

LITERATURE, CULTURE AND RELIGION

THE LANGUAGE OF CRIMINALIZATION IN
ĐẠI VIỆT SỬ KÝ TOÀN THU:
A CASE STUDY OF THREE *TRẦN* DYNASTY SEXUAL EVENTS

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Abstract: This article undertakes a purposive case study of the Classical Chinese vocabulary system in the *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* [Complete Annals of Đại Việt], examining three paradigmatic sexual events of the *Trần* dynasty royal house. Rather than surveying the chronicle exhaustively, it selects three cases because each saturates a distinct layer of the criminalizing lexicon, allowing the system to be reconstructed from a small but analytically complete corpus. The analysis is organized along three cross-cutting semantic-lexical fields rather than the events' narrative sequence: prosecutorial verbs (*bức, thông, đoạt, hặc tấu*), dehumanizing labels and classical allusions (*dâm loạn, tỵ ưu, chung*), and kinship-term aggravators (*huynh thê, đích tỷ, đồng bào nữ*), newly identified here. Through etymology, glyph analysis, and historical philology, the study shows each field enacts a mechanism of *Xuân Thu bút pháp* [the Spring and Autumn brush method]: *nhất tự bao biếm* and *trực thư kỳ sự* for the verb field, *bất hụy* for the label field, and *chính danh* for the kinship field. Historiographical language, the study concludes, does not merely record but actively renders judgment, its ideographic structure carrying inherent sentencing power within a Confucian moral order.

Keywords: *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, *Trần* Dynasty, *Xuân Thu bút pháp*, semantic field, *chính danh*, case study, Classical Chinese vocabulary.

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1. Introduction

In the Eastern tradition, the recording of history is always associated with the function of moral education, aiming at “*khuyến thiện, trừng ác*” [encouraging good and punishing evil] (Trần Đình Sử, 1999). Similar to the familiar concept of 文以載道 (*văn dĩ tải đạo* [literature as a vehicle for the Way]) in traditional poetics, the historian’s pen carries the responsibility of establishing moral boundaries to maintain social order. This is manifested through the conscious intent of writing to “*nêu gương tốt xấu cho đời sau*” [setting examples of good and evil for future generations], as well as the deterrent power of *Xuân Thu bút pháp* 春秋筆法 [the Spring and Autumn brush method] itself (Trần Đình Sử, 1999). Ngô Sĩ Liên himself, in the preface to the *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* [The Complete Annals of Đại Việt - ĐVSKTT], also affirmed that recording history is to ensure “*người thiện biết là được khuyến khích, kẻ ác cũng biết là bị răn ngừa*” [the good know they are encouraged, and the wicked also know they are warned] (ĐVSKTT, Quyển Thủ).

During the *Trần Dynasty*, ancient records documented many complex events related to the marriage and sexual lives of the royal family. Drawing lessons from how their own clan had once exploited the status of consort kin to bring people into power and then overthrow the *Lý Dynasty*, the leaders of the *Trần Dynasty* proactively established a system of endogamy. This helped prevent the formation of other aristocratic branches outside the clan, thereby protecting the clan’s interests more firmly and sustainably, and avoiding the danger of consort kin manipulating the throne (Trương Hữu Quýnh et al., 2008). From the pragmatic perspective of the *Trần Dynasty*, these were legal and normative behaviors. However, when the national annals were recompiled under the *Early Lê Dynasty*, at a time when Confucianism had been institutionalized and became the sole moral yardstick of society (Nguyễn Tài Thư, 1993), these practices immediately became targets of intense scrutiny and condemnation. For these events that went against Confucian ethics, the *Early Lê* historians employed a highly normative system of Classical Chinese (*Hán văn*) vocabulary to name, deconstruct their nature, and directly condemn the occurrences.

This article undertakes a case study of the Classical Chinese vocabulary system used to record and comment on three paradigmatic events: (i) *Trần Thái*

Tông's marriage to his sister-in-law *Thuận Thiên*; (ii) *An Sinh vương Trần Liễu's* assault of a palace consort at *Lê Thiên Palace*; (iii) *Trần Dụ Tông's* clandestine relationship with his elder sister *Thiên Ninh*. These three events are selected as paradigmatic cases because, taken together, they reveal the main lexical mechanisms through which the historian's language turns royal sexual conduct into an object of moral and political condemnation. Through philological, etymological, and semantic-field analysis, this article examines how the lexical fields of the ĐVSKTT structure the moral and political condemnation of sexual conduct within the *Trần* royal house.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Rectification of names (*chính danh*) and the moralizing function of historiography

The Confucian doctrine of the rectification of names (*zhengming*, 正名; *chính danh*) holds that correct naming precedes and enables correct judgment: when names are wrong, speech fails, and affairs cannot succeed (Analects, “Zilu”). Nguyễn Hiến Lê (1972) identifies this as Confucius's original theoretical contribution. *Ngô Sĩ Liên* applies the same logic to history-writing itself (ĐVSKTT, Quyển Thủ). This is the premise for why naming choices in the ĐVSKTT can function as judgment.

2.2. Xuân Thu bút pháp [the Spring and Autumn brush method]

Confucius's redaction of the *Xuân Thu* [Spring and Autumn Annals] was, according to *Trần Đình Sử* (1999), deliberately terse and judgment-laden rather than neutral, producing a style whose deterrent power makes “*loạn thần tặc tử trong thiên hạ đều run sợ*”. Because the original text was too condensed to read directly, three commentaries - the Zuo Commentary (Zuozhuan, 左傳), the Gongyang Commentary (Gongyang Zhuan, 公羊傳), and the Guliang Commentary (Guliang Zhuan, 穀梁傳) were composed specifically to recover its embedded verdicts (Hoàng Khôi, 1969-1971). Drawing on this tradition and following Zhang's (2012) analysis of *nhất tự bao biếm* 一字寓褒貶 [a single word conveys praise or blame] as the narrow definition of the brush method, in which a single, precisely chosen word already carries the verdict, and the broader definition, in which the bare narration of fact is left to speak for itself,

this article synthesizes four mechanisms for analytical purposes, each later mapped onto one of the three lexical fields in the Results section:

(a) *nhất tự bao biếm* 一字寓褒貶 [a single word conveys praise or blame] (Zhang, 2012), illustrated by the classical differentiation among 殺/弑/誅 (Sát, thí, tru, n.d.);

(b) *chính danh* 正名 [rectification of names], naming a relationship precisely is itself a verdict;

(c) *trực thư kỳ sự* 直書其事 [straightforward recording] (Zhang, 2012), the bare, precisely worded fact needs no further comment;

(d) *húy/bất húy* 諱 / 不諱 [avoidance versus deliberate non-avoidance of taboo], concealing or exposing a shameful matter is itself an act of judgment (Húy/Bất húy, n.d.).

2.3. Semantic field theory

A semantic-lexical field is a set of lexical units sharing a conceptual core and jointly partitioning one domain of meaning (Đỗ Hữu Châu, 1999; Nguyễn Thiện Giáp, 1985). This licenses grouping 逼/通/奪/劾奏, 淫亂/聚麀/烝, and 兄妻/嫡姊/同胞女 though drawn from three separate entries, into three unified fields, which is why the Results are organized by field rather than by event.

2.4. Glyph analysis and the six categories of character formation (*lục thư*)

Radical decomposition rests on *lục thư* 六書 (liushu) [the six categories of character formation], first codified in the postface to the Shuowen Jiezi (Xu, 1981). Two categories matter here: *hội ý* 會意 (huiyi) [compound indicatives] and *hình thanh* 形聲 (xingsheng) [phono-semantic compounds]; the *Hán Việt từ điển* [Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary - HVTĐ] (Thiều Chửu, 1942) is used to verify that decompositions reflect attested historical structure rather than the simplified woodblock variants.

3. Research Methodology

The primary source material for this article is the *Bản kỷ* (Kỷ nhà Trần) section in the *ĐVSKTT* (Nội Các Quan Bản edition, woodblock carved in the 18th year of Chính Hòa - 1697); cross-referenced with the Vietnamese translation by the Viện Khoa học Xã hội [Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences] (1993). The

original Classical Chinese text was extracted through the digital text database of the *Hội Bảo Tồn Di Sản Chữ Nôm* [Nom Preservation Foundation].

Consistent with the purposive-sampling logic stated in the Introduction, the three events analyzed here were chosen because, together, they saturate the three semantic fields: each event supplies at least one attestation of the prosecutorial-verb field, the dehumanizing-label field, and the kinship-aggravator field.

The theoretical framework is then applied to this corpus in three stages. Each keyword is first traced to its *lục thư* category, cross-checking the Hán Việt tự điển (Thiều Chửu, 1942), and the Shuowen Jiezi (Xu, 1981) against the actual woodblock forms, including popular variants with reduced strokes, so that the orthodox structure can be restored before radical analysis proceeds. The resulting lexemes are then grouped, independently of which of the three events they happen to appear in, into the prosecutorial-verb, dehumanizing-label, and kinship-aggravator fields on the basis of shared *nét nghĩa* [semantic features] within each field. Finally, each field is correlated with one of the four *Xuân Thu bút pháp* mechanisms, with the kinship-aggravator field further interpreted through the principle of *chính danh*.

4. Results

Contrary to a chronological, event-by-event exposition, the findings below are organized along three semantic-lexical fields that cut across all three cases, so that a single lexical mechanism can be traced through more than one event and its systemic, rather than anecdotal, character can be demonstrated. Table 1 summarizes the correspondence between each field and its underlying *Xuân Thu bút pháp* mechanism before the detailed lexical analysis follows.

Table 1. Correspondence between semantic-lexical fields and Xuân Thu bút pháp mechanisms

Semantic-lexical field	Representative lexemes	<i>Xuân Thu bút pháp</i>
Axis 1 Prosecutorial-verb field	逼 (<i>bức</i>), 通 (<i>thông</i>), 奪 (<i>đoạt</i>), 劾奏 (<i>hặc tấu</i>)	<i>Nhất tự bao biếm</i> + <i>Trực thư kỳ sự</i>
Axis 2 Dehumanizing-label field	淫亂 (<i>dâm loạn</i>), 聚麀 (<i>tụ ưư</i>), 烝 (<i>chưng</i>)	<i>Bất hỷ + điển cố</i> [allusion]

Axis 3 Kinship-aggravator field	兄妻 (huynh thê), 嫡姊 (đích tỷ), 同胞女 (đồng bào nữ)	Chính danh
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4.1. Axis 1 - The prosecutorial-verb field: *bức, thông, đoạt, hặc tấu*

In the three aforementioned events, the historian's act of criminalization lies in the selection of behavioral and litigious verbs: *bức thông* [forced intercourse], *đoạt* [seize], *thông dâm* [illicit intercourse], and *hặc tấu* [impeaching and submitting a memorial]. The use of these words creates a terminology field heavily imbued with legal significance, making the excerpts resemble a prosecutorial document rather than a purely historical record.

The case of *Lệ Thiên* Palace demonstrates that the event was recorded using a lexical structure that both depicts violent behavior and immediately places that behavior into a litigious process:

Classical Chinese: 見李朝舊妃，逼通於麗天宮。廷臣劾奏。
(ĐVSKTT, Bản Kỷ nhà Trần, Thái Tông Hoàng Đế, p.9a).

English translation: Saw the former consort of the *Lý* Dynasty, then forced intercourse at *Lệ Thiên* Palace; the court officials impeached and submitted a memorial.

Here, “逼通” (*bức thông*) is a combination with high legal nuance. According to the *HVTĐ* (Thiều Chửu, 1942), “逼” (*bức*) denotes oppression and coercion; “通” (*thông*) in this context shifts in meaning to adultery (*tu thông*). Regarding etymology, based on the *Shuowen jiezi* by Xu (1981), the character “通” (*thông*) is constructed with the Chuò (*Sước*) (辵) radical representing the concept of movement or taking steps. This construction allows for the metaphorization of wrongful sexual behavior as a “*bước qua giới hạn*” [stepping over limits] or an illegal “*nối thông*” [connection].

More notably, immediately following the behavioral verb is the litigious verb “劾奏” (*hặc tấu*), in which “*hặc*” means impeaching (*vạch tội* [denouncing a crime]) and “*tấu*” means submitting a memorial to the Emperor (Thiều Chửu, 1942). The appearance of this phrase, which is a specific administrative term used by power-supervising agencies such as the “*Ngự sử đài*” [Censorate], shows that when carnal behavior is placed alongside the term “劾奏”, it is no

longer a private matter of the inner palace. Instead, it has officially become a criminal case brought to trial before the discipline and laws of the state.

The case of “*đoạt huynh thê*” [seizing the elder brother’s wife] in the commentary of historian *Phan Phu Tiên* further pushes this event from the realm of political custom to the realm of moral crime.

Classical Chinese (excerpt): 聽守度之邪謀，奪兄妻以為后。
(ĐVSKTT, Bản Kỷ nhà Trần, Thái Tông Hoàng Đế, p.10b).

English translation: Listened to the wicked scheme of *Thủ Độ*, seized the elder brother’s wife to make her Empress.

The verb “奪” (*đoạt*) plays a central role in the technique of criminalizing the act: it refers to the biological elder brother’s wife (*huynh thê*) as a material object being illegally seized. In terms of etymology, the glyph of the character “奪” clearly reflects the coercive and violent nature of the act. Based on the *Shuowen jiezi* by Xu (1981), the character “奪” is composed of the character “奮” (*phấn*) [the image of a bird flapping its wings to fly away] and the radical “寸” (*thốn*) [the hand], with the original meaning being a hand trying to hold or grab a struggling bird. Under the historian’s pen, the use of a verb heavily imbued with coercion deliberately obscures the pragmatic motives of the *Trần* Dynasty (arranging a marriage to protect the throne and the line of succession). Instead, it highlights the tyrannical nature, contrary to the moral ethics of the act, transforming a political decision into a blatant act of robbery.

The case of *Trần Dụ Tông* was disguised under the cover of a “*phương thuốc chữa bệnh*” [medical remedy], but the historian’s pen shattered that cover with a phrase from the criminal charge group: 通淫.

Classical Chinese (excerpt): 及與同胞女通淫驗。帝然之。(ĐVSKTT, Bản Kỷ nhà Trần, Dụ Tông Hoàng Đế, p. 15b).

English translation: (After taking the medicine) then having illicit intercourse with a uterine sister (*chị/em ruột*) was effective; the Emperor followed it.

The combination “通淫” performs a dual judgmental operation: the character 通 (*thông*) serves to name the act (intercourse), while the character 淫 (*dâm*)

directly captures the moral core. Regarding etymology, the Shuowen jiezi places the character 淫 in the Shuǐ (Thủy) (氵) radical, with the original meaning denoting a state of flooding, water rising over the banks and losing control (Xu, 1981). When applied to the moral sphere, this word is a metaphor for the indulgence of desire, breaking through the boundaries of morality. Furthermore, the presence of “同胞女” (đồng bào nữ) [uterine elder sister] coupled with *thông dâm* pushed this behavior beyond ordinary lewdness to become the grave crime of *loạn luân* [incest] according to Confucian standards. The historian’s sentence structure here lacks any leniency or justification for the medical excuse; instead, it exposes the nature of the evil intent and becomes a formal verdict of guilt.

Taken together, these three cases show that 逼, 通, 奪, and 劾奏 form one coherent prosecutorial-verb field spanning all three events. Each substitution of a neutral narrative verb for a coercion or litigation verb realizes *nhất tự bao biếm*, the verdict is lodged in the single word itself, while the bare, unembellished recording of the act (*trực thư kỳ sự*) means the historian need not add explicit commentary: the wording alone already functions as an indictment.

4.2. Axis 2 - The dehumanizing-label field: *dâm loạn, tị ưu, chung*

If the previous group of terminology leaned toward legal criminalization, then this group belongs to the dimension of moral judgment, where the historian’s pen directly imposes a moral lens to designate how posterity should perceive the events.

The commentary by the historian Phan Phu Tiên regarding Trần Thái Tông taking his sister-in-law is a paragon of the Spring and Autumn style, as he immediately utilized the standards of the tam cương ngũ thường [three fundamental bonds and five constant virtues] to conclude that this act was the origin of decline.

Classical Chinese (excerpt): 毋乃斁彝倫，以啓淫亂（亂）之端乎。
。(ĐVSKTT, Bản Kỷ nhà Trần, Thái Tông Hoàng Đế, p. 10b).

English translation: Is this not a case of destroying moral principles, thereby opening the door to lewdness and disorder?

According to the *HVTĐ* (Thiều Chửu, 1942), “彝倫” (*đi luân*) refers to moral principles and the order of human relations; “斃” (*dịch*) means to destroy or ruin. Next, the phrase “啓淫乱（亂）之端” (*khởi dâm loạn chi đoan*) [opening the door to lewdness and disorder] demonstrates a relationship of moral causality: the unethical behavior of King *Trần Thái Tông* was the root cause for the entire sequence of decline among the later *Trần* emperors. Notably, the term “淫乱（亂）” (*dâm loạn*) here is not used to describe the degree of carnal pleasure, but rather to designate sexual acts that exceed established order.

Delving deeper into etymology, as analyzed previously for the character “淫” (*dâm*), it denotes flooding, water overflowing its banks and losing control (Xu, 1981). Human desire, if not restrained by ritual propriety, will be like a dike-breaking flood, shattering all boundaries of moral principles. Similarly, with the character “乱” (*loạn*), although the carvers of the ĐVSKTT woodblocks used the popular variant with reduced strokes “𪛗” to simplify the task, to unpack the historian’s original intent, one must examine its orthodox form “亂”. This character is composed of the character “乙” (*Át*) on the right and an ideographic combination on the left describing entanglement. Specifically, this combination consists of the Zhǎo (*Trảo*) radical (爪) [a hand reaching down from above] and the Yòu (*Hựu*) radical (又) [a hand reaching up from below] attempting to untangle a mess of silk threads (the character Yāo (*Yêu*) 幺 in the middle). This state of inextricable entanglement is a definitive symbol of the breakage of “*rường mối*” [social fabric] and the reversal of hierarchy (Xu, 1981). By using the character “亂”, the historian created a comparison: “*loạn*” [disorder] in desire (deviant sexual behavior) is the premise leading to the “*loạn*” of the nation (loss of the country, collapse of the dynasty).

When discussing the decadence of later kings, the historian *Phan Phu Tiên* condemned communal sexual behavior through an animal metaphor derived from the classical allusion “聚麀” (*tụ u*).

Classical Chinese (excerpt): 陳裕宗淫乱（亂）聚麀。(ĐVSKTT, Bản Kỷ nhà Trần, Thái Tông Hoàng Đế, p. 11a).

English translation: (Later) Trần Dụ Tông was lewd and disorderly in the manner of “*tụ u*” [gathering like a herd of animals].

In terms of etymology and classical allusion, “麀” (*u*) refers to a female deer. The structure “聚麀” originates directly from the *Khúc Lễ* section in the Confucian classic *Lễ Ký* [Book of Rites - LK]: “*Phu duy cầm thú vô lễ, cố phụ tử tụ u*” [Only animals are without rites, thus father and son share the same female deer] (*Lễ Ký*, n.d.). By applying this term to monarchs, the historian goes beyond merely describing sexual depravity to executing one of the most severe verdicts of Confucianism. It completely strips the ruling class of their human status, dragging them out of the moral system and demoting them to the level of animal instinct.

In the event involving *Trần Dụ Tông*, the weight of moral judgment lies not only in the phrase *thông dâm* but also in an archaic verb: “烝” (*chung*).

Classical Chinese (excerpt): 帝然之，烝於嫡姊天寧公主。(ĐVSKTT, Bản Kỷ nhà Trần, Dụ Tông Hoàng Đế, p. 15b).

English translation: The Emperor agreed, then had intercourse with his uterine elder sister (*đích tỷ*), Princess *Thiên Ninh*.

The historian’s choice of “烝” instead of a neutral narrative verb is a paragon of the Spring and Autumn style. According to the *HVTĐ* (Thiều Chửu, 1942), “烝” is a specialized ethical term used to designate the crime of an inferior having illicit intercourse with a female of a superior rank. Combined with the kinship modifier “嫡姊” (*đích tỷ*) [uterine elder sister, born of the Empress], the historian’s pen firmly establishes the contrary nature of the event against moral principles. This lexical pairing ensures that *Dụ Tông*’s behavior is categorized not just as the crime of *dâm* [ordinary sexual indulgence] but has officially become the grave crime of *phạm luân* [violating moral order], trampling upon bloodline order and laws.

Across all three events, 淫亂, 聚麀, and 烝 form a second coherent field, distinct from Axis 1 in kind: whereas the prosecutorial verbs describe an act, these labels reclassify the actor. Each label could have been avoided, the historian could have followed the classical practice of *húy* and simply omitted or euphemized the matter, yet *Ngô Sĩ Liên* and *Phan Phu Tiên* chose *bất húy*,

reinforced by direct allusion to the Confucian classics (*Lễ Ký* for 聚麀). This confirms that the dehumanizing-label field operationalizes *bất hủý* as its governing *Xuân Thu* mechanism: the shameful matter is not hidden but named in the most degrading terms available.

4.3. Axis 3 - The kinship-aggravator field: *huynh thê, đích tỷ, đồng bào nữ (chính danh)*

A third field, not identified in earlier readings of these passages, emerges when the kinship terms accompanying each act of illicit union are examined as a system rather than as incidental descriptive detail. In the three quotations already cited above, the historian never refers to the woman involved merely as “a woman” or “a consort”; in every case, a precise kinship term fixes her exact relationship to the perpetrator: 兄妻 (*huynh thê*) [elder brother’s wife] in the record of *Trần Thái Tông*’s seizure of *Thuận Thiên*; 嫡姊 (*đích tỷ*) [legitimate-line elder sister, born of the principal wife] in the record of *Trần Dụ Tông*’s union with *Thiên Ninh*; and 同胞女 (*đồng bào nữ*) [same-womb, i.e. full, sister] in the record of the same emperor’s “medicinal” intercourse with his sister.

In the Confucian tradition traced to the doctrine of *chính danh (thiên tử lộ)*, Confucius holds that when names are not rectified, speech does not accord with reality, and when speech does not accord with reality, affairs cannot be carried to success. *Chính danh*, the rectification of names, is the precondition of moral and political order. Applying this principle to historiography, naming a woman by her exact kin relation to the man who violates her is itself a judgment: it converts what might otherwise be recorded as an anonymous liaison into the violation of a specifically named Confucian bond, brother and brother’s wife, ruler and half-sister of the principal line, siblings of the same womb. The precision of 嫡 (*đích*) and 同胞 (*đồng bào*) is especially exacting: 嫡 marks descent from the principal wife rather than a concubine, and 同胞 specifies the same womb rather than a half-sibling of a different mother, so that in both cases the historian forecloses any possible mitigation through distance of blood.

Read together with Axis 1 and Axis 2, the kinship-aggravator field completes the system: the verb field (Axis 1) names the act, the label field (Axis 2) reclassifies the actor as sub-human, and the kinship field (Axis 3) fixes,

through chính danh, the exact bond that has been violated. No single axis alone would produce an indictment as complete as the three combined; it is their co-occurrence within the same short entries that gives the ĐVSKTT's language its prosecutorial density.

5. Discussion

Based on the survey results of the Classical Chinese vocabulary system surrounding the marriage and sexual events of the *Trần* royal family, it is evident that the historical recording language in the ĐVSKTT reflects the historian's pen exercising judgment on three core aspects: a structure summarized in Table 1 above, in which each field corresponds to a distinct mechanism of the *Xuân Thu bút pháp*.

First, the prosecutorial-verb field demonstrates the mechanism of *nhất tự bao biếm* combined with *trực thư kỳ sự*. The characteristic of the *Xuân Thu bút pháp* inherited by the *Early Lê* historians is the ability to transform the structure of writing itself into a verdict: by choosing 逼, 通, 奪, and 劾奏 over neutral narrative verbs, and by recording the bare fact without embellishment, the historian needs no additional commentary, the wording alone renders judgment. Through this rigorous lexical selection, historical records effectively become indictments.

Second, the dehumanizing-label field demonstrates the mechanism of *bất hủý*. A notable highlight of *Early Lê* historical language is the deliberate choice not to conceal the rare word 烝 and classical allusions that degrade human relations, such as 聚麀, where the *Xuân Thu* tradition would have permitted *hủý*. Through the Confucian lens, the only boundary distinguishing humans from beasts is *di luân*; by refusing to avoid the ugly term, historian *Phan Phu Tiên* stripped the rulers of their human status, affirming that when power is not restrained by morality, humans descend into herd instinct, and the collapse of the nation follows as an inevitable causal chain.

Third, the kinship-aggravator field demonstrates the mechanism of chính danh. The dense appearance of exact kinship terms (兄妻, 嫡姊, 同胞女) alongside the litigation and dehumanizing vocabulary of Axes 1 and 2 shows that correct naming of the violated bond was, for the *Early Lê* historians,

inseparable from moral and legal judgment itself. The historians transformed internal clan customs tolerated during the *Trần* period into clearly named criminal offenses; consequently, ĐVSKTT transcends the role of a mere historical record to become a case file where every actor, regardless of imperial rank, is named precisely enough to be judged fairly before history.

6. Conclusion

This case study of the Classical Chinese vocabulary system in the ĐVSKTT, examined through three paradigmatic sexual events of the *Trần* royal family, shows that traditional historiographical language does not merely record events but also produces moral and political judgment. Through the framework of *Xuân Thu bút pháp*, *Early Lê* historians used a condensed terminology system across three interrelated semantic-lexical fields: prosecutorial verbs such as 逼通, 奪, and 劾奏, which encode blame through precise verbal choice and straightforward recording; dehumanizing labels such as 淫亂, 聚麀, and 烝, which expose tabooed conduct through morally charged wording and classical allusion; and kinship aggravators such as 兄妻, 嫡姊, and 同胞女, which define the violated relationship through the principle of *chính danh*.

Together, these three fields transform internal clan practices tolerated under the *Trần* Dynasty into morally condemnable offenses under the Confucian framework of the *Early Lê* period. The analysis also affirms the importance of working with the original Classical Chinese text, since lexical nuance, graphic form, and allusive density are often lost in translation. Because the study is limited to three paradigmatic cases, its findings should be read as an analytic model rather than an exhaustive account of the ĐVSKTT's criminalizing lexicon.

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