



The Characteristics of Sino – Nom Funeral Oration (祭文) in Bình Định, Vietnam

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Abstract- From the results of our fieldwork on Sino-Nom funeral oration (祭文) in Bình Định Province, Vietnam, we have had an overall view of a special literary genre in Bình Định literature. This article focuses on clarifying the unique characteristics of Sino-Nom funeral oration in Bình Định literature. As a genre that is concerned with the function of sorrowful ritual, Sino-Nom funeral oration in Bình Định has provided new cultural values, contributing to the achievement of Sino-Nom literature in Binh Dinh, Vietnam.

Keywords: Post – Traditional Vietnamese Culture, Sino-Nom Literature, Sino - Nom Funeral Oration, Bình Định Literature, Sino-Nom Literature in Binh Dinh, Vietnam.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Sino - Nom literature, *funeral oration* (祭文) is a genre that has the development process inheriting and adopting from Chinese literature. The *funeral oration* shows a sense of respect for heaven and the rule of law, undertaking cultural functions. It is the bridge between the natural, supernatural, past and present worlds. In particular, each *funeral oration* is considered a humanistic and profound dialogue.

Began from October 2015 to May 2019, through three fieldworks in Bình Định, we collected 27 worship documents and funeral orations. Through our survey, we found that the reserve of Sino-Nom funeral orations in Bình Định is quite large but has not been researched appropriately.

We collected 04 Han script funeral orations: *The Funeral oration for Quận công Trần Đức Hòa* (Văn tế Công Quận công Trần Đức Hòa), *The funeral oration for Hoàng Quốc công Đào Duy Từ* (Văn tế Hoàng Quốc công Đào Duy Từ); *The funeral oration for Trần family in Cảnh Vân* (Văn tế Hiệp tế họ Trần ở Cảnh Vân), *The funeral oration for Đặng family in Lộc Trung* (Văn tế Hiệp tế họ Đặng ở Lộc Trung); and 06 Sino-Nom funeral orations: *The funeral oration for Chương Hậu quân Võ Tánh*; *Lễ bộ Tham Tri Ngô Tùng Châu* (Phụng dục tế phò mã Chương Hậu quân Võ Tánh; *Lễ bộ Tham Tri Ngô Tùng Châu* (Đặng Đức Siêu); *The funeral oration for husband and wife* (Nguyễn Trọng Trì); *The funeral oration for the mother and the dead soldiers* (Đào Phan Duân) (Văn tế mẹ, *Tế trận vong chiến sĩ*), *Funeral oration for the master* (Văn tế thầy, Buddhist monk Bich Lien), *The funeral oration for the lost souls* (Trần Đình Tân) (Văn tế cô hồn). We also collected 03 funeral orations that written in Quốc ngữ, and 03 documents collected by the Bình Định Historical Archives Center are like those (Đặng Quý Địch et al, 2017). All the documents we collected have not been published.

II. METHODOLOGY

Authors mainly use qualitative analysis, synthesis and analytical combined with descriptive and explanatory methods.

We also use historical materialism method.

III. MAIN RESULTS

Some Characteristics of the Content of the Sino-Nom Funeral Oration in BìnhĐịnh, Vietnam

a) Promote Morality and Social Ethics

Up to now, we have collected no funeral oration that written by the servants for the king. Lê NgọcHân stood in the position of a wife prayed to her husband King Quang Trung (*The Funeral oration for King Quang Trung; Văntếvua Quang Trung*). TrầnĐìnhTân wrote the funeral oration for Kinh Quang Trung is also on behalf of the entire people of the locality to commemorate the national hero (*The funeral oration for Emperor Quang Trung*). Perhaps this was a tacit convention that a servant could not pray to the king. Court of the Imperial Clan (*Tôngnhânphủ*) and Board of Rites (*Lễbộ*) were specialized agencies for this task in the activities of the feudal dynasties.

As for the emperor and the Court worship the servants, it is a quite important event, showing the emperor's personal concern and the Court's gratitude to the meritorious officials. According to history books Đại Nam thực lục, in June 1799, Nguyễn Ánh captured Quy Nhơn and changed his name to BìnhĐịnh, then withdrew his troops to Gia Định and sent VõTánh and NgôTùngChâu to defend. In 1798, Tây Sơn army led by Trần Quang Diệu sieged the citadel, Võ Văn Dũng kept Thi Nai gate from Nguyễn army. In 1801, Nguyễn Ánh rescued the citadel, secretly told VõTánh to leave the army to fight Phú Xuân. VõTánh advised Nguyễn Ánh to take the great bureaucracy as an important part of the time when the Tây Sơn army was here to attack and capture Phú Xuân. King Nguyễn took away the army and conquered Phú Xuân. After sending Lê Văn Duyệt and Lê Chất to rescue, but the army arrived in Quảng Ngãi, BìnhĐịnh citadel was defeated. Nguyễn Ánh was very sad and told the head of Board of Rites Đặng Đức Siêu to write the funeral oration for VõTánh, NgôTùngChâu (*Phụng đựt tế phò mã Chưởng Hậu quân VõTánh, Lễbộ Tham tri NgôTùngChâu*). This funeral oration is not only a recognition of the sacrifices of VõTánh and NgôTùngChâu for the Nguyễn dynasty, but also praises and exalts the courageous hearts of the two meritorious officials. Đặng Đức Siêu praised the "loyalty" of the Nguyễn dynasty's meritorious officials. He also consoled their holy spirits:

"The shadow remains, but we can not hold back the tears

Defeating the enemy, but we can not meet you anymore."¹

(Đặng Quý Địch, 2008: 45 Võ Minh Hải, 2019: 81).

Before VõTánh, NgôTùngChâu, in BìnhĐịnh, eminent dignitaries also contributed to help Nguyễn Lords to settle the capital and expand the southern border. Among them, TrầnĐứcHòa and Đào Duy Từ are typical figures. The book *Đại Nam chính biên* has clearly defined the merits and rituals of two meritorious officials. The general characteristics of these Han script funeral oration are aimed at "recognizing talents and virtue and their contributions to Nguyễn Lords' career" (Nguyễn Dynasty Historical Institute, 1999: 89).

The most sorrow funeral orations are written by wives to worship husbands (*The funeral oration for King Quang Trung* by Lê NgọcHân, *The funeral oration for the husband of TrầnĐìnhTân*. In some different works, the sons worship their parents such as *The funeral oration for Mother* (Đào Phan Duân, Trần Trọng Giỏi), *The funeral oration for Father* (Lê Đình Huyết). Junior doctor Đào Phan Duân could not hold back tears during the moment of the death of his mother:

"The death of father, nobody expected the pain

Mother is so fragile, feeling the lonely all the time..."²

(*The funeral oration for Mother*) (Võ Minh Hải, 2019:202).

The object of the worship is not only parents but also masters (*The funeral oration for Master* by Buddhist monk Bích Liên), Husband or wife's parent (*The funeral oration for wife's father* by Nguyễn Chuân; *The funeral oration for husband's mother* by Huỳnh Bá Văn). All are derived from the sincere heart. All the above funeral orations aim to affirm the value of morality, morality, and dignity. Although it is normative, they all express the admiration for the dead and the morality of the feudal law in old society. In addition, with the richness of humanity, the writers of BìnhĐịnh or those who wrote about the characters of BìnhĐịnh always appreciated the filial piety and loyalty of the people in this land.

b) Praise Patriotism and Humanitarian Spirit

The funeral orations in BìnhĐịnh also shows the patriotism and fighting against foreign aggression. Surveying the Sino – Nom funeral orations, we found that the Nom scriptures are often used to sacrifice historical events mainly related to the French resistance of the writers in BìnhĐịnh. As a retired meritorious officials of the Nguyễn Dynasty, witnessing the complete collapse of the Nguyễn dynasty and the Japanese surrendering to the Allies in 1945, Đào Phan Duân had confidence in the long-term resistance of the Vietnamese army and people, especially The Việt Minh. To commemorate the soldiers who lost their lives, the people of Tuy Phước district held a memorial service at the district capital on June 22, 1946 (Bình Tuất), Đào Phan Duân wrote an Sino – Nom funeral oration: *Funeral oration for*

the dead soldiers (Vântêtrậnvongchiếnsĩvăn) to worship soldiers who died in the war because of the French invasion. In his works, he always remembers the merits that soldiers poured out in the fight against the French invasion. The resistance was so laborious, long and difficult. This is also what keeps him wondering:

*VôĐịnh river, the pile of bones remains, the wanderer sank to the pain on afternoon
TrườngBinh land, the drop of blood in nowhere, one felt sorrow at sunset³.*

(ĐặngQuýĐịch, 2008: 87).

Đào Phan Duân affirmed that because of the patriotism, soldiers sacrificed bravely. Through his works, we can see that it is a sacrifice for the righteous, for the spirit of martyrdom. The funeral orations are created from the need to worship, to mourn or to praise the dead. Through the words, ideas and content of the works, the author wants to send the feelings of the survivor to the deceased, from painful loss to setting an example for those who are still alive. Using funeral oration also praises the spirit of patriotism. In commemoration of the anti-French hero – Marshal Mai XuânThưởng 枚春賞 (1860-1887) – the people of BìnhĐịnh praised for his contributions to this land. ĐờngSĩBinh worshiped Marshal Mai through two sentences that filled with emotion and admiration:

*"Despite defeat, your courage is eternal
Even if you died, your noble feeling is forever...⁴*

(ĐặngQuýĐịch, 2008: 37 Võ Minh Hải, 2019; 102).

It can be said that the funeral orations in BìnhĐịnh during the resistance period is the heart of the patriotic people. Those are not only the sorrow words but also the call to follow in his father's footsteps on the path of struggle. The funeral orations of this period can be viewed as words of resistance, and it fulfilled the glorious mission entrusted by history.

c) Deep Sarcastic Laughter

Satire (tràotiếu) means ridicule and mockery. The typical examples for this type are *The funeral oration for husband and wife* (NguyễnTrọngTrì), *The funeral oration for the rat* (HuỳnhBáVấn), *The funeral oration for opium* (NguyễnXuânKiều). These works are all humorous, in a heterogeneous way.

HuỳnhBáVấn – a Confucian scholar is an eminent author of this form. The number of his writings remaining is 07 articles. In which, *The funeral oration for the rat* with the words of the rat which are both deep and clever, compared to *The Funeral oration for husband and wife* by NguyễnTrọngTrì, each work has its own appearance. Through *The funeral oration for the rat*, he wants to target the dishonest courtiers "being fat because of the fertility of the people". According to him, like this "two-legged rat" always existed, they are good at "greedily groping", making a practitioner who cannot be compassionate have to set traps, the thirteenth girl also buys nets and steel traps

*"...You thought you fell into a jar of sticky rice
But you didn't know you got into the trap and died⁵*

(ĐặngQuýĐịch, 2008: 106).

NguyễnTrọngTrì is "the member of CầnVương Movement", always being watched by the authorities, but he still did not change his mind. His writings are quite a lot, but most of them have been disapproved. His work *The Funeral oration for husband and wife* to lash out the village bully in the village of Vietnam. In this work, when the husband died and lost his income, the wife wrote a prayer in pain:

*"Our tax has been collected, you brought it to our sons, but now you died
Our land is vast, you give it to me, but now you left this world"⁶*

(ĐặngQuýĐịch, 2008: 55).

The reader could not help but laugh because his wife's mourning for her husband was for money. Through this witty and humorous funeral oration, a certain part of enthusiastic heart has been revealed. It can be said that these are excellent work. Although it is imagination, but very creative, intelligent, bitterly sarcastic.

Some Features of the Artistic Style of the Sino – Nom Funeral Orations in BìnhĐịnh, Vietnam

a) Characteristics of the Literary System

With 71 Sino–Nom funeral orations in BìnhĐịnh, we have classified according to the literary criteria and the results are: The works written as Phú has 30 works (10 works in Han script, 20 works in Nom script); The works written as rhymed prose have 07 in Nom script. The works written in a complex style have 34 works (16 works in Han script, 18 works in Nom script).

In Vietnamese classical Sino-Nom literature, the *Phú form* (thểphú) is often used to write funeral oration. In fact, in the Nom funeral orations, the vast majority are written according to the rich form; out of 45 Nom funeral orations we collected, we find that there are up to 32 texts written as Phú, the rest are shared for the complex form, rhymed prose. HuỳnhBáVấn, TrầnĐìnhTân, Đào Phan Duân... are the authors with a lot of Nom funeral orations, most of them were written in the Phú form. It should be clear that, for the Han script funeral oration, most of them follow the strict form of Tang poetry. For example, in the

funeral oration *The Funeral Oration for QuâncôngTrầnĐứcHòa* in Han script, the author (anonymous) used the rules of Tang poetry to write, the sentence is arranged on principle:

天地儲精，乾坤鐘萃，
超然第一英雄，卓耳半千名世。

*You are the one who surpassed everyone and became the great hero
Your reputation has lasted for centuries and generations.*⁷

(ĐặngQuýĐịch, 2008: 10).

Phú form and poetry both expressed their feelings in rhymes. Phú differs from poetry in this point: poetry is condensed and Phú with highly detailed description. Therefore, the Nom funeral orations in Phú form express the special advantages of rhymed Phú form.

The expressive characteristic of funeral orations is emotional display and multi-tone. This feature is suitable for rich and prose. However, because funeral oration needs to be written in length to express all the concerns of the living towards the dead, so there are Sino - Nom funeral oration that used poetic forms of indefinite length. However, these are not really suitable for funeral oration.

With the elements of the narrative in six-eight poetry form (thể lục bát) and lyrical in double-seven six-eight poetry form (thể song thất lục bát), these Nom funeral oration made the listener understand the mysteries of the creation, the morality and the wisdom in life.

b) The Characteristics of Cultural Language

Cultural language are words that are influenced by scholarly and popular culture in the classical Vietnamese language. As literary works expressed as Han and Nom scriptures, funeral orations in BìnhĐịnh has special features and distinctive features compared to other localities, most clear in the Nom script funeral oration. The words in the Han script works are always correct according to the pattern, all of which are derived from the history. The more sinister words, the more profound they show the writer's talents. In the work *The funeral oration to Trần family* in CảnhVân (TuyPhước), the author wrote very erudite sentences:

“有開必先萬代之孝慈而見，
克昌厥後千秋之功德不遷。

*The ancestors made a fortune, the descendants respect for their parents forever
Brightening the life of the descendants, the work is so great*⁸

(ĐặngQuýĐịch, 2008: 24).

In these verses, cultural material such as “hữukhaitấttiên”, “khắcxươngquýếthậu” are words that are featured in the *ThiKin*. The characteristics of language in Sino Nom funeral oration are very diverse. With 45 Nom script works we surveyed, we have listed 1,040 cultural documents. This shows that, in the consciousness of writers, they have paid attention and applied creatively the cultural language system originating from Chinese and Vietnamese culture to express his attitude to the society. In 1,040 linguistic materials, we have initially classified into two systems: original form (737 materials, accounting for 70.87%) and translation (303 documents, accounting for 29.13%). Surveying the system of cultural language in the artistic language of several some funeral orations in BìnhĐịnh shows that cultural documents used by the authors are diversified and rich in terms of origin. Like the intact cultural language system, the cultural translation system are also quite rich in origins and flexibly, closer and easier to understand. The author has brought his works closer to readers, perhaps this is the reason why their works are widely disseminated among the general public.

c) The Variety and Complexity in Artistic Tone

Funeral oration is mainly used in rituals, so the solemnity, regret and respect are the dominant tones. Compared with other types of tones, the solemn tone can span the entire works as an exclamation, most obviously at the beginning and the end of the essay. The first part is always opened with *Cungduy* 恭惟 and ends with the words *Phụcduy* 伏惟, *Cẩncáo* 謹誥. In *The Funeral oration for Đặng family in LộcTrung*, the author has started with *Cungduytiêncông* 恭惟先靈 and ends with two words: *Thượnghưởng* 尚饗. Similarly, in *The Funeral oration for QuâncôngTrầnĐứcHòa*, the work begins with the sentence *Cungduytiêncông* 恭惟先公 and ends with the following pattern: *Phụcduy* 伏惟, *Cẩncáo* 謹誥. The Nom funeral orations also have a similar pattern to show the seriousness, helping the reader to express the solemn tone during the worship.

The last feature is his sarcastic voice. These works have little satirical content. The laughter in these works is mostly directed towards satirizing bad habits and a harmfulness in life to alert the world.

Nguyễn Xuân Kiều, because of his indignation, befriended opium. After realizing the harmfulness of opium, he wrote a funeral oration to satirize its harm and hoped that the next generation would stay away:

*A gentlemen knows the truth soon
And he can change himself so quickly⁹*

The funeral oration for opium (Đặng Quý Địch, 2008: 68).

From the satirical voice, these works gradually shifting to recommendations that have created optimism, helping people to know the wrongs and become useful people.

IV. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The funeral oration in Binh Dinh is a genre with the development process associated with the difficulties of the locality in history. Collecting and testing this genre has contributed to clarify the values of Sino Nom funeral oration in Binh Dinh in the process of classical literature in the South Central Coast of Vietnam. The diverse rhythms in Sino - Nom funeral oration in Binh Dinh not only bring new cultural values to the culture but also help the composers to expand the function of the genre's reflection. This is also one of the nationalization factors of exotic literary genres in Vietnamese medieval literature.

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