

Inter-Ethnic Cultural Exchange in the Dai Viet Civilization: Historical Processes, Characteristics, And Contributions to Cultural Integration and National Development

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ABSTRACT: The Dai Viet civilization is one of the most representative in Vietnamese history, spanning thousands of years and serving as a transitional link between ancient and modern Vietnamese civilizations. Within this civilization, cultural exchange between ethnic groups continuously occurred and expanded alongside the development of the national territory. Based on historical documents and using methods of historical analysis and synthesis, this article presents the process of cultural exchange among ethnic groups within the territory of the Dai Viet civilization throughout history. Furthermore, the characteristics of this process are analyzed, and its contributions to cultural integration and national development within the Dai Viet civilization are evaluated.

KEYWORDS: Cultural exchange, Dai Viet civilization, ethnic groups, cultural integration, national development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural exchange is an inherent and universal process that has accompanied the historical development of all nations and communities, serving as a key force in the evolution of cultures and civilizations. Cultural exchange is usually approached from two main perspectives: first, interactions among nations that share similar geographical and historical conditions, and have maintained long-term contact; and second, exchanges among ethnic communities living within the same national territory.

In the Dai Viet civilization, due to the unique characteristics of the feudal political system and the economic and technological levels, cultural exchange between nations was limited to some extent. Meanwhile, the process of building and consolidating the nation-state continued, with the tendency towards unification confronting the tendency towards fragmentation to affirm the nation's existence and unity. During the process of nation-state formation, cultural exchange among ethnic groups occurred under favourable conditions. Ethnic groups living in the area engaged in frequent and continuous cultural exchanges in various ways, contributing to cultural development and consolidating national unity. The result of this cultural exchange may have transformed some cultural patterns of each ethnic group. However, it has brought those ethnic groups into closer relationships with other groups, fostering a national consciousness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Inter-ethnic cultural exchange has become an important subject in studies of Vietnamese history and culture, attracting considerable scholarly attention from different disciplinary perspectives. Studies on the cultures of Vietnam's ethnic minorities by Nguyen Dang Duy and Tran Ngoc Binh have focused on describing the cultural characteristics of these ethnic groups, thereby affirming that cultural exchange fosters unity in diversity (Nguyen Dang Duy, 2004; Tran Ngoc Binh, 2024). Some research has investigated the policies of Vietnamese feudal dynasties towards ethnic groups, providing important evidence for evaluating the influence of feudal state policies on ethnic groups within the Dai Viet civilization (Dam Thi Uyen, 2007). In addition, several studies have explored cultural exchange through specific inter-ethnic relationships, including interactions between Vietnamese and Chinese communities (Pham Duc Duong & Chau Thi Hai, 2023), as well as between Vietnamese and Cham communities (Le Van Hao, 1979; Dang Nang Hoa, 2001; Tran Dung, 2009). Regional approaches have also been adopted, with research focusing on ethnic cultural exchange in southern Vietnam during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries (Pham Thi Hue, 2015) and the first half of the nineteenth century (Choy Byung Wood, 2011).

Generally, previous studies have provided valuable theoretical foundations, documentation, and events related to ethnic cultural exchange in Vietnam. However, these studies have not systematically examined this phenomenon as a long-term historical process closely associated with the formation and development of the Vietnamese feudal state.

Inter-Ethnic Cultural Exchange in the Dai Viet Civilization: Historical Processes, Characteristics, And Contributions to Cultural Integration and National Development

This article uses historical sources and key events in the evolution of the Dai Viet civilization to clarify the conditions for the formation of ethnic cultural exchange and its manifestations in medieval Vietnam alongside the development of the Dai Viet civilization. Moreover, the article highlights the characteristics and contributions of ethnic cultural exchange to cultural integration and national development within the Dai Viet civilization. As a result, it contributes to a better understanding of the role of the feudal state in promoting ethnic cultural exchange, as well as the role of ethnic cultural exchange in the formation and development of Dai Viet civilization.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses historical research methods. Source collection and comparative analysis were used to identify and verify historical events related to inter-ethnic cultural exchange through different periods. Moreover, synthesis and analytical methods were employed to clarify the relationships between historical contexts and patterns of cultural interaction among ethnic groups, as well as to evaluate their influence on the development of the Dai Viet civilization and the evolution of the Vietnamese feudal state.

4. THEORETICAL BASIS OF INTER-ETHNIC CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN THE DAI VIET CIVILIZATION

4.1. The concept of culture and cultural exchange

Culture is a familiar concept, commonly used in many fields of science and life. Various definitions of culture have been proposed; however, this study uses the broad definition proposed by Tran Ngoc Them (2025), which views culture as an organic system of material and spiritual values created and accumulated by humans through their interactions with their natural and social environments. Accordingly, culture includes material culture (food, housing, transportation, and clothing), production culture (economic activities), spiritual culture (religion, beliefs, customs, festivals, literature, science, and art), and social organizational culture (family, clan, and village institutions) (Tran Ngoc Them, 2025).

Cultural exchange and transformation, corresponding to the concept of acculturation, are defined as a phenomenon whereby long-term and direct contact between groups with different cultures leads to changes in the original cultural pattern of one or both groups (Tran Quoc Vuong, 2011). As an inevitable aspect of human social development, cultural exchange and transformation occurs when ethnic communities live in close proximity and interact through activities, such as trade, gift giving, religious practices, marriage, diplomacy, and other forms of social contact (Tran Quoc Vuong, 2011). Cultural exchange and adaptation are key driving forces in the development of ethnic communities.

In the process of cultural exchange and transformation, each community acts as both a cultural subject and a recipient of cultural influences. Cultural elements within each community may change in different ways: external cultural elements may replace or suppress existing internal elements, or they may be selectively adapted and integrated into the local cultural system. From the perspective of the receiving community's attitude, cultural acceptance may occur voluntarily or under external pressure. In terms of the degree of acceptance, it may involve either complete adoption or creative adaptation of external cultural elements (Tran Quoc Vuong, 2011). Through this process, the cultural identity and traditions of each ethnic group are continuously influenced by both preservation and transformation, contributing to their historical development.

4.2. The concept of ethnic groups and ethnic cultural exchange

The term *ethnic group* is now widely used instead of *nation* because the latter may be confused with the concept of *state nation*. Various definitions of ethnic groups have been proposed; however, many ethnographers have adopted Bromley's definition. Accordingly, an ethnic group is defined as a stable community of people formed through shared territory, language, economic life, and cultural characteristics, and based on these connections, each group develops an awareness of its ethnic identity and name (Ngo Van Le, 2004; Omelaenko, 2019). Consequently, the criteria for defining an ethnic group here include geographical area, language, economic activities, cultural activities, and ethnic consciousness. The relative importance of these criteria may vary depending on specific historical and social conditions. According to Ngo Van Le and colleagues, ethnic self-consciousness is the most decisive criterion. People belonging to a particular ethnic community always have a sense of community, recognizing themselves as members with a unique name, a unified ethnic identity, a distinct cultural identity, and unique cultural characteristics. This awareness exists and develops spontaneously even in cases of territorial separation or occupation, cultural fragmentation, and the decline of the mother tongue (Ngo Van Le, 2004).

As a general historical process, ethnic groups living in the same geographical area and having long-term contact will experience cultural exchange and transformation. This process has affected each ethnic group in two ways. The first is the tendency toward ethnic differentiation. In addition to migration, which has occurred since prehistoric times, class-based societies often saw smaller ethnic groups with lower levels of economic and cultural development displaced by larger, more advanced groups. This process took place over a long period, leading to the division of ethnic groups into many smaller branches. The second is the tendency toward ethnic integration. This process may occur within each ethnic group, strengthening internal cohesion and unity, or among ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic nation, leading to the merging of several ethnic groups into a unified one while retaining their

Inter-ethnic Cultural Exchange in the Dai Viet Civilization: Historical Processes, Characteristics, and Contributions to Cultural Integration and National Development

original identities. Ethnic integration may also take the form of ethnic convergence or assimilation, including both natural assimilation resulting from prolonged interaction and forced assimilation imposed through political or social pressures. Along with the development of the Dai Viet state, the ethnic groups inhabiting its territory underwent significant transformations through cultural exchange, interaction, and assimilation.

4.3. Overview of Dai Viet civilization

In the history of Vietnamese civilization, the Dai Viet civilization emerged by inheriting the achievements of the earlier Van Lang–Au Lac civilization while engaging in cultural exchange and adaptation with neighboring civilizations. Dai Viet civilization was built and developed along with the process of building and developing the feudal nation.

The formation of the Dai Viet civilization was rooted in several important foundations. Firstly, the values of the Van Lang – Au Lac civilization were preserved after more than a thousand years of Chinese rule, manifested in many material and spiritual fields that shaped the character and spirit of the Vietnamese people. Secondly, the civilization developed through continuous interaction with major regional cultures, particularly those of China, India, and Southeast Asia, and later with Western civilization. All these external cultural values were selectively adopted and adapted through localization, enriching the Dai Viet civilization (Truong Huu Quynh,1998).

The Dai Viet civilization developed in the context of a feudal nation that was continuously strengthened and expanded. National consciousness was forged through struggles against foreign domination and invasions, as well as through territorial expansion and state-building. From its original core area corresponding to the ancient Van Lang–Au Lac state, Dai Viet civilization continuously expanded its influence into southern territories, including Champa and parts of Chenla, forming a civilization within present-day Vietnam.

The Dai Viet civilization has a long-term development process. It began in the first millennium with the struggle to protect the values of the Van Lang–Au Lac civilization and to acculturate with the cultures of China, India, and Southeast Asian countries. Next is the development of this civilization within an independent feudal country, shaped by successive feudal dynasties from the 10th to the 19th century. By the end of the 19th century, when the French colonialists began to rule Vietnam, Dai Viet civilization was gradually replaced by another civilization associated with the introduction of capitalist methods into a colonial country.

In the course of its development, Dai Viet civilization has made many important contributions across various fields. In political and military terms, it is the process of building and perfecting a feudal state according to the centralized monarchy model. This process reached its peak in the 15th century with the state model under the reign of King Le Thanh Tong. With a centralized state apparatus, Dai Viet's liberal state has gradually and strictly managed localities, ensuring a unified administration. Along with the state apparatus, feudal law was also built with the introduction of laws from the Ly dynasty onwards. Although the law remains within the feudal framework, it meets the requirements of country management. Vietnam's feudal dynasties were all interested in building the army, not only as a tool to protect the feudal regime, but also as a pivotal force in resistance wars against foreign invaders and in protecting national independence (Truong Huu Quynh,1998).

In economics, the agricultural economy remains the main sector, with the continuous expansion of cultivated area, thanks to reclamation and sea reclamation, which contribute to the expansion of the national territory. At the same time, farming techniques and crop varieties were also improved. Crafts were also developed across diverse professions and with varying product quality. Many handicraft items became popular goods with foreign traders, such as silk and sugar. Although the commercial economy is not an important economic sector, it meets people's exchange needs and, at times, has helped strengthen the feudal government's potential through trade. In education, feudal education began during the Ly Dynasty, and throughout feudal dynasties, attention was paid to training mandarins and many intellectuals for the country. Many intellectuals from feudal education have made great contributions to the country's science, producing numerous works on geography, history, medicine, mathematics, and related fields (Truong Huu Quynh,1998).

Regarding literature, it is a quite prominent field with many literary genres in Chinese and Nom, and many authors recognized worldwide, such as Nguyen Trai and Nguyen Du. In addition, the treasure of folk literature is also extremely rich. In art, the fields of architecture and sculpture are prominent, with citadels, palaces, and mausoleums, as well as world-recognized heritage sites such as the Ho Dynasty Citadel and Hue Citadel. Along with that is unique folk art expressed through the architecture of communal houses, pagodas, and wooden statues. Regarding religion and beliefs, including folk beliefs, Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist ideas and religions have all influenced Dai Viet civilization, as reflected in perspectives on governing the country and in Dai Viet's material culture (Nguyen Duy Hinh, 2005).

4.4. Conditions for the formation of ethnic cultural exchange in the Dai Viet civilization

The long-term coexistence of diverse ethnic communities first shaped inter-ethnic cultural exchange in the Dai Viet civilization. The Dai Viet civilization was inhabited from the very beginning by many ethnic groups, with their living areas intertwined, close together, and sharing many cultural similarities. From the Van Lang - Au Lac period, ethnic groups living in the Northern and

Inter-ethnic Cultural Exchange in the Dai Viet Civilization: Historical Processes, Characteristics, and Contributions to Cultural Integration and National Development

North Central regions of Vietnam, belonging to the Austro-Austroasiatic language family, worked together to cultivate the land and build an economy and culture deeply rooted in the indigenous characteristics of Southeast Asian agricultural communities (Institute of Ethnology, 1978). During this process, in addition to preserving the culture of each ethnic group, these groups also developed a national consciousness to resist invading armies from the Chinese Dynasties and protect the territory of the Van Lang - Au Lac nation (Institute of Ethnology, 1978). Subsequently, during the development of the Dai Viet nation from the 11th to the early 19th century, the territories inhabited by Austronesian-speaking groups in Central Vietnam, formerly part of the Champa kingdom, were gradually incorporated into Dai Viet territory (Huynh Cong Ba, 2008). This included the Southern region – the former Funan kingdom (from the 17th to the mid-19th century). Although these were new lands, the period of coexistence between the Viet and these ethnic groups was shorter than in the Northern region. However, being agricultural communities that valued harmony and mutual support in the struggle against harsh natural conditions and feudal oppression, a sense of ethnic solidarity quickly developed among these groups.

The integrative policies of the feudal state also shaped inter-ethnic cultural exchange in the Dai Viet civilization. Although representing the majority ethnic group (Viet or Kinh people) and the ruling class, the feudal state also represented the nation-state, always striving to strengthen the unity and solidarity of all ethnic groups. From the Ly Dynasty onwards, a policy of *nhu viễn* (appeasement and conciliation) towards tribal chiefs of minority groups was implemented, manifested through marriage alliances or the granting of titles (Đàm Thị Uyên, 2007). Later, as the national territory expanded southward, feudal dynasties implemented policies encouraging migration and land reclamation, promoting natural cultural exchange between the Viet and indigenous ethnic groups. Simultaneously, the state, through its administrative policies, strengthened the influence of feudal culture and ideology on these ethnic groups to consolidate its role, as evidenced by the formation of unified administrative units, the regulation of surnames, and the dissemination of Confucianism (Choi Byung Wook, 2011). These policies significantly promoted interethnic cultural exchange.

5. THE PROCESS OF INTER-ETHNIC CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN THE DAI VIET CIVILIZATION

5.1. The period before the 10th century

This period marked the formative stage of the Dai Viet civilization, characterized by two parallel processes: the preservation of the cultural foundations of the Van Lang–Au Lac civilization and the assimilation of external influences that contributed to the emergence of a new civilization. At this time, the living areas of ethnic groups were concentrated in the Northern and North Central regions. The history of ethnic development in this period showed some major changes. The Thai people migrated from the North to the Northwest region. They occupied the living areas of valleys that had previously been inhabited by ethnic groups belonging to the Mon-Khmer language family. Hence, the Khang, Xa, and Hmong ethnic groups moved to higher mountainous areas (Institute of Ethnology, 1978). Meanwhile, the Viet (Kinh) people, through sustained interaction with Chinese culture, gradually separated from the Viet-Muong group to develop a distinct cultural identity.

Despite these changes, cultural convergence remained a dominant trend. The legend of *Quả bầu* (the Gourd), very popular in the folklore of many ethnic groups here, as well as the legend of *Trăm trứng* (the Hundred Eggs) of the Viet and Muong people, reflected common cultural origins and interactions (Institute of Ethnology, 1978; Ha Van Tan, 2017). In linguistics, the blending of languages between Viet, Mon-Khmer, and Tay-Thai was also very common during this period. The struggle against Chinese rule fostered cohesion among the ethnic groups in the northern mountainous region and the Kinh people. When the Trung Sisters revolted against the Han dynasty of China at the beginning of the Common Era, the Tay and Nung people also participated. Legends and memories among the inhabitants of the Viet Bac region still recount their ancestors' participation in the Trung Sisters' rebellion. In 543, the people of Viet Bac also participated in Ly Bon's rebellion, fighting against the Chinese Liang dynasty (Institute of Ethnology, 1978). The process of long-term coexistence, cultural assimilation, and cultural harmonization during the pre-Dai Viet period contributed to the formation of a shared national consciousness when the independent and self-governing feudal state emerged.

5.2. The period from the 10th to the 15th centuries

During this period, the Dai Viet civilization was shaped as an independent, self-governing feudal state. The living areas of the ethnic groups within the Dai Viet civilization expanded southward, including a part of the Champa kingdom's territory. Cultural exchange among ethnic groups also advanced through interactions between the Vietnamese and Austronesian-speaking communities. Cultural exchange during this period took several notable forms.

The ethnic groups living in the former Au Lac territory showed increased cohesion under the influence of the feudal state's policies of consolidating national unity and resisting foreign invaders. The feudal state implemented a policy of forming alliances with chieftains and community leaders in border regions (Đàm Thị Uyên, 2007). While the Ly Dynasty primarily entrusted military and civil affairs to the resident regional governor, the Tran Dynasty also appointed some members of the royal family and officials to govern certain border regions in the North. During this period, the centralized feudal state also forced ethnic groups to

Inter-ethnic Cultural Exchange in the Dai Viet Civilization: Historical Processes, Characteristics, and Contributions to Cultural Integration and National Development

pay tribute and suppressed any instances of land grabbing or separatism that threatened state power. These ethnic groups also demonstrated national consciousness by coordinating their efforts to defend Dai Viet's borders. The Tay and Nung ethnic groups in the Viet Bac region participated in resistance wars against the Song, Mongol, and Yuan dynasties (Institute of Ethnology, 1978). Partial assimilation also occurred in both directions between the Kinh people and other ethnic groups. Some Kinh officials and soldiers stationed among ethnic minorities adopted local cultures. They became members of those ethnic groups. A notable example is the Nguyen family in Lang Son, who gradually assimilated into the Tay ethnic group. Many Tay and Nung intellectuals studied Confucianism to a high level and used the Nom script as their ethnic writing system (Nguyen Van Huy, 1997).

In the South, diplomatic relations between Dai Viet and Champa were complex, sometimes peaceful, sometimes marked by mutual invasions and wars. By the 15th century, following King Le Thanh Tong's attack, most of Champa's territory had been annexed by Dai Viet. During this process, cultural exchange took many forms. Cham prisoners brought to Thang Long (Hanoi) their unique cultural and artistic achievements, which were well received by the Vietnamese community. Kinh people migrants settling in Cham lands not only respected indigenous cultural values but also learned production practices and ways of life from the coastal inhabitants of Central Vietnam, thereby creating their own distinct Vietnamese cultural characteristics in the new land. Conversely, the Cham people also adopted many elements of Kinh culture, including music, folk literature, and language (Le Van Hao., 1979), (Dang Nang Hoa. 2002), (Nguyen Thanh Loi, 2003). It can be said that, unlike politics, cultural exchange between the Kinh and Cham peoples took place naturally and continuously, leaving strong imprints on the cultures of both ethnic groups.

5.3. The period from the 16th to the 19th centuries

This period marked a new stage in the development of Dai Viet civilization, characterized by the most extensive territorial expansion and the incorporation of numerous new cultural elements. The development of the feudal system led to the formation of feudal powers in both Dang Ngoai and Dang Trong. The territory of Dai Viet expanded southward to encompass the entire southern region of present-day Vietnam. At the same time, the administrative policies of the Nguyen dynasty also significantly affected the autonomy of ethnic groups in the Northern border areas, the Central Highlands, and the Southern region. Within this historical context, the process of ethnic cultural exchange also expanded through increased interaction among ethnic groups in their old territories and through the interaction and adaptation of ethnic groups in the Southern region.

In this period, ethnic cultural exchange could lead to changes in the living areas of some ethnic groups. The Vietnamese population increased significantly in South Central and Southern Vietnam, becoming the majority community during the process of reclaiming and developing the region. A portion of the Cham people migrated from South Central Vietnam to settle in Southern Vietnam. Many Khmer groups moved from Southeast Vietnam to Southwest Vietnam. Chinese groups also settled in various parts of Vietnam. These population movements created favourable conditions for intensified cultural interaction and exchange. In the newly settled southern territories, ethnic groups influenced one another in various aspects of life, including agricultural practices, material culture, clothing, housing, beliefs, religions, and performing arts. Notably, the trend towards cultural harmony became prominent, and conflicts between ethnic groups were rare (except for the suppression of groups resisting the feudal state's centralization by the Nguyen dynasty's army).

Processes of cultural exchange and assimilation took place through everyday coexistence, economic activities, and collective efforts to overcome environmental challenges and social hardships. Cultural exchange played a crucial role in the nation's development. The process of inter-ethnic cultural exchange contributed to the multifaceted development of Dai Viet civilization. With the expansion of national territory, Dai Viet not only gained more land but also more cultural entities and ethnic groups with diverse cultural characteristics, which became part of Dai Viet civilization, enriching its traditions. Through this exchange and adaptation, the culture of the Vietnamese people also transformed, acquiring new cultural values associated with their new living environment.

6. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF INTER-ETHNIC CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN DAI VIET CIVILIZATION

6.1. The inevitability of ethnic cultural exchange in Dai Viet civilization

In the Dai Viet civilization, various ethnic groups settled at different times. However, they chose to live in proximity to one another, intermingling and sharing similar livelihoods, primarily relying on agriculture. These common economic characteristics showed that although these ethnic groups might differ in origin, they were closely connected in terms of their living areas, economic activities, and culture. They shared common cultural activities through cultural institutions, such as markets and festivals, which served as centers for cultural exchange. The contact and interaction among different ethnic groups were further promoted when the Dai Viet civilization reached a higher level of socio-economic development, improvements in transportation networks, and the administrative system.

The inevitability of inter-ethnic cultural exchange in the Dai Viet civilization was particularly evident in newly incorporated territories, especially in Central and Southern Vietnam. In these regions, ethnic groups often had considerable differences in their

Inter-ethnic Cultural Exchange in the Dai Viet Civilization: Historical Processes, Characteristics, and Contributions to Cultural Integration and National Development

origins and cultural traditions, and they had also previously belonged to different kingdoms. However, long-term coexistence created conditions for early and continuous cultural interaction. The majority ethnic group had not tried to assimilate the minority ethnic groups. However, it adopted the cultural treasures of the indigenous ethnic groups to adapt and harmonize with the natural and social environment.

6.2. The continuity and diversity of forms of inter-ethnic cultural exchange

Throughout the formation and development of Dai Viet civilization, cultural exchange among ethnic groups occurred regularly and continuously. Political and social changes, such as dynastic transitions and warfare, only interrupted cultural exchange in particular regions; such interruptions were generally temporary. After these changes, ethnic groups living in proximity experienced increasingly profound cultural assimilation. The history of resistance against foreign invaders solidified the ties between ethnic groups living in the northern mountainous regions and the Kinh people in the lowlands, reinforcing a common sense of belonging and cultural affinity.

The southward expansion of Dai Viet further illustrates the continuity of interethnic cultural exchange. Historical circumstances shaped complex political relationships between the feudal states of Dai Viet, Champa, and Chenla. However, the historical development of the newly incorporated territories into Dai Viet did not lead to the disappearance of local cultures but rather a continuous process of cultural exchange, with each ethnic group establishing its own position within a diverse culture.

Voluntary cultural exchange constituted the most common form of interaction within the Dai Viet civilization. This process occurred frequently among ethnic groups, driven by the objective needs of economic and cultural life. In this process, each ethnic group played an active role, independently discovering cultural values in other ethnic groups, actively accepting and adapting them to suit their own culture. The Viet and Muong people adopted irrigation techniques from the Thai people; some Mon-Khmer language groups in Northwest Vietnam were influenced by Thai culture in many aspects; the Viet people adopted rice varieties, farming techniques, handicrafts, and seafaring skills from the Cham people. The feudal state also contributed to promoting voluntary cultural exchange by encouraging the Viet migration to new lands, and through the process of cohabitation and integration between the Viet and indigenous ethnic groups, asserted its power. The history of establishing sovereignty by the Nguyen lords in Southern Vietnam combined political, economic, and cultural exchange elements, limiting the use of military force and violence.

Alongside voluntary exchange, cultural interaction also occurred through state-directed processes. In the Dai Viet civilization, although the feudal state always recognized the important role of ethnic groups in consolidating borders and territories, and consistently applied policies of appeasement to win them over to the state's side and protect national interests, to assert the authority of the feudal state, the feudal dynasties sought to impose Confucian ideology, administrative units, and governing officials on the traditional social organization of ethnic groups, and to name them according to the Kinh (Viet) style. All these policies caused many conflicts between the state and ethnic minorities.

6.3. The leading role of the Viet people and the active participation of other ethnic groups in inter-ethnic cultural exchange

The Viet (Kinh) people were the majority ethnic group in the Dai Viet civilization. They played a key role in the development of the Van Lang-Au Lac and Dai Viet civilizations. Under the leadership of the feudal state, the Viet people built a nation-state, drawing other ethnic groups along with them throughout the history of nation-building and defense. Through this, they promoted cultural exchange between ethnic groups.

The Viet people, whether a minority in the ruling class or the majority working people, carried with them a culture that valued harmony, characteristic of an agricultural society. Therefore, wherever they lived, they sought harmony with local ethnic groups, showing respect for other cultures. The Vietnamese living in the territory of the Champa kingdom showed respect for the long-standing cultural achievements of the indigenous people by not encroaching on the system of towers and fortresses, while also learning from the Champa's production experience. The Viet people who migrated to Southern Vietnam also coexisted harmoniously with the Chinese and Khmer.

Furthermore, despite being influenced by the political, economic, and cultural policies of the feudal state, the minority ethnic groups still retained their own distinct cultural characteristics. Over thousands of years of cultural exchange and transformation within the Dai Viet civilization, the image of a nation comprising 54 ethnic groups, each with its own cultural identity, demonstrates that cultural exchange did not result in complete cultural homogenization. Changes within each ethnic group were an inevitable part of the development process of a multi-ethnic nation

Inter-ethnic Cultural Exchange in the Dai Viet Civilization: Historical Processes, Characteristics, and Contributions to Cultural Integration and National Development

7. CONTRIBUTIONS OF INTER-ETHNIC CULTURAL EXCHANGE TO CULTURAL INTEGRATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

7.1. Inter-ethnic cultural exchange as a foundation of a unified yet diverse Dai Viet culture

The development of the Dai Viet civilization was closely intertwined with the nation's history. During this process, the ethnic groups living in the area of this civilization continuously exchanged and adapted their cultures, enriching each group's culture. At the same time, these ethnic groups became increasingly united by a continually evolving sense of national identity through nation-building and national defence. From this, each ethnic group came to acknowledge the feudal state's management and to accept themselves as a minority ethnic community alongside the majority Viet people.

After more than a thousand years of development, Dai Viet civilization expanded its spatial influence and adopted many cultural nuances from more than 50 ethnic groups living in the region. Despite centuries of exchange and mutual influence, these communities largely preserved their distinctive cultural identities, as reflected in their names, languages, customs, beliefs, and material and spiritual cultural traditions. This shows the nature of the cultural exchange process within the Dai Viet civilization as a natural, inherent process for each ethnic group. The preservation of ethnic cultural values within a shared civilization has made the Dai Viet civilization diverse.

The unity is determined by the geographical environment and the historical development of the ethnic groups within the Dai Viet civilization. Despite their differences in living areas, their shared cultural nuances are still influenced by the tropical monsoon climate and the agricultural economic environment. In particular, the processes of ethnic cultural exchange within the Dai Viet civilization were closely intertwined with the formation of the nation-state and the struggle to protect national territory, thus shaping national consciousness.

7.2. Inter-ethnic cultural exchange as a foundation of Dai Viet national development

The development of the Dai Viet nation was closely associated with territorial expansion and the incorporation of new regions into the state's political and cultural sphere. In this process, cultural exchange among ethnic groups was one of the factors that contributed to the integration of new lands into the nation, limiting military activities. The incorporation of territories formerly belonging to the Champa kingdom provides a notable example. This process began in the 11th century and ended in the early 19th century. Military activities between feudal dynasties usually began and ended quickly, while the subsequent process involved coexistence between the Viet and Champa peoples. Cultural exchange facilitated the coexistence and interaction of two ethnic groups that differed considerably in their historical origins, enabling them to live side by side, cultivate the land, and contribute to the development of southern territories. Through cultural exchange, Viet and Cham cultural elements increasingly influenced one another, fostering cultural integration and reducing the significance of earlier political divisions. Gradually, Vietnamese and Cham communities became increasingly rooted in these territories, even as political control passed from Cham to Viet rulers.

The process of territorial expansion in Southern Vietnam was initiated by Viet land reclamation and settlement in areas originally inhabited by the Khmer, Ma, Stieng, and Chu Ru ethnic groups. Historical records indicate that Vietnamese and Khmer communities often lived in proximity, engaging in trade and other forms of interaction. In some places, when the Viet people arrived, the Khmer people moved elsewhere because there was still plenty of land available (Trinh Hoai Duc, 2006). As the population increased and the land was fully developed, Viet villages and Khmer settlements were situated next to each other, and cultural elements began to permeate each other naturally. The process of cultural exchange and transformation turned the once barren land of Southern Vietnam into an economically prosperous and culturally diverse region, contributing to the affirmation of the role of the Dai Viet feudal state in this new territory.

Cultural exchange between the Viet and the Cham led to a significant shift in Vietnamese economic thinking. The Viet people settling in the coastal areas of Central Vietnam became closely connected to the sea. As a result, they not only controlled the mainland but also ventured out to sea to explore islands hundreds of kilometres offshore. It was Vietnamese fishermen, on behalf of the Nguyen dynasty, who reached the Hoang Sa Islands, establishing sovereignty very early on. The process of venturing out to sea and establishing a foothold on islands continued on the islands surrounding Southern Vietnam.

The development of the Dai Viet nation is also reflected in the strengthening of national consciousness. The history of cultural exchange among ethnic groups over a thousand years in the Dai Viet civilization bound these groups together, fostering national consciousness in newly joined groups and strengthening national identity in those already connected. This increase in national identity was promoted through various fields, such as the struggle against foreign invaders, the conquest of nature to expand territory, and the struggle against tyranny and oppression under the feudal regime (the peasant uprisings of Hoang Cong Chat, Le Duy Mat, and the Tay Son all involved and provided support to many ethnic minorities). Throughout the Dai Viet civilization, ethnic groups were bound together not only by their shared national origins, passed down through legends and myths, but also by a clearer understanding that their survival was inextricably linked to the nation.

Inter-ethnic Cultural Exchange in the Dai Viet Civilization: Historical Processes, Characteristics, and Contributions to Cultural Integration and National Development

8. CONCLUSIONS

With favourable geographical conditions and influenced by the historical circumstances of the feudal system's formation and development, numerous ethnic groups coexisted in medieval Vietnam. The living areas of these ethnic groups were intertwined, and they coexisted and worked together to reclaim land, conquer nature, and defend their living spaces against invasion. Vietnamese feudal dynasties recognized the importance of strengthening bonds among ethnic groups to secure the borders and remote areas. Therefore, they implemented appropriate policies to bind and connect these ethnic groups to the feudal state. Stemming from these objective and subjective conditions, interethnic cultural exchange occurred continuously in many aspects. The process of ethnic cultural exchange within the Dai Viet civilization was closely intertwined with the formation and expansion of the feudal state from the tenth to the mid-nineteenth century. As the territory of Dai Viet expanded from Northern and North Central Vietnam toward South Central and Southern Vietnam, cultural interactions among different ethnic groups became increasingly extensive and profound.

Inter-ethnic cultural exchange in the Dai Viet civilization was an inevitable historical process in a multi-ethnic society, closely intertwined with the formation and development of the nation-state. This process occurred frequently and primarily voluntarily, contributing to the development of the Dai Viet nation in many respects. In this process, the Viet people, as the majority ethnic group, played a driving role in promoting cultural exchange not only through the feudal government's cultural dissemination policies but also through practical labour and production, the conquest and transformation of nature, and social struggles. From this, Viet culture continuously spread to other ethnic groups. At the same time, the Viet people actively adopted the cultural values of other ethnic groups to adapt to the natural and social conditions of their living areas. However, other ethnic groups within the Dai Viet civilization continued to play an active role in cultural assimilation, and the unique cultural characteristics of each were preserved, creating a diverse cultural landscape.

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