

The Traditions and Characteristics of Vietnamese Medicine

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PREAMBLE

From the fourteenth century onwards, the Vietnamese, emphasizing the distinctiveness of Vietnam, lying as it did to the south of China, called their own medicine “Southern medicine” (*nam y* 南醫 or *nam dược* 南藥) and Chinese medicine or Vietnamized Chinese medicine “Northern medicine” (*bắc y* 北醫 or *bắc dược* 北藥). After French rule began in the nineteenth century, these two traditions of medicine were together called “Eastern medicine” (*đông y* 東醫) in contrast to “Western medicine” (*tây y* 西醫). Further, following independence in 1945, the term “Eastern medicine” (*đông y học* 東醫學) was used; then, after the deterioration of relations between China and Vietnam in 1978, the term “ethnic medicine” (*dân tộc y học* 民族醫學) came into use, and since 1986 the term “Vietnamese traditional medicine” (*Việt Nam truyền thống y học* 越南傳統醫學) has been used together with “Eastern medicine.” Today, specialists in Eastern medicine are being trained in six-year courses at Tuệ Tĩnh College of Traditional Medicine and in departments of Eastern medicine at six medical schools, and graduates are engaged in the treatment of patients. In 1961 an Institute of Eastern Medicine and a Society of Eastern Medicine were also established.

Because of its high temperatures, humidity, and wars, many medical texts and other sources have been lost in Vietnam. Partly for this reason, in this article I wish to survey the traditions of Vietnamese medicine and its characteristics during the Trần 陳 (1225–1413), Lê 黎 (1428–1789), and Nguyễn 阮 (1802–1945) dynasties, which were independent of China. The following survey is based on prior research by others¹⁾ and also on my own previous research.²⁾

1) Hoàng Bảo Châu, Phó Đức Thực and Hữu Ngọc, “Overview of Vietnamese Traditional Medicine,” in id., eds., *Vietnamese Traditional Medicine* (2nd ed.) (Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 1999), pp. 1–28; Lâm Giang, “Thư tịch y dược cổ truyền Việt Nam thực trạng” [The actual state of books of Vietnamese traditional medicine and pharmacology], in id., ed., *Tìm hiểu thư tịch y dược cổ truyền Việt Nam* [A study of books of Vietnamese traditional medicine and pharmacology] (Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản Khoa học xã hội, 2009), pp. 13–190 (this study has been cited on the basis

I. THE HISTORY OF VIETNAM AND MEDICAL SOURCES

From the second century B.C., when northern Vietnam was ruled by China's Han 漢 dynasty, Chinese rule of northern Vietnam continued until the tenth century except for a brief period during the sixth century. Consequently, the Chinese script was widely used, and a civil service examination system modeled on that of China operated from the eleventh century, after northern Vietnam gained independence from China, until 1918. The *chữ nôm* 字喃 characters used for writing Vietnamese were used from the thirteenth century down to the mid-twentieth century, and Vietnamese was usually written in mixed Hán-Nôm 漢喃, combining Chinese characters with *chữ nôm* characters. The majority of early books of the Lý Trần 李陳 period (11th to 14th centuries) were lost during Ming 明 rule and the war for independence in the early fifteenth century, and extant books are limited to manuscripts and printed books postdating the fifteenth century. The state collection of books that was held in Thăng Long 昇龍 (present-day Hanoi), the capital of the Lê dynasty, was later moved to Phú Xuân 富春 (present-day Hue), the capital of the Nguyễn dynasty (1802–1945). Partly because the inhabitants of Hue are unfavorably disposed towards the government in Hanoi,³⁾ the current state of these materials has still not been adequately

of an abridged Japanese translation by Ōnishi Kazuhiko 大西和彦); and Nguyễn Thị Dương, “Ngư tiều y thuật vấn đáp trong tủ sách đông y thời Nguyễn” [The *Ngư tiều y thuật vấn đáp* on the bookcase of Eastern medicine during the Nguyễn dynasty], *Tạp chí Hán Nôm* 漢喃雜誌 103 (2010), pp. 56–62.

2) Mayanagi Makoto 眞柳誠, “Betonamu kokka toshokan no koiseki shoshi” ベトナム國家圖書館の古醫籍書誌 [The bibliography of the old medical books in the National Library of Vietnam (*sic*)], *Jinbun Gakka Ronshū* 人文學科論集 (Ibaraki Univ.) 45 (2006), pp. 1–16; id., “Nghiên cứu so sánh định lượng thư tịch y học cổ truyền các nước khu vực đồng văn” [Quantitative comparative studies on traditional medical treatises in countries using the same language (i.e., classical Chinese)], *Tạp chí Hán Nôm* 97 (2009), pp. 10–29; id., “Betonamu kokka toshokan no koiseki shoshi: hoi (ichi)” ベトナム國家圖書館の古醫籍書誌 補遺 (一) [The bibliography of the old medical books in the National Library of Vietnam: Addendum (1)], *Jinbun Komyunikēshon Gakka Ronshū* 人文コミュニケーション學科論集 (Ibaraki Univ.) 10 (2011), pp. 21–39; id., “Betonamu kokka toshokan no koiseki shoshi: hoi (ni)” ベトナム國家圖書館の古醫籍書誌 補遺 (二) [The bibliography of the old medical books in the National Library of Vietnam: Addendum (2)], *Jinbun Komyunikēshon Gakka Ronshū* 11 (2011), pp. 51–73; and id., “Betonamu Kan-Nan Kenkyūjo no koiseki shoshi” ベトナム漢喃研究所の古醫籍書誌 [The bibliography of the old medical books in the Institute of Han-Nom Studies, Vietnam (*sic*)], (1)–(7), *Jinbun Komyunikēshon Gakka Ronshū* 12 (2012), pp. 19–42; 13 (2012), pp. 53–76; 14 (2013), pp. 39–65; 15 (2013), pp. 71–97; 16 (2014), pp. 17–46; 17 (2014), pp. 51–76; 18 (2015), pp. 17–41.

3) It is possible that some of the old books held in Hue were lost during the massacre at Hue during the Tet Offensive in 1968. There is said to be a depository of medical and pharmacological treatises in Hue in the home of an elderly woman who is the granddaughter of Trương Đăng Quế 張登桂, a minister during the Nguyễn dynasty, and some texts of the Imperial Academy of Medicine may have survived.

investigated, although during the period of French rule many of the books held in Hue were copied by the *École française d'Extrême-Orient*, and almost all of the old books it collected are today held in the Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies (Viện Nghiên cứu Hán Nôm) in Hanoi.

Only medical and pharmacological works dating from the fourteenth century and later are known today. Nonetheless, from the period of independent dynasties that began in the eleventh century, court physicians were using expensive Chinese medicines to manage the health of the king and officials, while village doctors were treating ordinary people with cheap Vietnamese medicines produced in Vietnam. These local doctors would probably have kept records of their experiences, but because of their need to make a living such manuscript writings would have been regarded as “secret” and would not have circulated widely, and it is only natural that they would have been gradually lost.

I once investigated about one hundred old books (all originals) at the National Library of Vietnam (Thư viện Quốc gia Việt Nam) and found 59 Vietnamese books and 16 Chinese books related to medicine and pharmacology. I likewise examined about five hundred books (both originals and copies) at the Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies and found 323 Vietnamese books and 22 Chinese books related to medicine and pharmacology. Among these books, there were 19 Vietnamese books on medicine and pharmacology and 2 Vietnamese books on plants and natural science held by both institutions, and if we exclude these, there were 361 Vietnamese medical and pharmacological books, the majority of which dated from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. They included formularies (64), books on smallpox and measles (43), books on obstetrics, gynecology, and pediatrics (37), general works on various areas of medicine (29), and books on diagnosis (26), and these trends in numbers are similar to the situation in China, Japan, and Korea. There was, however, a high proportion of works on obstetrics, gynecology, and pediatrics, and the presence of 11 works related to Taoism and Buddhism was a characteristic peculiar to Vietnam.

Records of the printing of books in Vietnam go back to the fourteenth century, but up until the mid-twentieth century the vast majority of books were compiled by the government and published by the state, and not many books were published privately or commercially. Some medical and pharmacological books were published non-commercially by Buddhist and Taoist temples, but few of these have survived. Commercially published medical and pharmacological books were also few in number, and most that have survived were printed in the nineteenth century and later. Consequently, the majority of medical and pharmacological texts have been transmitted as manuscripts that were formerly kept secret. Furthermore, information about old books held throughout Vietnam is not exhaustive at the present stage. Owing

to these various circumstances, it remains difficult to trace the history of Vietnamese medicine and pharmacology in terms of historical facts back before the Trần dynasty.

II. MEDICAL AND PHARMACOLOGICAL TREATISES OF THE TRẦN DYNASTY (1225–1400) AND TUỆ TĨNH

Vietnam's oldest extant medical treatise is considered to be the *Y học yếu giải* 醫學要解 (Exposition of the Essentials of Medicine) compiled by Chu Văn An (1292–1370).⁴⁾ I have not seen this work, but it analyzes the etiology and pathology of various diseases on the basis of the Chinese medical classic *Nei-ching* 內經 and describes diagnoses and treatments, and the compiler is said to have devised two prescriptions for treating infectious fevers and chills.

The physician representative of the Trần dynasty was Tuệ Tĩnh 慧靖 (1330–1385–?), who was born Nguyễn Bá Tĩnh 阮伯靖. He passed the civil service examinations in 1374 at the age of forty-five, but instead of entering government service, he took the tonsure and began practicing Buddhism at Buddhist temples, and it seems that he practiced medicine under his monastic name, first Huệ Tĩnh 惠靖 and later Tuệ Tĩnh 慧靖 (frequently miswritten 慧靜). He was sent to China in his capacity as a monk in 1385, but he was detained there so that he could practice medicine, and he is said to have died in China. This means that his medical writings must predate 1385.⁵⁾

In 1717 the Lê dynasty compiled and published Tuệ Tĩnh's writings under the title *Hồng Nghĩa giác tư y thư* 洪義覺斯醫書 (Medical Books of Hồng Nghĩa giác tư) in two volumes. The first volume consists of the *Nam dược quốc ngữ phú* 南藥國語賦 (Prose-poem in the Vietnamese Language on Southern Drugs) and *Trực giải chỉ nam dược tính phú* 直解指南藥性賦 (Prose-poem of Instructions Directly Explaining the

4) Chu Văn An 朱文安 (real name: Chu An 朱安; courtesy name: Linh Triệt 靈澤) was born on the outskirts of Hanoi on the 25th of the eighth month of 1292 and died on the 28th of the eleventh month of 1370 at the age of seventy-eight. Instead of entering government service after passing the civil service examinations, he opened a school in his home district and taught many students. During the reign of Minh Tông 明宗 (1314–29), he became a teacher for a time at the Imperial Academy (*quốc tử giám* 國子監), where he taught the crown prince. He is regarded as one of the luminaries of Vietnamese Confucianism and composed an introduction to Chu Hsi's 朱熹 *Ssu-shu chi-chu* 四書集注 (Collected Commentaries on the Four Books) under the title *Tứ thư thuyết ước* 四書說約 (Concise Exposition of the Four Books) in 10 volumes. This is the oldest extant Vietnamese work related to the Confucian classics and is also the oldest evidence of the transmission of Neo-Confucianism to Vietnam.

5) Tuệ Tĩnh is a monastic name that was used by several monks from the tenth to seventeenth centuries, and according to some, one of these was Hồng Nghĩa 洪義 of the early fifteenth century, who was well versed in medicine.

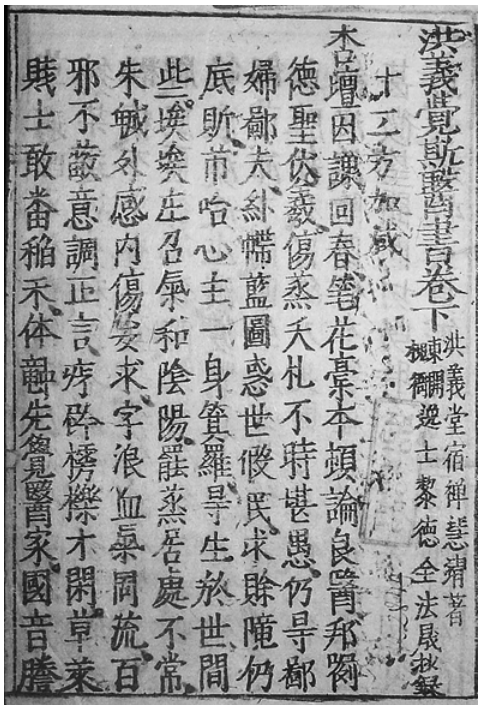


Fig. 1. *Hồng Nghĩa giác tư y thư*, vol. 2
(National Library of Vietnam [NLV],
R.1556)

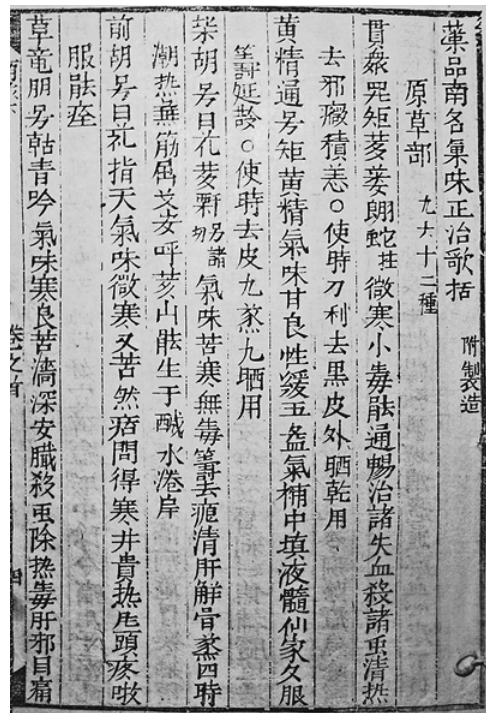


Fig. 2. *Nam dược thần hiệu*, opening vol.
(NLV, R.1740)

Properties of Southern Drugs), while the second volume (fig. 1) consists of the *Thập tam phương gia giảm* 十三方加減 (Thirteen Formulas with Additive and Subtractive Adjustments), *Thương hàn cách pháp trị lệ* 傷寒格法治例 (Examples of Methods for Treating Cold Damage), and *Chứng trị phương pháp* 症治方法 (Methods for Treating Maladies). It is clear, however, that the *Thập tam phương gia giảm* is an abridged Hán-Nôm translation of the Chinese Yüan 元-period *Chia-chien shih-san fa* 加減十三方 (first pub. 1413), while the *Thương hàn cách pháp trị lệ* is likewise an abridged Hán-Nôm translation of the *Sha-ch'e ch'ui-fa* 殺車槌法 (Method for Crushing Cold Damage) among the Ming-period *Shang-han liu-shu* 傷寒六書 (Six Treatises on Cold Damage) (first pub. 1522), and therefore they are undoubtedly additions attributed to Tuệ Tĩnh that date from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The edition illustrated in fig. 1 (of which only vol. 2 survives) is not from the first edition in 1717, but probably from a nineteenth-century reprint.

The *Nam dược quốc ngữ phú* records the Chinese names, Vietnamese names, and effects of Southern drugs in common use in Vietnam in the form of twenty-four Hán-Nôm prose-poems. Although it has modifications and additions made in later times,

it includes some old forms of *chữ nôm* characters, and the original work may therefore be considered to have been written by Tuệ Tĩnh. The *Trực giải chí nam dược tính phú* lists 218 drugs classified by treatment in the form of a Chinese prose-poem, and it begins by emphasizing the fact that Southern medicines produced in Vietnam are appropriate for illnesses prevalent in Vietnam: “If one wishes to benefit the people, one should first seek out sacred medicines. Heavenly writings will most certainly appear in the country in the south, and locally produced [medicines] differ from those of the land to the north” (欲惠生民, 先尋聖藥。天書越定南邦, 土產有殊北國). At the end of this work mention is also made of “the extensive benefit of the South” (南天廣惠), and since the character *tuệ* 惠 is used both at the start and at the end, this work may be considered to have been written by Tuệ Tĩnh (惠靖 = 慧靖).

In addition, Tuệ Tĩnh also seems to have written the original version of the *Nam dược thần hiệu thập khoa ứng trị* 南藥神效十科應治 (Miraculous Efficacy of Southern Drugs Applied to the Treatment of Ten Branches of Medicine). A manuscript copied by the École française d’Extrême-Orient and held by the Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies (A.1270) includes the preface to a 1761 reprint, and it constitutes an 11-volume compendium of medicine consisting of an opening volume and ten volumes ranging in subject matter from cerebrovascular disorders (vol. 1) to surgery (vol. 10). The opening volume, “Dược phẩm nam danh khí vị chính trị ca quát” 藥品南名氣味正治歌括 (Songs Summarizing the Southern Names, Properties, and Effects of Drugs), was reprinted three times in the first half of the twentieth century under the title *Nam dược thần hiệu* 南藥神效 (Miraculous Efficacy of Southern Drugs) (fig. 2 is from an edition published in Hanoi in 1920). This opening volume records in the form of songs of several lines the Chinese names, Vietnamese names (in *chữ nôm* characters), effects, and methods of preparation for 563 medicines classified into herbs, grains, vegetables, fruits, and so on. Since the method of classification coincides by and large with that of the Chinese *Pen-ts’ao kang-mu* 本草綱目 (Guidelines and Details of Materia Medica) (first pub. 1596), there can be no doubt that it was substantially revised and supplemented in later times. However, vols. 1–10 are all written in Hán-Nôm, include many simple treatments using Southern drugs, and show little Chinese influence, and therefore the received text probably derives from an original work by Tuệ Tĩnh.

At any rate, Tuệ Tĩnh’s view that Southern medicines should be used to treat the Vietnamese and his use of the song format were to have an enormous influence on subsequent Vietnamese medicine and medical and pharmacological treatises.

III. MEDICAL AND PHARMACOLOGICAL TREATISES OF THE LÊ DYNASTY (1428–1789)

1. Phan Phu Tiên's *Bản Thảo Thực Vật Toàn Yếu*

At the start of this period, the original version of the *Bản thảo thực vật toàn yếu* 本草食物纂要 (Collected Essentials of Comestible Materia Medica) was composed. The extant text of this work was handcopied by the École française d'Extrême-Orient (Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.1219), and it classifies 392 readily obtainable Southern drugs and everyday foodstuffs into herbs, vegetables, minerals, etc., adds the Vietnamese equivalents in *chữ nôm* characters to their Chinese names, and also records their properties, efficacy, detoxification methods, and so on. It also includes a postscript by Phan Phu Tiên, according to which it was compiled in 1429. Phan Phu Tiên gained the degree of presented scholar (*tiến sĩ* 進士) in both the Trần and Lê dynasties and made contributions to history and literature,⁶⁾ and his period of activity and official posts do not conflict with the postscript's contents.

This work also has an undated, anonymous preface, according to which it was excerpted from various pharmacopoeias and Li Shih-chen's 李時珍 *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu*. Since the main text includes many quotations from Li Shih-chen's work, there can be no doubt that use was made of the *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu*. But because the sixteenth-century date of the *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu* conflicts with Phan Phu Tiên's dates, it may be assumed that later additions and modifications were made to the preface and main text and that the extant text differs considerably from the original work. However, since some old *chữ nôm* characters found in the fifteenth-century *Hồng Đức quốc âm thi tập* 洪德國音詩集 (Anthology of Poems in Vietnamese Pronunciation by Hồng Đức) are used, it may be supposed that there existed a pharmacopoeia of comestibles by Phan Phu Tiên that served as a basis for the extant version.

2. Nguyễn Trữc's *Bảo Anh Lương Phương*

The presented scholar Nguyễn Trữc (1417–73)⁷⁾ compiled the 4-volume *Bảo anh lương phương* 保嬰良方 (Effective Prescriptions for Protecting Infants), the oldest extant Vietnamese work on pediatrics. Only a handcopy of the volume on spring,

6) Phan Phu Tiên 潘孚先 (d.u.) was born on the outskirts of Hanoi. He passed the civil service examinations in 1396 during the Trần dynasty and then again in 1429 during the Lê dynasty, eventually rising to the position of erudite (*bác sĩ* 博士) in the Imperial Academy. He also compiled the 6-volume *Việt âm thi tập* 越音詩集, Vietnam's first literary anthology, which contains 624 poetic works from the Trần to Lê dynasties.

7) Nguyễn Trữc 阮直 was born to the west of present-day Hanoi and passed the civil service examinations in 1442. In the years 1443–53 he served as a government historiographer.

made by the École française d'Extrême-Orient (Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.1462), is extant, and the whereabouts of the volumes on summer, autumn, and winter are unknown. In Nguyễn Trữ's undated preface it is stated that, "Although it is outside my area of expertise, I studied Chinese medical and pharmacological treatises and collected and excerpted their essence." According to the title page, this work was presented "on an auspicious day in the seventh month, in autumn, of the second year of the Diên Ninh 延寧 era (1455)," and so it is evident that it was completed in 1455. Its standardized format suggests that the base text of the hand-copy may have been a printed edition. It is written in Chinese and contains no *chữ nôm* characters.

The extant portion of this work describes diagnoses and treatments for infants' skin diseases, convulsions, smallpox, measles, etc., in the form of songs, prose-poems, expositions, discourses, etc. It is possible to identify parts that preserve the original forms of Chinese songs and prose-poems and parts that have been revised and edited by the compiler. The compilation of medical and pharmacological books by men who had passed the civil service examinations, as in this case, could be described as a characteristic of Vietnam.

3. Hoàng Đôn Hòa's *Hoạt Nhân Toát Yếu* and Trịnh Đôn Phác's *Hoạt Nhân Toát Yếu Tăng Bô*

Hoàng Đôn Hòa 黃敦和 is not mentioned in the genealogy of seventeen generations of the Hoàng clan, and so his dates are not known. But since it is recorded in the *Thần phả* 神譜 (Sacred Genealogy) that in the struggles with the Mạc 莫 clan in 1592 he treated fever, vomiting, and diarrhea among soldiers of the Lê dynasty's army and also treated its war elephants, it is evident that he was a physician of the sixteenth century. The *Hoạt nhân toát yếu* 活人撮要 (Compendium for Saving People) attributed to him does in fact include treatments for fever, vomiting, and diarrhea, and also methods for treating water buffaloes, cattle, and horses, but because there are virtually no elephants in northern Vietnam, there is no mention of the treatment of elephants. It includes many treatments based on readily available medicinal substances, and it may be described as a compendium of the essential points of medical treatment. The treatment of domestic animals is not found in any earlier works, and so Hoàng Đôn Hòa could be called the father of Vietnamese veterinarians and army doctors.

Trịnh Đôn Phác 鄭敦樸 (1692–1762), who produced an enlarged edition of the *Hoạt nhân toát yếu*, passed the physicians' examination in 1741 and was responsible for looking after the empress and others at the court's Academy of Medicine. His 3-volume *Hoạt nhân toát yếu tăng bổ* 活人撮要增補 (Supplement to the Compendium

for Saving People) survives in the form of a handcopy by the École française d'Extrême-Orient (Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.2535), and its systematic format suggests that it was copied from a printed edition. Vol. 1 deals with gynecology, vol. 2 with pediatrics, and vol. 3 with surgery and domestic animals, and it is by and large written in Chinese. There are quite a number of Vietnamese medical treatises dealing with the two subjects of gynecology and pediatrics, with surgery sometimes being added. The works used by Trịnh Đôn Phác to supplement the *Hoạt nhân toát yếu* include, in addition to the *Nam dược thần hiệu*, the Chinese medical and pharmacological treatises *Ching-yüeh ch'üan-shu* 景岳全書 (Complete Works of Ching-yüeh; first pub. 1710), *Shou-shih pao-yüan* 壽世保元 (Longevity and the Preservation of Health; 1615), *I-hsüeh ju-men* 醫學入門 (Introduction to Medicine; 1575), *Chi-yin kang-mu* 濟陰綱目 (Guidelines and Details for Benefiting Women; first pub. 1620), and *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu* (first pub. 1596), and it is evident that these works were held by the court's Academy of Medicine. These Chinese works are, moreover, frequently quoted in later Vietnamese medical works and exerted a strong influence on Vietnamese medicine. In content, the *Hoạt nhân toát yếu tăng bổ* mainly describes formulas arranged by symptoms, the diseases for which they are indicated, their constituent drugs, their doses, and how they are to be taken, and there is little theoretical discussion. It also includes many lists of oral instructions, which are indicative of Trịnh Đôn Phác's clinical experience.

The only other medical works dating from up until the seventeenth century that I have been able to identify are the 5-volume *Bảo sinh diên thọ toản yếu* 保生延壽纂要 (Collected Essentials for Preserving Life and Prolonging Life Span) by Đào Công Chính 陶公正, with his own preface dated 1676 (Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.3179), and the 1-volume *Châm cứu thủ huyệt đồ* 鍼灸取穴圖 (Diagrams for Selecting Points in Acu-moxibustion) with a colophon dated 1695 by Lí Công Tuấn 李公俊 (Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, VHv.2015).

4. Ngô Văn Tĩnh's Vạn Phương Tập Nghiệm

Ngô Văn Tĩnh 吳文靖, another presented scholar, compiled the 8-volume *Vạn phương tập nghiệm* 萬方集驗 (Collected Effects of a Myriad Formulas). The extant handcopy made by the École française d'Extrême-Orient (Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.1287/1–8) has a preface dating from when it was reprinted in 1762, according to which it was “compiled by Ngô Văn Tĩnh, a presented scholar of the Lê dynasty, proofread by Nguyễn Nho 阮儒, a presented scholar of the Lê dynasty, and copied by Nguyễn Dịch 阮迪, an entry-level licentiate (*tú tài* 秀才) of the Academy of Medicine.” It is also stated that because it was difficult to obtain a conspectus of formulas, this collection was compiled by searching widely and includes formulas

handed down in families throughout the country.

The *Vạn phương tập nghiệm* is written entirely in Chinese, and it constitutes a formulary arranged by illness. Vols. 1–4 deal with internal treatment, starting with various illnesses such as malaria, diarrhea, food poisoning, cerebrovascular disorders, summer colds, cold-induced disorders, influenza, and colds caught when it is chilly. The placing of malaria, diarrhea, and food poisoning before cold-induced disorders could be described as a characteristic common to Vietnamese medical treatises. Vol. 5 deals with surgery, vol. 6 with gynecology and pediatrics, vol. 7 with illnesses of the head, and vol. 8 with thoracico-abdominal illnesses and illnesses of the lower half of the body, and a distinctive feature of the final two volumes can be seen in the fact that they are both divided into three parts.

For each illness, formulas are listed by symptoms, but there is no theoretical discussion of the illnesses, and sources are given at either the start or the end of each section. Many of the formulas have been indirectly quoted from Chinese works such as the *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu*, *Wai-t'ai mi-yao-fang* 外臺祕要方 (Secret and Essential Formulas from the Imperial Library), and *Cheng-lei pen-ts'ao* 證類本草 (Verified and Classified Pharmacopoeia), but there are also quotations from Chinese works post-dating the *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu*. It is worth noting that the *Vạn phương tập nghiệm* also quotes from Vietnamese medical and pharmacological treatises the current whereabouts of which are unknown. This format of bringing together only formulas may have been influenced by the Chinese *P'u-chi-fang* 普濟方 (Prescriptions for Universal Relief; 1390). This work is the only extant Vietnamese formulary compiled by imperial order, and in this sense too it is quite valuable.

5. Lê Hữu Trác's [Hải Thượng Lãn Ông] Y Tông Tâm Lĩnh

Lê Hữu Trác 黎有俔 (1720–91), whose given name was Hữu Chẩn 有診, also went by the pseudonym of Hải Thượng Lãn Ông 海上懶翁 (Old Idler of Hải Thượng). Both his grandfather and father had been presented scholars. He was born in his mother's hometown in Hà Tĩnh 河靜 province, grew up in his father's hometown in Hải Dương 海陽 province, and later returned to his mother's home district, where he took the name Hải Thượng Lãn Ông and practiced medicine. He is therefore generally known as Hải Thượng Lãn Ông or Lãn Ông.

As a boy, Lê Hữu Trác went with his father to the capital Thăng Long, where he studied and became renowned for his exceptional talent and extensive knowledge. At the age of twenty he returned to his birthplace to perform the funeral service for his father and discharge his filial duties towards his mother, and he never resumed his studies. At the time, the country was in a state of upheaval because of numerous conflicts, and it was also suffering from droughts and famines. Unable to decide on

how to support himself, Lê Hữu Trác studied *yin-yang* 陰陽 theory under an eighty-year-old teacher named Võ 武. He later joined the army, but realizing that war is of no benefit to the general populace, he returned to his mother's hometown after his older brother's death.

But because he had many worries and had become debilitated, Lê Hữu Trác received treatment from Trần Độc 陳讀, who had given up studying for the civil service examinations and had retired to become a doctor, and he recovered after about one year. The medical books he studied at this time included the Chinese *Feng-shih chin-nang mi-lu* 馮氏錦囊秘錄 (Mr. Feng's Secret Records from a Brocade Pouch), a medical encyclopedia in 8 parts and 50 fascicles by Feng Chao-chang 馮兆張 and first published in 1702, and because Lê Hữu Trác displayed a profound understanding of *yin-yang* theory as it applied to medicine, Trần Độc transmitted all of his medical knowledge to him. In 1756 Lê Hữu Trác went to the capital in search of a teacher of medicine, but unable to find one, he returned home and continued with his reading. Then, after having practiced medicine for a further ten-odd years, he began writing some years prior to 1770 a work based on his own experiences and studies and ultimately composed the [*Hải Thượng Lãn Ông*] *Y tông tâm lĩnh* [海上懶翁] 醫宗心領 (Essential Guidelines for Medicine [by the Old Idler of Hải Thượng]) in 28 parts and 66 volumes. The above biographical information is based on his own preface to this work (fig. 3), its explanatory remarks and final volume, and other sources.

The *Y tông tâm lĩnh* was proofread by Đường Mi Võ 唐郿武 on the basis of Lê Hữu Trác's own handwritten manuscript, etc., and was first printed in 1879–85 at Đồng Nhân 同人 temple in Bắc Ninh 北寧. Judging from the prefaces to each volume, it was written in the years between 1770 and 1786. The woodblocks were stored at Đồng Nhân temple until the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, and some surviving woodblocks that ended up in the south are currently held by Bắc Ninh Provincial Museum (fig. 4). The general table of contents gives the title of each volume, and their contents are as follows:

Opening vol., “Y nghiệp thần chương” 醫業神章: describes *inter alia* the author's experiences with medical treatment throughout his life.

Vol. 1, “Nội kinh yếu chỉ” 內經要旨: explains the essential points of the *Nei-ching*.

Vol. 2, “Y gia quan miện” 醫家冠冕: summarizes the main points of medicine.

Vols. 3–5, “Y hải cầu nguyên” 醫學求源: present sayings of earlier physicians with explanations.

Vol. 6, “Huyền tẩn phát vi” 玄牝發微: discusses congenital water and fire (*yin* and *yang*) in the kidney's energy (*shen-ch'i* 腎氣) and pills with six ingredients (*liu-*

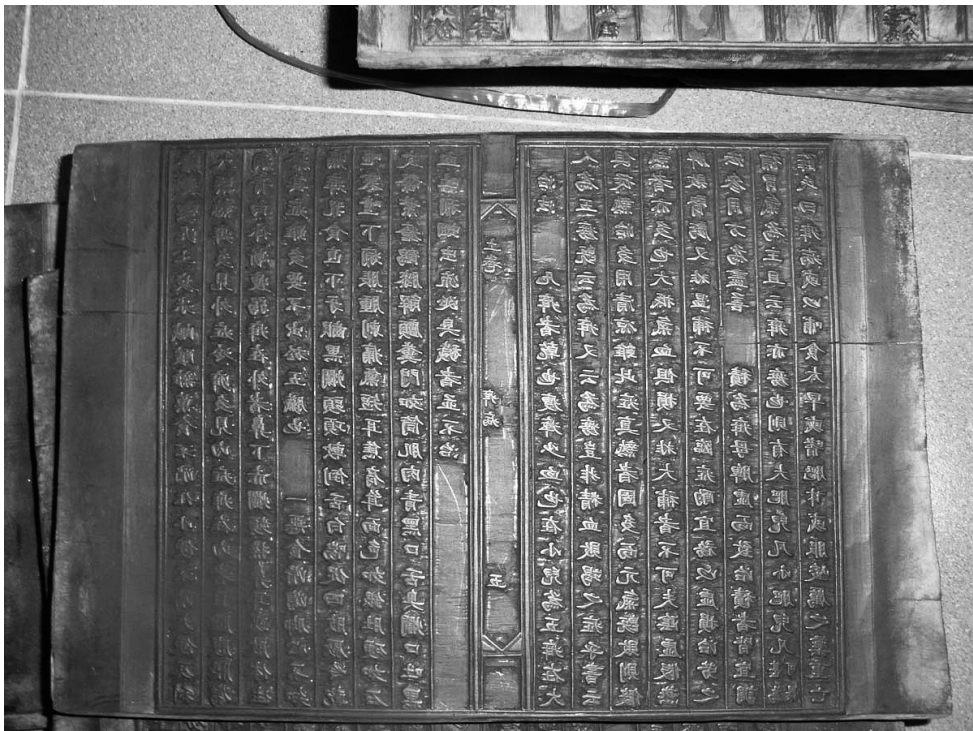
Fig. 3. *Y tóng tâm lĩnh*, author's preface (NLV, R.1077)

Fig. 4. Woodblock held by Bắc Ninh Provincial Museum

- wei-wan* 六味丸) and eight ingredients (*pa-wei-wan* 八味丸).
- Vol. 7, “Khôn hóa thái chân” 坤化探真: discusses acquired energy and blood (*ch’i-hsüeh* 氣血) in the spleen and stomach and formulas for tonifying the spleen.
- Vol. 8, “Đạo lưu dư vận” 導流餘韻: sets forth the author’s medical theories.
- Vol. 9, “Vận khí bí điển” 運氣祕典: discusses the theory of circulatory phases and seasonal influences (*yün-ch’i* 運氣).
- Vols. 10–11, “Dược phẩm vừng yếu” 藥品彙要: describe the effects of 150 important drugs.
- Vols. 12–13, “Lĩnh Nam bản thảo” 嶺南本草: describe the effects of Vietnamese drugs on the basis of the *Nam dược thần hiệu*, etc.
- Vol. 14, “Ngoại cảm thông trị” 外感通治: discusses illnesses due to external malarious influences and their treatment.
- Vols. 15–24, “Bách bệnh cơ yếu” 百病機要 (only vols. 17–18 published): discuss various illnesses and their treatment.
- Vol. 25, “Y trung quan kiện” 醫中關鍵: discusses the secrets to treating various illnesses.
- Vols. 26–27, “Phụ đạo xán nhiên” 婦道燦然: discuss gynecological disorders, prepartum and postpartum disorders, and their treatment.
- Vol. 28, “Toạ thảo lương mô” 坐草良模: discusses obstetrics.
- Vols. 29–32, “Ấu ấu tu tri” 幼幼須知: discuss pediatrics.
- Vols. 34–43, “Mộng trung giác đậu” 夢中覺痘: discuss smallpox.
- Vol. 44, “Ma chẩn chuẩn thăng” 麻疹準繩: discusses measles.
- Vol. 45, “Tâm đắc thần phương” 心得神方: explains formulas included in the *Feng-shih chin-nang mi-lu*.
- Vol. 46, “Hiệu phỏng tân phương” 倣倣新方: lists formulas devised by the author.
- Vols. 47–49, “Bách gia trân tàng” 百家珍藏: list formulas devised by renowned Vietnamese physicians, arranged by illness.
- Vols. 50–57, “Hành giản trân nhu” 行簡珍需: give drugs suitable for various illnesses.
- Vols. 58–60, “Y phương hải hội” 醫方海會 (only vol. 58 published): bring together formulas arranged by illness.
- Vol. 61, “Y dương án” 醫陽案: gives examples of successful treatments.
- Vol. 62, “Y âm án” 醫陰案: gives examples of unsuccessful treatments.
- Vol. 63, “Truyền tâm bí chỉ” 傳心祕旨 (“Châu ngọc cách ngôn” 珠玉格言): presents sayings about the quintessence of medical treatment in general.
- Vol. 64, “Vấn sách” 問策: unpublished.
- Closing vol., “Thượng Kinh kí sự” 上京記事: includes an account of the author’s visit to Thăng Long, poems exchanged with famous people, etc.

The *Y tông tâm lĩnh* thus consists of 64 volumes together with opening and closing volumes, making 66 volumes in total. But the extant version is missing several volumes, and judging from the prefaces added at the time of publication it would seem that a total of 55 volumes in 27 parts were actually published. It is, of course, the most voluminous medical treatise compiled by a single person in Vietnam, and there are few similar examples in China, Japan, or Korea. When one also takes into account the fact that it was published about a hundred years after the author's death, it is questionable whether it was actually composed by Lãn Ông alone. But the overall contents, including the author's prefaces to each volume, display a high level of internal consistency, and signs of the inclusion of the writings of other people can be found only in vols. 12–13. The most frequently quoted work is the *Feng-shih chin-nang mi-lu*, followed by the *I-hsüeh ju-men*, *Wan-ping hui-ch'un* 萬病回春 (Recovery from a Myriad Diseases), *Shou-shih pao-yüan*, and *Ching-yüeh ch'üan-shu*, all of which are medical encyclopedias dating from the Ming to early Ch'ing period, and it is to be surmised that it was partly because of the influence of these works that the *Y tông tâm lĩnh* was composed.

The achievements of this work may be considered to have been threefold. First, it presented a system of medicine in which Chinese medicine had been Vietnamized and clarified its characteristics. Secondly, it dealt comprehensively with the effects of and formulas for Vietnamese drugs from the perspective of Tuệ Tĩnh's view that Southern medicines should be used for treating the Vietnamese, and it also provided newly devised treatments and formulas. Thirdly, it described not only successful but also unsuccessful examples of treatment for the benefit of future students of medicine. This work presented both theories and methods of treatment, especially methods of treatment and formulas using Southern drugs, and a systematic form of Vietnamese medicine was brought to completion. Even prior to its publication, it was quoted in many Vietnamese medical and pharmacological works, and manuscripts of parts of it or excerpts from it also circulated. It was thus an extremely influential work, and its author Lãn Ông must indeed be regarded as one of the leading physicians in the history of Vietnam.

6. Medical Treatises by Nguyễn Gia Phan

Nguyễn Gia Phan (1749–1829),⁸⁾ another presented scholar, wrote several medical treatises, including the *Thai sản điều kinh phương pháp* 胎產調經方法 (Methods for

8) Nguyễn Gia Phan 阮嘉璠 was born in Từ Liêm 慈廉 district (present-day Hanoi) in 1749. He passed the civil service examinations at the age of twenty-six and was appointed to the post of censor, overseeing officials in Sơn Tây 山西 province.

Conceiving by Regulating Menstruation), *Lý âm phương pháp thông lục* 理陰方法通錄 (Comprehensive Record of Methods for Managing Women's Health), *Hộ nhi phương pháp thông lục* 護兒方法通錄 (Comprehensive Record of Methods for Protecting Infants), and *Liệu dịch phương pháp toàn tập* 療疫方法全集 (Complete Collection of Methods for Treating Epidemics).

The Trịnh 鄭 family, which wielded power in the final years of the Lê dynasty, had few successors, and learning that the presented scholar Nguyễn Gia Phan came from a family of physicians that had continued for three generations, they had him compile a book about prepartum matters (1777), which was then used at the imperial court. Nguyễn Gia Phan returned home in 1786 and, adding a section on postpartum matters which had been missing in the work he had presented to the Trịnh family, he wrote the *Thai sản điều kinh phương pháp*, a book on obstetrics written in Chinese (Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, VHv.2069).⁹⁾ It includes an explanation of the relationship between the fetus during the ten months of pregnancy and the meridians or channels (*ching-mai* 經脈), methods for predicting the sex of the fetus, medicines to be used at childbirth, illustrated explanations of the fetus during the ten months of pregnancy, treatment for menstrual irregularities, methods for becoming pregnant, secret instructions for conceiving through sexual intercourse, and secret instructions for changing a female fetus into a male fetus within the first three months of pregnancy. Each chapter contains a theoretical discussion and formulas, as well as accounts of the author's experiences in treating the conditions dealt with. The works quoted include, in addition to the Chinese gynecological texts *Chi-yin kang-mu* and *Fu-jen liang-fang* 婦人良方 (Effective Formulas for Women), the encyclopedic *Cheng-chih chun-sheng* 證治準繩 (Standards for Diagnosis and Treatment), *Ching-yüeh ch'üan-shu*, *Feng-shih chin-nang mi-lu*, *Shou-shih pao-yüan*, and *Wan-ping hui-ch'un*, suggesting that these works were widely read at the time.

Nguyễn Gia Phan then took the sections on pediatrics in the *Thai sản điều kinh phương pháp* and in 1813 compiled the *Hộ nhi phương pháp thông lục* in 4 volumes (Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.1989/1–2, etc.), again in Chinese. He quotes theoretical discussions and treatments, arranged by symptoms, from Chinese works on pediatrics and medical encyclopedias, and it is worth noting that this work includes “Western methods of treatment.”

In 1814, Nguyễn Gia Phan compiled the 4-volume *Lý âm phương pháp thông lục* (2 vols. extant; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.2853/1–2) on gynecology, also in

9) Extant copies of this work also bear the titles *Thai tiền điều kinh phương pháp* 胎前調經方法, *Thai tiền điều dưỡng phương pháp* 胎前調養方法, *Thai sản điều lý phương pháp* 胎產調理方法, and *Thai sản điều dưỡng phương pháp* 胎產調養方法. But these titles are all misnomers deriving from chapter titles, and the correct title is *Thai sản điều kinh phương pháp*.

Chinese. Since it includes a preface from 1788, it could be regarded as an enlarged version of the *Thai sản điều kinh phương pháp*, and again it contains many quotations from Chinese medical works. According to the author's preface from 1814, he also wrote the *Y gia phương pháp tổng lục* 醫家方法總錄 (Complete Record of Physicians' Methods), but it is not known whether it has survived.

In 1814 Nguyễn Gia Phan also wrote the 2-volume *Liệu dịch phương pháp toàn tập* on the treatment of epidemics, again in Chinese. According to the 1816 colophon in the manuscript of this work (Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.1306), it is based on the author's experiences of treating epidemics during two major outbreaks in 1789 and 1814. The authors of works quoted include Chang Ching-yüeh 張景岳, Feng Chao-chang, Chao Hsien-k'ò 趙獻可, and Wu Mien-hsüeh 吳勉學 of the Ming, and it is evident that their writings were widely consulted at the time.

IV. MEDICAL AND PHARMACOLOGICAL TREATISES OF THE NGUYỄN PERIOD (1802–1945)

1. *The System of Medical Treatment and Traditional Medical Circles*

In the capital Phú Xuân (present-day Hue) there was an Imperial Academy of Medicine (*thái y viện* 太醫院) attached to the court, and it was responsible for providing medical care for the imperial family and government officials. The training of court physicians at the Imperial Academy of Medicine began in 1856, but because the lectures provided only simple introductions to internal medicine and surgery, the majority of official physicians were selected from among doctors practicing among the general populace. Official physicians responsible for looking after government officials and troops were also attached to local medical offices (*luong y ti* 良醫司). But there was no public health care for ordinary people, nor were there any training and research facilities, and private doctors learnt from teachings passed down in their families or else studied at the private schools of renowned physicians. In the period from 1820 to 1883, the government provided medical care and medicines for the general populace, and during epidemics officials from the central government and court physicians were sent to the provinces.

In the 1880s France abolished the civil service examination system in Sài Gòn (present-day Ho Chi Minh) in the south, and from around 1910 a romanized form of Vietnamese orthography devised by the French (*quốc ngữ* 國語) began to spread. Thereafter, the use of mixed-script texts employing Chinese and *chữ nôm* characters fell into decline, and as a result of the spread of education and hospitals (fig. 5) based on Western medicine by the French, traditional medical treatment became the preserve of the private sector. However, the civil service examination system survived



Fig. 5. Vietnam's first Western hospital (Sài Gòn, 1876)

until 1918 in Hue in central Vietnam and in Hanoi in the north, and Hán-Nôm writing was used into the twentieth century, as a result of which traditional medicine has not been relegated to the private sector to the same extent as in the south. At the same time, the number of people engaged in practicing traditional medicine increased nationwide, and its spread and popularization also advanced. It is partly for this reason that the majority of extant works on traditional medicine and pharmacology by Vietnamese are manuscripts or printed books dating from the Nguyễn period.

2. Datable Works

There are no voluminous works such as the *Y tông tâm lĩnh* among extant medical and pharmacological works from the Nguyễn period. Furthermore, the majority of works thought to have been handwritten since the nineteenth century are notebooks and the like that record teachings and so on transmitted by certain families, and only a small number mention the author or date of composition. But there are also some that have prefaces and so on which inform us of when they were written or published. In the following, I shall therefore give a brief overview of works that I have been able to date. For further details, reference should be made to two on-line

sources.¹⁰⁾

Nguyễn Hành 阮衡, *Lạc sinh tâm đắc* 樂生心得 (Rules for Happy Living), 1 vol. (author's preface dated 1802; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, VHb.199): medical treatise written in Chinese; also includes songs on the meridians written in Hán-Nôm in alternating lines of six and eight syllables.

Lê Trác Như 黎卓如, *Cứu pháp tinh vi trích yếu tiện lãm* 灸法精微摘要便覽 (Concise Compendium of the Essence of Moxibustion), 2 vols. (author's preface dated 1805; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, VHv.2946): treatise on moxibustion, written in Chinese.

Ngô Thủ 吳手, *Hoạt nhân bị yếu* 活人備要 (Essentials for Saving People), 1 vol. extant (author's preface dated 1809; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.2798): originally a 4-volume medical encyclopedia written in Chinese; the general discussion of diagnosis, etc., has survived.

Lê Văn Huệ 黎文惠 (?), *Tổng toàn y tập* 總纂醫集 (Compendium of Medicine), vols. 2–3 extant (1854?; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.1242): medical encyclopedia written in Chinese; the extant manuscript appears to be based on a printed edition.

Bùi Thúc Trình 裴叔貞, *Y học thuyết nghi* 醫學說疑 (Exposition of Doubts about Medicine), vols. 1, 3–5 & 7 extant (author's preface dated 1854; National Library of Vietnam, R.1963): medical treatise written in Chinese in question-and-answer format (fig. 6).

Bùi Thúc Trình, *Vệ sinh yếu chỉ* 衛生要旨 (Main Points for Protecting Life), 8 vols. (colophon dated 1866, author's preface dated 1890; National Library of Vietnam, R.1201–04, etc.): systematic medical encyclopedia written in Chinese; judging from the extant manuscripts, a printed edition may have been published in 1890.

Trần Đức Hình 陳德馨, *Đậu khoa* 痘科 (Smallpox), 4 vols. (author's preface dated 1869; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.2949/1–2): systematic and comprehensive collection of treatments for smallpox, written in Chinese (including songs and prose-poems).

Nguyễn Hi Viên 阮希袁, *Sử đồng tê thọ đậu hậu toàn thư* 使童躋壽痘後全書 (Encyclopedia for Recovery from Infantile Smallpox), 1 vol. (author's preface

10) <http://square.umin.ac.jp/mayanagi/paper01/hannom.html> (MAYANAGI Makoto, The Bibliography of the Old Medical Books in the Institute of Han-Nom Studies); <http://square.umin.ac.jp/mayanagi/paper01/nlv.html> (MAYANAGI Makoto, The Bibliography of the Old Medical Books in the National Library of Vietnam).

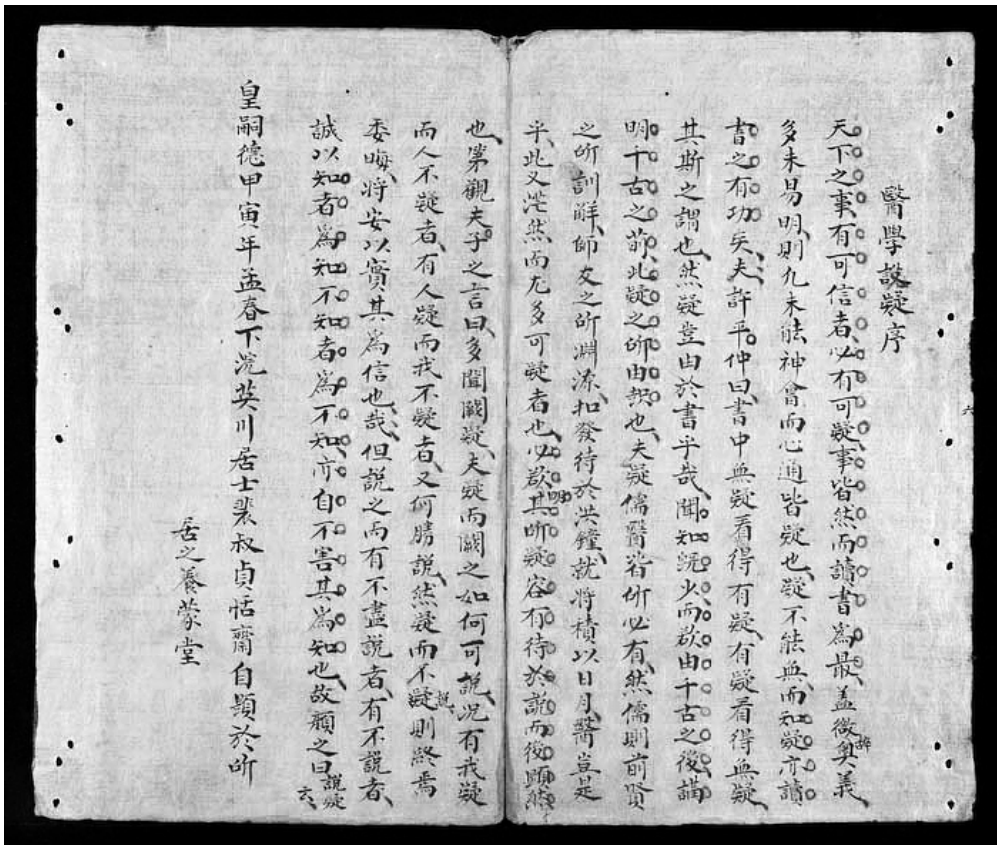


Fig. 6. *Y học thuyết nghi*, author's preface (NLV, R.1963)

- dated 1880; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.2273): extant version was copied from a printed edition with a preface dated 1880.
- Nguyễn Văn Thi 阮文詩, *Tự dục bí quyết* 嗣育秘訣 (Secret Instructions for Obtaining an Heir), 5 vols. (author's preface dated 1884; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, VHT.3/1–3): detailed treatise on obstetrics, with examples of how childless prominent people had children.
- Lê Đức Vọng 黎德望 (?), *Nhân khoa yếu lược* 眼科要錄 (Essentials of Ophthalmology), 1 vol. (colophon dated 1884; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.2160): treatise on ophthalmology, written in Chinese.
- Nguyễn Dịch 阮迪, *Vân Khê y thư yếu lược* 雲溪醫書要錄 (Essentials of Vân Khê's Medical Treatise), 2 vols. extant (preface dated 1885; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.2133/1–2): collection of medical theories and sections on obstetrics and gynecology taken from the *Y lý yếu lược* 醫理要錄 (Essentials of Medical Theory) by the court physician Vân Khê 雲溪.

Author unknown, *Bảo thai thần hiệu toàn thư giải âm* 保胎神效全書解音 (Encyclopedia in Vietnamese on Divine Efficacy in Protecting the Fetus), 1 vol. (pub. 1885; National Library of Vietnam, R.383, etc.): correct title is *Bảo thai chủng tử quốc âm toàn yếu* 保胎種子國音纂要 (Essentials in Vietnamese Pronunciation for Protecting Conception and the Fetus); a treatise on obstetrics and pediatrics written in Hán-Nôm.

Author unknown, *Kì phương diệu tuyển* 奇方妙選 (Wondrous Selection of Novel Formulas), 4 vols. (colophon dated 1896; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, VHv. 2950): family formulary arranged by illness.

Author unknown, *Vệ sinh bảo giám* 衛生寶鑑 (Precious Mirror on Hygiene), 1 vol. (pub. 1898; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, AB.428): written in Hán-Nôm, it discusses hygiene in everyday life; unrelated to a Chinese work of the same title.

Hoàng Chí Y 黃志伊, *Tự luận đường dược tài bị khảo* 敘倫堂藥材備考 (Tự Luận Đường's Notes on Materia Medica), 9 vols. (colophon dated 1899; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.290/1–2): pharmacopoeia which classifies 520 drugs by their effects and briefly describes them.

Nguyễn Văn Thịnh 阮文盛, *Công tư phổ tế linh dược* 公私普濟靈藥 (Miraculous Drugs for Universal Relief, Public and Private) (pub. 1910; Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, AC.235): collection of formulas for illnesses in seven branches of medicine, including men's health and pediatrics, said to have been sent down to earth by order of the Jade Emperor of Taoism.

Chí Thiện Đàn 志善壇, *Hoạt thế lương pháp* 活世良法 (Effective Methods for Saving the World), 3 vols. (pub. 1931; National Library of Vietnam, R.1788, etc.): collection of formulas said to have been imparted by a deity who had descended upon a medium (fig. 7).

3. *The Trung Việt Dược Tính Hợp Biên* by Phan Văn Thái et al.

In addition to the above works, a notable pharmacopoeia is the 16-volume *Trung việt dược tính hợp biên* 中越藥性合編 (Combined Compilation of the Properties of Chinese and Vietnamese Drugs) (Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, A.2702/1–16). According to the preface, “Because until now there had been no monograph on drugs produced in Vietnam, and it had been difficult to ascertain their Vietnamese names and utilize them, the government ordered the court physician Phan Văn Thái and others to compile one, and it was completed in 1916.”

This work lists a total of 1,655 drugs produced in China and Vietnam, classifying them in the manner of the *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu* into water, fire, and earth. Written in succinct Chinese, for each drug it gives the name, its provenance (whether it is produced in China or Vietnam), alternative Chinese name(s) and Vietnamese name

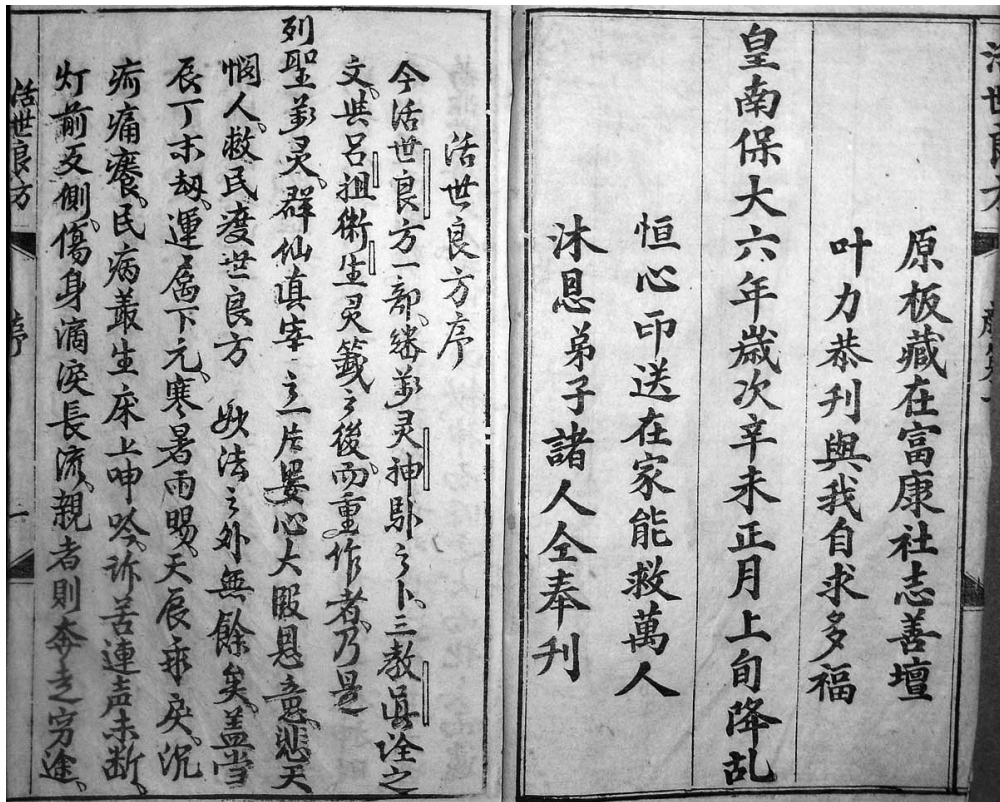


Fig. 7. *Hoạt thế hương pháp* (NLV, R.1788)

(the latter in *chữ nôm* characters), appearance, properties, processing methods, and effects, together with textual sources. The most frequently cited source is the *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu*, followed by Hải Thượng Lãn Ông, the Ch'ing-period *Pen-ts'ao ts'ung-hsin* 本草從新 (New Pharmacopoeia), the local gazetteer *Đại Nam nhất thống chí* 大南一統志 (pub. 1910) compiled during the Nguyễn period, the Ming-period *I-hsüeh ju-men*, and the Ch'ing-period *Pen-ts'ao pei-yao* 本草備要 (Essentials of Materia Medica). Vietnamese historical works are also quoted.

In the explanatory remarks added to the section on ginseng (*Panax ginseng*) in vol. 15, mention is made of ginseng produced in other countries, and Western (i.e., American) ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) from North America is mistakenly said to come from France. But it is correctly noted that Oriental (i.e., Japanese) ginseng (*Panax ginseng* cultivar) is produced in Japan and that "flower-flag ginseng" (*hua-ch'i-shen* 花旗參), another name for American ginseng, comes from the Americas. It is also interesting to note that in the section on tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*) in vol. 16 it is stated that it first entered Vietnam from Yün-nan 雲南 in China in 1660. This

work, which also pays attention to natural history, is the only Vietnamese pharmacopoeia compiled by imperial order, and judging from its size, it was probably never printed. The sole extant copy held by the Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies is a handcopy made by the École française d'Extrême-Orient, and because it was probably based on the original preserved in Hue, it is valuable also for the history of Vietnamese scholarship.

4. *The Ngư Tiều Vấn Đáp Nho Y Diễn Ca and Medicine in Southern Vietnam*

Among the Vietnamese medical and pharmacological works considered above, only a small number, such as the *Hồng Nghĩa giác tư y thư*, have been translated and published in modern Vietnamese, and in most cases only the titles and/or authors have been mentioned in other studies. It is also unlikely that there exist any photographic reproductions of the originals, but currently works held mainly by the National Library of Vietnam are being made digitally accessible.¹¹⁾ Furthermore, these were all works from northern and central Vietnam, especially Hanoi, the capital from the Trần period, and Hue, the capital during the Nguyễn period. Up until the first half of the Nguyễn period, southern Vietnam was far removed from the centers of politics and culture, and few old books from the south have survived.

Following the Treaty of Saigon in 1862, on the basis of which the Nguyễn dynasty ceded southern Vietnam to France, French-style medical treatment became the official form of treatment in southern Vietnam, and traditional medical treatment became the preserve of local physicians. In resistance to these moves, there was composed between about 1870 and 1880 the *Ngư tiều vấn đáp nho y diễn ca* 漁樵問答儒醫演歌 (Verses of a Dialogue between a Fisherman and a Woodcutter about Confucian Medicine) (fig. 8; pub. 1911), and it has continued to be reprinted under the title *Ngư tiều vấn đáp y thuật* 漁樵問答醫術 (Dialogue between a Fisherman and a Woodcutter on the Art of Medicine), which includes a parallel rendering in romanized Vietnamese. This work was composed by the blind poet and Confucian physician Nguyễn Đình Chiểu 阮廷炤 (pseudonym: Hối Trai 晦齋; 1822–88) in mixed Hán-Nôm that makes use of many *chữ nôm* characters, and it presents the quintessence of Chinese medical and pharmacological theories in about 3,600 verses (*diễn ca* 演歌) in alternating lines of six and eight syllables.

Because this work was written in a style of Vietnamese that was easy for people to understand and popularized systematic knowledge of traditional medicine for the

11) <http://lib.nomfoundation.org/> (Digital collections of the Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation).

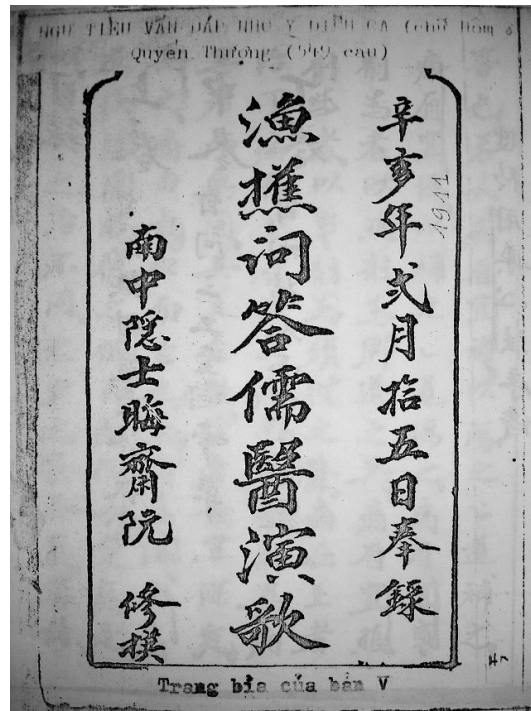


Fig. 8. *Ngư Tiêu vấn đáp nhô y diên ca* (Southern Institute of Social Sciences Library, Ho Chi Minh)

first time, it is considered to represent a pinnacle in the Vietnamization of Chinese medicine. It was also the longest work in the history of Vietnamese medicine to be written in the distinctively Vietnamese literary style known as *diên ca*. It could be said that the reason that similar works did not appear at the time in central and northern Vietnam was that it was in the south that traditional medical treatment was under the greatest threat from French colonial medicine.

V. THE DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF VIETNAMESE MEDICINE AND PHARMACOLOGY

In the above we have examined extant medical and pharmacological works from the Trần period down to the Nguyễn period, and through these works it is possible to gain a glimpse of some of the developments and characteristics distinctive of Vietnam.

The first point to be noticed is the development of a form of medicine suited to Vietnam's climatic conditions, the structure of illnesses to which its people were

susceptible, and people's physical constitutions. The fourteenth-century *Y học yếu giải*, the oldest extant Vietnamese medical work, includes two newly devised formulas for treating infectious fevers and chills. In dealing with acute diseases, greater emphasis is placed on malaria, diarrhea, and food poisoning than on cerebrovascular disorders and cold-induced disorders, and this is a characteristic common to Vietnamese medical works. In vol. 14 ("Ngoại cảm thông trị") of the *Y tông tâm lĩnh*, cold-induced disorders are discussed together with Vietnam's climatic conditions and the physical constitution of its people, and it is deemed inappropriate to use the warming diaphoretics ephedra (*ma-huang* 麻黃 [*Ephedrae herba*]) and cinnamon twigs (*kuei-chih* 桂枝 [*Cinnamomum obtusifolium (ramus)*]) to treat cold-induced disorders because of Vietnam's high temperatures. This work also includes many new formulas for supplementing bodily fluids lost through perspiration because of Vietnam's heat and humidity.

Related to this is the application of Southern drugs in formulas, advocated by Tuệ Tĩnh, and the influence of this can be widely seen in many medical works. That is to say, the second characteristic is the expansion of the field of Vietnamese medicine and pharmacology. The development and application of Southern drugs extended to a recognition of the medicinal efficacy of distinctively Vietnamese foodstuffs, and there were born original pharmacopoeias of Vietnamese drugs and foodstuffs, culminating in the *Trung việt dược tính hợp biên*, compiled by imperial order. In clinical developments, not only did there develop treatments for malaria, warm-temperature diseases, and miasma, which could all be described as endemic diseases, but there were composed medical treatises that placed an equal importance on the treatment of domestic animals. Further, owing to frequent warfare, military medicine was born, while in measures taken in the imperial court to produce heirs there were advances in the fields of aphrodisiacs, sexual hygiene, gynecology, pediatrics, and smallpox to assist in conception and childcare. These formulas based on experience were included in the *Vạn phương tập nghiệm*, a comprehensive formulary compiled by imperial order.

Thirdly, mention may be made of the spread of expositions of medicine in song form, starting with Tuệ Tĩnh's *Nam dược quốc ngữ phú* and *Trực giải chỉ nam dược tính phú*. Medical and pharmacological works in song form first appeared in China during the Yüan dynasty and circulated somewhat during the Ming, and their influence also extended to some extent to Korea and Japan. But the adoption of this format in the greatest number of medical and pharmacological works is a major characteristic of Vietnam, and it could be said to be a reflection of the fact that the essentials of medicine and pharmacology were transmitted by recitation from memory and oral transmission. This format was brought to completion in Nguyễn

Đình Chiểu's *Ngũ Tiều vấn đáp nhô y diển ca* in the form of *diển ca* written in alternating lines of six and eight syllables. It is to be surmised that commercial publishing, which also has the function of publicizing and disseminating medical and pharmacological knowledge, did not emerge in Vietnam until the late nineteenth century. Background factors in this widespread adoption of the song form in Vietnamese medical and pharmacological works may have been this social economy and an oral culture.

The fourth characteristic is the fact that many of the contemporary medical and pharmacological works that continued to be copied and have survived down to the present day were compiled by men who had passed the civil service examinations or by men belonging to or associated with such families. Of course, the existence of the civil service examination system lies behind this, but in China and Korea, where civil service examinations were also held, medical and pharmacological works compiled by men who had passed these examinations were not circulated or transmitted to the same extent as they were in Vietnam. This suggests a relationship between Confucianism and medicine peculiar to Vietnam. Consequently, the Chinese medical and pharmacological works quoted in their writings were all voluminous and expensive works such as the 52-fascicle *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu* (1596), 59-fascicle *Feng-shih chin-nang mi-lu* (1702), 64-fascicle *Ching-yüeh ch'üan-shu* (1710), and 44-fascicle *Cheng-chih chun-sheng* (1760), and these were not works that local doctors could usually utilize. Even smaller works such as the 8-fascicle *I-hsüeh ju-men* (1575), 8-fascicle *Wan-ping hui-ch'un* (1587), and 10-fascicle *Shou-shih pao-yüan* (1615) were being used in Vietnam not all that long after they had been completed or had been first published in China, and this too would have been difficult for local practitioners to do. It was probably partly because of such factors that medical works by men who had passed the civil service examinations continued to be transmitted and quoted.

Fifthly, mention must be made of the appearance of the [*Hải thượng lãn ông*] *Y tông tâm lĩnh* in 28 books and 66 volumes. Not only can all of the characteristics of Vietnamese medicine and pharmacology noted above be found in this work, but they have been systematically and logically organized, and it is no exaggeration to say that a system endowed with the distinctive features of Vietnamese medicine was given concrete expression in this work. This great achievement is comparable to that of Manase Dōsan 曲直瀨道三 (1507–94) in Japan and Hō Chun 許浚 (1539–1615) in Korea, and for this reason Hải Thượng Lãn Ông (Lê Hữu Trác) is regarded as the greatest physician in the history of Vietnam. But because of its voluminousness and the fact that it is written in Chinese, this work is not used at all in present-day Vietnam.



Fig. 9. Temple of Medicine (Hanoi), where Lãn Ông and others are enshrined.¹²⁾

Further, because of the introduction by the government in Hanoi of contemporary Chinese medicine in modern Vietnamese translation since 1955, medicine in present-day Vietnam, with the exception of research into Vietnam's own medicines, is far removed from the old medical and pharmacological works that record Vietnam's own experiential knowledge. It is to be hoped that in the future the diversity of traditional Vietnamese medicine and pharmacology will be given greater prominence.

12) This Temple of Medicine (Y Miếu 醫廟) was established in 1774 by Trịnh Đình Ngạc 鄭廷玩, head of the Imperial Academy of Medicine, for the purpose of venerating renowned Vietnamese physicians such as Tuệ Tĩnh and Hải Thượng Lãn Ông. It was renovated and extended in 1834, but was then abandoned during the period of French rule. In 2000 it was rebuilt and restored by the municipal authorities of Hanoi, and since then a memorial service has been held annually on Traditional Medicine Day (15th day of the first month of the lunar calendar) by people involved in medicine. It is interesting to note that the names inscribed on the pillars—*Shou-shih* 壽世 and *Ching-yüeh* 景岳 on the right and *Hui-ch'un* 回春 and *Tan-hsi* 丹溪 on the left—are the names of Chinese medical works and physicians that had an influence on Vietnamese medicine.