



Comparing the Images of the Boat and the Moonlight in the Poems of Du Fu (China) and Nguyen Binh Khiem (Vietnam)

Nguyen Hong Linh¹ & Cheo Thuy Linh²

^{1&2}University of Education, Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam.

Abstract: *Du Fu and Nguyen Binh Khiem are two poets representing the typical authors of Chinese and Vietnamese literature. Facing the cultural and literary exchange, in the inevitable trend of the world when approaching great opportunities for development, we need to maintain, preserve, protect and promote the national cultural identity so as not to be dissolved. Besides, we also have to constantly innovate to keep up with the integration at that speed of development. Literature is one of the important elements, expressing the national cultural identity. Therefore, studying the influence of Du Fu's artistic thought on Nguyen Binh Khiem's poetry, specifically comparing the images of the boat and the moonlight in the poetry of Du Fu (China) and Nguyen Binh Khiem (Vietnam) is also to understand more clearly the cultural identity of Vietnam.*

Keywords: *National Cultural Identity, Poetry, Du Fu, China.*

1. Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Researching the similarities and differences in the poetic careers of Du Fu and Nguyen Binh Khiem is a specialized research direction that aims to clarify the influence and reception of cultural and literary quintessence from abroad into the national culture and literature. At the same time, it contributes to affirming the role and position of works imbued with the national cultural identity of Vietnam. The research article compares the images of the boat and the moonlight in the poems of Du Fu (China) and Nguyen Binh Khiem (Vietnam) to contribute to understanding the similarities and differences in terms of content in the works of the two literary authors. Thereby, it further clarifies the reception and exchange between the two literary traditions of China and Vietnam.

Content

Du Fu and Nguyen Binh Khiem are two typical poets who write about the theme of nature. There are similarities in the compositions of these two authors. Nature in their poems is a means of expressing their own emotions.

The themes of nature in the poems of Du Fu and Nguyen Binh Khiem are simple, close, and familiar images of people's lives. Images of ponds, boats, clouds, bamboo alleys, moon, wind, birds, autumn leaves, flowers, images, colors, and sounds of nature in harmony between people and natural scenery have created simple, close, and familiar beauty of the homeland and country.

Nature in their poems has similarities in social issues, life, country, and concerns for world affairs. Du Fu and Nguyen Binh Khiem are poets of reality whose lives have gone through hardships, suffering and changes of the times. Du Fu and Nguyen Binh Khiem used images of nature to express their feelings, closely combining natural scenery and personal experiences with the disasters of the times. In the landscape and lyrical poetry of the two authors, emotions, scenery and objects, phenomena are interwoven. They are poets who carry within them the pain of the people. Their works express their love for nature, country and also express sincere and deep feelings of friendship and family. At the same time, they also criticize and express their indignation at the cruelty and injustice of the times. However, that is not a complete similarity but comes from common points in inspiration and poetics, and in each author, their poetry has its own unique and distinct colors.

In Du Fu's poetry, the boat is one of the popular images symbolizing emotions. The boat carries many meanings such as drifting, separation, freedom, seclusion, but in Du Fu's poetry, the boat mainly represents the loneliness, isolation, sadness and fear of the poet in the last years of his life. Before the Tang Dynasty, there were not many poems describing the wandering, lonely image of the boat. After the Tang Dynasty, due to the unstable social situation and many other factors, the use of the image of the boat as a symbol of wandering, loneliness became popular and was used frequently, typically in the works of the poet Du Fu. For example, in the work Dang Nhac Duong Lau, "There are no relatives, friends, no old people and sick people". The poem Dang Nhac Duong Lau was written when Du Fu was living near the end of his life. Two years after the poem was composed, the poet passed away. Before writing this poem, Du Fu and his wife and children had to go through an arduous journey by boat out of the canyon to find a suitable place to stay after many trips to Yueyang, Hunan. The first two lines of the poem are:

Transliteration:

*Tich van Dong Dinh thuy,
Kim thuong Nhac Duong lau.*

Poetry translation:

*Ta xua nghe tieng dong Dong Dinh,
Nay ta len Nhac Duong lau.*

English translation:

*I once heard that the water of Dongting Lake,
Now I can go up to Yueyang Tower.*

The first two lines of poetry imply that Du Fu has gone through many ups and downs in life, and now he can climb the Yueyang skyscraper in his old age and has fulfilled his long-cherished wish. The two parallel sentences "Wu Chu lies in the southeast, the universe flows day and night" express a sigh about the vastness of Dongting Lake. However, before the vastness of Dongting Lake, the sun, moon and stars seem to be floating in the lake. But in this vast universe, there is no place for the poet Du Fu to settle down. In his later years, he could only "wander between the Southwest sky and earth" and had no choice but to turn the boat into his home. This leads to the parallel sentence: "Not a word about relatives, friends, and no old people, no sick people". The small boat on the endless lake is like a traveler wandering in the vast world. The boat is helpless and drifts on its own. Similar emotions are also expressed in the Tam bai tho vui mua thu (Eight Funny Autumn Poems) (Part 1) by Du Fu. The sentence "Chrysanthemums bloom and the apricot blossoms will shed tears, the lonely boat connects to the heart of the homeland" although only describes the trees and the lonely boat, it shows the poet's sorrow. The poet does not avoid reality but looks straight at reality to reflect, reality makes people suffer, surrounds, violently swallows, making people unable to escape.

The image of the boat also appears in the works of Nguyen Binh Khiem. Similar to the image of the lonely boat, drifting, not knowing where to go, where to return of the poet Du Fu. In the poem Ngu y (Implied meaning), the image of the boat is mentioned in the sentence:

Transliteration:

*Danh toai cong thanh huu hi huu,
Dang nhan the co nhat hu chau.*

Poetry translation:

*Nhu the cung goi la cong toai danh
thanh roi day, thoi the cung nen thoi,
Viec doi pho mac cho con thuyen voi
voi no lenh denh muon den dau thi den
ma ta tim lai cai thu vui cua ta.*

English translation:

*That's called success, that's fine, let's leave it at that.
Leave the affairs of life to that drifting boat to go wherever it wants, and let me find my own joy.*

Nguyen Binh Khiem skillfully used the image and symbol of the boat to indirectly express his sadness and helplessness, leaving the boat to drift without a destination.

Du Fu always had lofty political ideals and ambitions, considering the rise and fall of the country and the happiness of the people as his own noble responsibility. However, the depressing life

and the failed examination journey made the hero unable to fulfill his responsibilities and he could only sigh to the moon. For example, in the poem Giang Han:

Transliteration:

Phien van thien cong vien

Vinh da nguyet dong co

Poetry translation:

Dam may voi troi cung xa tit

Dem dai voi trang cung co don

English translation:

Clouds and the sky are far away

Long night with the moon and loneliness

Du Fu deeply felt his own helplessness and weakness. The above verses showed the injustice of the contemporary society caused when the author was not recognized for his talent, but he still expressed his desire to serve the country, his loyalty shining like the lonely moon, his loneliness and anger but filled with positive feelings of wanting to serve the country.

Nguyen Binh Khiem also described the image of the lonely moon in the work "Du cao xa huu nhan biet hau". The poem was written by Nguyen Binh Khiem to send to his friend in Cao Xa after saying goodbye. The image of the moon shows us the loneliness and isolation in An May, not having a single person to keep him company. People and natural scenery in the dark night share the same sadness and loneliness. Loneliness and isolation have covered all things.

Transliteration:

Tuong phung loan hau lao tuong thoi,

Khiem quyen ly tinh tuu so boi.

Da tinh Van Am thuy thi ban,

Nhat song minh nguyet chieu han mai.

Poetry translation:

Sau luc loan ly gap nhau thi deu da gia,

Cung nhau uong vai chen ruou de that chat moi tinh ly biet.

Dem thanh vang o Am May biet lay ai lam ban,

Chi vang trang sang ngoai cua so roi bong vao goc mai lanh.

English translation:

After the chaos, we met, both old,

Drinking a few cups of wine together to tighten the love of separation.

The quiet night in Am May, who can be my companion,

Only the bright moon outside the window casts its shadow on the cold apricot tree.

2. Conclusion

Du Fu and Nguyen Binh Khiem are two typical poets representing the two countries of China and Vietnam. In the poems of Du Fu and Nguyen Binh Khiem, we see that they were both born in a society with many changes, so social life influenced their writing. However, each poet has his own writing style. Through the comparison of the boat and the moonlight, it can be seen that Nguyen Binh Khiem was somewhat influenced by the writings of the poet saint Du Fu, but he did not completely copy Du Fu's poetic style, but Nguyen Binh Khiem selectively absorbed it while at the same time making breakthroughs, developing and creating in his writings.

References

- Nguyen Si Dai (1996). Some artistic characteristics of Tang Dynasty quatrains, Literature Publishing House.
- Tran Xuan De (1975), Du Fu's Poetry, Education Publishing House, Hanoi.
- Ho Si Hiep (1993). The development of Du Fu's poetics through the periods of writing, Hanoi University of Education 1.
- Tran Thi Bang Thanh & Vu Thanh (2001). Nguyen Binh Khiem, the author and his works, Education Publishing House, Hanoi.

Nguyen Hong Linh (2023). Studying the reception and influence in the description of natural themes from Chinese Tang poetry to the system of Vietnamese Nom poetry of Tang rules, *European Journal of Literary Studies*, ISSN: 2601–971X.

Nguyen Hong Linh (2024). Pham Thuy Tien, Cheo Thuy Linh, Nguyen Thi Tham, Friendship in the poems of Du Fu (China) and Nguyen Khuyen (Vietnam), *International Journal of Education Humanities and Social Science*, ISSN 2582-0745.