



VI THI PHUONG

**ETHNICITY AND HUMANITY OF VIETNAMESE CULTURE
IN *TAO DAN* MAGAZINE (1939)**

Abstract

Tao Dan (1939) is a cultural magazine of literature and art with great opening contributions, important ideological and academic works in Vietnam period 1930-1945. *Tao Dan*'s policy and efforts are: building and preserving the national cultural identity, making the culture of the country not "dissolve" in the original way of losing the roots of human culture. This is a right policy, up to now still retains a positive meaning. With our research, we analyze and explain the national spirit and humanity of Vietnamese culture in *Tao Dan* magazine by studying the manifesto of the magazine – as well as debate. "Art for art or art for human life?" – in modern poetry, prose and drama.

Keywords: Ethnic, Humanity, *Tao Dan* magazine, 1939, Cultural Vietnam.

INTRODUCTION

On the way of development of the press, cultural and literary components are increasingly expanded and increased. In the first step of forming a modern Vietnamese culture, as well as nowadays, the press has a close relationship between to culture and literature in two mutual directions. Journalism attracts readers by the power of literature and vice versa, culture and literature through the press reach the readers in a popular and widespread manner.

The issue of upholding the national cultural tradition has been aroused in all fields of cultural and literary arts. *Tao Dan* magazine covers quite a lot of fields. The content includes the following parts: *Theory - research; literary criticism and literary works* (poems, stories and stories, plays). In the three main sections of the journal, the focus is on the *Discussion and Research* sections as well as on literary works; Those fields in *Tao Dan* have all contributed effectively to serve the principle and purpose that we are aiming for.

Content

1. Culture-arts journalism 1930 -1945 and the birth of *Tao Dan* magazine

In Vietnam, in the first half of the twentieth century, the press was an updated forum, allowing the opening of debates, polemics discussing current affairs or literary and artistic issues. Journalism is a land to nurture and develop pens for literature and art. Before the August Revolution in 1945, looking back to magazines specializing in literature and art, we saw the contributions of magazines: *Indochina magazine* (1913 - 1917), *Nam Phong magazine* (1917 - 1934), *An Nam magazine* (1926 - 1927, 1930 - 1933), *Tan Thanh magazine* (1931), *Literature Magazine* (1932), *Tan Thieu* (1934), *Hanoi newspaper* (1936), *Tao Dan* (1939), *Tri Tan* (1941 - 1945), *Thanh Nghi* (1941 - 1945).

Among the magazines mentioned above, *Tao Dan* has a special key function. According to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Thien, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the only two journals specialized in literature were *An Nam magazine* (only poetry) and *Tao Dan* (culture - literature and art). Prior the founding of *Tao Dan*, with *Annam magazine, a magazine of literature, as well, already existed: "The first edition appeared on 1 - 7 - 1926 in Hanoi. The chairman and editor was the poet Tan Da Nguyen Khac Hieu. This is a newspaper specializing in literature."* [4, p. 119].

In the period 1930 - 1945, the typical feature of the Tonkin press was the appearance of the press groups: The independence union with the two contributions: *Phong Hoa* and *Ngay Nay newspaper*; **Tan Dan** group with *Tieu thuyet Thu Bay* (June 2, 1934); newspaper *Ich Huu* (25-2-1936), the newspaper *Pho Thong* appearing twice a month with a first release dated 1-12-1936, the magazine *Tao Dan* which appeared once every two months (1-3-1939); Thanh Nghi Group with *Thanh Nghi Magazine* (June 1941) and finally the; Han Thuyen group with *Van Moi Magazine* (1941).

In 1932, Vu Dinh Long opened a bookstore and **Tan Dan** opened a publishing house, specializing in printing textbooks, especially swordplay and tragedy, mainly translated from Chinese stories. *Tao Dan Magazine* was born in the right moment as a cultural institution with the purpose is to build a peculiar Vietnamese culture.

Tao Dan has 13 numbers (from March to July - 2 terms / 1 month; from August to October - 1 month / 1 period) and 2 special numbers (about Tan Da - July – p.134; about Vũ Trọng Phụng - December 1939 – p.88), with a total of 1,374 printed pages. *Tao Dan Magazine* was born in a short time in 1939 and "is considered a pivotal moment of the political and cultural life of each nation around

the globe, marked by the outbreak of the second world war in September 1939”
(Nguyen Ngoc Thien).

2. Expression of the national spirit and humanity of Vietnamese culture in *Tao Dan* magazine

2.1. Manifesto of *Tao Dan* magazine

The magazine's manifesto is expressed in the words "With readers" on the front page of the first issue, the magazine's editor made clear the purpose of *Tao Dan*: "***Tao Dan*** is a magazine that is not a specific organ a culture. It will be a meeting place for all artistic and ideological trends and trends, as long as these trends have the same purpose: to build a Vietnamese culture." [5, p. 22].

Tao Dan magazine advocates avoiding sectarianism, but tries to become an open forum, capable of gathering and converging forces, though political opinions may vary, but have a common position to preserve and develop to promote the national cultural identity, not to fall into the state of losing its roots and mistress into foreign cultures. *Tao Dan* "will be the nursery of the race's talented seed, a place where any personality can fully develop in terms of thought as well as art. It will be the focus of all efforts to arrive at the unification and progress of the Vietnamese language completely and, ultimately, to realize the true nature of humanity through the soul of Vietnam." [5, p. 22]

The goal of *Tao Dan* is to continue the work of newspapers and magazines that were born and operated before it, in order to contribute to the completion of the construction of the national culture. The magazine advocates to avoid sectarianism in the name of the organ of a particular sect, tries to become an open forum, capable of gathering and converging forces that may differ, but have commonalities. a position to preserve and promote the national cultural identity,

not to fall into the situation of losing its roots and mistress into foreign cultures. Obviously, that is the noble purpose that *Tao Dan* set out, and more importantly, the magazine has endeavored to accomplish this throughout its existence. In fact, according to the declaration, *Tao Dan* has made great contributions to the Vietnamese press landscape as well as to the national culture.

2.2. Discussion and Research

Regarding the *Discussion - Research section*, *Tao Dan* magazine published survey essays, introduced the quintessence of ethnic culture through the folk literature of Kinh and ethnic minorities (articles by Phan Khoi and Lam Tuyen Khach - another pseudonym of Lan Khai); on classical literature written in Han and Nom (written by Huynh Thuc Khang, Nguyen Van To, Nguyen Trong Thuat, Ngo Tat To, Phu Huong ...); on modern literature (Truong Tuu, Hoai Thanh, Tran Thanh Mai, Truc Duong). The content of *the Discussion - Research papers* mainly refers to Vietnamese culture, literature and art.

Nguyen Trieu Luat is the author most closely referring to Vietnamese culture. In the article "How to build a culture unique to the Vietnamese people", he considered Buffon's view: "Culture is a common culture, but after showing it in writing, any country's language, it is convenient to implement a culture of that country, that nation. We must teach Vietnamese in schools on order to, get literature that enrich our culture" [5, p. 388].

Nhan Nguyen Van To with the essay "On the issue of women" [5, p. 474]. In Nguyen Van To's opinion, men and women must have equality. In order to give more power to women, it is important to raise their education level - so that they will not be exploited by the selfishness of others. Besides, Nguyen

Van To also hopes that from this magazine, the women of our country will have a more progressive, violent and justified spirit than before.

In the *Discussion – Research section*, the authors discuss, exchange and present research papers showing the national identity and our national spirit of, Vietnamese culture. Most writers appeal to the people of An Nam to preserve their national identity.

2.3. The debate "Art of art taste or Art of human life?" In the final stage on *Tao Dan*

The debate on "art for art" and "art for human life" taking place in the period of 1935 - 1939 attracted many theorists, critics and writers to participate. The debate between the two groups has lasted for many years, raising many theoretical issues such as the ego of the artist, the literary public, the class, the ethnicity, especially on the issue of "Building up" as well as the question "What is Vietnamese culture like?".

This debate is divided into three major debates. [4, p. 35]. *The first shows* the origin of the debate between Thieu Son and Hai Trieu. The two authors had series of articles representing opposing, irreconcilable art views. The debate moved on to phase two with the overwhelming participation of opinions and disagreements in the aspects of the two artistic perspectives. *Second stage:* The politicians participating in politicians gathered into two factions: One side was led by Hoai Thanh and one side of Hai Trieu and his comrades. *And the third act:* The debate continued and ended in *Tao Dan* magazine, 1939.

It is worth mentioning that, from No. 2, *Tao Dan* magazine has actively organized the exchange of ideas around the topic "How to build Vietnamese national culture?" *Is there an eternal literature on which people's hearts are*

based? Between art and life, which is the main?", attracted the writers of the two group "art for art" and "art for human life" to participate in lively discussions.

In less than 4 months, from 1 (1-3-1939) to 8 (16 - 6 - 1939) *Tao Dan* has sparked a debate that lasted that lasted 5 years long and then closed the curtain for this kind of pen war. There are 22 articles written by the authors participating in the debate on *Tao Dan*. In order for the reader to visualize the whole debate, author Nguyen Ngoc Thien has collected and compiled the book *Reviewing the art debate 1935-1939*, Social Science Publishing House, 1996. For the first time, this work gathers quite a lot of documentation, research, and full introduction of the author with the book articles that had participated in the debate.

Around this debate and exchange of ideas, we can now draw useful lessons about the culture of debate, making progress in the process of approaching academic ideas of each party. If some aspects of their artistic perspective they are still different (in terms of national identity of culture and humanity; of immediate values, topical issues and long-term values, the eternal topic ..., in some other points, they came close together as a requirement of the unity and inseparability between the content of thought and the artistic value of work; for the common purpose of the arts and literature towards, Chan – Thien - My, but cannot be isolated in any way; the survival nature of literature is for the people; about the indispensable requirement of talent, unique creative personality, own voice of the bravery writer.

It can be seen that the debate about art in the period of 1935-1939 was closed but its meaning is profound and great, leaving the first lesson of how academic debate is cultural. This is an event of great importance to historical literature and has practical significance for the field of literary theory; It partly reflects the current literary situation and development trends in the direction of

progress. *Tao Dan* posted the final stage of the debate. It became a broad forum, on which the opposing views simmered. The way of *Tao Dan* is a fairly unique way showing efforts in preserving and absorbing cultural advances as well as repelling remnants of the old culture.

2.4. Literary work

The special feature of *Tao Dan* magazine in terms of ideology as well as in terms of art is its special focus on the creative works because only they can strongly promote the spirit of the Vietnamese people. *Tao Dan* spent the focus for the *Author of art*, spend the page to sign compositions in each of the authors. The more striking a work is, the more precious it becomes. The pages are full of passion, deeply imbued with the Vietnamese national identity. The Vietnamese essence is expressed through *Modern Poetry*, *Modern Prose* and *Theater*.

Regarding the writing force, *Tao Dan* magazine has printed a number of valuable poetry, with outstanding authors. Readers meet new and familiar poets: Dong Ho, Luu Trong Lu, Tran Huyen Tran, Pham Hau, Luu Ky Linh, ... Some of the good poems of these poets, a few years later were put on the immortal selection of *Vietnamese Poets* (1932 - 1941) by Hoai Thanh - Hoai Chan. In terms of genre, the poems of Dong Ho, Tran Huyen Tran, Luu Trong Lu, Nguyen Hanh Dan, Pham Hau, and Tan Da are written in different schemes such as a bunch of free poems (*Sad afternoon*, *Remember nature*, *Handkerchief*, *Y lan* - Pham Hau); free poem (*White butterfly* - Luu Ky Linh); six bowl (*Giang Ho I, II, III*; *Afternoon* - Tran Huyen Tran); 4-letter poetry (*Prayer Convention*); .. In terms of the topic, poetry on *Tao Dan* has a wide spectrum, it seems that anything can spark inspiration for writing.

In modern prose, readers have the opportunity to enjoy the literature of familiar writers such as Vu Trong Phung, Lan Khai and Nguyen Tuan. On average, at least every issue of *Tao Dan* magazine has at least one modern prose. That has shown a rather persistent effort of *Tao Dan* to appreciate the creative achievements of the artist. He promoted the creativity of our country's artists at that time. Luu Trong Lu has a *question about disturbing*, content as its nature: The woman in the eyes of men. "Although the most beautiful works of humanity must have the cooperation of a woman but can there be love but no woman or not?" [5, p. 141] *Tao Dan's* short stories and novels have played an important role in orienting and promoting literary writing activities, changing and modernizing our country's literature in a positive manner in the trajectory of a culture.

After the modern prose there is some space for drama. Drama is a great genre of literature, and also a theater art. This category has the participation of many factors, many people from different fields: script writers, directors, actors, musicians, design artists ... In *Tao Dan*, Toan Anh and Vu Trong Phung are the authors of literary scripts whose works have been completely published in many magazine editions. Although there are only two authors, their contributions mark the maturity of the drama, and set the stage for this category increasingly richer. Regarding contents and ideology *Tao Dan* was inspired by the western drama in going straight to the problem posed by the society at that time as the responsibility to the fatherland, the degrading of morality and hybridization. *Tao Dan* encourages and guides our country's writers to write drama. The authors have a large, concentrated, inseparable realization of the performing characteristics and the synthesis of theater art.

More significantly, *Tao Dan* was initially launched in the consciousness of our writers at that time, the spirit, the idea of the genre - though not many authors but brought aftertaste for readers.

CONCLUSION

In operation for less than a year, with 13 regular numbers and two special numbers. *Tao Dan* has made every effort to attract work according to the distribution of the section and the number of pages. *Tao Dan*'s success can be said that due to the strict observance of the set guideline, it strives to build the artistic literature bearing the national characteristics. The 1935-1939 art debate on *Tao Dan* was closed, but its meaning was profound and immense, leaving the first lesson of how academic debate was cultural. This is an event of great importance to historical literature and has practical significance for the field of literary theory; partly reflect the current literary situation and development trends in the direction of progress. *Tao Dan* posted the final stage of the debate. It became a broad forum, on which the opposing views simmered. This way of *Tao Dan* is fairly unique, showing efforts in preserving, absorbing cultural advances and repelling remnants of the old culture.

Tao Dan successfully demonstrated the national spirit and the humanity of Vietnamese culture. *Tao Dan* has created an environment to nurture and promote the values of Vietnamese cultural identity, affirming its position and Vietnamese nuance in human culture.

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