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THE POET PATRIOT NGUYEN DINH CHIEU

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NGUYEN Dinh Chieu was born on July 1st, 1822, and died on July 3rd, 1888, at the age of 66. His father, Nguyen Dinh Huy, was a low-ranking official of the Nguyen dynasty, who had been dismissed from office because of his refusal to repress a peasant insurrection led by Le Van Khoi. Nguyen Dinh Huy, after his dismissal, had taken his family back to his native village in Ben Tre, among the toiling peasantry.

Nguyen Dinh Chieu had wanted to follow the path of patriotic scholars: to study, pass official examinations, and take up the burden of public affairs. When he was 24, he went to the imperial capital of Hue to sit for the doctoral examinations. Death came and he went back to his native village to mourn for her. A severe eye ailment born of sorrow caused him to lose his sight, and he had to give up his dream and he went back to dream.

means love of the people, hatred of those who harm the people, and opposition to aggressors. He is certain that honest people will eventually be saved from oppression, that dishonest and wicked people will eventually suffer defeat and punishment. LUC VAN TIEN, his renowned work, is both autobiographical and ethical in content. It sings the love between Luc Van Tien and Kieu Nguyet Nga, praises the solidarity of the poor, extols patriotism.

In the last thirty years of his life, he witnessed chaos, tribulation, and mourning born of foreign invasion. His writings carried the anger and aspirations of the people who were longing for liberation. His many poems — "Refugees from the French", "Flood", "A Moving Scene", etc. — clearly express his feelings.

Fighting in the ranks of the people, his view of the role played by the latter, especially the

About that time, French colonial aggression began. The Nguyen Court refused to fight it, and instead tried to placate the French by offering them the three Eastern provinces of Nam Bo. The three Western provinces were soon also occupied by the enemy. Of the scholars, some collaborated with the aggressor; others withdrew to a hermit's life. Nguyen Dinh Chieu sided with the people and resolutely refused all co-operation with the enemy. In spite of his blindness and ill health, he was very active, teaching, writing prose and poetry to attack the invaders and the betrayal of the mandarins and the kind, extolling patriotism and calling on the people to rise and struggle for national sovereignty.

To the national literary treasury he added many works of great value. In recognition of his noble thoughts and deeds, the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation in 1965 gave his name to a major literary award of the South—the NGUYEN DINH CHIEU prize.

Nguyen Dinh Chieu's writings are imbued with patriotism, humanism, and faith in the victory of justice. For him, patriotism

peasants, was a very progressive one. For the first time in Vietnamese literary history, the peasant and his heroism, under the poet's pen, were depicted in a concise and comprehensive way. In such works as "Funeral Oration for the Brave Fighters of Can Giuoc," and "Funeral Oration for the War Martyrs of the Six Provinces", he extolled the heroes who had laid down their lives for the country: the toiling peasants, who worked hard and never ate their fill, yet stood firm against the invaders and fought to their last breath for the country. This accounts for the im-

mense and lasting popularity of Nguyen Dinh Chieu's works.

Nguyen Dinh Chieu is an honour to his native Ben Tre. At tradition of the nation and the indomitable spirit contained in his writings, the people of Ben Tre province have been fighting with great resolve against American aggression, for nation salvation, and have achieved resounding exploits. It was in Ben Tre that the first concerted uprisings against the US-puppet rule erupted in 1959-60. The children of heroic Ben Tre are the worthy successors of Nguyen Dinh Chieu, the poet patriot.