

Cultural Values of the Hoa People Community in Hoi An (Vietnam)



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ABSTRACT: The article studies the cultural values of the Hoa people (The Chinese people) community in Hoi An (Vietnam). In particular, in the field of material culture, the author of this article delves into the architecture, costumes, and cuisine of the Hoa people in Hoi An. Considering the spiritual culture aspect, the article examines the core contents in terms of religion, belief, language, customs, and practices of the Chinese community here. At the same time, clarify the cultural exchange between Vietnam and China to create the cultural identity of Hoi An today. To conduct research on this issue, the author relies on original documents and academic achievements of Vietnamese and international scholars. The author combines two main methods of History, namely the historical method and the logical method, with other research methods such as analysis, synthesis, comparison, etc., to complete the study's contents. The article will contribute to clarifying the cultural values of the Chinese community in Southeast Asia as well as in Vietnam and Hoi An in particular.

KEYWORDS: The Hoa people (The Chinese people), culture, Hoi An, material culture, non-material culture.

INTRODUCTION

The Chinese who followed the influx of immigration to Hoi An had deeply integrated into the local society by receiving favors from the Nguyen Lords. During the process, the Hoa people both absorbed and influenced the local culture. As a result of the cultural interference and acculturation between the Vietnamese and the Chinese in Hoi An, the Minh Huong community appeared. Regarding the meaning of the term "Minh Huong", A. Schreiner proposed that "Minh Huong" began to appear at the end of the seventeenth century. The Minh Huong people are descendants of the Ming people and indigenous women in Vietnam. According to the definition from A.Schreiner, the term "Minh Huong[明香]" can be understood as "people loyal to the Ming Dynasty", "ancestral sacrifice of the Ming Dynasty, worshipers of the Ming Dynasty".¹ However, the meaning of "明香" has also changed through each historical period. In the 8th year of Minh Menh (1828), when writing the phrase Minh Huong, the Nguyen court kept the word "Minh [明]" but changed the word "Huong [香]" into "Huong [鄉]". This point did literally create the transformation of the meaning of "Minh Huong" from "the keepers of the ancestral sacrifice of the Ming Dynasty", or "the Ming Dynasty loyalists" as was used previously into the new meaning of "the village of the Chinese who came to Vietnam from the Ming Dynasty". Since then, all administrative documents of the Nguyen Dynasty had written the word "Minh Huong [明鄉]" in this interpretation. In the "World Dictionary of Chinese - Overseas Chinese" the meaning of "明鄉" is explained as follows: The two words "明鄉" were gradually changed according to history, originally referring to the guild of the Minh Mat emigrants, then gradually changed the meaning to refer to the Chinese with the Minh Huong nationality, and finally changed to refer to the local-born Chinese, a hybrid of the Vietnamese and the Chinese.² The change in writing the phrase from "明香" to "明鄉" has more or less reflected the localization process of the Chinese community in Hoi An in the progression of integrating into Vietnamese society.

During the Nguyen Dynasty, the emperors of this dynasty introduced many policies to stimulate the integration of the Chinese into Vietnamese society. This was likewise a factor promoting the strong development of Minh Huong culture. The policy of the Nguyen dynasty introduced, for instance, if the father is the Qing people and the mother is Vietnamese, children must register in the register of Minh Huong officially recognized nationality (Vietnamese) when they reach the age of 18 with the Chinese communities in Vietnam in general and Hoi An in particular. Besides, for the Minh Huong, the policy of the Nguyen Dynasty was more favorable than that of the Qing (Chinese nationality). In fact, the Chinese community in Hoi An acquired not only a sense of cultural resistance

¹ Li Qingxin. 2009. *Mingxiang and Mingxiang Society in Vietnam*. Chinese Social History Review. Vol 10, p. 209

² Zhou Nanjing, 1993. *Dictionary of Overseas Chinese in the World*. Beijing: Beijing University Press, p. 495.

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but also integration into Vietnamese society, thereby gradually forming a cultural being with a mixture of Chinese and Vietnamese elements in Minh Huong. On the one hand, the Hoa people had, by all means, tried to help their children deeply absorb Chinese culture, actively building cultural institutions with Chinese characteristics such as temples, pagodas, and shrines as well as activities related to traditional Chinese culture. Especially for the Chinese (language - traditional characters), they have been making every effort to preserve it until nowadays. The author once went to the Fujian Assembly Hall in Hoi An; through talking with Vice President Ta Tan Vu [謝進武], I learned that, for the time being, the Chinese community here has made every endeavor to set up a Chinese class for their children, and their grandchildren, in the hope that generations of the Hoa people in this location can still keep their national language, although the majority of Chinese people still use Vietnamese in their daily lives. However, in order to have a good and successful future for their children and grandchildren; on the one hand, Minh Huong people have hoped to be able to preserve their cultural identity; on the other hand, they still have had to vigorously integrate into Vietnamese society. In fact, the Chinese have almost assimilated with the Vietnamese in terms of lifestyle, behavior, attitude, and to some extent, their voice. Meanwhile, the most deeply preserved values from Chinese culture have been beliefs - religions, customs, and habits³.

1. Material culture of the Hoa people in Hoi An (Viet Nam)

1.1. Architecture

In 1999, Hoi An Ancient Town was recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a world cultural heritage. Cultural heritage architecture in Hoi An mainly has seven types, including bridges, temples, pagodas, assembly halls, communal houses, houses, and citadel. The surviving ancient architectural works in Hoi An can be classified into three groups. The first group is the place of worship, including communal houses, pagodas, temples, shrines, mausoleums, assembly halls, and lineage halls. The second is civil works including narrow streets, houses, markets, ancient wells, and bridges. The third is a protective structure such as an ancient citadel.⁴ That is the overall classification of the architectural heritage of Hoi An. As for the architectural values associated with the Chinese community here, the following remarkable works can be found:

Firstly, Guan Gong Temple (Guandi Temple) is typical of Chinese temple architecture in Hoi An. As for the construction time of Guandi Temple, up to now, there has not been exactly determined yet. However, Professor Tran Kinh Hoa based on the content of the epitaph built after the first restoration in 1753: “Quan Thanh De Temple, Guanyin Buddha Temple, the original house has been built for several hundred years [關聖帝廟、觀音佛寺本鄉所建百有餘年矣]”, said that this temple was built before 1653, which was more than 360 years ago⁵. The architectural structure of Guandi Temple has three parts: the lobby, the inner courtyard, and the back hall. On the large door to the lobby, there was a relief stone carving sculpture with two blue dragons (according to legend, Guandi’s predecessors were Thanh Long - blue dragon and Bach Ho - white tiger). In the center of the lobby, there is an altar to worship the guardians of this deity. In the middle of the foyer and the back hall, there is a courtyard. Entering the courtyard, a small artificial lake with a view of the rockery (Hon Nam Bo) can be seen which reflects the stories of “the oath in the Peach Garden”, “Guan Gong protecting his two sisters-in-law”, “Cao Cao arrested and released by Guan Gong”. The back hall is the most sacred and dignified place in Guan Cong Temple. On the left is a burgundy Red Hare. On the right is a Red Hare in white. The images of the two horses are very realistic. Guan Gong Temple is a historical relic, a typical religious building of the Hoa people community in Hoi An. The art of architecture, sculpture and shaping of this construction is boldly unique in Hoi An’s artistic style.

Secondly, the assembly hall is also an important architectural form in the history of the formation and development of the Hoa people community in Hoi An. Assembly halls of the Hoa people in Vietnam can be divided into three categories. The first is the assembly hall established by compatriots, such as the Hokkien Assembly Hall and the Cantonese Assembly Hall. The second is the assembly hall established by merchants with similar occupations, such as the Chinese Assembly Hall (also known as the Duong Thuong Assembly Hall, the Ngu Bang Assembly Hall). The third is the assembly hall established by the local Chinese community, such as the Minh Huong Assembly Hall. In Hoi An, there are only the first and second types of assembly halls. In which the Chinese Assembly Hall and the Fujian Assembly Hall were the earliest assembly hall built (early 17th century). Other assembly halls date back later, such as the Chaozhou Assembly Hall was built in 1845. The Quynh Phu Assembly Hall was established in 1875, and the Quang Trieu Assembly Hall was established in the second half of the 19th century. The basic form of the architecture of the assembly hall is a whole which includes a large gate also known as the vestibular house, followed by a large courtyard with ornamental plants. On both sides, there are East House and West House, then the communal house (greeting lobby) connected with the main hall. Furthermore, there are also some outbuildings around the sides and back. All parts are attached to each other to shape the campus into a closed Guo word [國]. The Hoa people’s assembly halls in Hoi An have shown sufficiently sophisticated art of stone carving,

³ Nguyen Ngoc Tho. 2018. *The Hoa and the Minh Huong People with Hoi An’s Culture*. Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Culture and Arts Publishing House, p. 53.

⁴ Nguyen Phuoc Tuong. 2004. *Hoi An - World Heritage*, Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh City Literature and Art Publishing House, p. 38-39.

⁵ Tan Zhici. 2005. “Chinatown” and Guan Gong Temple in Hoi An, Vietnam, *Bagui Overseas Chinese Journal*. Issue 5, p. 45.

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wood carving, etc. which was created from the talented hands of Chinese and local artisans. The Hoa people's Assembly Hall in Hoi An often goes with the temple function, such as the Fujian Assembly Hall, also known as the Kim Son Pagoda.

Third, the ancient house of the Chinese is likewise an important type of residential architecture shaping the cultural identity of Hoi An. These ancient houses all share a common feature of narrow width extending from front to back. The overall layout consists of four parts: the front house, the middle house, the back house, and the rear house. A front house is a place of transactions for business purposes. The central court is the courtyard of the province. The back house is where the family lives. The backyard is the backyard, where there is a well, a kitchen, and a toilet. The house on the 101 Nguyen Thai Hoc is one of the architecture of the ancient house belonging to the Minh Huong people. It is not the oldest house. However, it is the most typical house for the townhouse style of Hoi An ancient town, making an important contribution to the identity of the world cultural heritage recognized by UNESCO on December 2, 1999. This ancient house belongs to civil architecture, which has been the living place of the Le family for 7 generations. According to the owner, this ancient house was built in the period 1800-1820, which means it has a history of more than 200 years. In previous centuries, this was a Vietnamese emporium selling cinnamon and silk products under "Tan KY". The front of the old house opens to the busy Nguyen Thai Hoc Street, and the back of the house faces the banks of the Hoi An river on Bach Dang street, which is a convenient place for importing goods.

The house was built in a tubular style, 30 meters long. The architecture was built with four consecutive houses. Although this ancient house has no windows, it is appropriately airy and cool due to the skylight (empty courtyard) which helps the house receive light and air circulation into the house space. It is noticeable that the wall of this ancient house consists of two layers. The outer layer was built of brick, and the inner layer was made of wood. Therefore, the interior space of the house is cool in the summer and warm in the winter. In addition, the custom of ancestor worship is always a cultural and religious belief of the Hoa people and the Minh Huong communities that cannot be ignored; that is why there is also a worship space in this old house.

In short, the architecture of the Hoa people and the Minh Huong communities has enriched and shaped Hoi An culture as today. The thoughtful decorative arts of the Chinese have also made their architecture a beautiful sight, creating an attraction in Hoi An ancient town. In the architecture of the Hoa community, there is a unique and typical element called the "door eye" it is a special feature of decorative art in Hoi An; in China, it is called "menzan [門簪]". The door eye, which is likened to a "god door", is the crystallization of the desire for a prosperous and happy life, trade smoothly prospers like hotcakes and fortune, and the desire to avoid tribulation, risk, disease, etc. The Hoa people and the Minh Huong in Hoi An anciently believed that humans and animals both have eyes to "see life" and "see through their hearts", consequently, houses and objects associated with human destiny must have eyes as well⁶.

1.2. Cuisines

In Vietnam, there is a saying "Live with a Japanese wife, stay in a Western house, and eat Chinese food". This saying shows that the culinary culture of the Hoa people has permeated the daily life of Vietnamese people. Culinary culture is also one of the pillars connecting Vietnamese and Chinese cultures in Hoi An in its nearly 400-year history. From the 17th century, the Chinese from the coastal areas of China began to come to Hoi An, especially the residents of Fujian-Hokkien and Guangdong- Cantonese. Consequently, they brought their eating habits to Hoi An. Gradually, the Vietnamese likewise adopted the culinary style of the Chinese, which created a distinct style in Hoi An. In consequence, the Chinese food in Hoi An mainly belongs to Cantonese food [粵菜] and Hokkien food [閩菜] among the 8 schools of Chinese cuisine.

Cantonese dishes in Hoi An have many varieties. For instance, the dish "Chi Ma" is a black sesame sweet soup mainly made by Cantonese expatriates in Hoi An and then hawked or sold in shops. "Luong phanh" is another type of Cantonese cuisine, and the pronunciation of "Luong phanh" is pronounced in Cantonese from the word "Loeng Fan [涼粉]" in Mandarin Chinese. "Luong" means cool, good, "Phanh" is powder, and put together means a cool powder. In addition, taro sweet soup, "Tau Xa" sweet soup, and "Khau Nhuc" are Cantonese dishes.

Furthermore, there are additionally several cuisines of the Chinese community that has been modified by the native Vietnamese, which have become a special dish in Hoi An today, identical to mung bean desserts, wonton, Fujian fried rice noodles, etc. Green beans cake in Hoi An has a long history. Since the 18th century, mung bean cake had been a valuable gift, used by local residents to present to the mandarins. During King Minh Menh's tours of Quang Nam, residents here offered premium mung bean cakes in Hoi An street for the king to partake.⁷ Wonton is also a famous and popular dish in China. It had not only received the favor of the Chinese in China but had also been brought to many places by Chinese immigration and developed by local processing, such as fried wonton and noodle wonton in Hoi An.

Moreover, there are some Chinese culinary that have integrated into Vietnamese society in Hoi An through Chinese holidays such as Dragon Boat Festival. Vietnamese people in Hoi An have received Chinese culinary culture and have established the custom

⁶ Nguyen Ngoc Tho. 2018. *The Hoa and the Minh Huong People with Hoi An's Culture*. Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Culture and Arts Publishing House, p. 152.

⁷ Tran Van An. 2000. *Cuisine culture in Hoi An ancient town*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, p. 57.

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of making Banh U La Tro - pyramidal glutinous rice cakes to worship ancestors at the Dragon Boat Festival. Simultaneously with Tang Yuan – sweet glutinous rice balls soup, Chinese people have considered the winter solstice an extremely significant day in Chinese culture. They had a say aphorism “The winter solstice - Dongzhi is as great as the year [冬至大如年]”. On the winter solstice, family members will reunite and worship their ancestors. sweet glutinous rice balls soup, known as Tang Yuan [湯圓] by the Chinese, is the main dish, containing the symbolic meaning of homecoming and reunion.

When discussing the dishes in Hoi An ancient town, it is impossible to disregard Cao Lau. Nevertheless, there has been much debate about the origin of Cao Lau. The Hoa people community in Hoi An also did not recognize this as their dish, and some Japanese researchers believed that Cao Lau was similar to Udon noodles.⁸ No matter what, Hoi An people have asserted that Cao Lau is the product of the combination of indigenous culture and culture from the outside, along with the traces of Chinese culture are the most obvious. In general, the culinary culture of the Chinese has permeated the lives of the natives. Hence, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish whose community inherits the culture. Moreover, culinary culture is not only expressed in dishes, but also in the concept of eating as food should coordinate and harmonize according to the principle of yin-yang.

1.3. Costumes

Along with food, costumes are also one of the elements that boldly represent the cultural traditions of the Hoa people community in Hoi An. It is proposed in the document that when the Chinese first arrived in Hoi An (the 17th century), they had worn Ming Dynasty costumes. This point was described by the Chinese Zen master Thich Dai San in “the Chronicles of Overseas” published in 1695 when he arrived at this port town for the first time: “Straight along the riverbank about 3- or 4-mile-long road called Dai Duong Street. On both sides of the road, the shops and restaurants are closely connected, and the street owners are all Fujian people. They still dressed up following the pattern style of the pre-dynasties (Ming Dynasty).⁹

The Dang Trong government had never had a regulation forcing the Chinese to give up their customs. In “Annals of Gia Dinh Citadel”, Book IV on “The Recording of Custom”, Trinh Hoai Duc recorded details proving that Dang Trong Lords always respected the culture of Chinese immigrants and other expatriates: “The expatriates from different countries are interspersing with each other; however, the clothes and daily supplies are different in their own country culture”¹⁰.

However, it was recorded in the “Cases of the King-Ordered Great Southern Conference” that “in the 2nd Thieu Tri Year (1841), the king approved the discussion: In all localities, for the new comings who are Qing people, they must follow the established rules and must be recorded in State books, pay taxes. When people of that state give birth to children, they are not allowed to shave their hair and wear a queue style. For children who are at the age of 18, the governor must report to the mandarin, in agreement with Minh Huong's number, and based on Minh Huong's law, to pay taxes. They cannot follow their fathers in the books of the Qing”¹¹. Thus, during the period of the Nguyen Dynasty, the Chinese (the Qing people) who came to Hoi An were forced to give up their culture of national costume. The Qing Dynasty was the underworld of the Manchus, and the policy of “The Phat Dich Phuc [薙髮易服]” was always coercive. At that time, many Ming people fled abroad to escape this policy. This policy was mainly aimed at the Han people, to distinguish those who resisted and obeyed the Qing. Therefore, a person's clothes and appearance always show their national identity. The above policy of the Nguyen Dynasty aimed to “localize” the Chinese culture in Hoi An by peaceful means. However, through the process of long-term residence, along with the interference and acculturation between the Chinese and the Vietnamese. Until now, there is no apparent distinction between the costumes of the Chinese people in Hoi An and the Vietnamese people.

2. Non-material culture of the Hoa people in Hoi An (Viet Nam)

2.1. Religious beliefs

In the middle of the seventeenth century, many Ming people refused to obey the Qing; therefore, they fled to Hoi An. These people were called “Minh Huong people”. The beliefs of the Minh Huong people have reflected the tradition of cultural beliefs of China. They also put their spirit into activities related to religion.

The earliest religious space the Minh Huong people built was the Guan Gong temple. According to Professor Tran Kinh Hoa's study, this temple was built by the Old Ten.¹² Worshiping Guan Gong is also the most typical belief conducted by both Vietnamese and Chinese in general and Minh Huong in particular. In Hoi An, Guan Gong temple is called Chua Ong by the Vietnamese and known as Trung Han Palace by the Minh Huong. Guan Gong was a person who lived in the Three Kingdoms period named Quan

⁸ Tran Van An. 2000. *Cuisine culture in Hoi An ancient town*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, p. 30.

⁹ Thich Dai San. 1963. *A Perspective of Vietnamese History - the Chronicles of Overseas*, Hanoi: Hanoi Social Sciences Publishing House, p. 155.

¹⁰ Trinh Hoai Duc. 1998. *Annals of Gia Dinh Citadel*, Hanoi: Hanoi Education Publishing House, p. 141

¹¹ Nguyen Dynasty Cabinet. 1993. *Cases of the King-Ordered Great Southern Conference*, Hue: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, p. 311.

¹² Tan Zhici. 2005. “Chinatown” and Guan Gong Temple in Hoi An, Vietnam, *Bagui Overseas Chinese Journal*. Issue 5, p. 45.

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Van Truong. He was considered a god because of his courage; loyal and filial; and integrity and righteousness, which is a shining example of spiritual beauty and the word "humanity" of humans. Every year, the Chua Ong festival is solemnly held on the 24th day of the sixth lunar month. And every three years, people hold a traditional festival in the years of the Dragon, the Dog, the Ox, and the Goat, which lasts for three consecutive days on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th day of the sixth lunar month.

The ancestral belief of the Hoa people has also been preserved from ancient times. Ancestor worship is one of the emblematic forms of The Hoa community beliefs since ancient times. It originated from the concept that the soul is immortal, even if the person has died. Ancestor worship had a close relationship with the tong phap regime and the blood relation. It had become a cultural institution closely associated with family and relatives, especially for those who have gone far away from their homeland. "When you drink water, think of the source", and "don't lose the root" is always a quality that is respected by the Chinese; hence, the ancestral belief can be said to have permeated the bloodline of the Chinese. In Hoi An, the Hoa community and the Minh Huong people, in particular, have their own lineage halls, such as the lineage hall of the Tran, the Truong, etc. Nowadays, the ancestor worshipping of the Hoa people is held at the clan house; most of them do not organize anniversaries (chap ma) but focus on the Qingming New Year, rites of spring, and rites of Autumn Festival.¹³

The quality of "when you drink water, think of the source" has always had a special position in Chinese culture. The Chinese in Hoi An have not only had an act of worshipping their ancestors, but they also have had the custom of worshipping senior sages. The most famous place of senior sages' worship of the Hoa people in Hoi An is Minh Huong Tuy Tien Duong, originally Minh Huong Tien Tu communal house, which was built by the Old Ten in 1725 and renamed as Minh Huong Tuy Tien Tu in 1820. This communal house was built mainly to worship Thap Lao, Luc Tanh, Tam Gia, and many other senior sages who had merit in building Minh Huong village. The Ten Elders are the exiles of the Ming Dynasty, including 10 people with the surnames Khong Thai, Nhan, Du, Tu, Chu, Hoang, Truong, Tran, Thai, and Luu. After the Ten Elders was the Luc Tinh Dynasty, including Wei, Trang, Ngo, Hua, Thieu, and Ngu.

The god of wealth is additionally a god community that is popularly worshiped by the Chinese, Minh Huong, and Vietnamese in Hoi An. As Hoi An with the function of a commercial port, worshipping the God of Wealth is an appropriately natural phenomenon, especially for trading families.

The worship of the Sea God in Hoi An is likewise strongly developed. TianHou ShengMu [天后聖母] is a god popularly worshipped in Hoi An. TianHou, also known as Mazu [媽祖], was Lam Mac Nuong, originally a resident of Mi Chau Island, Bo Duong, Fujian province. TianHou ShengMu is a sea god, mainly protecting the safe and sound of ships and people working on the sea. Therefore, the custom of worshipping TianHou was spread to Hoi An through trade routes and the immigrants from the Chinese coast. Currently, the Hokkien Assembly Hall, the Chinese Assembly Hall, the Cantonese Assembly Hall, and the Hai Binh Palace have all conducted the worship of the Lady Thien Hau.

Besides the types of beliefs common in the Hoa people community in Hoi An, researchers also find a few beliefs with unique characteristics of the Chinese people from different localities in China. In particular, the custom of worshipping Chieu Ung Cong is a separate identity in the beliefs of Hainan Chinese. Chieu Ung Cong is the common name for a group of Hainan-born Chinese merchants who died at sea, then recognized and ordained by the Nguyen Dynasty. This incident was engraved on the epitaph in Gia Ung Assembly Hall in 1891. These 108 Chinese were all merchants, suspected of being murdered by pirates in the Quang Ngai sea, finally acquitted by King Tu Duc and ordained Chieu Ung Heroic Action. On the other hand, the custom of worshipping Phuc Ba (Ma Vien) is the belief of worshipping the sea god of Chaozhou Chinese people in Hoi An. Phuc Ba is also known as Bon Dau Cong or Ong Bon. Hence, Chaozhou Assembly Hall is known as "Ong Bon temple" or "Am Bon temple".

During the progress of coming to the South, to consolidate and maintain their dominion over the land of Dang Trong against the Trinh lord in the North, the Nguyen lords paid great attention to developing the economy, culture, military, political, etc. The main purpose was to make Dang Trong residents able to have a stable life, especially in the circumstances of chaotic war and precarious life. Residents not only needed physical peacefulness but their psychology and spirit also needed shelter. In that context, the Nguyen Lords chose Buddhism. For this decision, Professor Li Tana said: "Lord Nguyen could not use Confucianism because the basic assertions of Confucianism directly contradicted their position of Nguyen being seen as a separatist regime and rebellion against the dynasty. However, the Nguyen family did not dare to go too far and did not dare to find a solution completely different from the tradition of the Vietnamese in the north. In those circumstances, Mahayana Buddhism provided a solution that met the Nguyen Dynasty's needs. Buddhism, on the one hand, promoted the national identity of the Vietnamese people and on the other hand, calmed the concerns of immigrants without questioning the legitimacy of the rulers"¹⁴. The fact that the Nguyen Lords

¹³ Nguyen Ngoc Tho. 2018. *The Hoa and the Minh Huong People with Hoi An's Culture*. Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Culture and Arts Publishing House, p. 83.

¹⁴ Li Tana, Nguyen Nghi translated. 2013. *Dang Trong: The social and economic history of Vietnam in the 17th and 18th centuries*. Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Young Publishing House, p. 222.

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supported Buddhism was also recorded by Thich Dai San Master in the “Chronicles of Overseas”: “The palace of Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu is decorated with Buddhist flags, tents, wooden fish and upside down bells, like a Buddhist temple”¹⁵.

Buddhism flourished in Dang Trong in general and Hoi An in particular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, also because of the profound influence of Chinese culture, especially the Chinese Zen masters presented in Hoi An during this period to propagate Buddhism. Typically, Zen masters Nguyen Thieu, Thich Dai San, Minh Hai, etc. They brought the baggage of Chinese Buddhist guidance to Dang Trong in general and Hoi An and were accepted and reconciled by the people here. It was spread out throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Among the Buddhist denomination, the Lam Te Zen denomination was the most typical in Hoi An due to the support of the Nguyen lords. Zen master Nguyen Thieu (1648-1728) was a native of Guangdong, belonging to the 33rd Lam Te generation, who came to Vietnam to propagate Buddhism. He became a Buddhist monk at the age of 19, came to Vietnam at the age of 30, and passed away at the age of 81. During his 51-year stay in Vietnam, he contributed a lot of effort to preaching the truth

Thich Dai San (1633-1705) was also a famous Chinese Zen master in Vietnam. He not only contributed much effort to spreading the Buddhist dharma in Vietnam, but he also wrote many valuable research works, especially the *Chronicles of Overseas*.

Zen master Minh Hai (1670-1746) was the founder of the Lam Te denominator, the Chuc Thanh sect. Zen master Luong, named The An, was born in Fujian province, belonging to the 34th generation of the Lam Te main lineage. He came to Dang Trong due to the request of Zen Master Nguyen Thieu. After attending the Great Ordination Homily in Hue. He went to Hoi An to build Chuc Thanh Pagoda around 1694-1695. Zen Master Minh Hai was one of the famous Chinese Zen masters in Vietnam in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Throughout his life in Quang Nam, he made great contributions to the propagation of the Buddhist dharma. Chuc Thanh Pagoda was the earliest and most typical Buddhist temple built in Hoi An.

Although under the reign of Lord Nguyen, Confucianism was not created favorable conditions for development. However, in the mid-nineteenth century, with the support and permission of the Nguyen court, the Minh Huong people in Hoi An gradually erected temples of literature. The Saint Temple of Literature on Huynh Thuc Khang Street was built in 1859, and the Temple of Literature on Phan Chu Trinh Street was erected in 1868, which were authentic proofs of the existence of Confucianism in the spiritual life of the Hoa people community in Hoi An from the past to the present. In other respects, the Chinese in Hoi An have followed Taoism. The belief in the three holy mothers of the Chinese people, which showed their act of worship to the three goddesses Quynh Tieu Thien De Lady, Bich Tieu Thien Vuong Lady, and Van Tieu Thien Thai Lady, with the meaning of asking for the protection of fetuses and children, that all have their origins from Taoism¹⁶. In addition, the respect for the King of Heaven, the Bao Sinh Great Emperor, the Land God, etc., of the Hoa people in Hoi An has been also influenced by Taoism.

2.2. Language

Linguistically, the Hoa people and the Minh Huong over time have integrated almost completely into the Vietnamese subject community. Especially for the case of Minh Huong people in Hoi An today who have completely Vietnamese-seized and speak Vietnamese.

As for the transformation in the language of the Hoa people and the Minh Huong people's use in Hoi An, the author of this article believes that this process can be divided into four stages. The first is when most of the Hoa people and Minh Huong people still used Chinese characters and spoke their local languages (Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka, etc.) and Vietnamese. The second is the period when the Chinese began to use Latin characters and spoke Vietnamese, even so, mixed with local languages and French. The third was the period when the local language and Chinese characters began to leave the history of the Hoa people, especially the Minh Huong; meanwhile, French and Vietnamese were used interchangeably. The fourth is the period when Vietnamese and Quoc Ngu characters became the main language of the Hoa people in Hoi An.

In the book “A Journey to Nam Ha in the years 1792 and 1793”, John Barrow mentioned what observed and experienced, as well as what he saw and heard in Vietnam. He recorded in his book the pronunciation of about 100 words in the Quang Nam area, which became a valuable document for language research in Hoi An - Da Nang in the 18th century. This book was translated into French and received the respect of linguists. There are some scholars who believe that the words that John Barrow included in the book are the product of a mixture of Vietnamese and Cantonese dialects. For this issue, Professor Hoang Thi Chau conducted a very in-depth study, and she discovered that at that time the voice of Hoi An used a “bilingual habit”. That means Hoi An people except for using Vietnamese to communicate, also used another common language. However, this common language was not formed as John Barrow said but was influenced by Cantonese. Professor Hoang Thi Chau took the phonetics of the words that John Barrow gave to compare with the phonetics of the Quang Nam dialect and the dialects of the southern provinces today. Since then, she affirmed, in the 18th century, the phonetics of Hoi An-Da Nang did not have much difference from the Northern phonetics. However,

¹⁵ Li Tana, Nguyen Nghi translated. 2013. *Dang Trong: The social and economic history of Vietnam in the 17th and 18th centuries*. Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Young Publishing House, p. 225.

¹⁶ Nguyen Ngoc Tho. 2018. *The Hoa and the Minh Huong People with Hoi An's Culture*. Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Culture and Arts Publishing House, p. 110.

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by the 19th century, after the journey of John Barrow, the Vietnamese of these two places began to appear with different characteristics. This phonetic change was closely related to the emergence of large numbers of Chinese. The Chinese who came to Hoi An mostly came from Fujian and Cantonese provinces. Hence, in the process of regularly interacting with the Chinese, there were some words of Hokkien and Cantonese that were borrowed and used by the Vietnamese. Consequently, it gradually seeped into Vietnamese, especially the vocabulary related to food and daily objects. The reason is that the Hoa people community in Hoi An is mostly doing business. For instance, xiu mai (shumai), gio cha quay (bagel twist-spring rolls), xa xiu (char siu), lau (hot pot), sui cao (dumplings), lap xuong (sausages), and li xi (lucky money), etc., are all borrowed from Cantonese. Besides, there are also words borrowed from Fujian, for example, my (noodles), bo bia (popiahs), dua (chopsticks), etc.

In the history of the formation and development of Quoc Ngu and Vietnamese characters, Chinese characters and dialects of Chinese have consistently joined as a component. Although the language culture of the Chinese has a significant influence on the Vietnamese language, we can still see the flexibility of the Vietnamese people. They always have a high sense of nationalism. They learn the culture of other peoples and at the same time, adapt the culture of the others to become their own, and the rich Han-Nom heritage proves this point.

2.3. Customs and habits

Customs and habits are a very expensive concept. It can be said that it exists in all human activities and aspects. When researching about the Hoa people in Hoi An, the author found that customs in marriage, funerals and holidays are the highlights in the spiritual and cultural life of this community.

From the Qin - Han dynasties, Vietnam was influenced by Chinese culture, including the dharma calendar - lunar calendar. Therefore, Vietnamese people share many holidays with Chinese people, such as Lunar New Year, Cold Food Festival (or Thanh Minh Festival), Dragon Boat Festival, the Qixi Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and The Ghost Festival (Zhongyuan Festival), etc. Even nowadays, the Chinese community in Hoi An still keeps the custom of celebrating traditional Chinese cultural holidays. However, they have also adapted to the local culture to create their cultural identity. Evidence can be taken from the Chinese custom of celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival in Hoi An. The word "Mid-Autumn Festival" was first mentioned in the Zhou Dynasty's etiquette. It was the day the Zhou Dynasty conducted moon worshipping activities and welcomed the cold season [中秋, 夜迎寒, 亦如之].¹⁷ For the time being, the Mid-Autumn Festival in Chinese culture is considered as a family reunion occasion. The main activities are "rejoicing the moon", eating moon cakes, and playing with lanterns. In Hoi An, during the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival, there is a unique custom that has never been seen in the traditional customs of Chinese culture - the TianGou - Heaven Dog [天狗] dance. TianGou means the dog of heaven and is a mascot associated with the moon. In Chinese culture, there is a concept of "Dog Eats Moon - Celestial Dog Lunar Eclipse", which is talking about the phenomenon of the lunar eclipse. As the ancients did not understand this natural phenomenon, especially during the Mid-Autumn Festival. Therefore, if a lunar eclipse occurs, the Chinese believe that the dog in the sky is eating the moon, so they must beat the gong or beat the drum to scare away the Heaven Dog. The Heaven Dog dance was also born due to this myth¹⁸. It becomes a typical custom of the Hoa people community in Hoi An every Mid-Autumn Festival, as a result of the interaction with the local culture, which distinguishes it from the Lion dance of the Hoa people in the South of Vietnam or the Lion dance in China.

Besides, The Kitchen God Day, which is worship to make farewell to the Kitchen God for returning to heaven, is also a localization custom of the Hoa people community in Hoi An. This important custom takes place on December 23rd in the lunar calendar before the Lunar New Year. It is additionally a common custom in the culture of the Chinese, the Minh Huong, and the Vietnamese. This habitude has a long origin. The Chinese believe that the Kitchen God is a fairy god sent by God to the human world, in charge of the fortunateness, disasters, and happiness of a family. Hence, they are revered as the "nhát gia chi chủ - the only house owner". In Te Tao Tu [祭灶詞] Tong Dai Thanh [宋大成] who lived in the Song Dynasty wrote: "Traditionally, in December, on the twenty-fourth day, the Kitchen God returns to heaven to present report".¹⁹ The custom of saying goodbye to Kitchen God in China was recently formed from the Song Dynasty. However, the Kitchen God in Vietnam and Hoi An are different from the Kitchen God in China. It has been Vietnamese-seized into the legend of "two men and one woman",²⁰ usually using 3 hats

¹⁷ Li Xueqin. 1999. *Annotation to Zhou Li*. Beijing: Beijing University Press, p. 631

¹⁸ Tran Van An, Truong Hoang Vinh. 2012. *Heaven Dog Dance*, Hoi An Cultural Heritage Management and Conservation Center. URL: <https://hoianheritage.net/vi/di-san-van-hoa/Nghe-thuat-trinh-dien-dan-gian/Mua-Thien-cau-68.html> (accessed February 15, 2022).

¹⁹ According to the ancient legend, on the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth lunar month, the Kitchen God returning to Heaven to present report.

²⁰ According to a folk story, The Kitchen God in Vietnam has the following story:

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to represent. This custom once again shows the uniqueness of the Chinese culture in Vietnam which is different from the traditional culture of the Chinese in China. In addition, it is also the quintessence of the exchange between the two communities of Vietnam - China.

Marriage customs. The Chinese are very taboo of people with the same surname get married, because they think that if two people with the same surname get married, when they conduct worship to the ancestors and the dodder marriage tie, Zhou Gong and Mr. and Mrs. Matchmaker will not approve. Thus, the marriage of two people will not be good and will face many difficulties in the future.²¹ The concept of Hoa people and Vietnamese people in Hoi An has some different points. For Vietnamese people, it is impossible to get married if they have any relative relationships, regardless of closed or far relative relationships. However, for the Chinese, as long as they don't have the same surname, even if they are the children of her aunt's family, her children can still get married. The Hoa people's marriage custom in Hoi An likewise has an interesting phenomenon that the Chinese do not marry their daughters to the Vietnamese, except in special cases such as talented Vietnamese or powerful families. However, it is very common for a Chinese son to marry a Vietnamese woman. This concept is also reflected in the marriage custom of the indigenous Chinese in Melaka, which will be introduced in the following section.

Funeral customs. The Chinese have the concept of "life and death is the greatest matter", which means that birth and death are the most important event in a person's lifespan. Hence, they must always be respected. In funeral customs, the Hoa people have elaborate rituals associated with two basic purposes: demonstrating the tradition of filial piety and the family's reputation and praying for the deceased to be able to salvation²². Not only have elaborate rituals, but the Hoa people also have many taboos in funeral customs. The Chinese are afraid of the cat walking across the dead person due to being fearful that the dead person will be raised up and then turn into a zombie. As for the time of shroud, they also have the custom of choosing the good time; even the time of the burial, the time of mourning and the time of lowering of the grave must be taken place in the good times so that the dead can go smoothly to the afterlife.

CONCLUSION

Over 400 years of settling in the land of Hoi An, the Chinese community here has built and preserved Chinese cultural values associated with their homeland. It can be said that, historically, a China sub-model was formed in Hoi An. That is reflected in both material and non-material culture, from architecture, and culinary costumes to religion, beliefs, languages, customs, and practices. However, in the process of living together with the Vietnamese, a two-way exchange and acculturation process took place. In particular, the cultural values of the Chinese people here are also gradually "localized" to improve their "flexibility" and the ability to "adapt" to the general flow of Vietnamese culture. That has made Hoi An's own identity as well as affirmed the contributions of the Chinese community here in enriching and diversifying Vietnamese culture in the past, present, and future.

Once upon a time, there was a husband and wife named Trong Cao, and the wife's name was Thi Nhi. One day Trong Cao beat his wife, she was so angry that she left home. After that, she met a man named Pham Lang. Pham Lang brought Thi Nhi back to his home, and then they got married.

After Trong Cao's anger subsided, he felt regret and went to find his wife. He looked everywhere but he couldn't see her anywhere. After all the money he brought with him was spent, Trong Cao had to go begging. One day, Trong Cao came to ask for some food at Thi Nhi's house, and they recognized each other. They regretted from what happened and felt sorry for each other. Thi Nhi was worried about Pham Lang coming home and discovering that her ex-husband was at their house. While she hadn't known what to do, she told Trong Cao to hide underneath the straw bale located in the garden. When Pham Lang returned home, he immediately burned a pile of straw to collect ashes to fertilize the fields. In the meantime, Trong Cao was exhausted, therefore he fell asleep in a pile of straw, and eventually burned to death. Thi Nhi ran out of the house and saw that Trong Cao had died by her arrangement, so she jumped into the burning straw to die. Pham Lang encountered such a situation, also jumped with his wife, and eventually died. The Grace above saws these three people who had the capacity of love, responsibility, and righteousness; hence, they ordained them into the Kitchen God).

²¹ Tran Van An, Tong Quoc Hung. 2018. *The Hoa people's cultural activities in Hoi An*. Danang: Danang Publishing House, p. 89.

²² Nguyen Ngoc Tho. 2018. *The Hoa and the Minh Huong People with Hoi An's Culture*. Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh Culture and Arts Publishing House, p. 123.

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