

Chữ nôm or the former Vietnamese script and its past Contributions to Vietnamese literature

字喃と昔の越南文学に対する字喃の貢献

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Chữ nôm (Chữ 'script,' and nôm < nam 'south, Vietnamese') is the name given by the Vietnamese to one of their two former systems of writing created by the modification of the Chinese characters. It was called so, as opposed both to Chữ Hán or the Han Chinese script ¹⁾ and to Chữ Nho or the script of Vietnamese confucianist scholars. In the latter connotation, it means the demotic or vulgar script in traditional Vietnam.²⁾

The date of its invention has not been so far established beyond controversy. According to Ngô Thì Nhậm 吳時任 (1726-1780) "our National language was most used from Thuyên." ³⁾ Thuyên was Nguyễn Thuyên 阮詮, a scholar who lived at the end of the thirteenth century, under the Trần 陳 dynasty. "He received his doctorate under the reign of Emperor Trần Thái Tông 陳太宗 (1225-1257). In the fall of 1282, while holding the post of Minister of Justice, he was commissioned by Emperor Trần Nhân Tông 陳仁宗 to write a message to a crocodile which had come to the Red River. After his writing drove the animal away, the emperor allowed him to change his family name from Nguyễn 阮 to Hàn 韓, because a similar incident had occurred before in China to the poet-scholar Hàn Yu 韓愈 (768-824). The anecdote was related in *Khâm định Việt-sử Thông-giám Cương-mục* 欽定越史通鑑綱目, 7.26a ⁴⁾ according to which, Hàn Thuyên 韓詮 was skilled in writing *Shih fu* 詩賦, and many people took model after him.⁵⁾

On the basis of these facts, Hàn Thuyên was claimed to be the inventor of Chữ nôm. Such was the opinion of P. Pelliot ⁶⁾ and H. Maspero. The latter who shared P. Pelliot's views, also mentioned a stele discovered in *Hộ Thành sơn* 護城山, Ninh Bình province 寧平省, North Vietnam.⁷⁾ This stele bore an inscription dating from the year 1343 and on which could be read twenty Vietnamese village and hamlet names in Chữ nôm.

The above hypothesis has not been accepted without reserve by other scholars. Nguyễn văn Tố presumed that Chữ nôm had probably existed as early as at the end of the eighth century when the title of *Bố Cái Đại Vương* 布蓋大王 (Father and mother of the people) was given by his successor and his subjects to Phùng Hưng 馮興, who, in 791, overthrew the then Chinese governor and seized upon the Protectorate of Annam.⁸⁾ Such was also the opinion of Dương Quảng Hàm in his Short history of Vietnamese literature.⁹⁾ A third hypothesis was advanced in 1932 by another Vietnamese scholar, Sở Cuồng, who tried to prove that Chữ nôm dated back from *Shih-Hsieh* 士燮 (187-226 A.D.). His arguments rested mainly on a statement by a Vietnamese confucianist scholar under the reign of Emperor Tự-Đức 嗣德, known under the name of Nguyễn văn San 阮文珊 and the pseudonym of *Văn-Đa cư-sĩ* 文多居士. In his book entitled *Đại-Nam Quốc-ngữ* 大南國語, this scholar stated that *Shih Wang* 士王, was the first to try translating Chinese Classics into Vietnamese by using the Chinese characters as phonetic symbols to

transcribe Vietnamese native words. Among the difficulties allegedly encountered by *Shih Hsieh* in his attempts, he quoted two examples: *sui chiu* 隼鳩, (the osprey) and *yang táo* 楊桃, (the carambola or willow peach), to which he did not know what kind of bird and what kind of fruit might correspond in Vietnamese. *Sở Công* subscribed to *Văn-Đa-cur-sĩ's* opinion, although he regretted that this author did not give any references to his statement. In support of it, he put forward the following arguments:

1) At the time of *Shih Hsieh*, when the first Vietnamese made Chinese studies, they could understand only through the Vietnamese language and their Chinese teachers must have used such Chinese characters as having sounds similar to the Vietnamese words to teach the Vietnamese how to read some Chinese characters. On the other hand, as the Chinese sounds and symbols could not transcribe all the Vietnamese native words, the then Vietnamese students must have tried to fill the vacancies by combining together various components of the Chinese characters to form new characters on the basis of such principles of Chinese writing as *Hsiai shêng* 諧聲, *chiah chieh* 假借, and *hui-i* 會意. It is in this way that *Chữ nôm* was likely to have been devised.

2) Furthermore, *Shih Hsieh* was a native of *Kuang-Hsin* 廣信, where, according to the *Ling wai tai ta* 嶺外代答, by *Chu ch'u Fei* 朱去非, under the *Sung* 宋, there had existed from the remotest times, a local script very similar to the Vietnamese *Chữ nôm*. For instances, 𠄎 (= small) and 𠄎 (= quiet).

3) The two Vietnamese *Bố*, father and *Cái*, mother as found in the posthumous title of *Bố-Cái Đại-Vương* bestowed upon *Phùng-Hung* were historically the earliest evidences for the use of *Chữ nôm* in the eighth century. Later, under the *Đinh* 丁, *Đại Cồ Việt* 大瞿越, the official name of the then Vietnam included also a *nôm* character 瞿 *Cồ*. Under the *Trần* 陳 there was a very common use of *Chữ nôm* as evidenced by the practice of the then Court Minister called *Hành Khiển* 行遣, who used to annotate royal decrees with *Chữ nôm* so as to make them better understood by the people.¹⁰⁾

All the views as just outlined above have each some good points. However, anyone is authoritative enough to be adopted as conclusive on the date of the invention of *Chữ nôm*.

In fact, *Chữ nôm*, far from being devised by an individual sometimes in Vietnamese history, should be rather considered as the product of many centuries of patient and obscure elaboration. Such is the most reasonable conclusion mostly reached by scholars quite recently dealing with research on *Chữ nôm*.

As previously defined, *Chữ nôm* consisted essentially of Vietnamese adaptation of borrowed Chinese characters. Accordingly, its invention could be realized only at a stage when the knowledge of Chinese characters had been enough wide-spread in Vietnam.

The first Vietnamese who commanded the use of Chinese characters were a few entirely sinicized intellectuals. Such was the case with *Lý-Tiến* 李進, *Lý Cầm* 李琴, *Trương Trọng* 張重 (second century A.D.). Later, some of these intellectuals came to make poetries and prosa poetries in Chinese after the Chinese models. Such was the case with *Phùng Đái Tri* 馮戴知 whose poetic composition was lauded by the Chinese emperor *Kao Tsu* 高祖 of *T'ang* 唐 (618-626), *Khương Công Phụ* 羹公輔 a prosa-poetry of whom can still be found in Chinese anthologies.¹¹⁾

During the period from the *Han* to the *T'ang* some *Chữ nôm* patterns might have been devised to represent some native words especially the names of places, persons and official titles in Vietnam. Only a few remains of these attempts have subsisted so far.

Such are *Bố* and *Cái* transcribed by two Chinese characters whose Vietnamese reading is similar to the sounds of the two corresponding Vietnamese native words.

From the tenth century to the thirteenth century, although the Vietnamese had gained back their national independence from China, the Chinese script always enjoyed an exclusive privilege strengthened by the system of civil service examination patterned after the Chinese system.¹²⁾ For that reason, Vietnamese intellectuals continued to express their thoughts and feelings in Chinese characters. Not only poetries, prosa-poetries and historical records but also royal edicts, memorials to the Kings, laws, and regulations etc... were written in Chinese characters. However, all of these Vietnamese writings in the Chinese script might have been not the same as those of the first Vietnamese intellectuals mentioned above. The form was Chinese but the substance was Vietnamese. In another respect, various genres of Chinese literature in which Vietnamese writers tried their hands were definitive acquisitions for the forthcoming Vietnamese literature in *Chữ nôm*. As far as the *nôm* script is especially concerned, the official use of the two *nôm* characters *Bố* and *Cái* late in the eighth century and that of the *nôm* character *Cồ* in the tenth century are fair indications that some patterns of *Chữ nôm* were devised by the Vietnamese at the latest from the eighth to the tenth century. Besides such *nôm* characters as *Bố*, *Cái*, *Cồ*, others might have been created about at the same periods both by the phonetic and by the semantic use of Chinese characters. For example, Vietnamese native words *một* (one), and *ta* (I, we) are respectively transcribed by Chinese characters 沒 and 些 with their phonetic reading. Vietnamese native words, *cày*, *cáy*, *ruộng*, *bếp* are respectively transcribed by Chinese characters 耕, 稼, 田, and 灶 with their semantic reading.¹³⁾ As to such other more refined patterns of *Chữ nôm* as those coined on the basis of the principles of Chinese writing *hui-i* and *hsieh-shêng*, they must have been invented only later, probably after the Sino-Vietnamese had taken a definitive shape.¹⁴⁾

To summarize, *Chữ nôm* was not invented overnight to be put at the disposal of *Hàn Thuyên* for writing poetry and prosa poetry but its formation process must have stretched over many centuries by starting at the latest from the eighth century before reaching a certain degree of completion under the *Trần* 陳. It was later improved successively by its users from the *Lê* 黎, to the *Nguyễn* 阮 before attaining to a relative fixity in such a popular long narrative poems as *Kim Vân Kiều* 金雲翹 and *Lục Vân Tiên* 陸雲僊 etc...

As far as can be judged from these master-pieces of Vietnamese literature in *Chữ nôm*, this script is not so fanciful and irrational as some of its critics have claimed. In fact, it was governed by rather precise and even rigid rules.

In our previous study on *Foreign borrowings in Vietnamese* we have given some examples of its main patterns. We will take advantage of this opportunity to describe its structure as fully as we could with materials we have access to.

As rightly observed by Prof. *Rokurō Konō*, the Vietnamese *Chữ nôm* shows striking similarities to the Japanese *Kana* and the Japanese *Kokuji* 國字. Following are some examples given by him. In the *Kojiki* 古事記, the phonetic and semantic readings of Chinese characters which also are made use of in *Chữ nôm* are both employed by its compiler *Ono Yasumaro*. Thus the phonetic representation is used in such proper names as 須佐 for/susa/of 速須佐之男命, 須賀 for/suga/of 須賀宮. This phonetic method is completely adopted in the famous song beginning with "yakumo tatu..." The phonetic representation is not a dominant current except in proper names and songs. Even in

proper names the phonetic method is not always adopted. 速須佐之男 (hayasusanowo) is represented by the semantic method except 須佐 /susa/, which is also prevalent in such examples as in 足名椎 (Asinaduti) 稻田宮主 (Inada-no Miyanusi) etc. Besides the two examples mentioned above, Prof. *Rokurō Konō* quoted also the instances 今 {ima, 初 {fazime, 時 {toki, 雲 {kumo, 歌 {uta, 神 {kami, 首 {kubi. The *hui-i* characters newly created are found both in Japan and Vietnam, e.g. 忝, *giòi* is created by compounding the character 天 and 上. The characters invented in Japan, the so-called Kokuji 國字 (National character) e.g. 榊 (sasaki), 峠 (tauge), 杜 (mori) etc... are the developments of the *hui-i* characters in the same way as the *nôm* character 忝, *giòi*.

Despite all these apparent similarities, in view of the differences between the Japanese and the Vietnamese languages as to their phonetic system and the historical background of the Chinese writing influences, the structure of *Chữ nôm* preserved its distinctive originality, as clearly shown hereafter by its various formation patterns.

Chinese characters borrowed by *Chữ nôm* to represent a single morpheme in Vietnamese may be used singly or in combination.

I. A single Chinese character is used to represent

1) a Vietnamese morpheme of Chinese origin, which has exactly the Sino-Vietnamese reading and the meaning of the corresponding Chinese character. Ex. 頭 *đầu* (head), 袄 *áo* (rob, tunic).

2) a Vietnamese morpheme of Chinese origin which has preserved the meaning of the corresponding Chinese character but whose Vietnamese reading has been slightly different from the Sino-Vietnamese reading of the corresponding Chinese character. Ex. Chinese character 法, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *pháp* is used to represent Vietnamese morpheme *phép* (law, rule). Chinese character 旗, Sino-Vietnamese reading *kỳ* is used to represent Vietnamese morpheme *cờ* (flag). Chinese character 橋, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *kiều* is used to represent Vietnamese morpheme *cầu* (bridge).

3) a Vietnamese morpheme probably of Chinese origin, whose meaning is the same as that of the corresponding Chinese character but whose reading compared to the Sino-Vietnamese reading of the Chinese character has been strongly altered. Ex. Chinese character 捲, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *quyển* is used to represent Vietnamese morpheme *cuốn* (to roll). Chinese character 本, Sino-Vietnamese reading *bản, bôn* is used to represent Vietnamese morpheme *vốn* (capital, funds).

4) a Vietnamese morpheme of the same meaning as the corresponding Chinese character but whose reading is quite different from the Sino-Vietnamese reading of it. Ex. 役, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *dịch*, is used to represent Vietnamese morpheme *việc* (work, job, occupation).

5) a Vietnamese morpheme whose reading is the same as of similar to the Sino-Vietnamese reading of the corresponding Chinese character but whose meaning is completely different. Ex. Chinese character 戈, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *qua* (lance, spear) is used to represent Vietnamese morpheme *qua* (to pass by). Chinese character 沒, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *một* (to disappear under water, to be submerged) is used to represent Vietnamese morpheme *một* (one). In these two examples, the Sino-Vietnamese reading of the Chinese character is exactly the same as the reading of the Vietnamese morpheme represented. Ex. Chinese character 朱, Sino-Vietnamese reading *chu* (red, vermilion) is used to represent the Vietnamese morpheme *cho* (to give). Chinese character 箕, Sino-Vietnamese reading *ky* or *cơ* (crible, sieve) is used to represent

Vietnamese morpheme *kia* (over there, that). In the last two examples, the Sino-Vietnamese reading of the Chinese character is almost similar to the reading of the Vietnamese morpheme represented.

Such *Chữ nôm* as included in the second, third, fourth and fifth categories above by *Dương Quảng Hàm*¹⁷⁾ were considered by *Hồ Ngọc Cẩn*¹⁸⁾ as belonging to the same category of *Chữ nôm* represented by Chinese characters whose Sino-Vietnamese reading offers sound similarities with their Vietnamese reading. There are, according to the latter, several cases of these sound similarities as follows:

1) Sound similarities between the Sino-Vietnamese reading of a Chinese character and the reading of one or several Vietnamese morpheme except for the initial consonant. Ex. Chinese character 板, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *bản* may represent *phản* in Nôm.

2) Sound similarities only as the final syllable or only as the vowel or the vowel cluster before the final consonant. Ex. 合, may be read *hợp, hạp, hiệp* or *hốp*.

3) Sometimes, the Sino-Vietnamese reading of the Chinese character used to represent a Vietnamese morpheme differs from the latter both by the initial consonant and the final syllable. Ex. 職, Sino-Vietnamese: *chức* may also represent, in Nôm, *chắc* or *giắc*.

4) Sound similarities considered as such despite the difference of tones. Ex. 吟, Sino-Vietnamese *ngâm* is also used to represent, in Nôm, *ngâm, ngấm* or *ngậm*.

To understand the above and other similar examples of *Chữ nôm*, we should know which initial consonants, which vowels or vowel clusters, which final syllables in the Sino-Vietnamese word corresponding to a Chinese character and in the Vietnamese morpheme to be represented in Nôm used to be considered as interchangeable.

- A) Initial consonants considered as interchangeable for representation in Nôm.
- a) Initial consonants b-, ph-, v-. Ex. 卜, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *bốc* which represents in Nôm such Vietnamese morphemes as *bốc* and *bói* may also represent *vóc*; 板, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *bản* may also represent in Nôm *phản, bản* or *ván*.
 - b) Initial consonants c-, k-, gh-, qu- used to be interchangeable. Ex. 及, Sino-Vietnamese reading *cập* may also represent, in Nôm, *cáp, gáp* or *kip*; 群, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *quần*, may also represent *còn* in Nôm.
 - c) Initial consonants d-, t-, v- used to be interchangeable. Ex. 性, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *tính* or *tánh* may also represent *dính* in Nôm; 停, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *đình* may also represent, in Nôm, *dành* or *đành*.
 - d) Initial consonants ch-, gi- and less frequently tr-, x- used to be interchangeable. Ex. 執, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *chấp* may also represent, in Nôm, *chup, giúp, xúp*, or *xốp*.
 - e) Initial consonants l-, r-, tr- used to be interchangeable. Ex. 律, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *luật* may also represent, in Nôm, *lọt, luật, lót, rọt* or *trót*.
- B) Syllables considered as interchangeable for representation in *Chữ nôm*.
- a) *ác, ắ, ắ, ức, ức* used to be interchangeable. Ex. 北, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *bắc* may also represent, in Nôm, *bác, bực* or *bước*.
 - b) *ach, éch, iéc, ích* used to be interchangeable. Ex. 役, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *dịch* may also represent *việc* in Nôm; 赤, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *xích*, may also represent, in Nôm, *xéch* or *xêch*.

- c) *ai, ay, ây, oai, oay, uây, oi, ôi, oï, uôi, uoi, ui, wi, e, ê, i, ia* and sometimes *ua* are interchangeable. Ex. 支, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *chi* may also represent *chia* in Nôm; 皮, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *bì* may also represent, in Nôm, *bê* or *vừa*.
- d) *am, ăm, âm, em, êm, im, iêm, om, ôm, om, um, uôm* used to be interchangeable. Ex. 尤, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *đam* may also represent, in Nôm, *đâm, đem* or *đom*.
- e) *an, ản, ân, en, ên, iên, uyên, in, uân, on, ôn, won, on, un, ưn, uôn* used to be interchangeable. Ex. 鄰, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *lân* was also used to represent *lăn* in Nôm.¹⁹⁾
- f) *ăng, âng, ung, uŋg, uông* used to be interchangeable. Ex. 登, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *đăng* was also used to represent, in Nôm, *dâng* or *chùng*.
- g) *ong, ông, ung* and sometimes *ung* were interchangeable. Ex. 用, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *dụng* was also used to represent, in Nôm, *dông, dùng*.
- h) *anh, ênh, inh, iêng, ang, ung* used to be interchangeable. Ex. 生, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *sinh* or *sanh* was also used to represent *siêng* in Nôm.
- i) *ao, au, âu, o, ô, o, u, u, ua, uu* used to be interchangeable. Ex. 牢, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *lao* was also used as *hsiai-shêng* to represent *lao, lau, trao* or *trau*.
- j) *ap, ăp, âp, ep, êp, iêp, ip, op, ôp, ơp, up, ưp, wop* were interchangeable. Ex. 及, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *cập* was also used to represent, in Nôm, *găp, gáp* or *kíp*.
- k) *at, ăt, ât, uăt, ot, ôt, ot, ut, ưt, uôt, it* were interchangeable. Ex. 乙, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *ât* was also used to represent in Nôm, *ăt, út* or *it*.
- l) *et, êt, iêt, it* were interchangeable. Ex. 歇, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *hiết* was also used to represent in Nôm *hết* or *hít*.

N.B. From the above examples, we see that several *Chữ nôm* were made up by changing not only initial consonants, but also final syllables and sometimes even tones. Ex. 及 could be read *cập, găp, kíp* or *kíp*; 吟 could be read *ngâm, ngắm* or *gắm*.

II. Chinese characters used in combination for representation in *Chữ nôm*.

Whenever a single Chinese character could not represent a *Chữ nôm* with its Sino-Vietnamese reading or sound similarities of its Sino-Vietnamese reading, two Chinese characters were used, the one as signific, the other as phonetic. The choice of the Chinese character to be used as phonetic was based upon the twelve rules given above by *Hồ Ngọc Cẩn* about sound similarities. As to the signific, it used to be represented either by a Chinese character or a Chinese radical (部首). Ex. Nôm character 𠄎 (*ba, three*) is made up of the phonetic (read *ba*) and the signific 三 meaning three. Nôm character 搥, (*tay, hand*) is made up of the signific 手 (hand) and the phonetic 西 (read *tây*). Nôm character 𠄎 (*trăm, hundred*) is made up of the signific 百 (hundred) and the phonetic 林 (read *lâm*). Nôm character 𠄎 (*ra, to go out*) is made up of the phonetic 𠄎 (read *la*) and the signific 出 (to go out). These examples show that the signific does not have a fixed position. In principle, it is placed on the left hand side. Such is the case with the above second example. However, for reason of esthetics, the signific may change its position. Thus it is placed on the right side in the first example, on the top in the third one and at the bottom in the fourth one. In this last one, always for the same reason, it may also be placed on the right side as follows 𠄎. In case it is constituted by one of the 214 radicals

of the Chinese lexicon, its position is the same as would have normally a radical in the Chinese character concerned. Ex. Nôm character 唵 *nói* (to speak) where the radical 口 is on the left side, Nôm character 鴉 *qua* (raven, crow) where the radical 鳥 is on the right side, Nôm character 簾 *nong* (flat, large winowing basket) where the radical 竹 is on the top, Nôm character 恻 *lòng* (entrails, heart) where the radical 心 is at the bottom.²¹⁾ Exceptionally, in a few *Chữ nôm* made up of two Chinese characters used in combination, both of their components may indicate the meaning. We then have a pure *Chữ nôm*. Thus Vietnamese morpheme *giời* or *trời* (sky, heaven) is represented by the *Chữ nôm* 天, itself a combination of two Chinese characters 夭 and 上. There is not even a most remote hint on pronunciation.²²⁾ Some *Chữ nôm* may also consist of a signific from *Chữ Nho* or Chinese character with a Sino-Vietnamese reading and a phonetic compound from *Chữ nôm*. Thus Vietnamese morpheme *lời* (word, speech, statement) is represented in Nôm by the complicated grapheme 唵 which consists of the Chinese radical 口 used as signific and of *Chữ nôm* 天 (*giời* or *trời*) used as phonetic.²³⁾ With these few exceptions, *Chữ nôm* of this second type are made up of signific and a phonetic, both being taken from Chinese characters.²⁴⁾ However some texts in *Chữ nôm* especially those of Catholic missionaries and those reproduced by copyists reveal a tendency to retain only the phonetic by suppression the signific. Here is an example quoted by *Hồ Ngọc Cẩn*. The phrase: *Có xưa nay* (There exists before and now) was represented in Nôm by Catholic missionaries as follows: 固初尼 while it would have been transcribed normally in Nôm as follows: 固智尼 according to *Hồ Ngọc Cẩn* or as follows: 固智吟 according to Prof. *Nguyễn Quang Xỹ* and Prof. *Vũ Văn Kính*²⁵⁾. This simplification of *Chữ nôm* may be generally accounted for by the necessity for the copyists of Nôm texts to save time. According to *Dương Quảng Hàm*, the same motivation might have underlain some specifically Vietnamese abbreviated forms of Chinese characters used for representation in *Chữ nôm*. Ex. Vietnamese morpheme *làm* (to do) is represented in Nôm by 𠵼, abbreviated form of Chinese character 爲. Vietnamese morpheme *là* (to be) is represented in Nôm by 𠵼, abbreviated form of Chinese character 羅.²⁶⁾

In addition to the above types of *Chữ nôm*, namely that of *Chữ nôm* transcribed by a single Chinese character and that of *Chữ nôm* transcribed by a combination of several Chinese characters, a special mention should be made of the following *Chữ nôm* 其其 (*khê-khà*, [of voice] to be drawling and hoarse) and 共共 (*khênh-khạng*, to be awkward; to walk slowly like an important person, put on airs).²⁷⁾ These *Chữ nôm* of a unique type were found by Prof. *Nguyễn Quang Xỹ* and Prof. *Vũ Văn Kính* in a poem in *Chữ nôm* by *Cao Bá Quát*, a poet scholar under Emperor *Tự Đức*. According to the authors of *Tự-Điển Chữ nôm* (Dictionary of *Chữ nôm*), these two *Chữ nôm* would defy any analysis as to their structure. Personally we wonder whether they were created by the Vietnamese on the basis of the same principle of construction as the modern Chinese character 乒乓 *píng pàng* or ping pong or whether such is only a mere case of pure coincidence.²⁸⁾

Chữ nôm whose structure has just been described above²⁹⁾ is not without imperfections.

Following are some of these as pointed to by *Dương Quảng Hàm*.

1) One Vietnamese morpheme may be represented by two different nôm graphemes. Ex. *đốt* (to burn) is transcribed sometimes by the grapheme 焯 sometimes by the grapheme 焯.

2) The same *nôm* grapheme may represent two or several different morphemes.

a) Two homophones, a Sino-Vietnamese word *mãi* (to buy) and a Vietnamese native word *mãi* (always) may be represented by the same grapheme 買.

b) A Sino-Vietnamese word *bản* (capital, funds) and a Vietnamese native word with the same meaning but with a different reading (*vốn*) are represented by the same grapheme 本.

c) A Sino-Vietnamese word *quần* (a group, a band) and a Vietnamese native word *còn* (still) having each a quite different meaning may be represented by the same grapheme 群.

d) Two or several words of different meanings but the reading of one of which suggests that of the other or the others are represented by the same grapheme. Ex. 買 *mãi* (to buy) is used to transcribed sometimes *mãi* (always), sometimes *mới* (new, then) or also *mấy* (some, a few, how many?)

e) Two or several Vietnamese words having in common the same final vowel or vowel cluster but not having the same initial consonant are represented by the same grapheme. Ex. 油, Sino-Vietnamese: *du* may represent Vietnamese word *dầu* (oil; although) or Vietnamese word *rầu* (to be sad, depressed).

f) Two or several Vietnamese words with the same sounds but with different tones may be represented by only one grapheme. Ex. 萌, Sino-Vietnamese *manh* (to sprout) represents not only the Sino-Vietnamese word itself but also such Vietnamese native words as *manh* (in *mong-manh*, to be thin, frail), *manh* (piece, bit, fragment), *mánh* (in *mánh khoé*, trick, artifice), *mành* (blind, shades). This use of the same grapheme to transcribe several words of the same sounds is due to the out-numbering of Chinese tones by Vietnamese tones. That is why, to compensate vacancies in Chinese tones, some diacritical marks were invented by the Vietnamese. Such as 丿, 𠂆 placed in the upper right and a small 𠂇 placed in the upper left of the Chinese character used to represent a Vietnamese native word. Ex. *mốc* (to be mildewed, musty, moldy) is transcribed by the Chinese character 木 (Sino-Vietnamese *mộc*) with the adjunction of one of the above three diacritical marks. As a result, we have 木丿 or 木𠂆 or also 𠂇木.³⁰⁾

With such imperfections, *Chữ nôm* could not indeed compare with the present *Chữ quốc ngữ* or the romanized script which is a phonetic script *par excellence*. It must be said however to its credit that, long before the invention of the latter system of writing, it had found out some devices of its own to phoneticize Vietnamese native sounds as accurately as feasible. *Edouard Diquet* showed that the ambiguity possible in the romanized script because of innumerable homophones could be avoided in *Chữ nôm*.³¹⁾ Quite recently, Prof. *Bữu Cầm* brought other strong points of *Chữ nôm* which a few exceptions, succeeded in making clear a distinction between initial consonants d- and gi-, between initial consonants ch- and tr-, between final consonants -n and -ng, between final consonants -c(k) and -t.³²⁾

As can just be seen, *Chữ nôm* despite its unavoidable shortcomings, proved to be of some value even in terms of phonemics.

In another respect, from the end of the thirteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, it has played an effective role in the expression and the transmission of Vietnamese literature.

The history of Vietnamese literature in *nôm* which covered nearly seven centuries may be divided in the following main periods: 1) The *Trần-Hồ* 陳胡 period (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries). 2) The *Lê-Mạc* 黎莫 period (fifteenth and sixteenth centuries). 3) The *Lê trung hưng* 黎中興 or North-South struggle period (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). 4) The *Nguyễn* 阮 period (nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century).

1) The Trần-Hồ period

According to *Khâm-định Việt-sử thông-giám Cương-mục* 欽定越史通鑑綱目, the first writer who used *chữ nôm* in poetry was *Nguyễn Thuyên* 阮詮 or *Hàn Thuyên* 韓詮 and others were said to have followed his example. Such were *Nguyễn Sĩ Cố* 阮士固, and *Chu An* 朱安. The latter and *Nguyễn Thuyên* were reported to have been respectively the authors of *Quốc ngữ thi tập* 國語詩集 and *Phi sa tập* 披沙集. Unfortunately, both of these collections of *nôm* verses were lost. According to *Bùi Huy Bích* 裴輝壁 (1744-1818), *Trê Cóc* 鯰蝸 or The story in verses of the Catfish and the Toad also dated from the *Trần* 陳, but the exact date of this satirical fable in *lục-bát* 六八詩 meter, has not been so far conclusively determined.³³⁾ In addition, *Trình Thử* 貞鼠 or the virtuous mouse a narrative poem in *nôm*, the Story in verses of *Vương Tường* 王牆傳, and six other writings in *nôm* related to the Story of *Nguyễn Biểu* 阮表傳 were also presumed to have dated from the end of the *Trần*. However, there has been so far much controversy about their true date.³³⁾

Concerning writings in *nôm* under the *Hậu Trần* 後陳 and the *Hồ* 胡 it was also reported that in 1387 under the reign of King *Trần Đế Nghiễn* 陳帝昞, the King's Father *Trần Nghệ Tông* 陳藝宗, having granted to *Hồ Quý Ly* 胡季釐 then *Lê Quý Ly* 黎季釐, a sword bearing the inscription 文武全才君臣同德 (Both a scholar and a warrior, a virtuous subject serving a virtuous King)³⁴⁾, *Quý Ly* composed verses in the vernacular to show him his gratitude. Later, in 1437, as King *Thái Tổ* 太祖 of the *Lê* 黎 dynasty wanted to read samples of edicts and verses written in *nôm* by *Hồ Quý Ly*, *Nguyễn Trãi* 阮薦, was reported to have succeeded in gathering and presenting to him some tens of these writings.³⁵⁾

2) The Lê-Mạc period

The same *Nguyễn Trãi* was also said to have left some writings in *nôm*, such as *Ức trai thi tập* 抑齋詩集, an improvised poem in the vernacular addressed to *Thị Lộ* 氏路, a girl seller of sleeping mats who later became his concubine³⁶⁾ and didactic poem in *nôm*, *Gia huấn ca* 家訓歌 or family instructions. The so-called improvised poem to *Thị Lộ* is of dubious authenticity. As to *Gia huấn ca*, this poem in 796 lines may have been composed later by one or several successive authors. The only writing in *nôm* by *Nguyễn Trãi* available at present is the Collection of poems in the National language (*Quốc âm thi tập* 國音詩集) which forms the chapter seven of *Ức trai di tập* 抑齋遺集.

If the outset of the *Lê* dynasty was marked with no other important *nôm* literary work than this collection of poems by *Nguyễn Trãi* and two *Thệ ngôn* 誓言 by *Lê Lợi* recently brought to light by *Hoàng Xuân Hãn*, the reign of King *Lê Thánh Tông* 黎聖宗 (1460-1497) witnessed an extraordinary flourishing of Vietnamese literature in the vernacular. King *Lê Thánh Tông* who was gifted with the rare faculty of composing poetry and was very fond of *belles-lettres*, founded a literary circle known as *Hội Tao Đàn* 會騷壇 with as members 28 Court officials called *Nhị thập bát tú* 二十八宿 or the 28 Constellations

and with himself as Chairman 元師, and as vice Chairmen 副元師, *Thân Nhân Trung* 申仁忠 and *Đỗ Nhuận* 杜潤. Within this *Hội Tao Đàn*, himself and his courtiers exchanged poems in *nôm* which were collected later to form the Collections of Vietnamese poems under the reign of *Hồng Đức* 洪德 i.e. the reign of *Lê Thánh Tông*.³⁸⁾ Besides this *Hồng Đức quốc âm thi tập* 洪德國音詩集, mentioned should be made of such writings in *nôm* as *Hồng Châu quốc ngữ thi tập* 洪州國語詩集, by *Lương Như Hộc* 梁汝鵠, *Kim Lăng Ký* 金陵記 by *Đỗ Cận* 杜覲. In the next century, under the *Mạc* 莫, Vietnamese literature in *nôm* showed much more originality in the famous Collection of poems by *Nguyễn Bình Khiêm* 阮秉謙 (1492-1587) known as *Bạch vân thi tập* 白雲詩集, *Bạch Vân* (White Clouds) being the literary appellation of this poet. Among *nôm* writings under the *Mạc*, we should also mention *Đại Đồng phong cảnh phú* 大同風景賦, *Tam Ngung động phú* 三嶼峒賦, and *Tịch cư ninh thể* 僻居寧體 by *Nguyễn Hăng* 阮況; *Sứ Bắc quốc ngữ thi tập* 使國語詩集, *Sứ trình khúc* 使程曲, *Tứ thời khúc* 四時曲, *Tiểu độc lạc phú* 小燭樂賦 by *Hoàng Sĩ Khải* 黃仕愷 and, finally, *Ngư phủ nhập Đào nguyên truyện* 漁父入桃源傳, by *Phùng Khắc Khoan* 馮克寬.³⁹⁾

3) The *Lê trung hưng* or North South Struggle period

From the death of *Lê Thánh Tông* in 1497, *Đại Việt* 大越 or the then Vietnam went on to be plagued with social troubles and a permanent state of political unrest which led to the usurpation by *Mạc Đăng Dung* 莫登庸 (1527). After the short lived dynasty of the *Mạc*, war broke out in 1627 between the *Trịnh* 鄭 in the North and the *Nguyễn* 阮 in the South, both claiming to be followers of the *Lê* 黎. It ended only in 1672 with the agreement to use the River of *Linh* (*Linh giang* 潯江) as the demarcation line between the two territories. But in 1775, taking advantage of the *Tây Sơn* 西山, revolt in the South, the *Trịnh* attacked and took *Phủ Xuân* 富春, the capital of the *Nguyễn* in the South. However, both the *Trịnh* and the *Nguyễn* were finally overthrown by the *Tây sơn* one of the leaders of whom *Nguyễn Huệ* 阮惠 proclaimed himself Emperor by the end of 1787. Despite the historic triumph of Emperor *Quang Trung* 光中 over the Chinese in 1789 and many of its remarkable achievements, the *Tây Sơn* regime was short-lived and brought to an end in 1802 when *Nguyễn Ánh* 阮暎 proclaimed himself Emperor *Gia Long* 嘉隆 of the *Nguyễn* after capturing Emperor *Cảnh Thịnh* 景盛 of the *Tây Sơn* and his brothers.

The social and political background of this long period covering the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries had a great impact on the development of the Vietnamese literature in *nôm*. Most of the writers were military leaders or Court officials mostly involved in the events of their times. All of them wrote in Chinese characters. However they chose to write also in *nôm* which enabled them to spread more widely their personal political convictions far beyond the traditional academic circle and, at the same time, to enlarge their sphere of influence in the country. Besides such Chinese borrowed literary genres as the *Thất ngôn thi* 七言詩 or seven beat meter poetry, the *Phú* 賦 or prose-poetry, the *Kinh Nghĩa* 經義 or explanations of Chinese Classics, the *Văn sách* 文策 or dissertation which continued to be in high favour, some long narratives in *lục bát* 六八 or Six eight meter and in *Song thất lục bát* 雙七六八 or the 7-7-6-8 meter which made their apparition toward the end of the eighteenth century, materialized the new creative spirit of Vietnamese writers in *nôm*. Following are the most representative works of Vietnamese *nôm* literature during these two centuries in the then North Vietnam, South Vietnam and under the *Tây Sơn*.

a) Let us mention, as main *nôm* writings in North Vietnam under the Trịnh: *Giai cảnh hưng tình phú* 佳景興情賦, *Ngã ba hạc phú* by Nguyễn Bá Lân 阮伯麟, *Chinh phụ ngâm* 征婦吟 translated into *nôm* by Đoàn thị Điểm 段氏點, *Cung oán Ngâm Khúc* 宮怨吟曲 by Nguyễn Gia Thiều 阮嘉昭, *Hoa Tiên Truyện* 花箋傳 by Nguyễn Huy Tụ 阮輝似, *Tự tình Văn* 敘情挽 or two short poems by Nguyễn thị Ngọc Vinh 阮氏玉榮, a concubine of Lord Trịnh Doanh 鄭楹, *Lý Triều Đệ tam Hoàng thái hậu cổ lục thần tích quốc ngữ diễn ca* 李朝第三皇太后古錄神蹟國語演歌 by Trương Ngọc Trọng, a maid of honor at the time of Lord Trịnh Cương 鄭綱, *Ngự đề Thiên hoà doanh Bách vịnh thi tập* 御題天和羸百詠詩集 by Lord Trịnh Căn 鄭根, *Kiên Nguyên thi tập* 乾元詩集 by Lord Trịnh Doanh, *Tâm thanh tồn duy tập* 心聲存肄集 by Lord Trịnh Sâm 鄭森.⁴⁰⁾

b) Among main *nôm* writings in South Vietnam under the Nguyễn, mention should be made of *Huê tình Truyện* 花情傳 by Prince Đán 旦 (1699-1753) the eighth son of King Hiến Tông 顯宗 Nguyễn Phước Chú 阮福澍, *Ngoạ Long cương vãn* 臥龍崗挽 and *Tư Dung vãn* 思容挽 by Đào Duy Từ 陶維慈, *Sãi Vãi*, a satirical writing by Nguyễn Cư Trinh 阮居貞, *Song tinh bất dạ truyện* 雙星不夜傳 by Nguyễn Hữu Hào 阮有豪 etc.

4) Main *nôm* writings under the Tây Sơn

In addition to such reasons as exposed previously which account for the great development of *Nôm* literature at the end of the eighteenth century, let us also mention the exceptional favour in which was kept *chữ nôm* under the Tây Sơn and especially under the short reign of Emperor Quang Trung 光中. Here are some of the *nôm* writings whose authors supported or opposed this regime: *Hoài Nam Khúc* 懷南曲 by Hoàng Quang 黃光, *Tụng Tây hồ phú* 頌西胡賦 by Nguyễn Huy Lương 阮輝澆, *Ai tư vãn* 哀思挽 by Princess Ngọc Hân 玉欣, wife of Nguyễn Huệ 阮惠, *Dụ am Ngâm tập* 裕庵吟集 and *Dụ am văn tập* 裕庵文集 by Phan Huy Ích 潘輝益, who has also left a *nôm* translation of the Chinese written *Chinh phụ Ngâm* 征婦吟 by Đặng Trần Côn 鄧陳琨, *Ngôn ẩn thi tập* 言隱詩集 and *Cung oán thi* 宮怨詩 by Nguyễn Hữu Chính 阮有整, *Chiến tụng Tây hồ phú* 戰頌西胡賦 and the narrative in *nôm* *Sơ Kính Tân Trang* 梳鏡新妝 by Phạm Thái 范彩.⁴¹⁾ Besides these *nôm* writings of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, we would like to make a special mention of the *Thiên Nam minh giám* 天南明鑑, an anonymous long historical poem in the 7-7-6-8 meter which according to Prof. Phạm văn Diêu might have been composed between 1623 to 1657⁴²⁾ and the *Thiên Nam Ngữ lục* 天南語錄, another anonymous historical poem which might have been written between 1787 and 1800 according to Nguyễn văn Tố or between 1682 and 1709 according to Hoàng Xuân Hãn.⁴³⁾

Vietnamese literature in *Nôm* under the Nguyễn (1802-1862)

This period which covered about sixty years has been justly considered to be the golden age of Vietnamese literature in *nôm*. This great flourishing of *nôm* literary works was not after all due to the cultural policy of the Nguyễn who with the exception of Emperors Gia Long 嘉隆 and Tự Đức 嗣德 neither composed verses in *nôm* like the Lords Trịnh 鄭 nor exhorted their subjects to write in *nôm*. It was, to some extent, both a heritage from and a kind of outgrowth of the *nôm* literature in the eighteenth century. In another respect, it authorizes to suppose that readers of *nôm* especially on *nôm* narratives in verses must have been more and more on the increase in Vietnam. In any case, the fact

is that most of the master-pieces of *nôm* literature precisely dated from the *Nguyễn* 阮 dynasty. For lack of space, we will merely mention a few book titles and authors' names without pretending to give an exhaustive list of the profusion of writings in *nôm* which were produced by the nineteenth century. First of all, a place of honor should be reserved for our National poem of *Kim Vân Kiều* 金雲翹 a 3254 lục bát line poem by the famous poet *Nguyễn Du* 阮攸 (1765-1820), of which several translations in foreign languages are available. Next come such writings both in *nôm* prosa and in verses as *Xuân Hương thi tập* 春香詩集 by Poetess *Hồ Xuân Hương* 胡春香 (early in the nineteenth century), *Nhị thập tứ hiếu diễn âm* 二十四孝演音, *Phụ chiêm tiên lãm* 婦箴便覽, *Sứ trình tiên lãm Khúc* 使程便覽曲 by *Lý Văn Phức* 李文馥 (1785-1840), *Mai đình mộng Ký* 梅庭夢記 by *Nguyễn Huy Hổ* 阮輝琥 (1783-1841), *Kim Thạch Kỳ Duyên* 金石奇緣 by *Bùi Hữu Nghĩa* 裴有義 (1807-1872), *Lục vân Tiên* 陸雲僊, *Dương Từ Hà Mậu* 楊徐荷茂, *Ngư Tiều vấn đáp y thuật* 漁樵問答醫術 by *Nguyễn Đình Chiểu* 阮廷炤 (1822-1888) *Thánh chế Thập điều diễn ca* 聖製十條演歌, *Thánh chế Luận ngữ thích nghĩa ca* 聖製論語釋義歌 *Thánh chế tự học giải nghĩa ca* 聖製字学解義歌 by *Tự Đức* (1829-1883), politics inspired poems by *Tôn Thọ Tường* 孫壽祥 and *Phan Văn Trị* 潘文值, *Chính Khí Ca* 正氣歌 by *Nguyễn Văn Giai* 阮文階, *Đại Nam Quốc sử diễn Ca* 大南國史演歌 by *Lê Ngô Cát* 黎吳吉 and *Phạm Đình Toái* 范廷倅, *Hạnh Thục Ca* 幸蜀歌 by *Nguyễn Nhược Thị* 阮若氏 (1830-1909), poems and songs called *Hát Nói* by *Nguyễn Công Trứ* 阮公著 (1778-1858), *Cao Bá Quát* 高伯适 (?-1854) and *Nguyễn Quý Tân* 阮貴新 (1811-1858), various poems by *Nguyễn Khuyến* 阮勸 (1835-1909), *Trần Tế Xương* 陳濟昌 (1870-1907) etc.

Finally, a special mention should be made of such anonymous narratives in *nôm* verses as *Nhị độ mai* 二度梅, *Tống Trân* 宋珍, *Thạch Sanh* 石生, *Nữ Tú Tài* 女秀才, *Phượng Hoa* 芳花, *Lý Công* 李公, *Hoàng Trừu* 黃紬, *Bích Câu* 碧溝, *Phan Trần* 潘陳, *Quan Âm Thị Kính* 觀音氏敬, *Hoa Điểu tranh năng* 花鳥爭能 etc... other *nôm* narratives and *nôm* writings continued to be produced mostly underground even after 1862 until at least the forties and despite the official adoption of the *Quốc Ngữ* script 國語字.⁴⁴⁾

All the *nôm* literary works mentioned above have been integrally or partly transcribed in the romanized script. However, such is not the case with a prodigious number of other *nôm* texts now stored in Vietnamese and some foreign libraries.⁴⁵⁾ They are always waiting for transcription in *Quốc Ngữ* 國語 to be made by specialists. In another respect, *nôm* texts which have been already transcribed have not been free from transcription errors. Under these conditions, textual criticism is indispensable and it would be possible only through collation of all the versions available both in *nôm* and in *Quốc Ngữ*. As rightly observed by *Dương Quảng Hàm* "a true history of Vietnamese literature could be really undertaken only when all these documents in *nôm* have been deciphered and transcribed in *Quốc Ngữ*."⁴⁶⁾ But, all the *nôm* texts especially those which require transcription in *Quốc Ngữ* are not exclusively limited to literature and there are many important *nôm* documents related to Vietnamese history and Vietnamese folklore.

In effect, *Chữ nôm* was not only used by Vietnamese writers for literature but also by other people for various purposes as early as from the seventeenth century. For example here is a letter in *nôm* addressed in 1670 to the Lord *Nguyễn Phước Trấn* 阮福湊 by a Japanese named *Kadoya Shichirobei* 角室七郎兵衛 also known under his Vietnamese name as *Cha Chánh* 吒正 (Father Chánh): 翁門歲固蔑媿碎於坦安南宜浪龟作碎翁門糜油門理時龟忌龍恩翁門歲 (注: 原文中碎、碎ノ誤ナリ).

Following is its transcription in *Quốc Ngữ* “*Ông muôn tuổi. Có một em tôi ở đất Annam nghe rằng đã làm tôi ông, mừng lắm. Dầu muôn lẽ thời đã cậy lòng (or trông) ơn. Ông muôn tuổi*” [English translation: I wish you ten thousands years of life. I heard that one of my young brothers [i.e. *Shichirojiro* 七郎次郎] who is living in *Annam* has become one of your subjects. I feel much pleasure for it. May I recommend him to your benevolence under any circumstances. I wish you ten thousands years of life].⁴⁷⁾

Always concerning the seventeenth century, let us mention several manuscripts in *nôm* from Italian Catholic Father J. Maiorica (1591-1651) found by Prof. *Hoàng Xuân Hãn* at the French National Library (Bibliothèque Nationale) in Paris. The titles of these manuscripts have been transcribed by him as follows. 1) *Thiên-Chúa Thánh-giáo Hồi tội Kinh*. 2) *Thiên-Chúa Thánh-giáo Khai-mông*. 3) *Đức Chúa Chi-thu*. 4) *Truyện Đức Chúa Chit-thu*. 5) *Thiên-Chúa Thánh-Mẫu*. 6) *Các Thánh truyện*. 7) *Vita sanctorum* (No title in *nôm*). 8) *Ông Thánh I-na-xu*. 9) *Ông Thánh Phan-chi-cô Xa-vi-ê truyện*. 10) *Ngắm lễ trong mùa Phục-sinh đến tháng bảy*. 11) *Những điều ngắm trong các lễ trọng*. 12) *Kinh những lễ mùa Phục sinh*.⁴⁸⁾

As just can be seen, *Chữ nôm* which has so richly and diversely contributed to the past Vietnamese literature, will remain an indispensable tool of research not only for the students of the past Vietnamese literature but also for researches on Vietnamese history and Vietnamese culture.

NOTES

- 1) Việt Hán Từ Điển Tồi Tân 越漢辭典最新. Nhà sách Chin Hoa. Saigon 1961. Page 549: Nôm = 喃字【意印《南國的字》】
- 2) Việt Nam Tự Điển. Hội Khai-Trí Tiên-Đức Khởi-Thảo. Saigon Hanoi. Văn Mới 1954. 370: Nôm= Tiếng nói thông thường của dân Việt Nam đối với chữ Nho.
- 3) Ngô Thì Nhậm 吳時任, 海東誌略 (Hải Đông chí lược).
- 4) Nguyễn Đình Hoà, Chữ Nôm, The Demotic System of Writing in Vietnam, Journal of the American Oriental Society. Volume 79, Number 4, Oct. Dec. 1959. page 271.
- 5) 《阮詮海陽青林人善爲詩賦人多效之後爲國音詩曰韓律者以此》欽定越史通鑑綱目。
- 6) P. Pelliot, “Première étude sur les sources Annamites de l’histoire d’Annam,” B.E.F.O. t. IV page 621, note.
- 7) H. Maspero, “Etudes sur la phonétique historique de la langue Annamite. Les initiales” B.E.F.O, t. XII, no 1 page 7, note 1.
- 8) Nguyễn Văn Tố “Phan Kế Bính Việt Hán Văn Khảo, Etudes sur la littérature Sino-Annamite 2 edit.) Hanoi, Editions du Trung-Bắc Tân Văn, 1930 in 8, 175 p.) B.E.F.O, t. XXX, 1930, Nos. 1-2 Janvier-Juin, pp 141-146.
- 9) Dương Quảng Hàm, Việt Nam Văn-Học Sử-Yếu, in lần thứ bảy. Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục, Saigon 1960 page 101.
- 10) Sở Công, “Chữ nôm với chữ Quốc Ngữ,” Nam Phong, no 172, Mai 1932, pp. 495-498.
- 11) Nguyễn Đổng Chi, Việt Nam Cổ Văn Học Sử, Hàn Thuyên, Hanoi, 1942, pp. 87-91.
- 12) The earliest session of civil service examination in Vietnam dated from 1075 under Lý Nhân Tông (1072-1127). See Trần Trọng Kim, Việt Nam Sử Lược, in lần thứ Nhất Trung Bắc Tân Văn, Hanoi 1920, page 81.
- 13) Nguyễn Quang Xỹ, Vũ Văn Kính Tự-Điền Chữ Nôm, Trung Tâm Học Liệu, Saigon 1971.
- 14) H. Maspero, “Le dialecte de Tch’ang Ngan,” B.E.F.O, 1920.
Mineya Toru, 三根谷徹, 越南漢字音の研究, 東洋文庫, 昭和 47年3月25日.
- 15) Nguyễn Khắc-Kham, “Foreign borrowings in Vietnamese,” Area and Culture Studies, no 19, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 1969 pp. 142-175.
- 16) Kono Rokuro, “The Chinese writing and its influence on the Scripts of the Neighbouring Peoples with special reference to Korea and Japan.” Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko (The Oriental Library) No 27. The Toyo Bunko, Tokyo, 1969. pp. 117-123.
一要解國語, 國文法辭典, 文學博士湯沢幸吉郎監修, 寺瀨光男編, 東京堂出版 page 66.
- 17) Dương Quảng Hàm, “Le chữ nôm ou écriture démotique. Son importance dans l’étude de l’ancienne littérature Annamite.” Bulletin de l’Instruction Publique de l’Indochine No 7, Mars 1942. N.B. Among the examples of this fourth category of chữ nôm, Dương Quảng Hàm quoted also the grapheme 味, Sino-Vietnamese reading: *vị* (savor, taste) as being used to transcribe the Vietnamese morpheme *mùi*. However, this writer thinks that the Chinese character might have been read *mùi* by the Vietnamese as early as the beginning of the Chinese T’ang dynasty in imitation of the Chinese reading. (cf. H. Maspero, “Quelques mots Annamites d’origine Chinoise” B.E.F.E.O, no 3, 1916,

pp. 35-39). Accordingly it might have been a *chữ nôm* whose date was prior to the eighth century.

18) R.P. Hồ Ngọc Cẩn, Văn chương An Nam, Littérature Annamite, Imprimerie de la Société des Missions Etrangères, Hong Kong, 1933. pp. 162-166.

19) This example is given by this writer instead of 隣 which, according to Hồ Ngọc Cẩn, was used to represent in *nôm răn, rân* or *rên*.

20) This example is given by this writer instead of 搥 which according to Hồ Ngọc Cẩn could be read *lao, lau, trao* or *trau*.

21) Dương Quảng Hàm, op. cited, pp. 279-279b.

三根谷徹, 安南語, 世界言語概説下巻, 研究社 1955.

同氏: 漢字からローマ字へ. 月刊百科, 7 no 70, 1968. pp. 15, 16, 25.

22) Dương Quảng Hàm, page 103.

Nguyễn Đình Hoà, op. cited, page 272.

23) Dương Quảng Hàm, op. cited. page 103.

Mineya Toru, ops. cited.

24) According to Prof. Hoàng Xuân Hãn, Chữ nôm was originally based on phonetic principle. Later only, it became ideographic by joining together two elements: a phonetic and a signfic, but prior to this last stage, it had made use of few peculiar signs which, added to the phonetic, indicated that the Chinese character employed as phonetic was different in meaning from the Vietnamese morpheme to be represented by it in *nôm*. Here is an excerpt from his study on Girolamo Maiorica's *nôm* works concerning the matter: "Les Vietnamiens ont cherché à améliorer le système en distinguant la deuxième catégorie de caractères de la première catégorie par l'accolement aux caractères "phonétiques" d'un signe particulier dont le sens nous reste encore mystérieux. Enfin la dernière amélioration consiste à remplacer ce signe par une partie idéographique qui est un caractère chinois ayant le même sens que le mot Vietnamien qu'on veut transcrire ou ayant un sens générique se rapportant à ce mot Vietnamien. Voici quelques exemples illustrant cette méthode. Le sud se dit *nam* en Vietnamien, mot provenant du caractère Chinois qui se prononce *nan* en Chinois actuel. Les Vietnamiens utilisent ce caractère pour transcrire le son et le mot *nam*. Or il existe en Vietnamien des sons voisins de ce dernier, par exemples *nam* qui a deux sens: *cinq* et *année*. Les Vietnamiens ont transcrit ce son par le même caractère Chinois qui veut dire *Sud*, parfois en lui accolant un signe particulier. C'est la méthode purement phonétique. Pour faciliter la lecture et la compréhension du texte, souvent ils adjoignent au caractère précédent, soit le caractère Chinois qui veut dire *cinq* pour le sens *cinq*, soit le caractère Chinois qui veut dire *année* pour le sens *année*." Concerning the peculiar sign above, Prof. *Hoàng Xuân Hãn* has added the following foot-note "J'ai décelé sept de ces signes, dont deux semblent se retrouver dans les caractères de *Si-Hia* (西夏) pays qui existait au Nord-ouest de la Chine de l'époque des *T'ang* jus-qu'à la fin des *Song*, ce qui me fait penser que les écritures locales des pays limitrophes de la Chine du temps des *T'ang* pourraient avoir une origine commune d'ordre administratif".

Hoàng Xuân Hãn, "Girolamo Maiorica, ses oeuvres en langue Vietnamienne conservées à la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris. Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu Extractum e vol. XXII, 1953. Institutum Historicum S.I. Roma, Borgo Santo Spirito, 5 page 206.

25) Hồ Ngọc Cẩn, op. cited page 166.

Nguyễn Quang Xỹ, Vũ Văn Kính, op. cited, pp. 165, 508, 859.

26) According to Prof. Kono Rokuro, the Vietnamese abbreviated form 𠄎 resembles the abbreviated form 𠄎 of the character 爲 for the Korean verb { ha “to do”} in the so-called *tho* in Ancient Korea. The chữ nôm character 𠄎, he added, is an abbreviated form of the character 羅 which was used for the word {là “to be”}. This also reminds us the similar abbreviation in the Korean *tho* (𠄎, 𠄎). Kono Rokuro, op. cited page 101. See also Mineya Toru, Annango, page 860.

27) Nguyễn Quang Xỹ, Vũ Văn Kính, op. cited, Lời Nói đầu (foreword) page viii.

28) Kanagae Nobumitsu 鐘ヶ江信光, 中國語辭典. Zhongguo yu cidian 大學書林, 昭和四十七年, page 612.

29) For further details about the structure of *Chữ nôm*, see 聞宥: 論字喃之組織及其與漢字關涉 (「燕京學報」第14期, 1933. pp. 201-242), 字喃雜考 (「西南研究」第1號昆明西南學會刊行, 1940. pp. 111-113).

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30) Dương Quảng Hàm, Le Chữ nôm ou écriture démotique etc... pp. 283-284a.

31) Edouard Diguët, “De la Langue Annamite Parlée et Ecrite” Revue Indochinoise, Aout, 1905, 226-32.

32) Bửu Cầm, “Ưu-điểm và Khuyết-điểm Của Chữ nôm” (Strong points and weak points of Chữ nôm) Việt Nam Khảo Cổ tập san, Saigon 1960, no 1, pp. 50-64.

Maurice Durand, Comptes rendus, B.E.F.E.O, tome L, fasc, no 2, 1962, page 561.

33) Hoàng Xuân Hãn, Nghiêm Toàn, Thi Văn Việt Nam (Từ đời Trần đến cuối đời Mạc), Các lớp Trung Học. Loại Sách Học Sông Nhị, Hà-Nội 1951. pp. 19-45.

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34) cf. Shu-King 書經, 泰誓中, 6: 《受有億兆夷民離心離德予有亂臣十人同心同德雖有周親不如仁人》 Kinh-Thư, Vietnamese translation by Prof. Thẩm Quỳnh. Saigon 1968 page 206).

35) Dương Quảng Hàm, Việt Nam Văn Học Sử Yếu page 107.

36) cf. Nguyễn Khắc-Kham, “Vietnamese Names and their peculiarities” Area and Culture Studies No 23 Tokyo University of Foreign Studies 1973, page 205 foot-note number 23.

37) Hoàng Xuân Hãn, Nghiêm Toàn, op. cited pp. 49-69.

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38) Dương Quảng Hàm, op. cited pp. 98, 99, 280.

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39) Hoàng Xuân Hãn, Nghiêm Toản op. cited pp. 101-121.

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41) Sơn-Tùng, Hoàng Thúc Trâm, Quốc văn Đồi Tây Sơn. Sách Hiếu Biết, Vĩnh Bảo Saigon 1950 123 pages.

42) Phạm Văn Diêu, "Thiên Nam Minh Giám." Văn Hoá Nguyệt San, Saigon

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43) Phạm Văn Diêu, "Thiên Nam Ngữ Lục" V.N.V.H.N.S. Loại mới tập XII, Quyển 3, số 79, tháng 3, 1963, pp. 351-368, Quyển 4 số 80, tháng 4, 1963, pp. 535-550, số 81, tháng 5, 1963 pp. 689-698, số 82, tháng 6, 1963, pp. 835-847.

44) Hạo-Nhiên, Nghiêm Toản Việt Nam Văn-Học Sử Trích yếu, II, Vĩnh Bảo, Saigon, 1949 pp. 7-70.

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N.B. Concerning the true names of Hồ Xuân Hương and Bà Huyện Thanh Quan presumed to have been respectively called *Hồ thị Mai* and *Nguyễn thị Hinh*, see Introduction à la littérature Vietnamienne (Collection U.N.E.S.C.O, Introduction aux littératures Orientales G. Maisonneuve et Larose Paris, 1969) by Maurice M. Durand and Nguyễn Trần Huân, pp. 181, 189.

45) Concerning the Collection of Nôm texts at the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, see: Alexander Barton Woodside, Vietnam and The Chinese Model, A comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Government in the first half of the nineteenth century. Harvard University Press Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971 page 323 where we read the following statement "In Paris, the baffling riches of the fascinating collection of nôm texts at the Bibliothèque Nationale are a challenge to any scholar."

46) Dương Quảng Hàm, Le chữ nôm ou Ecriture demotique etc... page 285.

47) Kawashima Motojiro, 川島元次郎: 朱印貿易史, 大正十年九月十日印刷, 大正十年九月十五日發行, 内外出版株式會社, page 469.

48) Hoàng Xuân Hãn, Girolamo Maiorica etc... op. cited pp. 208-213.

字喃と昔の越南文学に對する字喃の貢獻

クェソ カシク カム
Nguyễn Khắc-Kham

越南には大昔から文字があったかどらかは今も解らないが、中國の支配下にあった頃漢字の外には何の文字もなかった事は確かな事である。數人の学者の説によれば、字喃は西曆二世紀又は八世紀又は十三世紀末に發明されていたとの説が末だにある。字喃發見の年代に就いて、新しい見解を提出し、その造字のルールを出来るだけ詳しく述べて見た。又越南の文学に對する貢獻に重きを置いて、字喃によって七世紀近くに亘る長い間の豊富な文学が出来上って、今までに多くの字喃作品を残して来た。更に残っている字喃文献は越南の歴史や民俗に関するものが多い。それ故に字喃は昔の越南文学を勉強する爲になくてはならない大きな役目を持っている、又越南の歴史や文化を研究する爲にも必要な道具である。

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