

SUNY BROCKPORT VIETNAM PROGRAM  
**VIETNAMESE CULTURE**

INTRODUCTION

For students, this course provides an understanding of the Vietnamese culture. It is taught by instructors from Danang University and Duy Tan University.

Instructors:     Nguyen Van Ân

                  Vu Van Thinh

                  Vo Van Thang

This is a three-credit semester course that meets for three AND ONE-HALF hours in class each week. There are also field trips to museums, villages, and significant cultural sites (used to illustrate class materials). The trips are usually in addition to the class meetings each week. In addition, discussions with the Program Director and Program Administrator on course content will be held during the semester outside of class meetings. Course credit is awarded by SUNY Brockport. Text and learning materials will be provided.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The students are expected to:

1. Demonstrate their understanding of the everyday communication of the Vietnamese people in order to adjust to an absolutely different culture
2. Demonstrate their understanding of the ways the Vietnamese doing business
3. Demonstrate their understanding of the Vietnamese culinary
4. Demonstrate Vietnamese culture as a culture of diversity and multiple nationalities
5. Demonstrate Vietnamese culture as a culture based on rural wet rice agriculture
6. Demonstrate the collectivism in Vietnamese culture
7. Examine the roles of family in the lives of Vietnamese people
8. Examine the significance of the practice of ancestor worship in the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people
9. Examine the history and culture of Quang Nam - Danang
10. Examine the Champa culture and its influence on the Vietnamese culture

COURSE DESIGN

Lecture one: THE EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE

Objective:

The students are expected to:

1. Demonstrate their understanding of the everyday communication of the Vietnamese people in order to adjust to an absolutely different culture

Lecture two: BUSINESS CULTURE IN VIETNAM

Objective:

The students are expected to:

1. Demonstrate their understanding of the ways the Vietnamese doing business

Lecture three: VIETNAMESE CULINARY

Objective:

The students are expected to:

1. Demonstrate the perception of the Vietnamese people about food

Lecture four: TÃÚT

Objective:

The students are expected to:

1. Understand the significance of Tãút celebration of the Vietnamese people.

Lecture five: A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE VIETNAMESE CULTURE

Objectives:

The students are expected to:

1. Demonstrate Vietnamese culture as a culture based on rural wet rice agriculture
2. Demonstrate the characteristics of the Vietnamese people
3. Show their understanding of the evolution of the Vietnamese culture from the prehistory period to the modern period
4. Demonstrate their understanding of the outside influences to the Vietnamese culture in each historical period
5. Examine their own culture in comparison with Vietnamese culture.

Lecture six: FESTIVALS IN VIETNAM

Objectives:

The students are expected to:

1. Examine the secular and religious festivals in Vietnam
2. Examine some important festivals in Danang

Lecture seven: FAMILY LIFE IN VIETNAM

Objective:

The students are expected:

1. To examine the roles of family in the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people

Lecture eight: THE PRACTICE OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP IN VIETNAMESE VILLAGE

Objective:

The students are expected to:

1. Demonstrate the significance of the practice of ancestor worship in the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people

Lecture nine: UNDERSTANDING THE REGION

Objective:

The students are expected to:

1. Examine the history and culture of Quang Nam - Danang

Lecture ten: FOLK BELIEFS IN VIETNAM

Objective:

The students are expected to:

1. Learn the folk beliefs of the Vietnamese people

Lecture eleven: CHAMPA CULTURE

Objective:

The students are expected to:

1. Examine the history and culture of the Champa kingdom
2. Visit the Champa Museum to examine the unique art and architecture of the Champa people

Lecture twelve: ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS IN VIETNAM

Objectives:

The students are expected to:

1. Examine the similarities and differences of 54 ethnic minority groups living in Vietnam
2. Demonstrate the Vietnamese culture as a culture of diversity and multiple nationalities

GRADING KEY

A: Outstanding performance: You demonstrated a thorough understanding of the Vietnamese culture. Your essay was written in an excellent manner.

B: Good performance: You demonstrated that you understood most of the lectures. Your ideas were clearly written.

C: Average performance: You did not demonstrate clearly that you understood the lectures. Your ideas were not clearly written.

D: Marginal. Just passing. You barely demonstrated an understanding of the concepts. There are numerous problems in your writing and ideas.

E: Unacceptable: You demonstrated no understanding of the Vietnamese culture

This grade is made through a combination of the following:

40%: Final: A ten-page essay (doubled space, font size: 12, margin: top: 1 cm, bottom: 1cm, left: 3.5 cm. right: 1.34 cm)

30%: Mid-term: A ten-page essay (doubled space, font size: 12 margin: top:1 cm, bottom: 1cm, left: 3.5 cm. right: 1.34 cm)

20%: Quizzes

10%: Attendance and behaviors<sup>(\*)</sup>

#### REFERENCE

1. Neil L. Jameieson. Understanding Vietnam. Maple - Vail Book Manufacturing Group
2. Kenneth J. Herrmann, Jr. Lepers and Lunacy - An American in Vietnam Today - Book Surge
3. Pierre Haurd and Maurice Durand (1994). Vietnam, Civilization and Culture. Ecole Francoise D' Extrême - Orient Ha Noi
4. Len Rutledge (1993). Maverick guide to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Pelican Publishing Company
5. Claire Ellis. Culture Shock-A Guide to Customs and Etiquette. Graphic Arts Center Publishing Company
6. Huu Ngoc (2005). Wandering Through Vietnamese Culture. The Gioi Publisher
7. Vietnamese Folk-Tales. The Gioi Publisher
8. Huu Ngoc and Lady Borton (2004). Vietnamese Culture - Frequently Asked Questions (nine volumes). The Gioi Publisher

(\*) Students must attend all sessions (indoor and outdoor activities) and are expected to participate actively in the activities scheduled for each session. Students' behaviors and attitudes in class are also graded.

Instructor: Nguyen Van Doan  
Danang Teacher's Training College

## **THE EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE**

*Objective:*

*The students are expected to:*

- 1. Demonstrate their understanding of the everyday communication of the Vietnamese people in order to adjust to an absolutely different culture*

Vietnamese culture is an agriculturally oriented culture. The same origin and the same place are the foundation of all social relations in the traditional Vietnamese culture. The peasants' lives much depend upon each other; therefore, their relationships in the community are of importance.

The Vietnamese behaviorism was originated and influenced by the characteristics of the rural areas and villages; of which their sense of community and autonomy are of importance. Here are some of the characteristics of the Vietnamese behaviorism:

1. Keen on communication:

Human behavior is very important for the Vietnamese people. It is considered a point to prejudge somebody, which is why the Vietnamese like visitation and hospitality.

The Vietnamese feel very comfortable when interacting with people come from the same community. They, however, feel embarrassed with strangers or people from different community. These two attitudes do not conflict but reflect the flexibility in their behavior.

2. Highlight emotion in behavior:

Sentiment is the basic principle in their behavior. When dealing with contradiction or conflict between righteousness and emotion, the Vietnamese always incline toward the emotion. The Vietnamese are often concerned whether their behaviors or words hurt the others. Tolerance and gentleness is always highlighted in their everyday interaction.

3. Get to know, observe and prejudge the communicator:

This is considered the outcome of the strong sense of community, that makes them think they should care about the others; they, therefore, need the communicator's information

(name, age, family and personal life...). Foreigners may presume the Vietnamese are too curious. The Vietnamese also prejudge the communicator's physiognomy.

4. Highlight the need of public respect:

Individuals always fit in their families or villages in their community context. The Vietnamese, therefore, value the need of public respect because it relates to the whole community. They all want to have a good reputation and are scared of a bad one.

The Vietnamese are very concerned about their prestige and are anxious of public opinions.

5. Fond of sensitivity, thoughtfulness and harmony:

5.1 Sensitivity: The Vietnamese seldom use a direct approach in their dealings, they often beat about the bush. They also normally begin the conversation by inviting betel and areca nut or a glass of tea... After greeting, the Vietnamese often ask a couple of personal questions in order to get to know the communicator more.

5.2 Thoughtfulness: It always takes time for the Vietnamese to pick up the right words during their conversation because they are always worried about hurting the others, which makes the Vietnamese lack of decisiveness. In such situations the Vietnamese often smile. Their smiles than communicate more than words.

5.3 Harmony: The Vietnamese often make concessions to each other during their conversation.

6. Diversify in communication:

6.1 All communicative relationships tend to be considered as family relationships. In addition to the personal pronouns, we also use a number of names in family circle. This demonstrates how we value emotion.

The Vietnamese always address themselves in a humble manner, but they always give a certain respect to their communicators. We avoid calling the family's name during our conversation.

6.2. The Vietnamese tend to express themselves in an appropriate manner. We do not apologize and thank the communicators the same way in all situations, it depends upon different contexts.

The ways the Vietnamese communicate with each other are preserved for generations which are always a wonderful life experience for all people. They always use their rich source of proverbs to teach their descendants.

The significance of communication:

Fire proves gold, words prove men.

Or: The bird is known by his note, the man by his words

Emotion in communication:

Beauty lies in lovers' eyes.

Or: Love me, love my dog.

Or: Faults are thick when love is thin.

Prejudging their communicators through their behaviors:

Who keeps company with the wolf will learn how to howl

The way they communicate:

Think today, speak tomorrow

Or: You must turn your tongue seven times before speaking

Or: Good words cost nothing

Or: A close mouth catches no flies

Instructor: Nguyen Van Doan  
Danang Teacher's Training College

### **BUSINESS CULTURE IN VIETNAM**

#### Objective:

*The students are expected to:*

1. *Understand the way the Vietnamese doing business*

## **I. A brief history of business in Vietnam:**

Vietnam is an agricultural country. In the old days there was popular saying: "agriculture is of most importance, trade is of least importance". The Vietnamese inhabitants were classified by "educators, peasants, workers and traders". Business men were considered the lowest class in the society, they were looked down upon. There was, however, an "unofficial" opinion which was "no trade, no properties". Therefore, business was still done in 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Government officials were involved in this to make personal profits. They used their oversea business trips to make profits for themselves. This is called "smuggle", of course.

The self-sufficiency economy has a long history in Vietnam. Commodity economy came into being late and has not been very effective. Urban areas did not play an important role. In the feudal state in 16<sup>th</sup> century, the commodity economy made considerable progress with the arrival of Hoi An and some other towns. The Vietnamese began to do business with the Westerners. Bureaucracy and red tape began to challenge Western business men.

During the American war, North Vietnam was having socialist economy, even the government controlled everything, people were still involved in business which was called "smuggle". Government officials were also involved in this, particularly during their oversea business trips. This was like what it had been in the feudal state.

The Vietnamese people do not have a business tradition.

Trades were looked down upon for a long time. They are recently recognized by "Business Men".

The market economy is predominating. Vietnam is being to be a member of WTO but it looks like the national economy is not ready for this membership yet.

## **II. Habits in doing business in Vietnam:**

When doing business with strangers, they would like to ask a lot personal questions to get to know their partners: age, hometown, marital status, likes and dislikes... They would like to prejudge their partners' physiognomy.

The Vietnamese lack of punctuality.

The Vietnamese lack of professionalism.



Business must be competitive. This must be a perfect competition. The Vietnamese like to competitive in their way, the competition of petit peasants. And for other reasons, the Vietnamese do not highlight TRUST in business.

Agreements may be effective for minutes.

It is always difficult to understand the real meanings of "yes" and "no".

It is more preferable to do business in restaurants than in offices.

Complicated procedure has always challenged foreign business men.

PATIENCE is what foreign business men should learn when they want to do business with the Vietnamese.

Instructor: Nguyen Van Doan  
Danang Teacher's Training College

## **VIETNAMESE CULINARY**

*Objective:*

*The students are expected to:*

- 1. Demonstrate the perception of the Vietnamese people about food*

I. Views of culinary:

There are numerous views of culinary. The Vietnamese have publicly recognized its significance and essential with a well known saying: "*The way to a man's heart is through his stomach*". The word "ăn" (eat in English) has existed in people's actions: ăn ải (to live), ăn màũc (to dress), ăn noĩi (to behave), ăn chải (to lead a fast life/a life of debauchery), ăn nguĩ/ ăn nầòm (to have sex), ăn hoũc (to study), ăn cầõp/ăn trầũm (to steal)... Eating is so important that they presume "*lightening never strikes during meals*".

## II. Main ingredients of a traditional meal:

Eating is one of the cultural behaviors of human beings. The Vietnamese culture is an agricultural culture; the Vietnamese traditional meal, therefore, implies their agricultural culture (wet rice cultivation).

- Rice: Rice (*cảm* in Vietnamese language) is of the utmost importance. The Vietnamese meals are called *bảiả cảm*, even when we do not eat rice for lunch or dinner. In the old days rice was used to assess properties.
- Vegetables: Vietnam, which has tropical monsoon weather, is one of the centers for cultivated crops. There are a variety of vegetables all year round. Vegetables, therefore, are inevitable in the Vietnamese meals.  
Water morning glory/ water spinach (*rau muảũng*) and aubergines (*caĩ*) are their favorite vegetables.
- Fish: Fish is the most popular among sea food. The Vietnamese also eat different kinds of sea food made by different ways: fresh, dried and, particularly, *mầõm*.
- Meat:

The major ingredients of the Vietnamese meals are botanical.

The practice of chewing betel and areca nut came from the old days. This practice also represents yin-yang philosophy. Areca implies heaven (yang), betel tree implies earth (yin). The fact that betel tree grows from the floor clinging to areca represents the harmony.

Chewing betel and areca nut gives a great pleasure to women while water pipe is men's favorite. Smoking water pipe also represents yin and yang. Water pipe was so popular that there was one road named Phầũ Haĩng Ấiảũũ selling only products for water pipe in the Old Quarter in Hanoi.

Tea and wine are the two popular drinks. Tea originally came from China. The upper class and the aristocracy called it *traï* while common people called it *cheï*. Most of the wine was made from rice which is called *white wine* compared with colored wine made from fruit. The Vietnamese also drink medical wine soaked with medical herbs or animals. Rice wine is one of the inevitable offerings for worship celebrations.

### III. Characteristics of the Vietnamese culinary:

#### 1. Blend:

It is synthetic in the ways they make food and eat meals. When making food, the Vietnamese synthesize ingredients, tastes and colors based on the five-element philosophy (five ingredients, five tastes and five colors). When they eat meals, they eat all courses together and synthesize all tastes (five tastes).

#### 2. Sense of community:

People who share the same meal always relate to and depend upon each other. The Vietnamese love sharing meals and talking during meals.

#### 3. Dialectic:

They focus on the harmony and balance between yin and yang in selecting the right food, balancing yin and yang in their bodies and between their bodies and the environment.

#### 4. Flexibility:

- The ways they eat
- Chopsticks

The Vietnamese culinary reflects the balance of yin and yang.

Instructor: Nguyen Van Doan  
Danang Teacher's Training College

### **TÃÚT**

*Objective:*

*The students are expected to:*

1. Understand the significance of Tăút celebration of the Vietnamese people.

In the old days a year was split into 24 periods (*Tiăút* in the Vietnamese language) based on the changes from the weather. The word "Tăút" came from "Tiăút". Tăút holidays are all year round, they are normally on the breaks between crops (according to the agricultural calendar). The Vietnamese, therefore, celebrate their Tăút holidays when they have much free time. They also presume that they deserve enjoying their holidays thoughtfully after their hard working days. In the Vietnamese language they use "ăn Tăút" to imply "enjoy Tăút" ("ăn" means "eat" in English)

The ways the Vietnamese people celebrate Tăút reflects their customs, traditions and psychology. This, simultaneously, demonstrates their culture and civilization through their traditional customs.

Here are some important Tăút of the Vietnamese people:

- Tăút Nguyễn Ấn: The beginning of a New Year
- Tăút Thăung Nguyễn: A Buddhist celebration (on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Lunar January)
- Tăút Thanh Minh: Visiting their ancestor's graves
- Tăút Hăn Thăc: Ancestor worship on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Lunar March
- Tăút Ấoan Ngoũ: Killing insecticides on the 5<sup>th</sup> of Lunar May
- Tăút Trung Nguyễn: The amnesty for the dead on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Lunar July
- Tăút Trung Thu: Mid-Autumn festival on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Lunar August
- Tăút Hău Nguyễn: Harvesting celebration on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Lunar October
- Tăút Ăng Taĩo: Kitchen's Gods celebration on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Lunar December

Among these above Tăút holidays, Tăút Nguyễn Ấn is the most important celebration.

### **TĂÚT NGUYỄN ẤN**

*Nguyễn* means the beginning, *Ấn* means early in the morning Tăút Nguyễn Ấn is the celebration for a new year. Everything must be new and fresh for this celebration.

Tết Nguyên Đán begins right after the New Year's Eve. New Year's Eve is the transitional of the old and the new. A New Year begins at the New Year's Eve and also ends at the New Year's Eve. New Year's Eve, therefore, is a significant moment for the Vietnamese people. People will ignore and forgive all bad things of the old year and look forward to welcoming a happy new year.

Tết Nguyên Đán is the most important holiday for the Vietnamese people so all people are looking forward to this occasion. They welcome Tết (Nguyên Đán) solemnly, look forward to Tết eagerly and enjoy Tết joyfully. Tết begins after the New Year's Eve but the Vietnamese people have thorough preparation for Tết.

Important traditions of Tết Nguyên Đán:

1. Tết's preparation: It normally takes the Vietnamese people a month to prepare for Tết. They focus on the offerings they are going to have for Earth and Heaven, their ancestor, food and clothes. People also prepare for the community celebration in the rural areas.
2. Home decoration: Everything must be bright, clean and beautiful.
3. Tết's offerings: People bring their offerings to their eldest brother or eldest member of the clan for their ancestor worship.
4. Tết's gifts: To show their appreciation to somebody else.
5. Year end celebration: Colleagues or co-workers share a big meal before leaving for Tết.
6. Year end class: Students wish their teacher a happy new year.
7. Children's market and Tết's market: Parents take their kids to market to buy them pictures and fire crackers on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of Lunar December. Tết's market is the one on the last day of the old year where the sellers want to sell out of their stuff, the buyers want to all they need.
8. Visit to graves: After the Tết's preparation people visit their ancestor's graves and invite them home to enjoy Tết. They also have a separate celebration "to invite the dead" for their family reunion.
9. Xúc Xào Xúc Xé: On New Year's Eve all the kids in the neighborhood gather in line visiting their neighbors.
10. Paying off debts: Nobody wants to owe anything for two years. They have to pay off their all debts before Tết.

11. Ancestor worship: Offerings must be placed and incense must be burned on the altars on New Year's Eve and during Tăút to welcome their ancestor's reunion.
12. Tăút's wishes:
13. Happy age: People often give red envelopes with money inside to each other for a new happy age.
14. First footer:
15. First departure:
16. Tăút's visitation: People visit each other to wish each other a happy new year.
17. First writing: Intellectuals, authors and poets often write on the first day of Tăút.

All the Tăút's customs and traditions demonstrate the significance of the Vietnamese culture which is the strong sense of community.

Instructor: Nguyen Van Doan  
Danang Education College

## **A BRIEF OUTLINE OF VIETNAMESE CULTURE**

*Objectives:*

*The students are expected to:*

- 1. Demonstrate Vietnamese culture as a culture of wet rice agriculture*
- 2. Examine and analyze the characteristics of the Vietnamese people*
- 3. Demonstrate their understanding of the evolution of the Vietnamese culture from the prehistoric period to the modern period*
- 4. Demonstrate their understanding of outside influences to the Vietnamese culture in different historical periods*

### **I. The Vietnamese people - the subject of Vietnamese culture:**

#### 1. The origin of the Vietnamese people:

Various hypotheses about the origin of the Vietnamese people.

#### 2. The characteristics of the Vietnamese people:

The latest research on Vietnamese people shows that their typical characteristics include: a strong hearted patriotism, closeness to their homeland (especially as home, village and country); collectivism; diligence and industriousness; good patience; good relationship with their surroundings; flexible behavior, good adaptability and integration.

Inclement environmental conditions, their position as a country with a history of continuous warfare, and the limitations placed upon them by backward agriculture production have created such negative characteristics as egalitarianism, spirit of conciliation, arbitrariness and patriarchal behavior... These characteristics also exercise a great influence over the construction and development of an advanced culture and wealthy country.

The salient characteristic of the Vietnamese is sentimentalism in relationships between people and people,

people and nature; the behavior and responsibility towards the next generation is expressed in their involvement in charitable causes.

## **II. The space of Vietnamese culture:**

- a. In a broad sphere, the cradle of Vietnamese civilization is in the Austro-Asiatic region. More specifically, this space could be considered a triangle, with the top at the North Yangtze River (China) and the lower sides in North Central Vietnam and along the Mekong River. This area is formed by the basin of two large rivers originating from the Himalayas Mountains. The two rivers have exercised great influences on the cultural spirit of the residents. This is an important geographical constant forming a unique culture in this, the birthplace of wet rice agriculture. This is also where the art of bronze molding was first practiced. An excellent example of this is the well-known Dong Son bronze drum.
- b. In particular, the origins of Vietnamese culture lie in present-day Indonesia. .
- c. During a later exchange, Vietnamese culture experienced a close tie with Chinese culture, absorbed much from their neighbors to the north. The space of Vietnamese culture, however, was originally formed in the space of South East Asia. Situated in a special position - the intersection of various cultures - Vietnam is a conversion of most characteristics of the culture of South East Asia. Vietnam is minimized SEA. This brings the basic difference between Vietnamese culture and Chinese culture.

## **III. The evolution of the Vietnamese culture:**

### 1. Vietnamese culture in the Prehistoric period and the early historic period :

#### a. The Prehistoric period:

In Vietnam, before the arrival of its ancient civilization or before the formation of the first kingdom, there had existed a long process of cultural development during the prehistoric time.

During the prehistoric period, a common culture layer for all inhabitants living in the Southeast Asia gradually developed into three major linguistic families as follows: *Austro Asiatic*, *Malayo-Polynesian*, and *Sino-Tibetan*. In the middle of the first millennium BC, inhabitants in the Southeast Asia had a comparatively high standard of cultural



development and wet rice-cultivation became the main occupation.

Scientists found some archaeological vestiges and artifacts of the Paleolithic in Thanh Hoá, Mesolithic in Hoà Bính and Neolithic in Laung Sán, Hâu Long, Nghãu An, Quaíng Bính...

## 2. The early historic period and initial stage of the historic period:

Approximately 4,000 years ago, the Vietnamese from Red River to Áöng Nai River delta entered metal age with three great cultural centers such as:

- Áäng Sán culture, which was considered the most important center of the ancient Vietnamese (in the North and Northern part of Central Vietnam)
- Sa Huyính culture, which was considered the forerunner of Champa culture (in the Southern part of Central Vietnam)
- Áöng Nai culture was one of the original sources of Oc Eo culture belonging to Malayo-Polynesian inhabitants living in the Eastern and Western part of the Mekong Delta during centuries AD.

The three complex cultures developed into three great civilizations corresponding to the three ancient kingdoms: *Vàn Lang - Áu Laúc, Cham and Phuì Nam.*

Áäng Sán culture was the period during which Huìng founded Vàn Lang kingdom kings and later became Áu Laúc kingdom reigned by An Dảng Vảng.

## 3. Vietnamese culture under the Chinese invasion:

In 179 BC under the leadership of Triãu Áaì, Nam Viãút kingdom invaded Áu Laúc kingdom. In 111 BC Hãin imperialists seized Nam Viãút kingdom and Áu Laúc kingdom was annexed by the Hãin imperialists.

Vietnam was under the domination of the Chinese invaders for more than 10 centuries. In 938, Ngã Quyãön's victory on Baùch Áöng River opened a new era of national independence.

During more than 10 centuries living under the Chinese domination, Vietnamese people ceaselessly waged struggles for national independence, for instance, uprisings led by *Trạng Sisters, Lady Triãu, Lyỉ Bản, Triãu Quang Phuúc, Mai Thuïc Loan, Phuing Hạng, Khuïc Thạì Du.*

Besides these armed struggles there were also ardent struggles against Chinese cultural assimilation. During the period of Chinese domination. The Vietnamese people continuously fought for their cultural identity. If their cultural and national character were preserved, the borderline between Vietnam and China would never be erased. When the borderline still existed, the Vietnamese people's struggles for national salvation could never be quelled. The cultural protectionism took place continuously and persistently. It constantly smoldered but whenever favorable conditions existed, it turned into armed struggles.

The most noticeable feature of this period was that the cultural protectionism of Vietnamese people that did not prevent them from absorbing and apprehending positive aspects of Chinese culture. Selecting and acquiring foreign cultural achievements with the aim to develop their own culture and society was two impetuses for allowing this evolution to take place. Under the domination of Chinese invaders, the process of selective and creative absorption of oversea cultural achievements, especially those from the Chinese and Indian increasingly took place. It included material and spiritual culture. The process of accepting and selecting spiritual culture among the Vietnamese was manifested as follows:

- Acquiring Confucianism and Taoism from Chinese culture
- Acquiring Buddhism from Indian culture

This process derived from unwilling and imposed contact with Chinese culture along with its interference and from natural cultural exchanges with that of India.

In general, under the domination of Chinese invaders, the Vietnamese people still kept and preserved their own cultural identity. Additionally, they also accepted and selected foreign cultural achievements, especially those from China and India. Therefore they enriched the Vietnamese culture. It was one of the fundamental strength in their struggles for national salvation.

#### 4. Vietnamese culture under the Lê Viêt kingdom (X century to 1858):

The Bạch Đằng victory in 938 won by Ngô Quyền opened a new era of absolute independence, the period of independent feudalism under the reign of different dynasties such as Ngô, Đinh, and pre-Lê. In 1010 the Lý dynasty took the Pre-Lê dynasty's place and promoted the cause of cultural renaissance and national construction.

In 1010 Lyï Cäng Uáøn, the first king of the Lyï dynasty, ordered the transfer of the capital to Âaûi La Citadel and renamed Thàng Long (present-day Hà Nội). Lyï Cäng Uáøn changed the national title into Âaûi Viãût (Great Viet). Âaûi Viãût kingdom led to the appearance of Âaûi Viãût people. Originating from the ancient Văn Lang-Âu Lạc, a community became tempered in more than 10 centuries of fighting against the Chinese domination. From XI century on, Âaûi Viãût kingdom became stronger and stronger.

In the time of Âaûi Viãût, there were three main periods among which the Vietnamese culture progressed considerably after being destroyed for a long time. It could be presumed that they were the three periods of national cultural renaissance:

4.1. The first cultural renaissance of the kingdom happened after the kingdom was liberated from the Chinese domination. This cause began in the dynasties of Âinh, Pre-Lã and considerably developed after the Lyï dynasty moved to Thàng Long. There were several achievements in the Lyï, Tráøn (XI - XIV century)

4.2. The second cultural renaissance of the kingdom happened in the XV century, after Lam Sãn insurrection's victory against the Ming. From Lã Thaïi Tãø dynasty to Lã Thaïnh Tãng and to the end of VX century, Âaûi Viãût became one of the strongest countries in Southeast Asia.

4.3. The third cultural renaissance happened at the end of XVIII century. In the period of Âaûi Viãût kingdom, the culture made considerable progresses during this period.

There were several achievements proved the comparatively full development of the Vietnamese material culture compared to nations in Southeast Asia and in the world. The growth of the spiritual culture was expressed in folklore. Folklore met the cultural need not merely of the laborers but also of the whole society including different upper strata, mandarins and kings. Moreover, folklore was an important foundation to shape the national erudite culture.

Âaûi Viãût culture manifested the identity and ability of a developed kingdom and expressed the life of a civilized kingdom. Though that culture still remained some shortcomings, it was the Vietnamese people's strength in the

later struggle against the French colonists and in the gradual integration into the modern world.

#### 5. Vietnamese culture in the contemporary and modern period:

##### 5.1. The contemporary period (1858 - 1945):

The Vietnamese culture in the contemporary period was divided into 2 stage:

- The first stage (*from 1858 to the end of the World War I*): Although several brave struggles against the French colonialists from 1858 to the end of the XX century were launched they were all defeated by the enemy. The Vietnamese patriots gradually realized that it was vital for them to apply experience and cultural - scientific achievements gained by Western countries to the cause of national salvation. The movements of *Duy Tân*, *Âng Du*, *Âng Kinh Nghĩa Thuộc* at the early XX century showed the combination of cultural struggles with those of national salvation.
- The second stage (*after World War I to 1945*): After World War I the French began their second exploitation. During 1920s, influences from the Western culture as well as the second exploitation vigorously affected Vietnamese people's socio-cultural life. Since 1930 after the foundation of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the Western proletarian culture has gradually exerted its influence on Vietnamese culture. After the August Revolution in 1945, the influence has become the key factor.

##### 5.2. The contemporary period (from 1945 up to present ):

Since the August Revolution in 1945, Vietnam has developed into a modern country. Vietnamese culture has also progressed showing both national as well as modern characteristics.

In its revolutionary leadership role, the Communist Party of Vietnam has paid much attention to the cultural front. In 1943 the Communist Party issued the document *Vietnamese culture program* with its three targets: Vietnamese culture must bear its national characteristics, the study of Vietnamese culture must be more scientific, and the understanding of Vietnamese culture must be disseminated in the whole population.

#### **IV. The traditional social structure of Vietnamese culture:**

1. Rural organization:

The majority Vietnamese live on wet rice cultivation, therefore agriculture is of utmost importance in the traditional social structure or in the culture of community organization. Vietnam's rural areas are villages and communes. Villages and communes in Vietnam are well organized with different principles:

- 1.1. Rural organization in accordance to parentage (family and clan)
- 1.2. Rural organization in accordance to residency (hamlets and villages)
- 1.3. Rural organization in accordance to careers and hobbies (guilds and associations)
- 1.4. Rural organization in accordance to male tradition (male line in a village)
- 1.5. Rural organization in accordance to administration (hamlet administrative unit and village administrative unit)

2. National structure:

- 2.1. Country is an expansion of village: Village - country
- 2.2. Country's mechanism (feudalism)
- 2.3. Examinations - the way to hire mandarins working for the country.

3. Urban organization:

- 3.1. Urban areas are formed administered by country
- 3.2. Two functions: administration and economy
- 3.3. In the traditional society of Vietnam some rural areas have urban function: industrial and commercial villages
- 3.4. Urban areas which are influenced by rural areas have strongly rural characteristics
- 3.5. Traditional urban areas are always under thread of ruralization.

**V. Exchange and acculturation in Vietnamese culture:**

a. The cultural foundation of the South East Asia:

The indigenous foundation of Vietnam culture is the culture of SEA. The indigenous factors of Vietnam have the general characteristics of the SEA. Vietnam is a minimized SEA with three factors: mountain, plain and sea with all ethnic groups in linguistic families in SEA.

b. Cultural exchange and acculturation with Chinese:

There are a prolonged cultural exchange and acculturation with China culture in the history. There are two states: compulsory and non-compulsory exchanges.

c. Cultural exchange and acculturation with Indian:  
A natural and voluntary exchange and acculturation.

d. Cultural exchange and acculturation with Western culture:  
The cultural exchange and acculturation with Western culture took place when the Vietnamese people were waging wars against colonist for national independence, in additionally, the acculturation with Western culture also contributes to the state modernization.

From the above analysis, Vietnamese culture has fundamental characteristics as follows:

Vietnamese culture is a culture of wet rice agriculture

Vietnamese culture is a culture of rural area: village and commune

Vietnamese culture is a culture of diversity and multi nationality

Vietnamese culture is a culture of strong indigenusness and mixture

Instructor: Nguyen Van Doan  
Danang Education College

## **UNDERSTANDING THE REGION**

*Objective:*

*The students are expected to:*

- 1. Examine the history and culture of Danang*

### **I. History:**

Danang that was separated from Quang Nam Danang province on January 1, 1997 is a city under the direct central administration. In the history Danang is a part of Quang Nam Danang, therefore, when considering the history and culture of Danang we cannot separate it from its motherland Quang Nam.

Danang belonged to Quang Nam, an important area of Sa Huynh culture (in the 1st millennium BC) and Champa kingdom (2nd century to 15th century).

Danang belonged to Dai Viet (Great Viet) at early 14th century (1307). King Le Thanh Tong formed Dao Quang Nam from south Hai Van pass to present-day Phu Yen province. Quang Nam Danang officially became the territory of Dai Viet.

Ding Quang Nam was formed by Lord Nguyen and governed by his crown prince at early 17th century. Quang Nam Danang was considered a second important area after the Lord's palace in Phu Xuan (present-day Hue).

Danang belonged to Quang Nam in 1932. Danang has not been an independent administrative unit until the second half of 19th century.

Danang, which became a concession to the French colonist, was officially named Tourane in 1888. The French colonial administration decided to form Danang belonged to Quang Nam.

After August Revolution in 1945, Danang was named after Thai Phien, a historical figure born in Danang.

Danang used to be a town of Quang Nam province (1955 - 1962), Quang Da province (1962 - 1975). After 1975 Danang was attached to Quang Nam. Danang became a city under the direct central administration in 1997.

Archeologist found out relics belonging to Sa Huynh culture and Champa culture.

In genealogies the Dai Viet residents first moved to Danang at the second half of 14th century.

Names in different times:

Danang first came into being in document at mid-16th century. According to researchers, Danang came from the Champa language *Da Net* that means a large river. The Vietnamese people spell *Da Net* Danang. Danang was first on the map drawn by westerners in 17th century.

The folk name of Danang is Han or Cua Han. It was named after a large river flowing through the city. This name was used by many westerners, especially, on the map drawn by missionary Alexandre de Rhodes in 1666. The name used at

this time was Kean which means Ke Han (a crowded residency on Han River).

In documents and books written by westerners Danang was called Turon, Toron, Tournon and Tourane. There are many explanations for this.

The Chinese called Danang Hien Cang.

The local population called it Vung Thung, Tra Uc, Tra Ao, Tra Son and Dong Long Loan.

## **II. The functions of Danang in the history:**

### 1. Danang - a potential trade port:

During 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries Hoi An used to be a large trade port. Danang played the role of a major port. Missionary Alexandre de Rhodes commented that there were two ways for ships to go to Hoi An: Cua Dai (Hoi An) and Cua Han (Danang). More than 100-ton ships found it hard to enter Cua Dai, therefore, they came through Cua Han. Freight was transported to Hoi An on Co Co river (which is filled now). In late 18th century Hoi An declined, Danang took its place and became a central port for this area with crowded population. Hoi An was considered a trade fair from 16th century to 18th century, at early 19th century Danang became a real maritime port where western ships came to do business with the Vietnamese merchants. This was also a place for exchanges in international trade and diplomacy.

Since then Danang is always the major potential port in Central Vietnam

### 2. Danang - a main gateway:

During the war between Dai Viet and Champa kingdom (14th - 15th centuries), the war between the two feudalist group Dang Trong (Nguyen Lord) and Dang Ngoai (Trinh Lord) (16th - 18th centuries), Danang with the role of a major port and an important military base was considered a bridge head and a spring board for all attacks.

In the scheme to invade SEA, Western countries like Portugal, Spain, Great Britain, France paid much attention to Danang because of its strategic position in military. Dealing with the westerners' scheme to invade Vietnam, Danang was considered a place to defense Hue citadel.

### 3. Danang - a target of wars of aggression:



The French colonist began their war of aggression in Vietnam by attacking to Danang on September 1, 1858. The French failed in their plan of "quick attack quick win" when attacking Danang.

The Americans first landed on Vietnam through Danang beach on February 9, 1965. The American built the great military in Danang.

### III. Culture:

With the strategic position in the evolution of history and culture of Vietnam and Quang Nam, Danang is always the vanguard in taking the fatherland's responsibility: In the war of resistance against the French and Americans; in the territory expansion and in the acculturation with Champa and western cultures.

The Quang Nam Danang people are always sensitive to the new, are ready to perceive the new to apply for the national defense and construction:

In the state renovation in the second half of 19th century: Pham Phu Thu.

In the patriotic movement against the French at early 20th century in the tendency of renovation, there was Duy Tan movement (1906 - 1908); Phan Chu Trinh...

Literature: Nguyen Khoi

The Quang Nam Danang people are frank, rather hot tempered but strong hearted. There are many historic figures born in this area: Phan Chau Trinh, Huynh Thuc Khang, Tran Quy Cap, Nguyen Thanh, Thai Phien and Tran Cao Van

The Quang Nam Danang people endure patiently and are fond of learning.

Instructor: Vu Van Thinh  
Duy Tan University

## FESTIVALS IN VIETNAM

*Objectives:*

*The students are expected to:*

- 1. Understand the way the Vietnamese people celebrate Tet and some customs and legends relating to Tet*
- 2. Examine some festivals in Danang*

### I. Introduction:

Vietnam is a country with a 4000-year history and divided into two stages: the first 2000-year stage is called

the history of legend, the last 2000-year stage is completely compiled. It is the reason why Vietnamese people have such a valuable treasure of tales, legends. Most of the Vietnamese people presume that they have the same origin. Vietnamese legends related that *Kinh Dǎng Vǎng* was the first king of Vietnam whose tomb nowadays is seen in *An Lǎi* village, Bǎoc Ninh province - east Hǎi Nǎui. *Kinh Dǎng Vǎng*'s son - *Laúc Long Quán* married *Áu Cǎ* and they became the masters of the country. *Áu Cǎ* gave birth to a flesh bag containing one hundred eggs from which sometime later came out one hundred sons. *Laúc Long Quán* and *Áu Cǎ* then decided to part from each other. They divided between themselves the children: fifty children went with their father to the South Sea, the other fifty followed *Áu Cǎ* to the mountains where they settled in the "chǎu" (district) Phong, situated by legendary tradition in the region of Viǎt Trç, Bǎich Hǎuc. Their descendants are the Vietnamese people.

*Kinh Dǎng Vǎng* is the emperor who taught the Vietnamese people how to cultivate, deforest and grow rice. So it is not accidental to say that Vietnamese festivals are attached to the life of villages, temples, and pagodas where people hold annual festivals to show gratitude, and to pray for peace and prosperity. The ceremony of offering is also quite different. There are always a procession and an illustration of God-offering in sacrifice and then games such as wrestling, swimming, singing, buffalo fighting or cock fighting...

There are a lot of festivals in Vietnam and they are generally divided into two kinds: secular holidays and religious festivals. However, May Day, Liberation Day, National Day and Tǎút are the most enjoyable holidays.

## **II. Festivals:**

### **1. Tǎút:**

Vietnamese people use the lunar calendar so Tǎút is on the first day of spring, it is normally in late January or early February. Tǎút is a festival not merely for everybody but also for family. During these days, members of family who live far away from home always try to come home before the New Year's Eve to review the past, be happy with the present and think about the future with their parents and other members such as brothers, sisters... Tǎút lasts for three days. On the first day, everyone wears their new clothes to visit their grandparents, parents and relatives. On the second day, people visit their teachers and on the third day they visit their friends. On these days, people usually wish

each other health, prosperity and longevity. In Vietnam we have "Chuïc Mạìng Năm Mạìi!" (Happy New Year!). Children are very happy during these holidays because they can eat a lot of delicious meals, wear new clothes and especially they can receive money (lặ xặ) from adults.

*Some customs on Tặút holiday (Tặút nguyẫn ậi):* Vietnamese people prepare for Tặút very carefully and considerately.

- (*Tặúg cặu, nghinh tặn* ) Farewell to the past, welcome the new: At the end of the year, especially on December 30th (lunar year), everybody and each family make their home cleaner and decorate their house because they know that during Tet holiday they should neither clean the floor nor sweep the garbage out of the house.

The legend said that in "Sặu thặn ky", there was a trader named Ấu Minh. One day he went past Thanh Thặo Lake and the God of lake gave him a servant named Nhặ Nguyẫn. Since Nhặ Nguyẫn lived with him, he became very rich. One day, on the first day of the first year, Nhặ Nguyẫn broke an ancient bowl. Ấu Minh beat him and he escaped into a dust heap and disappeared. From that day on, Ấu Minh was very poor. It is the reason why people dare not to sweep garbage on Tet holiday. In fact, this custom is originated from China and then spread into Vietnam.

- *Offering gifts (Quặ Tặút, Lặu Tặút)* - present someone with a gift on pre-Tet holidays. This custom usually takes place before Tet holidays. Before Tet, son-in-law has to visit and present his parents-in-law with gifts (such as two boxes of tea or two bottles of wine); students also bring gifts to their teachers; patients bring gifts to their doctors to show their gratitude and appreciation.
- *Preparing for Tet:* every family, regardless of being rich or poor must have flowers to decorate their house during Tet. In North Vietnam, people use cherry flower and apricot in South Vietnam. Besides, lily, sunflower, carnation, orchid...are also used to decorate their house. Jams, fruits, *bặnh chặng, bặnh teit*, are also completely prepared. During Tet, if you come to visit someone's house, you will be invited to enjoy various kinds of jams, fruits, especially wine or beer to cheer for health and luck...
- *Legend of bặnh chặng, bặnh teit*

- *Picking bud, first footer*: In the early morning of the first day of new year, many people go to pagodas and pick bud or a small branch of new leaves to bring it home. They believe that this will bring them good lucks for the whole year.

However, Vietnamese people still have a lot of taboos. For example, they believe that the first footer on the first New Year's day is very important. If that person is happy, active, clever, their family will have good lucks all year round but if the first footer is gloomy, sluggish, it will be a bad thing. So the Vietnamese people often choose the first footer.

In some Vietnamese villages, people still erect "cây nẫu" to drive devils away. They believe that cây nẫu symbolizes the territory of Human. If devils see it, they will go away.

Vietnamese people also believe that New Year's Eve is a night when the deceased will come back and reunite with their family so each family usually makes offerings with foods...

## 2. *Ăng Taïo Holiday*:

At the end of lunar calendar, 23rd December is the day of *Ăng Taïo*. Vietnamese people believe that each family has a God of kitchen (*Ăng Taïo*) and a God of land (*Thăø âĩa*). On that day, each family will prepare two hats for gentlemen and one hat for lady together with a carp for *ăng Taïo*. He will ride the carp to see the Jade emperor (the ruler of heaven) that night and report to him everything about the life of people such as the advantages/disadvantages, strengths/weakness during that year. Finally, the Jade Emperor will criticize and solve problems.

## 3. *Huìng Temple Festival*: (10<sup>th</sup> March Lunar year).

On this day, people from everywhere bring incense, candles and offerings to thank the first king that declare the birth of Vietnam. Uncle Hăo said: "*Huìng kings laid the first foundation for the national construction, we must defend our country*". *Huìng Văang* festival is held annually in *Phuï Thoũ* (North Vietnam).

## 4. *Festival of bumper crop*:

This festival is widely organized in Vietnamese villages. In North Vietnam, it is held on 10<sup>th</sup> October (lunar calendar). Generally, after finishing the harvest, the

peasants alternatively celebrate the festival, which lasts for a month. It is sometimes lasts longer depends upon the weather, and then they plant a new crop.

The purpose of this festival is to thank God and wish a next bumping crop.

*Gioing* festival in Hai Năüi: Last 4 days from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> April (lunar calendar)

#### 5. *Tăút Âoan Ngoü*:

The summer solstice day is celebrated on May 5th of Lunar year. During this time it is very hot and humid which is very convenient for germs and bacteria. This holiday is celebrated to fight against epidemics and diseases. People burn votive papers and bamboo dummies that substitute themselves to the person on whom the genius of death had already put their mark. People buy or prepare medicaments and amulets.

Especially, many kinds of fruits are offered to the ancestors to show their gratitude. According to the legend, there was a herbalist who loved his mother so much. When his mother was seriously ill, he climbed up the mountain to look for medicament. Eventually, he found it at noon but he died. There fore people believe that on this day all kinds of leaves can be used as medicament.

#### 6. *Ngău Lang Chæic Năi Day*:

This day is held on July 7<sup>th</sup> of Lunar calendar. According to the legend, *Ngău Lang* is a secular man; *Chuc Nu* is a fairy. One day, fairy *Chuc Nu* descended the earth; she felt tired and took off her clothes to have a shower. Meanwhile, *Nguu Lang* was on his way home from work, he accidentally saw *Chuc Nu* being naked. *Chuc Nu* was pretty shy and decided to marry *Nguu Lang* because he was the only one who saw her body. However, *Chuc Nu*'s father did not accept this marriage therefore he forced *Chuc Nu* to come back to heaven. When *Chuc Nu* came back to heaven, she always missed *Nguu Lang* and did not do anything. She seemed to die of missing him. Her father was touched by her committed love so he permitted *Chuc Nu* and *Nguu Lang* to meet with each other once a year on July 7<sup>th</sup> of Lunar calendar. At that time there was a flock of crow arranged into a bridge where the two people could meet with each other (one from heaven and one from the earth).

#### 7. *Tăút Trung Nguyăn*:

It is held on July 15<sup>th</sup> of Lunar calendar. People offer the wandering souls and devils with porridge put on leaf along the sidewalk. For those who can afford, they buy fish and birds to release. To the Buddhists, this day is called Vu Lan ceremony. This is the day when children show their gratitude and appreciation to their parents. People go to pagoda to pray for their parents. At the pagoda those who wear red rosettes shows that her mother is still alive; those who wear white, their mother has been dead.

*8. Tấút Trung Thu (Mid-Autumn Festival):*

It is held on August 15<sup>th</sup> of Lunar calendar. This is the holiday for every body, particularly kids. This is the day when the moon is the fullest of the year. At this time, the weather is cool and comfortable. On the nights of 13, 14 and 15 children hold unicorn dance. They come to each house and the dance lasts form ten to fifteen minutes. It is believed that dunicorn dance will drive the devils away and bring good lucks all year round. To children at the age of four to eight can follow the procession with lanterns of colors lit by candles. They are given many candies and cakes by their parents.

*9. Phấút Ấaín Day:*

This is held on April 15<sup>th</sup> of Lunar calendar. This is the day when Shakyamuni Buddha was born. All Buddhists go to pagoda on this day to pray for health, prosperity and luck.

*10. Christmas Day:*

It is held on December 25. This is the day of Catholic, Protestant and Christian. On Christmas's Eve, all churches hold solemn service. Streets are crowded with people.

In addition to the festivals mentioned above, nowadays there are some remarkable ceremonies:

- National Day (September 2)
- International Labor's Day (May 1)
- Women's Day (March 8)
- Teacher's Day (November 20)

FESTIVALS IN SOME LOCALITIES

*1. The Whale Festival (Lấu Cáồu Ngæ):*

It is held in coastal area in Central Vietnam. The date depends upon the death anniversary of the whale. However, the fishermen usually choose these days after Tet because during this period, the weather is warm. Fishermen believe

that the death of the whale is a good omen. So they solemnly celebrate the funeral for the whale.

In Danang the Whale festival is held in Man Thai fishing village. The Whale festival began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is preserved up till now. Dated on January 26<sup>th</sup> the Whale festival is sophisticatedly prepared and celebrated for twenty days. In order to have a successful festival; people have a meeting of many clans in the village and also with local authorities. On January 10<sup>th</sup>, people prepare tents at the Whale mausoleum. The rite of the ceremony consists of three parts: Waiting Ceremony, Processing Ceremony and Funeral Oration.

*2. Hăüi Quan Thăü Âm Festival:*

This is a Buddhist festival, which is celebrated at Marble Mountain on the February 19<sup>th</sup> of Lunar year in Danang. The first Hoi Quan The Am festival was held in 1960 at Hoa Nghiem cave, since then it is annually held. This festival consists of two parts: ceremony and festival.

*3. The buffalo stabbing festival:*

It is usually held in mountainous areas in Central Highlands in Vietnam. The ethnic minorities usually celebrate this festival after Tet or on the day before fishing or bumper crop.

4. The buffalo fighting festival

5. Perfume pagoda Festival (from February 10 to April 19 of lunar year)

Instructor: Vu Van Thinh  
Duy Tan University

## FAMILY LIFE IN VIETNAM

*Objective:*

*The students are expected:*

*1. To examine the roles of family in the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people*

### **I. Introduction:**

Currently, Vietnam has a population of around 80 million people comprised of 54 different ethnic groups. The main ethnic group is the Kinh people, who occupies 87% of the population. There are 64 units of administration (cities and provinces). The capital city is Hanoi, and the centralized cities are Danang, Hai Phong, Can Tho and Ho Chi Minh City.

To Vietnamese people, life tradition is very important. A traditional family is one in which the home is tidy and relations are hierarchical. All members of a family have to respect each other, the young respecting the old and the old making concessions to the young. Everybody always gets along well with each other. Children must be well behaved, have good characteristics, and set a good example for and be loved by other members of their families and communities. Today, this traditional pattern continues to be transmitted from one generation to the next. For many years, this traditional family culture has brought into play and passed on to all classes of people. Vietnamese people believe that family is the social microcosm from which people originate the "cradle of peace" that is a foundation for all future interactions. Without a traditional family hierarchy or force of nation, society would risk losing its order and structure.

The role of a mother in a family is the most important, with the father making the next most important contribution. A well-known Vietnamese proverb (phuïc âæc taûi máu) means that children's luck in life depends on the education or sacrifices of their mothers.



Nevertheless, under the old feudal system, men were well respected. People said "Nháút nam viãút hæi, tháúp næi viãút vã". This meant that ten daughters were not equal to one son, or that one son was more valuable than ten daughters were. The reason for this is that at one time in Vietnam (when it was a backward agricultural nation), nearly all people worked manually to cultivate rice. In this economy, "manpower" (strength) was crucial to the success of each harvest, and men were the breadwinners because as a group, they tended to be physically stronger than women are.

Of course, this opinion is now outdated. We know that the women's liberation movement took place in the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries thanks to three historical developments:

1. Effective birth control methods;
2. The development of labor-saving home appliances;
3. World War II

However, the idea of respecting men and looking down on women is still a little popular among residents of countryside villages. In summation, however, cultural traditions regarding family life in Vietnam are mainly based on morality, studiousness (so that people can become virtuous and talented people), duty (so that people can contribute their talents in a collective effort to build up and develop the country), and national identity (which is recognized and developed to build a powerful, just, and civilized society).

## **II. Contents**

1. Cultural characteristics: The characteristics of Vietnamese people originated from a localized (village, hamlet) life in which most people cultivated rice and faced hardships in defending and constructing their country.

- a. The Vietnamese family, land, and community are the basic elements of a strongly organized, centralized society.
- b. Most Vietnamese people are Buddhist.
- c. The deep community spirit has a great influence on Vietnamese villages
- d. Confucian philosophy effects people's behavior and attitudes to life

2. Marriage customs: As we have said, a sense of community is one of the main characteristics of life in a village or commune. In Vietnam, customs concerning

individuals also involve the community. As a result, marriage customs are very complex and sophisticated.

Within the feudalist system of the past, parents of the couple usually arranged marriage. The bride and groom were not permitted to meet each other until the marriage. There are many funny stories about arranged marriages. When marriages were arranged, both sets of parents usually paid attention to issues of property (land, houses, animals, etc.) and family tradition. People's belief during this period of history was "cha meû âât âáu con ngäöi âáy", which meant that children had to obey parents in all situations (Even in modern times, strengths and weaknesses of this idea are still cause for controversy).

Now, young men and women can seek and love each other with the permission of their parents. Most Vietnamese people strongly believe that a woman should remain a virgin until marriage.

Procedure: The couple has to go to the commune headquarters to register and receive a marriage certificate. After that, they can hold a small party at home and invite their neighbors to participate. Catholic couples and their families attend a religious ceremony performed by a vicar at their church in the presence of other Catholics.

Ceremony: Before holding a wedding, the couple usually follow these customs: Visiting the young woman's house *thăm nhà*, engaging *âãm hoí*, holding a ceremony for arranging the time and place *thành kyì*, then marrying *âãm cãäi*.

Visiting house: The young man and his parents go to the young woman's house to prove that he wants to seek the permission of both sets of parents before making friends with her. His parents have to bring two bottles of wine to her family on this occasion.

Engagement: To her parents, the young man's parents will bring gift such as betel, erica nuts, cake, meat, and rings.

Legend of betel and areca nut: Vietnamese people believe that when getting married, their weddings must have betel and areca nuts--this is an obliged custom. In fact, there is a legend about this:

Once upon a time, there lived two brothers called Cao Tan (older brother) and Cao Lang (younger brother), who

exactly looked like each other. They were orphaned when they were young, so they lived with their uncle. Both loved a very beautiful girl named Xuan Phu. Xuan Phu, eventually, married Cao Tan. From that day on, Cao Tan began ignoring his younger brother. Cao Lang was deeply hurt by this. So he decided to leave his older brother and go away. One day Cao Lang arrived at the bank of a wide river. The place was deserted, so he found no boat there. He sat down on the riverbank and wept. The next morning, there was a white rock at the place where Cao Lang had sat the night before. He had died and turned into a rock.

When Cao Tan noticed the absence of his brother, he searched for him. He followed the same road and stopped in front of the rock. He sat next to it and cried out until he died. In his place a strange tree with a straight trunk grew up. Its leaves were like those of coconut trees but shorter, and nearby there was also a cluster of a small round green fruit called areca (cây cau).

Cao Tan's young wife waited for him. When she didn't see him for a very long time, she decided to look for him. Finally, she also came to the place where the two brothers had died. There, she also died, and turned into a creeping plant, which wound around the trunk of the areca tree (cây cau).

Many years passed by. One year, there was a great drought in this region. Trees and plants withered but betel plants and areca trees remained green. When King Hung passed by, he was astonished, and ordered the elderly people living nearby to come and narrate him the story. After that, the king asked some soldiers to peak betel leaves and chew them with limestone. Suddenly everybody shouted, "Oh my god, blood", and everybody saw the red-like blood in the soldiers mouths and their faces turned red, as if they had drunken wine. They said that the areca nut tasted bitter, the betel nut tasted fragrant and hot, and that the limestone tasted rather sweet. Together, these tastes formed a wonderful combination. At last, the king understood that this was a phenomenon of faith. He ordered all people to plant betel and areca trees and chew them at weddings along with limestone. This is the origin of a custom that has been passed on to generations of Vietnamese people ever since.

Wedding Ceremony: First of all, the bride and groom must bow to the ancestor altars and then to both sets of parents. After the wedding, the new couple have to stay at the

husband's parent's house for several months. After that, they can live independently if they afford for their own house. However, in some cases, if the husband's parents are wealthy, they can purchase a house for the new couple. Nowadays in some families (especially among those living in villages), the bride has to stay at her in-laws' house for several years to serve and do housework for them ( laim dáu).

3. Giving Birth: After giving birth, the new mother has to observe many taboos. She has to stay in bed for several months and bathe herself in steam, not water. Especially, when coming home from the hospital the mother will exorcise the devils by using a pan of fired charcoal. The mother has to step over the fired charcoal, and throw two handfuls of salt onto it. A common postpartum sexual taboo is that the husband cannot have sex with his wife for three months after their first child and one for child after each subsequent child.

4. Full month celebration: celebrated one month after the baby's birth. At this point, the mother can go out into the community to introduce the child to her neighbors. The parents also hold a small party for friends and neighbors. After one month, parents believe that their child will survive.

5. Full year is celebrated at the end of the first year when the baby stops sleeping in the cot and is also a thanksgiving that the child has reached the end of the most dangerous year of life. The family will hold a party and at the party, the child is presented with a tray of various items such as: pens, a mirror, scissors, soil, wood. Some parents believe that the baby's characteristics and job will depend on which item s/he chooses (e.g. scissors for tailor, pen for teacher, soil for farmer, wood for carpenter).

6. Celebration for longevity: When parents or grandparents reach the age of 70, 80, 90, their children and grandchildren will hold ceremonies for longevity on their birth anniversary or during the Tăút. The purpose of longevity celebrations is to show gratitude and appreciation to persons who gave birth to us.

7. Funeral: Vietnamese people prepare very carefully for their death. Some people even buy a coffin while they are still alive.

A. Procedure of funeral:

1. Bathing ceremony: After death, the family of the deceased will use alcohol to bathe him/her. The purpose of this is to loosen the joints.

2. Phan Ham ceremony: This means to put some rice, three coins, and seven pearls (if very rich) into the mouth of the deceased.

3. Khâm liãum ceremony: Wrap the dead in a shroud in order to save the family of the deceased from having to view the corpse. A group of corpse caretakers will put the corpse into the coffin. Then, in order to tighten the corpse, they dress it in clothes that the dead person wore while they were still alive. They also put peanut oil, tea, and green bananas into the coffin in order to mask the unpleasant odor. Before wrapping the dead in a shroud, the family will stand around the deceased person.

4. Thaình phuúc ceremony: After the shrouding ceremony, the family will dress in funeral attire (normally white), and also wear a white bandana around their heads. At this point in time, guests can console the bereaved or share sympathy with the family. When they come, they can bring incense, candles, or money in an envelope. The family of the deceased lights a stick of incense to hand the visitor. The visitor will bow to the deceased, and the representative of the family will also bow to the visitor.

5. Moving coffin: The deceased will be moved from the home to a church or pagoda. The priest or monk will pray for the soul of the deceased. After that, the coffin will be brought to the cemetery. On the way to the cemetery, people will throw money of hell or rice to offer the homeless soul and also the fee for devils. After finishing the burial, people will put one egg, one bowl of rice and a pair of chopsticks on the grave.

After a parent dies, the son is not permitted to get married for two years and one year for daughter. At the same time, children must wear a white or black funeral badge on the right side of their shirts. After finishing the burial, a grave can be built. Three days after the burial, the family will visit the tomb called mải cạía mải. After seven days, the family invites friends and neighbors to a small party to thank them for their help during the family's difficult time. On the one-year anniversary of the loved one's death, the family holds another party.

7. Age--Vietnamese age is calculated in lunar years. When a child is born, they are already considered one year old. Age is also counted by the twelve animal signs: mouse, buffalo, tiger, cat, dragon, snake, goat, rabbit, monkey, chicken, dog, pig. Vietnamese people are

quite superstitious, so many also believe in horoscopes, fate, telepathy, palm reading and fortune telling.

8. Names--About 85% of Vietnamese family names (surnames): Nguyãùn, Lã, Phan, Tráön, Ngã, Dãang, Ääù, Äoian, Ääüng, Äinh, Hoaign. Middle names have their own function to denote sex or social roles. Females are often given the name "Thë", expressing a wish for many children. Males are often given Vàn, indicating the parents' desire for the son to be successful in the state exams.

Given names: Usually have a meaning and parents choose names, which reflect their wishes, aspirations, and ideals for their child. Some common names for boys denote quality and virtue: Huìng (courage), Trung (fidelity), Liãm (integrity), Xuán (spring), Thënh (prosperity). Some common names for girls denote meekness or softness is Häöng (rose), Lan (orchid), Lã (pear), Tuyãút (snow), Ván (cloud), Nguyãût (moon). After marriage, a Vietnamese woman still keeps their own name but before people usually used the husband's name to refer to the wife (ex. Mrs. Huìng).

Forms of address: When addressing, Vietnamese people use the given name. At the same time, to show respect, people usually add äng, baì, cã, anh, chë. To insult someone, use Thàòng, Häön, Con, Äí.

People use an informal name at home that sounds bad so that the devil will not invade the home.

Alias: used to work in secret organizations.

10. Vietnamese house: In rural areas of Vietnam, most of the dwellings are thatched cottages. Only a few Vietnamese families can afford brick homes. In cities, most cities are built of brick. In the countryside, people don't have the habit of closing their doors during the daytime.

A Vietnamese home in the country is normally divided into left, right, and middle partitions. Grandparents sleep in the back right side, and parents sleep in the back left side. The front right part is for the son, and the front left is for the daughters. The family altar is located in the middle of the home.

Every house in the countryside has a small vegetable garden and fishpond. Before, each peasant family had at least four children. Now, thanks to the family plan, people understand the risk of a population boom.

Hierarchy in families: The young respect the old, and the old makes concessions to the young. The father is

the breadwinner in a family. Family relations are typically paternalistic and conservative. Each family has three or four generations (grandparents, parents, and children, grandchildren, which can lead to generation gaps.

Vietnamese dress:

Nowadays, most Vietnamese people wear western style clothes. But before, people in the countryside used to wear an áo dài. Men had to wear a khăn áoing, a black bandana. Women had to wear a conical hat nón.

Nowadays, áo dài is considered the traditional fashion. This is charming and unique. So, Vietnamese women usually wear it on festivals or for banquets.

Conclusion

Originating from wet rice civilization and attached to the land and village life, Vietnamese are industrious and resilient. Their concept of religion is based mainly on Buddhism and Confucianism. In the long run, they are not hostile. They like to live in peace and friendship.

## **THE PRACTICE OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP IN VIETNAMESE VILLAGE**

### **A. Introduction:**

Ancestor worship is observed today in various places in the world. But is very clearly recognized by many Asian countries, especially in the Confucian - influenced

societies of China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Singapore. <sup>1</sup> In these countries, ancestor worship has been ritualized for a long time and has become a coherent part of social structure. It is not only a thread to tie family members in a lineage but also a clue to how people join together in a community that is regarded as a big family and is believed to have common ancestor. In some cases, ancestor worship is not only regulated by domestic rituals but also protected by law. <sup>2</sup>

In Vietnam, most families have an altar for ancestors in their home. Sacrificial ceremonies dedicated to ancestor are held several times a year. They are held in a household for the family's ancestors, in a village's ancestors and even on a national scale for the nation's ancestor.

## **B. Description**

### **I. Ancestor worship in family**

#### 1. Family and Housing

There are two forms of families in Vietnamese villages today: multi-generation family (three or four generations) and nuclear family (two generations)

Normally, the eldest son lives with his parents and the younger siblings build their own houses after their marriage. But there are cases when the eldest son prefers to build his own house and leave the parents' house his brothers and unmarried sisters.

There is one or several houses in a garden, or *vuon*, which is often bordered by hedges of bamboo. Originally, the garden was assigned to a nuclear family. It is a normal practice that a new family could apply to the government for a garden, but the principle has not been the same in different periods of history. When the sons of the family grew up and married, if they could not apply for a new garden, <sup>3</sup> they built their houses next to their parents' in the same garden.

Before and during the wartime, most village houses were built with bamboo pillars, bamboo woven walls and thatched roofs. Some rich families used wood pillars and brick walls. The house was always designed with three open compartments divided by the roof pillars. (It looks like one room but Vietnamese people recognize it as having "three spaces" based on the pillars, the structure of beams and the arrangement of doors and windows).



People prefer to build two attached houses in an L shape. The major one is called *nha tren*, upper house, and the subordinate one is called *nha duoi*, lower house. Both houses overlook a large courtyard, which is preferably paved with brick to be convenient for drying rice and other agricultural products. A kitchen is semi-attached to the lower house.

The upper house is the place for ceremony, for guest receiving, for serious talking. The lower house is for privacy and intimacy.

After the war, bamboo houses have been gradually replaced by brick ones. At the present time, about three quarters of the village families have brick houses. The newly built houses have a little change in design but we can recognize the "three-compartment" model being adapted.

## 2. Ancestor altar in a family house:

In houses of three-generation families, there is always an ancestor altar in the middle compartment of the upper house. The young couples living apart from their parents go to their parents' house on ceremonial days. It is unnecessary for them to put an ancestor altar in their own house, but they may do so if they want to. In fact, many houses have ancestor altar because the altar makes the house look more impressive to the residents.

The ancestor altar is called *ban tho ong ba* in Vietnamese, literally means "a table for worshipping ancestors". It is really a table with worship accoutrements put on it. Nowadays in brick houses, a shelf altar is affixed to the rear wall of the middle compartment. A wooden cupboard with its top higher than the shelf is placed in front of it. The top of the cupboard is the repository for the permanent articles of worship, which often include a container for the incense sticks, a pair of candle sticks; two drinking glasses; a flower vase; and a plate of fruit. The lower shelf behind is used to displayed various dishes of food on ceremonial days. Sometimes we can see portraits of ancestors on the altars.

When a parent dies, a new altar (a table) is put next to the ancestor altar or in the right compartment. The newly altar deceased soul is offered food for every meal just as when s/he was alive. The food is put on the altar, the candles

and incense sticks are burned. People in the family, often represented by the eldest man, stand meditating solemnly in front of the altar and speak out the invitation to the unseen loved person to come and enjoy the meal. It is consoling to all people to believe that their loved one is still present somewhere.

After three months, food is not offered for every meal. Fruit, cakes and cookies are put on the altar for many days. Incense is burned at intervals, usually at nights. There is no strict regulation concerning what kind of food should be offered or how often the ceremony should take place or how the ritual should be. There is a wide range of optional variants. After one to three years, the worship of the newly deceased spirit is moved to the common ancestor altar in the middle compartment of the house; the altar of the newly deceased spirit returns to the family table.

### 3. Ritual of ancestor worship in the family

As a way of showing veneration to ancestors, ancestor worship is observed in most Vietnamese families. The simplest worship behavior is to light an incense stick at the altar and to devote one's emotion to the ancestors. But there is a ceremony in which a lot of kinsfolk are involved and this can be regarded as a special activity. It is a ceremony on the death anniversary of an ancestor.

Vietnamese people call the ceremony *cung* or *ky* or *gio*. It is the ceremony to present offerings to ancestors and at the same time it is an occasion for the kinsfolk in an extended family to sit for a party. Moreover it is also a time for neighbors and friends to get together for a feast and to share a collective relationship and a mutual sympathy.

One ancestor may have many descendents: who among the descendents takes the role off the host of the death anniversary? There is not a very strict regulation, but a simple way to figure out is as: The eldest son always takes the main responsibility to carry out the ceremony at his house but his brothers can also take the duty to hole the ceremony to one of their common ancestors (parents, grandparents, granduncle, grandaunt...) at their houses, that means to share the responsibility.

On the death anniversary, the descendents of the deceased come to the house of the "on-duty" man. They often bring some kind of food such as a piece of meat, a dozen of

chicken eggs, a number of cakes... which are said to be offerings to the deceased. All the female descendents prepare together for a large meal, which then is placed on the ancestor altar. Then the candles and incense sticks are lighted on the altar. The host and/or his eldest brother bow solemnly before the altar, telling their devotion to the ancestor and their wish to present all the offerings to the ancestors. After about half an hour when the incense is nearly burn up, the candles are blown out and all the dishes of food are moved to the family tables to become part of the feast for the descendents and their guests.

In addition to the death anniversary, ceremonies are also held at traditional times on lunar calendar. But it is not a large meal or a big feast to be prepared, because all families observed the same ceremony at their own home and cannot come together for the feast. Some of the holidays are the fifteenth of the first lunar month, the fifth of the fifth lunar month and the fifteenth of the tenth lunar month.

The most important holiday is the Lunar New Year, that is called Tet in Vietnamese. In the last day of the year, there is a "welcome ceremony". it is to invite the ancestors to come back to the family to participate in the holidays with their descendents. After the ceremony, it is understood that the ancestors are present in the family. Some families offer food on the altar every meal during the holiday, the other offer one meal a day. In general, we can see cakes and fruit put permanently on the altar during Tet. On the third day of Tet, a ceremony is observed to see off the ancestors to the unknown world and Tet ends.

Ancestor worship is a personal and emotional sphere. Some of the old people light incense on the ancestor altar every night as a token of their veneration. Some families offer fruits and flowers on the altar regularly twice a month, on the night of new and full moon, i.e., the fourteenth and the last night of the lunar month.

## **II> Ancestor worship in the clan**

Normally all families in a village with the same first ancestor form into a clan.

On the family scale, people hold ceremonies for ancestors up to three or four generations. That means they hold ceremonies on the death anniversary of their parents,

grandparents, great grandparents and, sometimes, great great grand parents.

There are no ceremonies for the death anniversaries of ancestors in higher generations. An annual ceremony for all the ancestors of all generations is held collectively by the clan. That ceremony goes along with the days of refurbishing the ancestors' graves, and we call it Grave Day. Grave Day is held in the third month or the twelfth month of the lunar year depends upon the weather and the crops of the area. On Grave Day, or a couple of days before, people come to visit and refurbish their ancestors' graves and then come together to the clan's worship house (*nha tho toc*) to observe the ceremony to ancestors. The ceremony is similar to those in the family but looks more solemn with many old people in their black gowns and turbans bowing in front of altars to the rhythm of drum and gong.

In addition to the ceremony on Grave Day, there are two annual ceremonies held in the clan worship house, one in spring and another in autumn. Simple ceremonies are held on other traditional holidays.

There are too many descendents to come together in a clan's worship house; so only one or two members of a family come to the ceremony. The expenditure for the activities of the clan's worship house is shared equally by all married men of the clan.

### III> Ancestor worship in the village

We need to have a brief account of various worship institution in a village in order to identify ancestor worship structure in a village in Danang as follows:

- ❖ *Dinh* is a place to worship a god or some kind of god who is a protector for all people in the village. *Dinh* is also a place for public meetings of the village committee, hereafter called the public temple.
- ❖ *Chua* is a place to worship Buddha, hereafter called pagoda. Not all villages have pagodas.
- ❖ *Mieu* is a place to worship wandering souls or special deities, hereafter called the deity shrine. each village has a number of deity shrines.
- ❖ *Nha tho tien hien* is a place to worship the respectable pioneers (*tien hien*) of the village, hereafter called ancestors temple.

Normally, *tien hien* is understood as the founder of the village and, of course, the first ancestor of a particular

family in the village. A village may have not only one but also a number of *tien hien*. Vietnamese society is influenced by a hierarchical ideology. Descendants of the *tien hien*'s families gained a higher honor and more privilege, at least in discussion of public affairs, than those from other families.

Ceremonies are held twice a year in the ancestors' temple with the attendance of representatives of all the clans in the village. On other traditional holidays, simple rituals are observed. The meaning of the ceremonies is to express veneration to the pioneers, to thank them for their protection and to pray for a peaceful and happy life to all villagers.

#### **IV> Ancestor worship in relationship with other forms of worship**

In their houses, Vietnamese villagers worship other deities or spirit in addition to their ancestors. Entering any house, we see a small shelf attached to the rear wall about fifty centimeters above the ancestor altar, it is called *trang tho*, a worship shelf. There is no record telling clearly which kind of deities is worshipped there. The custom is passed from generations to by memory. When being asked, some say it is the house gods, others say it is the deities caring for the destiny of every family member. But considering how people speak of it, we may conclude that this worship is for all the gods are identified with goodness, justice and protection. An ancestor altar may not be found in a house whose owner is not the eldest son, but the worship shelf for deities exists in every house.

There is only one obligatory date on which a ceremony dedicated to the deities on the *trang tho* is held. It is New Year's Eve. People believe that there is a god who affects all happenings in the year, and every year a new agenda starts. On the New Year's Eve, people light incense and candle on the *trang tho* and put cakes, fruits, tea and wine on it solemnly say welcome to the god of the year, praying for everything to be good in the coming year.

Besides the welcome ceremony, the deities or gods on the *trang tho* are always the object of worship in any ceremony during the year. In general, when people light incense or place offerings on ancestors altar, they do the same to the worship shelf for deities.

Besides the deities who reside in the house and take care of the family, there are other deities and spirits who reside elsewhere around the house, in the garden, or under the tree. many family hold a ceremony dedicated to those deities and spirits once a year. A table is put in front of the house and is transformed into an altar. Food is put on the altar to offer to the deities and spirits. The main object of the ceremony is the deity of the land who takes care of the garden and all the crops. <sup>4</sup> But people also invite all the wandering spirits who may reside elsewhere around to come to share the offerings.

Besides the special ceremony, the deities and spirits outside the house are also worshipped and offered food on the ancestor commemorative days and sometimes on the traditional days. The rituals dedicated to the outside deities are carried out before the ceremony inside the house.

### **C. Discussion**

#### **I> Ancestor worship is an important part in the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people**

Looking at the practices in real life, we realize that the Vietnamese are closely attached to the custom of ancestor worship. The ritual of it can be invented, revised and changed by the intellectuals, but there still remains a certain core of practice observed by people in their everyday lives. Most of the major religions of the world, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity have been introduced to Vietnam at different stages of its history. However, ancestor worship is the most constant and deeply rooted belief by the Vietnamese people .

Religions believe in unseen force, including certain kind of gods or spirits. It is simple and practical for Vietnamese people to believe in the existence in some forms somewhere of their loved relatives after death. When a person is alive, he lives in a world full of gods, deities and spirits around him. When he dies, he joins the sphere of invisible spirits and his soul may be transformed into a god or deity. The gods, deities and ancestors as well as all kinds of spirits might bring good luck or chance to a living person.

There are not strict regulations about how to conduct ancestor worship in a family. People do it in the way their fathers did it. It seems that the villagers regard ancestor worship as a moral behavior. Growing up under the care of parents, people feel it is natural to obey and show respect to their parents. In the time when all forms of superstition were banned, ancestor worship exists as something not superstitious at all. It is at the core of the spiritual life of the villagers. Altars of ancestors and of deities in a house become the symbols by which villagers can find mental safety. When a peasant feels in need of some sympathy or support, he lights an incense stick and puts it on the altar. A lonely widow burns incense on the altar to request that her dead husband's spirit help her seriously sick child. An old mother lights incense to pray for the safety of her soldier son on the far battlefield, and people place offerings of flowers, fruit and food on the altars as thanks for help they received when they survived a disaster or had success.

Researchers have questioned the meaning of ancestor worship and tried to analyze the custom from various aspects. One of the ideas is "the dead thought as having a stake in a continuity, i.e. in the future persistence of the society to which they belonged in life..., it is this that, paradoxical as it may sound, gives ancestor worship a future orientation, rather than, as might superficially be thought to be the case, a fixation on the past."<sup>5</sup> Ancestor worship in Vietnam is more the living than the dead. Most of the books of ritual aim at moral behavior, the good life and benefits in contemporary society.

## **II> Ancestor worship in historical documents**

We have not found any document regulating sacrificial rites ancestor in Vietnam before the Le Code (the fifteenth century). We can only suppose generally that the kings of Vietnam before the fifteenth century might have encouraged the concepts of filial piety to ancestors and loyalty to the king in order to protect their positions as rulers. *Dai Viet su ky toan thu* records that the Ly King and his entourage made a vow at the shrine of the god of Dong Co mountain: "If we do not fulfill our filial duty as son to parents, if we do not fulfill our loyalty as an entourage to the king, we will be killed by the god".<sup>6</sup> In 1044, the Ly King held a ceremony in his ancestor temple to report the victory after the battle with Champa.<sup>7</sup> A general in the thirteenth century referred to the ancestors' altars and

parents' tomb to rally his soldiers in a fight against Mongol invaders: "...[if we are defeated], not only will my family be dispersed, but yours also will be enslaved by others. Not only will my ancestors' altars be discarded, but your parents' tombs too be excavated..."<sup>8</sup> And the story of Rice Cakes in *Linh Nam Chich Quai* reflects the custom of offering foods to the ancestor in a holiday which have been popular at that time (the fifteenth century): "[King Hung told his sons] which one of you is able to satisfy my desire for rare delicacies and dainty tidbits by presenting them to our ancestors at the year end, taking the principle of filial piety to the utmost, then the only then will I pass on my throne and establish that person as my successor."<sup>9</sup>

But before the fifteenth century, in addition to Confucian concepts, Buddhism, Taoism and other indigenous beliefs also had strong influence in the everyday life of common people. So we may suspect that the way of ancestor worship at that time was not the same as what we know in later centuries when Confucian influence became more prominent.

### **III> Ancestor worship: an interaction of metaphysical, moral and social issues**

In addition to the metaphysical aspect of believing in existence after death, ancestor worship is understood by the Vietnamese people as moral behavior. Many proverbs are passed by mother to children: *Uong nuoc nho nguon* (drinking water from a spring, remember the source of it); *An qua nho ke trong cay* (eating fruit, remember the person who panted the tree); *Chim co to, nguoi co tong, cay co coi, nuoc co nguon* (It is natural that the bird has its nest, the man has his clan, the plant has its root, the water has its source)

Ancestor worship is often regarded as a way to strengthen mutual attachment among members of a family, a clan, a village and a country. An image of a common ancestor of the whole country was recorded in the fifteenth century text.<sup>10</sup> This concept reappeared in educational books in the early twentieth century:

"People of one country  
Must love one another  
We are not distant  
But the same ancestry"

or

"Many homes make up a village  
Many villages form a country  
Our country's name Vietnam"



To be citizens, you children must remember  
that

Love your county, respect it  
Help make famous, wealthy and strong  
Able to stand equal with others."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ancestor worship is a main topic of the IX International Congress of Anthropological Science in Chicago. The papers to the Conges were edited and printed in 1976 in the book entitled *Ancestors*, including three articles on ancestor worship in Africa, thirteen articles on ancestor worship in Japan and six articles on ancestor worship in Taiwan. (Newell William H.ed.*Ancestor*, The Hague-Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1970)

<sup>2</sup> Some references to ancestor worship in China and Korea are: Ahern, Emily Martin, *The Cult of the Dead in Ch'ian Taiwan: A study of Ancestor Worship in a Four Lineage Community*, PH.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1971; Ebrey, Patricia Buckley, *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1948; Janelli Roger L *Ancestor Worship and Korean society*, Standford University Press, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, government policy has restricted the expanding of gardening land over farming land, so they do not assign new gardens for house building.

<sup>4</sup> The name of the ceremony is *cung dat*, that means "worship and offer to the land"

<sup>5</sup> William H. Newell, ed. *Ancestor*, The Hague Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1970. p.6

<sup>6</sup> *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*, volume 1, Hanoi: Khoa Hoc Xa Hoi Publisher, 1983, p. 255

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p.176

<sup>8</sup> Translation from Truong Buu Lam, *Patterns of Vietnamese Response to Foreign Intervention 1858-1900*, Yale University 1967, p.52

<sup>9</sup> Translation of Keith Taylor for classroom use, Cornel University, Fall 1996. See also Linh Nam Chich Quai, Vietnamese translation of *Le Huu Muc*, Saigon: Khai Tri, 1960, p.58

<sup>10</sup> Stories in the book *Linh Nam Chich Quai*

<sup>11</sup> Nguyen Cong Hoan, *Van Chu Viet Nam (Learning Vietnamese Words)*, Hai Duong, 1929, quoted in Marr, D.G., *Vietnamese Traditional on Trial 1920 - 1945*, California: University of California Press, 1981, p.91

<sup>12</sup> Nguyen Van Ngoc, *Nhi Dong Lan Vien (Kindergarten)*, Hanoi, 1929, lesson 144, quoted Marr, D.G.*ibid*, p.91

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### **RELIGIOUS BELIEFS**

*Objectives:*

*The students are expected to:*

- 1. Understand the characteristics of the Vietnamese religious beliefs*
- 2. Understand the uniqueness of the Vietnamese religious beliefs*

Regarding religious terms, there are no religious beliefs turning into religions in Vietnam. Major religions in Vietnam originally came from abroad. The folk religious

beliefs in Vietnam were formed a long time ago and play a vital role in the cultural life of the agricultural community. The Vietnamese folk religious beliefs may be divided into three groups:

### **I. Animism:**

1. Animism is quite popular in most of the cultures in the world. The Vietnamese people live on wet rice cultivation, therefore, their belief of worshipping nature is connected to their profession. Wet rice cultivation depends much upon natural factors which ignite the belief of worshipping groups of gods. Agricultural culture inclines toward yin, they tend to feminize all natural gods. They are not young beautiful women but they are BAÏ (old ladies) and MÁÛU (mothers). Goddess-worshipping beliefs are very popular in Vietnam. The animism of the Vietnamese people is well connected to agricultural festivities.

2. Forms of animism:

2.1. Tam Phuí: Máùu Thæåüng Thiãn (Heaven Goddess), Máùu Thæåüng Ngαιν (Earth Goddess) and Máùu Thoái (River Goddess). They are the important Goddesses to the wet rice cultivation.

2.2. Tæi Phaïp: Phaïp Ván (Cloud Goddess), Phaïp Vuî (Rain Goddess), Phaïp Lãi (Thunder Goddess) and Phaïp Âiãûn (Lightning Goddess). They are connected to water, the main source of life

2.3. Space God and Time God: The Space Gods are based on the Five-Element philosophy, The Five-direction Gods are in charge of the five directions... The Time Gods are based on the twelve-animal zodiac.

2.4. Botany-worshipping beliefs: Rice plant, Banyan tree, Areca tree, Mulberry tree and Gourd.

2.5. Animal-worshipping beliefs: Water-birds, Crocodiles and Snakes... especially, Dragon.

### **II. Genitalia Worship:**

1. Genitalia Worship expresses the desire of the growth of the human beings and things. They worship male and female reproductive organs and sexual intercourse. This religious belief began a very long time ago. Under the Chinese domination, when Confucianism gained a firm position in the Vietnamese society genitalia worship dissolved. It did not absolutely disappear, it integrated with other forms of art.

2. Reproductive organs worshipping belief: They worship natural or man-made columns/pilasters (male) and hallow,

cave, canyon (female); cross-bow (male) and bamboo tray (female); linga (male) and yoni (female)...

3. Sexual intercourse worshipping belief: The agricultural culture highlights the relationships in nature, the sexual intercourse worshipping belief is, therefore, quite unique and popular in Vietnam as well as South East Asia. We can easily find this religious belief in traditions, festivities and art. For examples: the reproductive organs procession in Bac Ninh, Ha Tay and Phu Tho... the statues of four couples having sexual intercourse on Dao Thinh bronze jar, decorations on the Dong Son bronze drum...

### **III. Human-revering belief:**

1. They worship people's souls. As other ethnic groups in South East Asia, the Vietnamese believe that there is a soul and body in each human being. There are three kinds of souls: tinh, khi, and than. Man has 7 bodies, woman has 9 bodies. It is believed that being alive is yang and being dead is yin. Human-revering belief is to hold a commemorative anniversary for the deceased.

2. Forms of human-revering belief:

2.1. The ancestor worship

2.2. The worship of the Gods of Home

2.3. The worship of the ancestors of professions

2.4. The worship of the Prosperity

2.5. The worship of the Fairy

2.6. The worship of the God of the village

2.7. The worship of the Four Immortal Gods: namely God Tan Vien (preventing flooding), God Giong (a legendary three-year old boy who became a national hero in the struggle against foreign invaders), God Chu Dong Tu (bright example in industrious labor to build a happy and prosperous life from dire plight and poverty) and Goddess Lieu Hanh (heavenly princess who left Heaven for the earth in the yearning for happiness)

### **IV. Characteristics of the Vietnamese religious beliefs:**

1. Represent respect and a strong relationship between human beings and nature

2. Represent the significance of yin-yang philosophy

3. Incline femininity

4. Represent a strong sense of community.

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## **CHAMPA CULTURE**

### Objectives:

*The students are expected to:*

- 1. Examine the history and culture of the Champa kingdom*
- 2. Visit Cham Museum to examine the art and architecture of the Cham people*

### **I. A summary of the Champa people and the ancient kingdom of Champa:**

#### **1. The Champa people:**

The Champa people, descendants of the Indonesian people, have a language that belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian linguistic family. BC the Cham people emigrated from south Ngang pass to present day Binh Thuan province. The population of the Champa is about 100,000 (according to the statistical materials on

April 1, 1989), ranking them 14th among the 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam. 89% of the Champa people live in Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan, and the rest live in An Giang, Tay Ninh, Dong Nai, Ho Chi Minh City, Binh Dinh and Phu Yen.

In addition to Vietnam, some Cham people also live in Cambodia and Thailand. The Champa people's presence in Cambodia is the result of the waves of immigration from Vietnam in the 14th century, and especially the 19th century. Most live in Kong Pong Cham (Khmer for "the Champa people's residence").

On the basis of religion, present-day Champa communities in Vietnam are divided into different religious groups such as Cham Brahmanism (the Cham people following Brahmanism or Hinduism in Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan), Cham Bani (the Cham people following Bani, a variant of Islam, in Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan) and Cham Islam (the Cham people following Islam in South Vietnam).

## 2. The culture of Pre-Champa:

In 1909, in the same place where the ancient Cham people lived, French archaeologists found artifacts belonging to the Sa Huynh culture. Since then, it has been assumed that modern-day Cham people are descendants of the Sa Huynh.

### Time of Sa Huynh culture:

Early Sa Huynh (before the Iron Age): 3,000 - 4,000 years ago

Late Sa Huynh (after the Iron Age): from the middle of the 1st millennium BC to the 1st and 2nd century AD

Owner: The Cham people are the main owners of Sa Huynh culture.

Characteristics: The death is cremated. The ashes are then put in a pot with tools, furniture and jewelry and buried.

Sa Huynh culture exchanged with Dong Son culture (North VN) and Dong Nai culture (South VN)

## 3. Champa kingdom:

Similar to Vietnam, in early 1st millennium the Cham people were dominated by the Chinese. In 192 the Cham people fought against the Chinese for their independence. Champa means a flower with sweet fragrance (aka "hoa dai" in northern Vietnam and "hoa su" in southern Vietnam). Champa is also the name of a region in northeast India. The word Champa was first engraved on stone steles in 6th century under the dynasty of Samghuvarman of Champa kingdom.

Champa kingdom existed from 2nd century to late XV century.

Champa kingdom was drastically influenced by the Indian civilization. This was expressed in their art, religion, writing system, the organization of their government.

A summary of the dynasties in Champa kingdom.

## **II. Champa culture:**

Sa Huynh culture is considered an endogenous factor and the influences from India an exogenous one of Champa culture. Herein some special sketches of Champa culture are discussed. The Champa art will be presented in Champa Museum.

### 1. Belief and religion:

#### 1.1. Folk belief

#### 1.2. Religion

##### 1.2.1. Hinduism

##### 1.2.2. Buddhism

##### 1.2.3. Bani - regional variant of Islam

##### 1.2.4. Islam

#### 1.3 The figures of religions in Champa

### 2. Architecture:

#### 2.1. Styles of architecture

#### 2.2. Models of architecture

#### 2.3. Technologies

#### 2.4. Styles of art

Tra Kieu style (late 7th century)

My Son E1 style (8th century)

Hoa Lai style (9th century)

Dong Duong style (from late 9th century to early 10th century)

My Son A1 style (10th century)

Transitional style (from My Son A1 style to  
Binh Dinh style in 11th century)  
Binh Dinh style (12th - 14th)  
Late style (14th - 17th)

### 3. Sculpture:

The sculpture of the Cham people is closely linked with architectural buildings. Each project serves for each specific function such as statue, bas-relief, and decoration...

A visit to Champa Museum to examine:

The construction and development of the Museum  
Styles of each work of art

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## **THE CULTURE OF THE ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS IN VIETNAM**

*Objectives:*

*The students are expected to:*

- 1. Examine the similarities and differences of 54 ethnic minority groups living in Vietnam*
- 2. Demonstrate Vietnamese culture as a culture of diversity and multi-nationality*

I. Vietnam, a multi-ethnic nation:

From the early days of the history, there were many ethnic groups living in Vietnam. Vietnam has 54 ethnic groups living in this territory. All the groups have the same origin, Indoneisien of Southeast Asian linguistic system. We have examined 3 linguistic families: Austro-Asiatic, Malayo-



Polynesian, and Sino-Tibetan. The 54 ethnic groups can be divided into 8 linguistics groups as follows:

1. Viet - Muong (4 ethnic groups): Viet, Muong, Tho and Chut
2. Mon - Khmer (21 ethnic groups): Khmer, Ba Na, Se Dang, Co Ho, Ho Re, Mnong, Stieng, Bru-Van Kieu, Katu, Khmu, Ta Oi, Ma, Co, Gie Trieng, Xinh Mum, Cho Ro, Mang, Khang, Romam, Odu and Brau.
3. Hmong - Dao (3 ethnic groups): Hmong (Meo), Dao and Pathen.
4. Tay - Thai (8 ethnic groups): Tay, Thai, Nung, San Chi, Giang, Lao, Lu and Bo Y.
5. Nam Dao (5 ethnic groups): Cham, Ede, Jarai, Raglai and Chu Ru.
6. Han - Tang (Sino - Tibetan) (3 ethnic groups): Han, San Diu and Ngai.
7. Tang - Mien (Tibetan - Burmese) (6 ethnic groups): Ha Nhi, Phu La, La Hu, Lo Lo, Cong and Xi La.
8. Miscellaneous group (4 ethnic groups): La Chi, La Ha, Co Lao and Pu Peo

Most ethnic minority groups live in the mountainous secluded areas, occupying 2/3 of the territory. Some groups are indigenous while others immigrated. Some formed in the early days of the history and some formed less than a century ago.

The great family of all ethnic groups in Vietnam was not mainly formed by any annexation. All groups keep their own identities, preserving their solidarity and avoiding discrimination. Their solidarity has been challenged in wars and is being improved. The contributions of the ethnic groups living in the northeast, Viet Bac, and Central Highland regions were instrumental to the success of such wars of resistance as the Tong (11th century), the Lam Son battle against the Ming (15th century), resistance against the Thanh (18th century) and those fought against the French and Americans.

The development of the ethnic minority groups in Vietnam is not the same. Differences in their cultural and economic development are based on their geographical residences and historical situations. For all ethnic groups, fighting against foreign invaders for national independence created a prolonged economic and cultural exchange. Based on the wet-rice cultivation and a multifaceted exchange, Vietnam has

developed "a diversified culture within an integrated whole".

## **II. Some figures of the culture of the ethnic minority groups:**

### 1. Muong culture:

The Muong people have the same origins as the Viet people (in Viet - Muong group). The population of 1,000,000 mainly live in Hoa Binh (75%), Thanh Hoa, Phu Tho and Son La provinces. Just like the Viet people, the basis for their economy is wet rice cultivation. Sticky rice is important in their daily lives. In addition, the Muong people grow corn, sweet potato, manioc, gourd, and pumpkin... Most people do not garden, preferring instead to pick wild leaves for their daily food. When women leave home, they normally bring a mirror, comb, knife and basket with them so that they can pick and cut leaves on their way.

Besides agriculture, people focus mainly on family handicrafts such as weaving, knitting and embroidery. As they do not know how to make pottery and forge iron, they buy these goods from the Viet.

Usually, 20-30 Muong families live in one hamlet, although there are large hamlets with more than 100 families. Hamlets are separate from each other, but are grouped together to become a Muong (county). Each hamlet, however, is home-ruled.

The chair of a Muong is the Lang Cun, a hereditary figure, who resides at Nha Lang. The Lang Cun's children and other relatives govern each hamlet named Tao or Lang Dao. The society has not been seriously differentiated.

Small family (monogamy) is a cell of the society. They live in houses on stilts with two halves: the front half is for men and the back for women.

Costumes: Men wear brown shirts; women wear headscarf, breast cloth, short shirt and long skirt. The hemline of the skirt is normally decorated with dragons or deer...

Belief: Ancestor worship

The Muong people have their own writing system. They have a rich folk literature with poems, legends, lullabies and songs. The most well known literature is the long poem of De Dat De Nuoc. Their various musical instruments include the

gong, violin, flute, and drum and trumpet... There are many kinds of traditional dances. There are many festivals all year round, especially agricultural festivals.

2. Tay - Nung - Thai culture:

Tay - Nung - Thai groups originated from Southwest China and immigrated to Vietnam at different times from BC until the 17th and 18th centuries. The population of the three groups is about 3,000,000. They belong to the Tay - Thai linguistic system.

Economy: Tay live mainly on wet rice cultivation. They grow rice in fertile valleys; therefore, their farming techniques are different from those of the mountainous areas. Besides rice, they plant corn, sweet potato, manioc, and tobacco. Like the Muong, they live on gathering foods instead of gardening. Although their handicrafts are not as advanced as some other minority groups, they know how to make rough pottery, forge knives, weave and knit. Particularly, the Thai women are very good at weaving and weaving has become a standard for men to choose wives.

Society: A unit of the society is Ban (hamlet). Each Ban comprises from 20 - 50 families. There are 3 or 4 generations in each family. They follow patriarchy. Many Ban are formed a Muong (county) governed by a landlord. The landlords are the Viet people, whose ancestors were first appointed to this position by the Dai Viet kingdom.

Costumes: The Tay, Thai, and Nung people wear brown shirts, men wear shirts with straight collars and four pockets. The Thai women wear Pieu headscarves decorated with pretty animals.

There are many festivals all year-round: Tet, Memorial Day, and Buddha's birthday (Lunar July 15). However, the three groups still worship their ancestors and heavens.

The Thai people have their own laws, and their writing system is based on a Sanskrit model. The Tay writing system is similar to the Nom Tay characters, which were developed by the Viet people and originally based on Chinese characters. The Nung people use their Nom Nung language. Their various forms of folk literature include epics, folk verses and legends. The Thai people have a well-known poem named Xong Chu Xon Xao (Seeing My Love Off). Songs and dances are very popular during festivals and fairs. There are many kinds of musical instruments, such as the trumpet,

flute, gong and drum. The Tay people are extremely skilled at decorating fabrics with different signs of religion, nature, and the universe.

### 3. The culture of the ethnic minority groups in Central Highlands and Central South:

Besides the Viet people, there are more than 20 groups living at the area of Central Highlands and Central South: E De, Ba Na, Xo Dang, M Nong, Ja Rai, Raglai, and Ma... These groups belong to the Mon - Khmer and Malayo - Polyneisian language families. The population is from 200,000 to 1,000,000.

The social unit is the buon or play (village), and comprises 30 families. There are 4 or 5 generations living in families that can include as many as 80 or 90 people in each family. At the center of each hamlet there is a Nha Rong, a large conference house for all villagers to meet and spend time together. The villagers elect the chief of each village.

All ethnic groups in the Central Highlands and South Central regions know how to garden and plant rice in the mountains. Animal hunting and fruit picking, however, are also important in their daily lives. The Xo Dang people (in Gia Lai and Kontum) know how to forge iron because they live close to an opencast iron mine.

People normally wear simple clothes. They love jewelry such as earrings, bracelets and necklaces.

Patriarchy is popular. Common beliefs include holy worship, Yang (spirit) worship and ancestor worship.

Each group has its own traditional dance. There are many kinds of musical instruments, including the flute, gong, and t'rung. The buffalo festival is the most popular among the Ba Na, Co Tu, Ma and Xe dang groups.

There are diverse forms of oral and written folk literature such as poems (the best known one is Truong Ca Dam San), legends, and folk songs.

### 4. The culture of South Khmer:

The Khmer people live in western Mekong delta in An Giang, Kien Giang, Hau Giang and Minh Hai... The population is about 1,000,000. They belong to the Mon - Khmer linguistic group.

Rice cultivation is their main source of income. They also grow corn, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, and beans. They also grow watermelon and mango. They know how to grow silkworms, weave, make rough pottery and carve silver.

The social unit is the phum or sac (village) comprises 10 families. There is a pagoda at the center of each village, and next to the pagoda is a salad (village house) - a common house for all villagers. The head of each village is elected by the villagers.

The main religion is Buddhism. There are 400 Buddhism temples. Temple is the center for all villagers to gather. Temples are used as schools for men to study Buddhist dogma. Two important festivals for the Khmer people are Tet and Ok Om Bok. Boat races are also popular cultural activities of the Khmer.

Khmer forms of music and songs have developed. The Khmer people adapted their writing system from Sanskrit. They also treasure their rich collection of legends, funny stories, and fables...