

**ARCHIVES OF COLLECTED MATERIALS OF FOLK AND  
TRADITIONAL MUSIC: THE CASE OF VIETNAM**

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It is a commonly known fact that Vietnam is a multiethnic nation consisting of 54 ethnic language groups belonging to some linguistic families of Southeast Asia such as Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Mon, Kh'mer, Viet-Muong, Tay-Thai, H'Mong-Zao, Malayo-Polynesian and so on. Each Vietnamese ethnic group has its own unique culture including its music.

Depending on certain historical conditions, the ethnic groups are not on the same social plane. They could be divided into three main categories:

1. The society at the end of the primitive communist regime with several vestiges of primitive democracy. In the culture of this regime, only folk music exists;
2. The pre-feudal society where only folk music exists;
3. The feudal society in which both folk and professional court music are prevalent.

The societies of 53 ethnic minorities belong to the first two categories while the single majority Viet belongs to the third category.

Evidently folk music has played an important role in the preservation and development of ethnic music. That is why our main thrust is on collecting and preserving materials of folk music even though we do collect and preserve various kinds of professional music such as court music, music of theatre and dance, religious music (Shamanic, Buddhist, Islamic, Hindu, Taoist, Christian and even the music associated with the Confucian shrine).

Before 1954, after the Geneva Agreement and since 1975, after the reunification of our country, we have been collecting folk and traditional music of the Vietnamese ethnic groups. We have collected not only the music but also the materials and images of musical activities and customs. The collected materials include mainly sound recordings, numerous photos, some 16 mm and 35 mm films and many ancient manuscripts written on papyrus and palm leaves.

The recordings were made using different kinds of recorders: reel-to-reel recorders between the 1950s and 70s, cassette recorders since the 80s to the present, and since a few years ago DAT and the MiniDisc recorder. We have a few 16mm and 35mm films shot with a low quality cinema camera. Since 1988 we have been using different types of video camera like the VHS, HiFi VHS, S-VHS, Betacam and now Digital Betacam. The variety of materials makes it difficult to preserve them in the hot and humid conditions of a monsoon country like Vietnam. Despite such difficulties, at present we have about 30,000 songs and instrumental pieces of folk and traditional music in our sound archives. These materials have been collected by several generations of collectors and researchers since the 60s.

The collected materials are preserved in the archives of the Institute of Musicology (Ministry of Culture and Information). There is also a small archives belonging to the Institute of Folklore (National Centre of Social Science and Humanity). Some collectors and researchers have their own private or personal archives and the technological conditions for preservation are different in each case.

The Institute of Musicology has the best conditions. The materials are computerized. The original materials are preserved in an air-conditioned storage facility on the second floor, the temperature and humidity being monitored round the clock. The Institute has some technical systems such as Digital Betacam Video editing system, S-VHS Video editing System, VCD production system, Sonic Solution System and so on. The materials of the Institute of Folklore and the personal archives are also preserved in their original form in air-conditioned rooms.

The state institutes receive an annual state budget for the collection and preservation of materials. Sometimes the institutes are also supported by grants from organizations such as the Association of South East Asian Nations–Commission of Culture and Information (ASEAN–COCI), the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO—Japan (ACCU), the Japan Foundation, the Japan Sumitomo Foundation, the Toyota Foundation, etc.

At the national level we have had a programme since 1995 named *Investigation, Preservation and Promotion of National Cultural Intangible Heritage* with an average budget of \$300,000 per year. The Ministry of Culture and Information is in charge of carrying out this programme. The Vietnam Institute of Culture and Arts Studies is entrusted by the ministry to conduct the collection plan throughout the country with the collaboration of the Provincial Department of Culture and Information of 61 provinces and cities. All the collected materials have to be passed on to the archives of the Institute of Musicology. After some decades of collecting, we have materials of 51 of the 54 ethnic groups in our archives. (Please see Information on the Archival Records of the Institute of Musicology at the end of this chapter).

Now we have planned to collect the materials of the remaining three ethnic groups in order to complete the Atlas. Our annual collection plan also includes collecting additional materials of the ethnic groups we already have in our archives in order to survey the changes in their music and musical lives. For this, we are supported by the state budget.

Generally, the stages of preservation and the ‘fortune’ of the collected materials in our country can be divided into two periods:

1. 1960–1990. Materials were preserved without any technological knowledge. As a result, many of the materials were destroyed; some of them we cannot collect again because the informants are dead and we have lost these materials forever.
2. 1990 onwards. With technical advancement and support from the state and foreign foundations, we have been able to restore and refine the deteriorated or affected materials, computerize them and transfer them to CD, VCD, CD-ROM.

The collected materials and the archives records are exchanged among relevant institutions annually. At the end of each year, institutions such as the Institute of Musicology, the Institute of Folklore, the Vietnamese Institute of Culture and Arts Studies, the Association of Vietnamese Folklorists, meet together where each institution informs the others about its own new records and they exchange materials with one another.

The collected materials were chosen to be included into the curriculum of primary and secondary schools corresponding to the age and psychological developments of the pupils. That is why the curriculum of primary schools contains mainly lullabies and various kinds of traditional children's songs, games and stories. In the curriculum of the secondary school, pupils are introduced to other genres such as the music of springtime ceremonies, alternating singing between girls and boys, music of shamanic ritual, etc.

On the national TV and radio (AM) we have a two-and-a-half-hour weekly programme of the folk and traditional music of the Vietnamese ethnic groups. Besides this, we have a provincial system of TV and radio in 61 provinces where they also broadcast a two-and-a-half-hour programme per week on folk/traditional music.

We have very few conditions—and they are mainly financial conditions—for publications. The printed books and materials are directed to the music publisher and each year they publish five-six books on folk/traditional music. Here they also have a section for CD production where each year they produce one-two CDs on folk/traditional music. The archives section of the Institute of Musicology also publishes some selected materials on various topics of its own.

Generally these publications only supply the internal demand of the Vietnamese people as they are published in Vietnamese. Very few materials are published in foreign languages like English, French, Chinese, etc. This makes the propagation and presentation of Vietnamese folk/traditional music difficult outside Vietnam.

#### *Challenges and Obstacles and How to Solve Them*

Vietnam is a developing country with a backward agrarian economy and a rural society. The traditional culture is faced with the threat of

extinction due to various economic and social factors. Under such circumstances we have to discover some reasonable and rational means to overcome the challenges and obstacles on the one hand and to maintain and preserve our cultural identity under the recent social conditions on the other. Firstly, we should be aware of the role of traditional culture, including folk and traditional music, in the present society and consider the following:

Traditional culture was born out of the conditions aimed at supplying the demands of the peasantry, living in rural communities. In that time and society, the folk and traditional culture (and music) was the single form through which the peasants created and consumed cultural activities and values.

In the present stage of industrialization and modernization in the context of globalization and urbanization, the social substratum and the basic structure of the old society including its culture are undergoing a process of destruction.

Our problem is how new social elements and conditions can emerge from these destructuralized elements of the old society and integrate with the new to create a new form of national culture. We need to suit the conditions of the present society on the one hand and preserve and develop the national traditional cultural values and identity on the other.

Secondly, in order to realize the aim of preserving traditional culture, we have developed an action plan as follows:

To collect as soon as possible all remaining elements, values, records of the folk and traditional culture (including music) and to preserve them in archives under the most modern technological conditions with modern equipment. By doing this we can preserve them in their authentic form. We call this plan of action 'Static Preservation' or 'Static Archives.'

The authors of the folk and traditional culture are the people, mainly the peasants of the 54 ethnic groups. We select those activities or forms from folk and traditional culture, that can meet the demands and are adaptable to the conditions of contemporary society and return them to the hands of the villagers. We have a policy encourag-

ing the villagers to restore, revitalize and make these folk and traditional activities part of their current cultural life. Our practical experiences demonstrate that folk and traditional culture (including music) preserved in living form is used by the people and becomes an inseparable component of the contemporary national culture. Furthermore, in the hands of their 'authors', the folk and traditional values are refined and changed to contribute to the restructuring of the national culture. We call this 'Living Preservation' or 'Living Archives.'

*What More Do We Have to Do?*

At present, we are planning to establish an Ethnomusicology Section, first in the National Museum of Ethnography and then in the Provincial Museums.

We plan to encourage the establishment of personal/private archives and to include them into a unified national archives system.

A national policy on the Preservation and Promotion of Cultural Intangible Heritage was drafted and submitted to the National Assembly. It might be approved soon.

We plan to create a national law protecting the rights and the interests of the villagers and communities owning folk and traditional cultural values, protecting the rights and interests of collectors, researchers, archivists, and institutions concerned in cooperation with WIPO.

We plan to join in regional and international archives organizations with an aim to exchange materials, experiences, scholars and delegates.

We can conclude by saying that for us the archives in general and the archive of folk and traditional music in particular is a very new discipline. We have started various endeavours, but we are only now making a real beginning. We hope that contact with other countries and archivists will open up new prospects for us.

Information on the Archival Records of the Institute of Musicology

FAMILY	SUB-GROUP	ETHNIC NAME	FOLKSONG collected items	INSTRUMENTAL collected items
AUSTRO-ASIAN	Viet-Muong	Chut	89	102
		Muong	445	291
		Tho	66	22
		Viet	8,977	2,055
	Mon-Kh'mer	Banar	276	300
		Brau	6	3
		Bru-VanKieu	95	66
		Ch'Ro	none	none
Cor		52	27	
K'ho		130	106	
K'Tu		46	21	
Je-Trieng		45	18	
H'Re		122	26	
Khang		24	7	
Kh'Mer		369	319	
Kh'Mu		97	67	
Mang		5	0	
Ma		80	72	
M'Nong		23	68	
ODu		none	none	
R'Mam	2	17		
Ta Oi	59	91		
KSing-Mul	2	1		
Se Dang	146	68		
Stieng	20	none		
Tay-Thai	Pu y	26	2	
	Zay	52	39	
	Lao	73	96	
	Lù	4	5	
	Nung	1,916	118	
	San Chay	43	43	
	San Ziu	25	none	
	Tay	710	257	
	Thai	821	676	
H'Mong-Zao	Zao	341	37	
	H'Mong	428	599	
	Pathen	3	none	
Mixed Kadai	K'Lao	25	10	
	La Chi	1	none	
	La Ha	none	1	
	Pu Piew	30	1	
AUSTRO-NESIAN	Malayo-Polynesian	Cham	353	348
		Chu-ru	none	none
		Rhade	84	91
		Jo Rai	282	267
Rak Glei	61	133		
SINO-TIBETAN	Han	Hwa	197	none
		Ngai	57	none
Tibeto-Burman	Tibeto-Burman	Kong	32	14
		Kh-Zi	52	16
		La Hu	none	1
		Lo Lo	35	14
		Phula	58	37
		Sila	10	1