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Editor: Nguyễn Đình-Hoà

720 Teresita Boulevard, San Francisco, CA 94127 (USA) Phone: (415) 584-0498

HỌC GIẢ HOÀNG XUÂN-HÃN TỪ TRẦN GREAT SCHOLAR PASSES AWAY

Famous Mathematician-Sinologist-Educator Hoàng Xuân-Hãn passed away in Paris, at 7:45 am on Sunday March 10, 1996, after spending two weeks at the Orsay hospital because of a stroke. He was 89 years old. A native of Hà-tĩnh Province, Professor Hoàng served as Vietnam's Minister of National Education and Fine Arts in the first independent government headed by Prime Minister Trần Trọng-Kim in March 1945. Later he took part in the French-Vietnamese negotiations in Dalat in 1946, but moved to France in the early 1950s to devote himself to scholarly activities, editing and publishing many works in Vietnamese history and ancient literature.

Several generations of students owe him a scientific and technical dictionary, *Danh-từ Khoa-học*, which he had to produce in a hurry when teachers at both the secondary and tertiary levels needed a native terminology in their classrooms, where the Vietnamese language replaced French in the spring of 1945 as the medium of instruction. Professor Hoàng taught at the Lycée du Protectorat in Hanoi after he earned his *Agrégation* in Mathematics, following his graduation from the Ecole Polytechnique and the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Ponts et Chaussées in Paris.

The scholarly world admired his rigorous research demonstrated through such famous books as the biography of 11th-century General Lý Thường-Kiệt (which is actually the diplomatic history of the Lý dynasty, 1010-1225), the annotations to various translations of *Chinh-phụ Ngâm-khúc* "Song of a Soldier's Wife" composed originally in Chinese by Đặng Trần-Côn, as well as the life and works of poetess Hồ Xuân-Hương. Educated first in Chinese classics by his father Hoàng Xuân-Úc before attending French-medium schools in his homeland, he became the dean of Vietnamese studies, possessing unique talents in deciphering traditional works of literature written in the vernacular *nôm* script. He was an ardent student of Nguyễn Du's works, including *The Tale of Kiều* --- about which he has left an unpublished manuscript that establishes a version closest to the original text through the textual analysis of some ten *nôm* editions of the national bard's narrative in *lục-bát* verse.

Dr. Hoàng is survived by his wife of fifty years, his daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren. His departure is a great loss to teachers and students alike, and is mourned by compatriots both inside and outside his homeland. In accordance with the *wishes* of the self-exiled scholar, his cremation will take place at the Orme-aux-Moineaux Crematorium in Les Ulis-Orsay (Essonne) on March 14, 1996, then his ashes will be deposited at Trúc-Lâm Zen Monastery, 9 Rue de Neuchâtel, Villebon-sur-Yvette. Eulogists at the private funeral will include a French general who was his classmate at the Polytechnique, some cultural personalities in the French capital, and those former students and colleagues of his who have been residing in Europe .

According to the bereaved family, on April 24, 1996, the elaborate (Buddhist) Seven Weeks Mass for the transcendence of Professor Hoàng's soul will be held simultaneously at Trúc-lâm Monastery and at the Hoàng family's country manor, "Manoir d'Aubonne" (*Dã-thự Cam-tuyền*), 14113 Villerville, outside of Paris.

Even an incomplete list of the eminent scientist's publications eloquently underlines his vast erudition in history and philology, his rigorous research on many aspects of Vietnamese literature and culture, and above all, the modesty of a real scholar and the kind generosity of a real teacher, always ready to dispense advice and guidance. In addition to articles in learned journals (*Bách-khoa*, *Văn-Hạnh* in Saigon; *Đại-học* in Huế; *Khoa-học*, *Ngôn-ngữ* and *Tạp-chí Văn-học* in Hanoi; and *Khoa-học Xã-hội* in Paris, to name just a few), here is a sampling of the prolific author's contributions to the field of Vietnamology:

1940. "Quelques poèmes en langue annamite du XVème siècle," *Bulletin Général de l'Instruction Publique*, Hanoi, 19e année, No. 10, Juin-Août 1940, pp. 180-185.

1949. (Ed.) *Đại-Nam Quốc-sử Điển-ca* "Great Vietnam's National History in Verse". Hanoi: Sông Nhị.

1952. *La-son Phu-tử*. [Master La-son served Emperor Quang-Trung of the Tây-son dynasty] . Paris: Minh-Tân.

1953. *Chinh-phụ-ngâm Bị-khảo*. Paris: Minh-Tân.

1964. (Ed.) *Bích-câu Kỳ-ngộ* "The Marvelous Encounter at the Blue Creek". Huế: Đại-học.

1995. (Ed.) *Văn tế Thập-loại Chúng-sinh* "Funeral Oration to the Wandering Souls" by Nguyễn Du. Paris: An-Tiêm.

We deeply mourn the loss of a great Vietnamese scholar and teacher,
and wish to express our heartfelt condolences to Cô Hân.

NOTE: For an exhaustive bibliography
of Professor Hoàng Xuân-Hãn's publications,
please contact Professor Tạ Trọng-Hiệp
4 Rue des Champs Elysées, 94250 Gentilly, France.