



Research Paper

## Preserving and Promoting the National Cultural Identity of Vietnam in the Current Context in Light of Ho Chi Minh Thought

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### Abstract

During his lifetime, President Ho Chi Minh always paid great attention to the preservation and promotion of national cultural identity in the cause of building the nation's culture. In the current context, the application of Ho Chi Minh Thought on this issue is of great importance and necessity. This article seeks to clarify the fundamental contents in Ho Chi Minh Thought concerning the preservation and promotion of national cultural identity; and, on that basis, proposes a number of solutions contributing to the development of an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with strong national identity.

**Keywords:** Ho Chi Minh Thought, national cultural identity, preservation, promotion.

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### I. Introduction

The national cultural identity of Vietnam is an invaluable asset and the soul of the nation, forged over thousands of years of nation-building and national defense through countless historical ups and downs, written in the blood, tears, and sweat of the entire Vietnamese people. Therefore, it is a symbol of endurance and a bridge connecting the past, present, and future of the nation. In the process of revolutionary activities and leadership of the Vietnamese revolution, President Ho Chi Minh made significant contributions to the cultural field of both the nation and humanity. He put forward many valuable viewpoints in the cultural domain, including the viewpoint on preserving and promoting national cultural identity.

### II. Content

#### 2.1 Ho Chi Minh's Viewpoints on Preserving and Promoting National Cultural Identity

##### a. Ho Chi Minh's Viewpoints on Culture

Ho Chi Minh early on provided the concept of culture as follows: "For the sake of survival as well as the purpose of life, humankind has created and invented language, writing, ethics, law, science, religion, literature, art, tools for daily living such as clothing, food, shelter, and methods of utilization. All these creations and inventions constitute culture. Culture is the synthesis of all modes of living together with their manifestations that humankind has produced to meet the needs of life and the demands of survival" [1]. The above viewpoint of Ho Chi Minh has generalized the content of the category of culture. He held that culture not only encompasses spiritual activities of human beings but also material activities. At the same time, this broad concept of culture also indicates that the survival needs of human beings, as subjects of social life activities, are the origin and profound driving force of culture.

Ho Chi Minh affirmed that culture is the driving force and the goal of the revolutionary cause. He clearly stated the requirement that culture must illuminate the path for the people to follow; that culture must lead the people to achieve independence, self-reliance, and self-mastery. Culture creates material and spiritual strength to defeat foreign invaders. If the economy improves the material life, then culture serves to elevate the spiritual life of the people.

He also put forward the viewpoint on building a new culture with five major points guiding the construction of national culture: "1- Building psychology: the spirit of independence and self-reliance. 2- Building ethics: knowing how to sacrifice oneself for the benefit of the masses. 3- Building society: all undertakings related to the welfare of the people in society. 4- Building politics: popular rights. 5- Building the economy" [2].

Ho Chi Minh's viewpoints on culture hold great significance and value, contributing to guiding and orienting the construction, development, and enhancement of the value of Vietnamese culture.

### **b. Ho Chi Minh's Viewpoints on Preserving and Promoting National Cultural Identity**

National cultural identity consists of the enduring cultural values of the community of Vietnamese ethnic groups; it is the fruit of the labor, production, combat, and exchange processes of the Vietnamese people. National cultural identity is perceived through two layers of relations. In terms of content, it is the love of the country and the nation; the spirit of independence, self-reliance, and national self-respect... In terms of form, the national cultural character is manifested in language, customs, habits, festivals, traditions, ways of feeling and thinking.

National cultural identity contains great value and holds important significance for the cause of national construction and defense. It reflects the unique features and national characteristics. It is the source leading to Marxism-Leninism. In the process of leading the Vietnamese revolution, Ho Chi Minh always paid attention to preserving and promoting national culture. He regarded national culture as a precious capital, and every citizen must take responsibility for preserving and promoting it. He signed decrees on the protection and preservation of national cultural heritage. According to him, "our people must know our history, so as to understand thoroughly the origins of our Vietnamese nation"; "the more deeply imbued with Marxism-Leninism, the more we must value the fine traditions of our forefathers." "Each nation needs to take care of its own national characteristics in art." He emphasized the need to nurture national character while thoroughly eliminating all colonial remnants and the enslaving influences of imperialist culture, and respecting the customs and culture of ethnic minorities.

He always upheld the fine traditions of the nation, especially the patriotic tradition of our people. Ho Chi Minh clearly stated: "Our people have a fervent love for the country. That is our precious tradition. Whenever the Fatherland is invaded, that spirit surges up vigorously; it becomes an immensely powerful and great wave, sweeping over all dangers and difficulties, and submerging all the traitors and invaders"[3]. Ho Chi Minh emphasized: The spirit of patriotism is like precious assets. Sometimes it is displayed in glass cabinets or crystal vases, clearly visible. But sometimes it is hidden discreetly in chests and boxes. Our duty is to bring those discreetly hidden treasures out for display. That means we must strive to explain, propagandize, organize, and lead so that the patriotic spirit of all people is put into patriotic deeds and resistance work. This is precisely the viewpoint on preserving and promoting national culture in Ho Chi Minh Thought.

In customs, habits, literature, and art, Ho Chi Minh clearly stated that the responsibility of everyone is to preserve and promote them. While exploiting and promoting national cultural values, attention must be paid to preserving national cultural identity.

Regarding the issue of festivals at historical sites, in 1958, President Ho Chi Minh put forward a directive with methodological significance: "When it is said to restore the old capital, we should restore what is good, and gradually eliminate what is not good... What is good, we should restore and develop; what is bad, we must discard" [4]. This viewpoint of President Ho Chi Minh demonstrates a scientific attitude, respecting the essence of pure customs and traditions regarding festivals and ancient customs, while elevating them to suit the new way of life and new culture.

Regarding the national language, Ho Chi Minh affirmed: "Language is an extremely ancient and extremely precious asset of the nation. We must preserve it, treasure it, and make it increasingly widespread. Having our own but not using it, and instead borrowing from foreign countries, isn't that a mentality of dependence?"[5].

Thus, in all cultural fields of the nation, Ho Chi Minh always cherished, preserved, promoted, and developed them with the aim of firmly maintaining national cultural identity and enabling national culture to develop to a scientific and advanced level. He generalized and summarized the traditional cultural values of the nation and applied them to the formation of the thought of the Vietnamese revolution. He always reminded our nation to summarize, supplement, and preserve the traditional cultural values of the nation. Not only did he promote them in their original form through copying, but he also elevated them to a new height. He constantly reminded that every nation has its own deep cultural roots, and therefore must know how to inherit and promote the distinctive features of world culture.

## **2.2. Preserving and Promoting the National Cultural Identity of Vietnam in the Current Context in Light of Ho Chi Minh Thought**

### **a. Preserving and Promoting National Cultural Identity in Vietnam Today**

The traditional cultural capital of the nation has been preserved and promoted through various cultural activities. Many traditional art forms such as tuồng, chèo, cải lương, chầu văn, Huế court music... have been preserved, performed, and attracted the interest of many people. Festivals continue to be regularly organized during festive occasions across all three regions. Many art festivals have been held both domestically and internationally. There have been additional valuable works on revolutionary and resistance themes, as well as on the renewal process.

Culture and art of ethnic minorities have made remarkable progress. The contingent of ethnic minority cultural workers has grown both in quantity and quality, making important contributions to almost all fields of literature and art. The vast majority of artists and writers, who have been tempered and tested in the revolutionary reality, possess rich life experience and profound patriotism. Amid the fluctuations of the times and the difficulties of life, they have maintained their qualities and remained steadfast in their creative standpoint of serving the people.

Our Party and State have paid great attention to the protection of cultural heritage because heritage is a precious capital left by the nation for future generations. Practical activities oriented toward roots, revolution and resistance, commemorating national heroes, honoring cultural celebrities, expressing gratitude to those with meritorious services, and assisting those in distress... have become widespread movements among the masses. Historical and cultural relics are being conserved and restored so that future generations can visit, experience, and appreciate them, thereby enhancing their understanding of national history.

Not only has attention been paid to preserving the traditional cultural identity of the nation, but our people have also absorbed the quintessence of world civilization to continuously improve themselves. The achievements of the world's scientific and technological revolution, along with the expansion of international exchange, provide opportunities for us to absorb the intellectual fruits of humankind.

Besides these achievements, current Vietnamese reality still reveals many issues related to culture that require serious reflection. In the face of complex political changes in the world, not a few people still waver politically, lose faith in socialism, deny the achievements of real socialism in the world, and reject the path to socialism in our country. More seriously is the moral and lifestyle degradation in a significant portion of cadres and Party members, including those holding positions of authority.

In education and training, there is a decline in moral standards in teacher-student relationships; a lifestyle lacking ideals, indulgence in pleasure-seeking and addiction... among a portion of university and high school students, who undervalue moral, aesthetic education and subjects in politics, social sciences and humanities.

Cultural and artistic life still has shortcomings. In creative work, theory and criticism, there occasionally emerge tendencies to negate the achievements of revolutionary and resistance literature. The trend of commercialization and catering to low tastes has diminished the ideological and aesthetic educational function of literature and art.

In community life and daily activities, there are still manifestations of anti-cultural or non-cultural thoughts and actions such as outdated customs and practices, superstition and fetishism. The use of the Vietnamese language still lacks purity due to the influence of foreign cultures...

### **b. Some Solutions for Preserving and Promoting the National Cultural Identity of Vietnam in the Current Context in Light of Ho Chi Minh Thought**

Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on preserving and promoting national cultural identity remain, in the current context of globalization, principles and a compass for the conservation, research, and education of national culture, and also serve as the basis for developing Vietnamese culture to advance rapidly, keep pace with, and integrate into the progressive culture of all humanity. In the process of building culture in Vietnam today, our Party has always thoroughly grasped and creatively applied Ho Chi Minh's viewpoints on culture and the issue of preserving, conserving, and developing national culture in accordance with the realities of the era and the country, considering it a correct orientation for development.

To overcome the limitations and weaknesses in preserving and promoting national cultural identity, the application of Ho Chi Minh Thought in the current context can be realized through the following solutions:

First, strengthen propaganda and mobilization work to encourage the masses to actively participate in cultural activities, especially the movement "The entire people unite to build cultural life." Timely detection and commendation of typical examples and individuals and collectives that have made outstanding contributions to building cultural life.

Second, develop national education and enhance the dissemination of national identity to younger generations. The Party and State need to issue policies to strengthen the development of education, cultural propaganda, and education on the revolutionary line and the traditional values of our nation in order to promote national pride among the people, especially the younger generation – the future masters of the country. When people clearly understand the precious cultural identities of the nation such as patriotism, spirit of solidarity, creativity, and humanity, they will actively promote these fine values.

Globalization helps strongly promote socio-economic development and changes the lives of the majority of Vietnamese people; however, the enjoyment-oriented, materialistic, and selfish lifestyle arising from economic development is becoming increasingly common among the people. In that context, educating national culture through books, mass media such as social networks, television, radio, newspapers... to train citizens with knowledge and understanding of national cultural identity is extremely necessary. In addition, special attention must be paid to nurturing cultural talents so that they can develop their capacities to contribute to building a more

diverse and rich Vietnamese culture. At the same time, it is necessary to orient the people, especially the younger generation, toward the beauty of the values of “Truth – Goodness – Beauty,” helping them distinguish authentic cultural, traditional, and national values. Through this, the national spirit, patriotic tradition, and great national unity will be aroused, aesthetic orientation provided, and comprehensive personality cultivated for the Vietnamese people, while enhancing the cultural beauty of our country in the eyes of international friends.

Third, focus on preserving and developing cultural values, national identity, and traditions. Continue to organize cultural festivals of some ethnic minorities with typical cultural identities in order to raise awareness of preserving and honoring the traditional cultural values of the ethnic groups within the community of Vietnamese ethnic groups. Attach importance to collecting and exploiting tangible and intangible cultural values.

Fourth, the preservation and promotion of national cultural identity must always be closely linked with the development of the legal system. The Party and State should continue to improve normative legal documents and guiding documents on cultural development in the new era. At the same time, there should be measures to ensure strict implementation of legal regulations in preserving national cultural identity. The improvement of cultural policies will help the preservation of national cultural identity be carried out effectively, prevent violations, and promote the actions of the people in conserving and promoting the nation’s culture.

Fifth, actively and proactively expand international cultural cooperation and exchange. Selectively absorb the humanistic, scientific, and progressive values from foreign countries. Actively introduce widely the quintessence and cultural identity of Vietnam, the great achievements of more than twenty years of national renewal, and the international integration policy of our Party and State, thereby contributing to enhancing Vietnam’s position in the international arena and taking advantage of funding sources from other countries for the development of the cultural cause.

Sixth, strengthen inspection and control work, and resolutely combat anti-cultural and non-cultural phenomena. Enhance effective state management measures over cultural activities, publishing, press, conservation of cultural values, artistic performances, copyright, advertising, cultural service activities, trading in cultural products, printing, copying video tapes, discs, music tapes, and discs...

### **III. Conclusion**

Ho Chi Minh Thought on culture in general, and on preserving and promoting national cultural identity in particular, is a great spiritual asset of our nation. Today, in the cause of building an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with strong national identity, Ho Chi Minh Thought on culture remains a solid spiritual pillar. At the same time, with its strong vitality, Ho Chi Minh Thought on culture has become and continues to be an integral part of Vietnamese culture. For culture to add to the nation’s strength and contribute to defending the territorial integrity, every citizen of ours must preserve and promote Vietnamese culture that is always advanced and deeply imbued with national identity.

### **Acknowledgment**

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