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**Basic Thoughts of Vietnamese Classic Aesthetics
through *Vân đài loại ngữ* (雲台類語) by Lê Quý Đôn**

Abstract

The focus of this study is to clarify some features of traditional Vietnamese aesthetic thought expressed through Vân đài loại ngữ, the “encyclopedia” work of Lê Quý Đôn (1726 – 1784) – a famous Vietnamese philosopher, writer and scholar of the pre-modern era. Our previous researchers (Vietnam, China) were very interested Le Quy Don’s thought about poetics in Vân đài loại ngữ. Our new contribution is to use Lê Quý Đôn’s thought as a case study of Vietnamese classical aesthetics. By examining literature (Chapter 5, “Văn nghệ”), music and calligraphy (Chapter 6, “Âm tự”) in relation to Li and Qi philosophy (Chapter 1, “Lý khí”) in Vân đài loại ngữ, our research has clarified Lê Quý Đôn’s conception of literary and artistic beauty based on sincerity, natural simplicity, and Yin-Yang harmony. We explain Lê Quý Đôn’s core concepts by comparing them with corresponding concepts in Chinese aesthetics to highlight the unique characteristics of Vietnamese classical aesthetics, and provide additional historical context.

Keywords

Vietnamese classical aesthetics, comparative aesthetics, *Vân đài loại ngữ*, Lê Quý Đôn

1. Introduction

Vân đài loại ngữ (芸臺類語, *Categorized Sayings from the Vân Terrace / Classified Discourse from the Library*) is an “encyclopedia” work of Lê Quý Đôn (1726 – 1784), a famous Vietnamese philosopher, writer and scientist in the Middle Ages.

Previous researchers have been interested in *Vân đài loại ngữ*, mainly in literary theory. Vietnamese authors such as Trần Thanh Mại (1960), Cao Xuân Huy (1962), Nguyễn Lộc (1962), Nguyễn Lộc và Trần Nho Thìn (1979), Đỗ Văn Hỷ (1983), Phạm Quang Trung (1993, 1994), Phương Lựu (1985, 1997), Đinh Thị Minh Hằng (1983, 1992, 2005, 2013), Nguyễn Thanh Tùng (2006, 2008, 2010, 2015), and Nguyễn Đình Phúc (2015) clarified Lê Quý Đôn’s contribution to the heritage of Vietnamese literary theory. Chinese writers Wang Xiaoshun & He Tiannian (2002) emphasized the Chinese influence in Lê Quý Đôn’s literature. Taiwanese author Huang Jun Jie (2006) discussed the influence of Zhuxi (Neo-Confucianism) and Qing Confucianism in *Vân đài loại ngữ*. Other writers such as Lin Weijie (2012), and Xiao Lihua (2012) used hermeneutics to assert that Lê Quý Đôn’s thought about poetics were influenced by Confucius. Western researchers have almost not studied Lê Quý Đôn.

Our new contribution is to use Lê Quý Đôn’s thought as a case study of Vietnamese classical aesthetics through the investigation of literature (Chapter 5 “Văn nghệ” (*wényì* 文藝), Music and Calligraphy (Chapter 6 “Âm tự” (*yīn zì*

音字) in relation with Li and Qi Philosophy (Chapter 1 “Lý khí” (*Lìqì* 理氣) in *Vân đài loại ngữ*. We focus on two main research questions:

- (Q.1) What are the important principles highlighted by Lê Quý Đôn’s aesthetic concept?
- (Q.2) What are the main characteristics of Vietnamese classical aesthetics presented through Lê Quý Đôn’s aesthetic concepts?

Corresponding to these two questions, we have two research hypotheses:

- (H.1) The aesthetic concept of Lê Quý Đôn emphasized several important principles of the nature, function, and aesthetic value of literature and art.
- (H.2) Through Lê Quý Đôn’s aesthetic concept, we can summarize some of the characteristics of Vietnamese classical aesthetics. On the one hand, it shows the common typological characteristics of classical East Asian aesthetics (influenced by Confucianism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Daoism). On the other hand, it presents the unique characteristics of Vietnamese national identity (based on the traditional local foundation of Southeast Asia, integrating regional influence and reflecting the two major trends of Sinicization and de-Sinicization).

In order to fully conduct this topic, we use a systematic and interdisciplinary approach. Based on the investigation of the work *Vân đài loại ngữ* translated by Trần Văn Giáp, edited and introduced by Cao Xuân Huy,¹ we analyse the themes to highlight some of the most important principles in Lê Quý Đôn’s aesthetic concept. In this article, the core concepts of Lê Quý Đôn are discussed through comparison with equivalent concepts of Chinese and East Asian aesthetics. The context and process of Vietnamese history and culture are analyzed to explain the characteristics of Vietnamese classical aesthetics.

2. Vietnamese Classic Aesthetics from Hermeneutic Approach and in Cross-Cultural Comparison

Scruton and Munro once said:

“Aesthetics, also spelt esthetics, is the philosophical study of beauty and taste. It is closely related to the *philosophy of art*, which is concerned with the nature of art and the concepts in terms of which individual works of art are interpreted and evaluated [emphasis ours].” (Scruton & Munro 1998)

We apply this interpretation in this research. Regarding the term “Vietnamese classical aesthetics”, we would like to mention the traditional aesthetic ideas related to academic/elite literature and art (but not folk art and literature) in the pre-modern periods (from AD 10th century to the early 20th century).

Before the 10th century, about 1000 years, Vietnam was under the occupation and rule of the early imperial China. From the middle of the 10th century, Vietnam gained independence. Nearly ten centuries later, despite repeated aggressions, Vietnam has always resisted stubbornly, while flexibly maintaining asymmetric relations with China. Vietnam has always maintained its independence through different dynasties including Đinh (968 – 980), Tiền Lê (980 – 1009), Lý (1010 – 1225), Trần (1225 – 1440) và Hồ (1400 – 1407), Hậu Lê (1428 – 1788), Tây Sơn (1788 – 1802), and Nguyễn (1802 – 1945) with the exception of a short Ming Chinese occupation period (1414 – 1427).

In this context, the traditional culture of Vietnam is influenced by China and has joined the common characteristics of the East Asian civilization (for instance, the Chinese script; Confucianism, Mahayana Buddhism, Daoism). However, around the beginning of AD, besides the Chinese influence introduced along with the violence of war and rule, Vietnam also received Indian influence (Pali script, Theravada Buddhism) through peaceful exchanges. Furthermore, before being influenced by China and India, Vietnamese culture with a native background in Southeast Asia had its own traditions in its 2000-year history. When exposed to external influences, Vietnamese culture, in the words of Ruth Benedict, always chooses to absorb, integrate, reinterpret and reconstruct these elements to be compatible adapt to its own cultural configuration. Therefore, in addition to common regional characteristics, Vietnamese culture also has its own national characteristics.

Imperial China, the powerful neighbouring empire, historically sought to assimilate Vietnamese culture. For example, Ming Chengzu (reigned 1402 – 1424) issued several decrees requiring the generals who invaded Vietnam to arrest skilled craftsmen and take them to China, destroy the carved stone tablets and burn all bibliographies, books, papers written by the Vietnamese.² Therefore, through the ages, Vietnam has worked hard to learn from the great cultures of the region, while on the other hand, it has struggled with foreign forces that are trying to annex it. This dual reaction will lead to a long and profound process of Sinicisation and de-Sinicisation.

East Asian traditional arts are generally diverse, ranging from language arts (literature), visual arts (architecture, sculpture, painting) to performing arts (singing, dance, music) to the arts of life (handicrafts, martial arts, tea arts, etc.). In particular, poetry, calligraphy, and painting are very important to Sinology intellectuals. In Vietnam, the art of painting and calligraphy has hardly developed, and there is no such great poet, calligrapher, and painter as Wang Wei (王维, 701 – 761), Su Dongpo (蘇東坡, 1037 – 1101) in China; Matsuo Bashō (松尾芭蕉, 1644 – 1694), Yosa Buson (与謝蕪村, 1716 – 1784) in Japan, etc. As an artistic philosophy, Vietnamese classical aesthetics

1

This is a translation that is appreciated by many Vietnamese researchers for its good quality.

2

“At the beginning of the 15th century, when the Chinese expeditionary general Zhu Neng was about to lead his troops to invade Vietnam, the Ming government issued a secret order on August 21, 1406. It said: ‘When the army entered their country, apart from Buddhist and Daoist carving plates and printed books, all books and texts, including ordinary classics, must be burned, even if it is a piece of paper or a word. In their country, any historical monuments built by China should be protected. If it is a monument erected by the Annamese people (Vietnamese), it must be destroyed without leaving a single piece.’ A long time later, the Ming government realized that the above-mentioned order had not been strictly observed, and on May 16, 1407, it sent another order to its subordinates in Đông

Quan (Hanoi), which read as follows: ‘I have told you many times that all of Annamese’s books and literary works, including the usual children’s school books, such as Shàng dàrén, kǒng yǐjǐ (上大人, 孔乙己), and even a piece of paper, a word, and a monument, were erected by locals, all must be destroyed immediately, leaving no nothing behind. Now it is said that in the army, every time you get a book, not only do you not immediately order it to be burned, but you also choose to read it before you decide to burn it. Moreover, most soldiers are illiterate. In addition, most soldiers are illiterate. If everyone does this, the transfer from one person to another may cause losses. Now you must follow the spirit of the previous order and order the soldiers to burn these books immediately. Do not tolerate it.’” (Cited from *Yuè jiào shū* 越轎書, Vietnamese: *Việt kiều thư*, Vol. II. Written by Li Wenfang, Ming Dynasty.) The preface was written in 1540 (cited from Trần Nghĩa 2011).

basically revolves literature, especially poetry. Vietnam's earliest written literary works appeared at the beginning of the 10th century.³ The opinions of literati and artists discussing literature and art would appear later. The last Chinese-style imperial examination in 1919 marked the official end of the literature associated with Sinology in Vietnam.

In the nearly 1,000 years of the Middle Ages, Vietnam did not/no longer retain any in-depth, systematic, large-scale poetry and aesthetic classics textbooks like *Poetics* by Aristotle (384 – 322 BC) and *Wenxin diaolong* (文心雕龍, Vietnamese: *Văn tâm điêu long*) by Liu Xie (劉勰, 465 – 522). Up to now, Vietnam has compiled four collections of medieval literature and art thoughts, including *Từ trong di sản: Những ý kiến về văn học từ thế kỷ X đến thế kỷ XX ở nước ta* (*Found in Heritage: Views on Vietnamese Literature from the 10th to the 20th Century*) compiled and edited by Nguyễn Minh Tấn and colleagues (1981), *Người xưa bàn về văn chương* (*The Ancients Talk about Literature*) by Đỗ Văn Hỷ (1993), *10 thế kỷ bàn luận về vấn đề văn chương* (*10 Centuries of Literary Discussion*) by Phan Trọng Thường and his colleagues, and *Tuyển tập thi luận Việt Nam thời trung đại (thế kỷ X – XIX)* (*An Anthology of Medieval Vietnamese Essays on Poetics (10th – 19th Century)*) by Nguyễn Thanh Tùng (2015). Examining these four anthologies, we can see that most of the classical Vietnamese aesthetic thoughts are concentrated in the preface, postscript, introduction, inscription, remark of each work, in administrative documents such as letters, edicts, decrees, etc., and in notes, papers, or in poems, songs, odes, and comments. The influence of Chinese aesthetics, especially Neo-Confucian aesthetic influence, played a prominent role. There are many comments quoted from Chinese literature and poems, but at the same time, Vietnamese writers also gave their own explanations, comments, and ideas.

In this work, we use the method of hermeneutics to explain the basic elements of Vietnamese classical aesthetics through the case study of *Vân đài loại ngữ* by Lê Quý Đôn. At the same time, we interpret the basic content of Vietnamese classical aesthetics in the context and process of historical changes in national literature and regional literature as well as learn the interpretation process of Vietnamese classical aesthetics.

3. *Vân Đài Loại Ngữ* by Lê Quý Đôn in Vietnamese Classic Aesthetics

Lê Quý Đôn was born in Diên Hà district, Thái Bình province. He adopted the pen name of Doãn Hậu and the literary title of Quế Đường. He came from a scholarly family and has deep attainments in Sinology. He was born and raised in the late Lê Dynasty (1428 – 1788), when Buddhism and Daoism were ostracized, creating a unique Confucian-dominated situation in Vietnamese ideological history.

At the age of 27, Lê Quý Đôn obtained his doctorate and was recruited into the Academy to take the position of the Compiler and Editor in the National History Institute. He also held the positions of the Academy Lecturer, Scholar of the Secret Letters Pavilion, and Hải Dương Provincial Political Counselor. He was appointed as an envoy to China twice in 1760 and 1762. During his mission to China, he had contact with many famous Confucian scholars of the Qing Dynasty (Liang Shizheng, Gui Youguang, etc.) and Korean emissaries (Hong Kyehee 洪啟禧, Cho Yongjin 趙榮進, Yi Hwijung 李徽中).

Lê Quý Đôn is a Vietnamese Confucian master, one of the most prolific Confucian scholars in the pre-modern periods. His major historical works include *Đại Việt thông sử*, *Phủ biên tạp lục*, *Bắc sử thông lục*, *Kiến văn tiểu lục*, literature works include *Quế Đường thi tập*, *Quế Đường văn tập*, Confucian classics (commentary book) include *Thư kinh diễn nghĩa*, philosophy books include *Quần thư khảo biện*, *Thánh mô hiền phạm lục*, and miscellaneous books include *Vân đài loại ngữ*, and *Kiến tiểu lục*. Lê Quý Đôn is also well-known among pre-modern regional Confucianists and contemporary researchers, being named as “Encyclopedia Scholar”, “Great Learning Scholar” (see Văn Tân 2012:306). For many generations, there is a saying “Thiên hạ vô tri vẫn bằg Đôn.” (“If you don’t know, just ask Đôn.”).

*Vân đài loại ngữ*³ (1733) belongs to the type of encyclopedia, collecting knowledge under 9 headings of philosophy, literature, science, and others, including (1) “Lý Khí” (理氣, “Cosmology”), (2) “Hình tượng” (形象, “Form”), (3) “Khu vữ” (區宇, “Geography”), (4) “Vựng điển” (匯典, “Classic Rule, Regime”), (5) “Văn nghệ” (文藝, “Literature and Arts”), (6) “Âm tự” (音字, “Language, Scripture”), (7) “Thư tịch” (書籍, “Books”), (8) “Sĩ quy” (士規, “Law of Officialdom”, “Law of Governing the People”), (9) “Phẩm vật” (品物, “Natural Objects, Social Phenomena”).

Lê Quý Đôn’s aesthetic point of view is expressed in two of the nine headings of *Vân đài loại ngữ*, which are Chapter 5 “Văn nghệ” (48 entries, discussing literature) and Chapter 6 “Âm tự” (discussing Music from entry 7 to 10 and Calligraphy from entry 96 to entry 108).

In addition to *Vân đài loại ngữ*, in *Quần thư khảo biện*, *Thư kinh diễn nghĩa* and some prefaces, Lê Quý Đôn sometimes also mentions literature, but it is just a short and scattered opinion, which can be said to be insignificant compared to *Vân đài loại ngữ*.

By investigating Chapter 5 “Văn nghệ” (literature and arts) and Chapter 6 “Âm tự” (texts related to music and calligraphy), we found that Lê Quý Đôn did not fully copy the original views of the ancients. Instead, he sorted out these views according to his own concepts, further explained and commented, also made criticisms, and stated his personal views. Lê Quý Đôn once emphasized:

“... we should extract and modify/refine the words and thoughts of the ancients instead of copying the original works” (*Vân đài loại ngữ*, p. 238).

This is really an expression of interpretation in hermeneutics.

Lê Quý Đôn quoted and commented on a wide range of ancient views, including the judgments of philosophers, writers, and poets, stories in history books, legends, etc. Although Later Lê is a Confucian monopoly dynasty, Lê Quý Đôn himself is also a great Confucian, but we can see that his famous quotations are not limited to Confucius and Zhuxi (Confucianism), but also extend to Guan Zhong, Han Feizi (Legalism), Laozi, Zhuangzi (Daoism), Buddhist scriptures, words of famous monks (Buddhism), etc. He even quoted and commented on Western philosophical and scientific works.

3

The earliest work in Vietnamese written literature is the poem *Quốc tộ* (in Chinese scripture) by the monk Đỗ Pháp Thuận (915 – 990) (Bùi Duy Tân, 1999:7–12).

4

The term “Vân đài” 雲臺 (*Yun Terrace*) in the book title (*Vân Đài Loại Ngữ*) is used to refer to a book room (see Lâm Nguyệt Huệ 2013).

Lê Quý Đôn's national independence spirit is very clear. During a envoy trip in 1762, he firmly opposed the way that Chinese officials referred to Vietnamese⁵ envoys as “di mục” (*yímù* 夷牧, “barbaric nomads”); therefore, the governor of Guangxi had to change its name to “Annamese Tributary Emissary” (安南貢使). Lê Quý Đôn also suggested that from that time on, the word *di* (夷) should no longer be used in Chinese official documents sent to Vietnam, and this proposal was approved.

Also during his envoy trip in 1762, Lê Quý Đôn read “An Nam Chronicles” (安南志紀要) by Gao Xiongzhen (高熊徵, 1636 – 1706) of the Ming Dynasty. He noticed the sentence:

“The Annamese only learned classic works since they were taught by Xie Jin [解縉, 1369 – 1415].”

Xie Jin is a mandarin officer appointed (by the Ming Chengzu Emperor) to work in Vietnam as a consultant for a year, not a Confucian with merit. Lê Quý Đôn bluntly commented on Gao Xiongzhen's book that “it's really rude to write like that”, and he continued:

“I corrected this mistake. I gave them the book *Trích điểm thi tập* to Zhu Peilian, Admiral of Guangxi, to let them know that Annamese people has had a large amount of literary works since the Trần Dynasty, not only from the later period when Xie Jin worked in An Nam.” (*Lê Quý Đôn toàn tập*, volume II: *Kiến văn tiểu lục*, pp. 170–171)

Lê Quý Đôn's national stance is thoroughly grasped in *Vân đài loại ngữ*. He quoted and commented on Chinese classics and literature, as well as Vietnamese proverbs and idioms. He cited Chinese sources and compared them with “external” sources as well as compared “Chinese language” and “national language”. A scholar like Lê Quý Đôn with both literary creation talent and erudition is rare in the history of Vietnamese literature. This makes Lê Quý Đôn's aesthetic conclusions not only universal, systematic, and normative as an outsider, but also profound, subtle, and empathetic as an insider. From the perspective of aesthetics alone, it can be said that Lê Quý Đôn's *Vân đài loại ngữ* is a particularly rare work and a treasure in the heritage of classical Vietnamese aesthetics.

4. Some Basic Aesthetic Thoughts of Lê Quý Đôn in *Vân Đài Loại Ngữ*

In Chapter 5 “Văn nghệ”, there are 48 entries discussing generalized literature based on medieval concepts, not only literature and art (i.e., *thơ* (*shī* 詩, *poetry*), *phú* (*fū* 賦, *narrative essays*, etc.) but also practical literature (i.e., *huấn* (*xùn* 訓, *instruction*), *cáo* (*gào* 誥, *announcement*, etc.), classics and historical stories (*wénshǐ zhé bù fēn* 文史哲不分, literature – philosophy – history indistinguishable). In Chapter 6 “Âm tự”, there are 4 entries discussing music and 23 entries majoring in calligraphy.

In those chapters, three aesthetic principles are emphasized by Lê Quý Đôn, according to the level of appearance from more to less, including: (1) Sincere affection, (2) Natural simplicity, (3) Yin-Yang harmony. The principle of “Profound implications” is mentioned much less than the three principles mentioned above.

No.	Topics	Article
<i>Chapter 5 “Văn nghệ”: 48 articles</i>		
1	Love, heart-mind, sincere affection	2, 13, 25, 26, 42, 48
2	Natural simplicity	1, 13, 14, 21, 22, 25, 29, 30, 46
3	Profound implications	8, 46, 48
4	Yin-Yang harmony	Directory guide, 2, 26
5	Other topics: the purpose and function of literature, literature and history, literary history, historical transcription, prose, poetry, literary selection, literary creation, writer training, reading (past and present), learning style (past and present), complete scholar, criticism of other people’s work etc.	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 44, 45, 46, 47
<i>Chapter 6 “Âm tự” – opinions about sound and music (from Entry 3 to Entry 10)</i>		
1	Yin-Yang harmony	Directory guide, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10
2	Sincere affection	Directory guide, 7
3	Simplicity	Directory guide
4	Other topics: classical music and daily-life music, singing and music, orchestra and musical instruments, musical technology	9, 10
<i>Chapter 6 “Âm tự” – opinion about calligraphy (from Entry 96 to Entry 108)</i>		
1	Heart-mind	99, 105, 108
1	Yin-Yang harmony	104, 105
2	Simplicity	Directory guide
3	Other topics: Chinese calligraphy history, calligraphy techniques, etc.	96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107,

Table 1: Analyzing topics related to literature and arts, music and calligraphy in *Văn đài loại ngữ*

5

Annam (*An Nam*, 安南). This is the name used by the middle and late imperial dynasties of China to refer to ancient Vietnam, which began in 679 during the reign of Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty. In the second millennium of about one thousand years of independence, although most of the monarchical dynasties of Vietnam chose *Đại Việt* as the country’s name, the term *An Nam* was still

the official name for the interaction between the Vietnamese court and the Chinese court. It was not until the Nguyễn Dynasty (1802 – 1945) that King Minh Mạng (reigned 1820 – 1841) issued an official edict, adopting the name *Đại Nam*. However, the name *An Nam* continued to be used until 1945, before the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (2 September 1945).

Continuing to investigate the chapter 1 “*Li khí (Li Qi 理氣)*”, we find that from a cosmological point of view, Lê Quý Đôn was also very interested in Yin-Yang harmony, heart-mind, and simplicity. In other words, his philosophical thoughts are closely related to his aesthetic thoughts. Lê Quý Đôn wrote in the Directory guide for Chapter 5 “*Văn nghệ*” as follows:

“Harmony is within, the scholarly essence is on the outside, setting the longitude and latitude of the world, that is, multi-literature. Both composing the letters, orders, edicts, and announcements related to the Way of governing the people and classic erudition, literary creation are all closely related to literature.” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 49)

In his view, literature and art are created by man. Just like the mountains and plants in the universe, they are all forms and the expression of Li (理) and Qi (氣), and all conform to profound aesthetic and philosophical principles.

No.	Topic	Entries
<i>Chapter (1) “Lý khí”: 54 articles</i>		
1	Li - Qi related to Yin and Yang	1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 31, 32, 36, 48, 49, 50
2	Li - Qi related to heart-mind	1, 20, 30, 32, 36, 50
3	Li - Qi related to Simplicity	19

Table 2: Analyzing topics related to Yin-Yang, heart-mind, simplicity in Chapter 1 “*Lý khí*” (“*Cosmology*”) in *Văn đài loại ngữ*

Below, we will analyse the three basic aesthetic principles of Lê Quý Đôn.

4.1. *Sincere Affection*

Among the 48 articles in the art section, Lê Quý Đôn expressed his opinion most directly in article 48, the last one. Lê Quý Đôn remarked that the rules and techniques of poetry are very rich and of course very important, but to realize the profound value of poetry art, the most important thing is to find it in its core essence.

“*Poetry is from the heart.* Three hundred poems in *Book of Songs* (詩經 *Shījīng*, Vietnamese: Kinh Thi) were mostly composed by peasant women, and some poems that later literati could not keep up. That is why it shows *sincere affection* [emphasis ours].

The poetry of Yuefu [樂府, Vietnamese: *Nhạc phủ*] in Han Dynasty and Wei Dynasty is still full of ancient rhyme [...]. From then on, it was bound by law and limited in sound. Talented people worry that the poetry style is not smooth while incompetent people suffer about sentence rules. [Consequently,] their poems lack sincere affection!”

Poetry is appreciated in sincerity, not in technique. Lê Quý Đôn emphasised this by comparing the innocent lyrics of peasants and uneducated women in *Book of Songs* with literary works of writers and intellectuals. He compared the free verses of Yuefu in the Han Dynasty with the strict rules of poetry in later generations. In just four next sentences, he emphasized twice that “poetry originates from the heart” and twice appreciated the *sincere affection* of poetry. He asserted his truth as follows:

“Therefore, we often think that poetry has three main points, one is love, the other is the scenery, and the third is things/events. The Heavenly flute sounds in our hearts, touching emotions, and our eyes observe the outside world, generating thoughts, and touching our hearts. The author takes notes to narrate the scene and refine its spirit. Although the author has more than one interest, there are roughly only these three principles.

Love is human, the scene is heaven, things are in harmony with heaven and earth. The author takes love to refer to the scene and takes the scene to describe things/events. When encountering things/events, the author speaks out, scenes that come without an arrangement. The writer does not try to be fancy but his words are naturally beautiful. In this way, one can train to the level of elegant poetry.” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 252)

The real beauty of poetry, especially the beauty of “elegant poetry”, according to Lê Quý Đôn, lies not in technique but in content. In the three key factors of poetic content, compared with the other two factors – the expression of Scenes (*jǐng* 景, Vietnamese: *cảnh*) and Things/Events (*shì* 事, Vietnamese: *sự*), it is the expression of Love / Affection (*qíng* 情, Vietnamese: *tình*) that is the first and last element. Because it derives from the deep voice of the heart-mind, touching the “love engine”, the artist “takes love to refer to the scene and takes the scene to describe things/events”, expressing it in poetry.

Lê Quý Đôn believes that the origin of music and calligraphy is in people’s heart-mind, too. He wrote:

“Calm music born from the heart of people with peaceful soul. Harsh music born from the hearts of many competitive people.” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 255)

“The spirit of calligraphy is in the hearts of the people (renxin 人心), and the form of calligraphy is in the books.” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 281)

“Love/Affection” (*qíng* 情, Vietnamese: *tình*) and “Heart-mind” (*xin* 心, Vietnamese: *tâm*) in Lê Quý Đôn’s thought are the source and basis of literature and arts. They are not limited to emotions, feelings, and souls, but in the broader sense, the inner, the spiritual world, and the “scholarly essence” (*yīnghuá* 英華, Vietnamese: *anh hoa*) which include *virtue* (*dé* 德, Vietnamese: *đức*) and *morality* (*xíng* 行, Vietnamese: *hạnh*) of the artists.

Essentially, “Heart-mind” is associated with “Qi”. In Chapter 1 “Lý khí” (Li – Qi), Lê Quý Đôn analyzed:

“Li stays in Qi and *Shu* [數, Vietnamese: *số*] derives from *Li*. *Li*, *Shu* are born from Heart-mind, and they have the power to influence everything. That is because of the push and stimulation of Qi.” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 66)

The soul of art, the spirit of the art movement, is in the spiritual world of the artist, not the technique. The same is true for calligraphy. Lê Quý Đôn emphasized that the calligrapher must:

“First of all, one has to locate the order, *confirm his mentality*, and fix well his wrists and fingers. When all this is mastered, he will *cultivate his affection*.” (*Văn đài loại ngữ*, p. 280, emphasis ours)

In the book *Văn học Việt Nam thế kỉ X đến hết thế kỉ XIX (Vietnamese Literature from the 10th Century to the End of the Nineteenth Century)*, Trần Nho Thìn wrote:

“The fact that Lê Quý Đôn discussed the relationship between Love/Affection – Scenery – Things/Events, and noticed that poets should use love to deal with scenes really reflects the change from ‘*Shī yán zhì*’ [詩言志, Vietnamese: *thi ngôn chí*, Poetry conveying willpower] to ‘*Shī yuán qíng*’ [詩緣情, *thi duyên tình*, Poetry springs from emotions / Poems originate from the poet’s heart-felt feelings] of the 18th century poetics.” (Trần Nho Thìn 2012:242).

Shī yán zhì and *Shī yuán qíng* are two propositions and two schools in the Chinese aesthetic tradition, which have a profound influence in East Asian countries. The *Shī yán zhì* perspective has been shaped since the pre-Qin periods (before 221 BC), emphasizing the literary and artistic expression of people's will, ambition, moral sentiment and social responsibility in accordance with Confucian political and moral concepts and covering rational, public-oriented character. The *Shī yuán qíng* initiated by the writer of the Western Jin Dynasty, Lu Ji (261 – 303), emphasizing the literary expression of natural emotions and human inner emotions. This “emotion-oriented” view continues to develop, especially the important contribution of Qing Dynasty idealism advocated by Yuan Mei (袁枚, 1716 – 1797), emphasizing the three factors Sincere Affection, Personality, and Poetic talent of the poet. Among the above two poetic schools, the *Shī yán zhì* school has always been more orthodox, mainstream, and dominant throughout the Chinese classical period.

Some researchers in China, Taiwan, and Vietnam think that Lê Quý Đôn's view of truth appreciation is influenced by the theory of natural disposition and intelligence. We find similarities between the points raised by Lê Quý Đôn and Yuan Mei. Yuan Mei wrote:

“Poems are born of love. [...] Having hundreds of thousands of poems with false feelings by Lian, Luo, Guan, Min [濂洛關閩]⁶ is not as good as one or two poems, but the true feelings of Bai Fu [白副] and Pan Chuan [樊川] [*Dá jí yuán lùn shīshū* 答戴園論詩書].”

“Personality is the source of [poetry], beautiful words constitute lines of [poetry].” (*Đào Di Văn thi tự*)

Having served as an envoy in China twice, Lê Quý Đôn had the opportunity to interact with Chinese scholars, possibly read books, and absorbed the influence of the Qing Dynasty literary movement. However, in the 48 entries in Chapter 5 “Văn nghệ” in *Văn đài loại ngữ*, Lê Quý Đôn never cited Yuan Mei or other Qing dynasty theorists of “xìng líng” (性靈, Vietnamese: *tính linh*, natural disposition and intelligence).

The main reason for the formation of Lê Quý Đôn's opinion of Sincere affection probably needs to be found in the historical-cultural context of Vietnam in the second half of the 18th century. It was a period of extreme decline for the Vietnamese monarchy. The power struggle between the lords Trịnh and Nguyễn plunged the people into a miserable situation and led to a peasant uprising in the late Lê dynasty. Discipline was broken, society no longer had morals and ethics. All this has led to the flourishing of humanitarian movement literature, sharing suffering, and sympathizing with people's desire for love and happiness. Vietnamese people had adhered to social moral duty for several generations, and until this period, a fundamental collapse occurred, leading to the awakening of individual feelings. This gave birth to many famous lament songs in Vietnamese literature, which honestly and profoundly expressed loneliness and the desire for love, for example, *Chinh phụ ngâm khúc* (徵婦吟曲, *Lament of the soldier's wife*) by Đặng Trần Côn (1705 – 1745), *Cung oán ngâm khúc* (宮怨吟曲, *Complaint of a Palace Maid*) by Nguyễn Gia Thiều (1741 – 1798), etc. The transition from the “*Shī yán zhì*” to the “*Shī yuán qíng*” that Lê Quý Đôn initiated is no exception.

In Vietnam, before Lê Quý Đôn, writers mostly followed the traditions of “writings are for conveying truth/moral lesson” (*Wén yì zài dào* 文以載道, Vietnamese: *văn dĩ tải đạo*) and “Poetry that expresses human ideas and interests” (文以言志, Vietnamese: *văn dĩ ngôn chí*). There are many typical authors, such as Phan Phu Tiên (15th century), Nguyễn Bình Khiêm (1491

– 1585), Phùng Khắc Khoan (1528 – 1613), etc. Lê Quý Đôn started the real flow of Poetry generating emotion with ideals: poetry is loved for its sincerity in heart-mind.

This new flow (*Shī yuán qíng*) does not completely replace the old one (*Shī yán zhì*). At the same time as Lê Quý Đôn and for a long time after him, Nguyễn Nghiễm (1708 – 1776), Ngô Thì Sĩ (1726 – 1780), Ngô Thì Nhậm (1746 – 1803), Phan Huy Ích (1751 – 1822), Phạm Đình Hồ (1768 – 1839) and many others still continued the tradition of “writings are for conveying truth/moral lesson”, “Poetry that expresses human ideas and wills”.

However, there are many writers among the literati who shared the new trend with Lê Quý Đôn. For example, Phạm Nguyễn Du (1739 – 1786), in the “Foreword” of *Phụng thị cung kị thi tập* also discussed Emotion – Scenery – Things/Events and the sincerity:

“Every period has its events, every event has its scenery. In other words, poets can gather all their inspirations into events, and when they encounter scenery, they can immediately come up with ideas. At that time, the verse is made with the inspiration of the poet, and the poem is composed after his will. Poetry exudes the restful emotion of leisure time, expressing the poet’s special sincerity.” (Nguyễn Thanh Tùng compiled 2015, p. 62)

Similarly, Cao Bá Quát (1809 – 1855), in *Bài tựa đề cuối tập thơ Thương Sơn công*, frankly criticized the “old-fashioned” poetic style which was false in emotion as well as the calligraphy that lacked spiritual character, only following the old rules of writing and drawing:

“When it comes to poetry, although we still maintain the stylistic rules, writing poetry must be rooted in human emotion. If everything is imitated, every word is plagiarized, such as singing the song ‘Yangguan wine cup’ [Yáng Guān jiǔbēi 陽關酒杯]⁷ when saying goodbye to a friend at the top of the village, reciting the sentence ‘the thatched house’s rooster crow’⁸ when paying a short visit to a neighbour, modifying the poem’s lyrics, showing off the wonderfulness of Jiazhou,⁹ refining royal poetic form, boasting of the voice following Shao Bo,¹⁰ then even if you use thousands of songs to express pain, or squeeze hundreds of verses from your withered belly, it has nothing to do with the Xing ling (natural disposition and intelligence). For example, in writing calligraphy, if you stick to the rules without changing and try to reach the beauty of Lan Ting’s¹¹ writing, no one will accept it. Su Dongpo¹² said when talking about the calligraphy: ‘It doesn’t matter if one doesn’t learn (calligraphy rules).’ Anyone who understands what he means can talk about writing poetry.” (Nguyễn Thanh Tùng compiled 2015, p. 176)

6

Lian Luo Guan Min (濂洛關閩) refers to five Song Confucian scholars, including (1) Lian (濂): Zhou Dunyi (周敦頤, 1017 – 1073), (2) Luo (洛): Cheng Yi (程頤 1033 – 1107) and Cheng Hao (程顥 1032 – 1085), (3) Guan (關): Zhang Zai 張載 (1020 – 1077), and (4) Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130 – 1200).

7

“Yangguan wine cup” (*Yáng guān jiǔbēi* 陽關酒杯) derives from Wang Wei’s poem: “(勸君更盡一杯酒, 西出陽關無故人)” (“Please drink a toast one more time, for there would be no friend after you go westward through the Yang Guan Gate.”) – Yangguan is a gateway in western China, leading to Xinjiang. The term *Yangguan* is used to refer to great separation.

8

The term “the thatched house’s rooster crow” is taken from Wen Tingjun (溫庭筠)’s poem: “The rooster crows in the moonlight of the thatched house; a man leaves his footprints in the mist on the wooden bridge” (*Jī shēng máo diàn yuè, rén jì bǎnqiáo shuāng* 雞聲茅店月, 人跡板橋霜).

9

Jia Zhou (嘉州) is the pen name of Cen Can (岑參, 715 – 770), a poet of the Tang Dynasty, who is famous for the frontier fortress poetry (*biānsài shī* 邊塞詩).

10

Shao Bo (少伯), the pen name of Wang Changling (王昌齡, ? – 756), Tang Dynasty poet, famous for the royal style poetry (*gōngtǐ shī* 宮體詩).

In addition, we can see such as trend in other well-known writers such as Bùi Huy Bích (1744 – 1818), Bùi Dương Lịch (1757 – 1828), Nguyễn Địch Cát (1760/1762 – ?), Phạm Quý Thích (1760 – 1825), Trịnh Hoài Đức (1765 – 1825), Phạm Đình Hồ (1768 – 1839), Nguyễn Án (1770 – 1815), Nguyễn Hành (1771 – 1824), Ngô Thi Vị (1774 – 1821), Phan Huy Chú (1782 – 1840), etc.

If the *Shī yán zhì* school has always been the mainstream in Chinese literature, the *Shī yuán qíng* has become the dominant school in Vietnamese literature since Lê Quý Đôn. The principle of Sincere affection represented the core point of Lê Quý Đôn’s aesthetic thought.

4.2. Natural Simplicity

Very close to the principle of Sincere affection is the principle of Natural Simplicity. At the beginning of Chapter 5 “Văn nghệ”, right in the Entry 1, Lê Quý Đôn repeatedly quoted Confucius (551 – 479 BC), Zhu Xi (1130 – 1200), and Shen Yue (441 – 513, Southern dynastic politician, historian, and writer), all of whom emphasized Simplicity (*jiǎnyì* 簡易, Vietnamese: *giản dị*) as the quality of literature.

Comparing the works of famous historians in the Han and Song Dynasties, Lê Quý Đôn asserted that the value of art itself is very different from the art of artificial refining technique.

“Si Maqian (司馬遷) and Ban Gu (班固) only took notes based on facts, did not intentionally create literature, so they created very good works. In the early Song Dynasty, literati used history as literature, and the writing was not good.” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 243)

Lê Quý Đôn also discovered the beauty of music and calligraphy in simplicity but not in complicated rules.

“Music does not need to imitate old laws and regulations; writing does not need to return to its customary style. Knowledgeable people like to use peaceful and simple things.” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 49)

Simplicity in the origin of music (“the lyrics are in one’s mouth” – *Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 260), and the simplicity in the movement of calligraphy (the brushstrokes that achieve “real”, “contemplative”, and “liberal” nature – *Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 276, 278, 279), express the deep and natural beauty of people’s “spirit”, “character” and “heart-mind” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 277, 280, 281).

In Chapter 1 “Lý khí”, Lê Quý Đôn once affirmed that the root of the universe, the root of all things in life, and all the creative careers of human beings are nothing more than simplicity:

“The roar of thunder, the penetration of wind and rain, the rotation of the sun and the moon, and the cycle of cold and heat nurturing creatures, all have their reason. In the end, it’s just *simplicity*. The temperament of heaven and earth, the career of a saint, is nothing more than simplicity. In two chapters Shangzhuan and Xiazhuan [*Yijing* 易經, Vietnamese: *Kinh Dịch*, *Book of Changes*], Confucius paid attention to this matter two or three times. So, we Confucianists pursue learning and apply it to politics, *why should we make it more complicated and troublesome?* (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 59, emphasis ours)

Here, we recall Lê Quý Đôn’s cognition of mountains, rivers, natural plants in the universe as Great Literature, along with man-made literature and art developing an endless variety of beauties. Poetry speaks the human heart, simply and naturally like Heaven’s flute.

Yuan Mei also said that poetry should be “naturally formed” like “the sound of the Heavenly flute”. However, the image of the Heavenly flute of Yuan Mei is mainly a communion with external objects that suddenly came to the poet. The three elements that Yuan Mei and *Xingling* (性靈, Vietnamese: *tính linh*) scholars emphasize are Sincerity – Personality – Talent, excluding the emphasis on Simplicity. With Lê Quý Đôn, in the image of the Heavenly flute, the beauty of Sincerity is associated with the beauty of Natural simplicity (*ziran* 自然, Vietnamese: *tự nhiên*).

In Vietnam, Lê Quý Đôn is the person who discussed the beauty of natural simplicity in literature and art most thoroughly and deeply. Before the 18th century, it can be seen in the preface that poetry critics often praised writers for their talent of “sharpening words and refining ideas”, “skilful words”, “wonderful words”, “elegant words”, “glorious and beautiful words and sentences”, words that could “weave brocade and embroider flowers”, “ingenious and neat” and “tight and comprehensive” poetic structure, etc.

In the work *Tựa Mĩ Đình thi tập*, Vietnamese writer Ngô Thì Sĩ (1726 – 1780) emphasized that he had learned to write poems since he was a child, until he “took poems to serve the court, recited at Jiao temple, and handle international relations”.

“When arranging and using words, if one word is wrong, the whole work cannot be called ‘qualified’! The ancients said: ‘One may burn some beards when writing a five-character poetic sentence’. Isn’t it too difficult to make poetry?” (Nguyễn Thanh Tùng 2015, p. 42)

So now reading a friend’s poetry book, he sympathized with the generous, simple, unconventional style of forcing the rules and being meticulous with every word:

“Generous aura often exudes poetry and is not constrained by mediocrity. His poetry shows a kind and simple soul, not in a frivolous way [...] so I want to imitate it. As for the polished, cliché poetry, what’s the use?” (Nguyễn Thanh Tùng compiled 2015, p. 42)

The transition from “tightly refined” poems to easy and simple poems, from exquisite “arrangement” poetry to natural and affectionate poetry can also be seen in the work *Tựa Phong trúc tập* by Nguyễn Dưỡng Hạo (the eighteenth century):

“Pure language is the voice of heaven, and cumbersome language is the voice of man. [...] My friend, Hoàn Phác [Tân Giang Ngô quân], has learned to write trendy style literature since he was a child, and he became very talented and mature in poetry. Then he was tired of the cumbersome voices of human society, eager to find the pure voices in the universe. [...] Then he suddenly realized that, The Qian hexagram [乾, Vietnamese: *Càn*] is easy to be recognized, the Kun hexagram [坤, Vietnamese: *Khôn*] is simple but good. The mystery lies in the vastness, the generosity. One can compose poetry when experiencing event/landscape. Just make a style that is natural and does not require elaborating. Doesn’t it convey pure sound?” (Nguyễn Thanh Tùng compiled 2015, p. 57)

Not all writers and poets in the *Shī yuán qing* school liked Natural simplicity, but most people who appreciate Natural simplicity value Sincere affection. In the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, the view that emphasized the quality of Natural simplicity in

11

Lan Ting (蘭亭): words written by Wang Xizhi (王羲之, 303 – 361), famous calligraphers of Jin Dynasty, China.

12

Su Dongpo is the literary name of Su Shi (蘇軾, 1037 – 1101), a famous Song Dynasty writer, poet and calligrapher.

Vietnamese literature and arts was gradually imbued with democratic colors, towards folk values, rustic, close to popular life and at the same time returning to the indigenous values of the nation. For example, Đào Vũ Hương (1743 – ?) praised the simple literature of his teacher, Trương Đình Tuyên, in the *Tựa Hàn Các quyết khoa thi tập*:

“Has that silk-like literary writing had the taste of beans and rice?” (Nguyễn Thanh Tùng compiled 2015, p. 59)

Similarly, Phạm Đình Toái (nineteenth century) emphasized the nation’s idyllic hexagonal poetry in comparison with Chinese law poetry in the *Tựa Quốc âm từ điệu*. He wrote:

“The seven-character poems have a cleverly contrasted appearance, but the hexagonal poems have the expression of rotation. [...] This poetry [the hexagonal poems] is popular all over the Southern country [Vietnam]. Elegant poets can make [hexagonal poem] verses any time, while ordinary women and farmers find it easy to sing together. As for the singing in the village or the jokes of the children, there is nothing unnatural. [...] How can one think that Chinese poetry are high but criticize his national poetry as crude? The hexagonal poem is actually very exciting! [...] So far, no one has analysed its form [hexagonal poem] to show the ingenuity of the structure of the poem, clarify the magic of Vietnamese accent, can compete with Chinese poetry.” (Nguyễn Thanh Tùng compiled 2015, pp. 248, 251)

In *Vân đài loại ngữ*, Lê Quý Đôn sometimes quoted Vietnamese proverbs that were equivalent to Chinese proverbs, but basically, his aesthetic thoughts did not deeply attach to folklore and national language literature. The predecessor’s aspiration of “tolerating the people’s strength is the top policy to protect the country” in Lê Quý Đôn’s thought, in general, still remained in the Confucian “rule the country and keep the people safe” principle. He once led troops to suppress peasant uprisings. The historical limitation that Lê Quý Đôn could not get rid of was overcome by later progressive poets. However, Lê Quý Đôn’s important contributions to the journey back to the beauty of natural literature and art, without being bound by rigid Chinese poetic rules and regulations, have always been very clear.

4.3. Yin-Yang harmony

Harmony (*Hé* 和, Vietnamese: *Hòa*) has an important position in Lê Quý Đôn’s aesthetic thought. Both Sincere affection and Natural simplicity are closely related to Harmony.

According to Lê Quý Đôn, from the Great Literature of the universe (expressed through countless rivers, mountains, trees, birds, etc.) to man-made literature (classics, poetry, song, etc.), all come from Harmony. It is the Harmony between the “inner” nature (“virtue” – “conduct” – “heart-mind”) with the “outside” expression (words/language), between “people” (art creators) and “literature” (art products):

“Harmony is within, the scholarly essence is on the outside, setting the longitude and latitude of the world, that is, multi-literature.” (*Vân Đài loại ngữ*, p. 49)

“Generally speaking, the scholarly essence is expressed to outside, because there is harmony within, so virtuous people always know how to speak and moral people are always learned ones. If they are phoenixes, they have colourful feathers, and if they are leopards, they have smooth fur. The decoration on the outside and the content on the inside are actually the same.” (*Vân Đài loại ngữ*, p. 237)

For music and calligraphy, natural harmony is the most important principle, above all rules:

“Music does not need to imitate old laws and regulations; writing does not need to return to its customary style. Knowledgeable people like to use *peaceful* and simple things.” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 49, emphasis ours)

Harmony is important to all these arts, after all, it comes from the deep core: everything in the universe exhibits the activity of “Qi”, magical living force is deployed throughout nature as well as this world. Lê Quý Đôn wrote the following in Chapter 1 “Lý khí”:

“Qi is very magical, very sophisticated: Qi that is *prosperous*, of course, will be relaxed; Qi that is declining, of course, must shrink: one will know when he sees where the trees are fresh or dry. When qi is *clear*, everything is flowing, and when qi is cloudy, everything is stuck; one will know when he sees through human heart-mind’s light or darkness. When qi is *full*, it will grow, and when qi is low, it will fade away; one will know when he sees the sea rise and fall every morning and afternoon. Harmony makes *progress*; otherwise, decay; one will know when he witnesses the ups and downs of society.” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 59, emphasis ours)

Harmony is the manifestation of the prosperous, vital, and relaxed qi. At that time, the qi is clear and transparent, full of vitality and growing. Good qi accumulates vitality and brings peace to mankind. Harmony is the key to natural development, people’s happiness, and national prosperity.

In more depth, Lê Quý Đôn analyzed the essence of the harmony of Qi in the harmony of Yin and Yang – the two forces that rotate regularly to create the universe. According to Eastern philosophy, these two forces *yin* (yīn 陰, Vietnamese: âm) and *yang* (yáng 陽, Vietnamese: dương) represent the relationship between *feminine* (cí 雌, Vietnamese: thu) and *masculine* (xióng 雄, Vietnamese: hùng), *night* (yè 夜, Vietnamese: dạ) and *day* (rì 日, Vietnamese: nhật), *black* (hēi 黑, Vietnamese: hắc) and *white* (bái 白, Vietnamese: bạch), *earth* (dì 地, Vietnamese: địa) and *heaven* (tiān 天, Vietnamese: thiên), *moon* (yuè 月, Vietnamese: nguyệt) and *sun* (rì 日, Vietnamese: nhật), *wet* (shī 溼, Vietnamese: thấp) and *dry* (gàn 干, Vietnamese: cằn), *soft* (ruǎn 軟, Vietnamese: nhuyễn) and *hard* (yìng 硬, Vietnamese: ngành), *small* (xiǎo 小, Vietnamese: tiểu) and *big* (dà 大, Vietnamese: đại), etc. Although *yin* and *yang* are opposites, they do not exclude but offset. There is *yang* in *yin*, and *yin* in *yang*, neither of which can exist alone. The harmony and unity of *yin* and *yang* is vital to the creation, maintenance and development of all things in the universe.

Lê Quý Đôn also mentioned in the calligraphy part that harmony between *yin* and *yang* is the quality and core value of artistic beauty:

“In each character, the ancients paid attention to all horizontal and vertical, large and small, down-going and up-going strokes. Those couples are reciprocal, the high and low strokes are converging.” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 280)

Lê Quý Đôn especially emphasized this point in the section of Music. He said:

“... Tàihé [太和, Vietnamese: Thái hòa, Great Harmony] and Yuánqì [原氣, Vietnamese: nguyên khí, Original Qi] are forged together to produce what a music expert might call a Yuánshēng [原聲, original sound, Vietnamese: nguyên thanh]. This presents a very *middle Way*, and the sound is very *harmonious*.

Therefore, if the form [xíng 形] is harmonious, the qi will be harmonious. When qi is harmonious, then the sound will be harmonious. When the sound is harmonious, then the *harmonious qi* of heaven and earth will react immediately.

Huángzhōng [黃鐘, Vietnamese: *hoàng chung*] expresses the manipulation of *yin and yang* (of heaven and earth); *Wǔshēng* [五聲, five musical modes] has their roots in *huangzhong* law. [...] It must be based in *huángzhōng*. The instruments are different, but they all go well together.” (*Vân Đài loại ngũ*, p. 257, emphasis ours)

“When one can coordinate these nine tones, any song he sings will conform to the sound rules.” (*Vân Đài loại ngũ*, p. 260)

Vietnamese classical music basically based on *wǔshēng*¹³ (five musical modes) like Chinese classical music. *Wǔshēng* has roots in *Huángzhōng* which means *yin and yang* harmony. *Lǜ lǚ*¹⁴ (律呂, ancient tone-system), a scale system consisting of two parts, namely, *Lǜ* (律, i.e. six *yang* tones) and *lǚ* (呂, i.e. six *yin* tones), is also based on *yin and yang* harmony. Musical instruments made of eight different materials¹⁵ play an octave and are also mixed together according to the principle of harmony between *yin and yang*.

Speaking of the Vietnamese musical tones, Lê Quý Đôn did not forget to emphasise national uniqueness. He emphasized that besides the five modes in *wǔshēng* (including *gōng* (宮, Vietnamese: *cung*), *shāng* (商, Vietnamese: *thương*), *jué* (角, Vietnamese: *giác*), *zhǐ* (徵, Vietnamese: *chủy*), and *yǔ* (羽, Vietnamese: *vũ*)), in Vietnamese classical music there were also two other tones, namely “transformed *gong*” and “transformed *shāng*”. All of them are flexible but is still firmly based on the harmony of *yin and yang*.

“Taihe” (Great Harmony) produces “Yuanqi” (original living force) and “Yuansheng” (original sound). Great Harmony is the Way of sound, the Way of music. “Harmonious sound” is a consequence of “harmonious form” and “harmonious qi”. “Harmonious sound” is contained in “harmony of heaven and earth”.

The original form of Yin-Yang philosophy was popular in the agricultural culture of ancient Southeast Asia (Southern China and Southeast Asia) before it was summarized and further developed by Chinese scholars of the Yin-Yang School (4th – 3rd centuries BC) and became one school of Chinese philosophy. Especially in Vietnam, the sculptural figures in pairs (square and round, sun and moon, bird and fish, men and women etc.) on Dongson bronze drums (about 800 BC) show the dualistic thinking of ancient residents. Vietnamese folk poetry, song, music, and dance have a long tradition, relatively independent of Chinese influence, and still full of the beauty of *yin and yang* harmony (see Trần Văn Khê 2006). In the section of *yin and yang* harmony in arts, Lê Quý Đôn did not use any quotation from Chinese sources, but directly expressed his own opinions, analysis and explanation.

The concept of Yin-Yang Harmony associated with Li – Qi thought of Lê Quý Đôn, according to researcher Lam Nguyet Hue, combines the Han Dynasty’s cosmic theory with Zhu Xi’s Thoughts (Lâm Nguyệt Huệ 2013). However, it also comes from the very innocent, ancient and familiar way of Vietnamese national observation, feeling and thinking.

Before Lê Quý Đôn, many Chinese music classics also mentioned harmony. Confucius wrote in *Liji* and *Yueji* as follows:

“Music (樂, Yue, Vietnamese: Nhạc) is the harmony of heaven and earth, while Ritual (禮, Li) is the order of heaven and earth [樂者，天地之和也；禮者，天地之序也].

[...]

The ancient kings invented Li and Yue, not to satisfy the desires of the mouth, belly, ears and eyes, but to keep people’s interests in the mean and correct the way of being a good man [先王之製禮樂也，非以極口腹耳目之欲也，將以教民平好惡而反人道之正也].” (cited from Trần Trọng Kim 2003:121)

Xunzi wrote in *Yuelun* (樂論) as follows:

“Music is what Confucius enjoyed, it could improve people’s mood because it has a deep influence on people, and is easy to regulate customs. Former kings ruled the people with music, so that the people got along. No one has no feelings of love and hate. If we don’t cleverly arouse emotions of joy and anger to respond to these emotions, the world will definitely fall into chaos. Former kings hated chaos, so they set good morals, regulated music to keep the world in order [樂者，聖人之所樂也，而可以善民心，其感人深，其移風易俗，故先王導之以禮樂而民和睦。夫民有好惡之情而無喜怒之應則亂。先王惡其亂也，故修其行，正其樂，而天下順焉].

[...]

So we can use music to conquer outsiders and appease/comfort insiders. To conquer or to appease the people, the meaning remains the same [故樂者、出所以征誅也，入所以揖讓也；征誅揖讓，其義一也].” (cited from Nguyễn Hiến Lê, *Giản Chi* 1994, p. 74)

It can be seen that the basic thought of Confucianism focuses on the relationship between Yue (music) and Li (ritual/order). Confucian scholars adjusted music and ritual to correct human temperament, to make everyone maintain their moral and legitimate obligations so that society would be civilized and orderly. The harmony of music is in the suppression of human feelings in order to stabilize the hierarchy along the vertical axis of social discipline.

Lê Quý Đôn’s thought is very different. Even in the Neo-Confucianism-dominated period, he discussed the harmony of musical modes as intimate relationships of harmony, sympathy, interaction, mutual assistance (on the horizontal axis) between king and people, father and son, husband and wife. He said:

“*Gōng* [宮] is the king, the father, while *Shāng* [商] is people, the son. When *Gōng* and *Shāng* get integrated, the king and his people, father and son also get united in harmony.

Gōng is the husband, *Zhī* [徵] is the wife. *Shāng* is the father of *Gōng* but the son of *Zhī*; Shang wants the son to help his mother, the wife to help her husband, and then *shēng* [聲] develops into *wén* [文, beauty, Vietnamese: *văn*].” (*Văn Đai loại ngữ*, p. 257)

Xunzi claimed that the function of music always is to conquer and force others to submit to higher and stronger forces, while Lê Quý Đôn found the power of music in the harmony of Yin – Yang, even, Yin has greater power. Accordingly, the more the music echoes the low voice, the calmer the heart, and the longer the country’s fortune has been without competition. The more the music conforms to the harsh treble, the more the heart fluctuates, the more intense everyone’s competition and the shorter the national fortune. He said:

13

The Chinese classical music law books define five basic rhythms (five tones), including *gong*, *shang*, *jiao*, *zhi*, *yu* (in Vietnamese: *cung*, *thương*, *giác*, *chuy*, *vũ*). According to Lê Quý Đôn’s *Văn đai loại ngữ* and Phạm Đình Hồ’s *Vũ trung tỳ bút*, in Vietnamese classical music, in addition to the above five tunes, there are also two new tunes (the transformed *gong* and the transformed *zhi*), making them into seven tunes.

14

Lǜ lǚ (律呂): the scale system in classical Chinese music consisting of 12 basic sounds.

Lǜ lǚ contains of two parts, namely, *Six Lǜ* (6 *yang* tones: *huáng zhōng* 黃鐘, *tài cù* 太簇, *gū xī* 姑洗, *rú bīn* 蕤賓, *yí zé* 夷則, and *wú shè* 無射) and *Six lǚ* (6 *yin* tones: *Dà lǚ* 大呂, *yīng zhōng* 應鐘, *nán lǚ* 南呂, *lín zhōng* 林鍾, *zhōng lǚ* 仲呂, and *jiā zhōng* 夾鍾).

Eight musical instruments made from eight different materials, including *jīn* (金, metal), *shí* (石, stone), *tǔ* (土, earth), *gé* (革, leather), *sī* (絲, silk thread), *mù* (木, wood), *páo* (匏, gourd/calabash), and *zhú* (竹, bamboo).

“The music of the ancients was harmonious because of the low pitch, and the music of later generations was not harmonious because of the high tunes. The low tunes are made by people’s quiet hearts, so people don’t fight, while the high tunes are caused by people’s tumultuous hearts, so people compete with each other. The change in people’s heart is born in *qi* but matures in *huá* [化, educate/cultivate], and then comes times of peace and times of chaos. Yin values the virtue of harmony. Compared with the later eras, the ancient sound was very low. The Six Dynasties [420 – 458] and the Five Dynasties [907 – 959] with high musical tones are the short and chaotic dynasties in Chinese pre-modern history.” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, pp. 255–256)

Lê Quý Đôn did not emphasize the relationship between *Yue* (Music) and *Li* (Ritual/Order), but the relationship between *Yue* (Music) and *Qi* (as the source of life energy for the entire universe and the human world).

Talking about *Qi*, Song Confucian scholars reject Feng Shui doctrine; instead, “using moral thinking to see the world”, while Lê Quý Đôn is very interested in Feng Shui, especially “wind force” (*fēngqì* 風氣, Vietnamese: *phong khí*), and often from observing the wind to deduce all natural phenomena (Lam Nguyet Hue 2013). The following passage by Lê Quý Đôn is about the harmony between musical instruments, the fusion of music with the eight-way wind like the breath of life in heaven and earth:

“We take the sound of Huangzhong as the standard to harmonize the 16 strings in a hierarchical manner. We again took 16 strings to arrange 6 instruments according to the principle of lowering the high tunes and ascending the low ones. We adjust each instrument one by one to make the music *harmonious instead of overwhelming each other*. When playing music, it is just like a musician playing on the street. He will see that the winds of the eight directions are in accordance with the music law, the *Qi* does not stagnate, and the sound is not out of tune. At that time, the instrument is complete and the music well-refined.” (*Văn Đài loại ngữ*, p. 257, emphasis ours)

These ideas are very much reminiscent of the opening paragraph of the chapter “*Qi wu lun*” (齊物論) in Zhuangzi’s *Nan Hua Jing* (南華經) on the harmony of heaven and earth, and the transformation of Yin and Yang:

“You hear the pipes of the people, but not the pipes of earth. Even if you hear the pipes of earth, you don’t hear the pipes of Heaven.

The vast breath of the universe, this is called Wind. Sometimes it is unmoving; when it moves it makes the ten thousand openings resound dramatically. Have you not heard it, like a terrifying gale? Mountains and forests are stormed by it, great trees, a hundred spans round with dips and hollows, are like noses, like mouths, like ears, like sockets, like cups, like mortars, like pools, like gulleys; sounding like a crashing wave, a whistling arrow, a screech; sucking, shouting, barking, wailing, moaning, the winds ahead howling yeeh, those behind crying yooh, light breezes making gentle sounds, while the typhoon creates a great din. When the typhoon has passed, all goes quiet again.” (Chuang Tzu – *Nan Hua Jing* 1994, p. 70; transl. Palmer, M. *et al.* 2006, p. 61)

Lê Quý Đôn’s views on Yin-Yang Harmony in music in particular, literature and art in general, are thus quite different from Confucian thought but closer to Daoist thought and deeply attached to Vietnamese traditional aesthetics.

To sum up, Lê Quý Đôn’s aesthetic thought emphasizes the organic connection among the three factors of “Sincerity” – “Simplicity” – “Harmony” revolved around the philosophy of *Qi* as the universal living force:

“The entire heaven and earth space is full of *Qi*.” (*Văn đài loại ngữ*, p. 51)

Literature and arts are manifestations of *Qi*.

5. Some Notes on Characteristics of Vietnamese Classic Aesthetics through Lê Quý Đôn's *Vân đài loại ngữ*

As the most famous and massive work on poetics and aesthetics in Vietnam, Lê Quý Đôn's *Vân đài loại ngữ* is worthy of comparison with Liu Xie's (China)'s *Wen Xin Diao Long* (文心雕龍, *Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*) and Aristotle's *Poetics*. Classical Vietnamese aesthetic thought in Lê Quý Đôn's *Vân Đài loại ngữ*, on the one hand, has the common characteristics of East Asia, and on the other hand, it also shows the uniqueness of the Vietnamese nation.

5.1. East Asian Common Characters (in Comparison to Occidental)

5.1.1. Collective Tradition versus Individual Innovation

Compared with Western aesthetic theory works, the first notable feature of Lê Quý Đôn's *Vân đài loại ngữ* is the inheritance of tradition. While Aristotle's *Poetics* rarely cited the views of other theorists, Lê Quý Đôn's *Vân đài loại ngữ* did so frequently and was based on explanations, proofs, and discussions of forerunner's views through which Lê discussed, presented and developed his thoughts and ideas. Whereas Aristotle's *Poetics* mentioned and analyzed authors, literary and artistic works to summarize certain types/patterns in terms of plot, characters, style, etc., Lê Quý Đôn's *Vân đài loại ngữ* frequently mentioned and analyzed authors and literary and artistic works as good or bad examples/models that later writers and artists should have followed or avoided. In East Asian aesthetic thought, the way of perfecting and enhancing the value of literary and artistic works, and improving and enhancing one's literary and artistic talents, usually begins and always accompanies the study of famous sages and masters of the past. *Shù ér bùzào* (述而不作, only elaborate the theories of the predecessors and do not have original ideas of one's own, Vietnamese: *Thuật nhi bất tác*), *fù gǔ* (復古, return to old ways (of a Confucian aspiration), Vietnamese: *phục cổ*), *hào gǔ* (好古, love of antiquities, Vietnamese: *hiếu cổ*) are appreciated in East Asia. In contrast, Western aesthetic thought emphasizes individual talent, contribution, uniqueness, innovation, and evolution.

5.1.2. Sincere Expression of Human Inner Reality vs. True Reflection of Objective Reality

The second very prominent feature of East Asian classical aesthetics compared with Western classical aesthetics is related to the relationship between literature and art and reality. The dominant influence of Western classical aesthetics, from the important beginnings of Aristotle to today, is directly or indirectly the concept of mimesis/imitation. In Aristotle's view, all art reflected (simulated) reality, and reality was mainly people's social life. Aristotle considered the origin and function of art and literature at the heart of imitation. He said:

"Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation

learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated.” (Arist. *Poet.* 1448b)

In Aristotle’s view, artistic imitation can bring knowledge and pleasure, because art does not passively reproduce objective reality, but through imitation, in essence, art creatively represents, reproduces, and reflects the reality through the details that summarize the laws of life. The value standard of literature and art lies in the correct reflection of the laws of reality. Aristotle wrote:

“The poet being an imitator, like a painter or any other artist, must of necessity imitate on of three objects – *things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be.*” (Arist. *Poet.* 1460b–1460b10)

It can be seen that Western classical aesthetics focuses on epistemological significance. Accordingly, literature and art must truly reflect objective reality and clarify the truth to provide people with scientific knowledge about life and to develop their rational perception. Meanwhile, Lê Quý Đôn’s *Vân đài loại ngữ* emphasizes that the essence of literature and art lies in the sincere expression of human affection/emotions. As mentioned earlier, parallel to this stream of *Shī yuán qíng*, there is another stream in East Asian aesthetics, *Shī yán zhì*, which promotes the expression of human will, ambition, moral sentiment, and social responsibility. Despite the differences, both *Shī yuán qíng* and *Shī yán zhì* belong to the human inner nature.

If the authenticity of Western classical aesthetics lies in the relationship between literary and artistic reflection and objective reality, then the authenticity of East Asian classical aesthetics lies in the relationship between literary and artistic expression and the personality of writers and artists. Therefore, Western classical aesthetics attaches great importance to the function of literature and art, mainly to provide people with knowledge and understanding of life, while East Asian classical aesthetics pays special attention to the functions of self-cultivation, will, and moral cultivation.

5.1.3. Monistic Harmony vs. Dualistic Opposition

The third characteristic of East Asian classical aesthetics is the pursuit of harmony. Western logic is based on the binary distinction between man and nature, reason and emotion, and mind and body, while Eastern metaphysics regards yin and yang as two fundamentals, not opposite, but dual, coexisting, complementary, and mutually transforming forces. They strongly express the fusion and harmonious relationship of the two in reverence for the life force of the entire universe.

Under the concept of *yin-yang* harmony, Lê Quý Đôn and many other East Asian theorists were not limited to referring to familiar structural principles in many classical literary and art forms. East Asian poetry, for example, does overestimate the combination of even and uneven tones, the breaking of sentences according to the parity rule, the method of pairing the sounds and changing the meaning, etc. in poetics. In terms of calligraphy, East Asian calligraphers appreciate the combination of black ink on white silk paper, as well as the square and round, curved and straight, light and dark, dry and wet, static and dynamic strokes when writing/drawing. Likewise, in music, they value the combination of low and high, light and strong, and stagnant and flowing scales of instrumental rhythm.

Importantly, in East Asian aesthetics, images are organized according to the principle of *yin* and *yang* harmony, so as to express the vital breath of artworks and create vitality in harmony with a Great Way of the universe. Laozi once said:

“All beings bear the Yin, and embrace the Yang. With the union of these two, they arrive at a state of harmony.” (Nguyễn Hiến Lê annotated and introduced, 2006, p. 178)

“Dao” (道, Way, Vietnamese: *Đạo*) refers to the mysterious principles and laws of the cosmic order that govern the entire world. “Dao” is present in all things in the universe; so everything in the universe is the embodiment of “Dao”. “All forms of literature and art embody Dao”. Through the simulation of specific real-life scenes, things, and events, literature and art express the movement of *qi*, the breath of life, and the vitality that pervades the vast natural and human worlds. Beyond the life-like reflection of the form of existence, East Asian aesthetics promote a sincere expression of life’s spiritual roots.

In short, Vietnamese classical aesthetics shows the common East Asian characteristics of valuing tradition, lyrical expression, and monistic thinking, which is different from the innovative stimulation, rational consciousness, and dualistic thinking of Western classical aesthetics. The Western aesthetic tradition began with Greek philosophers and was formed and developed in the context of maritime civilization and commercial civilization. In such a background, people need to learn the objective laws of the ever-changing environment and societies. Art and literature are also “recognized as forms of knowledge that can facilitate, hinder or impair the ability to attain ultimate truth” (Cai 2002:102). Meanwhile, the East Asian aesthetic tradition was formed and developed under the background of agricultural civilization, with good wind, good weather, good crops, and harmonious working societies (communities). The East Asian classic aesthetic thought has been influenced by Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and emphasized the harmony in society and in the universe. Literature and art are regarded as

“... originating from the objective world, operating in the inner world, and ide u | impacting back on the outer world. When it completes this cycle, it will bring harmony to all phenomena and experiences, between nature and man, outer and inner, public and personal, and sensual and transcendent.” (Cai 2002:102)

5.2. Vietnamese National Characteristics (in Comparison to Chinese)

Like the aesthetics of other East Asian countries, Vietnamese aesthetics are influenced by regional civilizations, but at the same time express their own identity. Vietnamese classical aesthetics in general, and Lê Quý Đôn’s thought in particular, received creatively Chinese influence. Vietnamese classical aesthetics in general, and Lê Quý Đôn’s thought in particular, received creatively Chinese influence. While focusing on Zhu Xi’s view of *Li* and *Qi*, Lê Quý Đôn is quite different from most Chinese scholars who are more interested in abstract and metaphysical theories. He mainly analyses the temporal and spatial performance of *Qi* in specific things. Unlike the Song Confucianists, who emphasized a moral view of contemplating the universe, Lê Quý Đôn looked at and felt nature as-they-are. Therefore, the *yin* and *yang* philosophy in Lê Quý Đôn’s aesthetics can be said to be the continuation of the dichotomy and union thinking associated with the wet rice civilization tradition.

In the long historical period, Chinese philosophy and aesthetics were often dominantly influenced by Confucianism. But, even in the period of Confucian monotheism (Later Lê Dynasty), Lê Quý Đôn's aesthetic thought was comprehensive and flexible because they was rooted in the spirit of the Three Teaching. Lê Quý Đôn himself was a great Confucian, but he not only quoted and commented on the words of Confucius and Zhu Xi (Confucianism), but also extended to Guan Zhong, Han Feizi (Legalism), Laozi and Zhuangzi (Daoism), Buddhist scriptures, and works of famous monks (Buddhism). Lê Quý Đôn's concepts of nature, harmony reflect the nuances of Daoism and Buddhism rather than Confucianism. Even in the part of cosmology (Li-Qi), Lê Quý Đôn also compared Zhu Xi's thoughts with Western philosophical and scientific works introduced to China through Catholic missionaries (such as books on theology, cosmology, and astronomy by Matteo Ricci (1552 – 1610), Ferdinand Verbiest (1623 – 1688), and others). Lê Quý Đôn sought pluralistic synthesis rather than dominance and monopoly.

Lê Quý Đôn's aesthetic thought also showed a profound national standpoint. He affirmed many times, directly or indirectly, that the culture, literature and art of Vietnam are not inferior (*Wú xùn Zhōnghuá* 無遜中華, Vietnamese: *Vô tón Trung Hoa*) or different (*Bù yì Zhōnghuá* 不異中華, Vietnamese: *Bất dị Trung Hoa*) compared with China. The same emphasis is placed on the nature of art and literature in human inner expression, but most Chinese theorists and artists tended towards willpower, ambition, social ideals, while Lê Quý Đôn and other Vietnamese theorists and artists were more interested in affection/emotion.

Chinese theorists and artists share the same understanding of the *yin-yang* relationship, emphasizing harmony and sustainability based on social hierarchy. Meanwhile, Lê Quý Đôn and other Vietnamese theorists and artists focused more in the harmonious beauty of literature and art is deeply rooted in the great harmony of the universe, and deeply rooted in the love and respect between people and people and between people with nature. In terms of artistic decoration, Chinese theorists and artists were very focused on refinement, while Lê Quý Đôn and other Vietnamese theorists and artists emphasized on natural simplicity.

Lê Quý Đôn especially appreciated the literary works that directly cultivate people's life. In *Kiến văn tiểu lục*, Lê Quý Đôn said frankly,

“... the exams for selecting talent people through writing literary genres with complicated rule would ‘limit the power of (Confucian) students and create ‘clumsy and clichés literature and poetry’, that is, literature has no practicality and is useless to life.” (cited from *Kiến văn tiểu lục*, pp. 93–94)

Lê Quý Đôn criticised the Chinese literati and officials of the Song Dynasty as people who used ‘empty’ literature (*xūwén* 虛文, Vietnamese: *hư văn*),¹⁶ regardless of the national fate and the people's livelihood. He said:

“In peacetime, I see great officials and intellectuals whose literature, as well as their noble style, no one does not admire. But when the country is in danger, there is no one on all sides to rely on. Alas! What did those rulers use their ‘empty’ literary writings?” (cited from Pham Quang Trung 2021)

For a country like Vietnam that always has to deal with foreign invaders, the mission of literature, according to Lê Quý Đôn, must be contribution to defending and honouring the motherland.

6. Conclusion

Lê Quý Đôn's *Vân đài loại ngữ* is a famous “encyclopedia” in Vietnam in medieval ages. Its entries and articles of literature and arts are of a “textbook” nature, consciously formulated, completely clear, and systematic. In addition, Lê Quý Đôn is not only a writer but also a scientist, especially a philosophical researcher. His theoretical overview of literature and arts did not stop at the level of poetics or art studies but reached the level of philosophical aesthetic thought and/or art philosophy. Through studying this work as a representative and typical case, we can summarize some significant characteristics of Vietnamese classical aesthetics.

On the one hand, Lê Quý Đôn's aesthetics share the common characteristics of East Asian typology (compared to the West), and on the other hand, it shows the specific characteristics of Vietnamese national identity (compared to China and other East Asian cultures).

Sharing the common characteristics of East Asia, Lê Quý Đôn highly appreciated the sincere and simple expression of the human heart and emphasized the beauty of harmony in the relationship between people and nature. This is very different from the Western classical aesthetics emphasizing the function of reflecting objective reality, the beauty of logic and the rational power of literature and art.

Despite being influenced by Chinese culture, Lê Quý Đôn had a deep understanding of the acculturation and update of ancient values, rather than the worship and dependence on them. Lê Quý Đôn's aesthetic thought vividly demonstrate the combination of external influences and endogenous sources, re-interpreting and restructuring imported elements to be compatible with indigenous cultural configuration. Lê Quý Đôn believed that the function as well as the beauty of literature and art is the expressing and evoking emotions, in a simple and natural style, cultivating harmony with human and the universe. Therefore, studying Lê Quý Đôn's aesthetics not only helps to clarify the characteristics of Vietnamese literature and art but also helps to clarify the soul, spiritual characteristics and national identity of Vietnam in the process of accepting and localizing foreign influences and cultivating its own unique cultural tradition. We hope to have the opportunity to continue in future research.

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Thị Thu Hiền Phan, Ngọc Thơ Nguyễn

Temeljne misli vijetnamske klasične estetike kroz djelo *Vân đài loại ngữ* (雲台類語) autora Lê Quý Đôn

Sažetak

Ovo istraživanje smjera razjasniti neke značajke tradicionalne vijetnamske estetske misli izražene kroz *Vân đài loại ngữ*, »enciklopedijsko« djelo Lê Quý Đôn (1726. – 1784.) – poznatog vijetnamskog filozofa, pisca i znanstvenika predmodernog doba. Naše je prijašnje istraživače (Vijetnam, Kina) jako zanimalo poetski aspekt djela *Vân đài loại ngữ*. Naš je novi doprinos korišten misao Lê Quý Đôn kao studiju slučaja vijetnamske klasične estetike. Ispitujući književnost (poglavlje 5, »*Văn nghệ*«), glazbu i kaligrafiju (poglavlje 6, »*Âm tự*«) u odnosu na Li i Qi filozofiju (poglavlje 1, »*Lý khí*«) u djelu *Vân đài loại ngữ*, naše istraživanje razjašnjuje Lê Quý Đônovu književnu i umjetničku koncepciju književne i umjetničke ljepote temeljenu na iskrenosti, prirodnoj jednostavnosti i harmoniji Yin-Yanga. Objavljavamo temeljne Lê Quý Đônove koncepte uspoređujući ih s odgovarajućim konceptima kineske estetike da bismo istaknuli jedinstvene karakteristike vijetnamske klasične estetike te pružamo dodatni povijesni kontekst.

Ključne riječi

vijetnamska klasična estetika, komparativna estetika, *Vân đài loại ngữ*, Lê Quý Đôn

Thị Thu Hiền Phan, Ngọc Thơ Nguyễn

Grundgedanken der vietnamesischen klassischen Ästhetik durch das Werk *Vân đài loại ngữ* (雲台類語) des Autors Lê Quý Đôn

Zusammenfassung

Der Schwerpunkt dieser Studie liegt auf der Erläuterung einiger Merkmale des traditionellen vietnamesischen ästhetischen Gedankens, der durch das „encyklopädische“ Werk *Vân đài loại ngữ* von Lê Quý Đôn (1726–1784), einem namhaften vietnamesischen Philosophen, Schriftsteller und Gelehrten des vormodernen Zeitalters, zum Ausdruck gebracht wird. Unsere vorherigen Forscher (Vietnam, China) interessierten sich sehr für den poetischen Aspekt des Werkes *Vân đài loại ngữ*. Unser neuer Beitrag ist es, Lê Quý Đôn’s Gedanken als Fallstudie der vietnamesischen klassischen Ästhetik zu verwenden. Durch die Untersuchung von Literatur (Kapitel 5, »*Văn nghệ*«), Musik und Kalligrafie (Kapitel 6, »*Âm tự*«) in Bezug auf die Philosophie von Li und Qi (Kapitel 1, »*Lý khí*«) in *Vân đài loại ngữ* verdeutlichte unsere Forschung Lê Quý Đôn’s literarische und künstlerische Konzeption der literarischen und künstlerischen Schönheit, die auf Aufrichtigkeit, natürlicher Einfachheit und Yin-Yang-Harmonie aufbaut. Wir erklären die Kernkonzepte des Lê Quý Đôn, indem wir sie mit einschlägigen Konzepten in der chinesischen Ästhetik in Parallele setzen, um die einzigartigen Merkmale der vietnamesischen klassischen Ästhetik zu pointieren, wie auch, um zusätzlichen historischen Kontext bereitzustellen.

Schlüsselwörter

vietnamesische klassische Ästhetik, vergleichende Ästhetik, *Vân đài loại ngữ*, Lê Quý Đôn

Thị Thu Hiền Phan, Ngọc Thơ Nguyễn

Les pensées fondamentales de l'esthétique classique vietnamienne à travers l'œuvre *Vân đài loại ngữ* (雲台類語) de l'auteur Lê Quý Đôn

Résumé

Cette recherche s'attache à clarifier quelques caractéristiques de la pensée de l'esthétique traditionnelle vietnamienne exprimées à travers Vân đài loại ngữ, l'œuvre « encyclopédique » de Lê Quý Đôn (1726 – 1784), célèbre philosophe, écrivain et scientifique de l'époque prémoderne. Dans nos recherches précédentes, l'accent avait été mis sur l'aspect poétique de l'œuvre Vân đài loại ngữ. Notre nouvelle contribution consiste à utiliser la pensée de Lê Quý Đôn en tant qu'étude de cas de l'esthétique vietnamienne classique. En interrogeant la littérature (chapitre 5, « Văn nghệ »), la musique et la calligraphie (chapitre 6, « Âm tự ») par rapport à la philosophie Li et Qi (chapitre 1, « Lý khí ») dans l'œuvre Vân đài loại ngữ, notre recherche met en lumière la conception littéraire et artistique de Lê Quý Đôn de la beauté littéraire et artistique fondée sur la sincérité, la simplicité naturelle et l'harmonie du Yin-Yang. Nous expliquons les concepts fondamentaux de Lê Quý Đôn en les comparant aux concepts correspondants de l'esthétique chinoise afin de faire ressortir les caractéristiques uniques de l'esthétique vietnamienne classique, et offrons ainsi un contexte historique supplémentaire.

Mots-clés

esthétique vietnamienne classique, esthétique comparative, *Vân đài loại ngữ*, Lê Quý Đôn