

Tình Bạn bè



L'AMITIE

Unlike love, friendship requires at least the

qualities found in someone in order to show feelings. Some Greek thinkers such as Epicurus and Cicero see in friendship a sign of personal realization. Others like Plato grants friendship a determining role in the formation and maintenance of cities. It is also the case of Vietnam where friendship is not only a social cement but also one of the five privileged relations to which the Confucian Vietnamese society attributes a great deal of importance in the maintenance of social cohesion. Friendship is not born by chance because it is linked in general to the environment or the medium

in which we live. But it is not the case of Vietnam where friendship is always in close relation with the Confucian vision. It is rather born out of an esteem. There is never a social barrier in this friendship. We may have friendship with someone in whom we find the qualities of a gentleman. The latter may not necessarily belongs to the aristocracy or bourgeoisie. Friendship pulls its vitality and strength from historical facts that continue to be cited and quoted in education to remind the young of the indestructible token on the land of legends.

The lord under-estimates my talent. That's why he receives me as an ordinary person in this dress. Hearing this remark, the lord came back to his room, put on his formal dress and went out to the court to receive Đào Duy Từ. Seeing the lord receiving him with solemnity this time, Đào Duy Từ accepted to kneel down and present his excuses. By this magnanimous gesture, the lord has shown Đào Duy Từ that he was not only at the top of his expectation but also a man of value, wisdom and tolerance. Very soon Đào Duy Từ became his counsel and confidant. He was the author of several stratagems against the Trinh among which the most known remained the one based on a word puzzle laid out in the form of verses written in "nôm" on a card arranged in a two-tier tray to make known to Trnh Tác the refusal to submission of the lord Nguyen. He was at the origin of the plans of fortification of Trường Dục and Đồng Hới to be face to face with the Trinh. He was also one of the key players foreseeing the conquest and annexation of Southern territories (Champa, Cochinchina) by the intermediary of the peasant-soldiers. Thanks to Đào Duy Từ, the Nguyen lords' territory grew as such. By his ingenuity and stratagems, Đào Duy Từ knew how to bring to his lords Nguyen what counsel Zhuge Liang

(Khổng Minh Gia Cát Lượng) had done to Liu Bei (Lưu Hoài Đức) at the Three Kingdoms time in China.

Friendship is also synonymous with fidelity. It is the case of general **Hưng Đạo Vương Trần Quốc Tuấn** with his subordinates **Dã Tượng** and **Yết Kiêu**. The latter was an excellent swimmer that Hung Dao Vương assigned to guard the boat at the bank of a river during a lightning excursion on Mongol ground. Uncovered and pursued by the Mongols, Hưng Đạo Vương, hesitating and being on the point of taking another direction, was reminded by Dã Tượng that Yết Kiêu continued to wait for him at the bank of the river. Thanks to the confidence and magnanimity that Trần Hưng Đạo always knew how to maintain toward his subordinates, and to their infallible fidelity, he was narrowly rescued. This friendship continues to be honored up to now because we find it not only on the altar dedicated to Hung Dao Vương the hero himself but also to his two faithful servants.

Friendship imposes duties that sometimes lead to even sacrifice. It is the case of **Võ Tánh** with the young lord Nguyễn Ánh, the future Gia Long. Admirer of Võ Tánh's bravery and boldness, the young Nguyen Anh quickly made friend with him and granted him the hand of his younger sister, princess **Ngọc Du**. Võ Tánh became a few years later one of Nguyễn Ánh's brilliant generals. To counter the Tây Sơn army (or Peasants of the West), he was in charge of protecting Qui Nhơn city. That caused to mobilize for entire months, the bulk of Tay Son forces. In spite of pleas from **Gia Long** and his close relatives to abandon Qui Nhơn, he preferred to kill himself instead of surrender at the fall of the city. It was a trap he wanted to set for his ennemy, but also a service he rendered, in the name of

friendship, fidelity and gratitude to Nguyễn Anh by permitting him to take Huế more easily because it was entirely empty. The learned **Đặng Đức Siêu**, minister of Rites, was assigned by Nguyen Anh to compose a few years later a funeral oration in honor of Võ Tánh, of his friendship and of his fidelity.

Friendship is at the origin of several Vietnamese legends of which the most famous remains Lưu Bình Dương Lễ. It is the story of a true friendship, that of two boys Lưu Bình and Dương Lễ. Lưu Bình was issue of a rich family while Duong Le lived in misery. At the death of their respective parents, Lưu Bình welcomed Dương Lễ to his home and made him beneficiary of his affluence. They took the same classes and shared the same leisures. Aware of his precarious situation, Dương Lễ was studious and hard working. On the contrary, Lưu Bình strong of his inheritance, indulged in pleasures and gambling. On the day of national examinations, Duong Le passed and was appointed governor of a far away region. As for Lưu Bình he failed. Because of his debauched life, he was ruined a few years later and went looking for help to his friend Dương Lễ. To his great surprise, he was not seen by Dương Lễ and was chased by his guards. Bruised by humiliation, he promised to himself without believing too much to be successful next year in order to take revenge. On the way to his native village, he stopped by an inn run by Châu Long, a young and single woman. Because the woman showed sympathy to him, Lưu Bình ended up convinced by her encouragements and attentions and started preparing seriously for his tests. He passed brilliantly the following session. He hurried coming back to let Châu Long know the good news. He was disappointed because the in was closed and Châu long has disappeared. He quickly went to look for his friend Dương Lễ to teach him a lesson. He was surprised by his welcome with great pomp and his kindness. He was at the point of reproaching Duong Le for his behavior and hypocrisy. But he was astonished by Châu Long's sudden appearance. He learned then that Châu Long was the second wife of

Dương Lễ who had asked her to do the job of helping him materially and encouraging him on his way to success. He understood his friend had undertaken an elaborate plan to help him overcome his difficulties. Moved, he reconciled with Dương Lễ and gave him a big hug.

Friendship rarely breaks on this land of legends. One prefers to honor it as long as one lives. It is the case of emperor Gia Long with Monsignor Pigneau de Behaine and that of Hồ Chí Minh with commissioner Jean Sainteny. The first one, despite his antipathy toward foreign missionaries, chose to tolerate their presence during his reign. That was due a great deal to the gratitude and fidelity to the memory of the man who had risked his life to hide and feed him and who had helped him to win back his throne with French mercenaries.

As for the second one, despite his political divergence with Jean Sainteny, he always had a deep consideration toward this commissioner because deep inside themselves, they mutually respected each other . Each one knew that they were willy-nilly in an opposing party and confrontation because they tried each of them, to defend their countries at all costs. The longer the discussions lasted, the more esteem sprang up between these two men. The confrontation did not make different their sympathy and admiration. Their consideration crossed tirelessly in the hydroplane that took them on March 24, 1946 to the appointment at the Hạ Long bay with admiral D'Argenlieu. This friendship witnessed Jean Sainteny's ultimate presence and emotion during Ho Chi Minh's funerals on September 9, 1969 in Hà-Nội, which Jean Sainteny revealed later in his book "Facing Hồ Chí Minh", Seghers, 1970.

On this land of legends,
friendship is not only a
way of wisdom but it
also reflects the
Vietnamese people's
way of thinking that has
been toned down with
the passing years by
Confucian vision.

Friendship