

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Doctoral candidate: LE THANH HOA

Dissertation title: Water culture of Muong people in Hoa Binh province

Major: Cultural Studies

Code: 62 31 06 40

Supervisor: Assoc. prof. Dr. Bui Quang Thang

Institution: Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies

CONTENTS OF THE ABSTRACT

1. Research aims and subjects

- **Research aims:** 1) To interpret the structure and function of the past and present water culture of the Muong people in Hoa Binh province; 2) To establish a ground for generating conservation policy of ecological culture of the Muong people in Hoa Binh province in particular and other ethnic peoples in Vietnam in general.

- **Research subjects:** The structure of water culture (ideology, knowledge, customs, customary and rituals relating to water) of the Muong people in Hoa Binh province.

2. Methodology and methods

- Adopt new theoretical/methodological achievements of ecological anthropology as a theoretical ground for the dissertation

- Utilize research outcomes of previous ethnological and folklore studies in traditional culture of the Muong people as important background information for understanding their indigenous worldview, animism as well as customs and rituals relating to water.

- Apply methodology/anthropological fieldwork methods to understand the logic of the relation between Muong people and their ecological environment and explore the meanings underlied in the expressions of their ecological culture and their transformations in current context.

In order to adopt this methodology, the author use quantitative methods including in-depth interviews, observation and secondary information analysis from ethnographic and folklore researchs of the Muong people and other Vietnamese as well as international researchs relating to ethnographic ecology and water culture.

3. Findings

1. On the basis of new theories of ecological anthropology and ethnographic literature on Muong people in Vietnam, this study presents the concept of water culture as a structure of three components:

- 1) Indigenous worldview relating to water: their perspective on soul, spirit, animism and Khu (Water Snake) King,... Generally, it is a worldview in which, people refer to all entities as subjects with souls and capabilities of communicating with human beings. Their behavior reflects their respect to all entities in the nature.
- 2) Indigenous knowledge relating to water: System of knowledge on the utility and protection of water resource in farming (different kinds of irrigation methods such as *muong*, *phai*, *hạnh*, *tặng*) and daily uses (*mó nước*) and in aquatic exploitation.

- 3) Cultural behavior patterns between humans and water: the worship of Khu King, *mó nước* (water source), *xuống đồng* (new paddy season starting) celebration, rice field edges fixing ceremony, irrigation canal fixing ceremony, rain rituals, fish-catching festival and the way Muong people use water in traditional ceremonies and rituals.

The study also interprets the relation of these three components on the ground of a perspective that indigenous worldview of a people will regulate their knowledge and behavior in the relation with nature.

2. Through a fieldwork study at Tan Vinh commune, Luong Son rural district, Hoa Binh province, the author has assessed the transformation of water culture of the Muong people and identified factors affecting those changes: After the August Revolution in 1945, Hoa Binh province as well as the entire society of Vietnam has been changed significantly in all political, economic and social aspects. Those changes strongly affected ecological culture of the Muong people living in Hoa Binh province. Changes in ideology led to changes in water-related cultural patterns and indigenous knowledge. Muong people has not used *mó nước* anymore, instead, they use water pumped wells. They no longer worship Khu King, manage fish catching according to different sections of a stream or use traditional irrigation (due to deforestation).

3. The outcomes of this study could be adopted in the current context of protecting ecological environment in Hoa Binh as well as in other locality where many minority groups reside in. The theoretical point derived from the findings of this research affirms that the reverence for nature of many ethnic groups in history, the balance and harmony of the relation between human and nature are constructive values in protecting water resources. There are probably conflicts in ideology/worldview or difficulties in the protection of traditional water culture yet if the central government has good policy based on the principle of cultural tolerance, positive essence of Muong water culture would be well promoted today.

Supervisor

Doctoral Candidate