

## MATERIAL LIFE OF THE KATU PEOPLE IN HOA VANG DISTRICT, DANANG CITY CURRENTLY: ANALYSIS FROM THE CHANGES

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**Abstract.** The Katu people in Hoa Vang district, Danang city, have a branch on the progress of the ethnic division of the Katu people in Quang Nam province. Their population is 1000 Katu people taking slash-and-burn agriculture as the main economic base and other supporting economic activities such as gathering, hunting, fishing, breeding, and handicraft. However, recently in industrialization and modernization taking place dramatically across the country, the Katu community in Hoa Vang, Da Nang city, has changed all life aspects, especially in material culture. There have been changes in village structure, house patterns, costume characteristics, gastronomy, means of transportation, and tools of production. Some have remained traditionally intact, but some have been lost or transformed. This status is a context with many inevitable and objective reasons that will naturally occur in integration, industrialization, and modernization (Louis Wirth, 1945; Michael Jackson, 2013). This article provides an overview of the material cultural change of the Katu community here. Besides, it analyzes/decodes these changing trends from cultural anthropology to find out interventions, active supports, or give predictions intending to minimize the distortion and oblivion of material culture, contributing to preserving the traditional culture of the ethnic group.

**Keywords:** Katu, material culture, change, vulnerable, tradition.

### 1. Introduction

The Katu people in Vietnam are the 26th ethnic group in the List of Ethnic Groups. Their habitation areas include the mountainous regions of Quang Nam province, Da Nang city, and Thua Thien Hue province. According to the 2009 Vietnam Population and Housing Census, the ethnic group had a population of 61,588 people, of which the number of residents in Quang Nam was 45,715, accounting for 74.2%; in Thua Thien Hue, there were 14,629 people, making up 23.8%; and in Danang, there were 1,000 people. In the current context of intense industrialization and modernization, the attention to the change in all cultural dimensions of ethnic groups is a prominent trend in the Katu people's studies. Previously, the available publications mainly mentioned

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Received September 16, 2021. Revised October 22, 2021. Accepted November 8, 2021.

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economic-cultural-social life to show the people's traditional cultural values. The investigation into the change in all cultural dimensions of ethnic groups has led to a timely, realistic approach towards the ongoing context to seek interventions, positive support, or predictions to mitigate the damage to the ethnic groups. Many researchers as Louis Wirth (1945), Michael Jackson (2013) Michel Verdon (2007) [1], [2] also emphasize that anthropology currently focuses on change, especially for small communities.

As a branch of the division progress of the Katu people in Quang Nam province, the Katu in Da Nang has 1000 people. They concentrate mainly on three hamlets: Gian Bi and Ta Lang under Hoa Bac commune and Phu Tuc hamlet under Hoa Phu commune, Hoa Vang district. The people here take slash-and-burn agriculture as the main economic base and other supporting economic activities such as gathering, hunting, fishing, breeding, and handicraft. This economic feature depends on nature, so their lives are precarious and poor; society is intensely self-sufficient and closed, forming a uniform social intercourse pattern under consuetudinary law. Under the Party's policy, the interest of local leaders, and comprehensive exchanges on economic, social, and cultural aspects, the mountainous area in Hoa Vang, Da Nang city has undergone positive changes in the current context of industrialization. Previously, the transportation system was almost congested and always divided upon floods. Now, 100% of villages, hamlets, and densely populated places have traffic systems with inter-commune and inter-village roads; in 100% of communes and villages of the Katu people, the design of schools health stations are invested, ensuring study and medical examination. 100% of the villages have access to the national electricity grid, and over 98% of households use electricity; nearly 97% of households use hygienic water. The picture of changing material and spiritual life of the Katu people here is worthy of support and pride. However, the intensity and scope of the exchange in the urbanization process in Da Nang taking place so strongly and widely has caused disturbances to the culture of the ethnic group. Some traditional cultural elements that are not sufficient to preserve or no longer adapt well to the social change have gradually disappeared and replaced by cultural aspects of other ethnic groups emerging. The identity of the ethnic group broke to a certain extent. This paper aims to address changes in the material life of the KaTu community in Hoa Vang district, Da Nang city, which has better access to urbanization than those in Quang Nam and Thua Thien Hue. Besides also analyzes and points out the change dimensions of material life of the ethnic group to forecast development trends and propose several interventions to minimize these changes, ensuring the preservation of traditional culture and integration with other regions.

## **2. Content**

### **2.1. Dimensions and contents of the change**

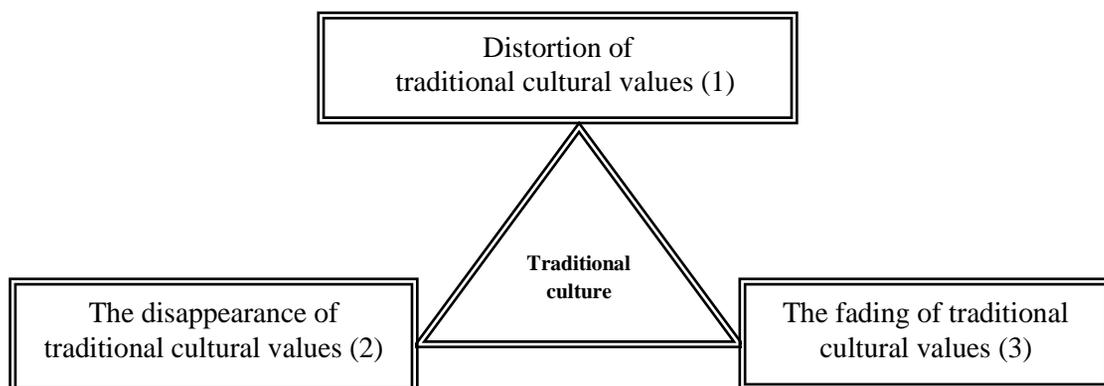
Hoa Bac and Hoa Phu communes, Hoa Vang district, were established in 1981 and 1986. Hoa Bac commune has an area of about 33,864 ha, more than 96% of which is forest area. There are seven villages, and 2 of them are the Katu community places, which are Ta Lang and Gian Bi. Hoa Phu commune has a natural forest area of more than 4,000 ha, including ten villages, of which one village is where the Katu people live.

**Table 1. Katu population in Hoa Bac commune, Hoa Phu**

<b>Hamlet</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Household (Unit: household)</b>	<b>Demography (Unit: Person)</b>
Ta Lang, Hoa Bac		113	356
Gian Bi, Hoa Bac		134	438
Phu Tuc, Hoa Phu		102	342

*Source: Report by the People's Committee of Hoa Bac Commune in the first six months of 2019*

As for topography, Ta Lang, Gian Bi, and Phu Tuc hamlets are at an altitude of about 200m above sea level, 22km from Da Nang city, which takes more than an hour by car. The villages have located close to the Ho Chi Minh route (Son La - Tuy Loan section and provincial roads DT601 that is more than 20 km long, connecting the inner city of Da Nang to the two villages of Ta Lang and Gian Bi, and the DT 604 road is asphalted and widened, has cut across PhuTuc village, connecting the intersection trade between Dong Giang district - Quang Nam and Da Nang, so the exchange conditions with plainsmen are relatively favorable. In the context of accelerating urbanization, the villages' social and cultural life has many changes, especially in material life. It realizes that the dimension of change is happening towards the following three types:



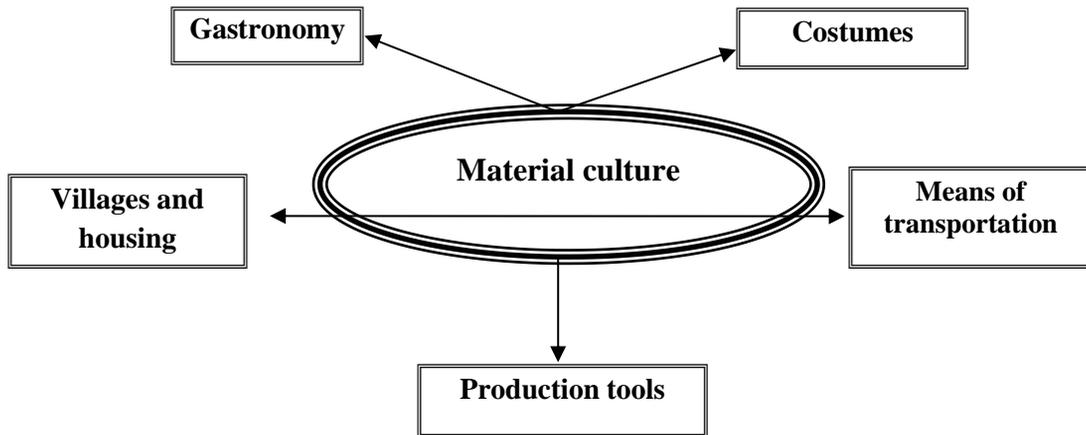
**Diagram 1. Types of change in the traditional culture of the ethnic group**

These are the three types of change that have been happening in almost all areas of the ethnic group's life, bringing challenges and tremendous pressure in balancing and handling relationships of “tradition”, “integration,” and “development”. The inner strength of the culture of the ethnic group forces them to take steps to assert their values and roles more strongly against this irreversible trend of exchange and integration.

Cultural elements' functional change is a natural law to adapt to another function to be performed (Radcliffe-Brown 1952) [3]. At the same time, it is also an opportunity to express the ethnic identity (Phan Huu Dat, 1998) [4]. A culture with identity and firmness is when the traditional culture of that nation has interference, mixture, acculturation, and innovation (Nguyen Huu Thong, 2015) [5]; therefore, we think that the dimensions of change of the ethnic group are merely the law of adaptation in development. However, the question put forwards is how we intervene and support to

minimize negative impacts and keep positive effects to improve the material and spiritual life of the ethnic group. The answer is not simple.

Pursuing this research for a long time through observations, group discussions, and in-depth interviews, we have approached the change in the material culture of the ethnic group in the following aspects:



*Diagram 2. Diagram of elements of material culture*

**Villages and Housing:** In traditional culture, the Katu people often build villages in a circular or oval shape with afferent structures. The Guol house, or together with other houses, faces a space having a ceremony column as the center, or the same ceremony column at the center of the circular village, but now “Villages” have been turned into “Hamlets” under the basic administrative units which are communes (then the senior units are districts, cities/ provinces, and central government). A village's closeness towards the defense mindset (with a protective fence, detached, self-sufficient) has disappeared. The Guol home has been less holy as a venue for the convergence of the spirits of ethnic groups, village gatherings, and guest reception. Previously, the Guol home was constructed entirely of natural materials (thatched roof, wood). Traditional decorative motifs and more modern construction materials (cement, reinforced steel, corrugated iron roof) are being phased out.

Compared to the past, people nowadays stay closer to the main roads than in the past. There are no longer any stilted dwellings in the communities. The image of the hamlet is bungalows with reinforced concrete or some thatched cottages with earthen walls. Building a home has also changed, especially the transition between hiring workers and asking for help. When building a house, most of the families asked for help from the villagers, but now, most of them hire workers. This transition also signals a decrease in community support among the people of the ethnic group.

**Gastronomy:** the characteristics of closed self-sufficiency have been more or less broken. Now, the source of food and foodstuffs in the area of the ethnic group is more prosperous due to the expanded trading conditions. As a result of the introduction of industrial foods and food items, certain traditional cuisines have faded into obscurity. As an example, alcohol can be used. Industrial alcoholic goods have supplanted hand brewing of alcohol from Ta Vac trees.

We attended a wedding party of Mr. A. L. Y V and Mrs. D.T.H were held at the bride's house and an outdoor party at the Goul House of Ta Lang Hamlet. The wedding was held for four days, two days at the groom's house in Quang Nam and two days at the bride's house. Each Party held the wedding ceremony towards the Katu and Kinh people's marriage rituals regarding costumes, foods, drinks, and etiquette. On the day we participated in the wedding party at the bride's house, although it was held in the Guol house, the traditional community house of the ethnic group, all includes the etiquette, decoration, food selection, and display, service ... was entirely in the style of the Kinh people. The traditional and customary marriage rituals of the ethnic people, such as rituals for giving things as the marriage guarantee, possessions to the new spouse such as jars, wine, jewelry, reduce to a certain extent. It is unnecessary to provide sufficient offerings, including traditional foods such as chicken, boar kebab, croissant, rice balls, rice wine, and ancestors. The strictness in a tray of offerings and the form of worship also reduce.

**Costumes:** mainly, the current style of the ethnic group is wearing jeans and pullovers. The traditional dresses only flicker in the rituals, festivals of the community. Families no longer keep conventional clothes in their houses, and if they do, there are no more than two sets for each family. Most households do not plan to buy traditional clothes, mainly because they are pretty expensive, and the homes cannot afford them. Therefore, brocade weaving in Hoa Bac commune has been lost for a long time. Most of the current traditional costumes of people in Hoa Vang area, Da Nang city are bought in Ta Lu commune or Con and A Tin rivers, Dong Giang district, Quang Nam province. This fact reflects that the demand for traditional costumes here is gradually limited. The local people are not interested in using this outfit in their daily activities; even for cultural and musical activities in the village, the costumes are only for dance teams to perform the entertainment acts.

Returning to Mrs. H and her husband's wedding story, as mentioned above, we observed that the bride wore a gorgeous wedding dress and went with a very luxurious groom in a suit like the Kinh person. In their wedding photo album, modern outfits are also more popular than traditional brocade ones. Even for the wedding guests, they did not use traditional costumes from the youth to the elder anymore.

**Means of transportation:** In the past, if anyone wanted to come to the settlement area of the Katu ethnic group in Hoa Vang district, Da Nang city, they had to go through lengthy and muddy roads. Those roads with dirt and mud are replaced by vast, flat, paved roads or concrete roads with solid bridges over the river. Currently, there are two roads to the settlement area of the Katu people in Hoa Bac:

+ From the center of Da Nang city, going along the Hoa Cam overpass, highway 14B, turning into bypass AH1, connecting the Da Nang - Quang Ngai highway to Hoa Son commune area DT 601 leading to Hoa Lien and the center of the People's Committee of Hoa Bac commune, then there is a single trail running along the Son La - Tuy Loan overpass up to 2 villages Ta Lang - Gian Bi.

+ From the center of the city, go along the seaside Nguyen Tat Thanh street in the direction to Nam O or Dien Bien Phu street in the order of the Nga Ba Hue overpass up to Lien Chieu district toward Nam O; after crossing Nam O bridge, turning left onto

Ngo Xuan Thu street, going along this route to Ho Bap bridge, and then to Khe Ram bridge, to Hoi Yen bridge, Pho Nam bridge to the center of Hoa Bac commune, turning left to Ta Lang - Gian Bi

Thus, it can see that the primary means of transportation of the ethnic group currently are all types of motor vehicles, motorcycles, cars, and bicycles. Most of the people travel on foot, and they no longer travel by boat.

**Production tools:** The traditional slash-and-burn agriculture-based economy has changed dramatically in terms of tools, production thinking habits, and crop varieties. It is noteworthy that the conversion of rice monoculture to monoculture crops such as corn and sugarcane has brought about a change in land use and productivity. Besides, the people also improve the soil, do the gardening, grow a variety of crops such as beans, cassava, pepper,... fruit trees such as avocado, mango, durian, guava, longan... to enrich the food source for daily life and at the same time for small businesses or exchanges.

Raising cattle and poultry on a small scale without paying attention to the quality and quantity of the raised animals, caring time, and mainly in the form of free-grazing has often led to epidemics. Natural fishing activities continue to exist without significant changes. The people still fish with the usual methods and tools such as fishing rods, dropping fish, stabbing fish, catching fish with rackets, or using their hands to catch fish and frogs. Therefore, their income is frequently uncertain. So, they have to earn money from many other jobs such as afforestation (mainly acacia). However, most of these jobs are seasonal. Many of them are highly dependent on the weather. For example, in the dry season, they can go to the forest to cut leaves used for making conical hats, rattan, firewood for sale. Even yet, during the wet season, people can sometimes stay at home or undertake odd jobs if any such as transporting acacia, hacking acacia forests ... As a result, developing commodity exchange activity is not typical but just a level of exchanging needs. People have not been proactive or brave to invest in new jobs such as doing business or providing service business.

*Table 2. Change in production tools*

No.	Working tools	Old	New
1		Hoe	plow
2		Grass rake	Irrigation system
3		Sickle	Types of fertilizer
4		Cleaver	Tractor/ agrimotor
5		Hole stick	Grinder
6		Papoose	Transporting vehicle

*Source: Fieldwork material July, 2018*

## **2.2. Comments and predictions**

Along with the above explanations, in the actual survey, we found that the material culture of the Katu ethnic group in Da Nang is progressing in the form of 3,1 and 2. (Reference to the diagram of the types of change in Page 2). Type 3 (the fading of traditional cultural values) is the most prominent, followed by type 1 (distortion of traditional cultural values), and type 2 (disappearance of traditional cultural values) is not clearly showed. The culture itself is dynamic, and the types mentioned above of change are probably not too innovative. The researchers such as B.Manilowski and Radcliffe-Brown, who represent Structural functionalism (1926), Phan Huu Dat (1998), and Tran Thi Mai An (2014) [4], [6], [7], [8] argued that the change in the function of cultural elements is a natural law to adapt to another function that needs to be performed, and culture with identity and firmness is when the traditional culture of that nation has interference, mixture, acculturation, and innovation. We had to accept that there are standard elements in the traditional material culture of the ethnic group that does not hinder the socio-economic development of the people and that there are old traditional cultural values still meeting the needs of a few or a part of the residents but being outdated, promoting adverse effects, hindering the cause of innovation, or there are old traditional cultural elements, which are not suitable for the new society, but not wholly outdated and can be processed and adjusted to serve the renovation and development. Most of the changes in the material culture of the Katu people in Da Nang are seen mainly in the direction of handling and adjusting to conform with the general development trend but not losing the ethnic group's identity.

We believe that the leading causes of the above changes and change dimensions of the community have been being studied are due to the following factors:

Firstly, the number of Katu people residing in Hoa Vang district, Da Nang city, is relatively small. However, they live in two separate areas, and the settlement space is also different from that of the Quang Nam Katu community. They also live in the area adjacent to Kinh people and Da Nang urban areas, and they have favorable conditions to contact many different cultural flows. Thus, the process of material acculturation takes place more strongly.

Secondly, the development of the transportation system and commodity exchange has brought many advantages. The tarred and widened DT604 road splits across Phu Tuc hamlet, Hoa Phu commune (Phu Tuc hamlet is one of the three remaining hamlets with the settlement of the Katu community in Hoa Vang, Da Nang) connecting the trade route between Dong Giang district (Quang Nam) and Da Nang. The DT 601 road, which is more than 20 km long, connecting the inner city of Da Nang to the two villages of Ta Lang and Gian Biis also tarred and widened to develop forest economy, serving the construction of Ba river hydroelectricity, as well as the development of trading and tourism... This is a condition for people to have opportunities to exchange and interact regularly with other ethnic groups and adopt more new cultural elements.

Thirdly, the economic and material life on the Katu people's land in Hoa Vang district is gradually developing. The natural and self-sufficient economy has progressively been narrowed. New technical measures, fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation, and care with high discipline in the production stages have created a change in production

and increased production efficiency. The people's current trend is the commodity economy, governed by the law of supply and demand, and has begun to integrate into the country's general economy. The income has gradually become less dependent on forests, reducing precarious livelihoods compared to that previously dependent on nature. This status makes the community more autonomous and confident with absorbing new and even different cultural elements.

Fourthly, the development of education - training, health care: the construction of high schools in the communes of the ethnic group and vocational training for young people have contributed significantly to raising the ethnic group's awareness, encouraging the people to choose and better understand the values of material culture they receive.

Thus, it can be seen that the change in the material culture of the Katu people in Hoa Vang district, Da Nang city, is taking place with different meanings. On the one hand, it creates development and opens up a new picture for the people to make their life more spacious, more modern, catching up and reducing the distance of the lowland and highland areas. On the other hand, it puts the people ahead because their traditional values of the material culture can be faded and disappeared. Although the economic indicators have shown that the Katu people in HoaBac Commune, HoaVang District have made progress, the reality is that the people are still at a low starting point. Thus, an ethnic minority community residing in the heart of a fast-growing city with the spread of technology, information, and comfort needs like Da Nang can create disharmony in life, quickly leading to the existence of negative thinking, appreciating modern material, and rejecting ethnic identity. More dangerously, a part of the ethnic group, especially the younger generation of the Katu people, is taking the standard of the Kinh people's lifestyle as their standard, orienting their style towards the culture of Kinh people without selection. These phenomena may lead to the lack of basic development foundations to guide and build the cultural, economic, and social lives of the ethnic group sustainably.

### **3. Conclusion**

It can be seen that the work of preserving and developing the traditional culture of ethnic groups in general and the Katu ethnic group in Hoa Vang district, Da Nang city in particular, is not a simple task that can be solved overnight. Because the nature of culture is dynamic, the preservation and development of traditional values of the ethnic group in the current urbanization context are not only considered in terms of asserting identity but also taking into account the support and impact promoting the ethnic group's social development. Therefore, the matter of concern here is how to maintain the integration and development of the material culture of the Katu inhabitation in Hoa Vang district but still preserve the presence of their traditional values of material culture. Measures must be taken to regulate the process of cultural change of the people in the region so that in the general picture of the Katu ethnic group in Vietnam, the contribution in preserving and developing the traditional material culture of the Katu people in Hoa Vang district, Da Nang city will create a more profound picture of the Katu ethnic group in central Vietnam in general.

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