

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES

1.1 . Concepts, characteristics, and functions of folk culture

1.1.1. The concept of folklore

Folk culture This phrase is used to translate the Western term folklore. "Folklore in its original English meaning is folk wisdom (lore), which, over time, has encompassed a much broader semantic field. "Therefore, researchers cannot translate it as "folk literature" or "folk arts" [Tran Quoc Vuong 2003:169]. To date, in our country and around the world, there are many definitions of *folk culture*, reflecting different conceptions of researchers .

+ *Some conceptions of folklore around the world*

- At first, folklore It is used to refer to “*the ways, customs, rituals, superstitions, ballads, proverbs... of ancient times*” [Ngo Duc Thinh] 2005:378].

Later, the term folklore was used by scholars with different broad and narrow meanings.

• In a narrow sense, folklore is limited to the realm of verbal art . “*We conceive of folklore as merely spiritual creations, moreover, only verbal artistic creations*” [Ngo Duc Thinh 2005: 46, 84-85]. According to this understanding, folklore is primarily folk poetry and literature.

•Broadly speaking, folklore encompasses both material and spiritual cultural phenomena, transmitted orally or through customs among the people. Archer Taylor argues: “*Folklore is material transmitted orally or through customs. It can be folk songs, folk tales, riddles, proverbs, or other materials preserved orally. It can be traditional tools and objects such as fences or knots, topknots, or Easter eggs; traditional decorations such as Trojan walls; or traditional symbols such as the swastika. It can be traditional customs such as throwing salt over the shoulder or banging wood. It can be traditional beliefs such as the elderberry plant curing eye diseases. All of these are folklore.*” [Ngo Duc Thinh 2005: 66 – 67]

+ *Some conceptions of folk culture in Vietnam*

- The term Vietnamese *folk culture*, understood in a broad sense, is equivalent to the international term *folk culture* (including all material and spiritual culture of the people), understood in a narrow sense as “*folk culture approached from an aesthetic perspective*” [Dinh Gia Khanh 1993:29,31].

- Vietnamese folk culture encompasses *folk literature, folk art, folk knowledge, beliefs, customs, and festivals*. This concept is broader, reflecting... "The approach to studying folklore is a holistic and integrated approach of cultural studies." [Institute of Cultural Studies 2004:16].

- “ *In the truest sense, folk culture is the culture of the people. This culture includes both material and spiritual culture. The most accurate international term for folk culture is the English word: Folkculture (...). This concept is very broad, encompassing the entire material and spiritual culture of the people. Its content includes the methods of producing wealth, customs and traditions, spiritual life, natural and social knowledge, moral concepts, perceptions, and feelings about the world and human life .*” [Vu Ngoc Khanh, Pham Minh Thao, Nguyen Vu 2002:620-621]. This viewpoint is consistent with the reality of folklore research in the West and folk culture research in Vietnam today. It

is a trend of expanding the research subject of folk culture to include cultural fields of a community.

Through the presentation of these concepts, we observe that the interpretation of folklore depends on the available materials and the scope of research conducted on the subject over different periods. Furthermore, these concepts reflect the current state of folklore research in each specific period. On the other hand, the interpretations demonstrate the efforts of researchers to specifically identify the components of folklore. However, the components in the aforementioned definitions still lack systematic organization and contain overlaps between them.

Based on the surveys above, we offer the following definition of folklore:

- Folk culture consists of valuable products created by ordinary people to serve their material and spiritual lives, and to contribute to the stability and development of the community. (Alternatively: Folk culture encompasses all valuable material and non-material products created by ordinary people to meet their material needs and satisfy their spiritual needs.)

In terms of value, folk culture encompasses all aspects/elements that are beneficial to both the material and spiritual lives of ordinary people, as well as contributing to the stability and development of the community.

The essence of folklore is reflected in its origin, form of transmission, and recipients, with the form of transmission playing the most important role.

Folklore encompasses a very broad scope, within which verbal art holds a special place. Verbal art is both a cultural product and a means of creating, preserving, and transmitting cultural values (experiences, knowledge, customs, beliefs, etc.). Furthermore, language is a component of many cultural phenomena such as festivals, beliefs, games, and customs. This is because language possesses the richest and most diverse expressive capabilities. In Vietnam, throughout the period of Chinese rule, oral language became the primary tool for preserving and transmitting national culture.

1.1.2. Characteristics of folk culture

+ *Oral transmission* : Before humans invented writing, and even after writing was invented but literacy was not widespread, oral transmission remained the primary method of transmitting folk culture, especially literary works. (This method existed in Vietnam until the mid-20th century. Before the August Revolution of 1945, 95% of the Vietnamese population was illiterate.) Oral transmission often combines words with actions, gestures, and movements. This is a common phenomenon in highly integrated forms of folk art. Therefore, to put it fully, folk culture is transmitted in the form of... Oral tradition sometimes combines the act of demonstrating or explaining something again.

+ *Collective nature*: Folk culture is created and enriched over many generations and across many regions. Folk cultural products often have unclear origins and are the common property of the collective. People often use the names of the regions where folk works (or products) originate to name specific genres. For example, Northern folk songs, Southern folk songs, Nghe Tinh folk songs, Bac Ninh Quan Ho folk songs, Phu Tho Xoan singing, Central Highlands communal houses, Central Highlands burial houses, Dong Ho paintings, Lang Sinh paintings, Do Son buffalo fighting, Bay Nui bull racing... To this day, although folk creation has become highly individualized, in modern folk culture there are still cases where it is difficult to identify the author of some works currently in circulation.

+ *Variations*: The method of transmission and the wide scope of folklore's dissemination form the basis for the existence of variations. Variations of folklore can be found in both narrow and wide, even very wide, ranges. This is because, since prehistoric times, humankind has migrated to many places on Earth; the human element in folk creation possesses both the universality of humanity and the specificity of each ethnic group. Therefore, within the same thematic framework, the plot, characters, and details differ in the folk cultures of different ethnic groups. Furthermore, when transmitted from one place to another, folk works are recreated according to the aesthetic thinking and moral concepts of specific individuals. Consequently, the understanding of good and evil, and the ways of resolving personal and social problems among these individuals, also differ. These are the direct causes of variations in folk works.

+ *Diversity*: The diversity of folklore is reflected in its themes and creative techniques. Due to its very early formation, folklore, from prehistoric times to the present day, truthfully reflects all aspects of the lives of working people. From a lifestyle of exploiting nature, working people have progressed to actively exploiting nature for survival and development. From naive understanding of nature, working people have reached the point of discovering natural laws to proactively manage production and daily life. It can be said that for every issue concerning nature and society that concerned ordinary people, there is a corresponding theme explored and expressed in folklore. In the field of storytelling alone, a multitude of narrative genres have emerged (myths, legends, fairy tales, humorous stories, fables, etc.), fully reflecting all aspects of social life in specific periods. Each genre represents a stage in the development of thinking and perception, demonstrating the progress of ordinary people in discovering natural and social laws. The realm of poetry is equally rich and diverse. Visual arts and performing arts constitute a vibrant repository of material about the lives of ordinary people. The rich imagination and improvisational nature of folk art allow folk artists to truly freely explore new and unique methods of expression. In this way, folk culture has inspired many creative methods for professional and scholarly cultural movements. Due to this characteristic, when studying folk culture, it is necessary to consider the subject within both diachronic and synchronic axes to fully appreciate its diversity and richness in themes and genres.

+ *Simplicity in form*: Because the artistic material is drawn from the daily lives of ordinary people, the form of expression is correspondingly simple; therefore, one rarely finds meticulous refinement or polishing in folk works. Simplicity is the opposite of elaborate and complex. Most works in the treasury of folk literature are of moderate size, suitable for the method and space of transmission, and appropriate to the level of appreciation of ordinary people; the structure of the works does not have many layers or complex internal relationships. Folk epics and long poems, although quite large in size, have content and structure close to the logic of real life, making them easy for readers and listeners to follow and understand. In Vietnam, the number of works of this type is not large compared to the entire folk culture.

1.1.3. Functions of folk culture

The concept of function comprises two components: function and capability. Function is the ability to perform a task, capability is the ability to accomplish it. The main functions are... of folk culture includes:

+ *Cognitive and storage function*: The process of natural and social cognition forms a vast and rich body of folk knowledge. This folk knowledge has practically met the needs of the working people. Even in naive, metaphysical interpretations, we can still

see a simple understanding of the duality of natural forces, and the gratitude and reverence of ordinary people towards these forces. Noble feelings such as love for one's homeland and national pride cannot be acquired overnight but must go through a process of understanding under the influence of the community, gradually becoming a need in the spiritual life of each individual. Therefore, it can be said that folk knowledge preserves the spiritual values of the working people, thereby nurturing and safeguarding the traditional values of the nation.

+ Function of promoting and reforming society: Folk culture stimulates the spirit of labor, creating a source of material wealth for society. Folk works always extol beauty and goodness; they criticize and condemn evil and ugliness. Artistic images in folk culture often represent a certain force; the general trend is that the forces of good always triumph over evil and ugliness; humanistic values are increasingly affirmed in society. In this way, folk culture contributes to building a better life.

+ Aesthetic function: Folk culture is an important part that can satisfy the spiritual needs of the vast majority of working people (it is a source of continuous spiritual nourishment for laborers). Folk cultural works awaken the ability to perceive and appreciate beauty in each individual; thereby helping them to be inspired to create art and to love artistic creation. The beauty of cultural products in general and folk culture in particular helps laborers forget the hardships and difficulties of the present; thereby giving them more joy to live and work in the days to come.

+ Source-generating function: The characteristics and functions mentioned above demonstrate the "foundational" role of folk culture in relation to national culture. Rich and diverse folk knowledge forms the basis for professional and scholarly culture. Except for scholarly and professional culture formed through external means, endogenous scholarly and professional cultural products have a natural connection with folk culture.

+ Educational function: Folk culture also serves as a means of educating awareness, morality, and aesthetics. The educational function is achieved through other functions and vice versa. The educational function is reflected in the purpose of folk culture in the process of creation and transmission, which is aimed at and for people.

1.2. Cultural structure and folk cultural structure

1.2.1 . Cultural Structure

Based on the characteristics of each cultural entity, and depending on different approaches, researchers will propose different models of cultural structure. Accordingly, the number of components will also vary.

Currently, there are two main approaches: the holistic approach and the partial approach.

+ *Cultural structure approached from a holistic perspective*

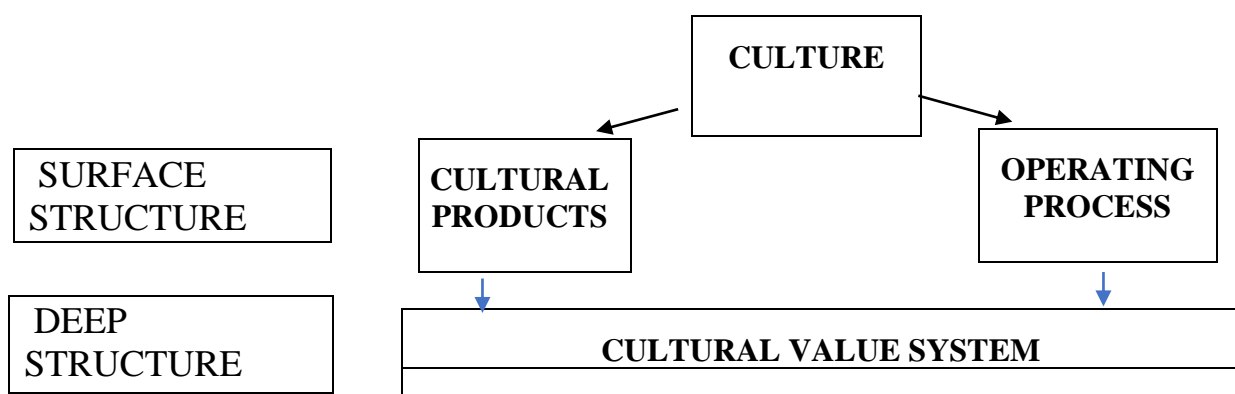


Diagram 1: Cultural components from a holistic approach

+ Cultural structure approached from a segmental perspective

From a segmental approach, researchers identify culture in the following ways:

1/ The classification of elements based on human-created products includes three groups: the group that meets the demands of material life, abbreviated as material culture; the group that meets the needs of spiritual life, abbreviated as spiritual culture; and the group that contributes to social stability and development, abbreviated as social culture.

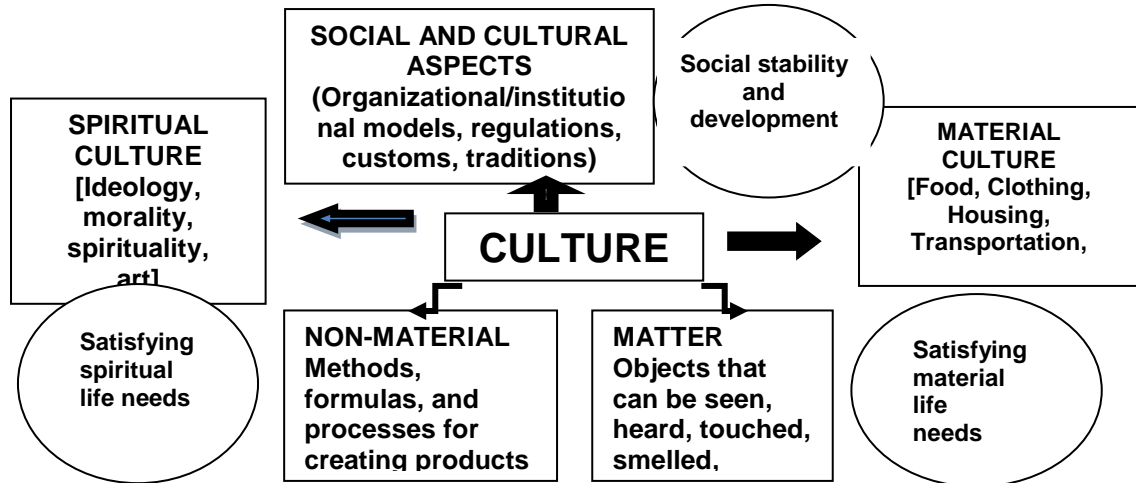


Diagram 2: Cultural elements from a product-oriented approach

2/ The approach to classifying cultural elements according to human activity includes: cognitive culture, organizational culture, and behavioral culture (the viewpoint of author Tran Ngoc Them in the book " Fundamentals of Vietnamese Culture," 2022).

3/ The approach to classifying cultural elements according to various dimensions includes basic elements such as: language, religion, beliefs, and festivals (the viewpoint of author Tran Quoc Vuong in the book " Fundamentals of Vietnamese Culture," 2011).

4. The approach to classifying cultural elements according to heritage management includes tangible and intangible cultural elements (" Declaration on Cultural Policies" of UNESCO, 1982).

following is a synthesis of cultural structural perspectives approached from two angles :

Surface structure	<p>Product</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Material culture + spiritual culture - tangible culture + intangible culture - socio-cultural 	<p>Operation process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cognitive culture, organizational culture, behavioral culture, management culture, livelihood culture, educational culture, artistic creativity culture, etc.)
Deep structure	<p>Value system (a system of attributes that provide benefits to the subject)</p>	

Table 1: Cultural components from a holistic approach

1.2.2 . The structure of folk culture

Constructing cultural structures is essential for cultural research in general. Building a structure for folk culture facilitates easier access to the subject matter. This is a necessary step when studying any cultural object. To date, researchers have used various structural forms to study Vietnamese folk culture. Below are some commonly encountered structural forms.

+ **Structure based on art genre:** When studying folklore according to art genre, a grouping method is used. The main groups are: *folk literature*, *folk theater*, and *folk fine arts*. Within each group, there are several genres that share certain characteristics.

- The folk literature group includes:
 - Speaking and storytelling includes: proverbs, fairy tales, and humorous stories.
 - Folk songs, ballads, and chants (singing) include: folk songs, folk ballads, and the ballad genre.

- The folk theater group includes:
Performing arts and dances include: theatrical performances, traditional opera (*chèo*), and folk dances.

- The folk art group includes:

Drawing (painting), sculpture including: paintings, statues, fine art ceramics...

+ **Structure based on the content plane:** Folk culture is the intellectual product of ordinary people, encompassing many aspects of life; therefore, it can be arranged according to specific planes for detailed description. The structural system according to specific planes includes: *folk knowledge*, *folk customs and traditions*, *folk festivals*, and *folk games*. In general, *These* aspects reflect the folk culture of any subject, in any period.

- *Folk knowledge:* The intellectual product of a community, preserved and passed down by the people to maintain and develop community life. Folk knowledge includes: knowledge about the universe and humanity, knowledge about organizing community life, knowledge about maintaining community life, and knowledge about artistic creation.

- *Folk customs and traditions:* These are habits of daily life (of working people) that become common conventions and shared knowledge among the common people, or even the entire community. At that point, members of the community follow and imitate each other unconsciously. Folk customs and traditions are studied in various aspects of life such as festivals, births, weddings, funerals, and worship.

- *Folk festivals and games:* These are forms of collective activity that exist due to the will and aspirations of the people. Folk festivals include: professional festivals, festivals commemorating national heroes, and religious festivals. Folk games include: physical games, intellectual games, craft games, performance games, and animal competitions.

+ **Structure based on subject activity:** Folk culture is approached based on the aspects of the cultural subject's activity. The system of components of this structure includes: cognitive culture, organizational culture, behavioral culture, and re-enactment culture (Table 1).

+ **Structure based on traditional classification:** Folk culture is approached using a traditional classification method, which is based on the form of the product to divide it into material culture and spiritual culture. Later, the element of institutional culture was added (Diagram 1).

In this work, Vietnamese folk culture will be identified on four dimensions (based on the classification of folk culture elements according to the activities of the subjects).

These are: *cognitive culture, organizational culture, behavioral culture, and reenactment culture.*

1.3 . Research orientation on folklore Vietnam

1.3.1. Objectives:

When developing the course materials for this subject, the author aimed for the following objectives:

- Identify Vietnamese folklore as an important part of national culture. Study folklore to discover the distinctive characteristics of national culture.
- By introducing a component-based approach, learners will learn how to analyze and synthesize these components in the process of studying folklore.
- To equip individuals with a knowledge base that lays the groundwork for in-depth research in the field of cultural studies.

1.3.2 . Subject Matter: Folk culture is the culture of the common people, encompassing all products that serve the material and spiritual lives of the common people, identified on the four dimensions mentioned above. Vietnamese folk culture includes all cultural products of the ethnic groups living in Vietnam, with the folk culture of the Kinh people playing a dominant role.

Vietnamese folklore is a rather complex subject of study due to its unique formation and development process; therefore, it is not possible to mechanically apply the European theoretical **approach to analyzing it.**

In Vietnam, there was no scholarly cultural system exclusively for the aristocracy as in the West. This phenomenon occurred because the Vietnamese official class did not form a separate lifestyle, completely superior to that of the common people, as was the case in the West. Except for the small number of royal officials living in the palace, the majority of officials living outside the palace (who constituted the majority of the Vietnamese feudal intellectual class) lived somewhat ostentatiously, but did not tend to create a lifestyle with a distinct cultural level from that of the common people, as was the case with the European aristocracy. The pro-people ideology always shone brightly during prosperous feudal dynasties. Terms like "court music," "court food," and "court attire" are used to refer to the culture of a segment of the royal family within the palace, but upon closer examination, they are closely related to folk culture. For example, in the field of music, *"folk music still has a place in the court, and court music remains firmly rooted in folk music with ancient traditions that have been shaped and developed since the previous period"* [Thuy Loan 1993:22]. On the other hand, craftsmen are not completely separate from agriculture, so there is no large class of craftsmen, nor a large class of hired laborers (later added to the working class). The common people in Vietnam during the feudal period were mainly farmers. It is also noteworthy that the majority of Vietnamese officials came from peasant backgrounds (due to the education and examination system of the feudal dynasties). When they retired from their official positions, they returned to live close to the people, finding inspiration for their creative work in everyday life. Some even showed an attitude of defending the poor and marginalized people in the countryside. Therefore, in essence, Vietnamese folk culture has a certain relationship with scholarly culture. This is different from the West, where the aristocracy had a separate lifestyle, distinct from that of manual laborers; therefore, folk culture and scholarly culture in European and American countries are clearly different.

Vietnamese scholarly culture during the French colonial and American periods was influenced by Western scholarly culture, and therefore, in essence, it was an incomplete version of European and American scholarly culture. Over time, these imported elements were gradually Vietnamized through the creative participation of the masses. Positive elements of the folk culture of European and American countries during this period were adopted and disseminated among the Vietnamese people.

Here, we also do not use philosophical criteria to distinguish between folk culture and scholarly culture (in Vietnamese culture). This is because Vietnamese folk culture contains profound ideas of Eastern wisdom that arose from the rice-farming agricultural system; among them, the contributions of folk culture from the Hoa Binh and Dong Son periods must be mentioned. Therefore, the notion that the Five Tigers paintings (Dong Ho paintings) are based on the Ha Do and Lac Thu diagrams is believable. Many other phenomena in folk culture also demonstrate the philosophical foundation of this cultural segment, such as the reliefs (reliefs) on the screens of communal houses in villages often depicting the Dragon-Horse – a mythical creature in the Ha Do legend; the way time is calculated in folk tradition using the Can Chi system; folk healing methods that go beyond experience to reach the theoretical level of Yin-Yang philosophy, both in feng shui, folk cuisine, and everyday social interactions. This has given Vietnamese folk culture a special value. It explains why folk culture was appreciated by the Vietnamese feudal intellectual class, and even many of the most sacred aspects of the feudal state involved the creative hands of folk artisans. For example, the orchestra in the Giao Sacrifice Ceremony (the ceremony at the Nam Giao altar) included a large number of musicians from the traditional eight-instrument ensembles in the villages; the complex of imperial architecture (city gates, palaces, temples, etc.) and tombs were all built by folk artisans; and the products and offerings were very similar to the selection, preparation, and display methods of ordinary people.

It can be said that philosophical homogeneity brought Vietnamese folk culture closer to the Vietnamese mandarin class, while simultaneously integrating scholarly culture into the folk culture stream naturally. This is difficult to find in the folk cultures of European and American countries, where philosophies are often reserved for the upper class. On the other hand, European and American folk culture reflects the everyday life, expresses the relationships and behaviors of ordinary people, and contains lessons learned from a life of class distinction; therefore, it was not an object of enjoyment for the feudal aristocracy in the early period. Furthermore, the cultural enjoyment perspective of the Western aristocracy is clearly class-based and anti-class. These works reflect the author's creative perspective (expressed in various schools) and are philosophical products, demonstrating a high level of technical skill and a tendency towards the application of high intellectual capacity in composition and performance (such as symphonies, ballet, opera, etc.). Later, Western society developed a more progressive view of workers, and popular culture emerged with phenomena such as pop music, pop dance, and pop songs.



Image 1: Dragon horse at Phu Mau communal house, Phu Vang district, Thua Thien-Hue province (old)
Source: Author

1.3.3. Research methodology and methods: To ensure objectivity in folklore research, this work employs a specific methodology. Dialectical materialism is considered the orthodox methodology. *The* dialectical materialist methodology places things and phenomena within a specific historical and social context, examining the object of study in the overall relationship between the elements: environment (space) - people (subject) - process of development (time). An interdisciplinary approach ¹is considered an important orientation when studying Vietnamese folklore. Specific methods used to study folklore include: fieldwork, data collection and classification, experimentation, synthesis and analysis, and comparison and contrast .

Among the methods mentioned, fieldwork, data collection, and classification play a crucial role. The main reason is that, to date, many folk cultural products from the past remain undiscovered; moreover, new products are constantly being created and passed down by ordinary people. The field survey process must ensure historical accuracy, that is, respect for the historical value of folk culture throughout different periods. According to the concept of mind-boundary theory, sometimes cultural elements that are cast far from the life of a community may retain their traditional attributes more effectively than where they originated. Even in distant lands, time and space do not easily alter rituals and customs that have been ingrained in the individual since their homeland.

When applying the comparative method to the study of Vietnamese folklore, we pay attention to the contrast between folklore and scholarly culture; between professional and non-professional culture; and between Vietnamese folklore and Vietnamese village culture. Developing criteria for identifying these cultural components is a mandatory requirement to help students clearly define their research subject. At a higher level, further comparative methods should be implemented to help students better identify Vietnamese folklore within the broader context of Southeast Asian and world culture.

Table 2: Comparison of the characteristics of folk culture and scholarly culture

Part	Folk culture	Scholarly culture
Characteristic		
Creative	It originated from improvisation.	Based on the theory

¹Regarding the interdisciplinary approach, we apply both current perspectives:

1. Combining research methods from two or more disciplines to jointly address a problem.
2. Utilize methods, terminology, and research findings from related scientific disciplines.

Transmission method	Word of mouth	Writing, text
Distribution range	Mainly in rural areas (villages)	Mainly in urban areas
Author	Collective, unspecified	specific individual
Form, structure	Simple, concise	Complex, multi-layered
Topic	The life of a worker	Life of the intellectual and official class
The work's central theme	People's morality	Upper-class morality

Table 3: Comparison of professional and non-professional forms

Form	Unprofessional	Professional
Characteristic		
Creative time	No time limit is set for each product.	Time allocation per product
Product creation intent	Without a clear purpose Little attention is paid to personal touches.	With a clear purpose Pay attention to creating your personal mark.
Composition method	Free-spirited, spontaneous, and artistic.	Following a pattern, it is systematic.
Form	Personal preference	According to the rules and regulations
Development trends	Popularization, mass mobilization.	Scholarly approach, individualization

The study of folklore should not only compare it to scholarly culture but also employ a comparative approach to identify contrasts between folklore and neighboring cultural spheres such as rural culture and village culture. These three cultural spheres do not completely overlap in terms of cultural space, cultural time, and cultural subjects. This "discrepancy" inevitably leads to differences in the fundamental elements of these three cultural spheres.

Based on the comparative criteria of the intensity of the attributes defining the characteristics of each cultural aspect mentioned above, we can find the following specific differences:

Table 4: Comparison of folklore with adjacent cultural spheres.

Cultural sector	Culture countryside	Culture folk	Culture villages
Criteria			
Space	Only in rural areas	Rural + urban	Associated with a commune-level administrative unit.
Subject	The common people + the intellectual class	common people	The common people + the feudal intellectual class
Socio-economic formations	All of them socio-economic formations	All socio-economic forms	From the feudal socio-economic system onwards
Time	Undetermined	Undetermined	Determine the stage
scholarly	Low level	Do not have	Low level

Through the comparative and contrasting operations described above, the essence of folk culture will be determined in comparison with related (or adjacent) cultural

spheres. From here, approaches to each cultural sphere will become clearer. Accordingly, although not all cultural spheres will be explored, learners will have methods for handling specific cultural spheres. For example, when faced with the requirement to clarify the characteristics of village culture, learners can independently determine the criteria and methods of solving the problem to meet the requirements.

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CHAPTER 2

CULTURE OF PERCEPTION IN VIETNAMESE FOLK

2.1. Awareness and the culture of awareness

2.1.1. Awareness

The "Vietnamese Encyclopedia" explains that cognition is the dialectical process of reflecting the objective world in human consciousness, through which humans think and constantly move closer to the object ².

Hoang Phe's "Vietnamese Dictionary" explains perception as "the process or result of reflecting and reproducing reality in thought; the process by which humans recognize and understand the objective world or the result of that process" [Hoang Phe 2002: 712].

Marxist-Leninist philosophy posits that cognition is the process of consciously reflecting and creating the objective world in the human mind on the basis of practice. This is a complex dialectical process, encompassing many different stages and forms. Depending on the nature of the study, this process is differentiated into various levels such as sensory cognition and rational cognition, empirical cognition and theoretical cognition (or common cognition and scientific cognition). Generally speaking, human cognition progresses from vivid intuition to abstract thinking, and from abstract thinking to practice. "Practice is not only the starting point of knowledge, a decisive factor in the formation and development of knowledge, but also the place where knowledge must always be directed to test its correctness. Therefore, practice is both the basis, the driving force, and the purpose of knowledge, as well as the standard for testing truth" [Nguyen Huu Vui – Nguyen Ngoc Long 2003: 294-309].

Perception is a psychological activity that takes place in the human brain aimed at understanding and discovering the nature of things and phenomena in life that humans do not yet know or understand. It is a series of activities aimed at seeking answers to questions arising from real life.

In general, human cognition follows two paths: experimental cognition and metaphysical cognition.

Empirical cognition is an approach to understanding and exploring the world by observing, measuring, and calculating, then summarizing and systematizing these findings into a theory. Empirical knowledge yields concrete results, interpreted through rational understanding, and verifiable in practice. Modern knowledge formed through the study of the microscopic and macroscopic worlds can also be verified using modern equipment.

Transcendental awareness is an approach to understanding and exploring the world through *experiential means*. The results of this experiential process cannot be explained by ordinary rational knowledge and are difficult to verify using physical methods. The science of human potential is seeking to use the latest discoveries of modern science to uncover the mysteries of the natural world, including the hidden dimensions within the human organism. Accordingly, experiential awareness is also a subtle and wondrous dimension of humanity.

2.1.2. Cognitive culture

The term "cognitive culture" is used in its primary sense to refer to products created by humans. Cognitive culture consists of products formed in the process of

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humans understanding and discovering the laws of nature, identifying the essence of social life, and even themselves. Due to this characteristic, when studying cognitive culture, we cannot separate cultural products from human consciousness. From this approach, we believe that cognitive culture includes the knowledge that humans use to explain the formation and development of objective phenomena and about themselves.

The term "cognitive culture" is used in its second sense to refer to the type, form, or manner (or style) of thinking that a particular community has chosen to understand and explain objective reality and humanity. Accordingly, research will focus on the types of methods and forms of thinking used to understand and explain the world. For example, how different ethnic groups have perceived the world and humanity-empirical or transcendental, dialectical or metaphysical, analytical or synthetic, etc.

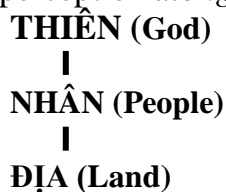
Thus, studying the cognitive culture of a community comprises two levels. The lower level involves discovering and describing cognitive outcomes in the form of specific products within the community's cultural life. The higher level is to identify the specificity of the thought patterns that produced those products, in comparison with other communities. Cognitive culture, understood at the second level, reflects the thinking patterns of the ethnic group.

2.2. Forms of perception among ordinary Vietnamese people

2.2.1. *Understanding nature and society through experimentation .*

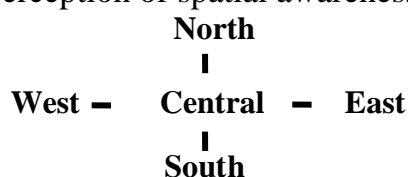
2.2.1.1. *Understanding nature through experimentation*

+ Spatial perception *along the height-depth axis*



Ancient people recognized early on that humans have a close relationship with heaven and earth. Nature is primarily heaven and earth, followed by the natural phenomena that occur daily. These forces directly impact human beings. "Heaven is high, earth is thick," and "earth gives birth, heaven nourishes" are familiar sayings of ordinary people when understanding heaven, earth, and human life. Vietnamese myths clearly reflect the process of ordinary people's understanding of nature, first understanding the formation of heaven and earth (The Story of the God of the Sky Pillar), then understanding natural phenomena in heaven and earth such as clouds, rain, thunder, and lightning. **Earth, Heaven, and Man** became the three objects of perception for ordinary Vietnamese people in particular and East Asians in general from ancient times. Understanding **Earth, Heaven, and Man** in a dialectical relationship formed the basis for the Vietnamese people's easy acceptance of the Three Powers (Heaven, Earth, and Man) theory in later Eastern philosophy.

+ Perception of spatial awareness *along horizontal and vertical axes*



The process of observing space along horizontal and vertical axes has formed directions and central positions. These directions are determined based on many factors such as: the Earth's rotation cycle around its axis and around the sun, the natural

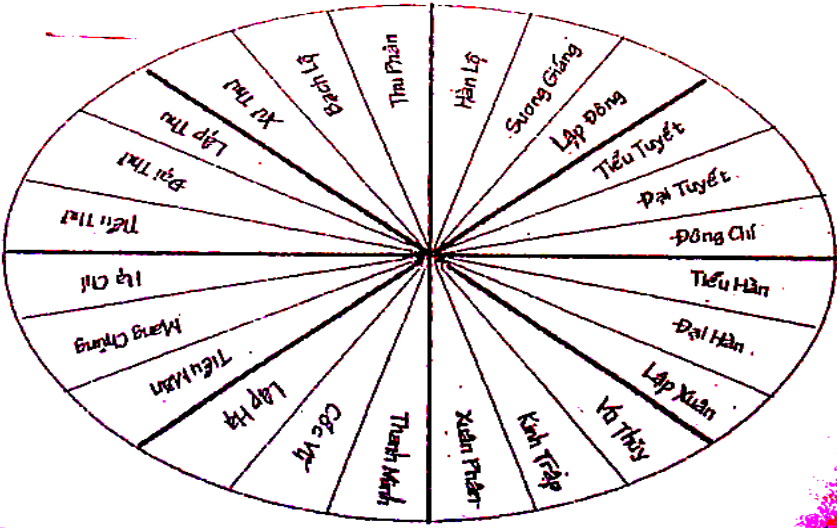
topography, and the influence of two cold air masses from the North and Southwest, which cause climate and winds blowing from different directions according to the seasons. Due to this influence, directions are always associated with seasons and specific climatic characteristics. For example: the North wind blows coldly in winter, the Southeast wind blows coolly in late spring, the Southwest wind ³blows hotly in summer, and the Northwest wind blows dryly in autumn. Understanding the directions North, South, East, West, and Center provides a foundation for ordinary Vietnamese people to accept and effectively apply the Ngũ Hành (Five Elements) model in Eastern philosophy.

+ Understanding time and counting

In Vietnamese folklore, the current system of calculating time throughout the year is based on the solar terms (tiết). By observing and recognizing the transition between day and night, and then the changes in climate throughout the year under the influence of the sun, people can calculate the Earth's movement around the sun according to these solar terms.

This is also how East Asians calculate the Gregorian calendar . The calculation is as follows: The time when the Northern Hemisphere is closest to the sun is used as the Summer Solstice, and the time when the Northern Hemisphere is furthest from the sun is used as the Winter Solstice. From these two points, the time between the Winter Solstice and Summer Solstice is used as the Spring Equinox, and the time between the Summer Solstice and Winter Solstice is used as the Autumn Equinox. Next, the time between the four established solar terms is used to mark the beginning of Spring, the beginning of Summer, the beginning of Autumn, and the beginning of Winter. Based on the eight established solar terms, combined with the observation of climate changes (1 solar term has 5 days, 1 solar term has 3 solar terms, climate changes approximately every 15 days, called a solar term), ancient Eastern people established 24 solar terms in the year. The order of these 24 solar terms is:

Diagram 3:



The total number of days in a year according to this calculation is 365 days and 25 hours (1 day has 100 hours). This number matches the Gregorian calendar discovered by the ancient Egyptians.

The names of the 24 solar terms mentioned above correspond to the areas inhabited by ancient South Asians and therefore do not accurately reflect the weather in the Northern and North Central regions of Vietnam. To use the solar calendar effectively,

³The correct scientific term is the Southwest Foehn phenomenon.

the ancients relied on the starry sky, the weather, and the seasons of their respective regions to translate the names of the solar terms into Vietnamese. This translation also took into account the Vietnamization of words of Chinese origin (Table 5).

Table 5: Names of the 24 solar terms in the Vietnamese solar calendar

Đầu xuân	Ấm ướt	Sâu nở	Giữa xuân	Trong sáng	Mưa rào	Đầu hạ	Duối vàng	Tua rua	Giữa hạ	Nắng oi	Nóng nực
Lập xuân	Vũ thủy	Kinh trập	Xuân phân	Thanh minh	Cốc vũ	Lập hạ	Tiểu mãn	Mang chủng	Hạ chí	Tiểu thử	Đại thử
Đầu thu	Mưa ngâu	Nắng nhạt	Giữa thu	Mát mẻ	Sương sa	Đầu đông	Hanh heo	Khô úa	Giữa đông	Chóm rét	Giá rét
Lập thu	Xử thử	Bạch lộ	Thu phân	Hàn lộ	Sương giáng	Lập đông	Tiểu tuyết	Đại tuyết	Đông chí	Tiểu hàn	Đại hàn

Currently, both Sino-Vietnamese and purely Vietnamese names for the seasons are still in circulation in Vietnamese folk life, especially in the northern delta and midland regions.

Solar terms should be used in agricultural seasons.

"The tassels are used to scatter rice seedlings for the season."

The young farmer goes to plow and plant rice in shallow and deep fields.

The rice plants in the cold dew are growing as tall as their heads.

"As winter approaches, we are determined to return quickly to harvest the crop."

In terms of health and medicine, ordinary people have known how to rely on the seasons of the year to maintain their health and treat illnesses. When the weather is cold or hot, the elderly often remind their children and grandchildren how to eat and dress to avoid getting sick. In cold weather, they eat dishes with warming properties such as beef and chicken, and use spicy seasonings like ginger, pepper, and chili. In hot weather, they eat dishes with cooling properties such as pork and duck, and use sour and cooling seasonings like gardenia, vinegar, and tamarind. The method of treating colds through steaming also depends on the weather to choose the most effective steaming method. For example, for colds in cold weather, steaming with fire or heated stones (mountain stones heated to absorb heat and then used for steaming) is recommended; for colds in hot weather, steaming with leaves or steam is recommended.

* Regarding the lunar calendar, by observing the moon's position each month, one can calculate the pattern of the moon's movement around the Earth. The calculation is as follows: Let the cycle of one full moon be considered a month. The number of days in a month is 29.53. The new moon is at the beginning of the month (sóc), the full moon is in the middle of the month (vọng), and the waning moon is at the end of the month. The total number of days in a year according to this calculation is 354 days (11 days less than the Gregorian calendar year). This number matches the lunar calendar discovered by the Sumerians in the Mesopotamian basin.

The lunar calendar is used to calculate the ebb and flow of tides and the growth cycles of certain plant and animal species. The experience of observing the moon's phases on different days of the lunar month is expressed in a very popular rhyming verse: *"The first day is like a sickle, the second like a crescent, the third like a rice leaf..."*

Because both the moon and the sun influence life on Earth, since ancient times, the inhabitants of South Asia have sought to understand their movements. Due to the

differing rotational cycles of the moon and the sun, when creating calendars, the ancients sought to adjust them so that both types of calendars could be used simultaneously.

** Adjusting the two calculation methods to create the Lunar-Solar calendar:*

The lunisolar calendar is formed by combining a calculation method based on the apparent movement of the Earth revolving around the sun (solar calendar) with a calculation method based on the apparent movement of the moon around the Earth (lunar calendar). According to natural laws:

A lunar year is 11 days shorter than a solar year.

Three years in the lunar calendar are 33 days (equivalent to one month) shorter than three years in the solar calendar.

After 36 years, the lunar calendar will be 12 months shorter than the solar calendar (equivalent to one year).

This also means that the beginning of the Lunar year is spread evenly across the Gregorian months. This disparity has limited the application of the Lunar calendar; today, very few ethnic groups use the Lunar calendar, and if they do, it is only in traditional activities such as festivals and religious ceremonies.

To create balance, a leap month is added every three years in the lunar calendar (a leap year has 13 months, meaning 13 full moons). After a leap year, the beginning of the year in both the lunar and solar calendars coincide.

Modern astronomy has confirmed the scientific validity of the lunisolar calendar: every three years (according to the lunar calendar), the Earth moves for approximately one month before returning to its starting position. Thus, the adjustment is based on the objective laws of planetary motion, not the subjective will of calendar makers.

** The Chinese Zodiac Counting System:*

Traditional methods of counting time utilize the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches system. Time is calculated and counted by combining the *Heavenly Stems system* with the *Earthly Branches system*.

The Heavenly Stems system is also known as the Ten Heavenly Stems (including: **Giáp, Ất, Bính, Đinh, Mậu, Kỷ, Canh, Tân, Nhâm, Quý**).

The Chinese zodiac system is also known as the Twelve Earth Branches (including: **Tý (Rat), Sửu (Ox), Dần (Tiger), Mão (Cat), Thìn (Dragon), Tỵ (Snake), Ngọ (Horse), Mùi (Goat), Thân (Monkey), Dậu (Rooster), Tuất (Dog), Hợi (Pig)**).

The Chinese zodiac system is used to calculate time periods such as years, months, days, and hours. Each unit of time is defined by a Heavenly Stem combined with an Earthly Branch. The Chinese zodiac system is calculated in a cyclical manner.

For a long time, people have known how to use the creases of their left fingers to calculate time according to the Chinese zodiac system. Typically, the positions of the Chinese zodiac are determined on the left hand (Figure 2): When calculating, people use the thumb of their left hand to determine the time points.

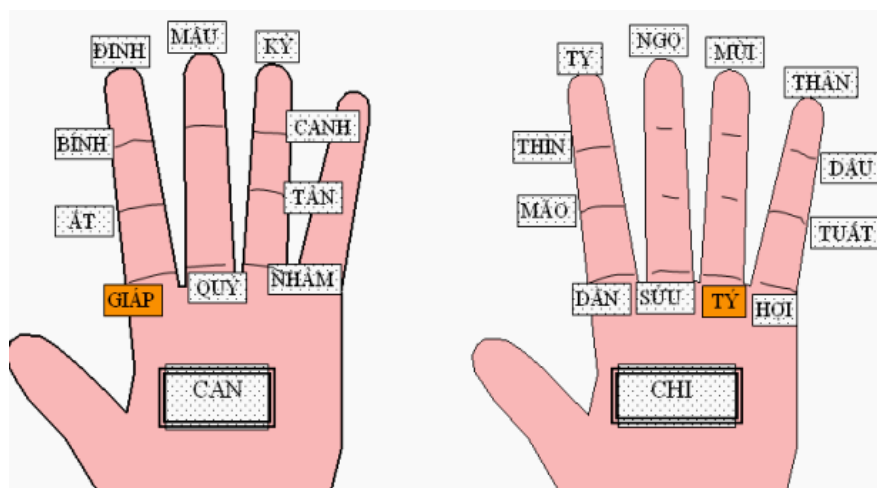


Fig. 2 The rule for calculating the Heavenly Stem is based on a cycle of +10. The rule for calculating the Earthly Branch is based on a cycle of +12.

Table 6: Thập Thiên Can (Ten Heavenly) corresponding to the ten joints of the left hand

Tân	Nhâm	Quý	Giáp	Ất	Bính	Đinh	Mậu	Kỷ	Canh
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Table 7: Thập nhị Địa chi) Twelve Branches correspond to the 12 joints of the left hand.

Tý	Sửu	Dần	Mão	Thìn	Tỵ	Ngọ	Mùi	Thân	Dậu	Tuất	Hợi
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

To calculate the Chinese zodiac cycle, a table with a 60-year cycle, called a "Hoa Giáp," has been created.

Table 8:

Chi Can		TÝ SỬU		DẦN MÃO		THÌN TỶ		NGỌ MÙI		THÂN DẬU		TUẤT HỢI	
		+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
GIÁP	+	1		51		41		31		21		11	
ẤT	-		2		52		42		32		22		12
BÍNH	+	13		3		53		43		33		23	
ĐINH	-		14		4		54		44		34		24
MẬU	+	25		15		5		55		45		35	
KỶ	-		26		16		6		56		46		36
CANH	+	37		27		17		7		57		47	
TÂN	-		38		28		18		8		58		48
NHÂM	+	49		39		29		19		9		59	
QUÍ	-		50		40		30		20		10		60

The method of using hands to count time was in use in East Asia for a very long time. Due to the complexity of the calendar system, only those with a keen interest used this method. Today, researchers have created tables and formulas to facilitate time calculation in relation to the lunar and solar calendars. (See "Vietnamese Chronology," Social Sciences Publishing House, 1984)

Throughout the history of Vietnam's wars of national defense, talented generals relied on folk calendar knowledge to accurately predict tidal patterns, using this as a military advantage when deploying troops on rivers and canals (the Battle of Bach Dang River, the Battle of Rach Gam - Xoai Mut)...

2.2.1.2. Understanding human nature through experimentation

+ Awareness of the natural human being

* In folk beliefs, a person is considered the product of a father and a mother. Therefore, the outward manifestation of genetic factors is summarized in the saying: "Like father, like son." Sometimes, people also incorporate subjective predictions based on personal experience: "A daughter resembling her father brings wealth to three generations, a son resembling his mother brings misfortune to three generations." On the other hand, the human body is also influenced by the elements, so when the elements change, the human body also undergoes changes depending on age and health. Therefore, to live a healthy life, one must adapt to the weather and the changes in climate throughout the seasons.

The relationship between humans and nature is justified by the famous Eastern theory of meridians, which is estimated to have originated more than 3000 years ago. The Meridian Theory, the theory of "*Heaven-Earth-Human Unity*", and the theory of "*Human Body as a Microcosm*" are all part of this theory. Completely based on the organic relationship between humans and the environment, this forms the theoretical foundation of *the principles of health preservation, diagnosis, and treatment in Traditional Chinese Medicine*.

+ Awareness of social human beings

people are judged based on their family relationships, kinship, village, and friendships. The nature of these relationships is considered and evaluated in terms of good and bad, virtue and vice. Social issues such as grudges and gratitude are resolved according to the logic of cause and effect: "evil deeds will be punished," "the sins of the father are visited upon the son," "parents cultivate virtue for their children to benefit from," etc. Furthermore, people also use methods of analysis based on the compatibility of the birth year's Heavenly Stem and Earthly Branch, or the laws of mutual generation and mutual restraint of the Five Elements, to judge human affairs.

Although astrology is not widespread in everyday life, it has a certain influence on the worldview and philosophy of ordinary people. Some ordinary people still believe in the predetermined arrangement of invisible forces and perform rituals to ward off bad luck. However, the general Vietnamese mentality is to trust themselves; they believe in freedom more than in predetermined fate ("Throughout history, human determination has often triumphed over fate"). In daily life, ordinary people focus on personal character and interpersonal relationships, viewing these as factors that directly impact their destiny. Therefore, in necessary situations, they may "sell distant relatives" to "buy close neighbors". They believe that if one lives well (is talented and virtuous), one can change their fate with the concept of "virtue triumphing over fate."

2.2.2. Understanding nature and humanity through non-experimental means.

Heaven and Earth are perceived as both natural forces and forces with personality. Since ancient times, in folk beliefs, another world has existed parallel to the human world – the world of gods and demons, collectively known as supernatural forces. Accordingly, there are gods in heaven, and on earth there are also gods and demons. The gods in heaven have a relationship with the gods and demons on earth (and below). Therefore,

when the order of the earthly world does not satisfy people, they seek the help of forces from other worlds to rearrange the earthly order according to their wishes.

In folk beliefs, directions are also governed by deities: the five directional deities, the five road deities, etc. These deities have also participated in the system of deities that have influenced the spiritual lives of ordinary people since ancient times.

According to common belief, time is also controlled by supernatural forces. The Twelve Zodiac signs are justified by the image of twelve midwives, overseeing the creation of all things. People also believe that each moment of the day, month, and year is positively or negatively influenced by the gods who govern time. This explains the practice of consulting auspicious and inauspicious days and times when building houses, traveling, getting married, or conducting business in folk traditions.

Religions conceive of the structure of space and time in different ways. The hierarchical structure of space and time in religion is complex and profound, thus failing to capture the attention of ordinary people. Ordinary people simply believe that gods reside in every dimension of space and time. The upward direction is considered good, the direction of liberation from suffering; the downward direction is considered bad, the direction of misery.

In folk beliefs, the human body is perceived as a single entity comprising both soul and body. Upon death, the soul separates from the body. Besides the soul and body, folk beliefs also encompass the concept of "phách" (or "vía"). The "phách" is associated with the seven orifices (some believe it to be nine orifices), which are the openings in the human body connected to the senses. Therefore, those who still have many desires to satisfy their senses are considered to have a "heavy "vía." Influenced by religion, the concepts of soul and "phách" in folk beliefs are explained in an abstract and mysterious way.

According to ancient beliefs, human destiny was held in the hands of Heaven and other deities. Supernatural forces such as gods and demons could control human fate. Influenced by Chinese culture, ordinary Vietnamese people also believed that the life and death of people were controlled by two deities, Nam Tao and Bac Dau.

On the other hand, due to the influence of Buddhist thought, people also believe in the theory of karma and reincarnation, and apply this theory to explain social phenomena. According to this theory, a person's current existence is the result of their life and actions from previous lives. If the cause is good, the effect is good; if the cause is bad, the effect is bad.

Because of their belief in supernatural forces capable of influencing human life, when faced with unusual changes such as injury or illness, people often turn to these forces to seek relief from misfortune and overcome bad luck. The belief in the existence of supernatural forces, along with the notion that all things possess souls, has shaped Vietnamese folk beliefs. Vietnamese folk beliefs are primarily fertility cults, the worship of natural forces, and the veneration of human deities.

Understanding through beliefs and religion is a transcendental path to knowledge, transcending rational understanding. However, the spiritual life of Vietnamese people tends to focus on reality. Based on the belief that a supernatural force exists in the world that can cause life to continuously flourish (*fertility belief*), ordinary people turn to this force to pray for abundant resources to serve their lives, such as bountiful rice harvests, abundant fish harvests, etc., and also to pray for increased reproduction to provide a

workforce. Because of this purpose, the objects of worship in fertility beliefs are not sacred things but rather objects and phenomena related to reproduction ⁴.

Believing that all natural phenomena are governed by gods, and that these gods do not live separately in a world of their own but are always close to humans (*a belief in the worship of natural forces*, where ordinary people turn to these forces to seek protection and help). The gods particularly revered are those with the power to directly control the lives of agricultural communities, such as the gods of Clouds, Rain, Thunder, Lightning, Earth, and Water...

With the age-old belief that after death, people will go to the afterlife and may return to the world of the living (*a belief in the worship of human deities*), ordinary people turn to these deities to seek their "blessings" in normal times as well as in times of difficulty. Within the family, these deities are grandparents and parents – those who have given birth to and raised them; within the village, they are those who have made positive contributions to the community: Tan Vien God, Saint Giong, Lady Lieu Hanh, Saint Tran Hung Dao, etc.

The folk belief in saints and deities is simple yet profound: "Who are the saints and deities? We are the saints and deities! Those who die justly and righteously become saints and deities." Therefore, anyone who knows how to sacrifice for a great cause can become a saint or deity.

Taoism in Vietnam naturally integrates into the spiritual lives of ordinary people. For the deities, all prayers are aimed at serving their lives. If one deity is not effective, people seek another to worship. Sometimes, people even resort to punishing deities ⁵to demand that they perform the function of "blessing" the household.

Vietnamese Confucianism under independent feudal dynasties was a Confucianism for the people and the nation. The Vietnamese feudal state was built on a Confucian foundation that had been modified according to the traditional concepts and ethics of the nation: the people are the source of all strength, the root of all political, cultural, historical, and social issues. Confucian thought was prevalent in folk life through the Confucian scholarly class in villages. Confucian scholars taught the Confucian language and considered it the language of the sages because it was associated with Confucian scriptures. The feudal scholar class, when they moved to rural areas (for various reasons), also contributed significantly to the dissemination of Confucian thought. The concepts of loyalty, filial piety, integrity, the three obediences, and the four virtues were explained by Confucian scholars in an easily understandable way, close to real life. Because of this, ordinary Vietnamese people were indirectly influenced by Confucian ethics. However, the common people's worldview tends towards equality and democracy, not accepting one-sided constraints as interpreted by Confucianism.

Vietnamese Buddhism has an engaged, worldly orientation. Individuals seek liberation within the liberation of the community. In folk life, Bụt (derived from Buddha) is an old, white-haired deity with miraculous powers, ready to appear anytime, anywhere to eradicate evil and injustice, and help the common people. Ordinary people follow Buddhism with the belief that good deeds are rewarded, hoping to live peacefully and

⁴ The reproductive organs and mating behavior. The reproductive organs are stylized as a female crossbow.

⁵ In Southern Vietnam, the household deities worshipped as the God of Wealth and the Earth God are sometimes drowned by their owners.

serenely in this world. In the spiritual life of the Khmer people of Southern Vietnam, becoming a monk (following Buddhism) is about becoming a virtuous person. Young men before getting married must spend time at the temple practicing to perfect their character. For the Khmer people, practice is not aimed at escaping worldly life or memorizing many scriptures to become a temple abbot (a high-ranking monk). Practice is so that after returning to secular life, they can live well with their families and communities.



Image 3: Hang Pagoda, Tra Vinh City . Source: Author

Vietnamese Catholics follow the path chosen by Jesus, which is to live by love **and forgiveness**. In their daily lives, parishioners live in harmony with the community and the nation, fulfilling their social responsibilities and obligations, and maintaining the tradition of ancestor worship. The motto of true believers is to revere God and love their country.

*** Summary of the Cognitive Culture of the Vietnamese folk:**

- Observation is the primary method, therefore empirical knowledge is fundamental: discovering social and natural laws through lived experience is the main approach. As time goes on, the common people increasingly recognize human capabilities and intelligence, and gain self-confidence.
- Transcendental knowledge is formed on the basis of limited understanding of nature and society. Later on, belief in natural forces (fertility beliefs, nature worship) fades, but the worship of human deities is maintained.
- The common people's knowledge is influenced by religious doctrines. The degree and nature of this influence depend on the specific period and place.
- Changes in perception within the community occur slowly and unevenly; differences in perception rarely cause conflict among members.
- The perception of the Vietnamese common people is governed by the universal laws of human development: from sensory perception to rational perception.

CHAPTER 3

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN VIETNAMESE FOLK

3.1. Organization and organizational culture

3.1.1. *The concept of organization*

Hoang Phe's "Vietnamese Dictionary" explains the word "organization" as follows:

(1) To make into a whole, having a structure, a composition and certain common functions.

(2) Make the city orderly and disciplined.

(3) Do what is necessary to carry out a certain activity in order to get the best results [Hoang Phe 2002:1007].

Wikipedia states that organizing is the act of arranging or setting up a organizational structure (object of the organization or arrangement of job in manufacture and in implementation project.

In practical terms, organization is the activity of arranging and controlling the activities of a group in a certain order. Organizing activities help human society develop in all aspects. The level of organization reflects the level of civilization of human society.

3.1.2. *Organizational Culture*

The term "organizational culture" is used in its primary sense to refer to a product created by humans. Organizational culture encompasses knowledge about how to organize and manage a community. It refers to management models devised and implemented by individuals or groups in the process of production, struggle, and community development. Organizational culture reflects human consciousness in leading the community towards civilization.

The term "organizational culture" is used in its second sense to refer to the type, form (or shape) of community organization and management. Accordingly, research will focus on the perspectives and methods of building models for organizing and managing society (authoritarian or democratic, horizontal or vertical exercise of power, organizational models suitable for the development of socio-economic forms or backward, ways of organizing residence and activities according to natural geographical conditions, economic forms, social systems, traditional experiences, hypothetical theories, etc.).

Thus, studying the organizational culture of a community involves two levels. The lower level is discovering and describing the forms of organization in the community's real-life situation. The higher level is pointing out the specific characteristics of these organizational forms in comparison with other communities. Organizational culture is a component of ethnic culture; therefore, it reflects the capacity of an ethnic group to organize and manage collective life.

3.2. Forms of organization of life for ordinary people Vietnam

3.2.1. *Community organization and management*

Village organization

- Residential model: Villages are the residential units of the highland people. Villagers are clustered in circular or square shapes, surrounded by fences. These are usually places near rivers, streams, or lakes. Infrastructure is mainly based on nature; for example, ancient trees provide shade for the village, clear streams serve as water sources, and forests serve as sacred spaces (for worshipping deities and burying the dead), as well

as for production and food gathering. The economy is primarily based on exploitation and rudimentary agriculture .

Some ethnic groups build communal houses (nhà rông, nhà gươl) as places for community activities ⁶. In some villages, kinship and inheritance rights are based on the maternal line. The matriarchal system implements the principle of maternal kinship but enforces a patriarchal system of autonomy. The social position and leadership power of men are determined by the maternal line. The village elder (or headman) , as a representative and authorized person, has the authority to decide on issues arising in the daily life of the village. However, if there are important issues related to the fate of the community, the village elder must convene a village meeting to gather collective opinions before making a decision. This is a clear manifestation of the tribal commune democracy.

In the Central Highlands, the coexistence of matriarchy and patriarchy still exists today.



Image 4: Waterways in the Central Highlands
Source: Author

+ *Village and commune organization (Northern Vietnam)*

- *Organization based on residential areas: hamlets and villages*

In terms of distribution, the village Traditional villages in Northern Vietnam have four common forms:

- The distribution follows a herringbone pattern: villages are spread out in clusters along riverbanks, embankments, or roads.

- The layout is like a chessboard: the villages are arranged in horizontal and vertical blocks, resembling a chessboard.

- The distribution follows a ring-shaped pattern: villages develop from the foot of the hill to the middle of the hill, commonly seen in the midland region.

- Scattered distribution: villages consist of hamlets separated by rice fields.

Villages are also classified based on topography, orientation, and location, such as: villages inside the dike, villages outside the dike, low-lying villages, and market towns.

The main factors that contribute to the distinctive appearance of traditional villages are:

⁶The communal house of the Bana and Ede people in the Central Highlands, and the gươl house of the Co Tu people in Quang Nam.

Village bamboo ramparts: These served as both a protective fortification and a natural landscape, as well as a rich source of materials for construction, production, combat, and daily life.

Village well: a large, wide well providing clean, cool water for the entire village. Villages near rivers often have a water landing, which also serves as a public gathering place for the village.

Banyan tree: often planted near wells, village communal houses, and village gates to provide shade.

Village communal house: located in the center, originally a resting place to shelter from rain and sun. Later, the communal house became a place of worship for gods and Buddhas... a center of spiritual life. The courtyard of the communal house also served as a place for collective activities during festivals, celebrations, or for resolving internal disputes.

Village gate : the boundary between the inside and outside of a village's residential area. Each village gate has its own unique design, reflecting some aspects of the village's culture.

The tomb of the pioneer: the burial place of those who contributed to the clearing of land and the establishment of a village. The contributions of our ancestors are commemorated in the familiar saying, "The pioneers cleared the land, the later generations reclaimed the land."

Ancestral temples: cultural institutions of a clan used as places to worship ancestors, store family genealogies, conduct important clan rituals, and contribute to preserving clan traditions.

Cemetery: a place where the dead are buried. Cemeteries are located outside the village's bamboo fence.

- Organization based on kinship: clan

Large villages usually have many clans. Smaller villages only have a few clans. Village names are often taken from the clans that contributed to the founding and development of the village, such as: Dang Xa, Nguyen Xa, Tran Xa, Le Xa... Each clan occupies a specific area within the village. The clan leader has authority in managing the clan. The hierarchical distinction within the clan is very strict, preserved for at least nine generations.

Table 9:

Great-grandfather/great-grandfather	Try	Grandfather	Father	I	Son	Grandchildren	Strain	A little
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

This system is carefully documented and compiled into a book called a family tree. The family tree is placed in the most prominent place in the ancestral temple or the home of the head of the family.

In practice, the close-knit nature of kinship organization has helped to establish order and discipline within the clan, contributing to the stability of village life and facilitating land management within the village.

Under a centralized monarchy, land was the ultimate property of the state, but in villages, communal land was owned collectively by the village, or more precisely, by the

clan. Communal land was closely linked to the nation in terms of material interests from the very beginning of its establishment. The privatization of communal land was due to the following reasons:

- The feudal state's policy of granting titles and land.
- The court allowed the buying and selling of land between individuals (during the reign of Ly Than Tong - 12th century, land sales were permitted) or directly sold land (King Tran Thai Tong - 13th century, sold some "official land" to private individuals) [Tran Tu, 1984:19]

The process of privatization was long, slow, and complex, following a pattern of dispersion - concentration - dispersion. Before the land reform (1953), almost every village in Northern Vietnam had communal land, and the right to allocate communal land belonged to clans.

Within each clan, there exists a form of organization called the "Giáp" (village/hamlet). This organization is exclusively for men ⁷and is considered an "*environment for advancement based on age* ." The head of the Giáp is the Cai Giáp (also known as Ông Cầu Đương, Ông Cai Đám, or Ông Đám). The Cai Giáp represents the entire Giáp in matters concerning land distribution, tax collection, forced labor, military service, and even village rituals. The Lệnh (or Quan Lệnh) is the person who carries out the Cai Giáp's orders. A large Giáp may have several Lệnh assistants: Lệnh 1, Lệnh 2, Lệnh 3, etc.

Each member of the armored unit must go through 3 stages:

Birth to 18 years old. When a child is born, the father holds a small ceremony called "*presenting the child to the village* ." The child's name is registered in the village register. When the child is a few years old, he accompanies his father to meetings and feasts. If he doesn't attend, the village elders will send home a "*package of food* " corresponding to his age.

A "Dinh" (a term referring to a young man aged 18 to 59, sometimes 55, 50, or 49). After the village presentation ceremony, the young man is recognized as a member of the "Dinh" clan of the village. He will receive certain rights and obligations. Regarding rights, each "Dinh" will be allocated a "*communal rice field* ." During village meetings or at feasts, the "Dinh" will be seated in a more prominent position. Regarding obligations, the "Dinh" must participate in public works, miscellaneous tasks, and maintaining peace and order in the village. To the country, the "Dinh" must pay taxes and, when ordered, must perform forced labor or military service.

Elders: Those aged 60 and above. At this age, a "celebration" ceremony is held to mark their longevity and elevate them to the rank of elder. These elders (or senior citizens) return communal land and are exempted from all obligations. They are respected for their age and experience. During village meetings, they sit in the place of honor. When important village matters arise, they are invited to discuss and offer advice, and they sit alongside officials and dignitaries (those aged 60 sit alongside scholars, those aged 70 alongside bachelors, and those aged 80 alongside doctors). Because of this social status, they are called "official elders." Their titles, based on age, are called "xí tước" or "thiên tước" to distinguish them from official titles.

- *Administrative organization: commune/village*

Villages were divided into administrative levels called communes and hamlets. The commune leaders were village officials elected by the people, known as the Council

⁷There are also female-specific robes, but they are not common in the villages of Northern Vietnam.

of Elders. The Council of Elders was headed by the village chief and deputy chief. The Council of Elders was responsible for formulating policies and measures to accomplish tasks related to the village and the country. Implementing the Council of Elders' policies was the administrative department, headed by the village headman. Below the village headman were the deputy headman, the village chief in charge of public affairs, and the village patrolman (or village patrol leader) in charge of security and managing the patrol team. Under the Nguyen dynasty, due to social development, villages also established many other officials to manage the village.

In the South, a village is called an Ấp; the Council of Elders is called the Hội Tề, headed by the Hương Cả.

Previously, village and commune administrative records mainly consisted of household registers and land registers. The distinction between resident and non-resident (i.e., permanent residents and migrant residents) was often very strict. Migrant residents enjoyed no rights whatsoever; they had to live on the outskirts of the village, working menial jobs, yet still had to fulfill all their obligations to the village.

Migrants wishing to become permanent residents must meet two conditions: firstly, they must have resided in the village for three generations, and secondly, they must possess some land.

In terms of ranking, the villagers are arranged into 6 ranks from highest to lowest as follows:

1. Rank of officials: Those who passed the imperial examinations (civil or military) and received ranks granted by the imperial court.

2. Rank of officials: Those currently serving in the administrative apparatus.

3. Rank of candidates: Although not yet having passed the examinations, they have surpassed the requirements of the Hương examinations (held every 3 years) and achieved first or second place in their respective schools.

4. Elderly category: Elderly people aged 50 and above. Elderly people holding ranks or positions of category 1 or 2 are not included in this category.

5. The "male" category: This includes able-bodied men or "village boys." Those "boys" holding ranks or positions of rank 1 or 2 are not included in this category.

6. Junior category: Includes components that have not yet been trained.

In reality, individuals in categories 1, 2, 4, and 5 officially participate in the social system.

+ *Voluntary organizations: factions, associations, neighborhoods*

Factions, associations, and guilds are voluntary organizations that are not dependent on the administrative apparatus of the commune or village.

A faction (or clique, group, party, faction, wing, faction, party, group) is an informal organization of a group of people who band together based on a particular opinion or interest, using it to oppose another faction. Each village has many factions, but the most prominent is the Literary Faction. This group consists of educated people who handle paperwork and official documents for the entire village. Most of them are well-off, articulate, and the most outspoken people in the village.

The other factions besides the Literary Faction were the Common Faction.

Association: A group of people who voluntarily support each other financially to make a living or who share similar interests.

The most common type of rotating savings and credit association (ROSCA) is the "Private Savings Association," where members pool their money and give it to the association president (each person holds the position for one year). This method is also

known as "playing the game," and the president is called the " *leader* " or " *house* ." Besides the form of ROSCA where money is used as an intermediary and for a specific purpose, there are other forms such as: pooling money to help any member facing unexpected difficulties, or for a family with a death (Holiday Savings Association), or for a wedding (Wedding Savings Association). The Tet (Lunar New Year) Savings Association uses the profits from the pooled capital to distribute to members for Tet shopping.

Types of associations that bring together people with similar recreational interests include martial arts associations, traditional opera associations, chess associations, etc.

There are also types of associations that bring together people with similar aspirations, religion, or beliefs, such as the Benevolent Society, the Society of the Goddesses, the Society of the Female Deities, etc.

Wards: Wards were formed based on livelihood activities, linked to the occupations of ordinary people. Wards prioritized economic efficiency. Each profession had its own ward. In a village, besides farming, there were many other occupations, hence the phenomenon of multiple different wards existing within a single village: Rice Planting Ward, Harvesting Ward, Cloth Weaving Ward, Carpentry Ward, Masonry Ward, Rowing Ward, Firewood Ward, etc.



Image 5 and 6: Rice harvesting tools

Source: Author

In terms of organization, each ward has its own ritual of worshipping the "Master Saint" (also known as the Artisan or Ancestor Master), with a register listing the names of its members. Each person contributes equally to the ward's fund. Annually, the ward convenes, elects a leader called the "Ward Leader," organizes a memorial service for the Master Saint, and shares a communal meal together.

In addition to professional relationships, members of the ward also support and help each other during times of bereavement, weddings, and other family events.

The ward represents a spontaneous division of labor within the village. Later, due to the development of industries, the need for commodity exchange in society, and based on the natural conditions of the locality, the division of labor expanded within rural areas, changing the economic structure of the village. Besides villages specializing in a single trade, multi-trade villages gradually emerged. Rural areas (in Northern Vietnam) currently have various types of villages such as: purely agricultural villages, handicraft villages, and semi-handicraft villages. This provides a practical basis for classifying villages according to occupation.

Purely agricultural villages: The weather in the Northern region of Vietnam is divided into two distinct seasons: a hot, dry season and a cold, rainy season. Based on the weather, the inhabitants of the Red River Delta have long chosen rice cultivation as their livelihood. Settling down and clustering together has led to the formation of purely agricultural villages. These villages have a tranquil pace of life, following two distinct periods: the agricultural season and the off-season. This seasonal division of farming allows farmers to seek out other things to meet their needs. They go into the forest to gather firewood and food, go to the rivers or lakes to catch fish, and use bamboo growing around the village and clay from the village to make everyday items such as bowls, plates, chopsticks, carrying poles, sieves, baskets, and other containers. Therefore, the production mindset of the inhabitants of purely agricultural villages is self-sufficient. The products they make are primarily for family consumption, and at most, for consumption within the village and neighboring villages.

In some places, where handicraft production develops and becomes the occupation of a significant portion of the local population, these villages are called semi-handicraft villages or semi-agricultural villages.

During their southward migration, the Vietnamese people retained traditional forms of agricultural organization and production. Therefore, agricultural villages in the river deltas of Central and Southern Vietnam clearly reflect the living habits and farming methods of Northern Vietnamese agricultural villages.



Image 7: Waterwheel. Source: Author

Handicraft Villages: Handicraft villages are formed on the basis of rural production activities that have reached a level of organization and division of labor. This division of labor stems from the objective requirements of production and consumption of the local people. In some places, due to geological structure, the strengths of livestock and crops, and market demand, the number of residents living by handicrafts increases and gradually becomes the majority. They were originally farmers who left agricultural labor to pursue handicrafts. When the lives of workers mainly depend on income from handicraft products, the nature of labor changes. Handicraft villages are established. A class of craftspeople begins to appear in the countryside. Trade also develops accordingly. In the early period, the main method of exchange was bartering. Later, with the appearance of currency, the manifestations of trade became increasingly evident.

Common crafts included pottery making, weaving, carpentry, iron forging, rattan and bamboo weaving, and rush mat weaving. Later, due to societal needs, handicraft and jewelry making also emerged in rural areas.

Industry flourished throughout the country. Many pottery centers still retain their reputation today . In the North, there are Bat Trang (Hanoi), Tho Ha, Phu Lang (Bac Ninh), Huong Canh (Vinh Phu (Phu Tho)), Que Quyen (Ninh Binh), Chu Dau (Hai Duong (Hai Phong))... In the Central region, there are Thanh Ha (formerly Quang Nam); Bau Truc (formerly Ninh Thuan), and in the South, there are Lai Thieu (formerly Binh Duong), Long Ho (Vinh Long)...

	
<p>Image 8: Bau Truc Pottery, Ninh Thuan Source: Author</p>	<p>Image 9: Dong Nai Pottery Source: Author</p>

Bat Trang pottery is the general name for all types of pottery produced in Bat Trang village . This is a famous and traditional pottery village in Vietnam , located right on the Red River (Bat Trang commune consists of two hamlets, Giang Cao and Bat Trang, in Gia Lam district , Hanoi). To make pottery, the potters must go through several stages: selecting, processing, and mixing clay; shaping; creating patterns; glazing; and finally, firing the product. The generations-old experience of Bat Trang pottery makers is "First the clay body, second the glaze, third the kiln." Potters believe that pottery objects are like living organisms, a miniature universe containing a harmonious combination of the Five Elements . The development of the craft... It is likened to the harmonious interaction of the Five Elements. According to them, the harmonious interaction of the Five Elements lies in the process of creative work with strict and precise technical procedures.

Bat Trang pottery today is produced using improved technology and features many innovative designs. Some artisans have initially succeeded in restoring some traditional pottery with distinctive styles and glazes from the Ly, Tran, Le, and Mac dynasties. Currently, Bat Trang pottery products are increasingly rich and diverse. In addition to traditional items, Bat Trang kilns also produce many products with new designs to meet domestic consumer demands, such as teapots, cups, plates, vases, building materials, and electrical insulation ceramics . Since the Doi Moi (Renovation) period, Bat Trang products have been available in the nationwide market and exported to many countries in Asia and Europe.

The pottery of Phuoc Tich village (Phong Dien district, Hue city) not only produced items to meet the needs of the villagers but also exquisite products to serve the

needs of the aristocracy. Although the pottery craft of Phuoc Tich has declined over time, the local artisans can still produce high-quality pottery according to customer orders.

Thanh Ha pottery (formerly Quang Nam province) emerged in the early 16th century, originating from Thanh Hoa pottery. The combination of techniques from the North with local techniques created a unique style, producing consumer products such as cups , plates , jars, vases, flower pots, and yin-yang roof tiles . Some Thanh Ha pottery techniques have been recreated in the Hoi An ancient town tourist area.

Bau Truc pottery (Ninh Phuoc, formerly Ninh Thuan province) is a distinctive product showcasing the traditional pottery craftsmanship of the Cham people. Cham pottery still retains its unique character in areas where the Cham people live, such as Van Hiep (formerly northern Binh Thuan province) and Chau Phong (An Giang province).

Lai Thieu pottery (formerly Binh Duong province) emerged in the late 18th century. The pottery is made from white clay, also known as kaolin, the best raw material for pottery. The white clay here is both highly white and very fine ; this type of clay was previously imported from China, hence it was also called "Chinese clay ." Lai Thieu pottery combines traditional techniques with new technology, resulting in products that are white, durable, and beautiful.

Carving has reached a very high level of technical skill. La Xuyen wood carving village (formerly Nam Dinh province) is famous for its art of carving the eaves and roofs of communal houses and temples. Bao Ha wood carving village (Hai Phong province) is famous for its art of carving religious statues, puppets, and Buddha statues. Wooden statues such as the Thousand-Handed, Thousand-Eyed Bodhisattva (But Thap Pagoda, former Ha Bac province), the 18 Arhat statues at Tay Phuong Pagoda (Ha Tay province (Hanoi)), and the mulberry wood statues at temples dedicated to the Four Dharma Protectors (Ba Dau Pagoda with the statue of Phap Van, Ba Dau Pagoda with the statue of Phap Vu, Ba Tuong Pagoda with the statue of Phap Loi, Ba Dan Pagoda with the statue of Phap Dien) are famous works of art in wood carving. Besides carving techniques, folk art also includes the meticulous and delicate technique of mother-of-pearl inlay. The art of carving and inlaying mother-of-pearl on wood also produces very vivid relief or intaglio wood carvings.



Image H10 and 11: Wood carvings of dragons and unicorns. Source: Author

The traditional rattan and bamboo craft has flourished since the Doi Moi (Renovation) period, expanding production in many regions across the country. Many products of the artistic rattan and bamboo industry have become valuable export items...

Although they are called craft villages, in many places, a portion of the villagers still make a living by rice farming. They cultivate communal fields or fields they have cleared themselves. Another group produces handicrafts while also growing rice, sometimes even combining it with poultry farming.

Semi-Handicraft Villages : Semi-handicraft villages are formed on the basis of a traditional craft village that both produces and directly sells its products. As handicraft technology develops and the production increases, a villager leaves the production stage and takes on the role of buying and selling. These individuals primarily live off the exchange of handcrafted goods (sometimes combined with the buying and selling of other goods). River crossings or junctions are very convenient locations for the formation of semi-handicraft villages. There, it's easy to establish markets, transport, and distribute products. These trading centers gradually develop into bustling towns with large populations. These towns facilitate the exchange and supply of essential goods between rural and urban areas, and between mountainous and lowland regions. Therefore, semi-handicraft villages are also called semi-commercial villages.

While purely agricultural villages are less likely to have commercial elements, craft villages can become semi-commercial villages. Generally, semi-commercial villages combine both handicraft production and the buying and selling of goods. Later, this type of village also came to be called a commercial and industrial village.

A semi-commercial village cannot be transformed into a commercial center or a large city for the following three reasons: *firstly*, handicraft production is still linked to agricultural production; *secondly*, commercial activity mainly involves the exchange of essential goods; *and thirdly...* There are no signs of surplus. Therefore, Vietnamese commercial villages remain trapped in a small-scale agricultural economy. In Vietnam, markets are spread throughout the country, but rural markets can only develop into small, scattered towns and townships, lacking the interconnectedness of a market system on an urban scale. This is quite different from the West, where towns, townships, and cities are formed based on market mechanisms, using the "market" element (which is actually a large commercial center) as the place for the circulation of surplus value.

The organization of villages in Southern Vietnam differs somewhat from that of Northern Vietnam. This difference is partly due to the topography of the South and partly due to the village formation process. The intricate network of rivers and canals, the open transportation routes, and the fluctuating population mean that Southern Vietnamese villages lack the closed-off nature of Northern villages. However, during the village establishment process, wherever conditions permitted, the people of Southern Vietnam still strived to maintain a village appearance similar to that of Northern villages. Therefore, in Southern Vietnam, we can still easily find communal houses, temples, pagodas, banyan trees, and even wells and water landings, all reflecting traditional ways of life. It can be said that ***Southern Vietnamese villages are a recreation of the Northern Vietnamese village landscape through the memories of migrants who settled in the South.***

3.2.2 Community activities

The main forms of collective activity in rural communities include festivals and folk games. Festivals vary in scale. Religious festivals are often large-scale, attracting many people from various regions. Folk games are usually organized during festivals and vary in size. Large games include boat racing, elephant racing, bull racing, buffalo

fighting, wrestling, human chess, and tug-of-war. Games for children are classified as small-scale games, simply organized, and without clear time limits.

+ *Organizing folk festivals*

- *The concept of a festival* : A festival is a collective activity involving many participating elements in a comprehensive manner. A festival is a combination implying both the ceremonial and celebratory aspects, but it can also include only one of these two parts. Festivals are an important component of folk culture. They represent a convergence of culture based on the recreation of nature and history according to folk beliefs. The values of festivals are always preserved and developed, meeting the spiritual needs of the people throughout history.

Rituals are a tightly structured and stable system of worship practices established according to established conventions.

of each village. The main rituals and procedures of the ceremonial part of the Vietnamese festival include: the water procession (water in the middle of the river), the bathing ceremony, the offering to the family deities (new clothes and hats), and the grand ceremony.

The festival is an activity that takes place after the ceremony, beginning with a procession. The phrase "as crowded as a festival" refers to the importance of the procession. The procession is considered the climax of the festival. It expresses the community's belief in their protective deity, showcases the village's potential, and brings excitement and joy to the entire community.

The festival is also conducted according to ceremonial procedures, consisting of two steps: the procession of the deity (village tutelary god) from the temple to the communal house, and the procession of the deity back to the temple (called "returning to the palace") after the villagers have finished the games in the communal house courtyard.

The order of the procession is also organized according to the specific regulations of each village. Vietnamese (Northern Vietnam) processions usually follow this order:

- Give the command (beat drums and gongs)
- Light the ceremonial fireworks.
- Horns, buffalo horns, and conch shells blown into the air.
- The dragon or lion dance troupe will lead the procession.
- Two rows of five-colored flags followed side by side.
- Two rows of swords and daggers followed, moving parallel to each other.
- A flag (a chess flag symbolizing power and authority)
- The Mao flag (symbolizing the emperor's decree)

Both types of flags symbolize divine power and authority.

- Five flags of five different colors, square or triangular in shape (pencil tail).
- Four flags embroidered with the four mythical creatures: dragon, 麒麟 (qilin), turtle, and phoenix.

• Eight trigram flags (embroidered with the eight trigrams: Qian, Kan, Gen, Zhen, Xun, Li, Kun, Dui)

• Two small, gilded signs are arranged horizontally, bearing the words: "hội lý" (stay away) and "tĩnh túc" (be silent).

- The large drum (placed on a gilded stand carried by two people)
- Large gong (carried like a drum)
- A pair of horses (1 pink, 1 white, made of wood, shaped like real horses, with wheels for pushing)

- The ceremonial procession (large axes, large hammers, and two scepters arranged in two parallel rows)
 - The Eight Treasures (a lute, flute, flowers, books, a sword, a wine gourd, a poetry bag, and a fan, all carved from wood, gilded and lacquered, and arranged in two rows)
 - The eight-instrument ensemble (consisting of 8 types of musical instruments)
 - Command swords (3 swords held by 3 people)
 - Earth God Dance
 - Lion dance with a ball
 - The ancestral tablet, covered with a canopy, bears the inscription "Supreme and Most Sacred" or "Awarded by the Imperial Court."
 - Long Dinh (a palanquin with an incense burner carried by four people, with two additional people holding umbrellas or parasols for shade)
 - Incense altar (altar with a tray of five fruits and a wine stand)
 - Drum and cymbal dance troupe
 - Drum sound
 - The eight-dragon palanquin has two large canopies or fans for shade.
 - Following behind the palanquin were the village elders and villagers.

The ethnic groups in the highlands have many festivals that reflect the unique cultural identity of the mountainous regions, such as: the New Rice Offering Ceremony (in the Truong Son - Central Highlands region), the Rice Planting Festival (in the mountainous regions of Viet Bac - Northeast Northern Vietnam)... These festivals have unforgettable highlights such as: the buffalo sacrifice ritual, elephant racing games, and the ball-throwing game...

- The origin of the festival

The origins of the festival are linked to folk beliefs. From the custom of worshipping supernatural forces and superhumans, it gradually developed into a festival praying for a peaceful and prosperous life. The main participants in traditional festivals are farmers and fishermen.

Regarding timing, based on the dates of some ancient festivals still maintained in Northern Vietnam (Dao Xa Festival in Phu Tho on July 9th, Thi Cau Festival in Bac Ninh from July 7-16, Do Son Festival in Hai Phong on August 10, Ha Dong Festival in Thai Binh (Hung Yen) from September 9-15, etc.), and comparing them with carvings on bronze drums and ancient Chinese texts, some researchers believe that agricultural festivals (in Northern Vietnam) in the past usually took place after autumn, when the yellow reeds bloomed. According to current statistics, Vietnamese festivals take place in all four seasons, most frequently in spring.

- Types of festivals

• Occupational Festivals: Most folk festivals are agricultural festivals; the festival space is in rural areas (communal houses, temples, pagodas, fields, hills, caves, riverbanks, etc.); the time follows the agricultural season cycle; the main participants are farmers. Activities in the festival reflect various aspects of agricultural life such as : going to the fields, hunting birds, chasing quail, hunting tigers, catching foxes, catching fish, etc. Therefore, they are also called ecological festivals. Village craft festivals have the meaning of honoring the profession , praising the merits of the founders of the profession (also called Patriarchs, Saints), expressing the principle of "drinking water, remembering the source," and praying for the development and prosperity of the profession.

•Historical festivals: Most are festivals commemorating national heroes. These festivals aim to recreate prominent historical events and figures that have impacted the thinking and emotions of the community. Festivals held annually include: the Hung Temple Festival, the Trung Sisters Festival, the Saint Giong Festival, etc.

•Religious festivals: These festivals celebrate divine forces representing goodness. These deities hold a special place in the spirituality and emotional lives of the people. Festivals also guide the community towards truth, goodness, and beauty, and inspire a desire for a peaceful life. Religious festivals have shown a degree of Vietnamization, diminishing their "foreign" character (except for Catholic festivals, which were introduced later).

- *Characteristics and significance of the festival*

•Festivals are the product of a collective (a specific community), encompassing many elements including customs, traditions, rituals, customary laws, beliefs, religion, music, singing, dancing, theater, visual arts, literature, performances, games, knowledge, and behavior. Festivals reflect the cultural characteristics of a village, hamlet, or community, and are a vibrant expression of local culture.

•The festival embodies the creativity of the people.

•Festivals reflect the spiritual life, wishes, and aspirations of the entire community.

•The festival showcases the economic potential of the village; reveals the collective intelligence and talent; and discovers talented individuals who are dedicated to the village.

•Festivals foster community cohesion.

•Local and ethnic traditional education festivals .

•Festivals bring joy and entertainment.

+ *Organize folk games*

- *The concept of games* : Folk games are artistic and humanistic forms of entertainment that have been formed and passed down among the people. Currently, there are still many different opinions about the origin of games . According to Plekhanov GV (Russia), games arose from labor. Claparade (Switzerland) believes that games originated from the imitation of animal movements due to the human instinct for recreation . Professor Hall (USA) considers games as a form of activity aimed at rejuvenation. According to E. Schiller (Germany), games are the opposite of work, but they contain elements that stimulate creativity and invention.

- *Types of folk games*: Based on the content and form of the games, folk games are divided into groups: religious games , entertainment games , competitive games , sports games , and children's games . Also based on content and form, we divide Vietnamese folk games into the following groups: games requiring dexterity and agility, physical games , intellectual games, creative games , performance games , and games involving training animals for competition ...

•The group of games requiring dexterity and agility includes: marbles, hopscotch, spinning tops, stick fighting, rice cooking contest , swinging, throwing the ball, threading a needle, stilt walking , catching eels in a jar, catching firecrackers...

•Group Physical games include : boat racing, tug-of-war, shuttlecock, capture the flag, stick pushing , wrestling , arm wrestling...

•intellectual games includes: playing O An Quan (a traditional Vietnamese board game), blindfolded tag, human chess , hide-and-seek...

- The group of craft games includes: making leaf trumpets, windmills, kites, lanterns, clay figurines, bonsai trees, ornamental stones, ornamental birds, ornamental flowers, etc.

- The group of performance games includes: chi chi chanh chanh, tap tam vong, do chu, rong ran len may, keo cua lua xe...

- The group of games involving training animals for competition includes: bull racing, elephant racing, buffalo fighting, cockfighting, etc.

Another way to categorize games is to group them into tangible and intangible categories.

- *Functions of folk games:* The main functions of folk games include: entertainment, stimulating creativity, training intellectual and physical abilities, educating teamwork and aesthetic capacity. These functions meet the requirements for physical and mental training for people living in villages in the past.

** Summary of the Organizational Culture of the Vietnamese Common People*

- *The organizational model in the highlands is suited to a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, while the organizational model in the delta region is suited to an agricultural lifestyle combined with handicrafts. Both organizational models are based on natural geographical conditions for organizing residence and production.*
- *The mountain village organizational model combines clan management and social management into one (village elder/headman); the delta village model separates clan management (clan leader/headman) and social management (village officials). However, both models tend to harmoniously combine centralized power with democratic rights. Even during periods of feudal authoritarianism, the village and commune models maintained a relatively independent position from the central government.*
- *In the model of community activities (festivals and games), the collective people are the subjects of the activities. - The organizational model of the Vietnamese common people is characterized by two attributes: communalism and autonomy.*
- *Changes in organizational models are governed by a universal law: changes in the form of production will lead to changes in the social organizational model.*

CHAPTER 4

CULTURAL CONDUCT IN VIETNAMESE FOLK

4.1. Behavior and behavioral culture

4.1.1. The concept of behavior

Hoang Phe's "Vietnamese Dictionary" explains behavior as "having appropriate attitudes, actions, and words in conduct" [Hoang Phe (editor), 2002:1091].

In a broader sense, behavior refers to the actions and attitudes (of people) in how they address issues related to nature and society. These behaviors and attitudes are manifested through activities that exploit the positive aspects of nature and society or through activities that limit the negative impacts of nature and society .

Human behavior is a conscious activity. Behavior is distinctly outward-oriented, reflecting a person's attitude towards nature and society. Through behavior, we can identify the types and forms of behavior that individuals and communities have chosen in response to external influences. The recurring patterns of behavior in response to common phenomena reveal the nature of an individual or an entire community.

4.1.2. Etiquette and Behavior

- The term "culture of conduct" is used in its primary sense to refer to products created by humans. Culture of conduct encompasses the products formed during the process of human interaction with and resolution of relationships with nature and society (behaviors and attitudes revealed in the process of exploiting, enhancing, and responding to nature, as well as gestures and attitudes in resolving social issues to support what is good and positive, and to condemn and criticize what is bad and negative...). Therefore, human consciousness is clearly reflected in culture of conduct.

- The term "culture of behavior" is used in its second sense to refer to the ways in which individuals or communities choose to adapt to their natural and social environments. Accordingly, research will focus on the attitudes and behaviors of individuals or communities in the process of interacting with nature and society (how people have respected or disregarded nature, how they have solved problems in social life based on reason or emotion, how they have considered individuals based on virtue or talent, how they treat the elderly, women, money, honor, etc.). The system of behaviors of community members (in response to the impact of nature and society) repeated over many generations forms the basis of the customs and traditions of that community.

Thus, studying the behavioral culture of a community involves two levels. The lower level is discovering the ways in which individuals behave in their daily lives. The higher level is pointing out the specific characteristics of those behaviors in comparison with other communities. Behavioral culture is a component of ethnic culture. The purpose of studying behavioral culture is to reveal the character of that ethnic group.

4.2. Dimensions of Behavior of ordinary Vietnamese people

4.2.1. Interacting with Nature

+ *Common features: Archaeological sites show that from ancient times, hunting and gathering tools were crafted from natural stone: "Post-Old Stone Age cultures, possibly Mesolithic and Neolithic, such as Hoa Binh - Bac Son , easily recognize a unified and common rule that "... limestone chips, fragments of stone tools, pebble chips, flakes ... exist in living spaces and next to hearths, in the subsoil layer there are tools and traces of human activity"* [Doan Nam Sinh 2002:101]. A long time later, humans discovered fire and forged knives for agricultural production. The Later Han Dynasty

History (124 AD) suggests that during a period of the Hung Dynasty, the Van Lang people knew how to “plow with knives, cut with fire...”. When progressing to a form of productive labor, weather forecasting served agricultural production (according to A profession (or occupation) is a constant requirement. The experience of observing natural phenomena to predict the weather has formed a "treasure trove of astronomy" in folk life, especially natural phenomena that affect agricultural and fishing activities. Thanks to observing nature, seafarers have very accurate knowledge about location and time when fishing at sea. Farmers also know how to observe nature to take the initiative in production and daily life... This is the process by which ordinary people accumulate valuable experience in labor and production (from hunting to farming, handicrafts...). The outstanding feature of production during this period is: appropriating nature, exploiting nature (hunting and agriculture). The products of labor aim to reproduce labor power by finding ways to exploit nature for survival and to cope with nature. Knowledge is still at the experience level, not yet systematically accumulated or built into theory to serve labor and production. natural restoration.

+ *Specific planes*

☛ Treating nature in food and clothing

- *Regarding cuisine:* For a long time, in order to survive, people have chosen the most readily available food in nature. When they switched to agriculture, they also had to choose and cultivate food crops suitable to the natural conditions of their place of residence. Vietnam's geographical location and climate satisfy three criteria for rice cultivation: muddy soil (alluvial soil) + fresh water + hot sunshine. Rice is a food crop that has both a hard husk, allowing for long-term storage, and high yields. Therefore, rice has become the main food crop of the Vietnamese people. Secondary food crops include potatoes, cassava, corn, beans, etc.

Plant-based foods include vegetables, fruits, and various types of fermented and fermented vegetable products. The Northern Delta region is often flooded and prone to landslides. Based on this natural phenomenon, Vietnamese people have chosen water spinach as a daily food because it can live year-round on the water surface and requires little care. Similarly, people in the Southwestern region of Vietnam use water hyacinth, water spinach, and other aquatic plants to prepare food during the flood season. Animal-based foods include various types of seafood and fermented and dried products made from the aforementioned animals. Poultry is also a common food source. Livestock meat is mainly pork, while beef and buffalo meat are less commonly used due to unfavorable breeding conditions (low-lying terrain, lack of pasture for livestock). The number of buffalo and cattle in the population mainly meets the needs for draft power in agriculture. Therefore, farmers do not consider cattle and buffalo as animals raised for meat. Therefore, the traditional meal of the common people is characterized by: more plant-based foods than animal-based foods, aquatic products preferred over seafood, and poultry more familiar than livestock. The traditional meal structure is: rice - vegetables - seafood. Vietnamese people use chopsticks as the main tool for cooking and picking up food. Therefore, the way to hold chopsticks is carefully considered technically, and later even philosophically refined with the solid Yin-Yang theory.

Food selection should be seasonal and varied to maximize the advantages of the tropical region's produce. Due to the hot and humid climate, food easily ferments and develops odors, thus requiring appropriate processing and preservation methods. Food intended for long-term consumption, such as drying or making fermented fish sauce, is

often preserved for extended periods. The weather changes throughout the year, so the menu constantly varies to suit tastes, meet bodily needs, and cope with the changing seasons. People typically eat immediately after cooking and pay close attention to reheating food before eating.

It is precisely the experience of cooking that suits these conditions that has led to the formation of many culinary art forms in Vietnamese food culture. ***The general principle** is The goal should be to achieve a balance of flavors between dishes, a balance of biochemistry in the body, and a balance between the body's physical condition and the environment. This is a wise choice for Vietnamese people in particular and for people of the East in general.*

There are many reasons behind the communal eating custom among most ethnic groups in Vietnam, including family and clan structures, an agricultural lifestyle, and the Southeast Asian climate. A typical family meal always includes all members. Various dishes are brought out and displayed throughout the meal... To avoid illness from eating cold food (the hot and humid climate easily causes food to ferment and change in quality), people usually eat hot food. When eating, the elderly, children, and those who have worked hard all day are respectfully given priority by the family. Women usually sit in the direction of the pots and pans containing rice and soup... to serve the meal for the whole family. "Eat according to the pot, sit according to the direction" is a saying that reminds everyone, especially young people, about the culture of eating in daily life within the family and in society.

Popular beverages include tea leaves (especially *Gynostemma pentaphyllum*) and *Syzygium jambos* leaves. These plants grow naturally in the mountainous regions of Northern Vietnam. Their leaves, when brewed into a drink, quench thirst and cool the body. Alcohol is a beverage made from various food crops. Rice wine is made from rice grains and is called rice wine or white wine. Rice wine is often used in religious ceremonies. Rice wine, when infused with traditional Eastern medicines, becomes a medicinal remedy used to prevent and treat diseases, known as herbal wine. Rice wine (Rượu Cần) is made from food crops combined with dozens of natural leaves. It is a specialty beverage of the ethnic groups in the mountainous regions of Northwest Vietnam, Northeast Vietnam, and the Central Highlands. All types of alcohol, when consumed in the correct dosage, have beneficial effects on the body. Several other plants are also used for medicinal purposes, to quench thirst, and to nourish the body, such as sugarcane, *Centella asiatica*, oranges, lemons, coconuts, guavas, and pomelos.

In addition, to cope with the weather and satisfy personal recreational needs, people have found other ways to smoke, such as chewing and smoking. Smoking is a preference of men. For a long time, ethnic groups in Vietnam have known how to use the leaves of certain naturally growing plants with properties similar to tobacco, processing them into strands and putting them into a pipe for smoking. The pipe is also called a tobacco pipe. The structural feature of the pipe is that the smoke must pass through the water inside the pipe; the water reduces the harsh heat and tobacco tar, preventing them from going directly into the lungs. Smoking tobacco is a classic pastime. Before fully understanding the harmful effects of tobacco tar, people believed that the pipe would help the body stay warm and more alert in cold rain or on freezing nights in the highlands. Besides smoking with a pipe, people also use thin paper to roll tobacco into small cigarettes for easier handling while smoking. Women of many ethnic groups, especially Vietnamese women, have the habit of chewing betel nut, or more accurately, the habit of chewing betel nut. Chewing betel helps strengthen teeth. A small amount of each – betel

leaf, areca nut, and lime – when chewed together produces a red, spicy liquid. If one knows the technique of "*chewing betel by biting the thread*," this vibrant red liquid becomes a unique "makeup" that enhances the beauty of women during festivals. The spicy taste has an invigorating effect and warms the lungs, making it particularly suitable for the cool weather of spring festivals in Northern Vietnam.

Chewing betel is a habit, so on ordinary days as well as in traditional festivals, there is always a tray (or platter) of betel leaves available for everyone to chew.

Due to the need to achieve balance, the ancients paid great attention to the properties of food and drink. Based on the principle of Yin and Yang, they classified food and drink according to their properties as follows:

Table 10:

Taste	SOUR, BITTER, SALTY (SOUND)			SPICY, SWEET, AND SALTY (YANG)	
	WELD	WAGE	JAR	HI BEAUTY	HEAT
VEGETABLE FRESH, C	pickled vegetables, ground cover, mung bean price sweet potato leaves, pennywort, plantain, Malabar spinach, purslane.	Cabbage, bok choy, bamboo shoots, young banana tree, three-colored plum, lettuce, jute leaves, kohlrabi, water spinach, sweet potato leaves, lettuce, Polygonum hydropiper	Chinese cabbage, kohlrabi, cauliflower, banana flower, lime leaves, pumpkin	mint, carrots, houttuynia cordata, Centella asiatica, onions, lemon balm, basil, perilla, mugwort, turmeric, shallots, coriander, lemongrass, perilla leaves, leeks	ginger, chilli, galangal, Vietnamese garlic
THE ROOT FLOUR	taro, kudzu	sweet potato, cassava,	yam, taro, potato	konjac cassava	
CEREAL	green bean	black beans	white beans, white rice, millet, noodles, corn, lotus seeds	red beans, peas, soybeans, white kidney beans, glutinous rice, roasted white rice	
SWEETS AND FATS		Sugarcane molasses, sesame oil.	Fresh honey, peanut oil, lard.	concentrated honey, concentrated sugar, beef fat, dog fat, goat fat	

SPICE	Gardenia, tamarind vinegar, alum.	Ice cream, white vinegar, salt, potassium nitrate, MSG, wood ear mushrooms.		Celery, mint, chili sauce, orange peel, tangerine peel.	cloves, pepper, star anise, cinnamon, cardamom
FRESH FRUIT, DRINKS	oranges, lemons, pagoda tree flowers, star fruit, custard apple, tamarind, sapodilla, mangoes	Green tea, coconut, Sophora japonica flower, sugarcane, jelly, longan, sapodilla, papaya.	Flavored tea, dried tea.	Beer, coffee, lotus seed tea, lime wine, salted lemon.	tangerines, custard apple, mangosteen.

Generally, due to natural conditions, the Vietnamese people have developed a unique and rich culinary art. *The differing climates and produce of the North and South have shaped regional eating habits. The North prefers spicy and hot food, while the South prefers sour and refreshing food. Vietnamese eating habits highlight a distinctive Eastern cultural characteristic: a strong sense of community. The act of inviting, calling, and waiting for each other to eat transcends the realm of family rituals and becomes a social custom.*

- Regarding clothing: Due to its hot and humid tropical climate, forests in Vietnam are very abundant. These forests are home to many wild animals. Based on these natural geographical conditions, from prehistoric times, the ethnic groups of Vietnam used natural materials such as leaves, bark, and animal skins to cover their bodies. They also knew how to use many plants found in nature that could be spun into yarn for weaving cloth, such as jute, hemp, cotton, and banana. In addition, they used other plants whose leaves could be used to weave raincoats and hats, such as palm trees, palm trees, and palm leaves. The Vietnamese also learned early on to cultivate mulberry trees and raise silkworms, extracting cocoons to spin yarn and weave cloth. Silk fabrics are soft and smooth. Clothing made from silk is very suitable for the Vietnamese climate. In short, in creating traditional clothing, people have utilized nature to cope with its conditions.

Clothing designs are suited to the hot and humid climate. Everyday attire is open-chested. Men go shirtless, wearing loincloths; women wear bodices and skirts. To this day, many ethnic groups in the highlands and rural areas of Vietnam still maintain this style of dress. Work clothes are dark in color, such as black, brown, and indigo. Later, the Vietnamese people developed other styles of clothing. Kinh men adopted short-sleeved shirts with open collars and loose-fitting trousers; women wore short-sleeved shirts, four-panel or five-panel blouses, and black trousers. Festival attire was distinctly traditional: men wore wide-legged trousers and dark silk shirts, while women wore long dresses with several layers of undergarments in elegant colors. In the South during the land reclamation period, there was a type of "ba ba" outfit worn by both men and women. Ethnic minorities in the highlands still preserve the technique of weaving fabrics decorated with colorful patterns. Nowadays, in village festivals, except for those directly participating in performances or responsible for the rituals who must wear traditional

costumes, men tend to choose Western-style clothing when attending festivities; women still look graceful in the traditional costumes of each ethnic group. At many international festivals, Vietnamese women are known to the world for their modernized versions of the traditional ao dai.

Headwear designed for tropical weather is breathable and provides ample coverage. The most typical headwear is the wide-brimmed conical hat. The traditional Vietnamese hat with chin straps and headscarf are often worn during festivals. Women in Northern Vietnam tend to wear a crow's beak-shaped headscarf in cold weather. People in Southern Vietnam prefer the checkered scarf, which they wear draped over their shoulder, wrapped around their head, or around their neck depending on the occasion.

Jewelry is made from natural materials such as gold, silver, precious stones, wood, and animal horns. These pieces of jewelry are often worn around the neck, fingers, wrists, and ears to enhance a person's beauty. Jewelry can also serve as personal mementos. Vietnamese children wear silver bracelets on their wrists, ankles, and necks to ward off evil spirits.

☛ Dealing with nature in residence and movement

• *Regarding housing: Building materials* are usually chosen from those readily available in the residential area or nearby. Vietnam's diverse topography results in a wide variety of building materials.

The mountainous areas contain wood, stone, palm leaves, rattan, bamboo, and other similar materials.

The plains region has bamboo, thatch, straw, clay, and fired clay used to make bricks and tiles...

The wetlands contain mangroves, melaleuca trees, nipa palms, reeds, and sedges...

Construction and house preservation techniques are adapted to the climatic and geographical conditions of Southeast Asia. The most common *type of house is the stilt house*.



Image 13: Stairs leading up to a stilt house in the Central Highlands

Source: Author

The characteristics of stilt houses are: a high floor to protect against moisture and heat; pillars driven deep into the ground to prevent erosion and withstand storms and tornadoes; a low roof to avoid direct sunlight and heavy rain; and low, wide (or multiple) doors to avoid slanted sunlight and allow for plenty of wind. A variation of the stilt house is the raised-legged house. Raised-legged houses are built along rivers with fluctuating tides. The main construction technique is assembly, using mortise and tenon joints, and tying (posts) with rattan and bamboo. Thatched and brick houses are built based on the stilt house structure: a high foundation, a V-shaped roof, a low and enclosed roof, low and wide doors, and pillars as the main supporting structure (the load-bearing frame is a system of columns, rafters, and beams).



Image 14 and 15: Thatched houses in the Southwestern countryside of Vietnam
Source: Author

In sturdy structures such as communal houses, temples, and shrines, the roofs are designed in a curved shape like the bow of a boat (also known as a blade shape) to reduce the impact of storms. Additionally, there are types of houses for people "settling" directly on the water, such as houseboats and rafts. These houses are mostly built facing east, southeast, or south, directions where sea breezes blow in, making them cool and healthy.

Concepts of housing and design approaches, The layout of Vietnamese houses is linked to Eastern residential thinking. Houses are clustered in villages and hamlets, often near rivers, streams, and canals for access to water for production and daily life, and for easy fishing. In lowland villages, the communal house (đình làng) serves as the cultural and administrative center. In the Trường Sơn and Tây Nguyên (Central Highlands) regions, villages have communal houses (nhà rông and nhà gươl) used for public activities. According to East Asian feng shui, "feng" (wind) is paramount for housing, followed by "shui" (water). Communal houses, temples, and pagodas are built according to the specific topography to avoid cold and hot winds, while also ensuring ecological factors such as vegetation, soil, moisture, and sunlight.

As settled residents, Vietnamese people spend their entire lives in their homes. For them, "a house is where you live, a grave is where you die."

The ethnic groups of the Central Highlands also build houses for the deceased called tombs. After about three years, they hold a ceremony to abandon the grave and no longer take care of the tomb.

•*Regarding transportation:* The materials used for means of transport are primarily local materials. The most common means of transport are waterways, including various types: boats (Northern Vietnam), barges (Southern Vietnam) ⁸, rafts, canoes, ships, ferries, motorboats, and small boats...



Image 16: Three-leaf boat
Source: Author



Image 17: Tac Rang
Source: Author

The main transportation system consists primarily of rivers, canals, and sea routes. Due to the terrain and level of development, rudimentary bridges appeared very early: wooden bridges, monkey bridges, and suspension bridges .



Image 18: Bamboo bridge in the Southwest region of Vietnam
Source: Author



Image 19: Coconut bridge in the Southwest region of Vietnam
Source: Author

As people who primarily travel on waterways, the Vietnamese have accumulated extensive experience and achieved a very high level of skill in shipbuilding. Most of the boats currently in use are both easy to maneuver on rivers and seas and capable of withstanding rough seas. Vietnamese warships are typically long and have many compartments, making them very difficult to sink. Boats were also designed to serve as both tools for work and residences for a segment of the population living on the

⁸ Regarding boats, there are dugout canoes, sampans, driftboats, shuttle boats, fishing boats... Regarding barges, there are loitering barges, cage barges, net barges, ferry barges, fishing boats...

waterways (houseboats). Boat eyes were a common form of decoration for people who traveled by river.



Image 20 and 21: Boat's eye . Source: Author

Water transport systems with handcrafted vessels remain the primary mode of transportation for residents in many regions of Vietnam to this day.

transport has left a very distinct mark on many aspects of Vietnamese folk culture: language, artifacts, funeral customs, etc.

- Interacting with nature in disease prevention and treatment.

- *Regarding disease prevention:* The fundamental principle of disease prevention is to identify the cause of imbalance and restore it. Disease causes are classified into external and internal factors. External factors include weather elements caused by monsoons such as wind, cold, humidity, sun, heat, dryness, and epidemics (later, Eastern medicine systematized these into seven factors: wind, cold, heat, dampness, dryness, fire, and epidemics). Internal factors include diet, sexual activity, and emotional states. To prevent disease, people must live in harmony with nature, that is, in accordance with the changing seasons throughout the year, maintain hygiene, and exercise moderation in their daily lives .

- *Regarding treatment methods:* The principle of folk medicine is to expel the disease as soon as it is contracted and to treat the root cause. When the disease is newly acquired, treatment involves steaming, cupping, acupressure, acupuncture, rituals , scraping, tapping, etc., combined with eating porridge to relieve cold symptoms. When the disease has progressed further, the focus is on neutralizing it, preventing it from further invading and gradually expelling it from the body.

The approach of both treating illness and nourishing the body was highly valued; often, food itself served as medicine. Surgical methods were rarely used, mainly involving external incisions in cases of insect or animal bites or boils.

Medicines are primarily derived from nature, such as plants and animals; sometimes, people even use stones (these are called herbal medicines, wood medicines, animal medicines, and stone medicines in Traditional Chinese Medicine). Some are also taken from the human body (human medicines). Folk medicine is mainly Southern Vietnamese medicine, which consists of herbs grown in villages and harvested and used immediately. Southern Vietnamese medicine is the result of selecting medicinal plants from nature, cultivating them, and preserving them for community use.

Methods of processing and preserving medicine according to climate include drying , roasting, heating, soaking, and boiling to make extracts. In folk medicine, people used to measure and consume medicine by estimation , such as : paulownia seeds, a

handful, a stalk or clove (of onion or garlic), a fruit, or a root... Later, people used units of measurement such as: tael (a unit of weight), liang (a unit of weight), dou (1 liter), thang (2 liters), and thach (10 liters).



Image 22: A traditional medicine clinic at Nguyen Trung Truc Temple, Rach Gia
Source: Author

A basic traditional Vietnamese herbal remedy consists of 10 ingredients (Imperata cylindrica root, Centella asiatica, Cassia tora leaves, Eclipta prostrata, Cynodon dactylon, Glycyrrhiza glabra, Xanthium strumarium, fresh ginger, lemongrass, and tangerine peel). However, for many ailments, only one or two ingredients are used for direct tonification and sedation. There is also a tendency to combine traditional Vietnamese herbal remedies according to the principle of "ruler, minister, assistant, messenger," similar to how traditional Chinese medicine formulas are formulated. This is when folk healers combine traditional Vietnamese and Chinese medicine in the treatment process. "Hidden" remedies are considered rare and highly effective. People in mountainous regions often possess many valuable "hidden" remedies.

In Vietnamese folklore, it is customary to gather leaves on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month (the Dragon Boat Festival) and dry them to use throughout the year.

The timing of taking the medicine is usually before or after meals, before going to bed or upon waking up, rarely adhering to the "medicine's direction" principle of traditional Chinese medicine. The methods of administering the medicine are also very flexible: several times a day, as a tea substitute, as a water substitute, with rice, or by adding the medicine to basins or tubs for soaking hands, feet, or the whole body ...

For a long time, folk medicine has known how to treat illnesses without or with limited use of medication. This method encompasses various techniques such as: acupuncture, cupping, steaming, scraping, tapping, rubbing, pressing, plucking or pulling hair, soaking in warm water, stepping on pebbles or pieces of wood, etc. Each method has many forms of treatment; for example, steaming includes methods such as steaming with leaves, charcoal, fire, sand, and medicinal smoke. Theoretically, this healing method is based on the meridian system and acupoints that Eastern people discovered thousands of years ago. Acupuncture, however, requires systematic study and is therefore less commonly used in folk medicine.

Another unique approach to treatment is emotional healing. This method works by regulating the patient's psychology (modern medicine calls it psychological healing). This

approach typically doesn't involve medication or manipulation of meridians, hence it's often referred to as folk remedies. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, the basis for treating emotional illnesses is the theory of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements, corresponding to the internal organs of the human body. The principle of psychological healing is based on the balance of Yin and Yang, specifically the balance of opposing elements in the Five Elements (Water-Fire, Metal-Wood).

4.2.2. Social Behavior

Social behavior is manifested in all relationships between people, and between people and supernatural forces, at all times and in all places. Even rituals of worship, though intended for "the unseen," are essentially about establishing character and, through that, building social norms in a specific historical period. Here, social behavior is viewed in two periods of social life: (behavior) in daily life and (behavior) during important moments in a person's life.

+ Everyday behavior

In everyday interactions, ordinary Vietnamese people have a manner of behavior that easily creates a sense of closeness upon contact. Moreover, one can also find in this the noble qualities of the Vietnamese people. Some of these qualities can be mentioned as follows:

- Value all relationships and remember gratitude.
- Respect each other's honor and dignity.
- Practicality is key.
- They have a clear stance against what is bad, evil, or undesirable, but express their attitude in a very skillful and subtle way.
- Selfless, compassionate (which can be understood as generosity and kindness towards others).
- Upholding the spirit of sacrifice, courage, talent, intelligence, and virtue.
- Sensitive to and appreciative of beauty.
- Value filial piety.

The imagery of the Four Immortals in Vietnamese folklore clearly reflects the general behavioral views of the Vietnamese people.

Having lived for a long time as farmers, confined to the narrow confines of villages, and influenced by the management culture of the feudal state and the management culture imposed by some colonial states in Vietnam, ordinary Vietnamese people also have certain historical and social limitations in their behavior. Some ways of behaving have become outdated and hinder the construction of a new cultural life. Envy, egalitarianism, reliance on the collective, factionalism, localism, narrow-minded kinship... are still prevalent among a significant portion of people from rural areas. This has become a major concern for those working in cultural affairs today.

+ How to behave in critical moments

Important moments are those when events occur that profoundly affect individual and community life. During these times, ordinary people have developed good customs to maintain the fine traditions of their nation. These important moments include: Tet (Vietnamese New Year), weddings, childbirth, funerals, and religious ceremonies.

- Etiquette during Tet (Lunar New Year)

In Vietnamese folklore, many festivals are still celebrated at different times of the year. Vietnamese people typically have two major festivals: the New Year (Tet Nguyen Dan) and the Mid-Year Festival (Tet Doan Ngo). The Cham people celebrate Mbang

Kate (according to the Cham calendar, July 1st, corresponding to around the end of September in the Gregorian calendar) and Mbang Cambun (according to the Cham calendar, September 16th, corresponding to around February or March in the Gregorian calendar). The Khmer people celebrate Chol Chnam Thmay on April 14th, 15th, and 16th in the Gregorian calendar. The Co Ho people (Lam Dong) celebrate their festival about a month after the Kinh Lunar New Year, called Nho LirBong, meaning the festival celebrating the harvest. The Ede people in Dak Lak celebrate the New Rice Festival around October in the Gregorian calendar... The Lunar New Year holds many beautiful meanings. During Tet, people visit each other to exchange greetings and wish each other good fortune and blessings. Tet is also an opportunity for family members to express their affection for grandparents, parents, and children. Tet often includes festivals for everyone to participate in and share in the joy. It is a time to resolve conflicts from the past year, build harmony in the community, and look forward to a better future. Tet also has spiritual significance, reflecting belief in the assistance of invisible forces, especially belief in deities who protect humanity.

- Etiquette in wedding ceremonies

• Traditional marriage customs: According to the Later Han Dynasty History (124 AD), during the early Hung Dynasty, the marriage customs of the Van Lang people were that "men and women married without using betel nuts, but instead exchanged a handful of earth (a handful of salt) as a token of their commitment." Men and women were free to love and freely choose their spouses. Even King Hung accepted the love of his daughter for the poorest commoner in society. According to the legend of betel nuts, the Vietnamese used betel nuts when society reached monogamous marriage; betel nuts are a cultural phenomenon of marriage in a plant-based civilization; this custom arose from the wishes of the tribal leader, but it was not only a cultural phenomenon of the upper class but widespread among the people, as it emphasized the moral principle of fidelity.

Through the process of assimilation of Northern customs, wedding customs in the imperial court and in the common people differed significantly. Under the pressure of feudal rituals, the marriage customs of the common people tended to become more ceremonial; gradually, more complex rituals were added compared to the early period. Although simplified, wedding customs in Vietnam until the early decades of the 20th century still followed six main ceremonies:

☞ Nap thái: The groom's family visits the bride's family to express their intention to have chosen the girl from their family as their daughter-in-law.

☞ The engagement ceremony: The groom's family comes to ask for the bride's name and date of birth.

☞ Presenting the auspicious fortune: The groom's family informs the bride's family that they have received a favorable fortune reading regarding the marriage between the couple.

☞ Wedding date announcement ceremony: The groom's family informs the bride's family of an auspicious date for the wedding.

☞ The betrothal ceremony: The groom's family brings jewelry, money, and gifts to the bride's family.

☞ The wedding ceremony: Also known as the welcoming of the bride, the groom's family comes to pick up the bride and bring her home.

According to Phan Kế Bính, the steps in a wedding ceremony include: engagement – betrothal – exchange of letters – dowry challenge – wedding ceremony –

red thread ritual – bringing the bride – ritual – closing the door – stringing the rope – courtship – post-wedding visit (after 3 days).

Besides the six customs mentioned above, there are other customs as well:

☞ Grinding rice in a mortar to welcome the bride.

☞ Be selective about who makes the bed.

☞ Find bridesmaids.

☞ The bride brings her hairpin to her husband's home.

• Characteristics of cultural etiquette in traditional wedding ceremonies:

☞ Respect for freedom of love and marriage is still maintained in many regions (a humane aspect).

☞ Simple customs that extend the pre-marital period: the custom of the son-in-law living with the wife's family (humanistic aspect).

☞ Matriarchal customary law protects women's rights (humanitarian aspect).

- Behavior during childbirth

• Birthing customs:

☞ Stages of childbirth: morning sickness - nausea - labor - burying the placenta deep and avoiding water droplets - lying on hot coals, avoiding drafts - eating steamed salt and fish sauce for 3 days after birth - full postpartum confinement (7 days for boys, 9 days for girls) - salt steaming - applying turmeric externally.

☞ Taboos: There's a folk saying, "a pregnant woman is at the gates of death," to emphasize the importance of childbirth for a woman. Therefore, from conception to childbirth, people in the past established many taboos. Whether reasonable or not, these taboos were still believed in and followed by many.

The following taboos should be observed to ensure the well-being of both mother and child:

- Avoid walking or standing erratically, suddenly moving, standing, or sitting, in a hurry or haste...
- Avoid getting angry or worrying to the point of having nightmares.
- Avoid bathing in the rain or soaking in water for too long.
- Avoid climbing to high places.
- Avoid carrying or lifting heavy objects...

Things to avoid to ensure your child's well-being include the following:

- Certain foods are avoided to prevent birth defects or gender abnormalities in children, such as: avoiding rabbit meat to prevent cleft lip, avoiding fruits that appear together to prevent conjoined twins, avoiding crab to prevent stubbornness in children, and avoiding wedding feasts to prevent awkwardness in children.
- Things to avoid to prevent children's character from becoming corrupted include: avoiding vulgar language, avoiding seeing immoral scenes, avoiding associating with wicked people, etc.
- Dietary restrictions to help children recover from illness: avoid eating shellfish like clams, snails, and mussels to prevent phlegm buildup; avoid eating food offered to delicacies to prevent thrush; avoid onions to prevent eye infections; avoid rotten or spoiled fruit and food to prevent stomach aches...

Other customs include:

☞ The daughter gave birth for the first time at her parents' home.

☞ Giving a child an ugly name.

☞ Please donate used baby clothes.

- ☞ Performing the ceremony of registering the family name...
- Cultural characteristics of traditional childbirth practices:
 - ☞ Women are instruments of production, both human and material (to meet the demands of the agricultural mode of production).
 - ☞ On the one hand, while valuing women's lives, on the other hand, unreasonable taboos regarding pregnancy and childbirth confine mothers to a life of hardship and malnutrition (especially since gender inequality emerged).
 - ☞ Utilizing knowledge about pregnancy and childbirth for women based on regional and ethnic experiences (not systematic).
 - ☞ Childbearing is a private matter for individuals and communities; it has little connection to the state (population, health, education, economy, etc.).
 - Etiquette during funerals
- Traditional funeral customs: Although each ethnic group conducts funeral rites according to its own customs, Vietnamese funerals clearly reflect the psychological characteristics of agricultural communities in Southeast Asia. Here, grief for the deceased is expressed through weeping and storytelling. The most common forms of burial are earth burial and cremation. The traditional forms of wood burial and water burial are no longer practiced.

Common funeral customs in Vietnam:

- ☞ Making a will (testament)
- ☞ Giving a posthumous name (a name given after the birth of the child)
- ☞ Record the time and date of death.
- ☞ Bathing
- ☞ Install the function
- ☞ Lowering the throne
- ☞ Put money and rice in the mouth of the dead.
- ☞ Place the coffin lid facing outwards.
- ☞ Wear mourning clothes according to hierarchy.
- ☞ The funeral procession follows the tradition of "the father escorts, the mother receives."
- ☞ Avoid carrying the coffin quickly.
- ☞ Parents refrain from attending their child's funeral.
- ☞ Scatter paper money and gold leaf along the funeral procession route.
- ☞ A ritual offering to the earth god before burial.
- ☞ Families in mourning refrain from visiting others to offer New Year's greetings.

Funeral customs of some other ethnic groups: The Khmer people have the custom of cremating the body after death, the Cham people recently adopted the custom of cremating after burial for a period of time (about 3 years), ethnic groups in the Central Highlands have the ceremony of abandoning the grave (after burial in a tomb for a few years)...

- Characteristics of cultural etiquette in traditional funerals:
 - ☞ Respect the body and soul of the dead.
 - ☞ Expressing the grief of the living for the dead (prolonging the keeping of the coffin, weeping and lamenting, performing many rituals after burial such as: opening the grave, weekly rituals, 49-day rituals, mourning for 2-3 years, keeping an altar in the house, annual memorial services and lighting incense on the first and fifteenth days of the lunar month, visiting and cleaning the grass on the grave...). The people of the Central Highlands perform a solemn ceremony before abandoning the grave.



Image 23 and 24: Central Highlands burial mounds

Source: Author

☞ Viewing attitudes and behaviors during funerals and ancestral worship ceremonies as expressions of filial piety and as a means of educating future generations.

☞ Funeral rites follow national traditions and regional customs.

☞ Funeral rites reflect the fear of bribery and corruption in the unseen world.

- Etiquette during religious ceremonies

- Traditional worship practices: Worship leads to the act of offering sacrifices to people and objects. In Vietnamese folklore, almost every deity, human or animal, that is worshipped is subject to offerings. However, people do not always offer sacrifices with positive intentions; sometimes they do so out of fear of evil (or wickedness), which, though invisible, can harm people and community life.

As an agricultural society, altars dedicated to the God of Agriculture are found throughout rural Vietnam. These altars are typically located within communal halls (đình). A distinctive feature of these altars is that they lack a roof and do not display many religious objects.



Image 25 and 26: Altar of the God of Agriculture

Source: Author

In the common people's consciousness, the Five Elements consist of five goddesses who directly influence daily life. The Five Elements Shrine is established to worship the Five Elements goddesses. These shrines are typically located within communal halls and other areas of the village.



Image 27 and 28: Five Elements Temple
Source: Author

Here are some places where ordinary people usually hold religious ceremonies:

☞ Temples and shrines: Places of worship for deities:

- High-ranking deities: Soc Thien Vuong, Chu Dong Tu, Lieu Hanh (Heavenly deities), Ly Thuong Kiet, Tran Hung Dao... (Human deities).
- Intermediate deities: deities with names but whose achievements are not clearly recorded.
- Lower-ranking deities: principal deities - City God (Fortune God).



Image 29: Hung Vuong Temple, Nha Trang City
Source: Author



Image 30: Nguyen Trung Truc Temple, Rach Gia City
Source: Author

☞ Temple: A place of worship for ancestors. Long-established families have ancestral temples dedicated to their founding ancestors. The altars include ancestral tablets, incense burners, and family genealogies. The altars are arranged in tiers, from highest to lowest, corresponding to the ancestors of previous and subsequent generations.

☞ A home: A place where deceased relatives are worshipped: grandparents, parents, siblings, or children who died young. Families with a religion or belief system may also worship the deities of their religion or belief system.

In addition, people also set up altars in other places such as roadsides, beaches, riverbanks, tree roots, rock crevices, etc., to worship people and things with various meanings.



Image 31: Altar for the Whale God
(Hoa Tam commune, Tuy Hoa district, Phu Yen province)

Source: Author

•Characteristics of traditional worship culture:

- ☞ Worship should be done voluntarily and consciously, considering it a righteous act.
- ☞ Showing respect and gratitude to our ancestors (the tradition of "Drinking water, remembering the source")
- ☞ Educating about national and family ethics, and the spirit of respecting history.
- ☞ Strengthening family and clan bonds
- ☞ The object of worship is usually specifically identified, but sometimes it is not. In cases where the object is not specifically identified, people still make offerings, but the intention of worship is unclear, or they make offerings but do not truly worship in their hearts.
- ☞ Sometimes, acts of worship are driven by self-interest, with people worshipping to make requests; they worship only the most powerful deities and relegate those that are not.

In general, cultural norms and customs have a certain correlation. Within them, we can find the choices made by a nation throughout its long history to address issues of survival, coexistence, and community cohesion and protection.

Folklore , a treasure trove of folk literature, contains many experiences in family conduct. These are essential knowledge for people to fulfill their duties as fathers, mothers, children, grandchildren, older siblings, and younger relatives . Folklore also contains many experiences in social conduct. These are essential knowledge for people to live well, become good neighbors, and be responsible and dutiful citizens towards their country .

In terms of behavior, *customs are... convention Customs encompass common principles of conduct between people and between people and nature, accepted by the entire community and implemented with a high degree of self-awareness.* Customs are found in social relationships, in the way ceremonies are organized, in ways of earning a living; and in attitudes between people and nature, and towards divine forces representing natural power. Customs are sometimes limited to the village or community, but sometimes extend far beyond, spreading across a large region.

Customs are closely related to traditions. Customs are found in everyday activities. These activities are repetitive and become familiar to members of the community. That is

what customs are. *Customs are ways of life. It was widespread among the population for a long time and had become a habit of the entire community.*

Once customs and traditions have taken shape and become evident, they in turn profoundly influence the lives of ordinary people. Many customs and traditions are still maintained to this day.

*** *Summary of the behavioral culture of ordinary Vietnamese people:***

- *Living habits, clothing, transportation, and disease prevention and treatment reflect a tendency to exploit nature for survival while simultaneously coping with its negative impacts.*
- *Behaviors within the family and in society are summarized as national cultural characteristics such as: valuing relationships, valuing emotions, valuing literature, valuing virtue, valuing women, and valuing the collective (village, nation).*
- *Tolerance and generosity in behavior.*
- *Emphasis on practicality. A tendency towards self-interest in seeking and worshipping supernatural forces, but not pragmatic in everyday life.*
- *The agricultural lifestyle, linked to village customs, has also formed negative behavioral relationships: egalitarianism, localism, narrow-minded selfishness, and patriarchal attitudes (see also the book "Searching for the Cultural Identity of Vietnam" by Tran Ngoc Them).*

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CHAPTER 5

THE CULTURE OF RECREATION IN VIETNAMESE FOLK

5.1. Reenactment and the Culture of Reenactment

5.1.1. *The concept of representation*

Reproduction is a property of the human brain. Objective reality is reproduced after humans have heard, seen, and felt things and phenomena in practice. One might argue that human imagination is bestowed by metaphysical forces, but reality proves that divine forces on earth, in heaven, or in hell are also products of humanity. All exist and operate according to human will.

Regarding the concept of representation, Hoang Phe's "Vietnamese Dictionary" explains representation as "re-expressing reality authentically, through artistic creation" [Hoang Phe 2002:885].

In the process of recreating objective reality, humans can use fiction through their imagination. Fiction is a common element when recreating reality through art. Fiction is a prominent characteristic of artistic creation. Recreating reality (in *Artistic creation* is a conscious human activity. Initially, people may engage in these activities to satisfy personal desires or to share with others what they have heard, seen, and felt in their daily lives. Through the process of reproducing reality, humans gradually accumulate knowledge and creative experience, thereby forming creative methods. This is the path from emotional to rational activity in artistic creation.

It is also necessary to clearly distinguish the relationship between representation and creation. Representation is a form of human activity aimed at reflecting reality through creative means. Creativity is the combination of common thinking with the novel ideas of an individual when representing objects and phenomena. Various forms of human activity such as perception, organization, behavior, and representation can all contain creative elements.

5.1.2. *Reenactment Culture*

The term "reconstructive culture" is used in its primary sense to refer to artistic products created by humans. Reconstructive culture refers to products formed through the process of humans using symbols to record their emotions, feelings, and life experiences through the creation of artistic imagery. It encompasses the entire creative artistic heritage of community members, aimed at satisfying individual emotions and meeting the aesthetic tastes of the collective. It is also a process of human exploration of nature and self-discovery. The human consciousness in reconstructive culture is to pass on to contemporaries and future generations what they have experienced, so that humanity can achieve a better and more fulfilling quality of life.

In this sense, all products created using artistic materials and methods appropriate to their field to build artistic imagery aimed at recreating nature and society are classified as recreating culture (or creative art culture).

The term "reconstructive culture" is used in its second sense to refer to the type or form (or manner, style) of thinking that individuals or groups choose to reconstruct nature and society. Accordingly, research focuses on the methods and techniques used when reflecting and reconstructing the world (objective or subjective artistic thinking, realistic or romantic creative methods, the choice of natural or artificial materials, creative intentions emphasizing natural phenomena or aspects of human life, attention to realism or stylization, etc.). Studying reconstructive culture aims to highlight the unique

aesthetic characteristics of an ethnic group. Reconstructive culture is a component of ethnic culture. Through reconstructive culture, we can see the artistic creativity and the ability to appreciate and express beauty of an ethnic group.

In artistic creation, the creative subject plays a crucial role in determining the value of the work. Freelance artists use various artistic materials to construct artistic imagery, as well as different materials to complete their works. Different artistic materials lead to different methods of expression. Different methods of expression lead to different forms of artistic imagery. The different forms of artistic imagery form the basis for classifying art forms. In reality, the current classification of the seven art forms (not including some newly added ones) is still inconsistent. This inconsistency stems from differing perspectives among researchers when examining the subject matter and functions of these art forms.

When creative culture satisfies the spiritual needs of the majority, and when a segment of the population specializes in artistic activities and can earn a living from the products they create, then crafts and craft villages emerge. These include painting, writing, poetry, singing, performing, sculpting, and other traditional fine arts. Those who work in these fields are called artisans. This is one of the paths leading to the formation of professional and scholarly cultures.

5.2. Methods of depicting reality by Vietnamese folk

5.2.1. Recreating reality through color, lines, and shapes

This is the earliest method of reproducing objective aesthetic reality in human artistic creation.

Two characteristic forms of the Vietnamese people's method of recreating reality through color, lines, and shapes are painting and sculpture.

Lines and colors were used early on when humans lived in caves, subsisting on nature. Hunting scenes became a source of inspiration for people at that time to create paintings on cave walls. The lines were rudimentary, the colors modest, but these paintings were the beginnings of modern painting.

The development of three-dimensional thinking reflects a significant step forward in the artistic creativity of the common people. With this three-dimensional perspective, the objects are accurately represented in terms of their physical dimensions using readily available materials such as wood and stone, or materials excavated from the earth such as clay. When humans mastered the technique of metal smelting, the art of sculpture entered a period of remarkable development. The remains of the Sa Huynh and Dong Son cultures, containing human and animal figures made of stone, terracotta, and bronze, demonstrate that sculpture developed very early in Vietnam.

In Vietnamese folklore, folk visual arts (including painting and sculpture) have held a prominent position in the national art scene. It is evident that throughout the history of Vietnamese art, folk artisans have undertaken most of the visual arts projects in villages and even in the royal court. The artistic materials and methods of expression in painting and sculpture were closely aligned with the aesthetic sensibilities of the common people.

In terms of painting, traditional Vietnamese painting is highly creative, most notably the art of making paper paintings using woodblock printing techniques (also known as woodblock printing or woodblock printing), the art of silk painting, and the art of lacquer painting.

+ There are two famous styles of paper paintings: Dong Ho paintings and Hang Trong paintings.

- Dong Ho paintings are a type of Vietnamese folk painting, whose full name is Dong Ho folk woodblock prints , originating from Dong Ho village (Song Ho commune, Thuan Thanh district, Bac Ninh province).

Besides its distinctive lines and composition, the folk art aspect of Dong Ho paintings also lies in its colors and the type of paper used for printing.

The paintings are printed directly from woodblocks (also called printing plates). The paper used for Dong Ho paintings is made from the trunk of the agarwood tree. Each woodblock displays a number of motifs with a specific color. The paintings are printed on paper coated with a layer of color mixed with the iridescent substance inside the scallop shell, hence the name "scallop painting"⁹. The paintings are printed entirely by hand using color plates; each color uses a separate plate, and the black plate (outline plate) is printed last. Thanks to this printing method, the paintings can be "produced" in large quantities and do not require sophisticated skills. However, because they are printed manually on woodblocks, the paintings are limited in size, usually not exceeding 50 cm on each side.

The colors used in the paintings are natural colors derived from plants and herbs, such as black made from charcoal of the acacia tree or bamboo leaves, green from copper rust or indigo leaves, yellow from pagoda tree flowers, red from cinnabar, and other hardwoods. These are fairly basic colors, not mixed together. Because the number of colors corresponds to the number of woodblock prints, Dong Ho paintings usually only use about four colors.

With their bold and simple lines, Dong Ho paintings reflect the simple, innocent, and genuine life and desires of ordinary people. Previously, these paintings... Dong Ho paintings are mainly sold to serve the Lunar New Year celebration. Rural people buy the paintings to paste on their walls, then remove them at the end of the year and buy new ones the following year.

- Hang Trong paintings are primarily produced in Hang Trong Street (Hanoi). The woodblocks only print the basic motifs in black ink on a white background. Once the black ink dries, the artist uses a brush to add color. Therefore, Hang Trong paintings are called white paintings. This style of painting demonstrates the adoption of Chinese painting in both content and technique. Hang Trong paintings were favored by the feudal intellectual class because their themes were within a certain framework feudal aesthetics East Asian in style, with delicate lines and tight composition. Although somewhat elaborate, Hang Trong paintings are primarily created by folk artisans (both the painting process and the selling of the paintings).

Besides the two types of paintings mentioned above, there are several other types of paper paintings throughout the country, each with its own distinct and unique style: Kim Hoang paintings (Hoai Duc district, Ha Tay - Hanoi) painted on red paper, known as red paintings; and paintings from Lang Sinh and Lang Chuon villages near Hue city, depicting human figures, known as devotional paintings, used only for rituals and then burned according to old customs.

⁹ The shells of scallops (a type of thin-shelled sea shell) are crushed and mixed with a paste (made from rice flour, glutinous rice flour , or sometimes tapioca flour , usually cooked until thin). This paste is then brushed onto the surface of dó paper using a pine needle brush, creating a base for paintings. The pine needle brush creates streaks along the brushed lines, and the natural scallop shells give the paper a shimmering white color under light . Other colors can be added to the paste during the scallop paper-making process.

Folk paper paintings are grouped by theme, including: devotional paintings (also called spiritual paintings), illustrations of folk tales, historical illustrations, paintings reflecting everyday life, and celebratory paintings.

Silk paintings are created on traditional silk fabric frames that are thin, fine, and smooth. With their ethereal lines, silk paintings primarily reflect the essence and soul of the artwork rather than focusing on detailed descriptions.

Silk paintings are easily damaged over time, so very few classic works remain. The most notable surviving silk painting is the portrait of Nguyen Trai, worshipped at Nhi Khe communal house (Ha Dong, Hanoi).

Recently, a new style of embroidery has emerged in Da Lat (Lam Dong province) under the brand name XQ. With its unique creativity and diverse themes, this style of embroidery has spread to many provinces and cities across the country and holds high economic and artistic value.

Many unique styles of folk art still circulate, such as mosaics made from various materials (wood mosaics, matchstick mosaics, toothpick mosaics, mosaics made from seeds, etc.), sand art, and more.

Regarding sculpture, the art of sculpture is practiced on many materials: stone, wood, terracotta, bronze... From the simple carvings on the cave walls of Dong Noi (Hoa Binh - Phu Tho) and the stone forests of Sapa (Lao Cai) to the Buddha statues, stone steles, and decorative objects in temples and shrines recently, these demonstrate the long development process of Vietnamese stone carving art.

The bronze drums and jars from the Dong Son period, the temple bells, and the Buddha statues from the Ly and Tran dynasties not only affirm the level of bronze casting but also serve as evidence of a highly skilled bronze carving art of the Vietnamese people .

The art of relief sculpture – mosaic of ceramics and glass (also known as ceramic and glass mosaic art) – leaves behind unique and deeply impressive works. The main materials are lime mortar made from tree resin, slag, and shells fired into lime, ceramics, and glass. Relief sculptures are created on the roofs, eaves, sides of steps, and entrances of classical architectural structures .



Image 33: Relief sculpture of a unicorn
Source: Author



Image 34: Relief sculpture of a dragon-horse
Source: Author

Along with carving and mother-of-pearl inlay, the art of relief sculpting and ceramic mosaic has showcased the talent and creativity of Vietnamese folk artisans.

5.2.2. Recreating reality through music, sound , and stylized movements.

Sounds in life are incredibly diverse. Each sequence of sounds can evoke a particular object or phenomenon in life. However, to recreate the "overall picture" of life through sound, only music, with its unique function as an artistic medium, can accomplish this.

Recreating reality through musical sound means using sounds with pitch, duration, rhythm, and timbre to build artistic imagery. Listeners can visualize the reality of life through the auditory channel (hearing).

In this mode of communication, the artist (the coder) and the listener (the receiver and decoder) must be equipped with the same reasoning system.

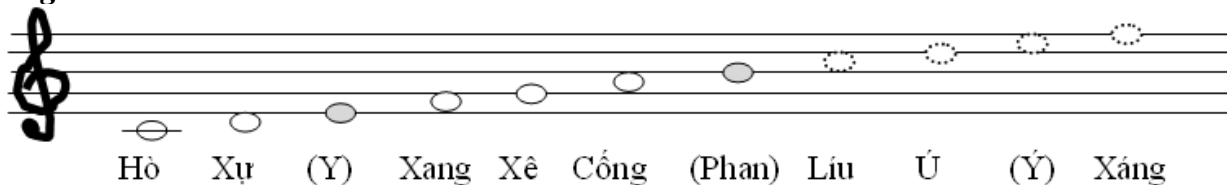
Stylized movement is a common form of human activity on stage. Animals in general often have a need for activity, and each movement aims to achieve a certain purpose. Alternatively, human activities can imitate or mimic the movements of another object. The imitation or mimicry doesn't necessarily have to be an exact replica, but primarily aims to express the object's intention. This is the beginning of stylized thinking in theatrical art.

The method of recreating reality through sound, music, and stylized movements reflects the holistic nature of traditional Vietnamese theatrical art. Therefore, we can group folk singing and dancing together under the name of folk music and performance .

5.2.2.1. Folk music

+ Characteristics of scales and modes: Based on the study of pronunciation and natural auditory perception, musicologists have discovered that the natural intervals suitable for human voices on Earth are relatively similar (a perfect fourth, a perfect fifth, an octave). Accordingly, the mainstream scale in Vietnamese folk music is the pentatonic scale.

Traditional Vietnamese pentatonic scale It consists of 5 sounds: *hồ, xư, xang, xê, công* .



This pentatonic scale also appeared very early in the music of East Asian countries. The pentatonic scale in traditional Vietnamese music is called the Bắc melody, in traditional Chinese music it is called the Cháng cung điệu, in Korean music it is called the Bình điệu, and in Japanese it is called the Rīg su.

Today, the most common pentatonic scale (without semitones) consists of three major notes (tritones): *C, F, and G*. Music in some ethnic groups also features less common pentatonic scales (i.e., with semitones) such as: *C, D-flat, F, G, A-flat, C* (South Indian classical mode, Japanese Ku moi yo shi mode) or *C, E, F, G, B*. (Tay folk songs, Central Highlands folk songs, Southern Vietnamese folk songs). Vietnamese A Dao singing still preserves the art of performing five scales: Bac, Nam, Huynh, Nao, Pha ¹⁰. This naming convention is intended to distinguish the differences between the pentatonic scales in traditional Vietnamese music and the Chinese pentatonic scales when performing and creating melodies.

¹⁰ (Northern scale - G (gade) is suitable for a firm, cheerful, and vigorous nature. Southern scale - A (acdeg) is suitable for a soft, melancholic nature. Southern scale - C (dega) is suitable for a bright and vibrant nature. Southern scale - D (degac) is suitable for a graceful and gentle nature. Southern scale - E (egacd) is suitable for a semi-muffled nature.)

While the pentatonic scale in folk music of many countries around the world may be stable in uncommon forms, the pentatonic scale in Vietnamese folk music has many variations. These variations are close to the pentatonic scales of many countries around the world (for example, the *C, D-flat, E* system ; the *C, D-flat, D, E-flat* system ; the *E, F, G, A-flat* system ; *the A, B-flat, B, C* system). In other words , the basic scale systems common to all of humanity can be found in Vietnamese folk music.

The scale of the mode (especially the mode) in Vietnamese folk music has contributed to reflecting nature, life , and the emotions of ordinary people. The highly expressive artistic imagery in the music is due to the skill and aesthetic awareness of the creators. Folk music works have demonstrated the ability of folk artists to vividly and authentically recreate nature and society.

Research and collection of folk art in our country involves many sectors with a high level of awareness aimed at preserving national culture. However, researchers in this field still feel unsatisfied. Regarding music, current folk music resources do not fully reflect the essence of national music. Understandably, most prehistoric music has not survived to this day. In reality, some information related to prehistoric music is often in the form of predictions, anecdotal accounts, or legends. Furthermore , most of the current collection of traditional music consists of audio recordings and performances by contemporary artists. In addition, these recordings and audio-visual materials do not guarantee the accuracy required for music research, so the results obtained are only considered as reference data, and their scientific accuracy remains relatively low. Another issue to note is that many folk melodies and collected musical pieces are often in modified forms to cater to modern aesthetic tastes. Without utilizing multiple information channels during the collection and fieldwork process, it is difficult to avoid misconceptions about traditional folk music. In this context, research on the scale and modes in our traditional music requires time and the contributions of many disciplines to meet national and international standards of assessment.

The lack of standardized terminology and inconsistency in research methods and procedures for traditional music also creates certain difficulties for studying the scales and modes of ancient folk music.

+ Characteristics of musical instruments: Folk musical instruments are diverse, rich in timbre, and demonstrate the creativity of ordinary people in utilizing nature to craft musical instruments from ancient times. The earliest types of instruments were percussion instruments (stone xylophones, bronze drums, leather drums, etc.). The Khanh Son 12-string stone xylophone, possibly made by the ancestors of the Raglai, Ede, and Gia Rai people 2500 years ago, is assessed to follow the prehistoric folk song scale with 12 tones corresponding to 12 Western musical notes: B2 flat, C3, D3 flat, D3, E3 flat, F3, B3 flat, C4, D4 flat, D4, E4, G4 sharp.

Most traditional Vietnamese folk instruments are imprecise instruments, meaning the notes are not fixed precisely on the instrument's body. The most typical example is the single-stringed *bầu* lute, which has no frets. On the other hand, some instruments with frets (*đàn tranh*, *đàn kìm*, *đàn nguyệt*, etc.) require the frets to be raised high in order to express high and low notes, and smooth, expressive melodic embellishments through the technique of emphasis (in the *đàn tranh*, because the frets are high, the musician can ascend from the tonic note by a fifth using the emphasis technique).

Traditional folk musical instruments were used not only in artistic activities and production but also in warfare. Since ancient times, bronze drums have been considered a "treasure," partly due to their multi-functional nature.

Currently, there is no consensus on the criteria for classifying musical instruments; for the sake of uniformity, we can tentatively divide them as follows:

- Based on the materials used in their construction (material system), we have stone musical instruments, bronze musical instruments, leather musical instruments, wooden musical instruments, bamboo musical instruments, leaf musical instruments, etc.

- Based on the method of performance (sound-producing movements), we have percussion instruments, plucked instruments, bowed instruments, wind instruments, and strumming instruments, etc.

Folk musical instruments also reflect a prominent characteristic of Vietnamese civilization: plant-based civilization. Plant species (vines, bamboo stems, trees), and parts of plants (stems, leaves, roots, fruits) are all used to make musical instruments with simple names: *bầu lute*, *gáo lute*, bamboo flute, leaf trumpet, bamboo clapper... Due to the natural nature of the materials used, the sound and timbre of these plant-based musical instruments are also very natural and expressive.

5.2.2.2. Folk Performances

To address the difficulties in classifying folk performances, we divide this category into two levels: level 1 folk performances and level 2 folk performances ; the division is mainly based on the structure of the performance genres and the form and scale of the performance organization.

- + Level 1 Folk Performances: Level 1 performances are forms of performance with low or no organizational structure. These are forms of expressing emotions and feelings associated with natural spaces such as rice fields, rivers, mountains, festivals, and traditional craft villages. This type of performance includes: chanting, rhyming, singing, reciting, folk dances, and festival dances.

- *Folk songs and rhymes*: These performance forms emphasize tone and rhythm, with lyrics that can be flexibly pieced together. Folk songs and rhymes are genres closely associated with the working lives of ordinary people, directly expressing their thoughts and feelings in a natural and authentic way .

- *Singing*: This form of performance emphasizes both lyrics and music. Compared to folk songs and rhymes , singing is more complete and structured in terms of composition and composition. Folk singing is very rich in themes and melodies.

For the most part, chants, rhymes, and songs are classified as folk songs. Vietnamese folk songs are divided into the following groups: *folk songs Labor* songs (boatman's songs, buffalo herding songs, lullabies, weaving songs, rice planting songs, trading songs... rice pounding songs, rice planting songs, wood pulling songs, water scooping songs... net pulling songs, boat rowing songs, pole pushing songs...), folk songs of emotional *exchange* (call-and-response songs, love songs including folk songs like "giam," "vi," "quan ho," "trong quan," etc.), *folk songs Lyrical* songs are those that express personal thoughts and feelings (e.g., "ho mai nhi," "ho mai day," "ho mai dua"). In addition, there are folk songs about nature, beliefs, and so on.

Singing is often used to refer to a form of performance that emphasizes both lyrics and music, as described. In addition, Vietnamese music also includes various forms of chanting and recitation, considered distinctive genres with regional characteristics ¹¹. Both singing and recitation are somewhat professional forms of performance, but their melodies remain closely tied to the folk scale and mode system. In particular, the content

¹¹The North has Ca Tru, the Central region has Ca Hue, and the South has Ca Vong Co.

of most chanting and recitation genres clearly expresses the thoughts and feelings of ordinary people. Currently, chanting and recitation are classified as scholarly culture, but the folk elements and origins of these genres are undeniable.

- *Folk dance*: Folk dance is a popular artistic form in the daily life of the people. The main artistic material of folk dance is stylized movements that mimic the working life, production, fighting, and reflect the spiritual life of the people. Through the artistic imagery of folk dance, we can gain a deeper understanding of the lives of Vietnamese people in relation to history, geography, and the specific living environment of each region.

Reflecting reality is a prominent characteristic of folk dance; therefore, realism is one of its defining features. The content of the dances vividly portrays the material and spiritual life of the working people. These include forms of activity in labor and combat; feelings and thoughts expressing the aesthetic views of communities and ethnic groups, stemming from the geographical, social, customary, and religious conditions of each ethnic group. The artistic imagery and rhythms in folk dances all originate from real life. Therefore, folk dances are very close to the lives of ordinary people and are naturally accepted and enjoyed by a large number of working people.

The talent and creativity of the artisans have given folk dance a unique artistic identity, deeply rooted in national traditions. Through stylized techniques, even without props, the artisans can help viewers visualize images from real life. The movements in activities such as weaving, rowing, playing gongs, and drumming are considered typical examples of this technique.

In the treasure trove of Vietnamese dance art, especially folk dance, the various ethnic groups have collectively contributed and left behind a rich and valuable dance heritage for future generations (Vietnam has 54 ethnic groups living together, and almost every ethnic group has its own folk dances). Folk dance is therefore very diverse, reflecting the unique identity of each ethnic group.

Compared to folk dances from other countries around the world (such as Western folk dance, for example), even considering only the "intensity" (strength, gentleness) and rhythm (fast, slow), Vietnamese folk dance has fundamental differences. While the rhythm and tempo of Western folk dance tend to be fast and strong, Vietnamese folk dance is somewhat slower and gentler. This difference in expression plays a significant role in conveying the aesthetic and emotional nuances of the art of dance, thereby showcasing the national artistic identity.

On the other hand, this difference may be due to Europe's cold climate, the rapid shift towards industry and services, and the somewhat hectic and vibrant pace of life. This leads to the conclusion that geographical and living conditions are important prerequisites for the emergence of art in general and dance in particular on a global scale.

In terms of expression, folk dance is also very diverse. Folk dance can be divided into many types according to different criteria. Based on the content and characteristics of the performance space, folk dance can be divided into two groups: *It reflects daily life* and *religious dances performed during festivals*.

- *Dance reflects everyday life*:

Stylized from real life, Vietnamese folk dance currently preserves many dances that vividly depict the working life and daily activities of ordinary people. Dances on this theme account for the largest number. Therefore, it can be said that Vietnamese dance clearly reflects agricultural life. For example, rice harvesting dance, boat rowing dance, weaving dance, shrimp catching dance, and fishing dance using lanterns...

Vietnamese life is closely connected to rivers and waterways, so rowing is a very common movement in folk dances. The forms of labor on the water involve different techniques and methods; the terrain and water currents vary across regions; and life on rivers and in coastal areas also differs. Therefore, in Vietnam, rowing dances are very diverse, rich, and vary in intensity and rhythm.

In general, dance reflects daily life, vividly expressing the love of life, love of work, love of nature, etc., of agricultural communities.

• *Religious dances in festivals:*

Religious dance is the most captivating form of folk dance. It reflects the spiritual life of working people and is quite common in the cultural activities of many ethnic groups.

Religious dances are often associated with various rituals. The movements and gestures of the dancers both express the spiritual life of people (praying for protection and blessings from deities, heaven, Buddha, etc.) and reflect the interactions between people, between people and deities, and vice versa. Religious dances create a sacred yet friendly space for people to connect with each other and with deities. This is clearly demonstrated in forms such as: the Mỡi dance, the Mo dance, the Sắc bủa dance (Muong people); the tung củn dance in the Lủng Tủng festival, the Then dance, the hunting dance, the Chiềng dance (gong dance) (Tay people); the Vủng dance, the Kinpangthen religious dance (Thai people); dances in the Initiation ceremony, wedding and funeral singing and dancing, the New Year's dance (Dao people); dances in the Chằ Vằ festival, dances in the Bủng ceremony (Cham people); fire dance (Pằ Thẻn people); The Khmer people have shaman dances, drum dances for moon worship ceremonies, and cotton rope dances; the Lao people have the Lam Vủng dance... The Vietnamese have the Do dance (associated with the worship of Tan Vien), the Dam dance (associated with the worship of Ly Thuong Kiet), the flag dance for mock battles (in the Hoa Lu festival), the boat rowing dance (associated with the worship of the generals of the Trung Sisters), and the Xoan singing and dancing in the Hung Temple festival...

Spirit possession dance, also known as trance dance, is a unique form of folk religious dance of the Vietnamese people. This type of dance has existed and developed during the formation of the Mother Goddess worship tradition and the Mother Goddess religion in Vietnam.

The worship of the Mother Goddess is not only found in Northern Vietnam but also in Central and Southern Vietnam. The spirit medium dance is a part of the festival and ritual program of the Mother Goddess religion. According to folk beliefs, the uniqueness of the spirit medium dance lies in the miraculous merging of the human body (in the role of the male or female medium) and the spirit of the deities. This reflects the common people's imagination about the close relationship between humans and deities, to the point of being able to blend together. This imagination makes the dance movements in the spirit medium dance free and unrestrained, setting the stage for the emotional transcendence of the performers during the performance.

Spirit medium dance is a type of solo dance but must portray multiple characters with different spirit possessions. Therefore, in addition to "talent" and "spirit mediumship" (psychological factors), the dancer must meticulously practice techniques and skills to succeed in the performance. At the "peak moment" (the moment when people believe the spirits are possessing the medium), improvisation is expressed at a high level, and spontaneous movements are performed brilliantly. At this time, spirit medium dance is elevated to a higher level, in a state of "ecstasy" for the artist. This is

what makes this genre unique. It should also be noted that the main factor leading to success at the "peak moment" is the human ability to perceive and perform, not external control (i.e., divine intervention).

The appeal of spirit medium dance stems from many reasons, primarily religious belief and the captivating artistry of the performance. Furthermore, spirit medium dance takes place in a very special environment: the vibrant sounds of musical instruments, incense smoke, and solemn atmosphere create objective conditions that stimulate the performer's "transcendence" and guide the audience towards focused appreciation. The music in spirit medium dance is very unique. Although the volume is not loud (due to the use of small-sized instruments), the melodies and rhythms create a very strong exhilarating effect.

The people of Southern Vietnam have the Búng Rỗi and Chặp Địa-Nàng dances. These are comprehensive performance forms encompassing singing, dancing, music, and theatrical acts, often performed during ceremonies at temples dedicated to female deities. Búng Rỗi and Chặp Địa-Nàng are two of the rituals commonly seen at the Bà Chúa Xứ festival (Châu Đốc, An Giang). In Búng Rỗi and Chặp Địa-Nàng, the characters performing the rituals include the female spirit medium, the earth god, and the fairy maiden.

Over time, religious dances not only appeared during festivals but also expanded their scope, becoming one of the cultural activities of the people, organized by individuals themselves.

In general, folk dance has an open structure and is always incorporating new elements. The open structure of folk dance means it is always ready to receive innovations, additions, or adjustments for greater perfection. Because of its openness, folk dance is constantly enriched and supplemented with new creations from successive generations, aiming to satisfy the cultural needs of ethnic communities. These new elements, accepted, preserved, and used by the people, become part of the national cultural heritage and serve as the foundation for subsequent creations by future generations. Respecting this also means accepting folk dance creation as a product of the majority of the people, from many regions and across many eras.

Although the structure and scale of folk dance performances vary, a readily apparent commonality is their aim to express human thoughts and feelings, thereby upholding the traditional moral values of the nation. These values are preserved and endure among the people. These include love for one's homeland, respect for morality, and loyalty.

Folk dance heritage plays a crucial role in the development of professional dance. The contributions of folk dance throughout history, with the participation of many generations, have enriched and perfected Vietnamese dance art.

- Gongs and drums – a distinctive form of folk performance (level 1)

The figures of drummers carved on the Dong Son bronze drums resemble the gong-playing gestures of many ethnic groups today; and based on the markings on the bronze drums (sacred objects on which only the most valuable things are engraved), scientists estimate that gongs appeared about 4,000 years ago. Regarding their origins, researchers believe that gongs are "descendants" of stone instruments following an "evolutionary process": stone gongs, stone cymbals, bamboo cymbals, followed by bronze gongs, bronze cymbals...

Compared to other countries in the region, we see that the gong-playing style in Vietnam is still "very primitive," with each person playing their own gong, not yet

forming a ensemble performed by a single artist as in Thailand, Malaysia, Laos, and Cambodia. The shape of the gongs has also not developed into drum-like forms (i.e., gongs with square or round bases).

Since ancient times, gongs and cymbals have been inextricably linked to the lives of the people of the Vietnamese highlands. In their spiritual lives, gongs and cymbals are a means for people to communicate with supernatural forces. For the people of the Central Highlands, each gong and cymbal is associated with a deity. These deities have their own lives and possess supernatural powers. These divine beings can bring happiness and prosperity, but they can also bring misfortune to the entire village.

In the Central Highlands, gongs are both the "voice" of the people and the voice of the spirits. In daily life, gongs are present in life cycle rituals or important community events. The gongs in the ear-piercing ceremony celebrate a baby's official entry into the community; in wedding ceremonies, they congratulate the young couple on their future together, their happiness, and their remembrance of their ethnic traditions. In health-blessing ceremonies, gongs wish the elderly good health and long life with their descendants. In funeral ceremonies, gongs bid farewell to a deceased family member. In burial ceremonies, gongs expel a spirit from the community, hoping for its early reincarnation. In battle, gongs encourage warriors fighting against enemies and wild animals that threaten the village. In celebratory festivals, gongs express joy at a bountiful harvest and jubilation at victory over the enemy. Sometimes, the sound of the gongs expresses the community's anxiety when facing risks or disasters such as natural calamities, crop failures, or epidemics.

Currently, gongs have been recognized for their value on both anthropological and musicological levels. Through research on the correlation of pitches, methods of harmonic arrangement, amplification, and performance art, researchers have "affirmed the richness, uniqueness, and diversity of the Central Highlands gong art, from its entirety to its individual parts. From types, methods of amplification, composition, and scales to the system of pieces and performance art, we encounter a multifaceted artistic spectrum: from simple to complex, from few to many, from linear to multi-linear... Within it, we will also see the historical layers of the musical development process ¹². "



Image 32: The gong and drum team of the Chơ ro ethnic group, Đồng Nai
Source: Author

¹²"The cultural heritage of the Central Highlands' gong culture".
<http://www.cinet.gov.vn/chuyendevh/congchieng/taynguyen.htm>

Gongs are found throughout the Northwest and Truong Son mountain ranges. The people of the Central Highlands do not manufacture these instruments themselves; instead, they acquire them from the Kinh people (usually from the former Quang Nam region) and then adapt the sound to their own unique style. Even the "Lao gongs" used by the Central Highlands are not made in Laos but through trade or commerce with the Vietnamese. This shows that the Central Highlands gongs have a very close relationship with the Muong-Vietnamese gongs.

Due to its creative values of global significance, on November 15, 2005, the Central Highlands Gong Culture was recognized by UNESCO as a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage. A Central Highlands Gong Culture cultural space has been established, spanning five former provinces: Kon Tum , Gia Lai , Dak Lak , Dak Nong , and Lam Dong . The subjects of this cultural space are ethnic groups closely associated with the Central Highlands mountains and forests, such as the Ede , Ba Na , Stieng, Mo Nong, Ma , and Lach.

The constituent elements of the Central Highlands Gong Culture Space include: gongs, gong music, gong performers, gong festivals (New Rice Festival, Water Worship Festival, etc.), and festival spaces characteristic of the Central Highlands (longhouses, communal houses, gr̄ol houses, burial houses, water sources, forests near Central Highlands villages, etc.).

Currently, the gong festival is held annually with the participation of numerous gong ensembles from across the Truong Son - Tay Nguyen region to honor ethnic cultural values and promote tourism.

+ Level 2 Folk Performance: Level 2 performances are forms of performance that are organized systematically and in a structured manner. These are forms of expressing emotions and feelings in a space that is reorganized in a way that recreates the real space or is theatricalized. According to this understanding, folk theatrical genres are classified as Level 2 performances.

But Traditional Vietnamese opera (Cheo) stage: As a form of art Vietnamese folk theater originated and developed in the Northern Delta region . Cheo has its roots in folk singing and dancing . Cheo singing gradually became widespread, popular among the people, and became a popular form of folk singing.

Cheo singing comprises three main styles: spoken dialogue, historical dialogue, and unspoken dialogue. The dialogues use everyday language but convey profound meanings.

This is a form of art that synthesizes many elements of folk art: folk songs , folk dances , and other art forms from the Northern Delta region. It is a form of storytelling through theater, using the stage and actors as a means of interacting with the public, and can be performed spontaneously.

This theatrical form is highly developed and rich in national character. If traditional Chinese theater is represented by Peking Opera (originating from Beijing) and Japanese theater by Noh drama, then the most representative form of traditional Vietnamese theater is Cheo.

Cheo theater reflects many aspects of life, with themes of moral significance. The plots are mainly taken from fairy tales and Nôm stories; the songs and dances are from folk songs and dances; and the lyrics are primarily folk poetry. From these fairy tales and Nôm stories, Cheo's content is elevated to a higher level through theatrical art, possessing profound realism and thought. In Cheo, good always triumphs over evil. Characters such

as kind and gentle scholars pass their exams and become officials; and virtuous wives, despite facing many hardships and difficulties, ultimately live happily with their husbands.

Cheo plays are rich in lyrical content, expressing personal emotions and feelings, and reflecting common human concerns: love, friendship, and compassion. The moral principles of the people, particularly the spirit of humanism, are profoundly expressed in Cheo plays.

Characters in Cheo (Vietnamese traditional opera) are often conventional, standardized, and stereotypical. The personalities of Cheo characters usually remain unchanged when portrayed in the same role. However, over time, some characters such as Thi Kinh , Thi Mau , Thiet The , and Suy Van have broken free from this conventionality and become characters with distinct personalities. Most supporting characters do not have individual names due to repetition in other plays or changing roles. They may be called teachers, wealthy landowners, prime ministers, scholars, clowns, etc.

Generally, Chèo actors are amateurs who gather in folk art organizations called Chèo troupes or troupes. Their roles, such as Quan Am Thi Kinh, Huong Cam, the Blind Teacher, the Deaf Man, etc., recreate ironic and humorous scenes of life, aiming to satirize the vices and bad habits of society. The "clown" in Chèo is a unique artistic figure with a high fighting spirit. Courage, honesty, intelligence, sharp wit, cleverness, and respect for righteousness and affection are the attributes that make up the value of the Chèo clown. The clown is allowed to freely mock characters representing various social classes. The vices and bad habits of feudal society (including the king, officials, and those with power and wealth in the village) are all brought to the Chèo stage. There are two main types of Chèo clowns: those wearing long robes and those wearing short robes.

The stage for traditional Vietnamese Cheo theater is simple, usually consisting of large mats spread out on the village communal house courtyard; this is where terms like "courtyard Cheo" and "mat Cheo" originated. Cheo art focuses on key elements such as drama, narrative, methods of character portrayal, and stylized and conventional nature.

Cheo theater uses many folk songs in the lục bát (six- eight) meter , but with a free and unrestrained style. Some sections also incorporate classical Chinese poetry with allusions. Cheo theater does not follow a fixed structure (as in European theater), allowing artists to improvise. Therefore, the length of a Cheo play depends on the artist's inspiration or the audience's demands. During performances, Cheo artists do not necessarily adhere to the script but are free to *change the melody and rhythm* to express the character's emotions. It is estimated that there are over 200 Cheo melodies today.

Chèo performances utilize at least two stringed instruments: the two-stringed fiddle (đàn nhị) and the moon-shaped lute (đàn nguyệt); sometimes a flute is added. In addition, musicians also use cymbals and drums . A complete percussion set includes a large drum, a small drum, a rice drum, a gong, and a wooden block (mõ). The small drum is used to keep the rhythm for singing and dancing, and to accompany the lyrics. A common saying among the people is, "Without drums, Chèo is incomplete," reflecting the importance of the drum in a Chèo performance.

Modern Cheo opera incorporates other instruments to enrich the accompaniment, such as the moon lute, the sixteen-stringed lute, the thirty-six-stringed lute, the flute, etc.

- *Traditional Vietnamese Opera Stage*: Tuong singing, also known as Hat Bo or Hat Boi, is a style of singing accompanied by dance and movement on stage. A prominent characteristic of Tuong singing is its conventional and symbolic nature.

Initially, Vietnamese court opera was closely associated with the lives of officials in the royal court. The content of Vietnamese court operas was taken from Chinese historical texts. The makeup, stage design, dance movements, dialogue, and singing styles were all influenced by Chinese acting. This type of opera is called Pho opera or Teacher opera. Although there are many differing opinions on the origins of the Tuong genre, it is easy to see that Tuong singing in the Vietnamese feudal court was influenced by the opera genre of Chinese theater.

Later, as Vietnamese opera became more widespread, Vietnamese songs and prose-style dialogues were added. The themes of operas performed in villages were taken from folk tales or from real life in the countryside. This trend made opera closer to folk opera and more familiar to ordinary people. From this, a new type of opera emerged, popularly known as Tuong Do.

Like Cheo, Tuong Do is an art form that has an educational effect on morality and ethics.

- *Puppet stage:* Water puppetry is a theatrical art form that originated from agricultural life. Its creators were farmers living near ponds, lakes, and rice fields. According to researchers, it appeared during the Ly Dynasty, around the 11th or early 12th century.

Water puppetry has characteristics different from traditional puppetry. The water puppet stage is usually located within the confines of a pond. The pond's edge is reserved for the audience. In the middle of the pond is a two-story building, designed like a miniature temple, called the Water Pavilion. The upper floor is for worshipping the ancestors, while the lower floor, enclosed by a curtain, houses the puppeteers and their control room. The technical equipment is hidden underwater. The area surrounding the Water Pavilion is decorated with flags, fans, elephants, canopies, and gates made of paper effigies... The surface of the pond serves as the stage, on which puppets (made of wood) move thanks to the control of people standing behind the puppet booth via a system of poles and strings... Water puppet performances are incomplete without the sounds of drums and applause.

Teu the Jester is a distinctive artistic figure in water puppetry.

Water puppetry can depict all aspects of life, but it is most impressive when set against a backdrop of rivers and water. The treasure trove of Vietnamese water puppetry includes over 30 traditional performances and hundreds of modern puppet shows that tell folk tales and depict the daily lives of Vietnamese people in the Red River Delta (for example, the puppet troupe of Nguyen Xa commune, Dong Hung district, Thai Binh province (Hung Yen province) has performances such as: Flag Raising, Fairy Dance, Fox Fighting, Rope Swinging, Plowing-Harrowing-Hoc Hoeing, Scholar-Farmer-Artisan-Commerce, Four Classes of People, Fishing, Lion Dance, Rope Climbing Dance, Sword Fighting, Quan Am Thi Kinh, Dinh Tien Hoang...; the puppet troupe of Chang Son commune, Sai Son district, Quoc Oai, Ha Tay province (Hanoi province) has performances such as: Pulling the Army, Horse Racing, Horse Riding and Banana Cutting, Duck Herding, Frog Catching, Pole Climbing, Swinging, Plowing-Harrowing-Planting, Rice Milling, Rice Pounding, Ladder Climbing, Buffalo Herding and Kite Flying, Dragon Spitting Water...)

Water puppetry is often performed during the Lunar New Year or other Vietnamese festivals.

Table 11: Classification of performance forms in relation to folk and scholarly art.

Category Part	Folk songs and rhymes	Sing	Ca	Soak
Folklore	Traditional folk songs and rhymes	Folk songs (Lượn, Quan Họ, Ví Dặm, ...) Military drums Singing at the temple gate Cheo singing Traditional Vietnamese opera	The story is told in a hoarse voice. Bài Chòi singing	ϕ
Folklore + Scholarly	ϕ	ϕ	Ca Tru Hue folk songs Traditional Vietnamese folk songs	Desert Hue Tao Dan
Learned	ϕ	Traditional Vietnamese Opera (Tuong) and Royal Court Opera	Ca Thai (Traditional Vietnamese Music)	ϕ

5.2.2.3. Martial arts – a unique form of dance art.

In the classification of art forms compiled by Western aesthetic researchers, martial arts are not included. This is obvious because Western fighting art differs from Eastern fighting art. Furthermore, the fighting art of each country is also different. Vietnamese fighting art has always been closely linked to the cause of nation-building and national defense. Martial culture is always intertwined with national culture. Besides extremely powerful "secret" fighting techniques, traditional Vietnamese martial arts contain invaluable "living heritage." These are forms that mimic the spirit of mythical creatures – symbols of traditional culture such as the turtle, snake, dragon, tiger, and crane. These are highly stylized works of art that contain the underlying spiritual and cultural foundations of the Vietnamese people. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct thorough research and elevate martial arts to the status of an art form within the Vietnamese art system.

The formation and development of Vietnamese martial arts followed the natural course of the nation's history. Initially, to defend themselves, laborers had to observe wild animals to effectively counter them. From there, stances for fighting tigers, defending against and killing crocodiles, and eliminating pythons were formed and passed down through generations.

During village festivals, people often reenacted scenes of battles between humans and wild animals. Over time, competitions were organized between martial artists to improve their physical fitness and learn from each other for greater effectiveness in combat. Therefore, folk martial arts often included wrestling. Wrestling is a collection of stances that can quickly subdue an opponent. Wrestling is a form of combat but also a way to train strength, agility, intelligence, and decisiveness. Because of this, wrestling

emphasizes the training of both physical and mental abilities. Wrestling associations were common in villages. For various reasons, these associations kept their secrets and only passed on "secret" techniques to their members.

Over time, folk martial arts have absorbed and integrated many foreign martial arts styles, primarily incorporating distinctive elements from Eastern martial arts. Major Chinese martial arts schools such as Shaolin, Emei, Wudang, and Baidang, which were introduced to Vietnam, have been **Vietnamized and transformed over time**. Vietnamese martial arts masters, while remaining faithful to the original style of their schools (by preserving their names and techniques), have also strived to apply their knowledge and skills to serve the practical needs of the nation's life, including combat and production (by establishing the school's objectives and principles). This process of adaptation and innovation in techniques and weapons has gradually transformed the martial arts schools imported from China, making them a valuable part of the nation's cultural heritage.

In general, the structure of traditional Vietnamese martial arts is systematic and unified in terms of theory. Authentic schools all preserve the school's structure as an artistic entity, including: philosophical foundations, martial arts history, school history, teaching content, principles and objectives...

Philosophically, traditional Vietnamese martial arts are based on the principles of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements.

Table 12:

Ngũ Hành Criteria	THỦY (WATER)	MỘC (WOOD)	HOẢ (FIRE)	THỔ (EARTH)	KIM (NEEDLE)
Level of education	Mindfulness	Basic	Gangster	Sect	Gate
Martial arts uniform	Black	Green	Red	Yellow	White
Thieu Thao	Authority	Dragon Fist	Crane Fist	Monkey King	Tiger Fist
Attack	Winding	Long	Dance	Square	Roll
Practice	Bone	Tendon	Blood	Meat	Gas

Given its unique geographical, historical, and social position, not only individual Vietnamese people but also the entire Vietnamese nation must be prepared for self-defense. Therefore, traditional martial arts have always been closely linked to the cause of national defense. Famous generals in great wars of national defense, such as Ly Thuong Kiet, Pham Ngu Lao, Tran Quoc Tuan, Le Loi, and Nguyen Hue, were all highly skilled martial artists. Many of them honed their skills in traditional folk martial arts. This shows that traditional Vietnamese martial arts are a combination of wrestling and combat (folk martial arts and classical martial arts). Today, historical festivals often feature martial arts performances recreating the working and fighting lives of our ancestors from millennia ago. It can be said that the formation and development of national martial arts has always been intertwined with the nation's struggles; therefore, ***traditional Vietnamese fighting art is always linked to the art of national defense***. This is also a distinctive feature of Vietnamese martial arts.



Image. 35: Traditional Vietnamese Martial Arts
Source: Author

To this day, the people still play the main role in preserving and teaching traditional martial arts. Forms such as dragon form, snake form, tiger form, crane form, monkey form, leopard form... are rarely used in battle but appear frequently in folk festivals. These martial arts dances are a synthesis of many cultural elements. With the desire to give people strength, flexibility, and dexterity, our ancestors built a systematic system of forms to help martial artists train their physical, mental, and willpower to rival the intelligent animals living in a natural environment full of uncertainties and fierce competition for survival. Through the stylized movements in these forms, the characteristics of some mythical creatures (dragon, unicorn, turtle, phoenix) are vividly recreated. The system of forms that use weapons reflects the fighting spirit of our people in certain historical periods. The stances in martial arts forms that utilize weapons are also stylized and contain profound spiritual values behind the introductory verses. In general, the techniques in these forms are both highly practical and symbolic. Therefore, these forms not only have combat value but also artistic value.

Vietnamese folk martial arts, and traditional Vietnamese martial arts in general, do not indulge in purely artistic pursuits but aim towards life, towards harmony with nature (living ethically), and towards preserving the natural righteousness of life (maintaining morality). This inclination has shaped the traditional beauty of Vietnamese martial arts: valuing righteousness over wealth. Martial arts masters tend to use "**martial arts**" to cultivate "**the mind**". The awarding of ranks and the passing on of the position of Grand Master are entirely based on heart and virtue, not simply on artistic talent. Vietnamese martial arts, like Eastern martial arts, always go hand in hand with moral principles. Martial arts students learn martial arts to preserve their school, which also means upholding morality. With this essence, Vietnamese martial arts is an art that aims for truth, goodness, and beauty; an art for living well, living beautifully, and living nobly.

As an integral part of national culture, folk martial arts have contributed to shaping the nation's character in the process of building and defending the country; making the face of Vietnamese culture more vibrant and rich.

5.2.3. Recreating reality through language

Compared to folk visual arts, verbal arts have a much more continuous and enduring development process. Oral traditions, both rhyming and unrhyming, are collectively known as folk poetry and literature. Throughout the period of Chinese rule,

when visual arts were almost completely suppressed, oral literature became the primary tool used to preserve and transmit national culture. Folk poetry and literature achieved brilliant successes in both content and form partly because they were closely intertwined with the lives of the people, even during the most difficult periods of national history.

In terms of form, there are currently two ways to classify folk poetry and literature: one based on structural form and the other based on the characteristics of its reflection.

- How to classify folk poetry and literature according to their structural form:

• Rhyming verse

Four-syllable or five-syllable poems: each line has four or five syllables.

Six-eight verse: lines of 6 or 8 syllables in a continuous sequence.

Song *thất lục bát* poetry: two lines of 7 syllables followed by a line of 6 syllables, then a line of 8 syllables.

Epic poem: the number of lines can reach hundreds or thousands.

• Prose

A story has a beginning and an end.

Prayer text: the prayer recited before a religious ceremony.

- Methods of classifying folk poetry and literature according to their characteristics:

• Idioms, proverbs, folk songs

Idiom: "A pre-existing, relatively fixed, and enduring phrase, not intended to fully express an idea or observation like a proverb, but to express a concept in a vivid form" (Le Ba Han, Tran Dinh Su, Nguyen Khac Phi 1992:200).

Examples: *a mother and child are both healthy, water poured on a duck's back, playing music to a buffalo's ears...*

Proverbs: "A genre of folk literature whose main function is to summarize experience and knowledge in the form of short, concise sayings, rich in rhyme and imagery, easy to remember and transmit" (Le Ba Han, Tran Dinh Su, Nguyen Khac Phi 1992:258).

Examples: *Eat first at a feast, wade through water last. Eat wisely and you'll be full, dress wisely and you'll be warm. Proximity to ink makes you black, proximity to light makes you bright. Each house has its own light...*

Folk songs: "Folk songs are also called folk rhymes. The term folk songs is used with many different meanings, both broad and narrow. In its original meaning, 'ca' refers to a song with a melody, while 'dao' refers to a song without a melody". "Ca dao is a compound noun referring collectively to all songs that are widely circulated among the people, with or without melodies. In this case, ca dao is synonymous with folk songs... For a century now, Vietnamese folk literature researchers have used the noun ca dao to refer specifically to the verbal artistic component (the poetic lyrics) of folk songs" (Le Ba Han, Tran Dinh Su, Nguyen Khac Phi 1992:22).

For example: - *Dong Dang has Ky Lua street....*

- *The road to Nghe An province is winding...*

- *The wind sways the bamboo branches gently...*

• Proverbs, maxims, sayings

Proverbs: "Proverbs mean the sayings of the ancients. Proverbs are sayings passed down from the ancients, including proverbs of the people and valuable sayings,

beautiful and wise words of famous people and sages that are passed down by the people" (Le Ba Han, Tran Dinh Su, Nguyen Khac Phi 1992:137).

For example: - *Better to die in purity than to live in corruption; people are the flowers of the earth.*

Proverbs: "A type of short, concise saying with moral and ideological educational meaning, considered by many as a standard or model to follow and strive for. Proverbs can be drawn from the treasury of folk proverbs or from the writings and sayings of leaders, scholars, and great cultural figures" (Le Ba Han, Tran Dinh Su, Nguyen Khac Phi 1992:136).

Examples: *Good deeds are rewarded, Good wood is better than good paint, Be clean even when hungry, Be fragrant even when ragged, A son better than his father brings blessings to the family, Birds have nests, people have ancestry, Hard work pays off...*

Proverb: "Words serve to admonish the world, prevent wrongdoing, and provide guidance on thought, morality, and way of life" (Le Ba Han, Tran Dinh Su, Nguyen Khac Phi 1992:37).

Examples: *Greed leads to ruin, learning must be put into practice (learn and practice), ants build their nest over time, rain soaks the earth, silence is golden...*

- Fairy tales, epics

Fairy tales: "A type of folk tale that arose from primitive society but mainly developed in class-based societies, with the primary function of reflecting and explaining social issues and the diverse fates of people in their multifaceted lives when private property, family units, class conflicts, and intense social struggles existed" (Le Ba Han, Tran Dinh Su, Nguyen Khac Phi 1992:250).

Examples: *Tám Cám, Sọ Dừa, Thạch Sanh, Trương Chi, Cây nêu...*

Epic: "Epic, also known as heroic poem. A long narrative genre (usually poetry) that appeared very early in the history of nations to praise heroic deeds of national significance and importance to the nation in the dawn of history" (Le Ba Han, Tran Dinh Su, Nguyen Khac Phi 1992:192).

Examples: *Dam San, Xinh Nha* (Ede ethnic group), *Dam Noi* (Ba Na ethnic group)

- Folk jokes, fables

Humorous stories: "Folk humorous stories are a genre of folk tales containing humor, using laughter as the main means to perform the function of criticizing, satirizing, attacking evil and providing entertainment" (Le Ba Han, Tran Dinh Su, Nguyen Khac Phi 1992:251). Examples: *The Honest District Magistrate, The Pig's Wedding in New Clothes, The Fire, One Extra Pig...*

Fables: *Fables* are a genre of folk tales that "often use animals or objects to indirectly talk about human affairs, conveying moral or philosophical lessons in a subtle form (Examples: *The Blind Men and the Elephant, The Cat Returns to Being a Cat, etc.*)" (Le Ba Han, Tran Dinh Su, Nguyen Khac Phi 1992:150).

Folk literature consists of two main aspects: reflection and recreation. Nature and the surrounding landscape reflect and recreate social life.

- The genre reflects and recreates nature with popular themes such as:

- The topic involves observing natural phenomena (the state of the sky, moon, stars, cloud colors, etc.) to predict the weather.

- The themes describe the natural scenery of the homeland. The artistic imagery in folk works reflects the natural beauty of various regions across Vietnam.

- The theme of interacting with nature reflects an attitude of respect for nature, harmony with nature, and a spirit of courage and resilience in resisting nature's onslaught.

• The genre reflecting and recreating social life encompasses many themes, most notably the following:

- The theme of labor and production reflects the livelihood of ordinary people. The process of labor and production is vividly recreated through artistic imagery, with the laborer as the central character. Experiences in labor and production are summarized concisely for easy transmission.

- The theme of social behavior reflects relationships in social life, experiences in interpersonal relationships, and experiences in fighting against evil and wrongdoing. The awareness of building a good and happy life among ordinary people is clearly expressed in this thematic area.

- The themes of love for nature, country, life, people, and all things reflect the psychology and emotions of ordinary people. The works express the character and qualities of Vietnamese people (simple, pure, optimistic, loving people, loving the scenery...).

In general, Vietnamese folk poetry and literature truthfully and vividly reflect the nature of Vietnam as well as the lives of ordinary Vietnamese people in many aspects such as: livelihood activities, relationships and interactions with nature and society, the psychology and emotions of individuals and the community...

Recreating cultural elements reflects the creative artistic thinking of artists. Artists living in a particular era will express the artistic thinking of that era. Prehistoric artisans created works related to life in caves and scenes of hunting wild animals. Feudal artisans created works related to farming and animal husbandry, along with rural landscapes or wild grasslands...

Overall, the Vietnamese cultural reinterpretations both possess strong national characteristics and demonstrate a skillful fusion of traditional artistic creation and global artistic creation.

*** *Summary of the Reimagining Culture of the Vietnamese People:***

- Many creative artistic thinking styles are present, but few schools of thought are clearly defined. The artistic philosophy is based on the Yin-Yang principle, aiming for balance and harmony.

- Almost all six traditional art forms of humanity are present. Many traditional art genres clearly demonstrate the unique characteristics of national art.

- There is a synthesis of materials, techniques, and methods of expression.

- The tendency to use realistic techniques more than other techniques makes the content of the works rich in realism.

- Integration and creativity in the process of contact with and adaptation of imported art.

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CHAPTER 6

THE VALUE OF VIETNAMESE FOLK CULTURE

6.1. The concept of value

The concept of value is used in many fields. In each field, the meaning of the concept of value also differs. In the cultural field, when placed within specific relationships, the concept of value is also understood in different ways. For example: value and priceless, value and worthlessness; value and real value, value and virtual value; value and eternal value, ...

In the West, the term "value," in its most common understanding, encompasses the following meanings:

- is an attribute or a set of attributes of an object.
- Rated as good (or above good) and useful.
- identified through the manifestation of its attributes.

Identifying value is a complex issue. In practice, we often encounter difficulties in finding criteria for identifying value. In the field of economics alone, to distinguish between value and use value, theorists must rely on a specific philosophical perspective linked to a particular object in order to help readers understand these concepts.

On the other hand, value is not only identified through the manifestations of attributes but also depends on the process of object recognition. This process involves the following factors:

- object of identification
- time of identification
- identity space
- the observer's perspective

Therefore, identifying the value of an object requires placing it within all its real-world relationships; both in terms of its origin and its development process. Identifying the value of folk culture is no exception to this principle.

6.2. The value of folk culture from an introspective perspective

6.2.1. Folk culture preserves the system of values and cultural symbols of the nation :

+ A value system encompasses the totality of useful attributes identified across different dimensions of a cultural entity. These attributes truthfully reflect the spiritual and material life of an ethnic group. The value system of the Vietnamese common people is primarily composed of spiritual values formed within village life. These spiritual values have forged the nation's fine traditions: love for the homeland, independence, and self-reliance. National spirit leads to a sense of mastery over the nation's destiny and an awareness of Vietnamizing imported cultural phenomena; a firm resolve not to lose national identity. The national value system also includes material values created by the common people, reflecting the nation's level of civilization. Material cultural products reflect the intelligence and creativity of the Vietnamese people throughout their struggle for survival and development.

+ The system of symbols includes countless symbolic images constructed according to aesthetic emotions, reflecting various aspects of the life of the cultural subjects. The system of symbols in Vietnamese folk culture vividly portrays the spiritual and material life of the ethnic groups in the great Vietnamese family. Symbols of material life such as chopsticks, a tray of food, women's aprons and skirts, men's loincloths, conical hats, ao

dai (traditional Vietnamese dress), ao ba ba (traditional Vietnamese blouse), rice wine, rice wine, boats, bamboo bridges...; symbols of spiritual life such as the Five Elements flag, the Five Tigers amulet for warding off evil spirits, bronze drums, the bầu lute, the đày lute, the t'rung lute, the concave-fretted guitar, the gongs of the Central Highlands... have become familiar to the Vietnamese people.



Image. 36: Festival flags have 5 colors (five-colored flags)
Source: Author

Theoretically, value systems and symbolic systems are the result of a process of refinement and sublimation from real life. Therefore, value systems and symbolic systems are fundamental components that shape the character and appearance of Vietnamese folk culture in particular and Vietnamese culture in general.

In practical terms, the process of forming, preserving, and protecting the value system and symbolic system has created the inner strength of Vietnamese folk culture, helping the Vietnamese people to strongly resist the encroachment of other cultures that have been imposed on Vietnam.

Within the symbolic system of folk culture lies the immense creativity of the nation, serving as a foundation for the process of national cultural renewal.

6.2.2. Folk culture contributes to the formation of national cultural identity.

+ *The concept of cultural identity:* The concept of identity is explained relatively consistently in Sino-Vietnamese dictionaries. According to the dictionary definition, "bản" means origin, something belonging to oneself, the root of all things; "sắc" means color, appearance, countenance; identity also has another meaning: inherent special qualities. The word "sắc" in the concept of identity also implies beauty that others admire. In life, when talking about identity, people tend to refer to the positive aspects rather than the negative ones. Saying "preserving national cultural identity" means focusing on preserving the good aspects. Pointing out the opposite aspects of identity is a methodological approach to clarify the issue. In English-Vietnamese dictionaries, the word identity means uniformity. Uniformity creates the identity of an object.

Based on the meanings mentioned above, we can draw some noteworthy points about the content of the term "identity" as follows:

- Identity is linked to the process of the object's formation and development.
- Identity is expressed through uniformity across a range of things and phenomena.
- Identity contains unique characteristics that allow one to recognize the appearance and nature of an object.

- Identity tends towards homogenization, so it's not about individual details; therefore, the more generalized an object is, the easier it is to understand its identity.
- Identity, in its original sense, encompasses the good and the positive rather than the negative.

Based on the survey, we have established several procedures for identifying the identity of the research subject as follows:

Table 13: Procedures for determining the content of identity (through the research subject)

Compare, compare	Ontological survey		
	Specificity (has its own unique characteristics)	Homogeneity (popular)	Permanence, stability (common, repeated)
IDENTITY			

Defining the conceptual meaning of identity provides us with the most general framework for defining the essential attributes of an object. In cultural studies, mastering the essential attributes of a culture is also the first step in grasping its identity. Of course, all our efforts can only approach cultural identity in an *approximate way* ; it is difficult to achieve *absolute accuracy* .

The concept of identity encompasses criteria sufficient to consider the "unique character" of a culture. Cultural identity is expressed on both tangible and intangible levels. However, cultural identity is not concrete objects or phenomena (i.e., tangible culture), nor is it methods related to medicine, cuisine, music, painting, etc. (i.e., intangible culture). Cultural identity lies within the consciousness of the cultural subject; it is **the way of life, the way of thinking, and the behavior** of the community in the face of historical and social reality. According to author Phan Ngoc, " *unchanging goals* constitute cultural identity, not different expressions of choices."

Cultural identity is a synthesis of the practical development of a culture. Therefore, the meaning of cultural identity is highly generalized. For this reason, we should not explain the term "cultural identity" by using other general concepts with corresponding meanings as a substitute.

Considering both material and non-material culture, cultural identity is classified as non-material culture. Cultural identity belongs to non-material culture and is not identical to intangible culture. This is because intangible culture contains both material and non-material cultural elements. Cultural identity influences and guides both material and non-material culture. This dominant relationship is not a relationship between the external and the internal, but rather an intrinsic relationship. It can be tentatively called the relationship between the center and the boundary. Cultural identity is at the center. If the center changes, the boundary changes, and vice versa (Diagram 3).

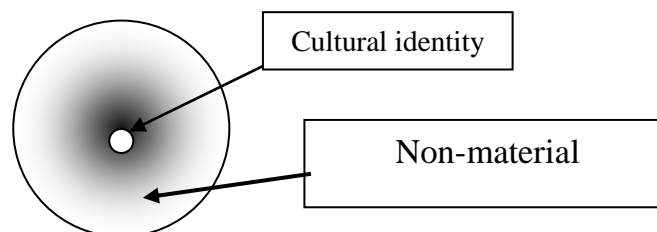


Diagram 3: Cultural identity in relation to intangible culture

There is an organic relationship between cultural identity and intangible culture, but in the process of human creation, considered along the timeline, cultural identity is the permanent, the primary element. Cultural identity is latent and pervasive, the governing and guiding force for both intangible and material culture .

Cultural identity is not immutable. It is something intrinsically linked to the subject, existing within a specific space and time. All three elements-space, time, and subject are constantly in motion; therefore, cultural identity is also constantly evolving. Because of this understanding, concepts like "immutable" and "enduring" are used cautiously when discussing cultural identity. We agree with this view because cultural identity should be the least changeable; if it changes continuously and in contradictory directions, then that culture becomes devoid of identity. Cultural identity cannot be immutable because, in reality, most cultures around the world have "transformed" their identity through the process of interaction and assimilation. We say "transformed" because this is an internal movement, a process that brings about very subtle and natural changes in the subject's perspective and thinking. Transformation in a way that aligns with the world is a positive transformation. It allows the subject to always have a new appearance without losing its own identity. Cultural identity cannot be immutable because many cultures have lost their identity before being destroyed or assimilated.

Cultural identity consists of the most stable and least changeable elements of a culture. This stability is also only associated with a specific space and time, according to a system of norms that exist within that space and time.

Cultural identity is the sum of all the attributes that express it. The essential characteristics of national culture are formed and developed throughout the long historical process of the country. These characteristic values exist at the "foundation level," in an abstract and latent form, yet they are the most enduring. Therefore, to understand them, one must look through the myriad *cultural nuances*, which are expressions of the basic characteristics of national culture. On the other hand, if cultural identity is something abstract, latent, and enduring, then its expressive nuances are usually identified through concrete things with a certain degree of change.

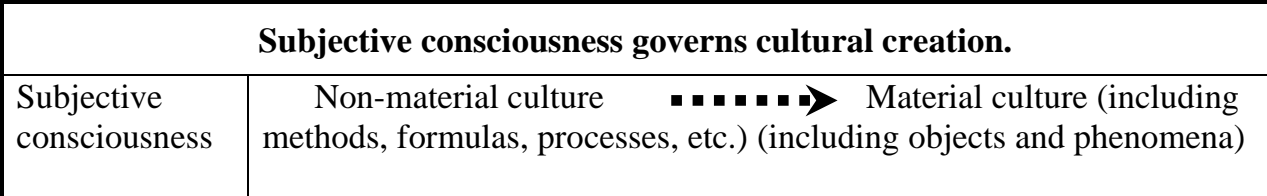


Diagram 4: Subjects in the process of cultural creation

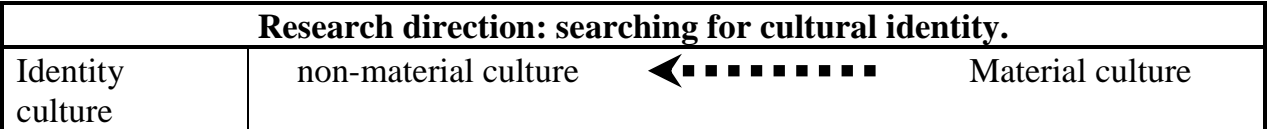


Diagram 5: Research direction, tracing cultural identity

Cultural identity is the core element that creates national identity, and national identity contributes to national character. The vitality and experience of the Vietnamese people have *created the ability to skillfully Vietnamize foreign cultures during the process of cultural exchange and transformation* , thanks to which the Vietnamese nation can stand firm and endure in the face of the harsh challenges of history.

+ *The role of folklore in the process of forming national cultural identity:*

Folk culture *Folk culture plays a crucial role* in the formation of national cultural identity. Originating and taking shape very early in the Dong Son period, folk culture is considered the "original culture," the source of national culture. Throughout a thousand years of Chinese rule, folk culture was the only cultural stream that preserved and transmitted national culture to future generations. Considered the "mother culture," folk culture is the source and nurturer of highly developed, professional, and scholarly cultural forms such as the court culture of feudal dynasties. As a product of the vast majority of working people, folk culture... It is highly indigenous and possesses immense potential for integration and self-generation. Folk culture It always clearly reflects the mindset and will of the entire nation . All of the above factors show that folk culture It embodies the rich cultural identity of the nation.

6.3. The Value of Folklore from an External Perspective

Firstly, folk culture has made a significant contribution to the formation of traditional values of the national culture. Many tangible and intangible cultural products in folk culture are loved and cherished by people all over the world, such as: bronze drums, ceramics, conical hats, traditional Vietnamese blouses (áo bà ba), floppy hats (mũ tai bèo), the bầu lute, the đay lute, the tr'ung lute, Chèo opera, water puppetry, Hue folk songs, Vọng Cổ folk songs, and the gongs of the Central Highlands... These are proofs of the value of Vietnamese folk wisdom. And when talking about national cultural identity, one cannot fail to mention these values.



Image..37 Dong Son bronze drum. Source: Author

Secondly, Vietnam is now better known to the world partly thanks to its folk art products (Gongs of the Central Highlands, Quan Ho folk singing of Bac Ninh) or art works whose formation process is closely linked to folk life (Ca

Tru folk singing). Many folk art products have been recognized by UNESCO as world cultural heritage. In the future, Vietnam will continue to prepare dossiers to propose to UNESCO the recognition of other tangible and intangible cultural works (belonging to folk culture) that are of value commensurate with the status of world cultural heritage.



Image.38: Singing Quan Ho folk songs of Bac Ninh
Source: Author

Thirdly, many foreign researchers have now chosen to study the system of elements of Vietnamese folk culture to approach Vietnamese cultural identity, with particular attention paid to the aspects of behavioral culture and reenactment culture. In fact, many research works have been published internationally.

It must be acknowledged that preserving the value of folk culture is not an easy task. Research and preservation of Vietnamese folk culture throughout history have faced certain difficulties. During wartime, traditional folk culture suffered some losses, dispersion, and decline, but the rate of decline was slow because the environment for creation, performance, and appreciation remained distinctly folk-like. Currently, the trend of modernizing the environment for creation, performance, and appreciation has led many genres of folk culture to a point where they no longer have a place to thrive. Some genres even require "urgent protection" in order to be preserved.

To fulfill the desire to preserve and develop folk cultural values, necessary and sufficient conditions are needed, the most essential of which is to cultivate an awareness of cherishing intellectual property and valuing the sentiments of our ancestors in generations of Vietnamese people.

Cultural management agencies play a crucial role in preserving and developing folk cultural values. It is necessary to scientifically establish specific criteria to determine the value and identity of each type of folk culture. Only when based on a solid scientific foundation can we succeed in preserving, restoring, and developing the precious values of our ancestors' heritage .

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REVIEW QUESTIONS

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2. Comparing folklore, village culture, and rural culture (based on Vietnamese practice).
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+ <i>Structure based on the content plane: Folk culture is the intellectual product of ordinary people, encompassing many aspects of life; therefore, it can be arranged according to specific planes for detailed description. The structural system according to specific planes includes: folk knowledge, folk customs and traditions, folk festivals, and folk games. In general, These aspects reflect the folk culture of any subject, in any period.</i>	6
+ <i>Structure based on subject activity: Folk culture is approached based on the aspects of the cultural subject's activity. The system of components of this structure includes: cognitive culture, organizational culture, behavioral culture, and re-enactment culture (Table 1).</i>	6
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