

The Significance of Studying the Relationship Between Folk Literature and Written Literature



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ABSTRACT: Folk literature and written literature share a close-knit relationship, mutually enriching each other. This research not only deepens our understanding of community beliefs, doctrines, and worldviews but also explores and evaluates the cultural diversity and essence within the spiritual heritage of generations. Employing comparative analysis, historical research, and cultural literary analysis, this paper focuses on analyzing common factors, mutual influences, and the relationship between folk literature and written literature. This interaction fosters diversity and richness within national culture and folk literature. Studying this relationship not only generates new creative resources but also opens doors to understanding the history, culture, and mindset of a community. Consequently, it promotes understanding and respect for culture and diversity, contributing to the development and preservation of our cultural heritage.

KEYWORDS: folk literature, written literature, cultural preservation, symbiotic relationship, national culture.

I. INTRODUCTION

The ancient proverb states: "A strong root fosters a sturdy tree". This phrase not only emphasizes the importance of a strong root system in the life of a tree but also reflects the necessity of a solid foundation in all activities. Folk literature is a part of national literature, and like other countries, Vietnamese literature has thrived and developed robustly thanks to two main sources: folk literature and written literature. Folk literature is like a nurturing source, fostering and nurturing written literature. It is the root, the solid foundation, aiding in the strong and sustainable development of written literature. Written literature is not merely repetition but also inheritance and development from the essence of folk literature. In this way, it enriches and diversifies the national literature. The relationship between folk literature and written literature is a dialectical, closely interconnected, and mutually influential relationship. The development of written literature strongly depends on nourishment from folk literature, while folk literature is also revitalized, developed, and preserved through written literature.

Research on the relationship between folk literature and written literature brings significant value to understanding the culture and ideology of a community. Folk literature often contains the values, beliefs, and traditional spirit of a nation, serving as the collective memory of the community and its history, culture, and ethnicity.

In the process of studying the relationship between folk literature and written literature, we can preserve and promote the important elements of folk literature and culture, helping future generations understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. The relationship between folk literature and written literature serves as a vital bridge between universal cultural heritage and specific expressions in written literature. This research deepens our understanding of the beliefs, doctrines, and worldviews of the community while exploring and evaluating the cultural diversity and essence in the spiritual heritage of previous generations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers worldwide have highlighted the importance of the relationship between folk literature and written literature in contemporary literary research forums. Nishanov Yashin Izatullayevich spoke about oral folk art as a creative foundation that literary geniuses respond to, serving as the origin of national identity and folk worldview [13]. Author Ellis Davidson [12] analyzed how folk culture influences other disciplines such as mythology, ethnology, literary criticism, history, and sociology. Author Herzfeld, M.F. also extensively researched folk culture and the formation of modern Greece, emphasizing the role of folk culture in nation-building [14]. Harold Scheub analyzed the evolution from traditional folk literature to modern written literature, highlighting it as part of the process of consciousness evolution [15]. Authors have also examined the cultural relationship and logical traditions through connected symbols [1], [16]. Author Tim Evans explored folk literature in H.P. Lovecraft's works [13]. From the roots of folk literature, various genres have been created and enriched, a topic also addressed in studies by authors

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Chatman [6], [3]. Later literary genres owe gratitude to traditional folk literature [17]. The authors agree that folk literature impacts literature and the development of novel genres [1], [2].

In Vietnam, numerous researchers have discussed the relationship between folk literature and traditional folk literature. Authors Bùi Văn Nguyên [4], Cao Huy Đình [5], Đinh Gia Khánh [8], Lê Chí Quế [18], Vũ Anh Tuấn [23], etc., have provided insights into the intimate and foundational relationship between folk literature and written literature. In 1980, an article by author Lê Kinh Khiêm appeared in the Journal of Literature discussing general theoretical issues regarding the relationship between folk literature and written literature [19]. Author Vu Ngoc Khanh [25] has reconstructed several forms of "interaction" between folk literature and written literature. This author has identified three forms of preserving folk tales. The first form is retelling fairy tales; the second form is when writers attempt to maintain the essence of folk tales but are not completely loyal, instead altering the storylines. The third form involves creating a series of new stories that have never been in the treasury of fairy tales. According to author Do Binh Tri, the relationship between folk literature and written literature is a natural, creative, and law-like relationship. These two literary components both exist independently and lean on each other [9]. Authors Tran Duc Ngon and Le Truong Phat [20], on the other hand, focus on the fundamental forms of interaction between folk literature and written literature. These studies also emphasize the relationship between folk culture and other fields such as media, tourism, and mythology. Folk literary works are often rewritten and adapted into written literature, while written literature inspires folk literature.

III. METHODOLOGY

Using comparative analysis, historical research, and literary and cultural analysis, this study focuses on analyzing common factors and mutual influences to understand the relationship between folk literature and written literature. This interaction fosters diversity and richness in national culture and literature. Research on this relationship not only generates new creative resources but also opens doors to understanding the history, culture, and mindset of a community. It promotes understanding and respect for culture and diversity, contributing to the development and preservation of our culture.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There exists a natural interchange between folk literature and written literature, as creators may come from either the educated elite or the common people, evolving through the process of cultural refinement to become versatile artisans. Authors become dual artists, engaging in both writing and spontaneous creativity. The rapid dissemination of works may blur the author's identity over space and time, with authors sometimes forgetting their intellectual creations in the context of spontaneous inspiration. Every literary tradition grows from the achievements of these two literary components. The influence of folk literature on written literature is significant. Looking at the world, we see the success of exploiting folk materials by writers such as Pushkin, La Fontaine, and Andersen. Their works, such as "The Fisherman and the Golden Fish" (Pushkin), "The Ant and the Dove" (La Fontaine), and "The Little Mermaid" (Andersen), are imbued with the essence of folklore and folktales. In the creative flow of Vietnamese literature, writers utilize folk literary materials as a constant source of innovation. Folk literature and written literature develop within different historical and cultural contexts. Writers of written literature continuously explore the spiritual treasures of their ancestors, drawing inspiration and forms from folklore to create new works, thus establishing interaction between these two literary components. This affirms the inheritance and development of national literature. When studying literary works influenced by folklore, readers have the opportunity to reflect, contemplate, and deepen their aesthetic appreciation, as the coexistence of the old and the new within the artistic framework of a literary tradition produces works that encapsulate cultural essence.

1. Concept of traditional folk literature

When discussing Vietnamese literature, we must mention two literary components. Folk literature precedes written literature, and even after the emergence of written literature, folk literature continues to exist and develop alongside it. Until today, these two literary components have always influenced each other throughout the history of literature. Folk literature, where "folk" refers to the people, is literature passed down within the community through oral transmission and collective creation. Therefore, folk literature is also known as popular literature, emphasizing the subject of creation, mainly by ordinary people in society. When referred to as oral literature, it highlights the distinctive creation and transmission characteristics of this literary component, but the term "folk literature" has a broader and more inclusive connotation.

When discussing folklore, one often thinks of the traditions and modes of existence of a past society. Tradition involves the transmission over time (from one generation to another) of cultural values through vertical transmission and the dissemination of these values across different regions. Folklore is an art of improvisation, a spontaneous response carried out according to the norms of a particular ethnic group. Due to its collective nature of creation and transmission, folklore represents the collective voice of the community, rather than the individual voice of an author as seen in written literature. Therefore, elements such as plot, plot points, imagery, and language are repeated in various works. These repeated content and artistic elements across different works are referred to as traditional formulas. When analyzing folklore, we juxtapose the work with others containing similar elements, which is considered traditional analysis. For instance, the recurring motif of the protagonist being conceived

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under unusual circumstances, such as in the stories of Saint Giông's mother conceiving by stepping on a giant footprint or the mother of Coconut Skull conceiving after drinking water from a coconut shell, or the many folk songs beginning with the phrase “my dear”... The repetitive opening lines of a song are called linguistic formulas. Linguistic formulas can vary widely. For example, to describe a beautiful countryside, formulas such as “our village scenery is picturesque”, “green hills and blue waters like a painting”, “white rice in clear water ” or to praise a girl's beauty, formulas such as “willow-like eyebrows”, “sharp as a dagger eyes”, “pearl-like teeth”. Describing a woman's mood often includes phrases like “evening after evening”, “night after night...”. Folk songs also repeat many symbolic images, such as the symbols of boats and docks, or the iconic old banyan tree.

The linguistic formulas and recurring elements in folklore establish artistic traditions. By definition, preliterate societies may lack written literature, but this does not mean they lack rich traditions. They possess diverse oral traditions. Even in societies with writing systems, oral traditions persist, especially within families. This phenomenon is universal; societies without distinct written literature still have many proverbs, sayings, incantations, fables, and folk songs passed down orally. Oral transmission involves conveying messages or lessons through spoken words and takes various forms; it is also the passing of cultural artifacts from one member to another. Spiritual lessons are stored in memory and recalled and transmitted in subsequent generations when appropriate. During Vietnamese family meals, conversations often interweave with proverbs, and allegorical stories, conveying implicit lessons. Every night, grandparents or parents recount stories to their children, both to soothe them into sleep and to educate them. Through this practice, society maintains a rich cultural heritage across generations, despite lacking a writing system. Storytelling isn't just entertainment. As we know, oral storytelling, dating back to prehistoric times, often imparts principles, history, and even knowledge passed down from one generation to another through oral traditions. Older generations can impart wisdom to their descendants through proverbs or folk songs, such as “*Kim vàng ai nữ uốn câu/ Người khôn ai nữ nói nhau nặng lời*” hoặc “*Người khôn ơi hỡi người khôn/ Lại đây anh đánh song loan cho ngòi/ Song loan anh đã đánh rôi/ Ai mà lịch sự anh mời ngòi đây*”. These verbal messages from the past transcend time to reach the present generation. In the history of national literature, folklore emerged to fulfill the people's need to express their consciousness. Throughout history, the populace has always had the need to express their thoughts, emotions, and attitudes towards the realities of life. Due to its oral nature, folklore can spread quickly and widely what needs to be said, without anyone being able to censor it.

Oral tradition can be defined as explanatory narratives passed down orally from one generation to another. People have long had the habit of seeking information about folklore in literature [7]. The oral tradition initially characterized human societies without writing systems and no means to transmit traditional cultures or record the thoughts, reflections, and emotions of its members. Each member of society is responsible for maintaining oral tradition and memories to transmit stories about beliefs and traditions and, more importantly, for the direct communication needs of the working people [21],[22]. Oral transmission is the foundation, the cornerstone, and the guiding ship of each person's thoughts. It is closely tied to human society and reflects people's ways of life, eating habits, styles, morals, and attitudes. It expresses a variety of emotions, and diverse feelings about any simple or complex issue, and gives meaning to life. It is a “colorful expression” with “many versions” and is not static but related to change. It involves creating messages that an individual, a family, and subsequently a community receive, all based on rumor, memory, vision, dreams, and even hallucinations. The messages are narrated in various forms to bind the community together.

The concept and definition of folklore literature have been acknowledged by scholars since early times. According to the Vietnamese Folk Literature textbook (edited by Đinh Gia Khánh), folklore literature is a collective creation, orally transmitted by the working people since primitive communal times, evolving through various stages in social systems with classes, and continuing to exist in the present day. Folklore literature in Vietnam is also referred to as folk literature (or popular literature), oral literature (or oral tradition), folk arts, folk creation, etc. The concept of folklore literature emerged around the 1950s.

The concept of folklore literature is described as follows: Folklore literature corresponds to the term “folklore” linguistically, representing the component of folk literature within the framework of artistic folklore (...) It encompasses various genres of folk creations with linguistic artistic elements formed historically, maintaining style sustainability, and playing a decisive role in the existence, transmission, and transformation of artistic folklore in general within folk culture [23], [24]. In Vietnamese academia, the term “folklore literature” is the designation for a subject within the field of Vietnamese Language and Literature. It can be defined as Traditional folklore literature comprising all genres of oral literary artistic creations, continually created and recreated collectively through generations of selection and refinement by the people, serving as an important element within the framework of folk culture and folk arts of the ethnic community, possessing indigenous characteristics. Therefore: i) Folklore literature is literature transmitted within the community orally and collectively composed. The term “folk literature” emphasizes the authors, mainly the common people. Oral literature emphasizes the method. Distinction: ii) Folk arts: Refers to both folklore literature and other art forms such as folk music (folk songs), folk dance, folk painting, and folk performances (puppetry, traditional opera). A folk song is a static text, set to a folk melody for recitation (dynamic form). For example: “*Còn duyên kẻ đón người đưa/Hết duyên đi sớm về trưa mặc lòng/ Còn duyên ngòi gốc cây thông/ Hết duyên ngòi gốc cây hồng hái hoa/ Yêu nhau chơi cửa, chơi nhà / Cho thầy mẹ biết, đuốc hoa định ngày/ Còn duyên buồn nụ bán hoa /Hết duyên ngòi gốc cây đa đợi chờ/ Đùng thấy lắm bạn mà ngờ /Tuy rằng lắm bạn vẫn chờ người ngoan”.*

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2. Basic characteristics of written literature

Compared to other art forms such as painting using color as material, music employing melody, and sculpture capturing lines, literature utilizes language as its most essential material, “A boundless sky of one's own” (Cao Bá Quát). Folk literature and written literature have a close relationship. The literature contains vivid memories of the diverse life of the community. Literature is an indispensable part of human life. We encounter literature through school courses, where we learn about past masterpieces. Our experiences stem from the simple folk songs of our grandmothers and mothers. Literature appears in mass media, musical melodies combined with verses, films and television programs weaving together myths and characters, and graphic websites narrating fairy tales conveying new life messages. Literature participates in every aspect of our lives. Like other art forms, literature provides joy and enchantment, transporting us away from the “real” world to distant places with the allure of literature. However, literature also poses intellectual challenges, requiring us to think, to place ourselves in the characters to resolve them. Wrestling with these challenges often enhances the joy of literature for readers. Through the study of literature, we open up opportunities to “see” more, and to appreciate life and humanity. We learn that not only a part of life, literature often reflects the real world and helps us clarify our position within it.

The Significance of Literature in Life: We choose to engage with literature for pleasure and meaning - literature not only entertains but also speaks to us about important aspects of life. Sometimes, with literature, we read for pleasure. When we read for entertainment purposes, we often don't pay much attention to the deeper meaning of the work. We want to experience the detailed, marvelous descriptions that literature provides, to escape our daily worries and let the magic of each word weave its spell in our souls. Remembering the first times we read books that enthralled us, making us forget everything around us. Always striving to read quickly, to finish and see how the characters' lives will turn out? Reading just for entertainment is like saying to ourselves, “I just want to enjoy, not to think”. Reading to find meaning. However, reading for entertainment and reading to find meaning are often closely related. The joy of reading books often comes from the meanings that the work conveys. For example, when reading “The Tale of Kieu”, we might be drawn in by the story of the talented and virtuous girl whose fate is full of twists and turns. But delving deeper, we discover the richness of themes and artistry that we hadn't noticed before. We see how Nguyen Du portrays the myriad emotions of the characters, making “The Tale of Kieu” a “book of a thousand emotions”, reading to see the special cultural values, particularly spiritual culture. “Nguyen Du must have had a clear-sighted eye for six realms and a heart that understood a thousand lifetimes to be able to write verses as if blood flowed from the tip of his pen” (Master of the Dream Lien Duong). The poetic language, profound tone, and deep understanding of society and humanity all contribute to the joy of reading - because of its meaning.

Many centuries have passed, yet one question is still often asked: what is literature? Literature is the combination of language and details within a work. The first level of meaning involves understanding the words and sentences in the text, expanding to grasp the details to understand the characters, events, settings, and timeframes. However, for some works, careful reading is needed to understand the content the text intends to convey. The second level of meaning involves ideas that arise from the connection between larger parts of the work. These parts include character descriptions, plot, context, metaphor, symbolism, etc. Finally, the third level of meaning connects the work to the outside world. This may occur when the work reflects aspects of the real world. The following diagram illustrates the communication process of literature:



During the creation process, authors aim to convey a certain message, they express this in literary works. They “send” their work to readers. Readers read (receive) the work, as recipients, challenging them to understand what the author conveys in the work. Instead of just telling us what they want to say, authors use “literary” tools such as metaphor, symbolism, plot, implication, rhythm, prosody, etc., to convey their ideas. Such artistic techniques convey meaning indirectly. They compel readers to discern the author's ideas. It's like an author telling us, “I want to express my idea about something, but instead of saying it directly, I'll tell a story and let you understand what I'm trying to say”. Understanding the relationship between folklore and written literature, researchers are interested in three main issues: the relationship between folklore and folklore literature, the relationship between folklore and written literature, and the relationship between folklore literature and written literature. Folk literature has recreated the entire material and spiritual culture of the working people. The important achievements of traditional folklore literature have contributed to the emergence of written literature. Therefore, investigating and researching the relationship between traditional folklore literature and written literature is of great importance in gaining a deeper understanding of the cultural essence of the country and providing a comprehensive view of the development of literature, consciousness in preserving culture through historical periods.

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1. Cultural preservation and development: Studying the relationship between folklore literature and written literature contributes to the preservation and development of Vietnamese literature and culture. Traditional folklore literature often serves as the root of Mother culture, and understanding it can help maintain and inherit traditional values. For example, when studying folktales, folk songs, and proverbs, we gain deeper insights into the culture of the nation. Looking deeply into the fairy tale of Tấm Cám, we understand the knowledge about beliefs, customs, the philosophy of karmic living, and reincarnation of the people of the rice culture. Folk literature often reflects the soul and thoughts of the community. Researching this relationship helps us understand how written literature reflects and interacts with folk values and beliefs. Analyzing the presence of folk elements in prose, poetry, and modern novels helps to understand the influence and interaction between folklore literature and written literature. This is important not only to maintain but also to develop and innovate folk culture in the modern context. Literary experts and artists can use this knowledge to shape and create creative works suitable for modern needs and values.

The difference between folklore literature and written literature, as two historical forms of literary art, two aesthetic systems, is distinguished by several aspects. Firstly, in terms of language, folklore literature and written literature use distinct transmission forms. Secondly, in terms of social foundation and aesthetic ideological content, we observe differences in artistic reflection between these two forms. Thirdly, there is a difference in poetic forms. This distinction is manifested in the following aspects: Difference in creative subjects: The poetic form of written literature is the work created by individual writers, while the poetic form of folklore literature is the creation of texts by the collective authorship. Difference in reflection principles: Folklore poetic form involves creativity through the re-creation of tradition, whereas the poetic form of written literature emphasizes the individual's creativity.

The differences in creative principles between written literature and folklore literature lie in their approach to selection and typification, with written literature often leaning towards specificity while folklore tends to favor generalization. Alongside the aforementioned differences, we also observe numerous similarities between these two forms of artistic expression. Both folklore literature and written literature are profound representations of the national spirit, consciousness, and patriotism, either directly or indirectly through their details and imagery. Therefore, folklore literature and written literature exhibit both similarities and differences. They are two independent forms of art, two distinct aesthetic systems that mutually influence each other. The modes of expression in the relationship between folklore literature and written literature are evident in various aspects. Firstly, there is the issue of the relationship in terms of ideological content between these two forms of literary art. Folklore literature is the intellectual treasure of the working people, providing written literature with a wide range of topics to choose from. Authors can draw upon folklore literature as a source of inspiration for their works. Many folk tales and characters have been adopted by modern poets and writers as subjects for their creations, offering valuable lessons. Folklore literature also inspires creativity in written literature, guiding authors towards the aesthetic ideals of simplicity and rustic beauty cherished by the laboring masses. In turn, written literature learns from folklore literature in constructing vivid literary figures. In terms of artistic expression, many genres and poetic forms in written literature are built upon and developed from the inheritance of genres and poetic forms in folklore literature. Written literature is deeply influenced by folklore literature in terms of language, tone, and literary devices. Authors in the literary field have enriched their works by incorporating idioms, proverbs, and everyday colloquialisms of the common people into their pieces.

Conversely, authors of folklore literature have utilized literary materials from written literature to enrich and enliven spiritual life. Moreover, they have also learned much from professional poets and writers. The classic plots and imagery from written literature have been interwoven into folk songs and poetic tales. Through the mutual infiltration between folklore literature and written literature, traditional literary and cultural values have been preserved.

2. Providing a foundation for new literary creativity: Traditional folklore literature often serves as a source of creative inspiration. Exploring this relationship helps us better understand how traditional elements can be adapted and integrated into modern literary works. Folklore literature can offer creative materials and lay the groundwork for innovation in written literature. Researching the relationship between them helps us understand the creativity and innovation in culture originating from traditional sources. For example, folk songs are a rich cultural heritage that originates from the heart, and everyone can learn and sing them because they are relevant to society. Traditional folklore literature plays a role in society, ethics, and politics. It imparts knowledge about various areas, such as explaining cultural responses to nature, and social, and human behavior. It carries rules, beliefs, knowledge, and philosophies for younger generations to learn from. Although it is a long-standing genre, it continues to thrive in society. It constantly regenerates and adapts to circumstances and time. Every society worldwide is known to have literature in written or oral form. This literary foundation has withstood the test of time. Studying folklore culture helps us understand its value and provides a clear, in-depth view of the traditions, customs, and culture of that specific society. Folklore literature is dynamic and adaptable to new circumstances and times. Despite societal changes, progress, and modernization, folklore literature can still be applied in these developed societies. Folklore literature is guided by the people. Comparing dialogues from folklore with excerpts from contemporary literature illustrates how folklore elements are adapted and create

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unique new perspectives. Artists, writers, and artisans can use this information to develop new, unique works that reflect traditional values.

3. *Community spirit and cultural diversity*: Researching the relationship between folklore literature and written literature helps us better understand community spirit and cultural diversity. Authors argue that folklore culture is linked to other disciplines, such as mythology, anthropology, literary criticism, history, and sociology. This can help respect and preserve diversity within society. Analyzing how folk stories from different geographical regions influence local and national cultures can help understand how folk literary works in different countries share similarities.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Folk literature and written literature strongly influence each other. Folk literary works are often adapted and transformed into written literature, and conversely, written literature provides inspiration and new creative materials for folk literature. This interaction creates multidimensionality and enriches the literature and culture of the nation. Researching this relationship not only opens up new sources of creative resources but also enriches written literature. It provides valuable educational materials, helping students better understand the culture, history, and mindset of a community. This encourages awareness of culture and diversity, fostering deep respect and understanding of the spiritual values of the nation. Studying the relationship between folk literature and written literature not only brings profound understanding of Vietnamese culture but also establishes a foundation for the development and preservation of culture across time and space. The relationship between folk literature and written literature is a window to a profound understanding of the history, psychology, and values of a society. Literary researchers and humanities scholars can use this information to analyze and explain the development of modern society based on folk culture. In summary, studying the importance of the relationship between folk literature and written literature is not only about preserving traditional values but also provides us with profound insights into our literature.

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