

BOOKS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES LIBRARY REVIEW

NINH VĂN HIỆP (chief author). **Pa Then's customs: preservation and development.** H.: National culture. 223 p., 2006 Vb 44376

Pa Then ethnic people belonging to the H'mong - Dao linguistic group reside mainly in Ha Giang and Tuyen Quang Provinces. Their material culture has many unique features and this book brings to readers all the latest studies on Pa Then ethnic people's customs, from their housing culture to eating and clothing habits as well as their use of manufacturing tools. The authors also show great concern about the preservation of Pa Then's intangible culture, especially when several long-existing customs are disappearing from their everyday life.

The book consists of five main parts.

The first part introduces characteristics of Pa Then's population through studies into its size, structure and allocation, etc. The second part focuses on issues about Pa Then people's material culture such as residential and housing characteristics, eating habits and table manners, clothing and the art of decorating clothes, means of transport, manufacturing tools, and so on.

Furthermore, issues relating to non-material culture such as main customs in a life-cycle, wedding and mourning customs, religion and belief customs, holiday and festival practices and so on have been viewed at several angles in the third part. The authors

have paid much attention to the dying-out of age-old cultural practices owing to modern lifestyles and the inadequacy of preservation activities.

Besides, the fourth part briefly introduces Pa Then people's achievements in literature and art including parallel sentences, proverbs, folk verses and folk songs, etc.

The final part of the book, part five, will present Pa Then people's traditional experience in work, production and medicine.

There are also an afterword and a list of reference at the end of the book.

HÁI BÌNH

PHAN THANH KHÔI, LƯƠNG XUÂN HIẾN (co-author). **Some socio-economic issues in the industrialization and modernization process in the Red River Delta.** H: Political Theory. 279 p., 2006, Vb 44394.

The book is a collection of writings by authors who are closely attached to and greatly interested in the Red River Delta. The contents of the book touch on several sectors as well as socio-economic issues deriving from the industrialization and modernization process with a view to contributing to the regional and national development career.

The first essay by Prof. Dr. Trinh Quoc Tuan digs deep into the analysis of the Red River Delta in the process of national socio-

economic development, especially in the last innovation period.

Other authors like Nguyen Duy Viet, Tran Xuan Thanh and Luong Xuan Hien focus on analyzing social and occupational structures, job solutions and environmental issues in craft villages in Thai Binh Province – a rural area famous for its agricultural capability.

Also, the authors pay considerable attention to economic structure transfer, economic alliance and new production solutions for peasants. Main issues mentioned and analysed are the alliance between four groups of people (peasants, managers, scientists and businessmen) and the fulfillment of the aim of a 50-million-per-year rice paddle field, the association between social policies and peasants as well as agriculture, the economic structure transfer in craft villages, and so on.

Furthermore, authors like Nguyen Van Dung and Vuong Thi Hoa express their concern about regional quality improvement and human resources development to meet the demands for economic growth in the industrialization and modernization process.

Besides, the role of the Party, the authorities and other social organizations and groups in the development of craft villages in the Red River Delta is also stated and it is undeniably one of the factors that have great influence on the development of the whole region.

At the end of the book are the index and the list of reference materials.

MINH ĐỨC

HUỖNH CÔNG BÁ. **Marriage and Family under the law of Nguyen Dynasty.** Hue: Thuan Hoa. 303 p., 2005, Vb 44905.

The book assists readers in understanding Vietnam's traditional law heritage, through which people understand more about Vietnam's age-old traditions and customs. It also contributes to the completion of current Vietnamese law.

The book is divided into four main chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces marital institutions in Nguyen Dynasty such as conditions for marriage (both positive and negative ones, both in form and in content), marital validity (both mental and material one).

Chapter 2 analyzes contents of institutions of divorce in Nguyen Dynasty's Law from divorce reasons to its effect in both personal record and property.

Chapter 3 mentions the regulations on the parents-children relations in Nguyen Dynasty's law including the relations between parents and their blood children, stepchildren, adopted and foster children, and relations between relatives and the children.

Chapter 4 states comments on the Nguyen Dynasty's law on marriage and family in addition to giving some suggestions on improving Vietnam's current legal system.

There are an afterword, an index and a list of reference materials at the end of the book.

HOÀNG NAM

VŨ QUỐC TUẤN (chief author). **Developing private economy in Vietnam today.** H: National Politics Publishing House. 198 p., 2006, Vb 45056.

Improving private economic sector is a long-term strategy in the process of developing a socialist-oriented multi-sector economy, which contributes considerably to

the mission of boosting national economy. The book closely investigates the analysis of both theoretical and practical background of the multisector market economy, the process of searching and testing, innovating and summarizing its growth in Vietnam's economy, in which private economic sector has played an important part. Also, the authors give analysis on, distinctions of and predictions about the developmental trend of the private economic sector in addition to proposing several policies and solutions to expand it in the next period.

The book is divided into four main chapters.

Chapter 1 presents the theoretical and practical background on the establishment and development of the private economic sector in Vietnam, as well as the distinctions of and predictions about its developmental trend.

Chapter 2 gives analysis on the current situation of development of private economic sector in Vietnam in terms of its strengths and weaknesses along with the obstacles that hinder its growth.

Chapter 3 provides Chinese experience in boosting this economic sector and some lessons for Vietnam.

Chapter 4 states some proposals on objectives, viewpoints, policies and solutions in order to develop our private economic sector in the next period.

The book ends with an afterword.

HOA MAI

TRƯỜNG MINH HẰNG. **Handicraft-villages of North Vietnam**. H.: Fine Arts Publishing House, 117 p., 2006, Vv 7566.

I. Fine art handicraft villages in Northern Vietnam and the preservation

of cultural values

1. Vietnamese history saw the appearance of handicrafts from the primitive era even before the formation of villages. However, it was not until the village structure came in to being and stabilized that handicraft villages became an essential part of the Vietnamese socioeconomic system. Handicraft villages make up a distinctive feature of the "Eastern pre-capitalism" in Vietnam. Almost all famous trades originated from and existed in a village. During the course of thousands of years' history, Vietnamese traditional crafts and handicraft villages have left invaluable product for generations to come, thereby contributing the nation's cultural identity.

Craft cultures are manifested mostly in the village community context. A village with its own craft assures a better and more stable life for the residents than a merely agricultural village does. Many crafts initially recognized as secondary jobs done in one's free time gradually turned into key trades that provided the main source of income for the whole village. Thankfully, the village's economic life and other cultural institutions were promoted and preserved, together enabling the maintenance and development of various long-term traditional festivals and practices. To maintain a craft, each village, with its own trade characteristics, has its own way of organizing and allocating labor. One of the main purposes of this is to reserve and protect the trade secrets within the village. Worshipping trade ancestors is a beautiful trait of Vietnamese traditional cultures which represents an aspect of the people's

spiritual life, that is, respecting trades.

A trade's values are shown not only in its economic role or its mode of production seen through workmanship and products, but also in many aspects of social life. A Vietnamese trade village bears in itself a lot of priceless humanistic and cultural values that need to be preserved, utilized, and developed.

2. According to recent statistics, 1,450 villages in Vietnam earn their major income from handicrafts, with more than 1,348,000 professional artisans; 40.6 percent of handicraft products made for exportation; and an annual turnover of 360 million dollars to over 100 countries. Quantitatively, these numbers seem optimistic. However, they are less than satisfactory when the real quality and ability of sustainable development are considered. According to a recent survey, just about 22.3 percent of Vietnamese handicraft products are really competitive in the market. The weakest points of Vietnamese products are low aestheticism and the degradation of traditional values manifested in them. There are a wide number of causes for this, but the most important one is that we haven't fully recognized the roles and values of craft villages as well as traditional handicraft trades. Thus, products are lacking in appropriate care when compared with their economic and cultural contribution to the nation.

The real situation of Vietnamese trade village poses an urgent appeal for the preservation and upholding of our traditional trades' quintessence. Notably, maintenance must be done together with the

promotion of sustainable development. Despite a lot of objective disadvantages, many handicraft products, since the 1990s, have succeeded in finding a foothold in the market, both domestically and internationally. Numerous handicraft workshops maintained the capacity to compete with imported products. All of this helps to show the potential and prospects, as well as the powerful vitality, of Vietnamese fine art handicrafts. When the trades have regained stability and have entered the common orbit of the commodity economy with product qualities and trademarks being recognized and appreciated, the workers' incomes will increase, their spiritual and material life improved, and the preservation of intangible cultural values carried out favorably and effectively.

The development process of Vietnamese trade villages has posed a wide range of problems to be solved, both short- and long-term. In the solving of these problems, Vietnamese traditional craft villages will distinguish themselves as a unique color in the "Common Asian Cultural Nacred Painting", and Vietnamese villages' products will become a bridge connecting Vietnam and other nations.

II. An overview of some well-known handicrafts and handicraft villages

1. Stone manipulation

Stone, a solid material not easily destroyed by natural and climatic conditions, has been closely associated with humans since the dawn of mankind. In Vietnam, if tools and jewelry manipulated by rudimentary methods such as striking, whittling, grinding, and perforating are not to be

included, the first stony works date back to the period of domination by northern invaders. Stone manipulation exists in a wide variety of forms including stone exploitation, cleaving, whitting, carving, sawing, and splitting. Among them, stone carving is recognized as the most demanding job, requiring the artisans to be highly skillful so as to bequeath to the people valuable sculptural works.

Since the beginning of Dai Viet time, stone carving has been highly developed, laying firm foundations for the development of Vietnamese traditional plastic arts. Stone is used in structures such as temples, mausoleums, and pagodas, as well as in such popular items as fine art objects,

epitaphs, paintings, statues, and household commodities. The Ly Dynasty's achievements in stone carving created great impetus for this unique craft to develop during the Dai Viet feudal era.

History has it that Vietnam had three major stone carving centers in Hai Duong, Thanh Hoa and Quang Nam. Some regions around the Red River Delta, namely Kinh Chu (Kim Mon, Hai Duong), Gia Duc (Thuy Nguyen, Hai Phong) and Dai Bai (Gia Binh, Bac Ninh), has good reputation for stone carving. Among them, Kinh Chu was considered the most famous for the craft.

(to be continued)