

The Right Way to be Human in Quốc Âm Thi Tập of Nguyen Trai and its Significance to Vietnam's Modern Society

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Abstract: Nguyen Trai—a national hero, an excellent culturist, a judicious politician, an outstanding military counsellor, a genius diplomat and a great poet. The article does not aim to present the whole concept of Nguyen Trai, but rather to analyze his concept of the right way to be human in his work “*Quốc âm thi tập*” (*Collected poems in the National Language*) and from there put forward its significance in Vietnam's modern society.

Keywords: Collected poems in the National Language; The right way to be human; Wanting a peaceful life; Loyalty to the king -Patriotism.

1. Introduction

1.1. About Nguyen Trai

Nguyen Trai, pen name Uc Trai, born on 1380, native place in Chi Ngai Village, Phuong Son District, Lang Giang (Chi Linh, Hai Duong), later the family moved to Ngoc Oi Village, Son Nam Thuong Commune, Thuong Phuc District (Nhi Khe Commune, Thuong Tin District, Hanoi). His father was Nguyen Ung Long, his mother was Tran Thi Thai. Nguyen Ung Long was good in learning but poor, not able to show his talent in examinations, so he must choose to be a teacher. Seeing that, the excellency over the masses (quan Tư Đồ) – Tran Nguyen Dan asked Nguyen Ung Long to be the teacher of his daughter – Tran Thi Thai and later allowed their marriage. Nguyen Ung Long studies days and nights and finally took second place in the court national examination (Bảng Nhân). Despite the high ranking in examination, he was not appointed to any position in the government. It was not until the Tran Dynasty was overthrown by Ho Quy Ly and Nguyen Ung Long changed his name to Nguyen Phi Khanh that he was appointed as vice chairman (Tư Nghiệp) of Quoc Tu Giam.

In his youth, Nguyen Trai lived with his maternal grandfather in Con Son, where having a beautiful and serene nature, this affected greatly in his personality development. In the same year that his father was appointed, Nguyen Trai also attended the examination and took the title of doctorate (thái học sinh), he was appointed by Ho Quy Ly to be “Ngự sử đài chánh trưởng”. However, when the Ming force came to invade, Ho Quy Ly lost quickly in 1407. It was not recorded what Nguyen Trai did and where was he since 1407. It was only around 1416 - 1420 that he appeared in Loi Giang and presented the “*Bình Ngô sách*” (*Book to fight off the Wu*) to

meet the Pacifying King Le Loi (BìnhĐịnhVươngLêLợi), in which Nguyen Trai outlined three strategies to fight the Ming army that mainly focused on people factors.

In 1428, with the victory of Lam Son revolutionary war, Le Loi become the king and took the name ThuanThien (The will of heaven). Nguyen Trai was appointed as Minister of Personnel (thượng thư bộ lại). Under the reign of Le Thai Ton, Nguyen Trai devoted whole-heartedly to serve the nation and was loyal to the country. However, he was later accused wrongly, it happened on 1st September 1442, when the king Le Thai Ton went to inspect the military in Chi Linh and visited Nguyen Trai in Con Son. On the way returning to the palace, Nguyen Trai's concubine – Nguyen Thi Lo went along as an escort. When the ship was at Le Chi Vien (Trai Vai, Dai Lai Village, Gia Binh District, Bac Ninh), the king died suddenly. Taking that opportunity, the opposition party wrongly accused Nguyen Thi Lo of regicide. Nguyen Trai, his concubine along with their entire extended families of three generations were exterminated, the history calls that "Le Chi Vien" mystery case¹. Nguyen Trai has left to our nation a monumental spiritual inheritance in the form of many works, in which the *Collected poems in the National Language* is a typical example.

1.2. About the work "Collected poems in the National Language"

Collected poems in the National Language (Quốc Âm thi tập) of Nguyen Trai is the first work written in national language (chữ Nôm) and holds an important position in the history of Vietnam. This collection includes 254 poems, was written at different times while the author "retired" and was residing in his native place Con Son, taking pleasure in nature of a remote place. *Collected poems in the National Language* is divided into four major categories: Untitled (Vô đề) (192 poems); The seasons (Thời lệnh môn) (21 poems); The flowers and trees (Hoamộc môn) (34 poems); The animals (Cầm thú môn) (7 poems). In each category, there are minor genres with the total of 53. Some minor genres have only one poem each, but some others contain a collection. For example, "Ngôn chí" genre has 21 poems, "Mạn thuật" genre has 14 poems, etc. The composition of this collection was still based on the common formula at that time but was adjusted and selected according to the author's intention. The most important section therein is "Vô đề" including 13 sub-genres such as "Ngôn chí" (Notes of words), "Mạn thuật" (Scattered thoughts), "Trần tình" (Explain self-thought), "Huấn nam tử" (Teachings for man), etc. The reason why this section plays the most important role in the whole collection is that it contains the most complete innermost feelings, emotions and constant heart of Nguyen Trai to his country and people.

Through *Collected poems in the National Language*, Nguyen Trai would like to convey a philosophy of immense love, a vast humanism to man and the landscape. Nguyen Trai was like an aging farmer being passionate in rural nature with his deep love. Along with the love for nature, the collection of poems also reveals the love for human and life, and the author's grief in the face of the world affairs and devilish heart of man. Throughout *Collected poems in the National Language* is the anxiety for the people, the love for the country and the surge of desire to dedicate himself to the great affairs of the country. These wills and aspirations were expressed in rustic language, not bound by the Tang poetry's rule, but liberal and high-faluting. Commenting on Nguyen Trai's Nôm poems, Prof. Dinh Gia Khanh wrote: "Nguyen Trai wanted to leave a "valuable mirror" in Nôm poems to admonish himself, understand how to self-improve and maintain good qualities, not bend to bad

¹. More reference, Nguyen Tai Thu: *Great thinker of the fifteenth century and of the history of national thought, printed in History of Vietnamese thought, Social Science Publishing House 1993, Volume 1.2*

behaviors of mankind (that Nguyen Trai understood as those fight others over power and position in the court) and look out for their malicious actions. Nôm poems of Nguyen Trai are the exclamation of a painful man for the ideal does not come true, and who worries because life is even more in disorder”¹

2. Results

Concept of the right way to be human of Nguyen Trai reflected *Collected poems in the National Language* is truly diverse and rich, but due to the constraint of an article, we can only focus on analyzing some following basic points:

2.1. Ideology of wanting a peaceful life, enjoying the pleasure and being delighted in the nature

Wanting a peaceful life is one of the life philosophy of the Confucian scholars in the feudal age of Vietnam, Nguyen Trai was not an exception. As a Confucian scholar, he spent his life on the desire to practice the virtues, save the country and help others, but during his stay in the imperial court, he always suffered the jealousy and envy of the court officials. Living in that narrow and dusty world, people are bound and lose their freedom, even their qualities; and their sense of purpose and uprightness is so corrupt that Nguyen Trai must exclaim: “*Everyone bowed like the hook/ There is no Shi Yu in the country*”². Meanwhile, the life of “*nhàn dật*” (living peacefully, secluded and away from struggles) portrayed by Nguyen Trai was really beautiful, respectable and respectful. In that life, people could enjoy all the pleasures of life and reach the most peaceful serenity among the natural scenery, clouds, wind, green mountains and blue water, and away from the places full of people scrambling for position and privileges as well as the hatred those position and privileges would bring: “*Unconventional life surely makes one lighthearted/ Why desiring for so much authority and fame/ Carefree much just wishing for silver moon beside/ Pleasure still when storehouse fills of peaceful wind*”³. These verses remind us of the natural scenery described by Nguyen Trai in a subtle and profound way. Thereby, we could see a part of the impact of natural scenery on Nguyen Trai’s concept of “*nhàn dật*”. Through the works writing about nature, we could see the whole person of Nguyen Trai, who was a pure and noble man with great and boundless ideology.

Reading his poems about nature, we could read his feelings and thoughts. To Nguyen Trai, nature was the material property being provided for satisfying the spiritual world of man. Contrary to living in the society intertwined with relationships that left him tormented and lonely, seeking nature helped him find plenty of pleasures. Nguyen Trai wrote: “*Temple fills with bird sounds and swaying flowers/ Fading fragrance lingers by the window bars/ Autumn rain waters three beds of daisies/ Spring wind swings a bed of orchids*”⁴. Nguyen Trai’s attachment to nature was not only the closeness expressed in the concepts of relationships but also the intense expression in the indulgence, acceptance and nursing: “*Break a bamboo to separate the stream/ Sweep the temple to hold the clouds/ Pond wants moon to appear so not letting fish out/ Forest do not want birds to return so not growing*”⁵. The nature of Nguyen Trai’s poetry is strongly attractive, yet he could not stray from the

¹. Dinh Gia Khanh, *Nguyen Trai and the heart of “worries and concern on the nation situation”*, printed in the book of *Vietnamese literature (the 10th century - the first half of the eighth century)*, Education Publishing House. 1998, pp. 221- 222

². Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, Man thuật, Poem no. 14, tr. 52

⁴. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, “Tự thán, Poem no. 8”, tr. 84

⁵. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, “Ngôn Chí, Poem no. 16”, tr. 38

⁶. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, “Mạn Thuật, Poem no. 6”, tr. 45

concern in his heart: towards life, ordinary people and his nation. Studying *Collected poems in the National Language* carefully, we would recognize that no poem was composed for entertainment. His entire collection of poems is the work of reflecting and understanding of man who is always restlessly thinking about living beings in order to discover the phenomenon of unpredictable changes and search for the truth. That is the path of action in Nguyen Trai's poetry, and in certain circumstances, it is the person finding his direction and struggling tirelessly: "*Honorable man should keep his sense of purpose/ Not minding difficulties or aging*"¹

In *Collected poems in the National Language* we saw two behaviors of Nguyen Trai. With the court, he hesitated, was afraid to scramble and select underlings, but with position, fame and wealth, he did not want to claim and was indifferent. For the life of "nhàn đật", Nguyen Trai expressed a fierce desire toward it: "*I will thus want unoccupied, so my job must set aside/ So worry but indifferent for afraid of involvement*"². However, it must be noted that the matter of lightening fame and honor and treasuring leisure moments is not the ideological product of Nguyen Trai, but one of the principles of behavior deeply originated from Confucianism - Buddhism - Taoism. When depressed with the life in the competitive and dangerous palace, he left for the countryside to show the attitude of disregarding fame and honor. Nguyen Trai put himself before the people to act, thus the collapse of ideas in Nguyen Trai was tragically, and in the end, he had to be a "wild goose hiding to avoid being hunted". In addition, facing disturbing reality of the evil authoritarian society makes Nguyen Trai "*Putting the whole mind on learning/ Not be interested in the past and present*"³. The restless mood of Nguyen Trai after realizing the collapse of ideas in the face of the harsh reality was the consciousness of a philosopher on the matter of the era. Nguyen Trai remembered and recalled such disturbance, and felt torn from the inside. There were no more days of "every words are heard and every stratagems are followed" and those "Piping Days of Peace" (Ngày Nghiêu thán Thuần) when there are no dissatisfaction, or resentment throughout the narrow village and corner. He could only see that "people hearts was malicious", "words are sealed tight like a covered decanter". At a standstill in finding a way, Nguyen Trai often talked about the earlier time, looked back at the past to control his anxiety and love and felt restless in his private thought: "*Still have concern for the nation/ Awake all night is ordinary*"⁴. From these, it can be seen that choosing to be "nhàn" (peaceful life) is an unwilling choice of Nguyen Trai. He fell into tragic life events and was always conscience-stricken. The researchers have all agreed that the tragedy that Nguyen Trai suffered was due to conflicts that could not be resolved in a day or two. It was the storm of the heart carrying thousands of feelings intertwined and inseparable, tearing Nguyen Trai from the inside, destroying his body so much that he became "skinny and full of diseases" and "grey-haired", etc. that is the feeling of a poet, a philosopher, a person spending all his life for the people and the nation. However, he was not helpless because of that, despite being disappointed, he still tried to rise up to be helpful in life.

2.2. The ideology of Loyalty to the king - Patriotism and Piety

Since man could not be against heavenly law, human beings must have good manners or etiquette to make human conduct be reasonable with heavenly law. It is the belief in heaven; and heaven has its own

7. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, "Ngôn Chí, Poem no. 17", tr. 39

8. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, "Tự thán, Poem no.38", tr. 102.

9. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, "Thuật hứng, Poem no. 25", tr. 79

10. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, "Thuật hứng, Poem no. 23", tr. 77

invisible reason that governs all the changes in human society and everything. It is because of placing all his faith in heaven, Nguyen Trai could live deliberately with no concern, leave behind the sadness of life and injustice, and never scramble for position and privileges. Due to placing too much faith in heaven, this made Confucian scholars at that time in general and Nguyen Trai in particular believe that the king was the son of heaven who had the right to make all decisions on everyone, everything. Thus, all the people must obey the king; no one was allowed to argue with the king. With this faith, Nguyen Trai deeply imprinted in his mind the thought of being loyal to the king, for loyalty to the king meant patriotism and loving people. Giving fidelity to the king, working under the king's regime and being granted with the fortune also partly affected Nguyen Trai's psychology. However, due to his loyalty to the king, he became torn in his own thoughts. Thereby, Nguyen Trai's ideology was portrayed profoundly; especially, be loyal and grateful to the king, and praise the king wholeheartedly.

The right way to be human according to concept of Nguyen Trai is expressed clearly in Piety, filial piety is the responsibility and obligation of children to their parents. Nguyen Trai told the greatly touching father-child bond: "*Heart nagging for not repaying king and parents / Unworthy of heaven's rice and father's clothes*"¹. Piety in his idea is even beyond the family, it is shown when his father was being escorted as a war prisoner to the other side of border, he wanted to follow to take care of his father but was told: "*You are an educated and talented person, you should find a way to wash off this humiliation for our country and avenge for me, only by that would it be the biggest form of piety*", he obeyed his father's words and supported the king helping the country in order to fulfill the biggest form of piety.

In addition to the ideas mentioned above, the right way to be human in *Collected poems in the National Language* of Nguyen Trai was also influenced by Confucianism which was shown when referred to the qualities of the Scholar. An honorable man (君子), according to Confucianism, is determined mainly by three basic qualities: humaneness, wisdom, courage. When referring to honorable man, in *Collected poems in the National Language*, Nguyen Trai also mentioned those aspects: "*Persistence to difficulty is what a honorable man be/ Exertion to force is what a great man be*"². Emphasizing the moral qualities and willpower of the honorable man, the author of *Collected poems in the National Language* comprehended the teachings of the Confucian predecessors. From that it creates the depth in the philosophy of the right way to be human. In addition, Nguyen Trai also applied the idea of "*Interactions between Heaven and Mankind*" (天人感应) of Confucianism to assume that all human actions cannot escape the control of heaven and earth. He skillfully elevated the sacredness of heaven and earth that support the righteous man, and inflict calamity on the evil-doers if violating the heaven's will. According to Nguyen Trai, if people work sincerely in the righteous way, they can "touch heaven and earth, move gods and devils" and be protected by heaven and earth. For those who do not "understand that success or failure are mandate of heaven", and act against the heaven's will, it means they are "digging their own grave".

It can be seen that Nguyen Trai used Confucianism beyond its inherent limitations of "destiny" (命) as he initially asserted the power of man by emphasizing the outcome of work depends on the human themselves. So he asserted the power of those who work with righteousness, which means work "*in agreement with human's*

11. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, "Ngônchí, Poem no. 7. tr. 31

12. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, "Trântinh, Poem no. 7", tr. 57.

heart, in accordance with heaven's will" will lead to success. From that, it has become the driving force behind the "kill the enemy and save the country" of our people. Thus, human destiny is considered by Nguyen Trai to be set by the heaven. However, his divinization of man also showed the purpose of putting high value on the role of man as the product of heaven and earth. And asserted the power of man based on the righteousness, morality to lead to succeed in the cause of developing the country.

Through the poetry pages in *Collected poems in the National Language*, Nguyen Trai was able to pour one's heart out of a Confucian scholar and further portray the social context at that time, so that he could speak out the feelings and concerns, as well as the torment in the mind of the Confucian scholar. Paying special attention to the concept of the right way to be human, he emphasized the idea of loyalty to the king and believing in the mandate of heaven as well as in the divine power of heaven.

2.3. Awareness about the law of causation of life in the Buddhist philosophy

Nguyen Trai appreciated the ethical ideas and traditional values of the nation. He admonished himself so that it can touch people to both create empathy and even greater, to let everyone learn from him to cultivate "the Way" (道) and "Virtue" (德) for themselves. There are many who are rich people but do not accumulate merits, always do deeds that will receive retribution by karma, which was also clearly reflected by Nguyen Trai. He was aware that wealth does not make people become luxurious, wealth also cannot follow people after death. Nguyen Trai valued the wealth of soul: "*Clear heart is more valuable than fame*"¹. He considered wife and children as the greatest value in life, more than any other material value: "*Death leaves to fate/ Wealth cannot compare to wife and children*"². Therefore, he believed that rich people without a good child will just be an obscure person: "*Many wealth but no good child/ Isn't that prisoner of hollow money*"³. From here, we can see a Buddhism's concept with an immense love for man, making man become closer to one another. Recognizing the true value of life, not following the frivolous external things and forgetting the true value of yourself. According to him, blessings and misfortune are the result of law of causation, that is fame and wealth if on the same path will bring misfortune. He also thought that living in a way of merits is living with a sense of responsibility to everyone, and that the merits, the blessings children enjoyed are not from accumulated merits of parents leave to them. From here, we realize the influence of the Buddhism concept in Nguyen Trai which is expressed clearly: "*Rather accumulating merits for children than accumulating wealth*"⁴. This is a concept of Buddhism that was inherited and applied in a flexible way by Nguyen Trai in order to direct human to goodness. As Vietnamese society is growing, the moral notions and traditional value are more overlooked. For that reason, causal ideology plays an important role in raising the goodness in activities of man, arouse the word "heart" (心) in the traditional moral conception.

Nguyen Trai mentioned the way to repay those who have lent a helping hand, as human beings, we should be always grateful to those who have helped us, give us joy even a little, thereby, never return favor with evil: "*Until repays fully to king and parents/ My steps will still be bound*"⁵. It can be said that Nguyen Trai has

13. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, "Tự thán, Poem no. 13", tr. 87

14. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, "Bảo kính cảnh giới, Poem no. 55", tr. 146

15. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, "Bảo kính cảnh giới, Poem no. 59", tr. 147

16. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, "Tự thán, Poem no. 41", tr. 104

17. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, "Ngôn chí, Poem no. 11", tr. 34

pondered in every steps of life to coin his noble motto of living. He wrote those lines while the court was treating the talented king's subjects and loyalists unfairly, those who contributed their power and wisdom to the resistance war's victories. That is why he commanded and comforts himself, however, this was also a message for everyone.

Nguyen Trai advised that working to feed ourselves is one of best ways to accumulate merits because labor makes people become honest: "*The wise should teach the ignorant/ A job in hand gives contentment/ Learning brings us career/ Work brings a life of comfort*"¹. Labor and education make people live ethically. In addition, Nguyen Trai advised that we should value morality than wealth, for preserving morality, we must do good deed, fulfill filial piety, live with sense of purpose and upright, do not bend yourself, submit to fame and wealth, complain, we should learn to forgive others, live for righteousness, tranquillity and make concessions to others to receive "peace" in life.

Nguyen Trai's concept of the right way to be human is also influenced by the Lao – Zhuang philosophical thought, so in part he could find the tranquil in his mind. However, his choosing of tranquil ideology seems to not be appropriate when the country is still in turmoil.

2.4. The meaning of the "proper behavior" concept in the collected poems in the national language in the current society of Vietnam

During the process of innovation, exchange and integration with the world, in addition to the positive effects, there're many challenges and implications for all the aspects of the life. social life, including morality. For the sustainable development and preserved national identity, it is necessary to recover core values in traditional ethical thought. In such traditional value system, Nguyen Trai's thought in general, his "proper behavior" concept in *the collected poems in the national language* in particular raises an important voice, contributing to moral education, promoting social progress, building up belief and national pride.

Firstly, the life philosophy of desire for leisure, pleasure and enjoyment among the nature creates a methodological basis for modern Vietnamese people in creating a peaceful and harmonious lifestyle with nature and protecting the ecological environment.

Under the influence of market economy mechanism, industrialization and modernization process and science-technology revolution of 4.0, people in Vietnam society are attracted to the fast-paced lifestyle of industrial life, therefore, they sometimes forget the deposition and tranquility in their soul. The commodities in the consumption lifestyle have tempted people, turning the life in the rotation of the technologies. In such context, Nguyen Trai's life philosophy on desire for leisure, pleasure and enjoyment in *the collected poems in the national language* is a reminder to everyone to slow down and go deep into the inner world to realize the life value.

Living in harmony with nature is one of the problems of modern life when people are at greater risk of separation from nature due to dependence on technology, such as clothes, houses, air conditioners and refrigerators. According to Nguyen Trai's philosophy, the pleasures among nature will bring peace of mind, enhance health, contribute to protecting the green-clean-beautiful environment. In *the collected poems in the national language*, Nguyen Trai composed many poems using the images of the trees, "animals" (animals), especially flowers (peach, apricot, peony flower), trees (Banana, Cane, Sugar) and pets (Pigs, Dogs, Cats) close

18. Nguyen Trai, *Collected poems in the National Language*, "Bàokính càn hgiói, Poem no. 46", tr. 141.

to human life. Having read the poems with the images of the trees and animals, we feel the close and intimate relationship between people and nature.

Life has a lot of changes and people are busy and hurry with it. It's the hustle life that makes us forget many things. Coming back Nguyen Trai's thought in *the collected poems in the national language*, we will find a reminder of tranquility in the soul. Having a tranquility moment for thinking about ourselves is the time for us to recognize the value of the present life for a better and more meaningful life in the community and humanity.

Secondly, Nguyen Trai's concept of loyalty to the King – patriotism has become a weapon of struggle in the national defense and construction.

The word "Trung (忠): " in Chinese Confucianism means "loyalty" to a master. The word "Trung" in the Vietnamese Confucianism is firstly understood "the loyalty" to the nation. The word "Trung" in Chinese Confucianism is partly understood as a kind of flattering lifestyle, called "stupid loyalty". In Vietnamese Confucianism, the word "trung" is understood in the patriotic sense. The Vietnamese confucian scholars always put the interests of the country above the interests of the King, therefore, if there is a choice between *loyalty to the King and patriotism*, they always choose patriotism, proving through the examples of Nguyen Trai who followed Le Loi instead of the Tran and Ho Kings because this is a patriotic King. This proves that "loyalty to the King- patriotism" is the refraction of Vietnamese Confucianism toward Chinese Confucianism. This thought of Nguyen Trai has affected some historical characters: Although Nguyen Trai doesn't want to betray, he had to attack the Le Dynasty (Le Chieu Thong) to defend the country, because the Le Dynasty betrays the nation by "Set the snake on one's own hens". Ngo Thi Nham did not follow the Le Dynasty. On the contrary, he followed Quang Trung - the representative of the spirit of national independence. Having heard that King Tu Duc had surrendered the French invaders, Phan Van Tri shouted: "Behaving Tu Duc, taking Tu Duc's liver and drinking Tu Duc's blood." Phan Chu Trinh wrote "That dieu thu" to King Khai Dinh, expressing seven serious crimes worth being beheaded of this King.

Currently, in Vietnam, the "loyalty to the King" is understood as the loyalty to the Party, the revolutionary cause under the people's choice while patriotism still retains the original meaning "loving nation." "Loyalty to the nation" is associated with "the piety to people", an absolute loyalty to the cause of nation defense and construction and the path to socialism; It is a life-long struggle for the Party and the revolution. "The piety to people" means loving, believing and doing everything for the people and to do such things, it's important for them to get close to the people, respect and study the people and consider the people as a root. The morality and qualification is an important part for each of us.

Thirdly, Nguyen Trai's "proper behavior" concept contributes to the education of filial piety and to the creation and improvement of personality of the Vietnamese people.

Under society development and the relationship between people increasingly distant, Nguyen Trai's thought makes relative contributions to healing those relationships. In the father-son relationship, the child needs to fulfill his/her filial piety to his/her parents. It comes not only from responsibilities, roles and duties, but from the heart of man. Each person not only fulfils his/her filial piety to his/her parents but also has to go beyond such obligation, to achieve the "piety to the people".

The word "piety" in Chinese Confucianism mainly expresses the father-son relationship in the *negative filial piety* (Children follow wherever parents request). When being introduced into the Vietnam, the word "filial

piety" is divided into two levels: 1) *The biggest form of piety* is "piety to the people and nation. 2) *The smaller form of piety* is piety to parents (as in Chinese Confucianism). In the relationship between the biggest form of piety and the smaller form of piety, the biggest form of piety always comes first. This is proved by Nguyen Trai's thought when he saw off his father to Dong Quang border pass. He followed his father's instructions to pursue the biggest form of piety instead of the smaller form of piety. After ten learning years, he came to Lam Son land to submit "Binh Ngo Sach", helping Le Loi beat the Minh Dynasty's soldiers. Moreover, the concept "filial piety" of Vietnamese people extends beyond the family scope- filial piety to the others in the community who are old enough to their parents. In the heart of every Vietnamese person, wherever they go, they always orient towards their nation and home. Each of them has the spirit of solidarity, strong will, national independence and deep love. And the tradition of filial piety is the root and origin of Vietnamese culture for nation.

From family aspect, the filial piety is raised to a category of morality and then becomes a norm establishing the foundation of family morality extended to society, which becomes the power to build up society. Therefore, the filial piety is raised to the concept "proper behavior"-meaning the path, moral principles and truth that must be followed. For the nation, the piety is the foundation and the basis for keeping house and becomes an important principle for nation governance.

3. Conclusions

In the development process of the history of national construction and defense, our nation has produced many talented thinkers, politicians and soldiers. Among the many outstanding heroes over the past time, in the XV century, Nguyen Trai appeared as a shining star. It can be said that Nguyen Trai reached the peak of the era and he has made great contributions to the Vietnamese history in general and the history of Vietnamese philosophy in particular. With the content of progressive thoughts, patriotism and love to the people, the sense of independence, self-control, autonomy and the desire for peace, the relations of peace among nations were ingrained in Nguyen Trai's mind.

Reading Nguyen Trai's poems in general and his "Collected poems in the National Language" in particular, it can be seen that in the context of modern society, the humanity value and depth of his thought has existed and shined through all the time. The verses: "Humanism is at peace" as a message of peace to future politicians. For him, the people are all. It's the people that decide all the successes of the defense of the country and the country. The people are the solid foundation on which the country can flourish. They're the true creator of history; without the people, there is no history in its own sense.

Under the assessment of Nguyen Trai's devotion on the history of the Vietnamese people and the development of humanitarian values, *the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)* recognized Nguyen Trai as a *world cultural celebrity* in 1980. Since then, the anniversary of his death has become the day of the Con Son Autumn Festival, opening from the 15th to the 20th of the eighth month in the lunar calendar. With such honors, Nguyen Trai goes into the history of the nation and deepens in the minds of every Vietnamese as a philanthropist who meets all the criteria of the title "three immortalities" (virtue, merit and words). All three of them in his mind are bright and strong enough to widely spread, from traditional to modern age and his image will extend to other centuries.

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