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RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN OVERVIEW OF HUMAN PHILOSOPHY OF THE SOUTHERN VIETNAMESE PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

Without expecting to cover all aspects of Southern Vietnamese people's living philosophies, in this article, I focus on introducing general information about the topics, philosophy and human philosophy, their origins and histories, and how they might describe the characteristics that typify Southern Vietnamese people's lives compared to those in other regions. These characteristics are Southern Vietnamese harmonious lifestyles, simplicity, tolerance, generosity, gratitude, flexibility, and practicality.

Key words: Philosophy, human philosophy, Southern Vietnamese people.

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INTRODUCTION

For over 300 years of development, Vietnam's favorable geography and climate have created a flourishing wet rice civilization for its southern land. Perhaps, this land of freedom and wilderness with many immigrants formed the features of the Southern Vietnamese character such as rustic, kind-hearted, tolerant, hospitable, generous, honest, frank, powerful and resilient. Throughout this history, the specific conditions of nature and its history, along with those characteristics have shaped the Southern Vietnamese people's human philosophy. Today, in busy modern society, with new qualities having been formed or introduced from abroad, especially the West, local people's human philosophy has changed gradually. It is meaningful to research on their human philosophy so we can value it and contribute to preserving and promoting the Vietnamese people's fine traditions in general and of the southern people's particularly.

Content of Southern Vietnamese's human philosophy

Different concepts of philosophy; human philosophy and Southern Vietnamese's human philosophy: The ancient West did not clearly distinguish what it meant by "philosophy". It was used in the same sense (φιλοσοφία) in Grecian philosophy) of distinguishing between connotation and denotation. In Vietnam, these concepts are sometimes used interchangeably and sometimes are synonymous. However, I regard "philosophy" to entail two different ideas: "Philosophy is the science of the general rules that both existence (i.e., the natural world and society) and human's thinking and cognition must obey" (Dictionary of Philosophy, 1986).

A Vietnamese idea is that philosophy is defined, firstly as "human's common conception of human and society"; and secondly as "theories of human and social matters" (Institute of Linguistics, 2002). However, I follow the standpoint that philosophy results from a process of reflecting, contemplating, generalizing, and accumulating the experience into a perspective that encompasses thought and action, and orients human goals and meaning. Thus, these two conceptions of philosophy not only closely relate to each other, but are not synonymous. Human philosophical behaviors towards nature, society, and one's sense of self can be drawn from philosophical principles. Not all philosophies are derived from doctrinal or philosophical principles. My philosophy reflects on reality and on the relationship of human beings in the process of survival and development, to the extent that it can be considered as a discipline and a direction for human thoughts and actions. And I draw much from the treasure of humanity's knowledge and national culture. The term, "Human", comes from Sino-Vietnamese origins to mean the person; "life" means living. So, the concept of "human" describes the life of humans. In general, human philosophy is an individual or a community perspective on life, which expresses feelings, dreams, desire, ideals that humans form during their lives. Therefore, in a broad sense, "human philosophy" applies the conception of life, the justification of living, its purpose, meaning and values of being human, how to live to deserve being a member of a social community. In the narrower sense, "human philosophy" describes how people view the relations between humans and nature, between humans and others in society, and humans self-respect. The Southern Vietnamese idea of "human philosophy" is semantically similar. The Southern Vietnamese currently and specifically perceive life, and express their feelings, dreams, desire, human ideals that is uniquely local to this region and evolved from their earliest days living in this land.

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Formation of Southern Vietnamese people's human philosophy: Like people in other regions, the Southern Vietnamese people's notions, views of life on nature, society and themselves have been formed during their survival as they developed the Southern land. This region is notable for not only its typical geographical and natural characteristics but also for its historical and social conditions, and cultural traditions of the local people. Those essentials have formed the Southern Vietnamese people's human philosophy. The terrain of the South is relatively flat: the west is bounded by the Gulf of Thailand, the east and southeast are bounded by the East Sea, the north and northwest abuts Cambodia, and a part of the Northwest borders the South-Central region. In the southeast is much high ground up to 986 metres elevation composed of mainly basalt soil and ancient alluvial soil. The Delta region of the South covers 6.13 million hectares and has more than 4,000 canals of up to 5.700 kilometres. The Southwest has an average elevation of nearly two metres, mainly new alluvial soil, while some low mountains are adjacent to the central highlands, to the west of Kien Giang and An Giang provinces. The two largest river systems in the South are from the Dong Nai and Mekong Rivers, but the Dong Nai sediment is lower than the Mekong's. In earlier times, the Mekong River had poured an average of about 4,000 billion cubic metres and annually carried 100 million metric tons of silt to contribute importantly to the life of the Mekong Delta. The Mekong Delta has remained a lowland with an average height of about five metres above sea level; over countless years the sediment of the river created the land of the Mekong Delta from what was millions of years ago a large bay.

Before the Funan Kingdom was established in the first century, the Southern land historically included all of Cambodia, southern parts of Thailand and Laos, the entire South and Ca Mountain Pass of Vietnam; the territory of Funan Kingdom might include Southeast Cambodia and the whole current South of Vietnam. In the beginning of the third century, the Champa Kingdom was formed including Funan land from Ca Mountain Pass to Phan Thiet close to Ba Ria so that the residential area of the tribes I mentioned earlier became buffer zone of those two kingdoms. In the fourth century, the Khmer Dynasty (i.e., Chenla) took over Funan. During this period, the Khmer had lived in what we call the South today; the population was meagre because the inhabitants had not by then established some form of governance. They lived on and cultivated the land on what is today Khmer land called Green Chenla. The people there assembled forces in the South of Sea Lake to confront the Siam Kingdom which, at that time, continued to encroach on the West of Chenla since the South had been considered a part of Chenla, but in name only. However, at that time, because the Khmer did not live in the South to cultivate the land, it would be inaccurate to assume that the South depended on Chenla. Nevertheless, many researchers suppose that the former South was both not economically viable or administered by any sovereigns.

From the seventeenth century, the Vietnamese immigrants started to reclaim the South so that it became a new and vital land. At that time, these immigrants were mostly extremely industrious but poor farmers and artisans after having faced natural disasters, war and feudal oppression and exploitation. They immigrated freely, either as individuals or with whole family, or in groups of many families. On the other hand, at that time, Lord Nguyen organized and sponsored the people of this settlement and their claiming the land. While they mainly

used sailing boats to travel, some people moved overland, but it was more dangerous as they needed to cross mountains and their passes. They stopped at certain places and stayed there for awhile to see if settlement was possible but moved on, eventually reaching the South. The immigration was at times vast, especially during the fierce feudal war of the Trinh-Nguyen class conflict between landowners and farmers, and when Lord Nguyen recruited people for the South. At that time, the first destination of Vietnamese immigrants was Moi Xuy (Mo Xoai), Ba Ria, because this is where the road from Binh Thuan to the South meets a convenient seaport for boats that travel from the North to the South. From here, the Vietnamese migrants gradually headed to Dong Nai (Ban Lan, Ben Go, Ben Ca, Ben Rua, Tan Trieu Islet, and Tan Chanh Islet, and then to Xoai Khon (Ben Nghe) to settle and cultivate the land. In 1679, a Chinese group (i.e., Tran Thuan Xuyen) also went to the South to settle and farm the land. This meant that, from Mo Xoai to Ben Nghe, Vietnamese, Khmer and Chinese settlers had by then occupied the land.

In the eighteenth century, the clearing areas are expanded to include Xoai Khon in Cho Lon, which has since become a bustling commercial center. Obviously, the rivered lands were a preferred destination. In the Dong Nai river basin, the peoples scattered over the hills, in the forests; they knew how to grow rice but, because they did not know the farming techniques well, they mainly hunted and collected food on the vast wild plain. Around the Vam Co Tay River, on the northern bank and the islets of Tien River (Tan An, Go Cong, Cho Gao, Minh Islet, and Bao Islet in Tien Giang), the places that were not flooded in Dong Thap, An Giang (i.e., Cao Lanh and Tan Chau) were called the "blessed land". It was explored and cultivated quickly thanks to the fertile alluvial soil (e.g., islets Tan Hue, Gieng, Ong Chuong, May, Lam Thon-Tien River, Cat and Dung-Hau River). Meanwhile, some Vietnamese Catholics, who escaped Lord Nguyen's exclusion of their religion, came to Cai Mon, Cai Nhum, Soc Xoai, Ba Vat, and Mo Cay of Ben Tre, a province at the end of the Mekong River bordering the East Sea. They gathered along the coastline, the river and canal dikes, because they were convenient for travel, to earn a living and avoid the flooding. Some other Vietnamese came to the southern Hau River, such as at Soc Trang, to settle with the Khmer. Besides Vietnamese people, Chinese groups called Duong Ngan Dich (in 1679) and Tran Thuan Xuyen also came to settle in the My Tho area. Vietnamese and Chinese immigrants increasingly arrived, especially when Mac Cuu recruited Chinese (about 200 subordinates) to establish seven communities extending from Kampot (Cambodia) to Ca Mau (i.e., Can Bot, Trang Ke, Huong Ut (i.e., Vinh Thom), Phu Quoc, Ha Tien, Rach Gia and Ca Mau). Besides Vietnamese, Khmer and Chinese, Cham people also came to the South.

In the nineteenth century, the final king of Champa (1822), PoChonChan, who had established the capital in Phan Rang, abandoned the throne and fled to Cambodia after crossing Truong Son with his troops, entourage and family. In 1833, Le Van Khoi took arms against the Nguyen Dynasty, occupied Phan Thiet, Phan Ri, and Phan Rang but, in 1835, the uprising was crushed by the troops. Therefore, many Cham people who were afraid of being caught fled to remote areas or Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. While living separately from their original communities, they were strongly influenced by Islam and thus complied in their habits and customs the Islamic doctrine. Subsequently, most of them moved to settle

in Chau Doc. In 1841, the South experienced the Lam Sam uprising in Tra Vinh. King Thieu Tri thus directed Truong Minh Giang, who was in Chenla (Cambodia), to retreat. The Cham and Malaysian people who had been recruited into the Nguyen Dynasty's army followed Truong Minh Giang troops in retreat with their families. The King's special envoy, Le Van Duc, Deputy Lieutenant of the Nguyen Dynasty Doan Uan, also followed. They have nonetheless resided with their families along the Hau River (at Katambong Islet) and Khanh Binh (An Phu and An Giang) to this day. In 1858, in Chenla, Tuon Set It led the people to revolt against the feudal court; the uprising attracted many Cham and Malaysian people. When it failed, many Cham and Malaysian people escaped to the South, all of whom were given rite of passage by the Nguyen Dynasty and settled in An Giang; they occupied seven villages: Chau Giang, Katambong, Phum Soai, La Ma, Koh Koi, Koh Kia and Sa Bau. This is considered to have been the largest wave of immigration of Cham people from Cambodia to An Giang. In both 1854 and 1858, many Islamic Cham people, who survived the massacre by the Khmer army, escaped to Chau Doc. Truong Minh Giang let them settle on the border along the Hau River near Chau Doc and Tay Ninh, with the Cham people who were already there.

The impact of historical conditions from the second half of the eighteenth century created immigration waves of Cham people who had been nomadic for years but returned to Southern Vietnam to live. Thus, Cham residents in Southern Vietnam in general, and in An Giang in particular, have originated from two main sources: first, migrating straight from the central parts of Vietnam to new lands in the South; and second, returning from Henla, Malaysia, Indonesia in large numbers. At first, they resided largely in An Giang, Tay Ninh and were scattered in southern areas. They did so seeking both to establish businesses, but also over the years that followed, to escape the effects of war, and eventually the bombs used by the French during its colonial occupation of the South. Under the yoke of neocolonialism in the South, many farmers in the Mekong Delta consisted of many Cham people, especially those from An Giang to the countryside around Saigon. They hoped for a more peaceful life as they looked for land to clear for farming in Ba Ria and Dong Nai, while a few others scattered to towns and communities. Up to the eighteenth century, in the South, four main ethnic groups including Vietnamese, Khmer, Chinese, Cham have lived in the South. But, of course, crucial to the South's character and diversity are its indigenous inhabitants, the Angdonedieng people, who have lived there since before Funan founded a state in the first century. Indigenous to the Southeast are the Stieng Budek, Ma, Choro and Mnong people who remain on this land. The largest Vietnamese immigration occurred in Ba Ria, Dong Nai, Saigon, My Tho and Ben Tre, especially to the area near Vam Co Tay River, Tien River and Hau River because of the favorable conditions of fresh water, rivers and canals that were conducive to cultivation, mainly of rice. Because of the ethnic groups' cultural traditions that they have shared between them, a unique culture has identified the South since it began as a new land with new, vivid characteristics, which remains to this day.

The basic features of Southern Vietnamese's human philosophy: As stated earlier, I would be remiss not to mention the character of Southern Vietnamese's human philosophy after describing its natural and social conditions. Therefore, I focus in this section on the link between the two topics. Some

characteristics of Southern Vietnamese's human philosophy can be generalized as follows:

Harmony and simplicity: Previously, the Southern Vietnamese depended mainly on nature; it did not "upset" the colonists who sought a better life and a new land; even the nomad believed that *God will never disappoint good people*. Indeed, while preparing the land for settlement, they received abundant "godsend" products:

*Dong Nai provides rice, Tan Sai provides firewood,
Rice from Can Duoc, water from Dong Nai,
Remember to let someone follow you when you leave,
Thank you for the grains, People not only pay off all debt but
also feel full,
Who comes to Thap Muoi, Fish and shrimp to catch, godsend
rice to eat.*

The southwest region is especially endowed with fertile land, favorable climate, lush vegetation all year round, abundant seafood, Le Quy Don once described in *Miscellaneous Chronicles of the Pacified Frontier, 1776*, at the end of the eighteenth century,

[T]he field is so vast that it is impossible for eyes to see the path at edge of rice field. The fields are even, flat and boundless like that. The land is very suitable for the cultivation of glutinous rice and ordinary rice. Rice here is white and very soft (Ly Quy Don, 2007).

Thanks to the river region, the South grows much rice; a chant, which many people know, recites: *Cai Rang, Ba Lang, Vam Sang, Phong Dien, is translated as, If you love me, then give me money, Do not give rice, neighbors will laugh at us*. In the old days, people here were not afraid of hunger because vegetables naturally grew around the house in the garden, on the field border, and in the ditches, while all kinds of shrimp, fish, crabs and snails were easily caught at any time for food. Natural food in the South is abundant, as reflected in a popular folk verse:

*The wind leads people back to the mountain field to eat small crabs,
Back to the river to eat fish and to the field to eat crabs,
Catching crabs to make crab paste,
Sending to grandparents, no one needs to pay for food.*

Especially in the extensive, rich Southwest, famous rich produce abounds:

Thap Muoi field is very big for many storks, There are lots of fish and shrimp; or Ben Tre is rich in Mo Cay sugarcane, In Thanh Phu clam, in Cai Mon mango, Binh Dai has lots of rice and shrimp, Ba Tri is famous for salt, Giong Trom is famous for rice; or in An Giang: Crow has told kite a few times, Ong Chuong Islet has a lot of fish and shrimp.

Being in *harmony* with the river and nature is demonstrated clearly in the local people's living and diet. The Southern Vietnamese habitually build houses along the great rivers (Dong Nai, Tien and Hau Rivers) and canals; they do not build houses with bricks and mortar, but using available plants, and leaves like bamboo, vulgar bamboo, eucalyptus, melaleuca, coconut. This is understandable since the natural geography there is favorable, and heavy rain and floods rarely occur as

they do in the Northern and Central parts. Because the people prefer the area's natural setting and weather conditions, they do not build—the Southern Vietnamese often say *raise* a house)-rock-solid houses. They mostly need only to be strong enough and airy. This place has created a typical “garden architecture”. Each family of former South usually had a few *cong*¹ or more of farmland to grow rice or a few-*cong* garden to grow fruit like mango, longan, and mangosteen. Those who for any reason did not have production land could work in fishing field to afford their families. Some others could glean rice on the field or dig manioc, sweet potato; fish, use net or some traditional tools to catch natural aquatic food in the river or canal. As described in *Seven days in Thap Muoi Field*:

At that time, the residents did not need to work too hard. They could plow the field behind their houses, sowed the land with some seed rice, then they could have rice to eat throughout the year. There was so much fish that the kids just needed a small trident to get a string of fish after a short time of stabbing; women who washed the dishes on the riverbank could use a knife to catch a snakehead fish that was as big as a calf in the river. To diversify the food, they caught the storks on the field, sparrow and gleaned the rice. If they wanted vegetables, water-lilies sprouted everywhere. If they needed firewood, there were bamboo, reed and mangrove” (Nguyen Hien Le, 2002). Because of the rich and unique produce from nature, the Southern Vietnamese do not process food in a sophisticated way; the food is simply cooked with the unique processing expressing a specific culinary philosophy. Vegetables, leaves and herbs from the garden, and all kinds of shrimp, crab and fish caught locally are harmoniously combined to produce the signature dish of the South: salted fish hot pot, sour soup and braised fish. Also typical are savory dishes of braised fish with black pepper, served with raw or vegetables and different types of salted fish. The most special and unique dish though is braised and salted different kinds of fish with many vegetables, but with the sour taste of mango; the dish is hard to resist and the Southern Vietnamese relish it (Trinh Hoai Duc, 1998). In Southern Vietnam, fish and its by-products are also dried to ensure enough is available for the whole year, even several years, at times when less fish and shrimp are available. This drying also caters for the times when the rivers and canals carry so much fish that there is a surfeit of produce, especially when the water level is low. Immigrants who travel to the Southeast by sea are often faced with big waves, strong winds and frost and thus must find ways to adapt. For example, to prevent cold when diving for fish, they often drink water mixed with salt and fish sauce. Trinh Hoai Duc (1765–1825) once commented in *Gia Dinh Thanh Thong Chi* [the book is about the ancient South]:

Gia Dinh has many rivers, lakes, 9 out of 10 people there are skillful at steering a ship, swimming, people like to eat salty. At that time, some people ate two barrels of salted fish, about 20 kilograms in one meal to make a bet (Institute of History, National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, 1998). An idiom, *Eating salty and speak frankly*, reflects a characteristic of Southern Vietnamese. Eating salty, especially applying to farmers, means that, when they drink, they quench their thirst. They often drink fast rather than enjoying it slowly. Southern people often drink iced tea, but few people drink hot tea to savor it slowly than Northern people. When drinking alcohol, they drink “until getting to the port”, “until the fishing rod is bent”, “until they get drunk, and, if they are not, they will not go home.” The Western Vietnamese especially think that

alcohol represents affection and gratitude, and that sharing much alcohol means “honesty”, “playing hard”, “deep affection”. While some people even measure affection by alcohol, others equate overindulgence with dishonesty and struggling to maintain friendship. When the Southern Vietnamese are drunk, they sleep on the floor without thinking much about work, if they would work on the field that day, or could do it tomorrow. These preference and behaviors have become habitual to people of the South because, work occurs in a favorable climate, which does not affect the crops, or the fields. Apart from their simple lives and unique food, the Southern Vietnamese are known for their jubilant drinking parties, singing sweet, simple traditional songs called ‘*vong co*’, which seems to strengthen the alcohol. Local people are loyal to the river region and always remember it and look forward to returning to enjoy it wherever they may go, to Europe or America. It is interesting that, although the Southern Vietnamese were once quite ignorant because they did not receive much education or the knowledge that it endows as in modern times, they are ingenious in how they combine the local food at their disposal. The combinations are very simple but unexpectedly rational and in harmonizing the five basic elements of Ying and Yang to the level of “perfection”. I suggest that this character not only reflects the philosophy of food culture but also the philosophy of the Southern art. It is an analogy for the words of Barcelona football legend Johan Cruyff: “the pinnacle of beauty is simplicity” (Simple is the best).

Because its landscape is crossed by with many rivers, Southern Vietnamese life is often closely associated with river trade. Such trading activities, as they say, “on the wharf and in the boat” motivate popular craft work making boats, canoes, nets, fish-hooks and bamboo fish traps in many places with some still being produced. A notable and unique attraction in the Western and Southern river regions is the floating market. Currently, six markets remain in the West are Nga Bay Floating Market (Hau Giang), Nga Nam Floating Market (Soc Trang), Cai Rang Floating Market (Can Tho), Cai Be Floating Market (Tien Giang), Long Xuyen Floating Market (An Giang), Tra On Floating Market (Vinh Long). Their common feature is that they gather early in the morning, very early in some places. For example, Nga Nam Floating Market starts at 3 am, the market is more crowded at 5 am, but, at about 8 am, it is almost empty. However, some markets gather according to water level. The markets are more crowded when the water level gets higher because it is easy for boats and canoes to get to them (Tra On Floating Market, Vinh Long).² Coming to the floating markets from a distance, visitors see a unique ancient “marketing” which is supposed to be an intelligent visual advertisement. It is a wooden stick called *cay be*,³ usually made of bamboo, at the top of a boat with dangling sweet potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, onions, garlic, and chilies, according to the slogan “selling what is hung”.⁴ Passing the southwest floating markets, we feel the fresh, peaceful, rustic, cordial features of people in the river region on which many people spend all their life with their beloved little boats and canoes. Trinh Hoai Duc commented:

In Gia Dinh boats are everywhere, boats can be a house, or they can be used to go to the market, visit relatives, carry firewood, rice, it is even more convenient to do business. The river is full of boats and canoes which travel all day and night, the prows adjoin the sterns (Institute of History, National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, 1998). Simple and

countrified images are displayed on traditional Southern Vietnamese garments with design of simple but unique dishes such as Chau Doc fish, rice noodles, beef noodles with banana flower (from Vinh Long), corn with salted fish, Hoa Loc mango (from Tien Giang), rambutan (from Vinh Long), Nam Roi pomelo (from Vinh Long), durian (from Ben Tre). Also used are the naïve but cute sayings used in the music: *The mat seller's love*, and *The midnight drum reminds me of you*, are the "specialties" that cannot be ignored not only by the natives but also by Western tourists. Using a modern economics measure, the floating market is a form of "market economy"⁵ which is novel, but appeared a long time ago and only in the Southern river to provide a rich source of goods (e.g., coffee, rice plates, fish, fruit and various other necessities) for the people on the river to meet market demand. Floating markets in the Western river region demonstrate not only how inhabitants have adapted to nature but also the flexibility, creativity, and intelligence of Southern Vietnamese.

Tolerance and generosity: The old South was untouched with mosquitoes sounding like flutes and leeches swimming like noodles when the villagers first arrived. They felt as if they all come to a strange region where the bird sounds scared people as did the regional fish. When people steered a boat, the crocodiles could have eaten their legs. They said, *Leeches are in the swamp, ghosts are in the forest*. Understanding and empathizing with the mood of those who settle a region where crocodiles swim in the rivers and tigers race in the forests, The Southern people formed a philosophy of living in harmony and relying on each other to survive. This philosophy influenced to live collectively in villages to protect themselves against dangerous animals and to claim the new land. When a whole village gathers to celebrate, for example, harvests, weddings, births and anniversaries of various kinds, it is enough that they share such occasions or, in other words, gifts are not necessary. The hosts derive their excitement simply from guests attending and sharing a celebratory glass of alcohol or a cup of tea. However, if people cannot attend, they customarily send gifts to apologize. Similarly, when a family of the village faces trouble from illness, bereavement, or other calamities, the other villagers will support them at any time of day. The whole village will donate rice and fish to poor families, even if those sufferings are not of their relatives. From such tolerance, the Southern people remain close-knit and interdependent. This sense of justice and reason is imbued with care, kindness and compassion typifies the local people.

As I mentioned earlier, the South is a preferred place to live because of its natural environment, its favorable climate, rich produce, lush vegetation. These condition underlie the Southern Vietnamese philosophy of life that is conducive with how nature has endowed this land. What Vietnamese culturist, Trinh Hoai Duc, wrote in *Gia Dinh Thanh Thong Chi* rings true:

Gia Dinh in the South of Vietnam is a landmass with lots of animals and plants, people are hardly worried about famine, so they seldom accumulate, they have luxurious customs, sense of honor and pride. People are brave and righteous when they are close to the sun. So, people prefer loyalty, learn from Confucian books to understand moral principles. (Institute of History, National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, 1998). In everyday life, the Southern people are open and do not mind a little conflict. While they hold that a small conflict should be ignored, they also believe that, if there is friction,

conflicts will become heated and raise perhaps unsettled issues. Therefore, they have parties and drink alcohol or a cup of tea to reconcile their differences. Southern Vietnamese *generosity* describes vividly an important dimension of the living philosophy of the people, because where they live is widespread with long rivers. Since they are self-reliant, they will stay if they feel happy and they will leave if they feel sad because they prefer freedom and spontaneity. The Southern people are always confident in their personal capacity, and commonly demonstrate optimism and thrive on life. This image was portrayed by Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Today you can go to the bay, tomorrow you can head for the open sea, Another day you can catch the wind, tonight you can make friend with the moon, You work leisurely by yourself, If you feel strong, you can catch fish with a net, if you are tired, you can fish with a fishing rod, You can go wherever you like, you can sing whenever you want, I enjoy my own life (Luc Van Tien). Perhaps, this human philosophy derives partly from understanding those who share the same plight. This is because all of them came from other lands and historically learned to live together after settling in a new land, often faced with harsh times, particular at the initial stage of their immigration. These trials help to form the Southern Vietnamese characteristics of bravery and alternatively, *hospitality*. It typifies and is unique to the people. For example,

In Gia Dinh, visitors are invited to have betel first, then tea and cookies, and a meal in order to make the guests feel welcoming. Regardless of relatives or acquaintances, strangers or friends, they will treat you well when you visit them. Therefore, most people do not carry much food when they go out, it is a refuge for quite a lot of people because there are places to keep visitors (Institute of History, National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, 1998). Why is this so? Many suggest that, since ancient times, because the Southern Vietnamese were many but secluded and remote. They found much pleasure when visitors came, even if the guests unintentional took the wrong route. Psychologically, they needed someone to talk to and confide in, merely to drink away their troubles derived once they had left their native lands. They treated their guests considerately, kindly, sincerely and generously. These days, when the guests visit, even poor families prepare a small meal with home produce, such as grilled snakehead, boiled vegetables and fruits. There must especially be alcohol or tea over which homeowners and their guests can chat, and a stranger can become a friend and can enjoy sharing *Catching and grilling the snakehead, Making a tray of rice alcohol to treat distant friends*. In other words, unlike the Northern people's psychology marked by, "blood is thicker than water", the Southern people say, "A stranger nearby is better than a far-away relative".

Perhaps, it is hard to find people of any countries who are as hospitable as the Southern Vietnamese because they value their guests and ensure that they are well-fed with the hosts' delicious food. The host family would be likely to do with less so that its guests' appetites are catered for. Southern people will provide for others financially and hospitably according to the creed, "although I am poor, I will take care of you thoughtfully; money is nothing; benevolence and righteousness are important" (Tran Phong Dieu, 2010). It is traditional in Southern Vietnam that guests do not refuse the food and comforts they are offered as this may be misunderstood as disregarding their hosts. Even if guests are sated after already eating elsewhere, they should take some food from their hosts,

as the Southern Vietnamese often say humorously, “eat three grains of rice” to satisfy the hosts. Living these Southern traditions serves to bind guests to their hosts: an important characteristic of Southern Vietnamese life philosophy.

Sense of honor

In the philosophy of life, Southern people value a high sense of honor because it has historically been a life principle. This quality has traditionally been the theme of mothers' lullabies: *Money is fugitive*,⁶ *Sense of honor is like a thousand gold coins*, *The teals rarely drown*, *Why do you want to look for the lover with no sense of gratitude?* I suggest that Southern people's righteousness originates from *compassion*. They always help poor people overcome hard times without expecting repayment, according to Nguyen Dinh Chieu, If you are poor, do like what the poor did in the old time, Saving people's lives by everything you have, If you are rich, do like what the rich did in the old time, Freeing them from their debt, giving them some rice, And who is an orphan, Helping them to get married, taking care of their children, Do not be indifferent to poor people, Some should give food and clothing, some should give wage (Questions and Answers of a Fisherman and a Woodsman). In other words, righteousness relates closely to sentiment because they “share clothes, share food”, they think “the leaves protect tattered ones”, and “better a neighbor near than a brother far off”. However, sometimes the balance is disturbed beyond reason when sentiment outweighs rightness, even to the extent of superseding it. Vietnamese people generally aim for this balance and are particularly opposed to the unfaithful tendency to “Bite the hand that feeds”. They apply this aim by treating strangers faithfully and “*Breaking off a connection with unfaithful brothers*”. They believe fervently that, *It is better to have a good reputation than nice clothes*, *Do not forget the crossbow when you already catch the birds*, *do not forget the fish trap when you already catch the fish*. Southern people say to people lacking benevolence and righteousness: *Because the rope is broken*, *the wood sinks*, *You look for something far because you are unfaithful*. For loyal people, they are ready to overcome any difficulties, even sacrificing for them: *Be together for the whole life*, *Without mats, we can sleep on palm leaves*; and support faithfulness in love with, *Fish disappear in a too long river*, *but I will wait for you because you are righteous*. Vietnamese people usually say “deep love, heavy righteousness” where “righteousness” occupies the profound feelings in life. In short, for the Southern people, the *righteousness* outweighs the *sentiment*. It is considered a “judge” of conscience to adjudicate conflicts in conjugal or other relations; righteousness helps individuals have criticism of their ethical behaviors.

Even though the Southern people value a sense of honor more than material possessions, they do appreciate a spirit of generosity. They also value sportsmanship based on courage, and candor. These qualities combine to fulfill the Southern sense of moral principles clearly and strongly: *Throw oneself in danger spot*, *Carrying friend on one's back to escape*, *Big waves under groves*, *Reaching to fish you out*, *it is alright to die for you*. If they see a grievance “on their way”, they are ready to help and sacrifice themselves for the cause of justice, even consider death as light as a feather. While I generalize this viewpoint, it is indeed sanctified into stories, proverbs, and folk songs, and in the image of Luc Van Tien in the story *Luc Van Tien*. It also symbolizes the image of a farmer who is

materially poor but filled with gratitude in the case of *Noc Nang Field*, and Wu's Song in *The forest land of the South*; the case of Nam Hen in *Catching crocodile in U Minh Forest*, and Le Van Do in *Grass standing in the draught*. They also fiercely condemn, to the point of contempt, people who are vane and greedy and those who forget righteousness for the sake of profit like the unpatriotic Vietnamese couple called Tu Mam in *The Forest Land of the South* or Trinh Ham and Bui Kiem in *Luc Van Tien*. Some people also describe the Southern people as *rakish*, but I disagree. These people might be mistaking *rakish* behavior by the Southern people's *frankness*, because they are “straight like the bow of a horse”, because they “wear their hearts on their sleeve”, and do not like “beating around the bush” and reject the “softening-up process”. The character of the Southern Vietnamese is unlike people from other regions. They will never do what is against their moral principles; they resolutely oppose the notions that, *Trees are born hard and leaves are born tough*, that *Regardless of the direction the wind, they do not follow*. Because of righteousness, sentiment, loyalty, they will nonetheless do what they promise; they will not change, even if that change significantly benefits them. They ascribe to the notions that, *Ships move but the docks do not*, and that *words bind men persistently*. The simplicity and candor of the Southern Vietnamese have become the beauty, the essence of the folklore and folk-song treasure of this land characterized by its purity and beauty. For example, men and women who love each other are not afraid to speak out:

In the beginning, I asked you to prepare three betel quids with a glass of alcohol. You shook your head because it was costly. Now I am married, why do you ask me to run away with you!?!; then: I love you so much, My skin of brain and head is peeled, I miss you when I sleep, I love you when I wake up; or: I was asleep in the late night, I missed the crayfish, If only I had picked the golden bracelet you wear.

Flexibility

The flexibility of the Vietnamese people in general and Southern people is particularly characteristic of the traditional Vietnamese culture, But without the flexibility in the flesh and blood of the Vietnamese, there would not be the dynamism of the South today. It can be said that dynamism is the *new development* of traditional flexibility in Southern area” (Tran Ngoc Them, 2006). Southern Vietnamese dynamism is a quality that owes its advantage to being driven from a *positive process*; it lies at the intersection of three axes shifting from static to dynamic: the holding, the time, and the space axis (Tran Ngoc Them, 2006). The South is a region of rivers, wet rice agriculture, canals, irrigation ditches, hot weather and monsoon that create a “meeting” point of “timely rains, and favorable weather”. Water has become to symbolize the personality and philosophy of Southern Vietnamese's life. The nature of water and the plentiful traffic on the waterways, namely, many canals and irrigation ditches, make local people consider them as roads. To settle their scattered people on a big tract of land, the former Southern Vietnamese did not separate themselves by surrounding themselves with bamboo as occurred in the Northern villages. It may be cozy but is also very cramped and Southern people always prefer open space. They can live “in an open space for several kilometers because the pressure from the group will be much lower, and if any citizens feel frustrated, they can move forward to work in other places” (Tran Van Giau, 2013).

Most Southern people build houses along the banks of rivers, canals, irrigation ditches because they provide the means of doing business easily. It is not necessary to gather by the bamboo gate as in Northern villages. In everyday life, Southern people regularly communicate with people from the other villages both in and outside the region. In the former countryside, sometimes in the flooding season, the whole village canoes to a house for meetings because the roads are flooded. Some live "itinerantly" on boats and canoes, being ready to relocate to explore new lands. Broadly speaking, it is easy for the Southern Vietnamese to transition and change their lifestyles because, "The *mobility* of people is a characteristic of the Southern land" (Tran Van Giau, 2013). Their typically flexible lifestyle relates to the river. Léopold Pallu, an aide of a French commander of a provincial army commented: "Southern people do not want to work abroad, but it is very easy for them to move to other regions within the country. When people make them miserable, they will leave" (Tran Van Giau, 2013). Pallu also found that,

In the South, a village may disintegrate in his hands as quickly as it converges...A family left with a buffalo herd in front, and their few belongings on a car or a boat. And because farming land and trees to build houses are everywhere, food and accommodation rarely make them feel perplexed" (Tran Van Giau, 2013). Flexibility in the human philosophy of the Southern Vietnamese is expressed in many different ways, more clearly in living or exchanging and acculturating the cultures of Europe, America, and Asian countries in the region through trade. Religions in Southern region also reflect the people's versatility in their variety. Besides the faiths that were introduced into the region like Buddhism, Christianity, Minh Su and Baha'i, the South follows indigenous religious beliefs expressing flexible combination with particular philosophy. A religion typically practiced in the South is Caodaism that combines other religions from the east and west, such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Catholicism. Coconut religion, also called *religious harmony*, was founded by Nguyen Thanh Nam (1910-1990) in Ben Tre, and includes Caodaism but also advocates religious harmony with and between Buddhism and Christianity. Coconut religion's followers build a pa kua altar to convey humans from ignorance to enlightenment with an opencast estrade to pray to the Buddha, Fairy and their Saint, and to ask God for good weather, their people's happiness and for peace for their people and country. In An Giang, the so-called "sacred land with extraordinary people", the *Buu Son Ky Huong* religion, also called the *gentle religion*, was introduced in 1849 by Doan Minh Huyen (1807-1856). He was born in Tong Son in Cai Tau Thuong, An Thanh Thuong District, Sa Dec Province (now belonging to Dong Thap).

He then went to Long Kien in the Cho Moi District, An Giang Province, to cure local people's sickness, and later became a monk in Tay An Temple (Sam Mountain, Chau Doc). He was revered by the believers who called him, *Tay An Buddhist Master*. He advocated and taught the doctrine "study Buddhism and cultivate virtue", that involved following the Buddha's teaching to remodel oneself, actively promote and practice the theory of the "Four grace" (*blessing*): *being grateful to ancestors and parents, the country, Triratna and compatriots and mankind*. This is the quintessential principle of this religion because it is consistent with the nature of Vietnamese in general. Although originating in Buddhism, this religion advocates that it is unnecessary to worship the Buddha

statue, to separate family and lovers, to fast, to shave, to recite prayers, and to make costly offering; just a few flowers and water are good for worship. According to cultural researcher, Son Nam, this is the way to practice being "unconditioned" as in Taoism, that does not focus on form, nor create unnecessary ceremony deliberately. In addition to the "study Buddhism and cultivate virtue", Tay An Buddhist Master also appreciate exploration, claim, farming so that the believers are food-sufficient, and do not need others' help to take holy orders.⁹ This was the progressive ideas at the time when the movement of claim was expanding into many places of the South. The theme of the idea of *being grateful to the country* according to the "Four graces" also inspired numerous followers to rise up against the invasion of the French colonialists at that time. The Bay Thua Uprising (1867-1873) was instigated and commanded by Tran Van Thanh, one disciple of Tay An Buddha Master. That uprising was a typical evidence. These values of the *Buu Son Ky Huong* religion profoundly influenced the *Hieu Nghia* and the *Hoa Hao* religions that followed later. The *Tu An Hieu Nghia religion* (*Hieu Nghia* for short), was founded in 1876 in Tuong Mountain (Ba Chuc, Tri Ton, An Giang), by Ngo Loi (known as the Buddha) when he sent some believers to claim, and build temples and new villages. At first, the *Hieu Nghia* religion was called the religion of worshipping grandparents by Ngo Loi, with believers later calling it the *Tu An Hieu Nghia* religion. Its principles are to "study Buddhism and cultivate virtue" and are expressed through preaching in poetic form with very simple words so that it is easy for believers to remember and so the words touch people's hearts.

Therefore, farmers accept the *Hieu Nghia* religion to the extent that the religion deserves credit for gathering the masses against French colonialism. It is considered as one of the Can Vuong movements, and it is considered as a purely indigenous religion because most followers are Southern farmers. In An Giang, another religion is the *Hoa Hao Buddhists* (also called *Hoa Hao*) because it was founded in 1939 in Hoa Hao village, Tan Chau District, Chau Doc Province but now belongs to Phu My Town, Phu Tan District, An Giang. The *Hoa Hao* religion is a Buddhist sect which was founded by Huynh Phu So (1920-1947), the believers call him the *Master, Head of the Religion Duc Huynh* or Venerated Teacher. He takes practice of Pure Land as his philosophical basis and takes holy orders at home. Hoa Hao Buddhism principle is also "study Buddhism and cultivate virtue" as foundation and merit, then people can become sages. However, the religion attaches special importance to cultivating virtue because the practice must be based on ethics, especially a *religion of human behavior* (*People follow Fairy's religion, Fairy follows people's religion, Do not cultivate virtue, never reach Fairy's religion*). This means that if people want to become Fairy Buddhist, they first need to cultivate virtue; if they do not, Fairy Buddhist are still far away). The influence of religion is quite broad, according to current data about this religion in more than 30 libraries around the world. Also in the South, many religions are quite strange such as *Lying, Sitting, and Banana religions*. The Southern people believe in "animism", that teachers that all inanimate as well animate things have spirits and are thus beholding to gods and saints. The followers believe that the land has the God of the soil, and the rivers have the God of the sea, and that "the God of soil keeps the house, the evil keeps the land". We can say that the South is home to many religions, all of which, to varying degrees, are followed by some people, while some remain under the thrall of Buddhism,

Hoa Hao, Caodaism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Brahmanism and Islam. The belief system of the South is an open system with a flexible philosophy whereby people easily accept change. For example, in the folk beliefs of the Khmer, people worship the Evil (Neak Ta); or Vietnamese people worship the Vietnamese's God of soil together with the Chinese's God of wealth. Also flexible and diverse is the Southern acculturation of other ethnic groups and folk beliefs of the Vietnamese people such as worshipping the God of soil (the Genie of the land), and the Regional God (Tutelary God). That has created *four layers* of protection for the Southern Vietnamese in their daily life. In the process of living together, ethnic groups are different, but accept each other's habits.

In *Gia Định Thanh Thong Chi*, Trinh Hoài Duc wrote, Gia Định is the Southern land of Vietnam, at the beginning of exploitation, adrift people from our country and Tang people (common name of Qing Dynasty's people is Tang people) as well as the Di barbarians called Chinese Han people rather than Han of Liu Han, Tang of Li Tang. Guangdong people themselves claimed that Tang of Tang is Yucheng, it is unavoidable to boast too much). West Ocean people (countries of Phu Lang Sa, Hong Mao, Ma Cao (Ao Mon), Western countries is called West Ocean), Cambodian, Cha Va people (usually 36 ports in Man Lat Da (Malucca) are called island. Son Nam people follow Bai Nhat religion (worshipping the sun, in short called Cha Va). The foreign countries mostly alternate but clothes and appliances are specific for each country (Institute of History, National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, 1998). Thus, the Southern people value traditions relatively to *accept the differences* in lifestyle and, from there, they have an attitude of *tolerance* for those who think and live differently. They tend to *value content over form* and *tolerance* in understanding Saigon and Southern Vietnamese in general (Tran Van Giau, 2013). In Southern culture, openness is also reflected in the characteristic cuisine with the appearance of the dish like hotpot, fried noodles, Chinese fried rice noodles, and curry of the Cham. Ao Ba Ba is adapted from Baju Kurung style of Malaysian, or "nop", "ca rang" (stove), which used to belong to the Khmer, but is used by the Vietnamese and adapted as one of their tools (Tran Ngoc Them, 2008).

Practicality: The quality of practicality is a form of social consciousness, so it is also subject to the regulations of natural, economic, cultural and social conditions. It originated within the philosophy of Vietnamese traditional culture. For the people from the South, being practical is a special achievement but is characterized as negative in the traditional culture. It also relates to pragmatism in both Eastern and Western traditional cultures (Tran Ngoc Them, 2008). The philosophy of practicality shows in most aspects from thinking to behavior in daily lives. It is very specific, simple, rustic, and usually derived from the daily experience of the Southern people. Of the people who originally migrated to the wild land of Southern Vietnam, most were poor as they sought a living. Having practical mindsets was not for pursuing high levels of education, but for earning a living, so thinking about everything needed to be practical is inevitable. In the eighteenth century, Le Quy Don wrote a well-known philosophy of practicality, "Phi nông bất ổn, phi công bất phú, phi thương bất hoạt, phi trí bất hưng" (which translates as "No farming, no stable; no job, no wealth; no trade, no progress; no knowledge, no progress"). The people in the South of Vietnam understand thoroughly the proverb "*Có thực mới vực được*

đạo" (i.e., "*It is no use preaching to a hungry man*"). "*Thực*"¹⁰ means not only food, but also producing food in the economy. President Ho Chi Minh assumed that to achieve socialism, the country should concentrate on economic development first and then the culture. The reason why is answered through the proverb, "*Có thực mới vực được đạo*", that continues, "*120 chuyện kể về tám gương đạo đức Hồ Chí Minh*". In general, "*Thực*" is not only the basis of the economy, but also is a physical element that exists in the social aspect of life. "*Đạo*" is Sino-Vietnamese; its literal meaning describes the path or road ahead metaphorically to point to the direction, orientation, goal or the way to reach a destination. Furthermore, it describes spiritual life and social consciousness and belongs to the field of the superstructure. "*Thực vực đạo*" means that material determines consciousness, and social survival determines social consciousness. However, regarding the *practicalities* embodied in human conception, each region has different views.

The Southern holds that the inner content is more truthful, friendly or beautiful than appearance. The axiom, "*Tốt gỗ hơn tốt nước sơn, Xấu người đẹp nết, còn hơn đẹp người*" translates as "Good wood is better than good paint"). Concerning love: "*Thương em chẳng biết để đâu, Để vào tay áo, lâu lâu lại dôm*", or to get married: "*Cùi khô dễ nấu, chông xấu dễ xài, Ham chi bóng sắc hành hài tám thân*". Regarding dress, both the kind of shirt used by South Vietnamese people and the traditional checkered black and white shawl, worn when a woman is rowing, are both convenient and friendly. It is a beautiful image of Vietnamese women when it helps them to express a happy smile and cover up a sadness. This lead to diversity in culture and folk art of the Southern people displayed through the art of proverb and poetry. Practicality is philosophically oriented to the field of art, which manifests itself as in literary fiction through its style of expression emulating the nuances from different areas. The core of writing and reading of the Southern Vietnamese is understand clearly to mean grammar rules, or "*tài đạo*". Luc Van Tien's story is a "strange phenomenon", which is attractive to most people, not only because of the content, but also its informal style. "*Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi*" (Tran Van Giau & Tran Bach Dang, 2013) commented: "Do Chieu used images of wood-cutters, fishers, master to talk about their favorite of most feudal intellectuals at Gia Định who interested in reading to understand meaning of document but failed in grammar". Because of practical conception in arts, many artists choose a more straightforward style of writing than North Vietnamese artists'. For example, instead of the word "lying", the Southern use a "*Ba Xạo*" word to talk about it. This satisfies the listeners because it becomes funnier and lighter in conversation like the comedy of the story of Mr. O in Ben Tre, about Ba Phi in Minh Hai ("*cọp xay lúa*" – *the tiger grinds rice*, "*heo đi cày*" – *the pig goes to plow*). It was famous in the folklore of the Southern Vietnamese.

Because of their practical conception in art, Southern people prefer specific to abstract communication. However, what follows was filtered and selected because of its profound and vivid meaning. Southern folk music is a typical example in naming the songs according to the content (Those songs are about different types of animals, birds, trees, vegetables and daily activities.), folk songs about mynah [more than 10 songs in the South and more than 30 songs in Vietnam], lý con cúm nùm, lý con sam, lý ngựa ô, lý cây bần, lý cây gòn, lý trái bắp,

lý trái bưởi, lý mù u, lý chúc rượu, lý qua cầu, lý cây, lý đường đẽm, lý vọng phu.

According to the first words of the sentences,

lý con cua, lý con chuột, lý con mèo, lý chim chi, lý chim sắc, lý chim chuyên, lý cây xanh, lý cây bông, lý cây ớt, lý mạ non, lý chẻ tre, lý chiếu bông, lý chiếu chiếu, lý đĩa bánh bò, lý nàng dâu, lý ba xa kéo chỉ, lý xăm xăm, lý liễn vũ. (the folk tunes about crabs, cats, cats, birds of prey, birds of prey, green trees, flowers, chilli, afternoons, a disk of a cake, the bride, the third pull only, tattoos, dance, with their first words of the sentences).

According to the sound of the music:

lý í a, lý bằng rù, lý bằng lưu thủy, lý bằng rằng, lý công xê xang, lý giọng ú, lý hồ khoan, lý hồ môi, lý kỳ hợi, lý lu là, lý tú lý tiên, lý rị đa (hoặc lý đu đê), lý rường ơ, lý tang tinh, lý ợ, lý yền ảnh...".

According to the origin of the type of art, a group of musical notes is simulated from the pentatonic music of Southern Vietnam and the sound from the musical instrument, "lý bản đờn, lý công chùa", according to landmarks, "lý Ba Tri, lý Cái Môn".

Because nature of Southern Vietnam is not harsh like that of the North and Middle regions, its traditional architectural style represents the adaptive, practical nature and the fertile lands close to nature that typify its topography. Therefore, the house in the Southern region are built simply, that is, not as solidly and even more impermanently than in other regions. However, some of the architecture styles represent universe art and traditional customs. For example, the panel house (i.e., *Ruong House*) in the South is designed according to the model of "Đình" (丁), the "Khẩu" word shape and the "Công" word shape. However, the "Đình" (丁) word shape style is the most popular in local areas. There they feature a hand-made traditional wooden house with many columns, beams and pillars, but not partition walls. The house is divided by columns into a main house and a wing house. The upper part is designed horizontally, the lower one is designed vertically. The ridge-beams of these two parts make a perpendicular as the "Ding". The house has the same eaves. The door of the upper part bases on the length of the house, and the door of lower one bases on the width of the house; therefore, two doors open in the same direction. In general, the "Đình" house features space and an airy aspect because the main house is used to worship the ancestors while household activities occur in the wing house. The high pointed roof helps to protect the house from strong winds and sun, even if the protection restricts outside visibility. The architecture of the Đình house not only reflects the common conception of a feudal regime, that is, *Confucianism* historically, but the South *Ruong House* also adapt to the environment of the Southern Vietnam, albeit it with some influence from Chinese architecture. The furniture is decorated by animal, plant, and floral motifs, which represent everyday life (e.g., fish, crab, tigers, and apricot blossoms). Vietnamese families have a tray of five special fruits on their altar called "Ngũ quả" consisting of a custard apple, syconium fruit, coconut, papaya fruit and mango, which indicates that they pray for better health. I suggest that this is a special convention style because "easy-going" is not only the expression of human practicality, but it also shows that

informal, easy to accept at the expense of detail are Southern Vietnamese bywords (perhaps, this is why Southern pronunciation does not distinguish "d" from "v"; "x" from "s"; and "oài" from "ài" (Vo Van Thang, 2014)). Southern people also value practicality in their religious belief and worshipping. When people pray for something to the God of land, they offer what they have, which is usually food. Different from when praying their ancestors - people worship before eating, they could eat the worshipped food first to prove to the God that the food is not poisonous. The God of land's statue looks friendly: he wears the kind of shirt used by South Vietnamese people. He wears a shirt without buttons, He shows off his belly, His hand hold an areca spathe fan, and he is eating banana and mango. He is easy-going with a friendly smile (Tran Ngoc Them, 2018). From the practical conception of social views, the Southern people pay more attention to the mandarins who are good at martial arts than those are good at literature, acting rather than talking, always doing more. "The cultural activities in the Southern region developed slowly in the eighteenth century because of constant war, until 1796, when the Nguyen dynasty opened the provincial examinations at Gia Dinh province. The number of candidates increased in the early nineteenth century when the country was independent. However, the number of Gia Dinh candidates was not as successful as in others area during the reign of Emperor Tu Duc. According to "Đại Nam nhất thống chí", 26 people became mandarin, entailing 13 military and 12 civil ones, and a famous Confucian scholar. Vo Truong Toan, taught other candidates, but he did not want to become a mandarin" (Tran Van Giau & Tran Bach Dang, 2013). Like others, he rather chose to live a simple lifestyle, using the teaching profession to help people and do something useful.

Conclusion

Studying the philosophy of the Southern Vietnamese ascertains that its values are characterized by living in harmony, and by valuing simplicity, tolerance, generosity, significance, flexibility and practicality. These qualities typify Vietnamese culture and thought. The content of human philosophy dominates the perception and behavior that formed the characteristics of Southern Vietnam and remains valued in the current integration era. We need to continue this inheritance and promote it in contemporary society. Philosophy by its nature always discusses choices and various opinions. In other words, it offers more than one side of human values: positive, negative, and indecisive. I have discussed few of the drawbacks in this article. For example, because of having a tolerant, generous, often gallant life style, this lead to an attitude that may not consider to far into the future. However, valuing emotions that care little about money and substance, but are frank and straightforward, leads to pride in the best sense of the word. Concentrating on practicality leads us to accept that "enough is enough" and maximizes, in An Giang University's case, its quest to enhance knowledge in light of the Southern region's current social requirements.

Notes

- Land measurement units commonly used in the South. In the ancient system of measurement in Vietnam, acres is a unit of measurement area. One acres is equal to 10 "sào" or "công" (1 "công" = 1 "sào"); a "công" or "sào" in the South of Viet Nam is 1000 square meter (in the Middle and North of Viet Nam is 500 and 360 square metre respectively).

- In some rivers of Vietnam, there is another concept that tide does not go up and down which call “nước ương”, or its another name is “nước linh sinh”. Trịnh Hoài Đức Wrote: “In Gia Dinh, the tide is not the same as the other country, it neither go up nor go down, it sometimes goes to 3 or 4 days in winter[...] “Đạp triều” or “nước ương” is the morning water which has not been completely poured down, the afternoon water from the Eastern wind, connects between the front and the back and the sea is filled up.
- In the Southern terms, “bẹo” means exposing, offering to provoke, bragging. “Cây bẹo” is a stick that sellers in the floating market plug in front of the prow, hanging on the things that they want to sell.
- However, in this place has three the principle of exception “exposed without selling”. The first thing that they do not sale is clothes which are in use. Because people in the South use boat-house like a house to earn the money to afford their life by sale (There are many people who do not have homes on the mainland, so family activities take place on the boat). So they hand up the “bẹo” stick to dry quickly their clothes. Secondly, food, however, there is another way for sellers to advertise their food by using klaxon. They create sound by hand or using their leg when they paddle. Thirdly, they have never sold roofing sheet when they hand up it on the “bẹo” stick. This means that they want to sell their boat, local people usually call it “bẹo lá bán ghe”.
- A market economy is an economic system in which the decisions regarding investment, production, and distribution are guided by the price signals created by the forces of supply and demand.
- Dusts.
- In the French Indo-china period, the French introduced a new silver piastre de commerce and associated subsidiary coinage throughout the entire Indo-Chinese colonies in order to increase monetary stability. The piastre was initially equivalent to the Mexican peso, It was called “đồng hoa xoè”, “đồng con cò” or “đồng con ó” by Vietnamese people and it also circulated widely in the region at that time.
- In ancient Chinese bibliographies of Vietnam, the national name of France was transliterated in Vietnamese is *Pha Lang Sa*, *Phu Lang Sa*, *Phu Lang Sa* or *Lang Sa*.
- In 1851, Buddha Master Tay An assigned disciples Tran Van Thanh, Tang Chu (Bui Dinh Than), Dao Xuyen (Nguyen Van Xuyen) to establish a lot of religious group to reclaim wild lands and build new farms such as Can Lo (Dong Thap), Lang Linh (Chau Phu), Thoi Son (Tinh Bien) etc.
- *Food* is a Sino-Vietnamese monophonic, it means that *eating* or be able to understand *content*, the *inner* (“*Hữu danh vô thực*”); *Food* belongs to Sino-Vietnamese monophonic means that practice, real life, honest, etc. This meaning can still understand in the proverb.

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