

COMPARISON BETWEEN *TALE OF LANG LORD* (*TREASURE CHEST OF VIETNAMESE FOLKLORE*) AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

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Abstract

This article presents the results of a comparison between “Tale of Lang Lord,” which is printed in “Treasure Chest of Vietnamese Folklore”, and the documents that Nguyen Dong Chi consulted. This method not only puts the story back in an extensive cultural background but also helps us discover the actual meaning of the author’s work titled “Collecting Folk Tales.”

Keywords: Collecting folk tales; Intertextuality; Nguyen Dong Chi; Tu Dao Hanh.

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1. INTRODUCTION

At the end of the archive, *Treasure Chest of Vietnamese Folklore (KTTCTVN)*, author Nguyen Dong Chi attached a reference chapter in which he listed hundreds of documents that “this archive uses or is related to” (Nguyễn, 2014, p. 560). As he was very serious in his academic papers, he even listed those references (if any) in the footnotes of each page. It was those notes that helped us to read the works of Nguyen Dong Chi in such a fashion that allows parallel comparisons among narrative stories in the archive *KTTCTVN* using the documents referred to by the author (usually written in the form “According to ...”). This reading approach hopefully extends the capacity of reference in the process of acquiring the national culture in general and commemorates the efforts of the preceding scholars. That is also the essence of this article and the authors of this article can only display the spirit by analyzing the tale *Tu Dao Hanh* or *the Tale of Lang Lord* (Nguyễn, 2014, pp. 822-837) using the references in the footnotes.

2. ANALYZING STORIES USING THE REFERENCES IN THE FOOTNOTES

2.1. *Thien uyen tap anh* or *Viet dien u linh tap* (Annotation 1)

The first annotation for *Tu Dao Hanh* or *the Tale of Lang Lord* refers to the scene in which the character Dai Dien says goodbye to the corpse of Tu Vinh, the father of Tu Dao Hanh. This is the extract mentioned in *Tu Dao Hanh* or *the Tale of Lang Lord (STTL)* (Nguyễn, 2014, p. 824-825):

Dai Dien arrived, pointed at the corpse of Tu Vinh, and spat: *Sống chết là giấc chiêm bao, Dầu giận thế nào không để cách đêm.*^[1] The corpse all of a sudden sank and drifted away.

Annotation [1]: By saying *Tăng hận bất cách túc, Sinh tử nhất mộng trường*. He means: Well! A gentleman can only be irked for one night; the matter of life and death is that of a dream (according to *Thien uyen tap anh*).

The way in which the annotation is written shows us that there seems to be a state called “multi-subject” in speaking and writing: the storyteller/collector/editor, etc. The annotation gives rise to a certain type of discourse dichotomy: “original text” as the discourse/text of the subject “storyteller–the symbol of folklore narration” (edited by the collector and editor of the archive) and a sub-discourse/subtext (as can be seen in the footnote of *KTTCTVN*, usually considered as “interruptions”–annotations for the storytelling lines). Let us consider the relationship between these two discourses: “Based on the sentence...” indicates that the collector and editor–those who write the annotation want the readership to acknowledge that they are being told a tale and the storyteller of the *Tale of Lang Lord* turns the Chinese original “Tăng hận bất cách túc, Sinh tử nhất mộng trường” into a Vietnamese six-eight style poem (or we can understand that “Sống chết là giấc chiêm bao, Dầu giận thế nào không để cách đêm” he storyteller “translated”

the original sentences, meaning the Chinese version was the original, and now there is a six-eight equivalent in Nom letters).

However, the annotation “*Based on the sentence ...*” can be simply understood as an “explanation” detailing the references used by the “composer” (the author or the writer). The composer can be a little verbose, saying “At this point—when character Dai Dien spits out the six-eight sentences *Sống chết là giấc chiêm bao, Dầu giận thế nào không để cách đêm*—we refer to the Chinese five-word verse *Tăng hận bất cách túc, Sinh tử nhất mộng trường*.” Or the author can be clear and write, “We based this on the sentence ...” (identifying the subject of the verb “based”). “We” can be seen as a self-referential action of the author of *KTTCTVN*—a scholar and a poem unsatisfied with the collected unpolished written record “according to the locals ...” (so when we look at the quite long title of the the archive *Tu Dao Hanh* or *the Tale of Lang Lord*, we can somehow understand this).

However, Nguyen Dong Chi can improvise by annotating in another way, one that is not affected by the urge to clarify as in “we refer to and write from certain sources.” Indeed, instead of “*based on the sentence...*” the author would only need to write: “There exists a Chinese version, *Tăng hận bất cách túc, Sinh tử nhất mộng trường*” or “From related documents. The sentences seem to derive from the Chinese version of *Tăng hận bất cách túc, Sinh tử nhất mộng trường* 僧很不隔宿，生死一夢長.”

However, based on the story itself (to differentiate story and tale), the situation would be: a sorcerer spitting out a six-eight style pair of sentences in Chinese (as can be seen in most rhymes, slang, and idioms in the story itself). Once Dai Dien, a sorcerer, intentionally said, “*Tăng hận bất cách túc, Sinh tử nhất mộng trường*” (knowing that Tu Vinh would understand), as a “collector-editor,” Nguyen Dong Chi only needed to annotate “this sentence means that...”—an annotation to clarify for contemporary readership—who use the modern Vietnamese language. (There is obviously no good reason to exclude a situation in which the character spits out Nom, or both Chinese and Nom sentence(s) (or poems, prophecies, or parallel sentences). Even a character such as a teacher or a mandarin can spit out Sino-Vietnamese sentences with such subtle wordplay. Yet in this story, the character says a pair of sentences in the six-eight style (as what it is!) Once we are satisfied with such annotation, the clarification of the origin of the sentences, *Sống chết là giấc chiêm bao, Dầu giận thế nào không để cách đêm*, in the archive *KTTCTVN* is optional.

At this point, it may be necessary to discuss an issue related to the above annotation of Nguyen Dong Chi. As it is written in parenthesis as “this was based on *Thien uyen tap anh*,” can we probably conclude that the author annotates that the referenced sentences, *Tăng hận bất cách túc, Sinh tử nhất mộng trường*, appear in *Thien uyen tap anh*? Seemingly, “this was based on *Thien uyen tap anh*” implies that the scene was based on several details from *Thien uyen tap anh* rather than claiming that *Tăng hận bất cách túc, Sinh tử nhất mộng trường* was taken from *Thien uyen tap anh*. Because if we read *Thien uyen tap anh* (禪苑集英, *TUTA for short*) we can only find a single sentence. In *TUTA* (translated by Le Manh That), the sentence is: “Dai Dien arrived and

spat out: ‘Tăng giận không cách đêm.’ Đọc xong, xác đập lại trôi đi.”¹ Or did the author Nguyen Dong Chi refer to another *Thien uyen tap anh* that contains the latter sentence – “*Sinh tử nhất mộng trường*”? In *Selection of Strange Tales in Linh Nam (Linh Nam Chích quái)* (嶺南撫怪, LNCQ for short): “Dai Dien arrived and shouted: “*Người đi tu không được phép giận quá một ngày,*” at that very instant, the corpse sank and drifted away” (Trần, 2017, p. 166). Seemingly, Nguyen Dong Chi was referring to *Viet dien u linh tap* (越甸幽靈集, VDULT for short). In *VDULT* (translated by Le Huu Muc): “Dai Dien arrived and murmured: - *Tăng còn giận chưa mãn tức hay sao? Sống là một cảnh hí trường, chết mới thành Bồ Đề.* Right after, the corpse drifted away ...” (Lý, 1961, p. 103). In a translation by Le Manh That: “Dai Dien arrived and said: ‘*Tăng giận không đầy đêm sao? Và sống là trường du hí, chết mới thành đạo Bồ đề.*’ The corpse responsively drifted away”²

Our analysis might be labeled as unnecessarily meticulous. Our intention, nevertheless, is to understand the interaction between Chinese and Nom, folk and savant, and oral and written records throughout the history of the country via the understanding of references. Most importantly, aside from differentiating oral records and the collection and composition of folklore (who “refers” to whom), the situation and annotation from the story help us to gain a more in-depth insight into our perception of the surrounding world (day/night-dream/reality; life/death; karma) that is all-pervasive in the folk culture and narration of the nation.

2.2. *Selection of Strange Tales in Linh Nam* or other documents (Annotation 3)

The tale ends with an old friend of Tu Dao Hanh, monk Minh Khong, curing Hanh in his afterlife. There is also a notable annotation in this extract (Nguyễn, 2014, p. 832).

When the king fully recovered, the regime threw heaps of praise upon the talent of Nguyen Minh Khong. They intended to reward him with acres of land but he declined, saying: - *I did this to fulfill my promise with an old friend, not for wealth.*^[3] Then he left for the old pagoda.

Annotation [3]: According to *Selection of Strange Tales of Linh Nam*, with reference to *Nuoc non tuan bao*; and based on the account by the Northern people.

It is very difficult to determine what is known as “Nuoc non Tuan bao” for the purpose of comparison. And it is also true for the case of “based on the account by the

¹ Tale 51 “Dao Hanh Monk” (-1117), *Section II–Thien uyen tap anh–Ha Book* (Lê, 2006).

² See the translation in *Section III–Annotation 4*, annotation No. 23 (Lê, 2006). This is the annotation for Tale 51 *Dao Hanh Monk* (-1117) in *Section II–Thien uyen tap anh–Ha Book*. The annotation is as follows: “In *Selection of Strange Tales in Linh Nam*, pages 28-31 were dedicated to Tu Dao Hanh. The story is almost identical to the one presented here, except for one detail that Dao Hanh passed the Bach Lien examination, which was not included in *Thien uyen tap anh*. The *Tale of Tu Dao Hanh* was added as a subordinate to *Viet dien u linh tap* at pages 221-225 by ‘Practitioners of Taoism.’ The main plot is the same, but there are several intriguing details, which should be translated later”

Northern people.” Therefore, we can only focus on *LNCQ*. However, though the annotation can be understood as an explanation for a single sentence (*I did this to fulfill my promise with an old friend, not for wealth*) or for the whole detail in which monk Minh Khong visited the palace to cure the king (for which a general took him from the pagoda – “The government immediately assigned a general to bring with him hundreds of soldiers and ten huge boats to invite Nguyen Minh Khong to the palace.” (Nguyễn, 2014, p. 834) till the end of the story), we can be sure that the two versions from *STTL* and *LNCQ* are different.³

LNCQ has a story titled *Tu Dao Hanh and Nguyen Minh Khong*, claiming that Nguyen Minh Khong was a student of Tu Dao Hanh after he reached the peak in his practice of Buddhism, not a companion during his journey to Tay Truc. Let us consider some details about the character Nguyen Minh Khong (the end of the story) in *LNCQ* and *STTL*.

<p><i>LNCQ</i>: When meeting Than Tong, Minh Khong said in a loud voice: “A gentleman like you has been entrusted to be the son of God, enjoying a wealthy life. Why did you contract such a disease?” The king was scared to death. Minh Khong took a huge cauldron of oil, heated it up, stirred the oil with his own hand several times and splashed the oil all over the body of the king. The disease was then cured. Minh Khong was assigned to be the grand chancellor and hundreds of households were rewarded afterwards. In the year of Xin Chou, 22nd year of Thai Binh, Minh Khong died at the age of 76 (Trần, 2017, p. 173-174).</p>	<p><i>STTL</i>: Nguyen Minh Khong stared at the patient and said in a loud voice: – <i>Do you remember this old friend? You’re now the son of God, wealthy as you just are and you still cannot escape karma?</i> The king was scared to death and lying inanimate. Minh Khong told the servants to bring out a cauldron, pour the oil in and heat it [...]. The king fully recovered, the state threw heaps of praise upon the talent of Nguyen Minh Khong. They intended to reward him with acres of land but he declined, saying: – <i>I did this to fulfill my promise with an old friend, not for wealth.</i> He then left for the old pagoda (Nguyễn, 2014, p. 834).</p>
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By comparison, we can see that the two extracts use the method of narrating by quoting Nguyen Minh Khong shouting at Dao Hanh in his afterlife to greet King Than Ton who is suffering from a disease gradually turning him into a tiger. As opposed to *LNCQ*, in *TUTA* the two characters, Tu Dao Hanh and Minh Khong, were narrated in two different stories (*Monk Dao Hanh* and *Grand Chancellor Minh Khong*). The story *Monk Dao Hanh* does not mention Minh Khong (and the detail in which Than Ton turned into a tiger). Meanwhile, *Grand Chancellor Minh Khong* tells that Minh Khong was a student

³ Obviously, the point here is to understand the meaning/use of the word “according” in the annotation. Whatever it means, we believe that the word “according” has three functions, which are “collecting, comparing, and narrating tales” as intended by Nguyen Dong Chi in this work. Academic Hy Tue calls the three functions sides: “It can be said that with only three sides as collecting, comparing and narrating tales, Nguyen Dong Chi has emerged as a leading professional [...]. However, it was not until the day that the full archive was published (1982) that Nguyen Dong Chi was recognized as a storyteller of Vietnamese traditional folklore.” (Hy, 2013).

of Dao Hanh, following the will left by Hanh that he would cure the king's disease. *TUTA* tale *Grand Chancellor Minh Khong* and *LNCQ* tale *Tu Dao Hanh and Nguyen Minh Khong* are the same in a sense that they both narrate about Minh Khong curing Hanh in his afterlife (following the will, the prophecy of the teacher).

Compared to *TUTA*, *LNCQ* has another detail that says Minh Khong did some magic tricks to feed the soldiers with just a small pot and helped them return to the palace overnight. This is the general motif of the narrated tales and it was applied in *STTL*.⁴

Overall, the story about Nguyen Minh Khong in *Tu Dao Hanh* or *the Tale of Lang Lord* does not show any sign of reference to *TUTA* or *LNCQ*. The most significant difference among *TUTA*, *LNCQ*, and *STTL* related to Nguyen Minh Khong can be concluded as: While *TUTA* and *LNCQ* describe the act of curing the disease as Khong following the will of his teacher, *STTL* says it is the fateful agreement between two friends. In other words, as a story of the Buddhism work, the story about Minh Khong is narrated under the general theme of *TUTA*—proving the unrelenting reincarnation and the development of religion through generations. Meanwhile, in ordinary folklore, the story induces a deeper perception of reality and the world. That is the reason why, for example, the two synonyms “cô nhân” (*Còn nhớ cô nhân nữa không?*—he asked Dao Hanh) and “bạn cũ” (*Bản tảng vì một lời hứa với người bạn cũ chứ không phải vì phú quý!*—replied to the state) in the lines of Minh Khong at the end of the story resonate with so many.

TUTA has four stories depicting four characters: Khong Lo, Giac Hai, Dao Hanh, and Minh Khong. The narration in “Monk Khong Lo” implies that Giac Hai is a friend of Khong Lo, while the narration in *Grand Chancellor Minh Khong* says that Dao Hanh is the teacher of Minh Khong. In *TUTA* there is no information for us to claim that Khong Lo and Giac Hai in any way have any relationship with Dao Hanh and Minh Khong. That might be the reason why it was not until *LNCQ* was published that there exists a phenomenon called “combination of stories” (“hợp truyện”). Khong Lo and Giac Hai are the protagonists of *Duong Khong Lo and Nguyen Giac Hai*; Dao Hanh and Minh Khong are the protagonists of *Tu Dao Hanh and Nguyen Minh Khong*.⁵

3. EXTENDING THE COMPARISON USING *VIET DIEN U LINH TAP*

VĐULT (Appendix section - *Elaboration on the Tale of Tu Dao Hanh*) translated by Le Huu Muc (Lý, 1961) narrates three characters: Dao Hanh, Minh Khong, and Giac Hai. The narration structure of these characters can be illustrated as follows (Figure 1):

⁴ The meticulous *Comparison* (after the story) of the author of *KTTCTVN* indicates so. The comparisons, particularly the one that depicts Khong's treat for the soldiers, show that they were taken from specific documents (*Cong du tiep ky* by Vu Phuong De, *Fairy Tales, Religion, Tradition and Myth* by Arnold van Gennep). The annotations show the serious attitude of the scholar Nguyen Dong Chi.

⁵ The expression “it was not until *LNCQ*...” might not avoid the impression of describing the works in their chronological order. (We support the view that *TUTA* existed before *LNCQ*.) However, due to the difficulties in determining when the works written in Chinese were published during the era of Vietnamese medieval literature, this article only focuses on comparisons of the works.



Figure 1. The narration structure of the three characters, Dao Hanh, Minh Khong, and Giac Hai, of *Viet dien u linh tap* (Appendix)

The same narration structure of the three characters can be seen in *STTL*. The difference lies in the detail that Khong Lo replaces Giac Hai (Figure 2).

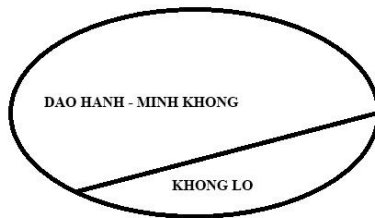


Figure 2. The narration structure of the three characters, Dao Hanh, Minh Khong, and Giac Hai, in the *Tale of Lang Lord*

TUTA=	Khong Lo
	Giac Hai
	Dao Hanh
	Minh Khong

LNCQ =	Khong Lo + Giac Hai
	Dao Hanh + Minh Khong

VDULT =	Dao Hanh -	Minh Khong + Giac Hai
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STTL =	Dao Hanh -	Minh Khong + Khong Lo
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Figure 3. Map of the relationships among the characters in *Thien uyen tap anh* (Selection of Strange Tales in Linh Nam), *Linh Nam chich quai* (Viet dien u linh tap), and *Su tich Thanh Lang* (the Tale of Lang Lord)

It can be concluded that the thing *TUTA*, *LNCQ*, *VĐULT*, and *STTL* have in common is the maintenance of a relationship between Dao Hanh and Minh Khong. (*TUTA* tells the story of each character, but the story *Minh Khong* does mention Dao Hanh; *LNCQ* organizes the story with each couple: Khong Lo–Giac Hai and Dao Hanh–Minh Khong). The difference between *VĐULT* and *STTL* is that *VĐULT* makes use of the *trio-character* (*bộ ba người*) style, forming relationships among Dao Hanh, Minh Khong, and Giac Hai. *STTL* uses the same style, but the characters are Dao Hanh, Minh Khang, and Khong Lo. We can draw a simple map (Figure 3).

It can be concluded that *TUTA* depicts Khong Lo and Giac Hai in two separate tales, but the plots indicate that they can be two characters in a single story.⁶ *LNCQ* portrays Duong Khong Lo and Nguyen Giac Hai simultaneously to create *Duong Khong Lo and Nguyen Giac Hai*. Nonetheless, the story of Khong Lo in *LNCQ* does not correspond with what is narrated in *STTL*. One notable difference that we can immediately recognize when comparing *VĐULT* and *STTL* is that the three friends in *STTL* do not include Giac Hai, the character portrayed in all three works *TUTA*, *VĐULT*, or *LNCQ* (in a separate tale–*TUTA*, or with another character–*LNCQ*, or with the other two characters–*VĐULT*).⁷

VĐULT (Appendix) narrates the story of curing the disease of the king, Than Tong, in which two monks, Minh Khong and Giac Hai, joined in the treatment. *TUTA*, *LNCQ*, and *STTL* narrate that there was only Minh Khong. *VĐULT (Appendix)* also indicates a sense of equilibrium in the narration of Minh Khong and Giac Hai.⁸ The narration shows

⁶ See the scene when the two compatriots are practicing Buddhism together in *TUTA*. The narration at the beginning of the “Monk Khong Lo” in *TUTA*: “He’s from Nghiem Quang, Hai Thanh. His family name is Duong. Generations of his family earn a living by fishing. He then quit the tradition and followed Buddhism, worshipping Da la ni mon. In the period of Chuong Thanh Gia Khanh (1059-1065) he and his like-minded friend, Giac Hai, went on their journey, temporarily settled in Ha Trach pagoda, wore clothes made from plants, ate leaves, and forgot who they were.” The narration at the beginning of the “Monk Khong Lo” in *TUTA*: “He’s from Hai Thanh. His family name is Nguyen. He used to go fishing for pleasure and used a small boat as a shelter, wandering along the rivers when he was small. At 25, he quit and shaved his head to become a monk. Initially, he and Khong Lo both worshipped Ha Trach. Then he followed the branch devised by Khong Lo.” [Tale 51 “Dao Hanh Monk” (-1117) in *Section II–Thien uyen tap anh–Ha Book* (Lê, 2006)].

⁷ In *STTL* Giac Hai was mentioned more than once. However, this story tells the title of Minh Khong after his enlightenment. Let us have a look at the narration in *STTL*: “After saying goodbye to his two friends, Nguyen Minh Khong came to Ninh Binh and became an abbot at a small pagoda under the title of Giac Hai.” “After saying goodbye to his two friends” does not correspond with the previous details. “After saying goodbye to his two friends” is usually understood as one person saying farewell to the other two (in this case, Dao Hanh and Khong Lo–LTT). The previous details indicate that Khong Lo and Minh Khong said goodbye to Dao Hanh to return to their hometown together (as they had been journeying to Tay Truc and met Dao Hanh along the way). Anyway, “saying goodbye to his two friends” is only a bridge to explain the reason why only Minh Khong visited the palace to cure the king’s disease and Khong Lo, after appearing very shortly in the return to hometown after the journey to Tay Truc, seemed to go somewhere else. Nguyen Dong Chi, as he admitted in the *Comparison* part of *Tu Dao Hanh or the Tale of Lang Lord* (more transparent in the *Comparison* part of *Giant Moulding a Bell or the Tale of Golden Buffalo in West Lake [Khổng Lộ đúc chuông hay là sự tích trâu vàng Hồ Tây]*) seemingly wanted to dedicate a separate story to Khong Lo in his renowned archive. That tale might be entitled *Giant Moulding a Bell or the Tale of Golden Buffalo in West Lake?* (Nguyễn, 2014, p. 503).

⁸ Scholar Le Manh That wrote: “*Tu Dao Hanh dai thanh su tích that luc* added to *Viet dien u linh tap* at pages 48-51 by ‘*Practitioners of Taoism*’ writes the story about Giac Hai as a subordinate to Tu Dao Hanh and Minh Khong” (see Annotation 6, Tale 31 – “Monk Giac Hai” in *Research into Thien uyen tap anh* [Tale 51 “Dao Hanh Monk” (-1117) in *Section II–Thien uyen tap anh–Ha Book* (Lê, 2006)]. The word “subordinate” might somehow cause a misunderstanding that in this narration of *Practitioners of Taoism*, Giac Hai is only considered to play a minor role. As we pointed out, in “Veritable Records,” Giac Hai and Minh Khong are depicted simultaneously as the two main characters. That is the reason why we depict the structure of the three characters as in Figure 1.

that Giac Hai plays the same role as Minh Khong in organizing and transporting delegates of the state—“Minh Khong, Giac Hai used a small pot to cook for delegates and soldiers, [...] The two monks did some magic tricks to speed up the boats without paddling” The first time Giac Hai was mentioned in this appendix is in the sentence “Dao Hanh [...] wishing to visit Tay Thien, India, to learn more magic tricks to battle against Dai Dien came with two of his friends, Minh Khong and Giac Hai.” The most significant difference between *VĐULT* (*Appendix*) and *LNCQ* in the narration of Dao Hanh, Minh Khong, and Giac Hai is that it intentionally emphasizes the role of the two supporting characters, Minh Khong and Giac Hai. This is proven by the fact that instead of narrating that Dao Hanh turned into a tiger to tease his friends and gave them his predictions in his next life, the story tells that Minh Khong and Giac Hai foretold to Dao Hanh that he would be a king in his next life and the two of them would find a cure for his disease because they were old friends.

Dao Hanh magically shortened the land distance, quickly headed forward, turned into a tiger, hid in the bushes in the village of Ngai Cau, Tu Liem Town, and let out several roars, which scared the locals. Minh Khong and Giac Hai were passing by, looking at each other with surprise. On the outside they seemed scared, but they thought to themselves that there was such magic and intelligence in the presence of the tiger, and they realized immediately that the tiger was Dao Hanh, who **pretentiously said: - *If you want to know about your afterlife, come here and I'll tell you***⁹. They told Dao Hanh: - We were also taught by Buddhalokanātha and enlightened. In the next life, you'll be a king and contract a seemingly incurable disease. It's a fate that we met, so we have to help each other. Dao Hanh left behind all his grudges, exchanged magic powers with each other. They range from walking on the surface of water, flying in the sky, shortening the land distance to changing into different forms of beings. Dragons have to land to greet him, tigers have to hide when he's around. His powers seem unimaginable. Therefore, Dao Hanh became the first student, Minh Khong the second, and Giac Hai the third. The school is now called Ban Kieu.¹⁰

On the contrary, *STTL* depicts Nguyen Minh Khong as a friend of Duong Khong Lo: “By then around the Northern sea, there were two soul mates: one was Nguyen Minh Khong and the other was Duong Khong Lo.” Minh Khong and Khong Lo were journeying to Tay Truc together when they met and made friends with Dao Hanh along the way:

One day, they came to an elevated mountainous area. The two chose an old shrine to escape the rain and met a young man lighting a fire to warm up inside. They struck up a conversation and came to know that the man was Tu Dao Hanh, who was finding somewhere to learn magic powers to retaliate for his father. After a

⁹ Highlighted by the narrator, see appendix—Elaboration on the Tale of Tu Dao Hanh (Lý, 1961, p. 103).

¹⁰ There are certain differences (see the phrases in bold font) between the translations by Le Huu Muc and Le Manh That. The translation entitled *Tu Dao Hanh dai thanh su tich that luc* by Le Manh That is mentioned in Annotation 23 of Tale 51 “Monk Dao Hanh” (-1117) in *Research into Thien uyen tap anh*, (Lê, 2006).

night, the three became friends. Tu Dao Hanh was the oldest, so he was considered the big brother. Duong Khong Long was the second brother and Nguyen Minh Khong the third. (Nguyễn, 2014, p. 825).

Certain differences between *VDULT* and *STTL* can be instantly recognized: *VDULT* (*Appendix*) narrates that Tu Dao Hanh is the big brother, Nguyen Minh Khong the second, and Nguyen Giac Hai the youngest. The three became brothers on their way home from Tay Truc. *STTL*, however, narrates that Dao Hanh is the big brother, Khong Lo the second, and Minh Khong the youngest. The three became brothers on their journey to Tay Truc. Considering the structure of each narration, we can see that the story of the trio in *VDULT* (*Appendix*) is quite consistent—especially for the two younger brothers, Minh Khong and Giac Hai. In *STTL*, Khong Lo appears as a supporting character besides Minh Khong. (The presence of Khong Lo does not in any way affect the progression of the story.) In fact, although introducing Minh Khong and Khong Lo as a couple of friends, *STTL* does not give as much attention to Khong Lo as he deserves.

4. CONCLUSION

As stated at the beginning, the annotations referring to each tale that author Nguyen Dong Chi has meticulously listed in *KTTCTVN* suggest an intertext reading approach for those documents. This approach does put each tale in an extensive cultural background, helping us to appreciate the efforts of the scholar. This article is limited in the sense that it only compares *STTL* with other related documents, such as *TUTA*, *LNCQ*, The aim to re-entitle the tale on an extensive cultural background can be partly accomplished, yet we believe that only by applying the intertext reading approach, people can somehow understand why, at the beginning of the *Comparison* part for the tale *STTL*, he wrote:

The tale has been polished by the pagoda to appreciate Buddhism. Some parts were also excluded, for example, scenes related to Tu Vinh, or scenes in which Tu Dao Hanh did some magic tricks to guarantee he can be reincarnated. On the other hand, the tale is somehow identical to the story “The Giant Monk (sư Khổng Lộ).” Based on the narration of the ordinary folks, we restored the removed parts, separated the tale from “Giant Moulding a Bell (Khổng Lộ đúc chuông)” (Tale 67), as we acknowledged its independent structure. Yet we did not distort the intended meaning of the tale (Nguyễn, 2014, p. 834).¹¹

¹¹ We know that there is a handwritten version of *TUTA* coded A.2767 (The French School of the Far East hired people to copy it). Scholar Le Manh That commented on this version: “This version has some inadequacies compared to the version during the Nguyen dynasty, which means it did remove the tale *Khong Lo* belonging to the branch of *Vo Ngon Thong*, which appeared in the versions during the time of Le I and Le II and replaced it with a new tale of *Khong Lo*. The new tale sometimes writes Khổng Lộ instead of Khong Lo (Khổng Lộ) in the detail that Khong Lo was moulding ‘Four Great Treasures of Annam’ (‘An Nam tứ đại khí’) [...] and in the end this version does not include the tale of *Minh Khong*.” Based on this remark, we can somehow be sure that the author of *Treasure Chest of Vietnamese Folklore* consulted this version to compile *Tu Dao Hanh* or *the Tale of Lang Lord*, and *Giant Moulding a Bell* or *the Tale of Golden Buffalo in West Lake*. Obviously, if the version (*TUTA* coded A.2767) “does not include the tale of *Minh Khong*” (Le Manh That) then we have to pose a question; Did Nguyen Dong Chi consult any official documents in his narration of Nguyen Minh Khong to end *Tu Dao Hanh* or *the Tale of Lang Lord*? The answer depends on whether scholars of Chinese Nom can

That separation might stand to reason. After the separation, he already states it clearly in the comparison part below: “The above story was agreed by many as the tale of Duong Khong Lo or Nguyen Minh Khong with more interdependent details (see the *Tale of Tu Dao Hanh*, Tale 120, Part III).” This helps us to understand why Khong Lo in Tale 120, *Tu Dao Hanh* or *the Tale of Lang Lord* only appears occasionally; the main story of this character seems to be (in an archive to be published, the tales are marked in order)¹² narrated in Tale 67, *Giant Moulding a Bell or the Tale of Golden Buffalo in West Lake*. Though it was said that “the tale has been polished by the pagoda to...”, the expression “the above story was agreed by many as the tale...” (close to the expression “according to the people”) might be taken in a negative manner (especially by researchers). Because how is “agreed by many” defined and how did the composer know “the tale has been polished by the pagoda”?¹³ This must be what Maurice Durand was wondering in commenting on the works of Nguyen Dong Chi when Part II of the archive was published.¹⁴ Below is the remark that is highly academic and hard to achieve:

When possible, Nguyen Dong Chi added some comments and different related versions of the tale. We believe that the comments are a little shallow. They should have included more comparisons or at least pointed out what can be compared and referred: Vietnamese folklore is diverse enough to allow so. On the other hand, if the archive of Nguyen Dong Chi aims to serve researchers, not the public, then it has some limitations: tales and myths are narrated according to different versions of the author and the author often combines them with each other. A better solution would be to present all of the versions, not to combine them (Durand, 1964, p. 243-244).

find any related documents. In case no source is validated, the narration will be attributed to Nguyen Dong Chi even if he states clearly “according to the people (in the traditional oral form) from....”

¹² Let us look back at the *Foreword in the archive KTTCTVN* of the author: “The second part, which constitutes a huge proportion of the archive, is a collection of Vietnamese folklore selected and arranged systematically.” This sentence reflects the manner of *collecting-and-making-of-books* of the author, Nguyen Dong Chi. A simple description of the archive’s structure related to our mentioned tales clearly shows the manner of the author and indicates his reading approach. (We do not discuss the positive/negative influences on the readership of the archive, yet, at least, this somehow serves as a specific “orientation”). Here is the simple description of the archive’s structure related to our mentioned tales: Tale 67 *Giant Moulding a Bell or the Tale of Golden Buffalo in West Lake* is put in Section IV. WISDOM AND HEALTH (THÔNG MINH TÀI TRÍ VÀ SỨC KHỎE). In this section we can see that there is a story that is entitled and depicts its characters in the same manner, and the main character is just like Tu Dao Hanh. (The tales all appear in *Selection of Strange Tales in Linh Nam* and *Viet dien u linh tap*. The character is also a lord worshipped in his hometown) – Tale 73 *Ly Ong Trong or the Tale of Chem Lord* (Lý Ông Trọng hay sự tích Thánh Chèm). Yet Tale 120 *Tu Dao Hanh or the Tale of Lang Lord* is put in Section VII. TALES OF FAIRIES, GHOSTS AND MAGIC (TRUYỆN THẦN TIÊN MA QUỶ VÀ PHỦ PHÉP) (KTTCTVN arranges 201 tales in order and puts them in 10 sections – from Section I. THE ORIGIN OF EVERYTHING (NGUỒN GỐC SỰ VẬT) to Section X. FUNNY TALES (TRUYỆN VUI TƯỜI DÍ DÒM). These ten sections form the basis for the second part of the archive – the above-mentioned PART II.)

¹³ The expression “*this tale...*” might imply that there exists a tale related to Tu Dao Hanh (in oral and written forms) that was polished, cut, and combined by the pagoda. A question can arise immediately: Where is the original version? Where is the polished version? Similarly, how can we “based on the narration of the ordinary folks to restore the removed and separated details... [...] And yet not distort the intended meaning of the tale?” Is the part dedicated to the father of Lang Lord, Tu Vinh, (constituting one quarter of the whole tale and depicting Tu Vinh as a “*lustful monster*” (“con dâm quỷ”) who makes use of his position and magic tricks to “*sneakily find girls*” (“lén lút đi tìm gái”) the removed part of this tale?

¹⁴ *Treasure Chest of Vietnamese Folklore*, PART I, II published in 1958. *Tu Dao Hanh or the Tale of Lang Lord* in PART III (“Tales of Fairies, Ghosts and Magic”) published in 1960.

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