

STATUS OF PHUC GIANG SCHOOL WOODBLOCKS – METHODS OF PRESERVATION AND SOLUTIONS

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Preface:

Phuc Giang School Woodblocks (MBTHPG), since the printing (in 1758), had been preserved at three rooms of Library temple (is the tabernacle for the Saint of Library- Nguyen Huy Oanh (1713-1789). The woodblocks have always been made clean before and after procedure of printing for books. Around 1950, due to damage of the Library temple, posterity of the Nguyen family took the woodblocks to store at attic of Nguyen Huy Tuu (1690-1750) Worship house. Then, Ha Tinh Province's Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism (SVHTTDL) had them placed in tin box and placed under the altar. In 2014, after digitalization (made by Ho Chi Minh Library) and printing, the woodblocks were moved to house of the family's representative. Currently, the woodblocks are put into cabinets for preservation here. This report is on physical status of the woodblocks, damage status quo, the manually cleaned blocks and several proposals of the Nguyen family as well as Ha Tinh museum.

I. Number of woodblocks

The known documents include:

1. *Tinh ly toan yeu dai toan*, containing 2 books *Thuong* and *Ha*, carved in 1758, compiled by Nguyen Huy Tuu since the years before 1718, adjusted and written by Nguyen Huy Oanh, *Ha* was faulfound by Nguyen Huy Tu (1743-1790), Tu together with Nguyen Huy Vuong- student of Nguyen Huy Oanh, managed the printing.

2. *Ngu kinh toan yeu dai toan* containing 9 books, carved in 1758,

- *Thi kinh toan yeu dai toan*, 2 books, compiled by Nguyen Huy Oanh and written by Nguyen Huy Cu (1717-1775).

- *Thu kinh toan yeu dai toan*, 2 books, compiled by Nguyen Huy Oanh, first of which was written by Nguyen Huy Oanh, second one by Nguyen Huy Quynh (1734-1785).

- *Le kinh toan yeu dai toan*, 2 books.

- *Dich kinh toan yeu dai toan*, 1 book, compiled by Nguyen Huy Oanh.

- *Xuan thu toan yeu dai toan*, 2 books, written by Nguyen Huy Quynh.

All of the said 9 books were managed in terms of printing by Nguyen Huy Tu and Nguyen Huy Vuong. Preface for *Ngu kinh toan yeu dai toan* was written by Phan Huy Can (1722-1789).

Among the mentioned 11 books, 2 books of *Tinh ly toan yeu dai toan* and 9 books of *Ngu kinh toan yeu dai toan* are made by Nguyen Huy Tuu and Nguyen Huy Oanh basing on 2 sets of *Tinh li dai toan* (性理大全) and *Ngu kinh dai toan* (五經大全).

3. *Thong tong chi yeu* was « copied from old books» by Nguyen Canh Huy.

4. *Tieu Tuong bach vinh*, is a set of poems that Nguyen Huy Oanh «express the grieving», written when he was on business trip in 1766.

5. *Hoang Hoa toan tap* was collected and arranged by Nguyen Huy Oanh from the set *Dai Thanh nhât thong chiof* « the predecessors», when he was on business trip in 1766.

6. *Quoc su toan yeu*, the printed version with mark A.1923, Library of Institute for Sino- Nom Research edited by Ngo Si Lien historicist and arranged by Nguyen Huy Oanh. The book was translated and published in 2004 by Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Center for the East and the West Culture, 330 pages.

7. *Tu thu toan yeu* was carved in 1773 when Nguyen Huy Oanh hold position of principal of Quoc Tu Giam. Also in accordance with Preface of this book, *Quoc su toan yeu* had been caused to be printed earlier.

8. *So hoc chi nam* (Library of Institute for Sino- Nom Research, mark A.1634) is the introduction lecture, instructing necessary regulation for students to learn at school, compiled by Nguyen Huy Oanh.

9. *Du The tap bien giai am* is the book that Nguyen Huy Oanh «collects apophthgans of talented and righteous men which can be treated as consecutive ideas of *Tu thu Ngu kinh* and explained to national language», the Preface was written in 1778.

9. *Bo Tung thui* is the book that Nguyen Huy Oanh referred from ancient sets of fortune telling like *Luc Nham*, *Thai At*, *Don giap*, *Thuat so*, and then he wrote the preface in 1788.

10. In the article of the book back in *Hoang Hoa su trinh do*, Nguyen Huy Trien (1852-1909), five-generation grandchild of Nguyen Huy Oanh said «*Su trinh tong ca* was carved to make heirloom », this is *Phung su Yen Kinh tong ca*, (Library of Institute for Sino- Nome Research, mark A. 373 and the same book in National library with mark R. 1375).

11. 10 volume of *Truong Luu Nguyen Thi*, quantity and year of printing is unknown.

12. *Thu vien quy l*, consisting of 7 sheets, 14 pages, compiled by Nguyen Huy Oanh in Beijing in 1766, the printing of which was managed by Nguyen Huy Vuong.

Number of books printed from Phuc Giang School Woodblock is predicted to be more. Only in field of literature, Nguyen Huy Truong Luu family has hundreds of books. Therefore, number of carving frame can reach *thousands*, only 383 versions of *Ngu kinh, tinh ly* and *Thu vien quy le* remain.

People and authority of Truong Loc Commune, Can Loc District, Ha Tinh province as well as Nguyen Huy Truong Luu (NHTL) family are proud of the frames for printing books of Phuc Giang School in Truong Luu village. Through over 257 years with incidents of history and natural disaster, system of the woodblocks from thousands of versions now reduced to very few with important information on education and culture.

II. Status of preservation of Phuc Giang School woodblocks during the past time.

In spite of being cared by professional management agencies like Ha Tinh Museum, Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Ha Tinh province and administrative agencies of the district or province, being managed and preserved by the family, passing over 250 years, many among the woodblocks become broken, bending and degrade. Truong Luu village lies in Central of Vietnam with severe climate, flood season lasts from October to April of following year, microorganisms and toxic fungi, temperature can increase to 38-39°C in summer can make the wood curve and bend. Truong Luu village is also the place suffering from loss due to the war (land of fighting during the time Tay Son came to the North in 1786, place of battlefields in time of Can Vuong hosted by Phan Dinh Phung in ending years of XIX century, Truong Luu was bombed 3 times in 1953 and more other times between 1968-1972). In addition, the Woodblocks are moved for many times over many places so some of them are damaged, 30 wood versions are now in heavy broken status.

Earlier, Phuc Giang School Woodblocks as folk telling had thousands of blocks and arranged fully in three rooms of Library Temple, place for worshipping Nguyen Huy Oanh as mentioned at the preface, then the Temple was broken, many blocks lost, in ending years of 1950, posterity and people of the village moved and put them on cupboard of Nguyen Huy Tuu Worship House. Later, there was a mad man came to stay in the worship house, he often ripped the blocks to make fire for warming, no one could force him to go away. Then, a member of the family (Nguyen Huy Tranh at Dai ton Worship house, who once performed Len dong) run to the house with petroleum in his mouth and sprayed fire, the mad man was so frightened and ran away. The Woodblocks since then were left in peace. Many delegations who came here for business trip took several blocks whenever they liked, Ha Tinh Museum did so for two

times. Some blocks were taken to make material for embanking ditch during process of irrigation maintenance. In 1991, when making document for ranking national- level historic and cultural spot for Nguyen Huy Tu famous person, 475 blocks were found to be left. All of them then were moved to tole boxes and placed in upper room of the worship house.

All original woodblocks have been digitalized and printed with copies, all of them are tranfered to agencies like: National Library, National Centre for Archive I, Institute for Sino- Nom Research, Ha Tinh Museum, Nghe An Library, Ho Chi Minh City Library and private library of Nguyen Huy family. Content of the documents are being translated briefly and constructed in traditional searching database system and net of information to serve readers.

Phuc Giang School Woodblocks are propagandized on many types of mass media like newspaper, TV, publication products ... especially introduced in four conferences on famous persons of Nguyen Huy family hold in 1993, 2007, 2013 and 2015.

Phuc Giang School Woodblock is also one of topics of 10 films on famuos persons of Nguyen Huy family broadcast in the series of Vietnamese famous persons on VTV1, VTV4 ... as well as in many documentary films of Ha Tinh TV Station.

Following is the pictures on preservation of the woodblocks and manual sanitation, including pictures of the uncleaned and cleaned woodblocks.





III. Plan for preservation and propagandization

As the matter of fact, due to limited budget, the Woodblocks were once placed naturally in Worship House, now they are arranged in the cabinets made of good wood to prevent termite- cated or bending. Currently, Ha Tinh Museum is together with the family to research and select methods and materials and draw up detailed plans for lengthening lifetime for the woodblocks and cooperate with agencies like Institute for Sino- Nom Research, Institute of Literature, National Library, Ha Tinh TV Station ... to organize exhibition for publication and introduction of the woodblocks in various forms like translation, book publication, exhibition or documentary film...

Regarding Truong Loc's people understanding, they hardly know about the woodblocks, they have only been told about this by few elders of the village and have some little primary knowledge on this kind of wood versions. Sometimes, authorities come to the village and took some version but the local did not know or they print without clear result. Since Department of Science and Technology, Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Ha Tinh province performed projects on themes of cultural heritages in Truong Luu village, several leaders of the commune have been invited so their understanding is more and more extended. Especially, upon result of translation digitalization, they know this is document for teaching at Phuc Giang School and famous poems of authors of family NHTL. At least five people participated in the compilation and writing letters for carving and printing, they are Nguyen Huy Tuu, Nguyen Huy Oanh, Nguyen Huy Cu, Nguyen Huy Quynh and Nguyen Huy Tu, all of them are national famous persons of Ha Tinh province. Among

them, Library Temple of Nguyen Huy Oanh does not exist now. Nguyen Huy Tuu, Nguyen Huy Cu, Nguyen Huy Quynh have their own worship house, Nguyen Huy Tu is worshipped in the same worship house as his grandfather Nguyen Huy Tuu.

Truong Loc Commune has proposed for many time and got support from upper authorities for maintenance of Nguyen Huy Tuu, Nguyen Huy Oanh's worship house, these are two authors of Phuc Giang School Woodblock.

Ky Phuc ceremony day on 13th June of lunar calendar each year is performed by authority and people of Truong Loc village in accordance with traditional procedure, the worship has always been performed for three angles and four human saints (three among them are authors of the Woodblock- Nguyen Huy Tuu, Nguyen Huy Oanh and Nguyen Cu) were honored magnates by Le Dynasty, honored angles by Nguyen Dynasty and currently honored "Cultural famous persons". In the ceremony, the Angles' contribution of the saints to the woodblock printing the woodblock is memorized.

IV. Problems need researching, discussing with respect to preservation and promotion of the woodblock value.

In Vietnam, beside Woodblocks of Nguyen Dynasty, there are many international and national-leveled heritages. Hence, it is necessary for the State, authorities, International Council on Archives and UNESCO organizations to give support through which value of the documents acknowledged as document heritage, among them is Phuc Giang School Woodblock, can be further preserved and promoted.

On the other hand, organization, agencies and families who are owners and managing the Woodblock heritages should combine with each other to maintain and improve their value because they are unique versions, cannot be recovered in case of damage or loss, these incidents if happen will definitely be a huge loss for the whole mankind as well as for Vietnamese people. Being aware of that fact, NHTL family always combines with Ha Tinh Museum to perform the said issues. We would like to show our desire for:

- Supported in researching, determining preservation environment suitable for climate conditions of particular region, ensuring specification to lengthen lifetime for this specially precious type of document. Relevant issues are: Relationship between temperature, moisture, function of each wood type, light and degradation of the documents;

- Being facilitated regarding the research on methods of recovery, forsake for damaged documents;

- Being equipped with appliances or shelves appropriate with size of documents;

- Being supplied with guidance on overall and long- term planning for promotion of the Woodblock value;
- Performing more translation and publication for content of the Woodblocks to meet demand of the society;
- Organizing exhibition, gallery for document of the Woodblock in various styles and with large scale to propagandize profoundly value of the document heritage to International and domestic public;
- Making further popularization and introduction for the Woodblock documents on mass media, especially on TV;
- Designing gifts or souvenirs from Woodblock documents;
- Developing quick and proper search tools, digitalize documents so that people can access to them without any limitation in terms of time and space;
- Combining with other places which are keeping woodblocks like National Center for Documents IV, Bac Giang Library to learn their experience in field of value preservation and promotion.

In Ha Tinh province and surrounding areas, right after the honor of Phuc Giang School Woodblocks into List of Document Heritage, authorities of all levels have combined with the family to organize celebration for reception of the certificate, which is now exhibited in Truong Loc Ward, Ha Tinh City, in Nguyen Du Memorial Area and Quoc Tu Giam Temple of Literature. Talks on the woodblocks have been held in Nghe An museum, Can Loc High School and Can Loc District.

Bands for propagadization hung on entrance way to Can Loc District People's Committee, Truong Loc Ward and Can Loc High School (which have been recently discharged due to flood No.10).

Control cameras have been installed at place of the woodblock preservation. Currently, due to insufficiency of people, devices and fee, the completed works compared to demand are insignificant.

Conclusion:

Urgent matter of the woodblocks now is sanitation work and preservation, which is not within experience and financial capacity of the family and Ha Tinh museum. InNHTL family, almost people aware of sanitation ways are passed away whereas no remaining ones are conscious of learning or keeping ways of cleaning the woodblocks. It is our desire to get support from experts who have experiences in this field, especially specialists or organizations from Korea and Japan.