

**FRIENDSHIP IN THE POEMS OF DU FU (CHINA) AND NGUYEN KHUYEN  
(VIETNAM)**

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**ABSTRACT**

It can be said that Tang poetry achieved great and brilliant achievements in Chinese literature with two typical representatives, Du Fu and Li Bai. Tang poetry had a great influence on Vietnamese literature, leading to the birth of poetry of Tang rules. Referring to Vietnamese poetry of Tang rules, we must mention Nguyen Khuyen - "the poet of Vietnamese landscape villages". His poetry makes readers feel drunk in the simplicity but still retains its shimmering, magical, and unusually charming features, showing a profound reception of the influence of Chinese Tang poetry, especially from the poet Du Fu. Comparing Du Fu's poetry and Nguyen Khuyen's poetry clarifies the reception of foreign cultural and literary quintessence and affirms the role and position of compositions imbued with Vietnamese national cultural identity is always a research direction with scientific and practical significance.

**Keywords:** Tang poetry, Vietnamese poetry of Tang rules, Nguyen Khuyen's poetry.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Nguyen Khuyen's poetry is rich in emotion, describing the simple, frugal beauty of nature. When entering the world of his poetry, we feel the colors influenced by Chinese culture and literature, with a subtle scent of Du Fu's poetry. The poems of both authors affirm the ideal of a good and noble life for humans. The poetry of the two poets is filled with life's pain, portraying a painful life but still shining with the power of wisdom along with experiences, immersed in natural scenery. In particular, Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen always used their pens favorably when writing about their friends. Comparative research on poems written about friendship by two authors Nguyen Khuyen and Du Fu is a valuable new research direction that has not yet received much attention in both Vietnam and the world.

**2. DISCUSSION**

When comparing the poetry of Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen, we discovered similarities from the depths of their emotions. We see that life has greatly influenced the works of the two men. Poetry clearly portrays a Du Fu who longed to contribute to the country all his life, but received misfortune and pain. A young Nguyen Khuyen only wanted to dedicate his talents to help the country and the people, but he failed. It can be seen that both Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen are two poets with a patriotic ideology. In their poems, they always truly reflect the picture of poverty and misery of the people, thereby expressing his pain and helplessness in the face of reality because he cannot do anything. They are patriots who love the people... Especially in their poems, the two authors express extremely deep friendship and love.

There is an ancient saying "If you have the best soulmate, you can never hate". In the journey of human life, no one wants to block their life, forever be a lonely wanderer, everyone has

a desire to communicate with others, to have a soul mate. Poetry is the voice of the artist, writing poetry not only to satisfy personal needs and desires but also to express feelings and confides. Indeed, "In a hundred years, soulmates are hard to find, friends are hard to meet, good friends are hard to know". The theme of friendship is a theme that we can easily see in both Du Fu's poetry and Nguyen Khuyen's poetry.

In many of his poetic works, Du Fu deeply expressed his feelings through poems about Li Bai. He always expressed his admiration and respect for Li Bai, appreciating both his friend's personality and talent. He once wrote: "*Bach da thi vo dich / Phieu nhien tu bat quan* 白也詩無敵，飄然思不群。(春日憶李白)。He believes that Li Bai's poetry has an open and gentle poetic soul that no one can compete with, no one can compare to. In the song "For Li Bai贈李白", Du Fu also brought out his friend's bold and arrogant personality: "*Thong am cuong ca khong do nhat / Phi duong bat ho vi thuy hung?*" 痛飲狂歌空度日，飛揚跋扈為誰雄? Du Fu sent many messages to Li Bai, wrote more than a dozen poems for Ly, missed Ly, and loved Ly. Not only that, poet Du Fu also always carried within himself the torment of worry, he always followed every ups and downs of his soulmate. The trio of poems "*Thien mat hoai Li Bai*" 天末懷李白, "*Bat kien*" 不見, "*Mong Li Bai* 夢李白" was composed by Du Fu during the time he heard that his friend had been arrested and had to be executed to Da Lang, the works show the author's concern for his friend. Du Fu was always worried about his friend. He didn't know how Li Bai lived during his exile, but why he never heard any news and only appeared in his dreams. Whether it is real or a dream, Du Fu always shows his pain, his worry, his helplessness in the face of his soulmate's misfortune.

It can be said that Du Fu was a very emotional person, he had up to 14 articles for Li Bai such as: "*For Li Bai*贈李白", "*Xuan nhat uc Li Bai*春日憶李白", "*Dong nhat huu hoai Li Bai* 冬日有懷李白", "*Thien mat hoai Li Bai*天末懷李白", "*Mong Li Bai* 夢李白... to express how much he missed his friend in almost every situation in life. Even though there are a thousand miles apart, Du Fu's heart to remember Li Bai seems to have never stopped.

Since meeting Li Bai, Du Fu has always considered himself Li Bai's junior and hoped to receive his guidance. This does not mean that Du Fu wanted to follow Li Bai's poetic style because right from the moment he heard Li Bai advise him to live like an eagle with wings in the sky, to put aside the troubles of the human world. At this point, Du Fu determined that he had to live his own life and ambition. Du Fu always respected and admired his best friend, he considered it a close love and soulmate that he must cherish throughout his life. Li Bai always looked towards the world. He still enthusiastically participated in political activities, but it was not really suitable for the times. A poem by Du Fu summarizes Li Bai's entire tragedy: "*Van chuong tang menh dat*" (Literature often hates good fortune). As a failure in life, all of Li Bai's feelings and sadness were conveyed in all of his poetic compositions. This is what makes Li Bai's literature arrogant, free, and liberal. Perhaps Du Fu truly had compassion and sympathy for his friend, he appreciated this talent and this person.

Only truly having to be each other's confidants and confidants can one understand each other so thoroughly. Du Fu clearly understood his friend's actions, he used "crazy" to fight "crazy" in life. Du Fu was worried and felt his friend's pain when everyone in the world wanted Li Bai to

die, only Du Fu had compassion for his talent. Du Fu had a hobby of enjoying the quintessence and essence expressed in Li Bai's poems, but at the same time he also admonished Li Bai's arrogant personality of disregarding world affairs, the poet advised his friend to put aside his journey and return to the field life.

Besides the theme of village nature, the theme of friendship is also one of the important topics for poet Nguyen Khuyen. He left behind about 800 poems in Nom and Chinese, including more than a hundred poems about friendship. Some songs only say one sentence and some say the whole poem, all of which create unique impressions of Nguyen Khuyen's poetry. Nguyen Khuyen lived his life for friendship and it was that love that nourished his soul. Nguyen Khuyen's poetry is also influenced by Du Fu's poetry because of its sad breath. When writing about the natural landscape of the countryside or writing about friendship, there is still sadness hidden deep inside. There is a sadness that brings tears to the eyes, but there is also deep sadness that touches the soul and makes readers feel like they want to cry. Many of Nguyen Khuyen's poems about friendship reached the pinnacle of national poetry. In the article "Inspiration" the poet wrote:

*Ngay truoc cung len lay cua troi  
Lau nay vang ve bat tam hoi  
Nuoc non man mac ve dau ta?  
Be ban lo tho sot may nguoi!  
(The day before, we went up to heaven together  
It has been deserted for a long time  
Where does the water go?  
Just a few friends left behind!)*

Perhaps the saddest thing is that when old age comes, friends become fewer and fewer, only "*Just a few friends left behind*". Because an old friend of the same age is also someone to listen to, share sadness and happiness, and comfort people when they are lonely. Nguyen Khuyen used the word "*sot*" (left behind) to indicate a new expressive nuance for the loneliness and sparseness of his old friend. Or in the song "*The Elder*" we once again see the absence of friends:

*Nam nay to da bay muoi tu,  
Rang lao rang quan to cung u.  
Luc hung danh them ba chen ruou,  
Khi buon ngam lao mot cau tho.  
Ban gia lop truoc nay con may?*

*(This year I am seventy-four,  
That elderliness is unavoidable.  
When in a good mood, enjoy three cups of wine,  
When in a sad mood, recite a poem.  
How many of my old friends are left?)*

If Du Fu had a close friend, Li Bai, then Nguyen Khuyen also had a very sincere friend, a precious friendship, that was the friendship between the old man Tam Nguyen Yen Do and his close friend, Duong Khue. The poem "*Ban den choi nha*" (Friends come to visit) was written when his best friend came to visit. The poem shows us a sincere friendship that doesn't care about material things. The verses in the poem seem to have a joking tone, but it is a serious joke. It must

be people who know each other very well and are very close to each other for people to joke like that:

*Da bay lau nay bac den nha  
Tre thoi di vang, cho thoi xa.  
Ao sau nuoc ca khon chai ca,  
Vuon rong rao thua, kho duoi ga.  
Cai chua ra cay, ca moi nu,  
Bau vua rung ron, muop duong hoa.  
Dau tro tiep khach trau khong co,  
Bac den choi day ta voi ta.  
(It's been a long time since you came here  
When children are away, the market is far away.  
The pond is too deep to catch fish,  
The garden fence is too sparse to chase chickens.  
Cabbage has just sprouted, tomato has just buds,  
Newly elected cord, melon is flowering.  
Welcoming guests without betel and areca,  
You came here to play with me.)*

Nguyen Khuyen's entire poem used words to describe space far, deep, wide, sparse to create a difficult atmosphere in preparing to welcome. Everything here is lacking, even the most minimal thing is the "betel nut" to welcome visitors that Nguyen Khuyen does not have. Nguyen Khuyen, through a difficult situation, highlighted the precious feelings between two close friends, "my" house in the countryside is so simple, lacking, do "you" want to stay and play with "me" or not? "find it difficult to leave" here? Nguyen Khuyen's poem "Friends come to visit" written in the 19th century was influenced by the poem "Guests come to visit" by Du Fu, 8th century, China, Tang Dynasty. Both poets wrote in the Tang style. One thing is that both are very liberal, not constrained in terms of composition according to poetic rules. Although influenced by the song "Guests" by Du Fu, Nguyen Khuyen's song "Friends come to visit" still has the unique feature of naturally and simply describing the scene and love of Vietnam. Nguyen Khuyen Vietnameseized Tang poetry to create the work. The poem has a bit of joking and humor imbued with Nguyen Khuyen's colors, which cannot be seen in Du Fu's poetry.

In particular, the highest peak in Nguyen Khuyen's poem about friendship is the poem "Khoc Duong Khue" (Crying for Duong Khue). It can be said that these are the best and very famous poems written about friendship in the treasury of national poetry and the poem "Crying for Duong Khue" by poet Nguyen Khuyen is the highest peak of the poem about friendship of Vietnamese poetry. The poem is a very passionate and touching cry of Mr. Tam Nguyen Yen Do for his friend. It was just a normal thing to cry, but because of true feelings, that was the shock, the expressed pity combined with great talent crystallized precious gems. His friend died suddenly. Living in loneliness, feeling increasingly lonely and sad, makes life seem to lose all meaning: not wanting to drink alcohol, not wanting to recite poetry, the house and soul become empty and lonely.

*Ai len nhan hoi bac Chau Cau,  
Lut loi nam nay bac o dau?  
May o lon con mua dat re?  
Vai gian nep cai ngap nong sau?*

*Phan thua suy tinh cang them thiet,  
 Tuoi ca choi boi hoa song lau.  
 Em cung chang no ma chang doi,  
 Thung thang chiec la, ruou lung bau.  
 (Who came to ask Uncle Chau Cau,  
 Where are you due to floods this year?  
 A few litters of piglets are cheap to buy?  
 Some compartments are flooded shallowly and deeply?  
 Thinking about losing is even worse,  
 If you play around at your age, you will live a long life.  
 I'm neither full nor hungry,  
 Valley of leaves, wine with gourd.)*

Thus, both Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen had profound poems written about their friends. Friendship has always been a sacred sentiment of Confucianists. Loving each other is not about material things, but about understanding each other in the soul, it is sharing from the heart without needing to say it out loud. Nguyen Khuyen has the same receptiveness in expressing sincere friendship as in Du Fu's poetry. That is to use poems according to Tang poetic rules to write, pages of poetry that show profoundness, sincerity and simplicity. However, the two poets still have their own writing styles. In Du Fu is still the profound pen of the saintly poet, and in Nguyen Khuyen is the sincere friendship of the kind and simple Vietnamese farmers.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Research on Chinese Tang poetry's influence on the works of Vietnamese poets is always a research direction of special interest to scientists. Within the framework of the article, we focus on comparing the topic of friendship in the poems of Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen. Nguyen Khuyen's poetry style is simple and close, closely associated with the Vietnamese countryside, while Du Fu's poetry has nuances of modern realism, many poems have solemn, tragic, and heroic sounds. But all of them have things in common, similarities in historical circumstances. His creative concept and poetry bring readers a feeling of peace but still leave a sense of sadness. Through a survey of some poems written about friendship, the study contributes to affirming the deep, complete and pure friendship that overcomes all trivial challenges of both authors.

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