

Digitizing A Vietnamese Buddhist Temple: The Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation's Thắng Nghiêm Temple Project

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INTRODUCTION

This paper provides an overview of the ongoing project directed by the Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation (VNPF) to digitize the Thắng Nghiêm Temple (Chùa Thắng Nghiêm 勝嚴寺) together with its manuscripts, epigraphy, visual heritage, and active ritual life. Such a comprehensive project is the first of its kind in the world and will result in searchable online database of all materials from the Temple. The Thắng Nghiêm Temple project will also result in an educational website, to be completed in late Spring 2014, on a Vietnamese Buddhist temple and its religious life. This project will in turn serve as a pilot program for other Buddhist sites in Vietnam. The Thắng Nghiêm Temple project specifically targets UN Millennium Development Goals by developing educational resources through information and communication technologies that

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will further secondary and post-secondary education.¹ Additionally, as a globally accessible website, it fosters an understanding of Buddhist culture and Vietnamese heritage on an international level, a desideratum fundamental to UN Millennium Development Goals.

BRIEF HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO THẮNG NGHIỆM TEMPLE

Thắng Nghiêm Temple² is of great historical significance not only in the Vietnamese Buddhist tradition but also in the development of Asian Buddhism as a whole and in Vietnamese history. The Temple dates from the reign of King Lý Thái Tổ 李太祖 (1009 to 1028) and sits on a riverbank just outside Hanoi along an ancient trade route (see **Figures 1 and 2**). Built by imperial order, it is the only remaining temple from a network of eight temples constructed during the ninth and tenth centuries modeling the eight sacred sites of Śākyamuni's life. Like those in India, these temples were central to the definition of sacred space in Vietnam and provided pilgrimage centers for the pious.³

1. The Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation's digitization of Thắng Nghiêm Temple addresses two UN Millennium Goals. First, funded by private donations as well as the Chino Cienega Foundation (Palm Springs, California), the International Music and Arts Foundation (Liechtenstein), North Carolina State University, and the U.S. Embassy, Hanoi, Vietnam, VNPF's project serves as a model of international cooperation for cross-cultural understanding (UN Millennium Development Goal 8F: "develop global partnerships for development... by making available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications."). Second, by providing educational resources online to all levels of students worldwide, the project assists in achieving UN Millennium Development Goal 2 of accessible universal primary education inclusive of educational materials and resources.

2. For the Temple website, see <http://www.thangnghiem.vn/>. The Temple is located at 20.929852, 105.795330 / +20° 55' 47.47», +105° 47' 43.19» (See Figure 1).

3. These are typically known as the Eight Great Numinous Stūpas (Aṣṭamahāsthānacaitya 八大靈塔): "The eight great "spirit", or sacred stūpas erected at (1) Kapilavastu, Buddha's birthplace; (2) Magadha, where he was first enlightened; (3) the deer-park Benares, where he first preached; (4) Jetavana, where he revealed his supernatural powers; (5) Kanyākubja, where he descended from Indra's heavens; (6) Rājagṛha, where Devadatta was destroyed and the Saṅgha purified; (7) Vaiśālī, where he announced his speedy nirvana; (8) Kuśinagara, where he entered nirvāṇa" (after Soothill and Hodous).



Figure 1. “A”: Thăng Nghiêm Temple (Chùa Thăng Nghiêm 勝嚴寺) location.

The Temple also played a major role in Vietnam’s history and struggle for independence. From the founding of the Lý dynasty (1009) in Hanoi until the Nguyễn dynasty was established in Huế (1802), every Vietnamese king and national general initiated his reign or deployment with a pilgrimage to the temple. Also underscoring the temple’s historical significance is its relation to Trần Hưng Đạo 陳興道 (1228–1300), who was raised at the temple and who later became a national hero by defeating the invading Mongol army (see **APPENDIX 1**). Over the centuries, several temple buildings were constructed within the Thăng Nghiêm precincts, including a royal temple and a temple for literati. Almost all of these structures were destroyed in various wars over the centuries. The site’s final destruction came with French bombing in their battles with the Viet Minh. Now only an entrance gate remains (**Figure 3**) together with the remnants of former buildings, a number of which have invaluable inscriptions in chữ Nôm



Figure 2. Thăng Nghiêm Temple (upper right) in relationship to Khúc Thủy village (lower left “A”).



Figure 3. Entrance gate to Thăng Nghiêm Temple, one of the few surviving structures of the original temple.

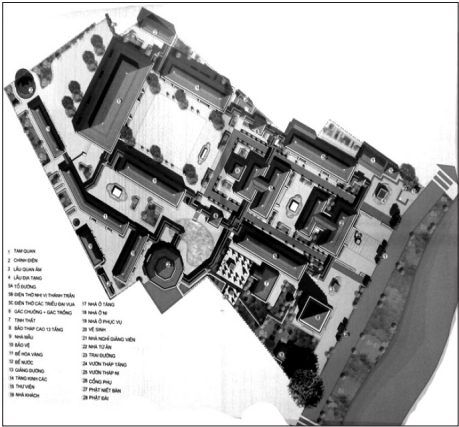


Figure 4. Drawing of Thăng Nghiêm Temple's future layout.

and Hán. The Temple is currently being renovated making permanent changes to the site and buildings, and the VNPF also seeks to record these alterations in the record of the Temple (for a plan of the future Temple grounds, see **Figure 4**).

This crucial placement of the Thăng Nghiêm Temple at the intersection of Vietnamese history and Vietnamese Buddhism made it a natural location for The Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation to begin its investigation of how the indigenous chữ Nôm script has been maintained into the 21st century and where its future prospects lie both in relationship to Buddhism and the Vietnamese people. The Temple Project's investigation begins with the recording of the chữ Nôm script in the Buddhist complex and detailing its contexts of use in the rich semantic economy of additional forms of Buddhist texts, epigraphy, and iconography in an active ritual setting.

VIETNAMESE NOM PRESERVATION FOUNDATION'S TEMPLE

PROJECT

Introduction to Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation and chữ Nôm

The Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation (Hội Bảo Tồn Di Sản Chữ Nôm, 會保存遺產喃) was founded in 1999 as a public charity⁴ devoted to preserving 1000 years of writing in chữ Nôm, the Chinese-like script that Vietnamese used to record their own language and its vast cultural heritage. Chữ Nôm and its literary culture are on the verge of extinction; out of 90 million Vietnamese, only a few hundred scholars worldwide can read chữ Nôm.⁵

From the 10th century until the early 20th century, educated Vietnamese used this indigenous vernacular script based on Chinese characters to record materials as diverse as poetry, government memoranda, and indigenous Buddhist scholarship. The general term for “national language,” *quốc Nôm*, refers specifically to the *chữ Nôm* script, and thus highlights the importance of these documents as repositories for Vietnam’s cultural heritage. Banned by the French in official communications in the early 20th century, this system of writing and its documents are now nearly lost, physically due to the destruction and deterioration of texts themselves and culturally due to the inability of Vietnamese to read them.

Since its founding in 1999, the Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation⁶ has created basic tools for the digital preservation of ancient writing in Vietnam. Its mission is to increase access to the endangered, 1000-year cultural heritage in the chữ Nôm and Hán-Nôm scripts by developing computer tools for the digitization, printing, study, bibliographic identification, preservation, and internet exchange of works of literature, history, philosophy, royal decrees, medicine, and the arts. A first step in this process was the translation and publication of the poems of Hồ Xuân Hương 胡春香 (1772–1822) by Professor John Balaban,

4. VNPF is registered as a U.S. 501c3 public charity (EIN: 58-2493125); in Vietnam, it is a registered NGO.

5. The following works provide an overview of chữ Nôm: Overviews of the script and its history

6. The VNPF website is <http://nomfoundation.org/>.

entitled *Spring Essence: The Poetry of Hồ Xuân Hương*.⁷ The translation from Vietnamese written in Nôm script necessitated the creation for the first time of True Type Fonts to allow the printing of Nôm, which had previously only been printed by block print. The creation of True types Fonts greatly facilitated the digitization of the script resulting in the completion of a series of projects by the Foundation (See **APPENDIX 2** for a full list with links).

OVERVIEW OF TEMPLE PROJECT

Thắng Nghiêm Temple illustrates the crucial intersection of Vietnamese history, Vietnamese Buddhism, and Hán-Nôm. The evolution and use of chữ Nôm supported interests both in Vietnamese national politics and in Buddhism. Early epigraphy (see illustration below: “sporadic epigraphy”⁸) represents two these two fundamental areas where chữ Nôm was used on Buddhist stele and in texts from the Lý Dynasty at the 12th and the 13th centuries, namely of Emperor Lý Càn Đức 李乾德 (1113, 1121, 1125) and Lý Long Cán 李龍翰 (1210).⁹ The earliest extant Buddhist texts using chữ Nôm are the *Sutra of the Buddhist’s Teachings on the Profound Grace of Parents* 佛說大報父母恩重經 (*Phật thuyết đại báo phụ mẫu ân trọng kinh*) and the Sayings of the Native Practices of the Cloud-Dharma Buddha of Cổ Châu 古州法雲佛本行語錄 (*Cổ Châu pháp văn Phật bản hành ngữ lục*).¹⁰

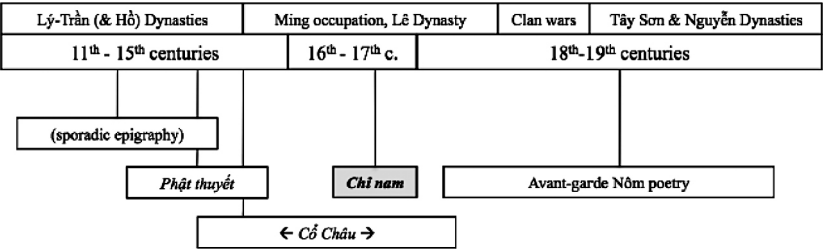
7. John Balaban (trans.). *Spring Essence: The Poetry of Hồ Xuân Hương*. Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2000.

8. Chart from John Phan, “Rebooting the Vernacular in 17th Century Vietnam,” In *Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000-1919*. Benjamin Elman, ed. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

9. Nguyễn Quang Hồng. *Khái luận văn tự học Chữ Nôm*. TP Hồ Chí Minh: NXB Giáo Dục, 2008.

10. See John Phan, “Rebooting the Vernacular in 17th Century Vietnam,” In *Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000-1919*, p.2.

Summary of Vietnamese Vernacular Development with Key Texts



In subsequent centuries, Buddhism continued to play a leading role in the development of chữ Nôm:

[...]the rise of the Lê [dynasty]¹¹ led a class of educated Buddhists, dispossessed of their place in the increasingly Confucianized court, to reorient themselves toward a more plebian audience. In this forced negotiation of Literary Sinitic writing with the vernacularized world of non-elite Vietnam, the hyperglossic distance between Literary Sinitic and Vietnamese speech came into focus. As a result, educated Buddhists of the 16th century increasingly cultivated the vernacular mode (in the form of *chữ Nôm*), in order to fill the vacuum of a diglossic partner for Vietnamese speech. This allowed the dissemination of Buddhist literary materials in the Vietnamese voice...¹²

Thus, not only does Buddhism in Vietnam remain one of the very last refuges of actively engaged chữ Nôm script, but the religion, together with imperial epigraphy, were at the very origins of the development of chữ Nôm in Vietnam. This central role played by Buddhism in the development of this indigenous writing system and in its ongoing use make Thăng Nghiêm Temple the ideal circumstances in which to research and preserve in its entirety through digitization this rare living context of chữ Nôm.

Digitization of Thăng Nghiêm Temple Resources

11. Lê 黎 Dynasty (1428-1778).
12. John Phan, “Rebooting the Vernacular in 17th Century Vietnam,” In Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000-1919, p.21.

The VNPF's Temple project builds on the Foundations previous digitization experience and databases for two fundamental purposes: 1) to expand digitized chữ Nôm resources to include both texts in the script and the resources of its larger ritual context, and 2) to make those resources available to the Vietnamese people and world. Equally important is recording the process of how a Buddhist temple adapts to the rapid changes unfolding in Vietnamese society and culture as the country modernizes under the economic reforms of the *Đổi Mới* (Renovation) period. Thăng Nghiêm Temple fundamental goal is to record core resources at the Temple for universal access. These resources are divided into four sections:

Documents in chữ Nôm and Hán inclusive of paintings:

A photographic overview of the architectural space and iconographical programs

A yearly record of Buddhist ritual life according to the yearly calendar of events

Videos capturing daily religious life throughout the year

I. DOCUMENTS IN CHỮ NÔM AND HÁN INCLUSIVE OF PAINTINGS:

These items include all Buddhist manuscripts & printed texts from the Temple library, as well as epigraphy and paintings found in the Temple precincts (click on links for access to primary sources; *Nota bene, items from the large collection of materials are still in the process of being catalogued and added to the online database as of early 2014*):

Thư Viện Chùa / Entire Temple Library (117 items)

Văn Bia / Inscriptions on Stone (6)

Bích Họa / Murals (11)

Câu đối / Parallel Couplets (20)

Cuốn thư / Wooden Scrolled Placards (4)

Hoành Phi / Wooden Placards (12)

Phù đồ / Stupas for Monks (5)

What follows are some samples of digitized items from Thăng Nghiêm

Temple according to the above categories under the first rubric of project resources, “Documents in chữ Nôm and Hán inclusive of paintings.”

1. Thư Viện Chùa / Entire Temple Library

Items of interest from the Temple library 書院寺 include a variety of sutras and liturgical texts in chữ Nôm and Hán. The critical sutra in Nôm Studies mentioned above, the *Sutra on the Profound Grace of Parents*, *Đại báo phụ mẫu ân trọng kinh* 大報父母恩重經, is found in the Thăng Nghiêm Temple collection, as is the *Prescriptive Names for the Holy Mother*, *Thánh mẫu phương danh* 聖母方名, a text notable for its extensive use of the vernacular (see **Figures 5 and 6** respectively).

2. Văn Bia / Inscriptions on Stone

Văn Bia 文碑, are inscriptions on stone that include the stele in **Figure**

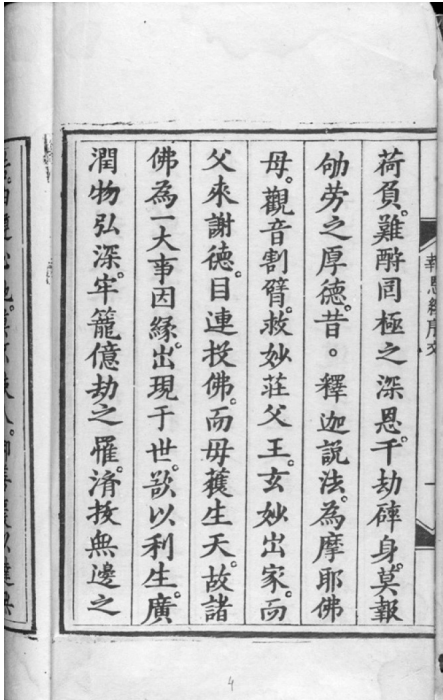


Figure 5. *Sutra on the Profound Grace of Parents*, *Đại báo phụ mẫu ân trọng kinh* 大報父母恩重經 (TN.039 • TNVNPF-005-01)



Figure 6. *Prescriptive Names for the Holy Mother*, *Thánh mẫu phương danh* 聖母方名 (TN.118 • TNVNPF-043)



Figure 7 (right). A Record of Phúc Đống Temple 福棟寺碑記 *Phúc Đống tự bi kí* (TNVNPF-VB-003)

7, which was incorporated into a temple wall and that details the donations and reconstruction of the temple (then known as Phúc Đống Temple 福棟寺) in 1901 when the site was in dire need of renovation. Stele typically provide a wealth of data on the temple’s religious and economic history together with information on the local community and social relations preserved only in stone given the remarkable loss of documentation over the years. Regrettably, the French bombing of the temple in their battles with the Viet Minh destroyed most remaining such documents.

3. Bích Họa / Murals

Murals *bích họa* 壁畫 at Thăng Nghiêm Temple cover a variety of formats and styles. Perhaps most striking is the inclusion of a wide variety of Tibetan style paintings depicting tantric deities and bodhisattvas (Figure 8). Previously unknown in such Chan/Zen or Pure Land Vietnamese temples, these mural are testament to the internationalization of Buddhism both in Vietnam and worldwide and to openness of the country under *Đổi Mới* (Renovation).

4. Câu đối / Parallel Couplets

An indispensable feature of East Asian temples (Buddhist, Daoist, Confucian, and kin), parallel couplets *Đối liên* 對聯 are typically counterpoint in structure and hung on either side of doors or gates (Figure



Figure 8. Tibetan style paintings on the inner wall of the Thăng Nghiêm Temple compound.

9). Their structure of having parallel meanings between the two lines in terms of lexical categories and rhyme makes them invaluable for understanding the use and conceptualization of chữ Nôm terminology and its relation to Buddhist concepts and philosophy.

5. Cuốn thư / Wooden Scrolled Placards

Rarely recorded in descriptions of temple paraphernalia, wooden scroll placards (*cuốn thư* 卷書, Ch. 書卷) are a vital iconographical feature of temple buildings. They typically contain dedicatory



Figure 9. Parallel Couplets, Câu đối / verses
Đôi liên 對聯 (TNVNPF-CD-002)

or quotes from well-known scriptures and so define the sacred space they dominate in relation to those quotes (**Figure 10**).

6. *Hoành Phi* / Wooden Placards

Hoành Phi 橫扉 (literally “horizontal leaf,” also *Đại tự* 大字 “big characters”) are wooden placards that label a votive niche *khám* 龕 with a summary four character expression *chengyu* 成語, the lexeme is typically



Figure 10. A wooden scrolled placard *cuốn thư* 卷書 containing a quote from the Flower Ornament Scripture *Dafangguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經, *Avatamsaka-sūtra* (TNVNPF-CT-001)

derived from Buddhist scriptures and define the space in terms of that rhetorical phrase and its associations. Each niche at Thắng Nghiêm Temple bears such a placard. The placard in **Figure 11** is placed in the ancestral teachers hall 祖堂 *tổ đường*, where mortuary portraits and spirit tablets of ‘ancestral teachers’ (祖師 *tổ sư*) in the Thiên/Chan/Zen 禪 lineage are typically enshrined and given regular offerings 供養 *cúng dường*.

7. *Phù đồ* / Stūpas for Monks

Phù đồ 浮屠 is a Vietnamese transliteration of the Pāli term *thūpa* (Skt *stūpa*; also *tháp* 塔). A number of these structures exist at Thắng Nghiêm



Figure 11. *Hoành Phi* 橫扉, i.e., a wooden placard stating “Unceasing Brilliance” (TNVNPF-HP-009).

Temple (**Figure 12**). In East Asia, stūpas (also known as pagodas), are dedicated to both the Buddha and to eminent monks, including those in ancestral lineages of teachers in specific traditions such as Thiền/Chan/Zen禪. Standard practice entails that the veneration of the Buddha and/or eminent monks at a stūpa is regarded as a good deed that produces merit *công đức*功德 for the adherent.

II. A PHOTOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF THE ARCHITECTURAL



Figure 12. Phù đồ 浮屠 located at Thắng Nghiêm Temple (TNVNPF-ST-001).

SPACE AND ICONOGRAPHICAL PROGRAMS

The architectural space of the temple is laid out according to the ideological



Figure 13. The Garden of Lumbini at Thắng Nghiêm Temple.

and philosophical function of sacred space in relation to the polity of the Vietnamese king and his legitimacy. The core element of this space is the reproduction of the Garden of Lumbini (Lam tỷ ni 嵐毘尼, Figures 13 and 14), the park where Māyā gave birth to Śākyamuni, that functions as the centerpiece of Thắng Nghiêm Temple. It is this feature that defines the temple's pride of place among the Eight Sacred Sites bát đại linh tháp (Aṣṭamahāsthānacaitya 八大靈塔) erected in medieval Vietnam as replications of the same sites in India.¹³ Remarkably, Thắng Nghiêm Temple is the last remaining shrine in this complex of pilgrimage sites in Vietnam. Crucially, it is the recreated garden of Lumbini and its symbolism that defines the very centrality of Thắng Nghiêm Temple in establishing the sacrality of the ruling monarch in Vietnamese history. As stated above, from the founding of the Lý dynasty (1009) in Hanoi until the Nguyễn dynasty was established in Huế (1802), every Vietnamese king and national general initiated his reign or deployment with a pilgrimage to the temple.

13. For a discussion of these sites' analogous function in China, see Neil Schmid, "The Narrative Instantiation of Śākyamuni's Pure Land," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society, 2008.



Figure 14. The Garden of Lumbini at Thắng Nghiêm Temple where Śākyamuni proclaims himself the Universal or Wheel-turning Monarch.

What was enacted was the replication of Śākyamuni's birth into the world in the garden of Lumbini where he took seven steps and then proclaimed himself the Universal or Wheel-turning Monarch (cakravartin, chuyển luân thánh vương 轉輪聖王). The temple thus establishes the legitimacy of each subsequent ruler, calqued on Śākyamuni's own experience, for nearly 800 years of Vietnamese history.

III. A RECORD OF BUDDHIST RITUAL LIFE ACCORDING TO THE YEARLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation's project to digitize the Thắng Nghiêm Temple is not limited to static images and photographs but also embraces the vitality of day-to-day religious life in forms of ritual activities and community events. To this end, the Foundation has kept an ongoing video record of religious phenomena for 2013 (see **APPENDIX 3** for the calendar) as they unfolded across the year through video recordings. These recordings (a raw example here) will be reedited according to the yearly festival calendar and placed on the Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation's Thắng Nghiêm Temple project website.

SUMMARY

Over the past two years, the Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation has been digitizing the Thắng Nghiêm Temple (Chùa Thắng Nghiêm 勝嚴寺) in conjunction with its manuscripts, epigraphy, visual heritage, and active ritual life. This project is unique in its comprehensiveness of approach, most notably as it will produce the first searchable online database of all materials from the Temple. This educational website will go online in late Spring 2014 and will provide an invaluable resource for examining the rich historical and Buddhist resources available at Thắng Nghiêm Temple. The project will also serve as a pilot program for other Buddhist sites in Vietnam. In keeping with the UN Millennium Development Goals, it will develop these educational resources through information and communication technologies with the expectations of supplementing secondary and post-secondary educational resources, and thereby bringing to bear religious and cultural materials through free access to students worldwide. In doing so it will aid in the understanding of both Buddhist and Vietnamese culture, namely the comprehension of the complex, intimate, and unique relationship between the indigenous Vietnamese chữ Nôm script, Buddhism, and the country's rich national heritage.

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APPENDIX 1: TRẦN QUỐC TUẤN 陳國峻¹⁴

Trần Quốc Tuấn 陳國峻, often known by his honorific title of the Hưng Đạo 興道 Prince, was the son of the An Sinh 安生 Prince Trần Liễu 陳柳 (1211-1251) and nephew of the first ruler of the Trần dynasty, Trần Cảnh 陳煚 (r. 1226-1258) or Trần Thái Tông. He was born in modern day Nam Định province at the southern end of the Hồng River delta. Quốc Tuấn never was in line for the throne, but he would serve as a military commander for Thái Tông, Quốc Tuấn’s half brother Trần Hoảng 陳晃 or Trần Thánh Tông (1240-1290), and his nephew Trần Khâm 陳吟 or Trần Nhân Tông (r. 1258-1308) during a period that witnessed three invasions from Mongol led armies in 1257, 1284, and 1287. Quốc Tuấn’s personal residence was located at Vạn Kiếp 萬劫, which was the site of fierce fighting during the Mongol attacks. In late 1284 Trần Quốc Tuấn assembled his supporters¹⁵ outside Thăng Long, modern day Hà Nội, to prepare for the capital’s defense. At this time Quốc Tuấn issued his now famous proclamation “Dispatch to All My Officers (Dụ chư tỳ tướng hịch văn 諭諸裨將檄文)” calling for the absolute loyalty of his men and their full commitment to the defence of the Đại Việt kingdom. The Đại Việt troops succeeded to driving back the Mongol forces, but Vietnam faced a third invasion attempt three years later. After a series of attacks and counterattacks in the spring of 1287, the Mongols were confronted by Trần defenders at the Bạch Đằng River where Trần Quốc Tuấn famously

14. Dr. James Anderson, University of North Carolina, Greensboro

15. Taylor, Keith Weller. (A History of the Vietnamese. 2013), p. 131.

used a defense of submerged iron tipped stakes to disable the Mongol navy and throw the attackers into disarray.² The Yuan forces were thwarted for a third time, and no more largescale attacks on the Đại Việt were attempted. Quốc Tuấn continued to serve the court until his death at the age of 74, after which the Kiếp Bạc Temple in modern day Hải Dương was established in his honor.

APPENDIX 2: VIETNAMESE NÔM PRESERVATION SOCIETY & ACHIEVEMENTS

- An internet Nôm Ideogram Look-Up Tool, & an online Nôm dictionary.
- A knowledge base of some 20,000 Nôm ideograms unique to Vietnamese, and encoding some 30,000 ideograms in its Nom Na Tong Light Font Set (<http://nomfoundation.org/nom-tools/Nom-Font>).
- Publication in True Type Fonts of the first modern dictionary of Nôm: *Giúp Đọc Nôm và Hán-Việt*, by Father Anthony Trần Văn Kiệm (http://nomfoundation.org/nom-tools/Nom-Books/39-Giup_doc_Nom_va_Han_Viet).
- Support for the facsimile publication of the very first attempt of a Nôm dictionary, the Taberd *Dictionarium Anamitico-Latinum* (南越洋合字彙) of 1838.
- Book publication, with the Viện Nghiên Cứu Hán Nôm (Hán-Nôm Institute), of *Kho Chữ Hán Nôm Mã Hoá* and the Nôm Coded Character Set.
- On its website <http://nomfoundation.org> posting five, fully searchable early Nôm versions of the classic *Tale of Kiều*, as well as a 1697 version the *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* (History of Greater Vietnam).
- Since 2007, in co-operation with the National Library of Vietnam, the Foundation has created a digital library of its ancient script collection of some 4000 items. This will be the first such digital library in Vietnam and an alpha version can be seen at <http://lib.nomfoundation.org>.
- At the same time, through a grant from the North Carolina State

University Libraries, and under the guidance of Dr. John F. Dean of Cornell University, the VNPF has engaged in the *physical* preservation of the Hán-Nôm collection at the National Library.

- Continued representation of the Nôm script to the Ideographic Rapporteur Group of the Unicode Consortium, including hosting IRG meetings in Vietnam in 2006, 2009, and 2012.
- Organization of two international conferences (Hanoi, 2004; Hue, 2006) and two book publications of the papers presented at these conferences.
- Nôm Study Scholarships for American scholars and for Vietnamese students, and annual awards to senior and junior scholars working with Hán-Nôm literatures.

APPENDIX 3: RITUAL YEAR AT THẮNG NGHIỆM TEMPLE

S TT	Festival Title	Date		Organization	Purpose
		Lunar calendar	Solar calendar		
1	The First (& Fifteenth) of a Lunar Month Celebration 朔望節	07/01/2013	16/02/2013	Bestowing to The Bud- dha of Medicine	To pray for Peace of the Country & Its People
2	Fifteenth of the First Lunar Month Celebration Nguyên) (Tiêu 元宵節	15/01/2013	24/02/2013	Making offerings to • Buddha Buddhist monks and dis- ciples chanting the sutra and recite the Buddha's name	To pray for Peace of the Country & Its People
3	Grave-visiting Celebration Thanh) (Minh 清明節	03/03/2013	12/04/2013	Making offerings to • Buddha and chanting the Sutra	To pray for Peace of the Country & Its People
4	Summer Retreat 入夏節	01/04/2013	10/05/2013	Making offerings to • Buddha Buddhist monks and • disciples chant the sutra and recite the Buddha's name	To pray for Peace of the Country & Its People
5	Dismissing of Summer Retreat 出夏節			Making offerings to • Buddha Buddhist monks and dis- ciples chanting the sutra and recite the Buddha's name	To pray for Peace of the Country & Its People
6	Fifth of the Fifth Lunar Month Celebration (also Khuất nguyên's death anni- (versary 端午節 (屈原節	05/5/2013	12/06/2013	Making offerings to • Buddha	To pray for Peace of the Country & Its People

7	Vesak/The Buddha's Birthday Celebration 佛誕節	08-15/4/2013	/17-24 05/2013	Cleaning Buddha statues • ((Tắm Phật Chief of the Buddhist • Clergy in Viet Nam making speech regarding the meaning of The Buddha's Birthday Buddha procession • rituals Official Buddhist rituals • Culturally musical • program	To pay respect and pay a debt of gratitude for Buddha's presence and his Teachings which help Buddhists with thorough understanding and zealous progress in the good and elimination of the .evil
8	All Soul's Day Celebration (Báo hiếu) 報孝	7 /14-15	20-21/08/2013	Opening remarks, the • meaning of the All Soul's Day, A Rose for Buddhists expressing their .gratitude to parents	To help everyone understand and practice Buddha's teachings& pay a debt of gratitude to their parents for giving birth and bringing them up
9	Ancestor Worshipping Day Celebration 祖師忌日	14/2/13 19/4/13 16/9/13	25/03/13 28/05/13 20/10/13	Making offerings to • Buddha, Ancestors & chanting the Sutra, making offerings to forsaken .spirits	To pay respect to the patriarch through many generations for their efforts to establish the monasteries
10	Village Festival 村 節慶 (Combined) with Ancestor Worshipping Day on the 13th-15th Day of (.Feb	13-15/02	24-26/03/13	Making offerings to • Buddha, Ancestors Rituals regarding chant- • ing the Sutra and reciting the Buddha's name Rituals regarding stag- • ing a procession for Saint of The Most Venerable Monk, Thánh tổ Linh Thông Hoà Thượng (if any) from the village communal house to the pagoda, then to the village altar after that All visitors are invited • to a vegetarian meal at the pagoda All visitors are invited • to a regular meal (with meat/fish) at the village communal house Cultural, religious, en- • tertaining, fun activities	To bring into play the nation's cultural traditions & pay a debt of gratitude to Thánh tổ Linh Thông Hoà .Thượng Đại Vương

11	Day to Make Offerings to the Stars to Relieve (someone) of His Run of Bad Luck 祭祀供星解厄 (held between the 7th and 15th (.of Jan	/ 07-15 01/13	16- 24/02/13	Buddhists, non-Bud- • dhists registration (full (name, birthday, address Making offerings to the • Stars to relieve (someone) of his run of bad luck at the three images in the main hall of monasteries	To pray for Peace of all Buddhist believers, male and female
12	Day to Make Offerings to The Kitchen God before he Goes up to The Heaven 祭祀灶君	12/13 /23	23/01/14	Making offerings to • Buddha and chanting the Sutra	To pray for Peace of the Country & Its People
13	End-of-the-Year Celebration (Trừ tịch) 畢年節 (除夕 (節	13/ 30/12	30/01/14	Making offerings to • Buddha	To pray for Peace of the Country & Its People
14	Mass for Peace of Someone's Soul at a Pagoda 祭亡入寺	Held monthly depending on people's needs		Rituals of making offer- • ings to Buddha Rituals of making offer- • ings to forsaken spirits Making offerings to • Buddha, Ancestors	To help ancestors, de- ceased grandparents, relatives go to be born in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha
15	Spiritual Support 邦助心靈的工作	Held weekly depending on people's needs		Helping sick people • recover by regaining balance in life, psycho- logically	
16	Release Living Creatures as a Work of Merit 放生節日	Held on the 14th day of each month		Rituals regarding mak- • ing offerings to Buddha Rituals regarding the • release of living creatures such as birds, crabs, fish, eels, river snails, etc	To help limit the kill- ing of living creatures and pray for divine blessings to partici- pants in the ceremony