used to express the feelings and emotions of the authors and, at the same time, to express many ideological contents with different levels. As a literary genre composed through spiritual conception, orations express philosophical thoughts of the Three Teachings, especially Buddhism. The literary genre in medieval Vietnamese literature has unique features that help it not lose its value over time. Thanks to this unique identity, literature has created an imprint that cannot be confused with other literary genres and contributes to creating a multi-tonal and nuanced literature.

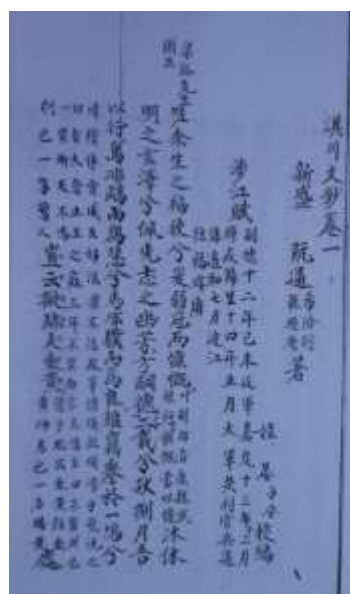
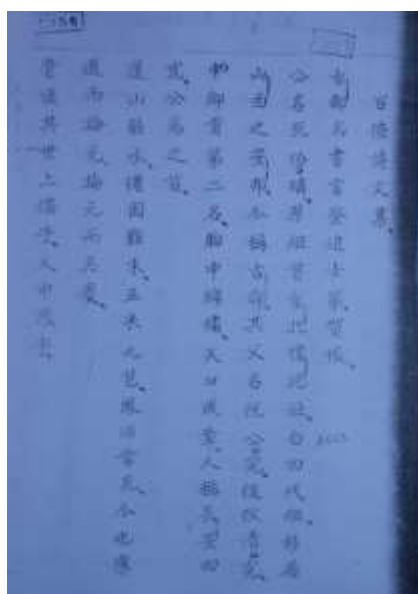
Throughout its history, Vietnamese literature has been associated with writings about the war from many different angles. Funeral orations are a special genre capable of deeply touching the pain of war and the compassion in the hearts of the Vietnamese. The theme of war and human love in Vietnamese Han-Nom orations shows the unique value of this genre in both modern and modern literature in particular, in the process of literary integration of Vietnam with the East Asian world as well as Western culture. The painful and tragic cry of many generations of Vietnamese writers has found a worthy genre, becoming the Vietnamese legacy of painful and heroic history pages, about the compassionate heart that always turns to lonely souls and longing for deliverance.

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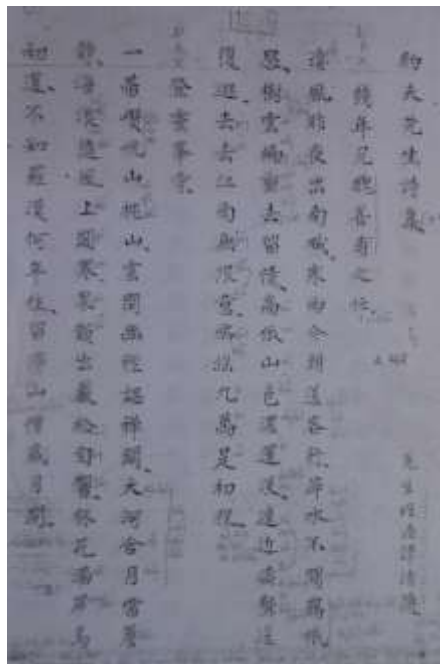
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APPENDIX

First page of some collections



Bách Liêu thi văn tập



Ước Phu tiên sinh thi tập

Kỳ Xuyên văn sao quyển nhất



Danh bút tùng thư

PHILOLOGY

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SOME FEATURES OF THE “EDUCATED – UNEDUCATED” OPPOSITION IN STORIES BY NGUYEN HUY THIEP

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Abstract. A specific artistic feature of stories by Nguen Huy Thiep (1950–2021) is the opposition “town – village”, which often attaches to the opposition “educated – uneducated”, or “intellectuals – common people”. However, the opposition of educated people and uneducated one has a number of peculiarities. Thus, in the stories of the present time we find the opposition “intellectuals – common people”, but in historical stories uneducated common people are opposed by Confucians (*nhà nho*), representatives of educated class typical of traditional Vietnam. At the same time, in a number of stories the “educated – uneducated” opposition has been transformed into the “public person (*con người xã hội*) – natural person” (*con người tự nhiên*) opposition. Once again this confirms the conclusion that hostility to educated people is one of obvious ideological dominants being the conceptual base of the writer’s work.

Keywords: Nguyen Huy Thiep, town and village in stories by Nguyen Huy Thiep, “educated – uneducated” opposition.

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