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## RESEARCH ON SOCIAL SECURITY THROUGH BUDDHISM IN THE TRAN DYNASTY

### 1. Introduction

In history of Tran dynasty, there was a time of highly development called *Prosperity era* of Tran dynasty which got its zenith during the period from the 8<sup>th</sup> Century until early decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century with kind kings and loyal mandarins. In this period there was Tran Thai Tong<sup>1</sup> (ruling from 1225-1258), Tran Thanh Tong<sup>2</sup> (1258-1278), Tran Nhan

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<sup>1</sup> *Tran Thai Tong*, birth name as Tran Canh, worship title as *Thai Tong*, meaning the *supreme founder*, was born in Tuc Mac, Thien Truong prefecture (now Tuc Mac village, Hy Loc dist., Nam Dinh province, Vietnam), son of *Tran Thua* with his wife, a woman named *Le*. He came into being on the 16<sup>th</sup> of the sixth month, year of Tiger (corresponding to Jul. 17<sup>th</sup>, 1218), lived 60 years-old, died in Van Tho palace, buried in the Mausoleum of *Chieu Lang*. He enthroned on the 12<sup>nd</sup> of the twelfth month, year of Chicken (1226), announced three era titles: *Kien Trung* (1225-1258), *Thien Ung Chinh Binh* (1232-1250), and *Nguyen Phong* (1251-1258). Tran Thai Tong ruled for 33 years (1226-1258) then passed his throne to Prince Hoang (Tran Thanh Tong), and claimed himself as *King Father*. Tran Thai Tong was the first king of Tran dynasty, the founder of royal examination, the establisher of official ceremonies and laws, and the builder of national university. In the 1<sup>st</sup> invasion of Mongol, he himself led the army to win the war of nation defense.

<sup>2</sup> *Tran Thanh Tong*, the second king of Tran dynasty, named as Tran Hoang, worship title as *Thanh Tong*, was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the ninth month, year of Mouse (1240), eldest prince of *Thai Tong* and his wife *Queen Thuan Thien*, a woman from Ly clan, enthroned on the 24<sup>th</sup> of the second month, year of Horse (1258). After his coronation, he changed the era title into *Thieu Long*, called himself as *Nhan Hoang*. He ruled for 21 years as king, and served 13 year as King Father. He died on 25<sup>th</sup> of the fifth month (1290), in the Nhan Tho palace, buried in the Mausoleum of Du Lang at his age of 51. He devoted himself in Buddhism study, practiced the policies in which he respected those who have great virtues, used the talent. The cause of Tran dynasty was firm by him.

Tong<sup>3</sup> (1278-1293), Tran Anh Tong<sup>4</sup> (1293-1314), Tran Minh Tong<sup>5</sup> (1314-1329), Tran Hien Tong<sup>6</sup> (1329-1341), the country was kept stable and developed strongly. Kings of this period are impacted strongly by Buddhism which leads them to care for life of the people more eagerly by reducing their duties, relieving their toils, supporting the poor, and stabilizing the social security<sup>7</sup>. Though from *Tran Du Tong*<sup>8</sup> onwards, Dai Viet fell in a comprehensive crisis, Buddhism remained the essential role, even less than before, as a national religion which took a big share in social security. Stabilizing social security for the people can be studied from many approaches, but in this article the authors focus on clarifying social security through policy of amnesty, caring material and spiritual life of the people during Tran dynasty.

<sup>3</sup> *Tran Nhan Tong*, named as *Tran Kham*, also called as *Kim Phat*, *Nhat Ton*, was the eldest son of *Tran Thai Tong* with Queen Thanh Thien Cam Hoang Hau, born on 11st of the eleventh month, year of Mouse (1258), died in 1308 in the temple Ngoa Van on the mount Yen Tu at his 51. He was the third king of Tran dynasty, coronated on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the tenth month, year of Tiger (1278), set the era title as *Thien Bao*. After ruling for 14 years, he passed his throne to *Tran Anh Tong*, and made himself King Father. He was a polite gentleman who tried to unite the people and develop the country, a virtue king of Tran dynasty. He was a master on Buddhism, the founder of Zen sect of Truc Lam. He was not only a king, but a gifted general, a talented writer, and a deep thinker.

<sup>4</sup> *Tran Anh Tong*, named as *Tran Thuyen*, was born on the 17<sup>th</sup> of the ninth month, year of Mouse (25/10/1276), died on 16<sup>th</sup> of the third month, year of Monkey (21/4/1320) at his 45, the eldest son of *Tran Nhan Ton* with Queen Kham Tu Bao Thai. After 21 years on the throne, he left and claimed himself as King Father. He was the forth king of Tran dynasty, and used only one era title, *Hung Long*, during his reign. He was a worthy heir of his father, kept the country peaceful and well-controlled.

<sup>5</sup> *Tran Minh Tong*, named as *Tran Manh*, worship title as *Minh Tong*, was born on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the eighth month, year of Mouse (4/10/1300), died on 19<sup>th</sup> of the second month, year of Chicken (10/3/1357) at his 58. He was younger prince of *Tran Anh Tong*. Although he was born by *Queen Chuong Hien*, daughter of *Bao Nghia Lord Binh Trong*, but by loyal law must accept *Grand Queen Thuan Thanh Bao Tu*, a woman of Tran clan, daughter of *Hung Nhuong Lord Tran Quoc Tang*, to be his official mother. He was the only son of the previous king being alive after his birth. So his father sent him to under care of *Queen Thuy Bao*, Aunt of King *Tran Nhan Tong*. The queen in her return sent him to her brother *Chieu Van Lord Tran Nhat Duat* to be raised. *Tran Nhat Duat* cared him like a blood son. *Tran Minh Tong* is the fifth king of Tran dynasty, ruled for 15 years, then passed his throne and became King Father for more 28 years. He used two era titles, *Dai Khanh* (1314-1323) and *Khai Thai* (1324-1329). "King civilized the people, developed what received from previous kings, kept his virtues, cared for future generations. Thus, the country is kept peace inside and respected outside..." (by Complete Annals of Đại Việt (1993), Volume II, Social Science Publish House, Hanoi, p.100).

<sup>6</sup> *Tran Hien Tong*, the sixth king of Tran dynasty, named as *Tran Vuong*, titled as *Thien Kien*, was born on 17<sup>th</sup> of the fifth month, year of Goat, died on the 11st of the sixth month, year of Mouse (1341) at his 23. He was younger prince of *Minh Ton*. His blood mother was *Queen Minh Tu Le Thi*, by accepted the *Grand queen Hien Tu* to be his official mother. He was enthroned on 15<sup>th</sup> of the second month, year of Mouse (1329), used the era title *Khai Huu*. He was commented as a smart king who succeeded to keep peace for the country.

<sup>7</sup> *Social security is a system of mechanisms, policies and solutions of the state and community to help all members of society cope with the risks and socio-economic shocks that can expose them to decline or loss of income sources due to maternity sickness, accident, occupational disease, old age without working capacity or for other objective reasons falling into poverty, impoverishment and service provision health care for the community, through policy systems on social insurance, health insurance, social assistance and special assistance* (according to Nguyen Hai Huu, Report on development of social security system Association in accordance with the socialist-oriented market economy - 2005).

<sup>8</sup> *Tran Du Tong*, named as *Tran Hao*, was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> of the tenth month, year of Mouse (1336), died on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the fifth month, year of Chicken (1369) at his 34. He was the tenth son of *Tran Minh Ton* with *queen Hien Tu*, the 7<sup>th</sup> king of Tran dynasty, ruled for 28 years (1341-1369), used two era titles *Thieu Phong* (1341-1357), and *Dai Tri* (1358-1369). "King was very smart with high education. He improved army, cared for education, got respect from neighbor kingdoms. In the era of *Thieu Phong*, all was well; But since *Dai Tri*, because of his too devotion in entertainment, the country got in the course of degradation." (by Complete Annals of Đại Việt (1993), Volume II, Social Science Publish House, Hanoi, p.127).

## 2. Research method

Social security and stabilizing social security for the people is one of the topics that attracts interest and participation in research of a lot of international and Vietnamese scholars. With multi-dimensional approaches and different research methods, at present, there are many in-depth studies that have initially clarified some theoretical and practical issues about social security activities in Vietnam. However, research on ensuring social security for people in historical periods, especially the role of a religious organization (here Buddhism in Tran dynasty) in participating in social security activities in such a glorious, brilliant dynasty of Vietnam is always a new problem which still lacks a depth approach and insufficient arguments.

In recent years, internationally and domestically there have been had many meticulous studies on the Tran Dynasty, including researches and studies on issues such as: State apparatus, institutions politics, economy, society, and ideology of the Tran dynasty such as: *Some comments on the organization and nature of the Tran Dynasty* by Phan Huy Le<sup>9</sup>; *On the aristocratic monarchy of the Tran Dynasty* of Nguyen Hong Phong<sup>10</sup>; *The royal regime of King Father in Tran Dynasty* of Nguyen Huu Tam<sup>11</sup>; *State organization model in Vietnam from the tenth century to the nineteenth century* by Pham Duc Anh<sup>12</sup>; *Economy and society in Tran dynasty, XIII-XIV century* by Nguyen Thi Phuong Chi<sup>13</sup>; *Tran Dynasty and its people*<sup>14</sup>; *Vietnamese history, volume 2, from the tenth century to the fourteenth century*<sup>15</sup>; *Vietnamese history from the origins to the mid-nineteenth century* by Le Thanh Khoi<sup>16</sup>; *Vietnamese thought in the Ly - Tran dynasties* by Truong Van Chung and Doan Chinh<sup>17</sup>; *Traditional humanistic thought of Vietnam from the X century to the 14th century* by Nguyen Thi Huong<sup>18</sup>; *The development of Vietnamese political ideology from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries* by Nguyen Hoai Van<sup>19</sup>; *Vietnamese thought in Tran Dynasty* by Tran Thuan<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Phan Huy Le (1987), *Some Comments on the Tran State Organization*, *Journal of Historical Studies*, No. 4 (235).

<sup>10</sup> Nguyen Hong Phong (1986), "On the aristocratic Tran monarchy", *Journal of Historical Studies*, (4).

<sup>11</sup> Printed in *the Tran and Hung Dao Dynasties Dai Vuong Tran Quoc Tuan in his hometown Nam Ha* (1996) published by the Department of Culture and Information Nam Ha.

<sup>12</sup> Pham Duc Anh (2016), *State organization model in Vietnam, XIX century - XIX century*, National University Publishing House, Hanoi.

<sup>13</sup> Nguyen Thi Phuong Chi (2009), *Economy and society of the Tran dynasty (XIII century - XIV)*, Publisher. Education, Hanoi; More information: *Thai hamlet - Tran fashion estate ( XIII - XIV century )* (2002), Publishing House. Social science, Hanoi by the same author.

<sup>14</sup> Institute of History - Vietnam Association for Historical Sciences (2010), *Tran and Tran people*, UNESCO Center for Historical and Cultural Information of Vietnam, Hanoi. The book consists of 2 parts, of which Part I brings together 32 articles by many authors.

<sup>15</sup> Tran Thi Vinh (Editor), Ha Manh Khoa, Nguyen Thi Phuong Chi, Do Duc Hung (2013), *Vietnamese History, volume 2, from the 10th century to the 14th century*, Publisher. Social Science, Hanoi.

<sup>16</sup> Le Thanh Khoi (2014), *Vietnamese history from the origins to the nineteenth century*, Publishing House. Nha Nam - The World, Hanoi.

<sup>17</sup> Truong Van Chung, Doan Chinh (Co-editor) (2008), *Vietnamese Thought in the Ly - Tran Dynasty*, Publisher. National Politics, Hanoi.

<sup>18</sup> Nguyen Thi Huong (2007), *Vietnamese traditional humanistic thought from the 10th century to the 14th century*, Publisher. Social labors, Hanoi.

<sup>19</sup> Nguyen Hoai Van (Editor) (2008), *The Development of Vietnamese Political Thought X-XV century*, Publisher. National Politics, Hanoi.

<sup>20</sup> Tran Thuan (2003), *Vietnamese Thought of Tran Dynasty*, Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hanoi.

In addition, a number of research projects have focused on explaining the institutions, the government, and the state apparatus of the Tran dynasty in Buddhist relations. We can mention the book *The relationship between the monarchy Ly - Tran Dynasties and Buddhism* by Hoang Duc Thang<sup>21</sup>; *The influence of Buddhism on the ethical culture of the Ly - Tran dynasties* by Nguyen Thi Thanh Hao<sup>22</sup>; Some historical figures as national models such as Tran Nhan Tong, Tran Quoc Tuan<sup>23</sup> have been studied by many authors such as: Le Manh That with *Tran Nhan Tong - life and works*<sup>24</sup>; Ho Duc Tho with *Hung Dao Dai Vuong of Tran dynasty in the mind of the Vietnamese nation*<sup>25</sup>; Do Thanh Duong with *Tran Nhan Tong - outstanding cultural personality*<sup>26</sup>; *Tran Quoc Tuan - military genius* compiled by the Vietnam Military History Institute<sup>27</sup>; Hoang Thuc Tram with *Tran Hung Dao*<sup>28</sup> ... However, up to now, the study of Buddhism in Dai Viet (*Tran Dynasty*) with an insight in ensuring social security is still a gap. Therefore, the study aims to narrow that gap. To answer the question of the objectives and research set out in this study, the authors use a number of typical methods:

*Method of historical and material data synthesizing.* This is the dominant and necessary method employed in the article. Through the collection and classification of materials from ancient bibliographies and scientific works of authors about the Tran period, it is possible to specifically identify problems on the implementation of social security in the Tran dynasty. This method allows the author to gather information from historical documents in ancient bibliographies, research the contents related to research problems accurately, and limit speculation and objective reasoning.

*Historical and logical method.* These are two important research methods used by the authors in the article. Combining historical and logical methods helps the authors point out the situation of the implementation of social security by Tran kings during their reign. At the same time, it can be seen the influence of Buddhism on Tran kings in the implementation of social security. On the other hand, this method helps the writer to deeply analyze the research object set out in the article.

*Analysis and synthesis method.* In the article, this research method is applied to divide the structure of social security problems and to identify the implementation of social secu-

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<sup>21</sup> Hoang Duc Thang (2012), *Relations between the Ly and Tran monarchs and Buddhism*, Publisher. Religion, Hanoi.

<sup>22</sup> Nguyen Thi Thanh Hao (2017), *The influence of Buddhism on the ethical culture of the Ly - Tran dynasties*, Ph.D. Thesis in Culture, Hanoi University of Culture.

<sup>23</sup> Tran Quoc Tuan (also known as Tran Hung Dao, Chinese characters :陳興 道, 1228 (?) - 1300 ). He was a politician, military man, embellished the Tran Dynasty of Dai Viet country at that time. He is known in Vietnamese history for his eminent army command to defeat two Nguyen-Mong invasions in 1285 and 1288.

<sup>24</sup> Le Manh That (1999), *Tran Nhan Tong - Life and works*, Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh

<sup>25</sup> Ho Duc Tho (2000), *Tran dynasty Hung Dao Dai Vuong in the mind of the Vietnamese nation*, Ethnic culture Publisher, Hanoi.

<sup>26</sup> Do Thanh Duong (2008), *Tran Nhan Tong - eminent cultural personality*, Ho Chi Minh City Publisher, Ho Chi Minh.

<sup>27</sup> Vietnam Military History Institute (2000), *Tran Hung Dao - military genius*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.

<sup>28</sup> Hoang Thuc Tram (2014), *Tran Hung Dao*, Dan Tri Publishing House, Hanoi.

riety in the Tran dynasty. Then from that identified and analyzed situation, the authors synthesize and evaluate how the common values of Tran's Buddhism influence in the implementation of social security for the people.

*Expert research method:* to study this issue, the authors use expert method (in-depth interview) to analyze and clarify the Buddhist activities of Tran Buddhism in ensuring social security for the people. Respondents are leading experts on beliefs and religions; Historical expert researches on Tran Dynasty; ... The obtained research results help the authors analyze and evaluate objectively the requirements and tasks set out in the article. On that basis, the authors made a number of observations in the research discussion. Thus, the use of the above research methods helps the authors focus on answering some research questions posed in the article:

*Firstly*, how did the Buddhism piety of Tran kings influence on their policy of ruling the country?

*Secondly*, what are the contributions of Buddhism in Tran Dynasty to the social security?

*Thirdly*, what are the barriers and limitations for the Buddhism in Tran Dynasty in the activities of ensuring social security for the people?

### 3. Research results

#### \* Buddhism piety of Tran kings makes a great influence on their policy of ruling the country

Buddhist thought about equality, compassion, and charity helped Tran kings to be close to and love the people<sup>29</sup>. Tran Thai Tong was a king who worshiped Buddhism. In the early years of his enthronement, he sometimes wanted to stay away from the main court to go to Yen Tu Mountain to practice spiritual practice. At that time, Ninh Binh was not only the ancient capital, but also the holy place of Buddhism. Tran Thai Tong sent a high monk there to commend the Buddha's teachings. *The Ma Nhai stele at Co Phong Mountain*<sup>30</sup> said that the Zen master was sent by the king to Co Phong Mountain, Hoa Lu district, Ninh Binh province to rebuild the pagoda and abbot there<sup>31</sup>. The cult of Buddhism not only manifests in ideology and spirit, but also builds many large temples. There are temples everywhere in the country. Even there are some localities where any communal post must have a Buddha statue to worship (year 1231). In 1256, 330 bells were cast. Not only worshiped Buddhism,

<sup>29</sup> In this article, we instruct the three early kings of the Tran Dynasty: Tran Thai Tong, Tran Thanh Tong and Tran Nhan Tong.

<sup>30</sup> *Ma Nhai* stele is directly engraved on the rocky mountain, located to the right of Lien Hoa cave, Co Phong mountain, now is Khuc Mo pagoda, Phong Phu village, Minh Giang commune, Hoa Lu district, Ninh Binh province. Buddha Temple at Lien Hoa Cave, Co Phong Mountain still exists. The stele is 80cm high, 36cm wide, and the top and bottom are carved with lotus flowers. Scanned copy is currently stored at the Han Nom Research Institute, number 29163. This is an intact stele of chewing in Tran dynasty. The stele does not include the author's name and the date of the stele.

<sup>31</sup> Hoang Van Giap (2002), *Ma Nhai stele at Co Phong mountain*, in: *Vietnamese Han Nom inscription*, volume II, Tran Dynasty, the upper volume, National Chung Cheng University Chia Yi Hanoi Han Nom Research Institute, p. 27 .

the king was also a Confucian devotee, was the first person to lay the foundation for the construction of the Confucian electoral system from which coming the doctorates who contributed to expanding learning in Vietnam. In the *Thien tong chi nam tu* (*The Zen sect in the south*)<sup>32</sup>, he wrote: "Buddha, regardless being in the South and North, can be found in pious practice; Human has fools and smarts, both can be taught to reach enlightenment. Thus, directing the human, lighting the way of life, these two are goals of Buddha. Setting regulations for generations, making samples for the future, these are tasks of the Enlightened. The Sixth Founder<sup>33</sup> said: "The sages and the masters are the same in authority regardless in which era they live." So, it can be said that the great truth of Buddhism can be transmitted only through the sages and the masters. How can I exclude myself from bearing the task of the sages and the masters as if my own task, the teaching of Buddha as if my own?"<sup>34</sup> He studied Zen and Confucian sutras continuously for more than 10 years: "For more than ten years, whenever having time I've always consulted the great masters on the way of Zen. For sutras of the great religion, no one that I left without reviewing"<sup>35</sup>. Thus, the thought of king loyalty, nation priority, appropriating virtues and morality of the mandarins, was represented in the clauses of the *Common Vow* in the Dong Co Vowing Ceremony. However, "he spent much time on studying Buddhism sutras and became a significant writer of Buddhism literature in this time"<sup>36</sup>.

Tran Thanh Tong, a talented king in many fields, is a follower of Buddhism. Of his extant 14 poems<sup>37</sup>, most of them are poetic of Buddhism. Tran Thanh Tong expresses his feelings and thoughts about miracles in the Buddhist world, which is the relationship between dynamic - static, living - death. In his *Self Narration*<sup>38</sup>, he demonstrates the stature of a monk who attains enlightenment, understanding "the truth of the truth" (the original form of all things in nature), from which he can master himself and what surrounding him. Trần Thánh Tông sought out the Buddhist philosophy to train himself with wisdom and courage and also to foster more love, compassion and tolerance towards the people.

King Tran Nhan Tong ascended the throne at the age of 20, October 22, year of the Tiger - 1278. The king had been passionate about Buddhism since a young age. One day, he left the Citadel himself to go to Yen Tu Mountain to practice, leaving behind the Royal Family and the noble throne. The Queen learned the story and told it to King Thanh Tong. King Thanh Tong immediately sent the governor to urge him back, reluctantly, the king had to return. The king governed the country with many tasks but "whenever being idle, he

<sup>32</sup> *The Zen sect in the south* is only a title written by Tran Thai Tong for the work of *Song of Zen sect in the South* (this work is lost).

<sup>33</sup> The Sixth Founder: master Tue Nang (?-?), a man in Lu clan, born in Linh Nam, pupil of master Hoang Nhan, the fifth founder, of the Chinese Zent sect. He was master of Bao Lam pagoda, Tao Khe mount, Thieu Chau.

<sup>34</sup> *Literature of Ly-Tran dynasties* (1989), Volume II, The upper volume, Publisher of Social Sciences, Hanoi, tr.27-28.

<sup>35</sup> *Literature of Ly-Tran dynasties* (1989), Volume II, The upper volume, op, tr.29.

<sup>36</sup> *Literature of Ly-Tran dynasties* (1989), Volume II, The upper volume, op, tr.20. Tran Thai Tong's work still has two poems, two essays, one title for the *Kinh Kim Cuong* book, one title for the work of *Zen Zong for male anthem* and the famous work of the *Lock of Destruction*.

<sup>37</sup> *Literature of Ly-Tran dynasties* (1989), Volume II, The upper volume, op, tr.399-420.

<sup>38</sup> The poem consists of 5 stages of Tran Thanh Tong (see *Literature of Ly-Tran dynasties* (1989), Volume II, The upper volume).

often invited Zen masters to explain Zen Buddhism". Besides, under the guidance of the master Tue Trung<sup>39</sup>, the eldest brother of Queen Nguyen Thanh Thien Cam, mother of Tran Nhan Tong, guided Tran Nhan Tong in studying Buddhism. Therefore, Tran Nhan Tong deeply understood the essence of Zen Buddhism. The book *Tales of the Three Founders* actually records: "Master Dieu Ngu<sup>40</sup> had a deep wisdom, was eager to study, and talented with many skills. He read almost any book, got an insight on every of them. Idling, he invited Zen practitioners to discuss about Zen, also consulted the Master Tue Trung, by such acts that he reached the core of Zen, and considered Tue Trung as his master"<sup>41</sup>.

Tran Nhan Tong has a fervent belief in Buddhism, even almost ignorant. After two successful resistance wars against the Mong - Nguyen army (1285) and the third (1288), in 1293, King Tran Nhan Tong ceded the throne to his son, Tran Anh Tong, to become King Father. At the end of the year of the pig - 1299, Tran Nhan Tong officially went to Yen Tu Mountain to practice Zen. He took the religious title of Truc Lam Dai Si (The Master in the Bamboo Forest), also called himself as bhikkhu Huong Van. "He devoted himself in practice the Twelve Virtues of a bhikkhu<sup>42</sup>, called himself as bhikkhu Huong Van, preached the Dharma, taught the monks, accepted many pupils"<sup>43</sup>. It is a very hard task for a man to practice the Bhikkhu Virtues. Since 1299 was the time opening a new phase in the life of King Tran Nhan Tong - Buddhist Emperor, and also the starting time for the birth of the Zen sect of Truc Lam Yen Tu - a Zen lineage bearing the identity of Vietnam. Tran Nhan Tong became the first patriarch of the Zen sect. The Mai Vien Thong tower stele (Thanh Mai pagoda) in Nam Sach, Hong Lo (now in Hoang Hoa Tham commune, Chi Linh district, Hai Duong province) showed the extensive development of Buddha. The stele is inscripted with biography of the second founder of Truc Lam Zen sect Dong Kien Cuong, religious name Phap Loa. The content of the stele is also a historical chronicle of Buddhism, Buddhist religious activities of the Tran Truc Lam Yen Tu Zen sect. In particular, *Thanh Mai Vien Thong stele*<sup>44</sup> also show the role of King Tran Nhan Tong as Bhikkhu Dieu Ngu, Buddha

<sup>39</sup> Master Tue Trung was born in 1230, died in 1291, his real name is Tran Tung, titled as Hung Ninh Vuong, the eldest son of An Sinh Lord Tran Lieu, the eldest brother of Hung Dao Dai Vuong Tran Quoc Tuan. He is the brother in law of King Tran Thanh Tong, and the one who was revered by King Tran Nhan Tong as his master. Tue Trung was a Mahayana Buddhist Zen master who had a great influence on the Truc Lam Zen sect of XIII-XIV century. His Zen study is very profound. His compositions are gathered in the *Master's Collection*, in which there are 49 poems with many topics and many genres. He had a great influence on Zen studies for kings Tran Thanh Tong and Tran Nhan Tong. King Tran Thanh Tong admired his reputation and talent, accepted him as his senior, and gave the title "Noble Master". King Tran Nhan Tong- Dieu Ngu Giac Hoang accepted him as master.

<sup>40</sup> King Tran Nhan Tong.

<sup>41</sup> *The Third Founder's Tales* (1995), translated and annotated by Thich Phuoc Son, Vietnam Institute of Buddhist Studies, p.19.

<sup>42</sup> Twelve Virtues of Bhikkhu indicate the twelve practices to control the mind, clear the emotions: 1. Living in A lan Nha; 2. Regularly practicing go for asking alms; 3. Begging one after another, regardless of rich or poor; 4. Eating only one meal a day; 5. Eating in moderation; 6. After noon, not using nutrients; 7. Wearing patchwork robes (clothes made of rags sewn together); 8. Using only three cloths; 9. Living in a graveyard; 10. Living under a tree; 11. Not attaching on a permanent accommodation; 12. Just sitting, not lying.

<sup>43</sup> Phuong Hoai Man (1994), *Meditation Thought of Tran Nhan Tong - Founder of Vietnamese Truc Lam Zen*, Journal of *Buddhist Studies* (Chinese. Vietnamese translation by Dr. Nguyen Huu Tam), p. 2; ĐVSKTT (1993) copy: "Ky Hoi, Hung Long Year 7 (1299). In August, His Majesty from Thien Truong palace re-ordained to Yen Tu mountain to practice asceticism".

<sup>44</sup> Vien Thong tower stele is still located at Thanh Mai pagoda in Hoang Hoa Tham commune, Chi Linh district, Hai Duong province. According to Mr. Tang Ba Hoanh, former director of Hai Duong Museum, beer was first discovered in 1979.

king in teaching and preaching sutras throughout the country<sup>45</sup>. Tran Nhan Tong regularly went to localities to teach Buddhism. He used to open many courses<sup>46</sup> to perform the ritual of ordination and preaching. "Bhikkhu Dieu Ngu opened three courses: 1. In Chan Giao pagoda<sup>47</sup>; 2. In Bao An pagoda in Sieu Loai<sup>48</sup>; 3. In Pho Minh pagoda in Thien Truong"<sup>49,50</sup>.

During his time in the throne, continuing the career of his father, grandfather, Tran Nhan Tong implemented the policy of peace and harmony, treating his servants as brothers, caring the people like his children, reducing punishments, lowering the duties, and keeping the law. Historians praise him as a wisdom king of the Tran dynasty. Tran Nhan Tong is the heroic king, Buddha king and great cultural hero of the country. He is a heroic king, at the same time a great master in Zen who got Six Knowledges<sup>51</sup>, a truth Buddhist king.

The connection between Buddhism and the Tran kings created a united power in building and defending the country. Tran kings advocated embodying the religion into the life, religion and life inseparable, expressed through the idea of "*Glory mixed with Dust*"<sup>52</sup>. This was also the period when Buddhism was deeply integrated with the national culture, greatly influenced the thought of the rule of the Tran emperors as well as the court officials.

#### \* Taking care of the material and spiritual life of the people

The Buddhist thought of compassion, charity, salvation, indulgence was transformed by the Tran emperors with policies, practical actions, setting the interests of the people on top, taking care of the people's life, physically and mentally. The Tran dynasty is famous in history with the spirit of the people, for the people, care of the people's life. The national history records the Tran kings follow the examples of each other to boost the people's well-being, reduce the duties, and support the poor in their trouble time. The Tran kings were very conscious and focused on teaching the heirs about virtue, filial piety, peace, modesty, goodness, generosity, courtesy, and promotion of good virtues<sup>53</sup> to join the court in building

<sup>45</sup> *Thanh Mai Vien Thong tower ball, in the epitaph of the Tran dynasty* (2016), Thich Duc Thien - Dinh Khac Thuan (editor), Publisher. Ethnic culture, Hanoi, pp.163-164.

<sup>46</sup> Preaching Course Stage (戒壇): is a course used to celebrate the rite of ordination as well as the preaching the theory (According to the online Buddhist dictionary). Preaching course is an important and sacred event in the life of Buddhism. This is a unique Sangha activity, organized to impart the dharma precepts to the monastic, with very strict regulations in the Vinaya (According to Enlightenment online). The course stage is a patch of soil that is filled slightly above the ground level in the course field.

<sup>47</sup> *Chan Giao Pagoda*: established by King Ly Thai To in September, the 15th Thuan Thien year (1024), in Thang Long Citadel.

<sup>48</sup> *Sieu Loai*: in Bac Ninh province.

<sup>49</sup> *Thien Truong*: The second capital of the Tran dynasty, now belongs to Nam Dinh City, Nam Dinh province.

<sup>50</sup> *The Third Founder's Tales* (1995), translated and annotated by Thich Phuoc Son, Vietnam Institute of Buddhist Studies, p.35.

<sup>51</sup> Six Powers: six supernatural powers a man can get. 1. *Than Tuc Thong*: you can travel through the space to anywhere you want; 2. *Thien nhan than*: you can see all sufferings and happiness of everyone; 3. *Thien nhi thong*: you can hear all things under heaven of everyone; 4. *Tha tam thong*: you can know any thoughts of any one; 5. *Tuc mang thong*: you can know the past and the future of anyone; 6. *Lau tan thong*: you can remove all causes of sadness and happiness on earth.

<sup>52</sup> *Glory mixed with Dust* (和光同塵): literally means the light is mixed with the dust to symbol the engagement of a wise man with the earth and the world. The term originated from the saying *Engage yourself in light, engage yourself in dust also of Laozi*. In Buddhism, this term is used to show that Buddha and Botamahatat, in order to save the human, must hide their glory and light of their intelligence, transform themselves into human, live in the human world with full facts of sadness, pain, sorrow, happiness, joyfulness. (according to online Buddhism Dictionary).

<sup>53</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, Social Science Publisher, p.23.



and developing the country. As a result, in the first half of the 13th century, people's lives were prosperous and happy. According to Complete Annals of Đại Việt, the year of the Horse, - 1246, "At that time the nation was peaceful, the people was happy"<sup>54</sup>.

*Implementing amnesty for the people:* Tran kings repeatedly practiced amnesty for the people. What the content of amnesty, unfortunately it is not recorded in history. We just know that, the occasions for amnesty is when the king ascending the throne; changing the era title; nature disasters causing damage to people and property; the post-war time. From Tran Thai Tong and Tran Nhan Tong to Tran Due Tong, the court performed about 10 "great amnesty". Specifically, these events are recorded in Complete Annals of Đại Việt as follows: "Year of Mouse (1240), announced the amnesty on the occasion of making Hoang Sinh the crown prince<sup>55</sup>; The fifth, the sixth months, year of Tiger (1242), due to drought, king Tran Thai Tong ordered not only check the prisoners, but conducted amnesty for all the country<sup>56</sup>; The seventh month, year of Cow (1265), flood drowned Co Xa commune, people and animals died many, king Thanh Tong ordered amnesty for the people<sup>57</sup>; year of Cat (1279), spring, the first month, the 1<sup>st</sup>, changed the era title, ordered amnesty"<sup>58</sup>.

After the third victory of the Mongol invasion (1288), the country was exhausted by warfare with many villages damaged, King Tran Nhan Tong ordered amnesty, cleared tax for the people in the localities suffering war, and reduced the duties for many places by different levels"<sup>59</sup>.

Year of Mouse (1293), spring, the 9<sup>th</sup> of the third month, the king ceded his throne to prince Thuyen. Thuyen was enthroned, changed the era title into *Hung Long* the first year, ordered amnesty...<sup>60</sup>; Year of Dog (1358), spring, the 1<sup>st</sup> of the first month, king Tran Du Tong changed the era title, ordered amnesty<sup>61</sup>; Year of Dog (1370), the 15<sup>th</sup> of the eleventh month, the king took his throne, changed the era title, ordered amnesty<sup>62</sup>.

*Reducing rents, taxes, and supplying to the people:* The well-being of the people is the concern of Tran kings. When people ran into starvation due to crop failures, the court issued an order to reduce rents, personal income tax, and provide supports to the people. Depending on the extent of the damage, the reduction will be from one part to a half, from a range of localities to the whole country.

In the Year of the Tiger (1242), the rain happened in July, the extent of the damage was unknown, but that year, King Tran Thai Tong "reduced a half of agriculture tax"<sup>63</sup>. Before that, in the years of Mouse (1240), year of Cow (1241) had natural disasters continuously happened, storms, heavy rain, earthquakes (the seventh month, year of Mouse), drought, landslides in many places. In Cho Dua the land ragged (the fourth, year of Cow).

<sup>54</sup> Complete Annals of Đại Việt, Volume II, ibid, p.21.

<sup>55</sup> Complete Annals of Đại Việt, Volume II, ibid, p.18.

<sup>56</sup> Complete Annals of Đại Việt, Volume II, ibid, p.19.

<sup>57</sup> Complete Annals of Đại Việt, Volume II, ibid, p.35.

<sup>58</sup> Complete Annals of Đại Việt, Volume II, ibid, p.44.

<sup>59</sup> Complete Annals of Đại Việt, Volume II, ibid, p.62.

<sup>60</sup> Complete Annals of Đại Việt, Volume II, ibid, p.69.

<sup>61</sup> Complete Annals of Đại Việt, Volume II, ibid, p.139.

<sup>62</sup> Complete Annals of Đại Việt, Volume II, ibid, p.151.

<sup>63</sup> Complete Annals of Đại Việt, Volume II, ibid, p.19.

In 3 consecutive years (1240, 1241, 1242), heavy rains, storms, earthquakes, and droughts have greatly affected people's lives, so the king continuously made amnesty and exempted the people from rents.

After the 3rd resistance war against Mongol invasion (1288) ended in the years of Cow (1290) and of Cat (1291), the people in the country suffered serious famine, rice prices soared, 3 USD for 1 kg, many people had to sell their land and even their children as slaves to others. Each person costs only 1 USD, which meant every person costing only 3 kg of rice<sup>64</sup>. The famine in the year of Cat (1291) caused many people to starve to death<sup>65</sup>. The court visited the site and opened the rice stock to help the poor and at the same time, implemented tax exemption<sup>66</sup>.

In the year of the Goat (1343), in the fifth and the sixth months, drought, crop failure, and famine happened, the king ordered to reduce a half of human tax<sup>67</sup>. Year of Horse (1354), the third month, famine; the ninth month, crisis of rice worm, ordered to reduce a half of agriculture tax<sup>68</sup>.

The year of Dog (1358) was a quite special year. From the third to the seventh month, droughts occurred and worms damaged the crops at the same time, ordered to mobilize the rich to help the poor by sharing their rice stock. Such shares should be calculated and returned in cash by the State<sup>69</sup>.

In the year of Tiger (1362), from the fifth to the seventh month, droughts and heavy rains came, the king ordered exemption of a half of tax for the whole country<sup>70</sup>. In the eighth month of the same year (1362), when a great famine happened again, King Tran Du Tong ordered to share rice stock with the people. Those who shared their rice were given different praises<sup>71</sup>.

King Tran Nghe Tong also advocates to limit luxury and waste in building the palace so as not to harm the people. "In the fifth month, year of Pig (1371), ordered that the palaces should be built simply and economically, limit to the most extant using people as workers"<sup>72</sup>.

King Tran Due Tong<sup>73</sup>, when ascended to the throne, also carried out modern amnesty for the people (The eleventh month, year of Mouse - 1372).

*Ensuring social safety and security:* As mentioned above, two famine events took place in 1290 and 1291, in addition to the court distributing paddy to the poor and exempting people from tax, King Tran Nhan Tong also ordered that the slaves can be freed upon being

<sup>64</sup> Here using modern units for the sake of convenience. Conversion rate is according to the definition in Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary, published by *Thuong vu an thu*, Peking, 2002, p.946.

<sup>65</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.68.

<sup>66</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.67.

<sup>67</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.128.

<sup>68</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.134.

<sup>69</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.139.

<sup>70</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.142.

<sup>71</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.142.

<sup>72</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.155.

<sup>73</sup> *Tran Due Ton*: named as Kinh, the eleventh son of king *Minh Tong*, younger brother of king *Nghe Tong*. He took the throne on the 9<sup>th</sup> of the eleventh month, year of Mouse (1372), died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the first month, year of Snake (1377) at his 41. He named the era title as *Long Khanh*. He died in the battle with Chiem Thanh army led by Che Bong Nga.

repaid (1292). This shows that the king cares for all classes of people, including those with low status in society. The national history records an event when the king went out for amusement, on his way whenever meeting a servant of a royal family, he would call them and asked: "Where is your master?", And told the guards not threatening them. When returning to the palace, the king told his close staffs: "The servants of the peaceful time will be the soldier in the war time"<sup>74</sup>. Inheriting the policy of his father Tran Nhan Tong, King Tran Anh Tong also ordered that those who had sold fields and their children as slaves were allowed to redeem them. According to the Complete Annals of Đại Việt, year of Pig (1299), the ninth month, ordered that from year of Tiger (1290), year of Cat (1291) up to now, servants sold as slaves and fields purchased should be redeemed, out of the pointed time, should not<sup>75</sup>.

From the beginning of the fourteenth century, the land disputes developed, to ensure social security, King Tran Minh Tong twice issued regulations on the settlement of land disputes. The order clearly stated: "Year of Monkey (1320), the tenth month, ordered that those who fought for the land, if found that they were not their own, those who struggle for the land that is not belong to him shall be punished by the penalty equal to double the price of the land. If producing fake contract, a knuckle of his left hand shall be cut off"<sup>76</sup>. In year of Dog (1322), order that the any the rice field in struggle which is in its crop shall be divided in two half, one half for the cultivator, the other remained<sup>77</sup>.

In year of Monkey (1248), the construction of Dinh Nhi dike from the headwaters to the beach was carried out. King Tran Thai Tong ordered that, fields of the people which are invaded by the filling works shall be compensated by cast<sup>78</sup>, in order to limit to the lowest level damage to people. In localities where there are dykes, the king also made two positions, *Chief of Dike Watch* and *Deputy Chief of Dike Watch* who every year after harvesting would organize the workers to repair the dikes and clear the streams in prevention of flood and drought, securing the cultivation and life<sup>79</sup>.

In his position as King Father, Tran Minh Tong did not mind the dangers and difficulties, personally fought the rebels, bringing a peaceful life for the people. In year of Snake -1329, winter, King Father *Minh Tong* patrolled the Da Giang religion, led the army to suppress the Nguu Huong barbarians, made the official Nguyen Trung Ngan to accompany him to record the events. Tran Khac Chung advised: "Da Giang is a dangerous wild land with very hard terrains which is disadvantage for army movement. Chiem Thanh is a land with more favorable climate. In the past we have been successful many times in seize its land and capture its king. I think it is a better option to leave the Nguu Hong and fight Chiem Thanh. King Father said: "I'm father of the people. Whenever my children are in violation, I must rescue them. Can I leave them just because of hardness?" Tran Khac Chung bowed

<sup>74</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, ibid, p.68.

<sup>75</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, ibid, p.78.

<sup>76</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, ibid, p.105.

<sup>77</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, ibid, p.108.

<sup>78</sup> *The Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting the History of Viet* (the Synopsis) (1998), Volume I. Education Publisher, p.450.

<sup>79</sup> *The Synopsis*, (1998), Volume I. Education Publisher, p.457.

down and said: “Your Highness, your great heart and majestic kindness are beyond my limited capacity of my mind”<sup>80</sup>. The determination of the King Father as above proves his strong interest in life of the people.

From the time of King Tran Du Tong onwards, more and more enemies emerged. The State formed specialized forces called *The Legion of Wind* to swipe the robbers. Year of Monkey, the eighth month, the State sent 20 Legions of Wind to clear the robbers over the country<sup>81</sup>. In the river gates where the robbers operated strongly, the State set patrols and river guards to deal with such situation. Every place could form 3, 4 or 5 patrols according to their real conditions<sup>82</sup>.

Especially, King Tran Du Tong applied public health care and food for the poor and the patient. The ninth month, year of Tiger (1362), king visited Thien Truong prefecture. Anyone who was in ill was given free medical care and food, as much as their need. (A kind of medicine called pill Hong Ngoc with multiple uses. For every person came, two pills, two kg of rice, and two dollars would be given)<sup>83</sup>.

For the remote localities, king sent his officials to care the people. The Complete Annals of Đại Việt recorded: “The eighth month, year of Pig (1371), Ho Quy Ly was sent to Nghe An to encourage the people and calm the border land clans”<sup>84</sup>.

In the meantime, the state also has a clear regulation on the responsibility of the people to the king and to the State. Anyone violated the law will be punished strictly. Year of Dog (1392), the twelfth month, ordered that for soldiers and plebs who flee from legal duties shall bear the penalty of 40 dollars, be incised to the nape with four letters, the leader shall be beheaded, his fields shall be confiscated<sup>85</sup>.

*Taking care of the people's spiritual life:* Buddhism is revered by the people of the whole country. The spiritual appearance of Tran society is strongly imprinted with Buddhism. To ensure the spiritual life for the people, the government allowed the construction of pagodas everywhere. If according to Nguyen Du's record (16th century), there were one or more pagodas in every village in the Tran period<sup>86</sup>, the number of temples in Vietnam in the Tran dynasty must be very large, but unfortunately there is no exact number. Newly built or restored pagoda and pagoda structures spread across the country from the capital city of Thang Long to the ancient capital of Hoa Lu, from Thanh Hoa to Ha Giang at the northern tip of Vietnam. According to the epitaph documents, there are large pagodas built by the monk to build the Buddha temple and given the name of the as *The Great Pagoda of Thang Nghiep Luat*<sup>87</sup>. In the reign of King Tran Thai Tong, the places where communal houses were allowed where people come to rest when it was sunny, set with Buddha statues

<sup>80</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.116.

<sup>81</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.129.

<sup>82</sup> Each patrol consists of 30 troops.

<sup>83</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.142.

<sup>84</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.155.

<sup>85</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.184.

<sup>86</sup> Nguyen Du, *Collection of Strange Tales*, Hanoi, 1971, p.152.

<sup>87</sup> *Stone stele of Thang Nghiep Luat pagoda*, in *the epitaph of Tran dynasty* (2016), Thich Duc Thien - Dinh Khac Thuan (editor), Ethnic culture Publisher, Hanoi.

to worship<sup>88</sup>. In order to spread Buddhism among the people, the *Great Sutra* were inscribed for printing by Thuong Hoang Tran Nhan Tong and King Tran Anh Tong to make an important contribution to the development of Buddhism in the next century. The twelfth month, year of Goat (1319), 5,000 volumes had been printed and stored at Quynh Lam Institute<sup>89</sup>. It is noteworthy that the Mahāvastu sutras are engraved with the blood of the monks and nobles of the Tran dynasty. In "*Dien Phuc pagoda stele*", built on the 7<sup>th</sup> of the first month, year of Dragon, the fifth year of *Khai Thai* (1328), was inscribed the pray for the Buddha's blessing for the village of literature expansion, fertility of the families, the prosperity of the rice crops, people being able to limit their desire, quickly getting rid of the dark suffering, and together reaching the Tathagata realm. At the end of the stele, there are 32 verses, each with 4 characters, praising the services of the kings who had created prosperity and security for the life of the people, expanded Buddhism to every corner of the kingdom. Through the epitaph content we can know: Buddhism continues to go deep into the spiritual life of people, the temple is the place where they send the wishes of each individual and the community on the occasion of the full moon ceremony<sup>90</sup>.

In the stele of *Thieu Phuc pagoda*<sup>91</sup> in Bai village, Bac Giang, compiled by Le Quat showed showing that the Buddhist society in the Tran dynasty developed widely. "So deep and so stable is the great impact of the Belief of Fate of Buddhism in Tran dynasty on the people! Upper are the king and royal figures, lower the plebs, all of them are ready to use the last coin for Buddhism affairs. A deposit to a pagoda is seen as a deposit for after life position which all people desire. So, from the capital to the provinces, from towns to villages, people surrender without any order, trust without vows. Wherever there are people, there are pagodas and temples, too. Wherever the pagodas are damaged, they will be repaired. Bells, drums, temples, and pagoda took more than a half of the society buildings. Buddhism easily gets it win over the people and their worship..."<sup>92</sup>. This article was also recorded in the Complete Annals of Đại Việt in 1370, late Tran dynasty. It indicates the development of Buddhism and spiritual life of the people.

Every 3 years Tran dynasty conducted a ceremony of bhikkhu ordination which once time transferred not less than one thousand plebs into monks. Phap Loa, the second founder, was a devotee of this practice. He ordained a big number of monks. Until 1329,

<sup>88</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.12.

<sup>89</sup> Quynh Lam Zen Monastery, now Quynh Lam Pagoda (also known as Quynh Pagoda) in Dong Trieu district, Quang Ninh province. Quynh Lam Pagoda is one of the famous temples of Vietnam, built in the reign of King Ly Than Tong (1127-1138). In the Tran dynasty (1226-1400), the pagoda was an important Buddhist center of the Truc Lam Zen sect. The pagoda used to have a Buddha statue as one of Thien Nam four great qigong or An Nam four great qi, or four kinds of bronze vessels, of great size and weight, and was a valuable asset of Dai Viet in the Ly and Tran dynasties.

<sup>90</sup> Do Thi Hao, *Steles in Dien Phuc Pagoda*, in: *Sino Nom - Vietnamese inscription*, volume II, Tran Dynasty, the upper volume, National Chung Cheng Univesty Chia Yi- Hanoi Han Nom Research Institute- 2002, pp.213-214.

<sup>91</sup> The Stele written by Le Quat, doctor graduation in 1258. At present, the stele is no longer exist, only the text written in *Complete Annals of Đại Việt* and introduced in Ly Tran's Poetry, Volume II, Social Sciences Publisher, 1989, p.748 and in *Sino Nom - Vietnamese inscription in Tran Dynasty*, (2002), National Chung Cheng Univesty Chia Y- Hanoi Han Nom Research Institute.

<sup>92</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.12. See *The Stele of Thieu Phuc Pagoda*, in *The Steles of Tran Dynasty* (2016), *ibid*, p.202.

Phap Loa ordained 1500 plebs into bhikkhu and bhikkhuni. Tran Phu, messenger of China dynasty, visited Dai Viet and recorded in his *Book of An Nam*: "Men have their heads shaved. Officials cover their head by towels because all people are monks"<sup>93</sup>.

#### 4. Discussing the research results

From the above research shows that the participation in social security activities of Tran dynasty Buddhism took place positively and achieved some basic achievements such as:

\* ***Tran kings tried to boost the goodness:*** Buddhism was highly respected and revered by the Tran kings, so it had good conditions for development. The development of Buddhism entered the life of Dai Viet people. Buddhist teachings are widely available throughout the country. Buddhism is not only for monks and Buddhists but also spread to the whole society, from the court to the village, from members of the royal family to the common people. Buddhism is deeply embedded in the spiritual life of the people. Most prominent is the widespread Zen school. In the mind of the early Tran kings was imbued with Buddhism, thereby controlling the specific actions of each person. Thought or consciousness helps people define goals for their activities, creating in human feelings, beliefs, wills, urging people to take action to achieve the set goals. In Buddhism, there are two terms which have meanings closely to the concepts of good and bad, namely, *kusala* and *akusala*, that is, goodness and non-goodness. What is goodness according to the Buddhist conception? Goodness, as defined in the scriptures, is thoughts, words and deeds that benefit oneself, humans and other living beings, and vice versa, non-goodness. In the Bodhisattva Sutta in the Ambala forest (Ambalathikā Rāhulovāda sutta, Middle Length Sutra, sutta number 61), the Buddha explained about kusala and akusala as follows: "This body of mine is doing. This karma body of mine does not lead to self-harm, does not lead to harming others, does not lead to harm both; by such my karmic body is of *kusala*, bringing bliss and blissful retribution." And, "This karma is doing. This karmic body of mine leads to self-harm, lead to harming others, to harming both; this karmic body is *akusala*, leading to suffering, bringing the retribution of suffering..."<sup>94</sup>. King Tran Nhan Tong used to go to many places in the country to advise people to practice the ten virtues<sup>95</sup>, to eliminate prostitution. The benevolence in Buddhism helped Tran kings formulate policies not only towards national development, political and social stability, but also to always care about the people.

\* Tran kings practiced social security for the people according to the Buddhist teachings: Buddhist teachings conception that people need to have kindness, compassion, joyfulness, and sacrifice (Four Great Hearts). This is the main factor that helps to develop compassion, humanity, and directing Buddhist activities to the people and for the people. In

<sup>93</sup> Tran Nghia (1972), A "sketch" of our society in the Tran dynasty - The poem "Records on An Nam" by Tran Phu, Journal of Literature, No. 1, p.110.

<sup>94</sup> Nguyen Hiep (2013), *Good and evil in Buddhism*, Enlightenment Journal, dated February 26, 2013.

<sup>95</sup> Ten Virtues: 1. No killing, 2. No stealing, 3. No illegal sex relationship, 4. No lying, 5. No saying separating words, 6. No evil words, 7. No dirty words, 8. No greed, 9. No angry, 10. No evil thought.

Buddhist conception, the practice of merit and good deeds are the way to help people have a peaceful life. Buddhist scriptures always refer to the spirit of selflessness, kindness, advising people to live a good life, to help others, to show their kindness to others. Promoting compassion, righteousness, and being considered an incarnate religion associated with the Vietnamese people. The Buddha taught that, you need wisdom to see the things as they are, see the things worth to do, men worth to help. From there, it is possible to engage in the Bodhisattva's cultivation, benefit many people, and properly demonstrate the selflessness of selflessness<sup>96</sup>.

Tran Buddhism can perform social security well for a number of reasons:

*Firstly*, because there is a similarity in the Buddhist philosophy for man and the Tran Dynasty's spirit of taking "People as the root". This similarity shows the spirit of entering into practice, doing charity, building a peaceful society, in harmony with the flow of the people's philosophy of life: "love you as if you love yourself". The Buddhist tradition up to Tran was imbued with a social personality and incarnation. Tran Nhan Tong is a Buddhist king who always takes care of the people for the country. Kings Tran Thai Tong, Tran Thanh Tong, Tran Nhan Tong to Tran Nghe Tong repeatedly implemented amnesty and reduced tax rents for the people. King Tran Anh Tong once released gold and silver in the warehouse, calculated up to 50,000 USD and handed over to Phap Loa<sup>97</sup> for distribution to the poor<sup>98</sup>. In year of Goat (1319), the people had a poor crop. King ordered to handle Phap Loa 100 pieces of gold and 500 pieces of silver to help the people. During the reign of King Tran Anh Tong, many events related to Buddhism policy were issued, for example: Year of Dog-1310, King Anh Tong ordered to take place bhikkhu ordination ceremony every three years. Year of Pig – 1311, ordered to reproduce the *Dai Tang sutra*<sup>99</sup> (to year of Chicken finished, Phap Loa composed the preface). The ninth month, year of Cow – 1313, issued the regulation on hierarchy of Buddhism monks and assigned more than 100 high monks. Commenting on kings with the role of Buddhism in the Tran dynasty, author Nguyen Lang wrote: "Tran kings all studied well, but they were very good at Buddhism, so the relationship between kings and Zen masters was not is to rely on in terms of planning and work. Kings like Thai Tong, Thanh Tong, Nhan Tong and Anh Tong all have a solid foundation of Buddhism. They support Buddhism in part because they are Buddhists, partly perhaps also because they want to join humanity in building and protecting the country. The Nhan Tong period was the era when Tran Buddhism flourished to its extreme. But the spirit of compassion and tolerance of Buddhism is never accompanied by a negative attitude and forgetting. The Dien Hong Conference convened by Tran Nhan Tong expressed the unanimity of the king of the people at that time. "Fight!", The unanimous resolution of the Dien Hong Conference was

<sup>96</sup> Thich Tri Quang, *Selflessness and forgiving*, Enlightenment Journal, issue of February 4, 2019.

<sup>97</sup> Phap Loa (1284-1330): His name was Dong Kien Cuong, the second founder of the three ancestors of Truc Lam Zen sect in Tran Dynasty. He was privileged as Great Sage Pho Tue Minh Giac Tinh Tri. His Hometown in Nam Sach district, Hai Duong province today.

<sup>98</sup> Tales of the Three Founders, *ibid*, p.43.

<sup>99</sup> *Dai tang sutra*, by the call of Phap Loa, was inscribed by blood of the monks and the people to produce more than 5000 copies, stored in Zen monastery of Quynh Lam. King Tran Anh Ton also extracted his blood to write a mini copy of Dai Tang sutra which was enclosed in 20 boxsets, granted to Phap Loa (according to *Tales of the Three Founders*, *ibid*, p.47).

a voice of the sense of autonomy and self-reliant spirit of Dai Viet people in the era of unified Buddhism in Tran dynasty ...<sup>100</sup>.

Secondly, Buddhism directs people to a lifestyle of altruism, equality and charity. Buddhism easily enters the heart of people, has the effect of perfecting moral character, living a good life. As mentioned above, the benevolence of Buddhism is one of the sources of humanism, human dignity, human-centeredness. The Buddhist ideology of equality, compassion and charity directs people to always remember "filial piety": "filial piety is Buddha's virtue, filial piety is the Buddha's mind", etc., are positive values that lead the people care about the community, live honestly, respect humanism, stick with nature. The spirit of salvation and salvation of the Buddha is widely promoted, helping Buddhism to stick closely to the Vietnamese nation. It is through the spirit of compassion, sharing with unfortunate fate that Buddhism has led them to do good, directing their attention to people and society.

However, from the research results showed that, ensuring social security for the people of Tran Buddhism still had a number of basic limitations that significantly affected people's lives at that time, namely:

The implementation of social security was uneven during the Tran period. Attention to the people's life focused only on the early kings of the Tran dynasty as mentioned above. The late Tran kings, from Tran Du Tong onwards, although not restricting the development of Buddhism, did not pay attention to maintain or inherit the care of the people like the previous kings. King Tran Du Tong<sup>101</sup>, when he first came to the throne, was still very good, Complete Annals of Đại Việt wrote: "King was very smart with high education. He improved army, cared for education, got respect from neighbor kingdoms. In the era of Thieu Phong, all was well"<sup>102</sup>. The king also implemented a number of policies to reduce hardship for the people such as tax reduction, exemption, and reduction of farm taxes. Later, too engaging in amusement, he not only loosens the government, but also ignored the life of the people, exposing the kingdom to danger of collapse. One time, in the sixth month, year of Horse (1366), king left the palace to "visit home of Tran Ngo Lang in Me So (Chau Giang, Hung Yen today) and play there until midnight. On his way home, across Chu Gia river, he was robbed the seal and the sword. Knowing that he would not live long, he devoted himself in pleasuring games"<sup>103</sup>. King Tran Due Tong<sup>104</sup> suppressed Duong Nhat Le, recovered

<sup>100</sup> Nguyen Lang (2000), *Vietnamese Buddhist history*, I-II-III, p/375-376, Literature Publishing House, Hanoi.

<sup>101</sup> Tran Du Tong (ruling from 1341-1369), names as Tran Hao, was the seventh king of Tran Dynasty. He was the tenth son of king Tran Minh Tong, younger brother of king Tran Hien Tong. In 1341, Tran Hien Tong died, king father Minh Tong made Du Tong to be king in his 5 years-old. He ruled for 28 years, died at 34, used two era titles Thieu Phong (1341-1357) and Dai Tri (1358-1369).

<sup>102</sup> Complete Annals of Đại Việt, Volume II, *ibid*, p.127.

<sup>103</sup> Complete Annals of Đại Việt, Volume II, *ibid*, p.144.

<sup>104</sup> Tran Nghe Tong, named as Phu, the third son of Minh Ton, was enthroned on the tenth month, year of Dog (1370) and ruled until the 9<sup>th</sup> of the eleventh month, year of Mouse (1372), three years in total, then became himself Father King for 27 years, died at his 74. He used the era title of Thieu Khanh. According to Complete Annals of Đại Việt (1993), Volume II, *ibid*, p.148: "He cleared all rebellions, recovered the cause of his ancestors, and once again made the country prosperous. However, while he was a respectful and kind king, he lacked a determined mind of a ruler. As a result, he found himself faced both the invasion on the borderland, and the corruption of the court inland. By time, the dynasty degraded to the point of collapse.



the cause of Tran Dynasty, but failed to defeat the army of Chiem Thanh, making the country weaker. In the third month, year of Pig (1371), Chiem Thanh army from Dai An sea gate (Lieu gate today, Nghia Hung, Nam Dinh) march toward the Citadel Thang Long. King had to sail to Dong Ngan to hide. Chiem army seized the citadel, destroy the palace, captured women and properties<sup>105</sup>. This detail not only shows the weakness of the Tran army but also shows the king's distraction in consolidating security and defense. Historian Ngo Sy Lien in his comment on this, had the intention of blaming King Tran Nghe Tong: "Just because the people got lazy, the law got loosened day by day that the border defense was weakened and happened such a disaster. The enemy invaded the land and the border guards were defeated. The enemy attacked the citadel and the royal army couldn't fight against. How can the country survive? Du Tong just liked to amusements and ignored the state. Nghe Tong, thought had undergone many events, ignored also the defense. What can it be but just focusing on entertainment and leave the defense not reinforced?"<sup>106</sup>.

Tran Due Tong was the ninth king of the Tran dynasty but was the only king to die in the battle with Chiem Thanh in 1377, ending his throne after more than 4 years of reign. However, despite his short stay in the throne, he actively strengthened the defense consolidation for the attack on Chiem Thanh. In the two years 1373 and 1374, he ordered additional troops, building and repairing ships. The year 1375 was the year when Dai Viet urgently consolidated its army, weapons and food to prepare for the battle against Chiem Thanh. The king ordered the selection of generals to lead the army, those officers who knew martial arts, understood tactics, regardless from what class of the society, were selected as military general. Old and weak soldiers were allowed to be home. At the same time, more healthy people, including hired laborers (i.e. those who are not citizen) in the two lands of Thanh Hoa and Nghe An, were added to the army. The kingdom army procured weapons and ships to preparing fighting Chiem Thanh in the twelfth month of the year of the Dragon-1376<sup>107</sup>. But the king's efforts did not produce results, the king died in battle due to fall into the trap of Che Bong Nga (January 1377), and the Dai Viet army failed badly. Later kings such as Tran Phi De<sup>108</sup>, Tran Thuan Tong<sup>109</sup> and Tran Thieu De<sup>110</sup> just sat on the throne as puppets, and power in the country was held by Ho Quy Ly.

<sup>105</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, ibid, p.157.

<sup>106</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, ibid, p.155.

<sup>107</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, ibid, p.158.

<sup>108</sup> *Tran Phe De*: born on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the third month, the 4<sup>th</sup> year of *Dai Tri*, 1361, was enthroned on the 13<sup>rd</sup> of the fifth month, year of Mouse (1377), ruled until 1388. He took the title of *Xuong Phu*. "King was named in birth as Hieu, the eldest son of Due Ton, his mother was queen Gia Tu. When Due Ton conquered the enemy on the south, Nghe Ton was enthroned. After that he was lowered to be Linh Duc lord, then forced to die by hanging. He was on the throne for 12 years, died at his 28, buried in An Bai mount. He was a fool and weak king, failing to do anything, and his authority couldn't control his aid (pointing to Ho Quy Ly), thus the country fell in crisis. He even couldn't protect himself. So poor! (*Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, ibid, p.164).

<sup>109</sup> *Tran Thuan Tong*: born in 1377, was enthroned on 1388, and died in 1398, used the title of *Quang Thai*. "His birth name was Ngung, the youngest son of Nghe Tong. He ruled for 9 years, being a monk for 1, murdered by ho Quy Ly at his 22. He just a puppet king. All power was in hand of Ho Quy Ly who finally killed him. So poor! (*Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, ibid, p.177).

<sup>110</sup> *Tran Thieu De*: born in 1396, named as An, the eldest son of Tran Thuan Tong, ruled for 2 years (1398-1400). He was deposed by Ho Quy Ly in 1400 who made himself to be the new king, called himself as Bao Ninh Dai Vuong.

The political, economic and social crisis in the second half of the fourteenth century restricted the implementation of social security in Tran Buddhism. From the reign of King Tran Due Tong until the end of the Tran dynasty, the court did not once more apply modern amnesty, tax exemption for the people. In addition, the war with Chiem Thanh took place regularly, the court had to mobilize human and material resources for the war, while the national economic condition fell into a serious weakening position. The people fell into starvation, the bandits emerged. From 1343-1400, within 57 years, there were 8 rebellions by the bandits. In particular, during the reign of King Tran Du Tong (1341-1369) there were more than 4 cases, in 1343, 1344, 1351, and 1354 and typically the uprising of Ngo Ben in Yen mountain (Quang Ninh today) from 1344-1360<sup>111</sup>. Now (1354), because of starvation, and hardness caused by the bandits.” The State sent the Legions of Wind to suppress the bandits. In addition, royal army was also mobilized to such a task. Hungry became popular over the country, treasury got empty, the State failed to supply the people with food. All the rich families were called for such task. Many times the Court had to release orders to encourage the rich families to share food and rice with the people, or deposit rice to the national warehouses to supply the army. In return, the State would be assigned the attendants to the official positions of the country. Such a situation recorded as below:

*Autumn, the eighth month (1358), ordered to encourage the rich families over the country to share food with the people. Local government must calculate the food shared to return in cash.*

*In the eighth month (1362), serious starvation, ordered to force the rich families to share food with the people. They would be assigned official positions in return.*

*Autumn, in the eighth month (1375) ordered to collect tax from the people, the tax payers would be assigned official positions in return.*

*Autumn, in the eighth month (1378), it was the time of warfare, national treasury got empty<sup>112</sup>.*

Historian Phan Phu Tien<sup>113</sup> once wrote: “After Du Tong, a lustful king, and invasion of Chiem Thanh, disturbance of the bandits Tran Dynasty was on crisis. The law fails to balance the society and suppress the bandits who commit even in daylight. Quy Ly took the authority and tried to stabilize the situation. Then the society recovered partly its organization<sup>114</sup>. Thus, in the last years of the Tran Dynasty, the construction of worship facilities to take care of the spiritual life for Buddhists and the people received little attention. The above reality shows that the seriously degraded infrastructure as well as superstructure in the society is one of the factors leading to the collapse of the Tran Dynasty.

<sup>111</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.134.

<sup>112</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.139; 142; 157; 159; 165.

<sup>113</sup> *Phan Phu Tien*: Born around 1370-1371, the year of death is unknown. Hometown in Thach Chau commune, Loc Ha district, Ha Tinh province, but later moved back to Ve village (ie Dong Ngac village, now in Bac Tu Liem district, Hanoi). He worked as a mandarin during the Lê dynasty, participating in compiling *Dai Viet History and Vietnam Poetry Collection*.

<sup>114</sup> *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, Volume II, *ibid*, p.184.

#### 4. Conclusion

The early Tran kings were imbued with Buddhist thought, so most of the policies on ensuring social security were aimed at taking care of people's lives. In addition to increasing production, economic development for the country, and successfully conducting three resistance wars against the Mongol invasions, the early Tran emperors implemented amnesty, reduced tax rents, and granted people. Build pagodas to ensure spiritual life for the people. Implementing the Buddha's philosophy, action is the necessary means to overcome obstacles on the way of liberation. The Tran kings acted for the People because of their practical work, towards the residential community, towards the prosperity of the nation. Vien Chung, royal monk, once said about the principles guiding the life of a Buddhist politician: "If you are a person serving the People, you must treat the will of the People as your own, consider the desire of the people as your own ..."<sup>115</sup>. In society, the merit actions of all classes of people in the building of temples and towers are also directed to: "pure natural mind", towards a peaceful life. In the second half of the fourteenth century, Confucianism was on the rise but still could not prevent the prevalence of Buddhism.

The role of Buddhism in the implementation of social security is expressed through concrete actions by the Tran kings and dynasties, which is the viewpoint that takes "People as the root", cares and takes care of material and spiritual life for the People. Thus, the Tran dynasty was able to unite the internal court and unite the entire people, contributing to the victory in the resistance wars. It can be seen that, from the establishment until before the event of Duong Nhat Le usurping, the Tran kings as well as the system of great mandarins did not happen even once in a domestic fight or internal conflict. It can be affirmed that the Tran Dynasty was the most flourishing and humane dynasty in the feudal dynasties of Vietnam.

However, the economic, socio-political situation of the Tran Dynasty in the second half of the fourteenth century fell into a serious crisis, significantly affecting the implementation of social security of Tran Buddhism. If from 1240 to 1372, the State did 10 amnesties for the people, from 1372 onwards, the amnesty did not take place even one more time. On the social level, from 1343 onwards, the Tran dynasty had to focus its efforts on suppressing instabilities, including robbery and bandits. The cause of common robbery is due to starvation. Economic decline, ensuring social security, although the desire to develop, but unfortunately, was not as in the first period. At times, the national treasury fell into a state of depletion, the people were devastated by famine, the court was no longer able to provide paddy in public warehouses for the people, but had to call on the rich to share their paddy to save the hunger in exchange official positions assigned by the State. Therefore, ensuring social security for the people, apart from freedom, belief and religion, it is essential to have a developed economic foundation, so does every dynasty.

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<sup>115</sup> Nguyen Lang (2000), *Vietnamese Buddhist history*, I-II-III, p.390, Literature Publishing House, Hanoi.

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### Research on social security through Buddhism in the Tran dynasty

During the period from 8<sup>th</sup> Century to early decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, Dai Viet was in the course of prosperous development with reigns of Tran Thai Tong (ruled from 1226-1258), Tran Thanh Tong (1258-1278), Tran Nhan Tong (1278-1293), Tran Anh Tong (1293-1314), Tran Minh Tong (1914-1329), and Trang Hien Ton (1329-1341). We can say that this is time of prosperity and advance of Tran Dynasty. The Tran Kings' piety upon Buddhism had a great impact on thought and government policies, especially the spirit of equality and humanity. Kings of Tran express a great care on life of the people, try to relieve their toils, reduce their duties, help the poor, and enhance the social security.<sup>116</sup> From Tran Du Tong onwards, all was not as before anymore. Research on social security by Buddhism in Tran dynasty can be presented in many aspects, but this article just focuses on clarifying the social security through Buddhism's care on material and spiritual life of the people.

**Keywords:** Social security, amnesty, Buddhism, Tran dynasty.

### Badania nad zabezpieczeniem społecznym przez buddyzm w dynastii Tran

W okresie od VIII wieku do wczesnych dekad XIV wieku - za czasów panowania: Tran Thai Tong (rządził od 1226-1258), Tran Thanh Tong (1258-1278), Tran Nhan Tong (1278-1293), Tran Anh Tong (1293-1314), Tran Minh Tong (1914-1329), i Trang Hien Ton (1329-1341) - Dai Viet był w na drodze rozwoju. Można powiedzieć, że jest to czas prosperity i postępu dynastii Tran. Pobożność królów Tranu wobec buddyzmu miała wielki wpływ na myślenie i politykę rządu, zwłaszcza na ducha równości i człowieczeństwa. Królowie dynastii Tran wyrażają wielką troskę o życie ludzi, starają się ulżyć im w trudach, zmniejszają ich obowiązki, pomagają biednym i zwiększają bezpieczeństwo społeczne. Od czasów Tran Du Tong, wszystko nie było już takie jak dawniej. Badania nad zabezpieczeniem społecznym przez Buddyzm w dynastii Tran można przedstawić w wielu aspektach, niniejszy artykuł koncentruje się jednak tylko na wyjaśnieniu zabezpieczenia społecznego poprzez opiekę Buddyzmu nad materialnym i duchowym życiem ludzi.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zabezpieczenie społeczne, amnestia, Buddyzm, dynastia Tran.

*Translated by Anna Oleszak*

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<sup>116</sup> *Social security is a system of mechanisms, policies and solutions of the state and community to help all members of society cope with the risks and socio-economic shocks that can expose them to decline or loss of income sources due to maternity sickness, accident, occupational disease, old age without working capacity or for other objective reasons falling into poverty, impoverishment and service provision health care for the community, through policy systems on social insurance, health insurance, social assistance and special assistance* (according to Nguyen Hai Huu, Report on development of social security system Association in accordance with the socialist-oriented market economy - 2005).

