

TENTATIVE TRANSLATION TO PRACTICE I – DỊCH VIỆT-ANH

Translate the following Practices into English, using the given vocabulary for your text (if provided). Use your own paper. Answer can be found at www.tinhhoavietnam.net under **Key to Translator's Manual** 'Phần trả lời bài tập Cẩm Nang Dịch Thuật'

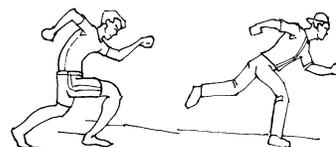
A. Dịch ở cấp độ từ-vựng 'Lexical level'

Lưu ý: Trong **Bài tập 1** này chúng ta sẽ làm quen với những từ-ngữ hay câu nói thông thường trong sinh hoạt hằng ngày của người Việt với nhau.

Notes: In **Practice 1** we will familiarize ourselves with typical terms and phrases commonly used at home among Vietnamese speakers themselves.

◎ Bài tập 1

- 1) a. Hey Joe, **act your age!**
b. What a **silly and cheatable** you are!
- 2) a. **Age before beauty!**
b. That pair of reading **glasses for elderly people** is very light and expensive.
- 3) a. **After you!**
b. **Let-money-talk-first** is a wise policy.
- 4) a. **All righty already!** Stop what you talking.
b. Stop. **That's enough.** I just need that much.
- 5) a. Are **things getting** you **down**?
b. The two children averse to each other **made** their mother **sad**.
- 6) a. Are you **ready for** this?
b. Everybody **wants to know** what happens to them in the future.
- 7) a. **Break a leg, break a leg,** Thanh!
b. His mom always encourages him **to try harder** in his study.
- 8) a. **May I have** your **attention**, please!
b. **Dig up! Dig up!**
- 9) a. Do I have to **paint you a picture**?
b. I had to make a lengthy explanation before he **could understand**.
- 10) a. Don't **do anything I wouldn't do**, okay?
b. They are a group of people frequently **committing wrong doings**.
- 11) a. I **just can't get over** the way everybody treated one another like animals.
b. The grandma **was amazed** to see her little grandchild has become a tall, muscular young man.
- 12) a. I don't **mean maybe!**
b. It was **a true story**; still many people thought it was just **a joke**.



- 13) a. We left early because we didn't want **to wear out our welcome**.
b. That person is entirely inconsiderate; he is a perpetual **bother to us**.
- 14) a. "**Have a ball!**" said Tâm to Mai as she walked out the door.
b. We saw Mr. & Mrs. Quang off at the airport and said to them, "**Have a good trip!**"
- 15) a. Nam, I want you to settle down and start studying. **Get my drift?**
b. I wonder if you **understand** what I am talking about.
- 16) a. Tâm blew his top, looking, **for all intents and purposes**, as if he were going to strangle Xuân, but, being the gentleman that he is, he just glowered at her.
b. We **intend** to help both of them some money to start their business.
- 17) a. "**Give me a break!**" shouted Bằng. "Go away and stop bother me!"
b. **That does it!** I never want to see you again!
- 18) a. **That really burns me up!**
b. Her child's sickness is getting serious; that **worries her a lot**.
- 19) a. That's **enough foolishness**. I'm leaving and I never want to see you again!
b. **It was crazy of her** as she let that stranger have all of her savings.
- 20) a. **Bite your tongue!** He'll be all right.
b. During those dark days, we only had **fish brine and salt** in the diet without a bit of meat or fish.



◎ Bài tập 2

Lưu ý: Trong **Bài tập 2** dưới đây có 20 cặp, mỗi cặp có các từ-ngữ **nghiêng đậm** khác nhau nhưng tương đương với một từ-ngữ tiếng Anh mà thôi.

Notes: In Practice 2 below, there are 20 pairs of sentences. Each has **bold italic** terms which are different in Vietnamese but supposed to be translated the same terms in English.

Thí dụ:

*Trong tòa nhà này có nhiều **văn phòng** của các tổ hợp luật khác nhau. 'In this building, there are quite a few **offices** of different law firms.'*

*Anh ấy có được chức vụ ấy là nhờ vào **sự vận động** của một người bạn. 'He obtained a position through the **offices** of a friend.'*

- 1). a. Having lived in a large city all his life, he found it hard to adjust to **the sticks**.
b. The threat of unemployment was **the stick** that kept the workers toiling overtime.
- 2). a. After the quarrel last week, two of them get **a rent**.
b. This apartment **rents** cheaply.
- 3). a. Parents should always **inculcate** virtue in the young
b. Adults ought to **inculcate** children with the love of truth.
- 4). a. Severe pains **distorted** her face.
b. The speaker is noted for having **distorted** the facts.

- 5). a. At the news of their mother's death, the children **cried their eyes out**.
b. The rise in crime **cried out** for greater police protection.
- 6). a. This log will **smolder** on the hearth for hours.
b. Hatred **smoldered** beneath a polite surface.
- 7). a. She **calls** her husband names.
b. Thousands of young men are being **called to the colors**.
- 8). a. The road up the mountain is winding and **arduous** to travel.
b. That year we suffered an **arduous** winter.
- 9). a. What a **messy** and dirty room!
b. It was a **messy** political situation that lasted for more than two years.
- 10). a. His tact makes a **difference** in the way people accept his suggestions.
b. Let's take half of the cake and let the three of them split the **difference**.
- 11). a. A meticulous person pays attention to the **minute** things.
b. The building design is up to the **minute**.
- 12). a. He had **seconds** on the meat and potatoes.
b. I have my hair cut every **second** week.
- 13). a. A broad smile **registered** on her face.
b. The thermometer **registered** 102 Fahrenheit degrees this noon.
- 14). a. I wish to have a fresh **garden** of vegetables.
b. The voters had been led up the **garden** path too often to take a candidate's promises seriously.
- 15). a. The whale usually moves in a **school**.
b. Among the **schools** of arts, I like the Expressionism.
- 16). a. The door **sprang** open and in he walked.
b. The board **sprang** from the fence during the storm.
- 17). a. The bleating of a froghorn **broke** the silence.
b. The prism **broke** the light into all the colors of the rainbow.
- 18). a. The rooms in the suite **communicated** by means of a hallway.
b. They **communicate** with each other every day.
- 19). a. His political rivals formulated a **design** to unseat him.
b. This is a scholarship **designed** for foreign students.
- 20). a. The urgent voice **took** the passers-by's attention.
b. She continuously **took** me for three times in the check game.



◎ Bài tập 3 -

Lưu ý: Trong **Bài tập 3** dưới đây có 20 câu dùng chữ **ăn** và những từ-ngữ có chữ **ăn**. Hãy dịch các câu đó ra tiếng Anh để thấy sự dị nghĩa của từ như thế nào.

Notes: In Practice 3 below, there are 20 sentences using the term **ăn** and its combination. This illustrates how compartmentalization of terms works.

Thí dụ:

Cửa này **ăn** thông ra sau vườn. 'This door **leads** you **to** the back garden.'

Trong cái xã hội ấy, cán bộ chính quyền đều tham nhũng; họ **ăn** không chừa một thứ gì. 'In that society, government officials are all corrupt; they **succumb to** all kinds of ill practices.'

- 1) That guy is *leading an idle life*; he's actually doing nothing. (**ăn** rồi không ngồi < ăn rồi ngồi không; inversion, lit.: 'eat then sit only; to lead an idle life')
- 2) Doing this business, I get a 5 per cent *commission*. (**ăn** hoa hồng 'eat flower pink 'rosy rose', to work on a __% commission)
- 3) The new-elected president volunteered to *work without pay*. (**ăn** lương 'eat rice, to get salt money: salary')
- 4) Many tradespersons usually get their extra profits by *doing pilferage*. (**ăn** bớt 'eat abate; dishonest profits in marketing or services, to pilfer')
- 5) Her poverty *makes her life dying for want* of food that she has to borrow from her neighbors till the harvest time when she is able to pay off her debts. (**ăn** đong 'eat measure: to borrow rice for meal after meal, to live in want).
- 6) The new film by Disney was *welcomed* by movie goers *like hot cakes*; on the first week after its release it gained 12 million dollars. (**ăn** khách 'eat guests: guests are attracted by something extraordinarily interesting; to sell/go like hot cakes).
- 7) *The dress* in the present day is quite different from that in the old days when the garments covered most the body, and now it shows most of the body. (**ăn** mặc 'eat wear'; to dress > the way one dresses up)
- 8) The ill-treated citizens have been *cooling their heels* for several years, but none of the cadres in the government has helped them solve the problems. (**ăn** chực 'eat wait'; to feed on someone; **ăn** chực nằm chờ 'eat wait lie awaiting'; to cool one's heels)
- 9) Owing to his patiently hard-working character, curiosity, and business skill, he *carried all before him* just in the first three years in the United States. (**ăn** nên làm ra 'eat better work out' > to prosper in one's business, to carry all before one)
- 10) The book entitled *13 Reasons Why* addresses the bullying trend that results in indulging teenage people to commit suicide. (**ăn** hiếp 'eat harrass'; to bully)
- 11) They two had been *shacking up* for many years before they decided to get married. (**ăn** nằm 'eat lie (down); shackle up with someone)
- 12) In my neighborhood, there is a group of young men and women who *fly with the owls*. So, if decide to move in this place, avoid coming home late at night. (**ăn** đêm 'eat night'; fly with the owls)
- 13) My eldest brother is a *dandy man*; he often buys a lot of new fashionable and expensive clothes. (**ăn** diện 'eat fop'; characterizing a dandy person)



- 14) When young I used to displease my parents. Now that they both have passed away, I always *repent of my thoughtless acts I did*. (**ăn năn** ‘eat beseech’; to repent)
- 15) He talked a lot of nonsenses not *related to* the topic being discussed. (**ăn nhập** ‘eat merge’; to be related, relevant to)
- 16) At the encounter that day, she was determined to *square off over* her husband’s girl friend but in vain. (**ăn thua** ‘eat lose’; to square off over; > in negative use, it means ‘in vain’)
- 17) The gang of government cadres are thugs that *take the bread out of* innocent people’s mouths becomes rich. (**ăn cướp** ‘eat rob’ > ‘to pillage’ **ăn cướp cơm chim** ‘to take the bread out of someone’s mouth’)
- 18) Once hired, we have to *carry the ball* no matters who hires us. That’s normal. (**ăn cơm chúa**: ‘eat rice of the lord; to carry the ball’).
- 19) His wife passed away a long time ago, but he decided to stay celibatic. If he needs a relationship with any woman, he prefers to *pay cash on the barrelhead*. (**ăn bánh trả tiền** ‘eat cake pay money’; to pay cash on the barrelhead)
- 20) Those gangs of cadres in the government are simply *talking through their hats*, stealing public money, harrassing the innocent and serving the fifth column. They can never be of help in the development of the country. (**ăn ốc nói mò** ‘to eat snails; talk through one’s hat’)

B. Dịch bài ‘Translating full text’

◎ Bài tập 4 – Làng tôi

My village

The early summer days in my homevillage are the happiest but also the most arduous ones of the year. Royal poinciana flowers bloom and cover the schoolyards and country roads with their red petals. As the days grow bright and long, school finally ends. Children have more free time to go bird-nesting, or fishing in the pond, the brook or in the river. In summer, however, there are many things for adults to do and worry. The rice needs more water as the sun delivers excessive amounts of punishing heat onto the fields, and grassland for water-buffaloes shrinks at a rapid rate. Many of the children in the village soon become water-buffalo boys who will take their animals farther for green grass. Young girls accompany their mothers and help pull water with bamboo baskets from canals or rivers to pour onto the rice paddies. On summer nights, especially in moonlight, the whole field seems to be at work. People of all ages are trying their best to save the rice, with the hope of a good harvest in the coming autumn. Life in my hometown is rather difficult but enjoyable.



◎ Bài tập 5 – Đời thi sĩ

A Poet's Life



Most poets did not enjoy success in their lives. Nguyễn Tất Nhiên, who was one of the truly great poets in Vietnam, became a symbol of reminiscence after his suicide. His poems have been transformed into music, and his name is widely known to the Vietnamese of all ages. Hàn Mặc Tử, who left the world in his late 20's, has been noted for his heart-breaking love poems. Nguyễn Du, who was born into a high-ranking mandarin family, became famous not because of his position in the royal court but because of his outstanding works: *The Tale of Kim-Vân-Kiều*. This is an adaptation from a popular Chinese novel similar to *Le Cid*, which was adapted by Corneille from a Spanish drama of Guilhem de Castro.

◎ Bài tập 6 – Tôi đi học

Going to School

In late autumn when the worn paths in my village are covered with yellow leaves, and great masses of clouds are scattered in the sky, my thoughts turn towards the reminiscence of my first day to school.

I never forget the pure impression, which enlivens my heart like a fresh flower smiling cheerfully under the serene sky. It is the impression that I was too young to record anything, and now I cannot remember it all. But every time I see little children timidly hiding themselves behind their mothers on their first day to school, my heart ruffles with joy.

It was early on a cold and breezy morning, my mother walked with me holding my hand lovingly. We paced along the narrow path, on which I had traveled innumerable times before, to my school, but that morning everything along the path seemed quite different to me. Maybe it was because there was a big change on my mind: It was my first day I went to school. (Thanh Tịnh, *Motherland*)



◎ Bài tập 7 – Nhớ Rừng

In Remembrance of the Forest (of a Tiger in the Zoo)

*Enduring silent resentment in an iron cage,
I yawn watching the passing of each day.
In front of me come and go those little guys
that are of nothing but very silly in my eyes.
Now that I've been caught and kept in prison
I shamefully act like a clown for man's fun.
Look at that! Those dishonest bears over there
and brainless leopards nearby me seem to air.
I'm living in lack of love and in sad memory*

*about the old days when I was entirely free:
The forest was vast, full of shades of tall trees
caressed by angry storms and echoes of gorges.
among boisterous noises and chaos in darkness
My roar'd silence everything, and emptiness
would return to solemnly greet my brisk pace.
I enjoyed other animals' dependence on my grace.
I travelled through darkness and shivering thicket,
but my eyes, so keen that I'd spot a tiny cricket.*

Everywhere I went, my prey held their breath
 for their fear of me as their fear of death!
 I am I the lord of all creatures in the forest
 where ageless plants and flowers show their best.
 But alas! No more yellow moon by a rivulet,
 Where I quenched my thirst after a neat banquet.
 No more can I gaze at violent hurricane
 that swept over my kingdom with heavy rain.
 I see no more young trees bathing in forenoon ray,
 and happy birds chirping; as life bringing them
 into play.
 I couldn't watch the sun setting in bloodlike red
 waiting for the night to fall and darkness to shed.
 Before I began to regain what I had possessed.
 Oh, poor me! I lost everything and have to live on,
 swallowing all the bitterness and let them be
 bygone
 I'm averse to that lifeless and unnatural scene
 that appears before me here since I have been:
 planted flowers, moved lawn, trimmed trees,
 and brooks with dull water, all fake, can't suit my
 royal taste that I had been enjoying with glee.
 There, a disgusting islet I never want to even see.

Those thick leaves on that tree show me no
 mystery.
 But, heck! They all pretend to be extreme secrets
 with irony, they all act as if in wilderness,
 where wildness and prestige have existed for
 ages.
 Oh my former kingdom! How magnificent it is!
 My kingdom where I used to proudly throne.
 How can I stand doing nothing but lie prone?
 My kingdom, the place I can never see again.
 Don't those guys understand my innermost pain?
 Never mind! I am still having it in my dream.
 Yes, I am standing by a wonderful stream:
 – Hark! My proud kingdom, my beloved forest!



By Thế Lữ
 Translated into Vietnamese
 By Trần Ngọc Dung, 9/2002

◎ Bài tập 8 – Câu Đố

A Riddle



Three friends checked into a motel for the night and the clerk tells them the bill is \$30, payable in advance. So, they each paid the clerk \$10 and went to their room. A few minutes later, the clerk realized he had made an error and overcharged the trio by \$5. He asked the bellhop to return \$5 to the three friends who had just checked in. The bellhop saw this as an opportunity to make \$2 as he reasoned that the three friends would have a tough time dividing \$5 evenly among them; so he decided to tell them that the clerk made a mistake of only \$3, giving a dollar back to each of the friends. He pocketed the leftover \$2 and went home for the day! Now, each of the three friends got a dollar back, thus they each paid \$9 for the room which was a total of \$27 for the night. We know the bellhop pocketed \$2 and adding that to the \$27, you get \$29, not \$30 which was originally spent. Where did the other dollar go?

◎ Bài tập 9 – Tình Bạn

Friendship

Two friends were traveling along an empty road. After a while they engaged in a hot debate. One of them lost his patience; he gave his friend a good slap at the face. Hurt but calm, the other friend said nothing. He silently walked to a sandy spot and wrote on it, "Today, the best friend of mine gave me a slap at the face."

They continued the journey and encountered a river. Both swam in the river for a while. Unfortunately, the friend who got slapped almost drowned if the other did not come to rescue in time. The incident being over, the rescued friend found a big boulder along the road. He stopped and carved on it, "Today, my best friend saved my life."

The other friend was surprised. He asked, "Why did you write on the sand when I slapped you. Now you write on the rock?"

Smiling, the friend replied, "When our friends hurt us, we'd write it on the sand and the wind will eventually wipe it off. But when our friends do some good deed to us, we have to inscribe it on the rock or in our hearts where no winds could wipe it away."

Let's learn where to write – on sand or on the rock.



◎ Bài tập 10 – Ải Nam Quan

South View Border-Port



Ảnh: Imbert Edgard (cuối 1906 - trang Ecpad) Nhan's Blog

Nhan's Blog

"Nam Quan Border Port is approximately 31 miles from Lạng Sơn provincial city to the north. It's a part of Văn Uyên county adjacent to Bằng Tường county of Qwangxi of the Qing, which the Tsin call it South View Post. This port was built during the reign of King Jiā jìng of the Ming dynasty and was renovated by Gān Rǔlái, head of Guangxi provincial administration of justice under the rule of Yong Zhèng of Qing dynasty (1725) and he renamed it Great South View. To the east of this port is a small hilly area and to the west another small range of

rocky hills. In other words, the port is in midway of the path in a dale. Its wall is 119 trượng (about 4.7 meters x 119) long. Above the entrance is a panel that says Great South View Port installed during the sixth year of Yongzhèng's reign (1728). The entrance is always locked, and it's open only when a delegate from either side needs to go through. During the reign of Qianlong, in 1781, another panel that wrote Chung Wai Yi Lia was added just below the main panel. To the north of the entrance a small structure is Zhāo Dětái, and behind it is Tíng Cāntáng (horse barn) during the Qing. On the southside that belongs to Vietnam, there is structure called Nguỡng Đức Đài 'Virtue Admiring Tower' with two suites of rooms where delegate members would be staying upon arriving at this port." After Great Nam Chronicle (1882)

◎ Bài tập 11 – Sống và Chết Trong Lãng Quên

Living and Dying in Oblivion

Twelve years ago, I lost my way to downtown Philadelphia, an old city with a widely-diverse demography of residents; a place of bars, broken glass fragments almost everywhere along the streets, and graffiti almost on all walls. The American residents who have been living at this place for a long time never want to leave their beloved town. Probably, they are bound to their ancestors' memories and heritage. Many elderly people living alone in close-in homes whereas their children have left them and are leading a free life like birds.

My neighbor was one of those. Of late, I have heard the phone in the next door rang several times but it seemed no one was home to pick it up. Afternoon came, then evening, the phone kept ringing periodically. On the following morning, another neighbor of mine told me that there used to have two people in that home -- a mother and her son, but the son had moved to another state. The mom was living by herself. About a week earlier, an ambulance arrived at her door and took her to the hospital. Curiously, as I asked him about the phone ringing, he guessed it might be someone or the son who called home to talk to his mom. The lady had been hospitalized or she might have passed away. And the hospital may be expecting her relatives to come and prepare for her funeral service. This is one of the common situations found in the United States.



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(Huy Phương – *Warm and Cold on the Foreign Land*, 2006:14)

◎ Bài tập 12 – Ông Quan Lùn Họ Lý

Mandarin Ly

There was once a Vietnamese mandarin noted for being an eloquent orator whose name was Ly. He was very short of stature; in fact, he was so short that the top of his head was no higher than an average man's underarm.

Mandarin Ly was sent to Tsin (a former name for present China) to settle a very important political problem with it. When the Emperor of Tsin looked down from his dragon throne and saw this little man, he inquired, "Are the Vietnamese such little people?"

Mandarin Ly replied: "Sire, in Vietnam, we have both little men and big men. Our envoys are chosen in accordance with the importance of the problem. As this is a minor matter, our king has sent me to negotiate. When there is a big problem between us, our king will send a big man to speak with you."

The emperor of Tsin pondered: "If the Vietnamese consider this important problem only a small matter, they must indeed be a great and powerful people."

So he lessened his demands and the matter was settled then and there. (A Vietnamese Folk story)

◎ Bài tập 13 – Nói Dóc Tở

A Lie and a Half

Returning to his home village after a long voyage around the world, a traveler boasted of his story. He said that during his journey he saw a huge ship, the length of which defied the listeners' imagination. A young child of ten walked from the stem to the bow of the ship. By the time he arrived at the mast his hair and beard had turned white. Finally, he died of old age before he could reach the bow.

Having heard the tale of this type a villager spoke up: "Nothing remarkable in what you have just told us. I myself once passed through a thick forest full of tall trees. They were so tall that it was impossible to estimate their height. In fact, a bird that tried to reach the top of one of these trees had to fly for fifteen years without even approaching one-third of its height."

"That's a detestable lie!" cried out loudly the boaster. "How could it be possible?"

"How?" asked the other in low voice. "Well, if it is not the truth where could you find such a ship you have just told us?" (Nguyễn Văn Ngọc, *A Vietnamese Ancient Folk Tale*)

◎ Bài tập 14 – Cái Gì Cũng Cười

Grinning Attitude

We, the Anamese*, have a strange habit of grinning our attitude of everything. We grin when people praise us; we grin when people criticize us. Of encomium or of scorn, we all grin. A mirthless grin accompanied a sham-laughing "hee" sound spoils the ceremoniousness of everything.

Some say grinning, at the utmost, is the attitude of the most-revered figure, for life is nothing to be momentous about, but it simply is a theatre where comedians play their roles. Nothing is so important that makes anyone, even the venerable, frown and think.

If we Anamese perceive life as just a theatrical fun, and we are all venerable, then I would not dare to remind those with a bad habit of sneering at everything people say to quit it. They should pretend their best to be as serious as possible, and view life as genuine spectaculars in front of the stage of life instead.

In reality, some grin without knowing it's an atrocity to others; others grin with a haughty and disgusting manner; some invoke evil over somebody. They never tend to listen before they grin; they never care to understand what is spoken to them before they grin; and they even intend to slander the speaker before he finishes his words.

Nothing is more frustrating than having to deal with someone who only laughs or grins when you talk to him. His verbal protests or refusal to listen to you would not make you as such frustrated.

True! Sometimes you try to consult someone, your mouth gets hoarse, your tongue becomes numb and parched, and your lips tiff and dry, but the listener doesn't show any interest to you at all. He doesn't bother to thank, to criticize, to protest. He simply grins without saying a word! What a nuisance!

It's good to know, when someone talks to you, it means he needs your feedback. The feedback depends on you. If you wish to tell the truth, you can. If you don't understand, you should ask for



clarification. If you do not want to tell him your innermost feeling, you should find way to get away with it in a courteous manner. You should wisely imply in your feedback that he has gone too far and violated your privacy, and imply that he should stop asking.

As a rule, once you listen to someone, you owe him an answer.

(Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh Indochina Magazine, 1913)

◎ Bài tập 15 – Truyện Kể

My Stories

This collection comprises of 14 letters written by a father to his children.

The write-up was composed by a communist refugee who spent more than half of his life outside Vietnam.

The father witnessed harsh consequences resulted from tearing forces of world power, political fractions following the uncivilized domination of the French colonization and persecution of communist regime during the past three generations.

Beginning the decade of 1990, in Europe as well as in Russia, these peoples have been enjoying the fall of communist system, which was soon discarded at these places. Unfortunately, China and Vietnam are still suffering the shackles imposed by the communist dogmatists. They are flaming the burning fire, which some among the Westerners are not fully aware of or beyond their ken; they keep supporting the devilish Chinese communists.

Writing this letter, the father wishes to pass down some facts related to his family and to the scenario in which his home land underwent as evidence of the miserable past he and his people had to endure. He wishes his son, born in Germany – one of the free and democratic countries in the world – never been to Vietnam, to have a good grasp of his forefather's land.

My Story, came to being as a result of the sense of responsibility the predecessors who ought to inspire their descendants, particularly those born abroad, to become aware of where they came from and why they had to migrate from their native land. The author entirely conforms that it is natural to lead a life in harmony and that human life of every epoch becomes meaningful only when one treats others being equal to be treated in love and understanding; always do the heart, happiness, courage, and empathy embrace it all.

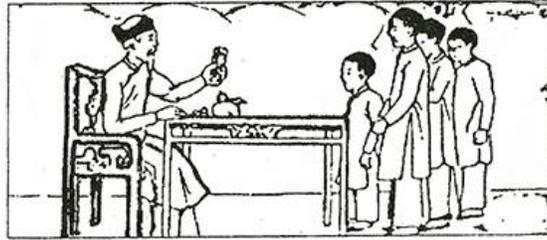
... (Tăng Vinh Lộc, Germany, *My Story*, 2017)

◎ Bài tập 16 – Hợp Quần Là Sức Mạnh

Unity is Power

Once upon a time, lived a small village a wise farmer. He had four children. One day, he put chopsticks in a bundle and told each of the children: "If anyone of you can break this bundle of chopsticks, I will give him a tale of silver." One after another, each tried their best to break it, but none was capable of breaking it at all!

Then the farmer untied the bundle and gave his children one chopstick each. By now, old or young, they all were able to break the chopstick without any effort. The father explained, "As you have seen, if you stick together as a whole, you have an unbreakable strength. After my death, you all should remember this story and are ready to help, protect one another. Thus enables you all to stand up to any harm from outsiders."



Unity is power!

◎ Bài tập 17 – Đi Tu

Taking Vows

This year Uncle Bach graduated as valedictorian. My mom said he had made his way successfully, and he can be ready to get married. He is the last single child in the family. He told mom he had no idea about getting married. Mom said it was all up to him.

Uncle Sau passing away, my mom had all of his children and his wife come and live with her. I felt relieved because since I got married, my mom lived by herself alone.

But the situation did not turn out smoothly due to the conflict between mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law. My mom was a thrifty person to cope with her desperate poverty and being alone. She had to toil all year round to raise her children to school. Had it been someone else, my brothers would have been laborious workers or hiring hands.

During the harvest in October, I usually went back to my home village to buy rices. I loved travelling to different hamlets where rice was piled up in dunes in the front yards, or across the fields where rice stalks filled the area with promises of being well-off. Here and there harvesters enjoyed gathering their crops. Air was wafted with ripen rice fragrance.

My mom asked my sister and me to stay home to monitor the harvesting while she and my uncle went to Đào Xuyên Pagoday in Hưng Yên. They would be attending an ancestral anniversary ceremony. Her trip surprised me. It was not like her. She used to go during Tet Celebration or annual festival but never had she been to the pagoda during harvest time. I thought it was my uncle who asked her to come along, and so I paid least attention to it.

Several days later, at noon time, two of us were sitting by a pile of rice in the front yard. We suddenly saw a nun in neat brown sash. I thought she was the Senior Nun from Hải Dương. Both rushed forward to greet the nun and soon discovered it was my mom. She went to the pagoda to shave her head and volunteered to become a nun. I was amazed at the fact my mom has become a nun. Having entering the home, my mom explained in detail. From the day my dad passed away, she vowed to enter the religion practices but she had to wait till all of my brothers had graduated from school, then she would enter the realm of religion practice.

Nguyễn Thị Thế, *Memoir of Nguyễn Tường Family*, Culture of Today, 1996:131-132

◎ Bài tập 18 – Sĩ Nhiếp (187-226STL)

Officer Whisper* (仕變 – Shi Nie)

Shi Nie's ancestor was from Lu (魯 – Lu) country. He fled his home town due to the rebellion of Wang Mang (王莽) and settled at Kwang Xìn of Shǎng Wu district. Sie Nie was the seventh generation of the settler. His father Shi Cì (士賜) was governor of Ru Nan, who sent Shi Nie to the capital, Luò Yang, of the Han dynasty, where he would continue his study. Later on, Shi Nie graduated *Xiào lián* (Regional Royal Academic Exam) and was appointed minister. A short time afterward, he was removed from his post. Disappointed, he resumed education and graduated *Mào cái* (an equivalent degree to present Master's). He then was reappointed district chief of Jiao Zhi. In 203, under the reign of Hàn Xiàn dì (漢獻帝), Zhāng Xīn (張新) and Shi Nie requested Jiao Zhi be changed to Jiao Zhōu, and Hàn Xiàn dì approved it.

Thanks to Shi Nie's mischievous and cunning tricks, Shi Nie eventually got dubbed a marquis.

Shi Nie was noted for three marvelous stratagems that Chinese and Vietnamese history books both inscribed:

- He was successful in deceiving Zhāng Xīn who ceded the post of Provincial Supervisor to him.
- He helped his younger brothers to become district chiefs of Jiuzhen, Hepu, and Nanhai, and became very influential figure of the time.
- At the end the Han dynasty, the political situation was chaotic, hundreds of members of his relatives and friends fled their homeland to Jiao Zhi where they got financial and educational assistance from Shi Nie. Here these refugees and their children became officials in his court. They were assigned high posts at all areas and acted as his eyes and ears. On the other hand, these members sang Shi Nie's praises. They called him "Shi King" for having "civilized" and "educated" people of Jiao Zhi.

All Chinese history books copied the same things and exaggerated Shi Nie's "great merit."

Vietnamese history historians based on the Chinese books also sing his praises and consider him a great contributor.

On the contrary, according to *A Summary of Vietnam History*, "... not mentioning the period when Lý Ông Trọng was alive, but only the time when Shi Nie's father, Zhi Cì (士賜) was a little boy ..." Han mandarins, kings were cruel and barbarious in the way they dealt with the local people in Vietnam. By then, no matter how academically good people of Jiao Zhi weere, no one was allowed to be appointed a petty position in the court! Not until the reign of Han Ling ti (漢靈帝 168 – 189) was a gentleman from Jiao zhi named Lý Tiển appointed district chief of Jiao zhi for the first time. Lý Tiển recommended many others to become roylal courtiers but Han ti only allowed the denizens who possessed *Mào cái* degree to work just at local offices."

* **Officer Whisper** is the literal translation of the name Sĩ Nhiếp (transliteration) or Shi Nie (pinyin)

Theo Hoài Việt, *Going Against the Current of History*,
People Cutlure publishing house, 1998:177-178

◎ Bài tập 19 – Người Vợ Chân Chính

A truthful wife

The Vietnamese highly respect women. That's why a Vietnamese married couple is called *wife and husband* not *husband and wife*. In fact, the role of the wife in a family is extremely important.

In the old days, lived in a small village a rich man. His wealth was so immense that it was beyond inventory: farm land, orchards, real estate properties, money, fabric and materials, etc. were in great quantity. His wife was not lucky; she passed away at her young age, leaving behind a little boy who was disobedient and .naughty. He loved hanging around with bad friends and often played truancy.

The rich man felt pretty sad about his son. He always thought that his son would get away with the money and property he had now after his death.

Disturbed by the ideas, he thought he would find a good girl who would be devoting to taking care of his son.

He then decided to search around for such a girl, from one village to another. He found his way to all families that had girls of his son's age.

One day, he arrived at a village fairly far away from his. On his way, he saw a group of children, boys and girls, surrounding a guava tree. The children were fighting over the good guava fruit. Among the children, he spotted a little girl whose look was meek and gentle. She stood looking at her friends. Once in a while, she scrutinized the guava tree and foud a good, ripe one. The rich man approached her and asked if he could have one guava . The girl looked for a delicious one and gave it to him.



Pleased at her manner and appearance, the rich man decided to investigate the girl's family.

He disguised himself a traveler who lost his way and wanted to stay over night at the girl's place. Her parents were very poor but their hospitality was pretty warm. The next day he gave the girl a big coin and asked her to help him buy some food. The girl bought enough food for the rich man a gave to him the exact change after the purchase.

In the afternoon, he repeated the same request, and girl did as she was demanded.

After several times testing the girl's personality, he found in her truthful, honest, wise, and noble characteristics of a daughter-in-law to-be he wanted. He went home and planned to have a matcher who would arrange a wedding ceremony for his son.

From the day he got married, the son became more playful and ignored all the housework. This even saddened the father. In the end, he got sick. While he was in bed, he called for his daughter-in-law and told her:

- As you have seen, your husband is not a decent person. I only trust in you. You are only a daughter-in-lwa but I regard you as my own child. I will let you all of my wealth so that you will think of how to handle it.

A short time later, the rich man took the last breath. Without his father's control, the son was more mischievous. His gambling habit and drinking sprees burned up all the farms, orchards, and

anything he could lay his hands on until he had nothing left. He began torturing his wife for money. One day, the wife refused to give him any more money, he drove her out of his home.

The wife left the home quietly, carrying with her all the possessions her father-in-law had given her. At the new place, she adopted two little girls and started to build her business. She soon became a rich woman.

A year after the wife's departure, crops suffered great loss, and famine threatened majority of people. The husband was desperately poor; he had to live on others' charity. He thought of his wife and felt repentant for his thoughtless action. He decided to look for her.

At the new place, his rich wife provided food for the needy. Lines of people who came became longer day after day. The husband heard of that and he got in line waiting for his turn.

The wife recognized her husband among the needy but she hid herself from him. She wanted him to be severely hungry. When she spotted her husband at the front of the line, she began to provide food from the end and vice versa. Or the food was only given to the one just before her husband in line. After three times the husband could not get a tiny bit of food, he felt his life to be in a horrible destitute. His repentance even rose more swiftly. During the windy and rainy nights, coldness chilled him to the bone. He was not fully aware of the value of every single piece of money he had extravagantly spent.

By now, the wife sympathetically understood her husband's innermost feelings. She had her people come to him and asked if he would be willing to work hard then he would be working in the landlady's home. From that day on, the husband devoted to working hard. In a short time, he got promotion from a household helper he quickly became a booker and then a butler. He worked so hard and so efficiently.

One day, the landlady had her people decorate and clean up the house for a death commemoration.

The husband was very surprised at seeing his father's portrait and tablet on the altar.

Now he knew exactly that the landlady he had been working for was the wife he had been looking for.

During the commemoration, the couple embraced in tears. The husband showed regret his mistakes caused to this wife, and his wife expressed her sorrow for having let him starve for a while.

The couple dedicated themselves to doing business, to charity and helping the poor. Their adopted children grew up in love and care, and they both had their own blissful families.

Everybody in the area admired the couple. They especially sang her praises for being a wise, generous, faithful, and talented woman.

☉ Bài tập 20 – Trời Đánh Tránh Bữa Ăn

Lightning Avoids Eaters

In the old days, Vietnam was controlled by a devilish group of people called Tsinummoc [tsin.uhm.mok]. This group used to be human but they went into the forests and trained themselves using the chthonic book entitled *Pro.luh.tah.ri.uht* based on the Msixram originally from Dutch. Children of this group are even more brutal and inhumane than their forefathers.

At a small village, there was a little naughty kid named Sản Ngộc, a real trouble maker to all the poor villagers. He was a son of the high-ranking mandarin in the area. No one could do anything to stop him. He afflicted poor people, flirted with young girls and even kidnapped girls and women to sell away. Even worse, he confiscated farmers' land and sold to his masters or to the rich red bourgeois.

Innocent people's resentment and hatred were undescrivable. Day after day, these sentiment accumulated and formed a large black patch of cloud that rose, up and up to the heavens.

One day, the Emperor of Heavens was roaming in his royal garden to enjoy the beauty of nature and of the flowers in the garden. He smelled something unpleasant. He became aware of what was going on at the small village. He immediately summoned the god of thunder:

"God of thunder! You, quickly go to that village and get that naughty Ngộc up here without delay!"

God of thunder wasted no time. He rushed to the boy's home. Catching glimpse of the boy, God of Thunder raised his lighting hammer and was about to hit the boy at the head. Unfortunately, his action was not faster than the boy's; he quickly ran into the house, to the kitchen and got a bowl of rice and began eating single grain at a time. God of Thunder could do anything good. He stood waiting for the boy to finish his bowl.

Time passed by. The boy was still eating. God of Thunder was tired of waiting. He sadly left the boy's and returned to the Heavens.

Hearing God of Thunder's report, the Emperor of Heavens blew his top. He ordered the Demon Purging Sword be given to God of Thunder and granted him the power to "kill the boy unconditionally."

God of Thunder was delighted with the sword in hand. He instantly went to the village with strong affirmation that he would behead the boy this time.

It was around three o'clock in the afternoon as God of Thunder reached the destination. He saw the boy watching the most-advanced technology of TV of the time. The boy was laughing, giggling, guffawing happily. Suddenly, he caught sight of God of Thunder. He horribly petrified for a second, but then quickly turned tail into his house. Not knowing what where to go, the boy decided to hide himself under the altar.

God of Thunder, so excited with his authorized mission, ran after the boy at hot pursuit. His "high" determination to carry out his goal assigned by the Emperor for an "outstanding achievement" prevented him from seeing anything around but the boy. As he saw the boy climbing into the space below the altar, God of Thunder raised the sword to kill the boy. Suddenly he heard a grave throat-clearing voice from above.

God of Thunder stepped backward and looked up at the altar. He realized that it was Lord of Devils, that was staring at him with angry eyes. God of Thunder looked around; no one could be seen. Certainly, it must have been of Lord's of Devils voice. Startled, God of Thunder stood aside, not knowing what to do next. In the meantime, the boy was safely sitting under the altar. Out of danger!

Cooling his heels, God of Thunder kept waiting until the sun had long set, but no sign of the boy's coming out. He then humbly tiptoed out of the boy's and returned to the Heavens.

The Emperor lost his temper as God of Thunder finished his report. He said to God of Thunder, intending the whole Royal Court to hear: "Let **me** go down there and get him."

News about the Emperor to descend the earthly world was publicized. Preparation for the Emperor's visit began right away. The grassroots and other walks of life were overwhelmed with joy and enthusiasm. The most interest group of all was people in the very village where the boy was living. They all hoped that the Emperor would get rid of the boy for good; their life would be much better forever.

The atmosphere was ceremonious and everyone was all smiles. The Queen also felt absorbed in the joy of the mass. She couldn't help joining the delegation down the earth. The preparation was even more enormous.

The day came. The Emperor and his long train of delegates went to the village, heading Ngọc's home. The villagers were delighted; all of them thought the little bloke would have no way to escape, but die. They also planned ahead some form of celebration for several days if the lad being rid.

God of Thunder was even more delighted. "You'll see how you can run away now!" He enthusiastically moved forward with an intention to scare the boy of his image leading the way for the Emperor.

From the day Ngọc heard of the news about the Emperor's visit, he was horribly scared. Every day he plead with his father for way to save him. His father, though a ranking official, kept sighing at his son's plight. He thought his whole family would be suffering unavoidable disaster!

At the boy's threshold, God of Thunder caught sight of the boy who vanished inside and disappeared. He never knew the boy ran through the back door, into the rear garden and then climbed over the fence to a neighbor's. He slowly followed the delegate. Finally he mustered up all courage and sneaked up to the Queen's palanquin. He knelt down right in front of the Queen and addressed out loud twice: "May I welcome my dear great aunt! May I welcome my dear great aunt!" Everyone in the delegate was surprised at seeing the boy's manner and they all would burst out laughing hadn't they covered their mouths in time.

The Queen, who just set foot on the worldly site, was like fish out of water. Now she saw a little boy kneeling in front of her, she was not sure how she would react. Actually, the boy's loud voice inspired God of Thunder's attention. Seeing the boy kneeling in front of the Queen, God of Thunder turned pale; fear possessed his body; his hands and feet thrilled. He bent very low and said whispering to the Emperor, "Your Majesty, the very boy is kneeling in front of the Queen. It's he!"

The Emperor did hear the boy's voice but he paid not attention. Now God of Thunder recalled it, so the Emperor walked back to the Queen. In fact, the boy was still kneeling there.

By now the Queen had been "aware of what was going on." She extended her hand and stroke and boy's head, saying, "My dear nephew. Stand up." The Queen's advice ended as the Emperor came by her side. He inquired, "Who is he? One of your relatives?"

"He is one of my nephews. I am his aunt." The Queen replied the Emperor without any hesitation.

At the Queen's answer, the Emperor smiled looking at the boy, then he turned to God of Thunder. In a yielding soft voice, "I thought he was someone else. Now I know he's the Queen's nephew. Let's go home!"