

# Exploring Ethnic Identity through Traditional Music: A Comparative Study of the Folk Music Cultures of Pa Ko and Ta Oi Peoples in Thua Thien-Hue Province, Vietnam

## Khám phá bản sắc tộc người qua âm nhạc truyền thống: Một nghiên cứu so sánh văn hóa âm nhạc dân gian của người Pa Kô và Tà Ôi ở tỉnh Thừa Thiên - Huế, Việt Nam

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### Abstract

The cultural identity of different ethnic groups is evident through various factors, particularly in traditional music. Therefore, studying folk music is crucial in identifying cultural and ethnic differences. This research focuses on the field investigation of the folk music of the Pa Ko and Ta Oi ethnic communities in Thua Thien-Hue province. The study confirms that the Pa Ko ethnic group has a unique folk music background, which is expressed through folk song genres, instrument systems, performance forms, and usage concepts. By comparing the musical characteristics of the Pa Ko people with those of the Ta Oi people in the same area, this report concludes that the former has its distinct musical culture. The research primarily uses qualitative research as methodology, particularly in-depth and participatory interviews with skilled, elderly artisans with good memory. The study results provide evidence that the Pa Ko and Ta Oi are not one ethnic group but two different groups. It is essential to emphasize that this report focuses on musical culture and not musicology. Its findings underscore the significance of folk music in understanding cultural and ethnic identities.

Bản sắc văn hóa của các dân tộc khác nhau được thể hiện rõ qua nhiều yếu tố, đặc biệt là trong âm nhạc truyền thống. Vì vậy, nghiên cứu âm nhạc dân gian có ý nghĩa quan trọng trong việc xác định sự khác biệt về bản sắc văn hóa, dân tộc. Nghiên cứu này tập trung điều tra thực địa để làm rõ sự khác biệt về âm nhạc dân gian của cộng đồng dân tộc Pa Kô và Tà Ôi ở tỉnh Thừa Thiên-Huế. Nghiên cứu khẳng định dân tộc Pa Kô có nền tảng âm nhạc dân gian, được thể hiện qua các thể loại dân ca, hệ thống nhạc cụ, hình thức biểu diễn và quan niệm sử dụng. Bằng cách so sánh đặc điểm âm nhạc của người Pa Kô với đặc điểm âm nhạc của người Tà Ôi trong cùng khu vực, báo cáo này kết luận rằng người Pa Kô có văn hóa âm nhạc riêng biệt. Nghiên cứu chủ yếu sử dụng nghiên cứu định tính làm phương pháp chính, đặc biệt là phỏng vấn sâu và có sự tham gia của các nghệ nhân lớn tuổi, lành nghề và có trí nhớ tốt. Kết quả nghiên cứu cung cấp bằng chứng cho thấy người Pa Kô và Tà Ôi không phải là một tộc người mà là hai bản sắc khác nhau. Điều cần thiết là phải nhân

manh rắng báo cáo này tập trung vào văn hóa âm nhạc chứ không phải âm nhạc học. Những phát hiện này nhấn mạnh tầm quan trọng của âm nhạc dân gian trong nghiên cứu và phân biệt bản sắc văn hóa và dân tộc.

**Keywords:** Pa Ko people, Ta Oi people, folk music, cultural identity, characteristic comparison, Thua Thien-Hue | Người Pa Kô, Tà Ôi, âm nhạc dân gian, bản sắc văn hóa, so sánh đặc điểm, tỉnh Thừa Thiên Huế

## Introduction

Vietnam is home to 54 ethnic groups. In 2008-2009, the People's Committee of Thua Thien - Hue province proposed that the Vietnamese Government recognize the Pa Ko people as the 55th official ethnic group, separate from the Ta Oi people. However, to date, this distinction has not been officially acknowledged. In the ongoing quest to understand and delineate the unique cultural and ethnic identities, this study seeks to compare the musical cultural identities of these two groups. By highlighting the differences, it aims to underscore that the Ta Oi and the Pa Ko are indeed distinct ethnic entities. This research provides a foundation for the recognition of the Pa Ko as the 55th official ethnic group within the Vietnamese ethnic spectrum.

Despite the unclear determinations of the Pa Ko ethnic name, direct field surveys of folk music reveal that the Pa Ko people have a unique cultural identity and music, which are relatively separate from the ethnic groups living in the same area. In-depth interviews with local cultural managers, intellectuals, and elderly Pa Ko artisans reveal fundamental differences in terms of ethnicity, from language to culture, and traditional folk art (Nguyen 2009, 2016, 2022).

The Pa Ko people live in A Luoi district, with a population of over 20,000 people, accounting for nearly half of the district's population. They live alongside the Ka Tu, Ta Oi, and Van Kieu, who belong to the Mon-Khmer language group from a survey and research on folk music in 2008. An additional survey in 2022 by the Division for Ethnic Affairs Ethnic Affairs of A Luoi district, belong to Thua Thien Hue Board for Ethnic Affairs, revealed that there are approximately 21,639 Pa Ko people in the area (Division for Ethnic Affairs of A Luoi district 2022).

Housing and traditional clothing are significant cultural symbols of the Pa Ko people. The Pa Ko house has a circular architecture with two main doors at the ends of the stairs and two doors in the middle. The traditional costume of the Pa Ko is woven with brocade with four main colors: black, red, blue, and yellow. Women's costumes include long skirts and tops, while men's clothing consists of loincloths and blazers, or a wide band of fabric that falls over the shoulders to the hips (Figure 1). However, traditional costumes are typically only worn by the elderly in daily life, and modern suits are now common attire for the younger generation during village festivals.



Fig. 1 Costumes and models of houses of the Pa Ko people in the Azakooh festival. The parade was held during a festival in Thua Thien-Hue city in 2022. Source: Photos by Ho Tu, 2022.

One of the significant cultural and material heritages of the Pa Ko people is their tombs (Figure 2). These spiritual architectures are associated with the A Rieu Piing festival, which is one of the most prominent rituals celebrated by the Pa Ko people in Vietnam.



Fig. 2 Traditional tomb of the Pa Ko. Source: Photo by Ho Tu, 2022.

Intangible culture is also an important factor that determines the traditional cultural characteristics of the Pa Ko people, in addition to their tangible cultural heritage. The A Rieu Piing festival is an essential cultural heritage that expresses the unique identity of the Pa Ko people. This ritual is distinct from the funeral rites of the Ta Oi people, as the two ethnic groups have different conceptions of death, leading to differences in their funeral rites. For the Pa Ko, death is not the end but a reunion with ancestors, while the Ta Oi believe that death is the end of a person's life (Nguyen 2009, 2016, 2022).

The A Rieu Piing festival is a large village ceremony that involves the beating of gongs and drums in a joyful and lively manner, expressing joy rather than sadness. Unlike the Ta Oi people, who only use the drum, whose rhythm is very slow, showing sadness.

The festival is held every 5-7 years, depending on the economic conditions of the village and clans, and it is typically organized around August. The purpose of the festival is to provide an opportunity for children and grandchildren to express their love and filial piety to their ancestors who have

passed away. This festival has many similarities with the Vietnamese reburial ceremony, but the difference is that this ceremony reburies the clans of the village at the same time.

Preparation for the festival starts a few months in advance, with meetings being held by the village elders and authorities. They also invite guests, and the clans notify their descendants in advance if they are married or working far away, so they can return in time for the festival. The preparations include working a pole to tie a buffalo, ox, or goat when brought to sacrifice and preparing new tombs for each deceased family member. Each clan has its pillar, and the powerful clans in the village are buried near the village pillar. The rest will be far away, and the decorative patterns on the columns reflect the power of each family line (Nguyen 2009, 2016, 2022).

During the main festival, the village elders and people gather in the middle of the village yard to prepare for the ritual sacrifices to the gods. The offerings prepared by the villagers and clans include wine, buffaloes, cows, goats, and many other typical dishes of the people.

In addition to the A Rieu Piing festival, the Pa Ko people have other traditional festivals, such as Aada (seasonal festival) and Pul Boh (farm-keeping ceremony), which are significant in their cultural and religious activities. These rituals have created the identity and differences in culture and beliefs between the Pa Ko community and the Ta Oi community, and other ethnic groups of the same language family. A specific example of the Ta Oi people's costumes can be seen in Figure 3.



Fig. 3 Men and women's costumes of the Ta Oi people, next to their traditional house. Source: Photo by Nguyen Dinh Lam, 2019.

Festivals are occasions where the appearance and function of folk music are shown most vividly, following its own principles while also harmonizing with the creator's intentions naturally. Music is essential to express the function of connecting and managing the ritual uniquely, and it is the soul of the festival from start to finish. Gong concerts with traditional musical instruments and folk dances are performed to lead and connect the ceremonies of the village elders. Therefore, it can be asserted that music is a particularly significant factor that defines a culture's identity. In other words, to understand the characteristics of a culture, we need to focus on the traditional and folk music



elements of that ethnic community. Music is an indispensable means that expresses the function of connection and administration of the ritual in a special way.

## Literature Review

Every culture has its own unique characteristics, which are not only reflected in material culture but also in intangible cultural elements, including folk music. By examining the folk music of an ethnic group, one can appreciate an important part of that group's cultural tradition.

The International Folk Music Council (IFMC) was founded in 1947 and attempted to define "folk music" at its conference in São Paulo in 1955. The IFMC defined folk music as "the product of a musical tradition that has been developed through word of mouth". This concept emphasizes that folk music only includes music that has developed within a community and has not been influenced by popular or artistic music from other cultures. Folk music is seen as a product of tradition and transmitted by word of mouth. Although a talented artisan within an ethnic community may originate folk music, it is absorbed into the community's unwritten tradition of living (Pegg 2002: 2).

Scholars such as Shepherd and Wicke (1997) have considered the role of music in culture. They believe that music is the foundation of social life and is not merely a form of relaxation or entertainment. It is central to the formation and reproduction of human society. Music is a form of material expression that conveys the principles of symbolic structure. They emphasized the human body as a primary venue for the musical reconciliation of social and symbolic processes. Music and culture theory also establish new links between the study of music and culture, showing how each can inform and enrich the other (Shepherd and Wicke 1997).

As a factor that determines the cultural identity of an ethnic group or community, music is not only a symbol but also a reflection of the behavior of a society and culture. Music is a group activity that supports cultural norms and displays them symbolically through public performances. Through the activism of culture makers, the acceptance and reinforcement of cultural norms are achieved, which are the basic characteristics of a community (Woma 2012).

Through folk and traditional music, people can feel their culture. The artists are the pseudo-cultural lands of their communities and peoples. Folkestad also confirms that traditional music is the cultural outcome of a people, religion, and national context in which that community lives. Folk music performs two functions, expressing and communicating national and ethnic characteristics, which can be seen from the inside out and from the outside in. Music can strengthen bonds within a community and expand it (Folkestad 2002: 151-162). Revill further emphasizes that if we want to understand a culture or music, we can do so by being in the middle of it. The starting point has to be how we, as individuals, actually use, absorb, or care about music (Revill 2004: 199-209).

The relationship between folk music and social identity is complex, and can have significant impacts on cultural and political issues. American folk music, for example, has been used to both break down and reinforce racial boundaries in the United States. Aesthetic identity is the cultural association of art genres with social groups, and folk music can both reflect and subvert genre and social boundaries. Folk music is often associated with groups perceived as "other," whether defined by race, region, class, or country. Before it was called folk music, Native American music was racially integrated, influenced by both European and African styles. W. G. Roy argues that

American communists and their allies have used folk music as a tool of racial solidarity during times of polarization (Roy 2002 459-469).

The cultural policy of a country or ethnic group is closely linked to its political issues. Turkish folk music was examined as a specific cultural type to investigate the dynamics of cultural policy during the founding years of the Republic of Turkey (1923-1940). The reconstruction of Turkish folk music and the development of the term "folk" reflect specific cultural and political aspects of the formation of the Turkish nation-state and nationalism (Degirmenci 2006: 47-65). Furthermore, community tourism development also emphasizes traditional music elements in Nigeria. Folk music is maintained and continues to expand and enrich its resources while breaking down ethnic barriers and uniting wider geographic communities, which contributes to its national identity (Nzewi 1980: 6-21).

Vietnam has a rich cultural tradition that spans thousands of years, with ethnic groups in Vietnam still preserving their unique identities despite wars and foreign invasions. Vietnamese traditional music, in particular, has continually found ways to protect itself and even elevate itself to higher levels when faced with foreign musical influences (Vietnamese Institute for Musicology 2003: 28).

According to ethnomusicologist Professor To Ngoc Thanh, folk music created by workers exists and develops within the hearts of communities over generations, maintaining historical continuity in the face of cultural assimilation by invading forces. Folk music serves as a repository that fully preserves ancient traditions, regulating and supporting national musical culture (Thuy Loan 1980: 11-13). While other types of music have their own unique functions, folk music has a special function for the social life of each ethnic group (To Ngoc Thanh 1981: 2-5). To Ngoc Thanh further emphasizes that modern musical forms cannot replace folk music (To Ngoc Thanh 2007: 636).

Through field trips in Thua Thien-Hue province, this article aims to research and clarify the cultural identity of the Pa Ko people, confirming their native ethnic group origin and culture that differs from other ethnic groups.

## **Research Methods**

This study takes an interdisciplinary approach to cultural anthropology, musicology, and ethnomusicology. Fieldwork was conducted directly in Hong Ha commune, Hong Trung commune, and A Luoi town in A Luoi district with the Pa Ko, and in communes Nham, A Ngo, Huong Lam, and Hong Trung in A Luoi district with the Ta Oi. These are the localities with the densest folk music culture of these two ethnic groups. In-depth interviews and discussions were conducted with 25 artisans, three village elders and chiefs, three cultural managers in A Luoi district, and two Vietnamese folk music researchers. The selected artisans can perform local art activities, maintain and practice various forms of musical activities of each ethnic group, and possess rich and diverse indigenous cultural knowledge.

The in-depth interviews aimed to clarify the difference between the folk music of the Pa Ko and the Ta Oi people, including the subjects who create, practice, and maintain folk music forms in their cultural life. The interviews also assessed the nature of insider perspectives on the meaning of music and the use of each genre of music in the cultural and religious life of the people.

Additionally, interviews were conducted with participants and artisans at the festival spaces and folk music activities of these two ethnic groups. These interviews helped the author to have a more objective view when assessing the relationship of music with the cultural identity of these ethnic groups.

This study also uses an ethnomusicological approach. The author recorded the music, analyzed the rules of melodies, scales, and rhythms to identify the musical characteristics of the Pa Ko and the Ta Oi people. Typical folk music genres and musical instrument families of these two ethnic groups were also studied and compared.

## **Findings and Discussion**

In this section, the author will concentrate on presenting and examining the distinct genres of folk songs and musical instruments of the Pa Ko people, comparing them to the musical culture of the Ta Oi people, and occasionally with other ethnic groups such as the Ka Tu. These ethnic groups belong to the Mon-Khmer language group in A Luoi district. The study will then delve into confirming that the folk music of each ethnic group has a distinct identity and origin, which is one of the factors that contributes to the unique identity of each culture.

### ***Identifying typical folk songs of the Pa Ko people***

The following folk songs of the Pa Ko people have been confirmed as cultural heritages created by the Pa Ko themselves and are present throughout the lives of the people from birth to death. Folk songs serve different functions depending on the stage of a person's life and have a significant influence on the process of shaping and developing the unique cultural identity of the Pa Ko people (Nguyen 2009, 2016, 2022).

During the early stages of life, lullabies such as *Rtang oi – ru cay* are sung by the grandmother, mother, and sisters to lull the newborn to sleep. These lullabies are sung at home or in the fields where the parents work. In addition to being the first music lessons, lullabies also teach important moral lessons and express emotional content and good wishes for the child. The Pa Ko lullabies often have a slightly sad melody and a slow tempo (Figure 4).

**RU CON (PAKÔ)**

Người hát: **Ta Dúz - Turoz**

Ru - u - u - u - u - u

Ca van rơ tan rơ xang A Kay oi

May chuôa ta tuar ta tom A Kayoi C'ri bun tê cô A

Kay oi Ca van rơ tan rơ xang may cho chi chau mi mi to rơ

chon Kon to tom A Kay ru.

Ru u u u u u u

Fig. 4 A children's lullaby of the Pa Ko. Musical notation by Minh Phuong. Photo by Nguyen Dinh Lam, 2023.

In-depth interviews conducted with Village Elder 1 and numerous artisans in the village revealed that the lullaby of the Pa Ko people is a unique lullaby, not borrowed from other ethnic groups. Researcher 1 added that lullabies are typically native songs, consisting of simple melodies and native languages, that are suitable for the lullaby space for babies. Artisan 15 explained that the lullaby of the Pa Ko people is a song that has been created, practiced, and passed down by Pa Ko fathers and grandfathers for generations. The lullaby of the Pa Ko people is distinct from the lullabies of other ethnic groups residing in proximity to the Pa Ko ethnic group. Field research conducted on Mon-Khmer ethnic groups in Thua Thien-Hue demonstrated that Ta Oi and Ka tu people in this region also possess their own unique lullabies.

The genre of folk songs known as *đồng dao* is typically associated with folk games and is intended for individuals over or under the age of 12. However, this genre has mostly disappeared from the community, and the younger generation no longer uses it to sing and play traditional folk games. According to surveys and retrospective interviews with artisans, the *đồng dao* genre not only adds to the appeal of folk games but also helps to form and develop many aspects of Pa Ko folklore. Furthermore, it serves as a means of educating young people about values such as kindness and honesty towards friends and supports the development of a pure and simple soul in the traditional Pa Ko way of life. However, it is primarily the older generation who still remember and perform these songs.



Upon reaching adulthood, the Pa Ko people possess distinct songs, including *Amieng*, *Cha chap*, and *Xieng*, which are products of the cultural heritage of this indigenous community. *Cha chap*, a typical folk song of the Pa Ko people in this region, has been confirmed by the community's seasoned artisans. What is noteworthy, however, is that the Ka tu and Ta Oi people in the area also employ this song, singing it in the Pa Ko language instead of their own. This study observes and evaluates that the Ka tu and Ta Oi people have adopted this particular folk song genre in their musical practices. All interviewed Pa Ko artisans have attested that *Cha chap* originated from their forefathers, which has been corroborated by Artisans 2, 5, and 6 from the Ka tu ethnic group. Manager 1, who has served as a cultural manager in this district for many years, also affirms this claim. Based on almost two decades of ethnographic fieldwork experience, the author identifies *Cha chap* as a folk song created, performed, and passed down by the Pa Ko people to the present generation.

*Cha chap* is primarily performed in two forms: solo and reciprocal. When young Pa Ko individuals reach the age of finding a romantic partner, they utilize *Cha chap* melodies to express and share life experiences and information with one another. It is common for couples to employ the song to convey their emotions and affection towards each other. Moreover, *Cha chap* is sung during weddings, New Year's Day celebrations, and various traditional festivals within the village (Figure 5). As a result, the song's contents may include themes of flirting, love confessions, as well as prayers for a peaceful and prosperous life before the gods (*Jang*). Gong and drum accompaniments are often used during performances of *Cha chap*.



Fig. 5 Two Pa Ko artisans sing *Cha chap*. Source: Photo by Nguyen Dinh Lam, 2019.

*Cha chap* is characterized by a powerful and resolute tone. By conducting in-depth interviews with artisans and listening to numerous renditions of the song, the author has documented the scale (*Long ban*) of this distinctive melody as follows: the song's range is within the 6th interval (from a to g) of a 6-tone scale, namely a - c - d - e - f - g. A striking feature of *Cha chap* is the opening sentence's high pitch, followed by a descending melody with multiple syllables of the same pitch. The song often employs a relaxed, free-tempo rhythm and may be classified as 2/4 time to facilitate melodic analysis (Figure 6).

Fig. 6 Melodies of *Cha chap* folk songs of the Pa Ko people in A Luoi district. Musical notation by Minh Phuong. Photo by Nguyen Dinh Lam, 2019.

*Cha chap* serves as a unifying force within the Pa Ko community, establishing a unique cultural identity. It can be said that love songs, in general, have a crucial role in creating, preserving, and transmitting the customs of different ethnic groups. In her research on wedding music in the Prespa Albanian community, author Sinmida Tasaki discovered that music performances helped establish social and moral order, while also emphasizing the natural differences between men and women (Sinmida Tasaki 2000). The reciprocal love songs benefit from the traditional performance environment and young people's love inspiration, ultimately serving as a means of cultural expression, shaping ethnic identity, and ethnic poetic identity. Poetry and music are intimately linked, and the process of shaping traditional poetry and inspiring folk melody creation relies heavily on elements of traditional folk poetry. In a study of Khmu and Vietnamese love songs, Nguyen Van Huyen and Frank Proschan noted that those who combined the most verses, appropriately arranged the largest number of rhymes, utilized the most word groups, and included the most contrasting or similar images and compound words typically received the most inspiration (Proschan 2010: 613). Thus, love songs have a significant role in the development of ethnic languages and folklore within the Pa Ko community and other ethnic communities in Vietnam.

It is worth noting that the neighboring Ta Oi and Ka tu communities have also adopted *Cha chap* into their cultural and musical practices. However, surveys have confirmed that this genre is indigenous to the Pa Ko people and possesses its unique identity. Artisans 13, 14, 20, 21, and 22 have attested that the Ta Oi people always sing the song in the Pa Ko language. Additionally, Manager 2 has confirmed that the Ta Oi people often use Pa Ko lyrics while singing the *Cha chap* tune, thus borrowing the song from the Pa Ko ethnic group.

In addition to *Cha chap*, *Xieng* is another typical folk song that is indigenous to and possesses its identity within the Pa Ko community. *Xieng* is sung in a call-and-response format and is often used by the Pa Ko people to express their daily emotions, including their joy and sadness. The song's

musical feature involves the continuous sound of notes combined with the 2nd and 3rd steps in the melody's structure, giving listeners the impression that the artisan is telling a melancholic story about their life (Figure 7).



Fig. 7 *Xieng* folk song of the Pa Ko. Musical notation by Minh Phuong. Source: Photo by Nguyen Dinh Lam, 2019.

Ethnographic and musical field surveys have revealed that *Xieng* is a traditional folk song indigenous to the Pa Ko people, which contributes to their cultural identity. The song is performed in a range of cultural contexts, including the village's festive occasions, daily life, and family gatherings, serving as a means of communicating their feelings. The moral lessons, life experiences, and folk wisdom passed down by Pa Ko fathers to future generations are vividly reflected in *Xieng* distinctive melodies.

In addition to *Cha chap* and *Xieng*, *Amieng* is another typical song of the Pa Ko people in Thua Thien-Hue province. Artisans have described it as a predominantly solo performance with a narrative, free recitation style that evokes emotions akin to lullabies. A notable feature of *Amieng* melody is the recurring motif: "*Amieng* ooh... eh... eh...ho...," which is a subtle yet poignant call or lamentation. The song reflects the hardships and difficulties of life while expressing people's aspirations for a prosperous and happy life before nature and the gods. According to artisans interviewed by the author, *Amieng* melodies and verses serve as a vital means of transmitting traditional Pa Ko culture from one generation to the next. Singing alone enables individuals to self-reflect and correct their faults, while singing to others promotes the teaching of good values, demonstrating *Amieng*'s significant role in creating, practicing, and preserving the traditional folklore of the Pa Ko people.

Furthermore, the Pa Ko people have a popular genre of folk songs called *Car loi* songs that are mainly sung by older men in the village during festivals and religious ceremonies, particularly the harvest festival when the crops have been harvested. During this time, *Car loi* is an essential way for the Pa Ko people to connect with their Jang-gods. The song is sung to express gratitude to Jang for the bountiful harvest and favorable business. *Car loi* is frequently sung by older people, and it is

also performed during the inauguration of a new house to pray for blessings of health, happiness, and prosperity from the gods. The accompaniment of drums and gongs is common when singing *Car loi*.

It should be noted that *Car loi* can also be found in the Ta Oi and Ka tu communities, and the Ka tu people accept it as their own creation. However, local cultural managers and Pa Ko artisans have confirmed that *Car loi* is a cultural heritage that the Pa Ko people have claimed for themselves. Evidence given by the artisans is that during cultural exchange programs between ethnic groups in the A Luoi district, the Ta Oi and Ka tu people sing *Car loi* in the Pa Ko language. Therefore, the author concludes that *Car loi* should be considered a folk music property of the Pa Ko people, which has been borrowed and used by some ethnic groups of the Mon-Khmer group in the area.

In addition, the Pa Ko people also incorporate songs from other ethnic groups within the same group, such as *Ba boch* and *Nha nhim*, into their cultural life. These songs are typical of the Ka Tu and Ta Oi people. Cultural exchange and acculturation in folk music have been a common occurrence throughout history. However, it is important to note that while cultural identity and the creators of folk music may be influenced by other communities, there is always a specific community that can be identified as the originator of a particular genre.

#### ***Traditional musical instruments of the Pa Ko people***

The Pa Ko people have preserved and promoted many traditional musical instruments, including idiophones, membranophones, chordophones, and aerophones. These indigenous instruments are vital parts of the cultural and musical identity of the Pa Ko people. Folk musical instruments not only serve an entertainment function when performed independently, but also play a crucial role in harmonizing between different instrument families, particularly as accompaniment to their own folk songs. Traditional musical instruments are widely used in indispensable religious ceremonies and festivals of the Pa Ko people. One of the most significant festivals is the A Rieu Piing festival, which is a funeral ceremony, as previously mentioned. Through the study of the musical instrument system used in this ceremony and other traditional cultural and artistic spaces, it is evident that these instruments are indigenous and express the unique cultural identity of the Pa Ko people. They are used for specific functions in particular festivals, further highlighting their significance in preserving and promoting the traditional culture of the Pa Ko community (Nguyen 2009, 2016, 2022).

Resonant musical instruments include the *Tart le-coong mut* (gong), which is classified as an Idiophone. In-depth interviews with experts revealed that the knob gong has a diameter of approximately 43 cm, while the flat gong has a diameter of about 33-35 cm. Moreover, there are larger gongs known as *Ngoong mut*, which are roughly 43 cm in diameter and produce a deep, lingering sound similar to that of a Vietnamese temple bell (Figure 8). Thanks to the careful preservation by traditional families, these gongs have been passed down to the present day.





Fig. 8 The *Ngonng mut* instrument of the Pa Ko. Source: Photo by Ho Tu, 2022.

According to instrument-making artisans, gongs may be used in combination with other instruments or even played solo for entertainment purposes. In major ceremonies, gongs are often used to lead other musical instruments. Its primary function is to announce the stages of the festival while also serving as a solo instrument, harmonizing and accompanying folk songs. Surveys conducted on gongs in this region have shown that this instrument is a prime example of traditional musical culture and reflects the musical identity of the Pa Ko here, from the way it is performed to its functions.

Gongs are used for a variety of purposes, including mourning (*A rap ku man*), grave leaving ceremonies (*Xi ku mui*), buffalo stabbing ceremonies, healing witch dances (*Pa dun ca ru*), dances to celebrate the new house (*So'r an dang dom tro*), and musical entertainment activities with songs such as Happy Day (*Tu toat ama*) and collective fun dances (*A rieng a d'*). Typically, it is played by men. Detailed interviews with Artisans 2, 19, and 21 revealed that during gong performances, the Pa Ko people use cloth-covered awls to strike the gongs while covering their faces with their hands. In contrast, the Ta Oi people often cover both the inside and outside of the gong. This unique feature in the gong performances of the Pa Ko and Ta Oi people from the same district highlights their distinct musical and cultural identities. The gong plays a crucial role in announcing and leading festivals and performing in significant ceremonies of the Pa Ko people and considered a significant means of connecting the people with the gods of the Pa Ko village.

Apart from gongs, another typical instrument of the Pa Ko people is the *Reeu-karding* (shaking bell), also classified as an Idiophone. According to artisans' records, the bell is made of cast bronze, is hollow in the middle, and has a gourd-shaped body that is around 7 cm in height. The top of the bell has a small knob to hold when shaking, and the bottom has a small sound hole. To enhance its sound, a metal ball is placed inside the bell before it is vibrated. This bell is usually played in combination with gongs, drums, horns, bamboo tubes, and other musical instruments to create unique rhythms. The bell is also essential in religious rituals and is utilized by shamans in healing



rituals (Pa dun ka ru). According to Village Elder 3, the *Reeu-karding* bell is exclusively used in the religious ceremonies and some traditional dances of the Pa Ko people. This instrument represents the daily cultural practices of this ethnic group.

Moving on to the *Karnhong* (bell), another musical instrument that belongs to the Idiophone family. The bell consists of a pair of thin, conical bronze mounds that are approximately 7.5 cm in height and 6.5 cm in width. The tip of the bell has a place to tie a string for holding while hitting. This instrument is usually played by men.

The Ta Oi people popularize idiophone musical instruments that differ from those of the Pa Ko people. Notably, the Ta Oi people in A Luoi district still preserve a special set of resonant musical instruments known as *An toong*, which are percussion instruments made from wood (Figure 9). The *An toong* consists of four wooden lutes. Through research and interviews with instrument makers, I realized that the Ta Oi people have their own long-standing folk music identity. The musical aesthetic of the Ta Oi has reached a high level, as evidenced by their production of musical instruments using wooden sticks arranged according to the traditional scale of the people. The bars are hung on a wooden stand in order of sound, ranging from low to high. Consequently, the player can sit or stand depending on the height and position of the piano stand. This musical instrument is primarily used for entertainment activities, rather than being performed at funerals and folk religious ceremonies.



Fig. 9 The *An toong*. Photo by Nguyen Dinh Lam, 2019.

In addition to the *An toong*, the Ta Oi people also possess other resonant musical instruments. One of these instruments is the *Kârtootd*, which is made of aluminium and resembles the Vietnamese *Nãobạt* percussion instrument. It has an average diameter of about 17 to 20 cm and is approximately 0.2 cm thick. Another instrument is the rattles, known as *Kârnhang*, which produce a shaking sound. There is also the *Eat k'rao*, or *Đàn môi*, which creates a snapping sound.

Similar to many ethnic groups residing in the Truong Son mountain range, the Ta Oi people possess a brass instrument known as *Tar' le*, which they employ for singing, recitations, or self-accompaniment. The average diameter of the gong's face typically ranges from 35 to 45 cm, with a

central protuberance known as a nipple (referred to as nipple gongs). Larger gongs can have face diameters exceeding 40 cm, but they often lack nipples and are referred to as flat gongs. Upon observing the gong ensembles, it becomes apparent that the Ta Oi people do not adhere to a specific arrangement or standardized number of gongs per set. Notably, in Hong Trung commune, A Luoi district, it is common to find a gong set consisting of only two gongs: one flat gong and one knob gong. These two gongs are played alongside drums, bells, horns (buffalo horns), and additional gongs. Primarily, these instruments serve the Ta Oi people's needs and are employed during festival rituals, as gongs are regarded as sacred objects. It is worth mentioning that gongs are also struck during mourning ceremonies known as *Sil sǎu*. The gongs are played by men.

Next is a *A pukh*, a type of aerophone instrument. According to an artisan, it is made of an old and dry bamboo tube that is approximately 30 cm in length with an average diameter of 4-5 cm. One end of the tube is closed with a knot, while the other end is open to let sound escape. To play this instrument, a wooden stick with a diameter of around 2 cm and a length of about 25 cm is used to strike the middle of the tube body. The impact of the force makes the steam column inside the tube vibrate and produce sound. This instrument is commonly used by females. During performances, artists strike *A pukh* while simultaneously combining it with dance movements of the hands and feet. *A pukh* also serves the purpose of controlling dance movements with other musical instruments.

Another aerophone instrument is the *Corodoocadon* (Tu va), made from a buffalo horn with a natural curvature in the shape of a sickle (Figure 10). To make this instrument, the inner body of the chosen horn is cleaned, making the body hollow in the middle. The sound/blowing part is located in the middle of the horn. According to the artisan, a hole of around 2.5 cm long and 5 cm wide is cut away from the sharp tip of the horn (in the curved part) and attached with a crafted copper piece on the outside with a pronunciation reed. This metal piece is then fastened to the horn body using asphalt and strings, creating a horn instrument.

The syllable of the *Corodoocadon* for the Pa Ko people is placed right at the tip of the horn, near the sharpest part. Depending on the size of the horn, the instrument produces different timbres, with larger and older buffalo horns creating a deeper, more resonant sound. The *Corodoocadon* that the artisan worked on is typically around 45 cm in length, with the mouth/speaker part being around 13-15 cm wide and 5-7 cm high. During performances, people often use their left hand in coordination with their mouth to control the pitch, intensity, and strength of the sound.

The Pa Ko people commonly use the *Corodoocadon* in traditional festivals, such as the buffalo stabbing ceremony and the new rice festival. Similar to many other traditional musical instruments, the *Corodoocadon* is frequently played in spiritual ceremonies and utilized by village dignitaries. Moreover, it is often played together with other instruments, such as drums, gongs, and khen flutes.



Fig. 10 The Pa Ko's CCorodoocadon. Source: Photo by Nguyen Dinh Lam, 2019.

While the Pa Ko people use a lot of wind instruments as mentioned above, the Ta Oi people are more inclined towards flutes. These aerophones include the flutes *A hel*, *Te rel*, *Te reeng*, and *A reng*. A brief description of these musical instruments is as follows:

*A hel* is crafted from a bamboo tube, specifically a small type, measuring approximately 40-45 cm in length and around 0.8 cm in diameter (Figure 11). The top end of the bamboo tube is beveled for blowing, and a small reed is cut to create a sound reminiscent of a brass trumpet. The *A hel* features four punch holes situated at the top, which are used to produce different pitches.

The *Te rel* is a vertical wind instrument made from a bamboo tube. The length of the flute body is approximately 40 cm, with a diameter ranging from 0.6 cm to 1 cm. Similar to *A hel*, the top of the tube is thinly beveled, and a small reed is cut. The *Terel* possesses three upper punch holes and one lower punch hole. *Te reeng*, another wind instrument, is blown vertically and made from a bamboo tube. On average, it has a length of around 35 cm and a diameter of approximately 1 cm. The top end of the tube is also thinly beveled, and a small reed is cut. The *Te reeng* is equipped with three punch holes. The *A reng*, a wind instrument played by blowing across a hole, completes the list. Similar to *A hel*, *Te rel*, and *Te reeng*, it is crafted from a bamboo tube. The *A reng*, however, is a branched wind instrument. The aforementioned flutes are typically played individually and not in harmony or alongside singing.

Through field trips to various villages of the Ta Oi people, I have gained insights into the distinctive flute known as *A reng*. This particular musical instrument is constructed using a bamboo tube, specifically from a type of bamboo with a petite diameter of approximately 0.3 cm. The length of the flute measures around 25-30 cm. The top end of the tube is thinly beveled, and a small reed, known as *Lam* or *hưi gà*, is cut to produce the desired sound. The *A reng* is equipped with two punch holes. Notably, an *A reng* requires the collaborative efforts of two individuals, one male and one female, to play it. The man blows into the pipe using the reed, while the woman places the

flute's outlet in her mouth and sings along with the music produced by the flute. This unique playing technique gives the *A reng* a distinct and captivating sound.

These flutes invariably accompany folk songs during cultural events and festivals of the Ta Oi people. Surveys and interviews with participants have confirmed that both young and elderly men play the flutes on festive occasions. They utilize the flute to express their emotions, share their joy, and convey their sorrows to those around them. The flutes are primarily used by men for entertainment purposes and as accompaniment to singing, rather than for funerals and worship. In addition to their use in concerts and solos, these remarkable flutes also fulfill the role of accompanying the folk songs of the Ta Oi people in this region.



Fig. 11 The *A hel*, a vertical flute; Source: Photo: Nguyen Dinh Lam, 2019.

In addition to the flute, another prominent wind instrument among the Ta Oi people is the *Khen* (*Khen be*). The *Khen* belongs to the polyphonic, branched wind instrument family. The Ta Oi people have two types of *Khen*. The first type bears similarities to the trumpets used by the Thai people and the Co Tu people in Vietnam. The second type features a more unique structure, consisting of 14 pipes, with only 10 high-pitched punch holes, while the remaining pipes serve as a proportionate extension of the trumpet. The length of the longest tube in the trumpet is approximately 38 cm, while the shortest measures about 30 cm. Despite variations in the number of pitch holes and sizes, the structure and arrangement of the pipes remain the same.

The Ta Oi people utilize the *Khen* to play *Ba's Jang* and *Bua ka r's* during worship and sacred ceremonies. However, its primary use is for solo performances during night singing, folk dancing, and with drums, gongs, and other musical instruments during community activities. Practical research indicates that the *Khen* is predominantly played by men, serving as a solo instrument and providing harmonization with other instruments while accompanying the folk songs of the community.

Moving on to the *A kuur* (drum), which is a type of membranophone instrument (Figure 12). This is a leather double-sided drum made by joining pieces of wood together, similar to the way other

drums are made in Vietnam. However, the Pa Ko people also have drums carved from a wooden body. The drum that an artisan worked on is around 74 cm long and has a diameter of approximately 35 cm on both sides of the skin. People typically use buffalo skin or cowhide as the drum face. Besides *A kuur*, the Pa Ko people also have a large drum that is approximately 1 meter in height, with a drum surface diameter of about 50 cm. Drums play a significant role in the cultural activities of the Pa Ko people, from funerals to festivals, and dance and entertainment activities. The *A kuur* drum is played by men and is primarily used in harmony with other musical instruments, such as gongs, *khen* flutes, and *Corodoocadon* horns. Drums and gongs are two musical instruments that play the primary role in creating and keeping the rhythm in the traditional dance of the Pa Ko people.



Fig. 12 The *A kuur* drum of the Pa Ko. Source: Photo by Ho Tu, 2022.

The drums of the Pa Ko and Ta Oi people also exhibit many differences. One such drum is called *Cu'r*, which is a vibrato percussion instrument (Figure 13). The drum holds a significant place in the cultural life of the Ta Oi people, especially during village festivals. It is crafted from a single piece of wood, measuring around 50-60 cm in length, with a bulging shape in the middle and slightly tapered ends. The drumheads are made of cowhide or buffalo skin, with a diameter of approximately 30-35 cm. The drums are played using wooden sticks or palms. Artisan 25 explains that while it is not a strict rule, during performances where a louder sound is desired, people may also use a wooden axe to play the drums.





Fig. 13 The *Cu'r* drum of the Pa Ko. Source: Photo by Nguyen Dinh Lam, 2019.

During gong performances, the *Cu'r* drum is played by two individuals, each holding a stick and striking the drum on their respective sides. This technique produces various rhythms, incorporating skilled and intricate hand techniques such as strokes and rolls on the drumheads. The drums are used by men and serve the primary function of accompanying dances and harmonizing with other musical instruments. They are frequently performed in sacred spaces of the Ta Oi people. In-depth interviews reveal that not only the *Cu'r* drum, but most of the instruments used by the Ta Oi people adhere to specific principles and functions. Expert 2 emphasized that the Ta Oi people believe that certain musical instruments house their own deities (*Jang*), thus the use of any instrument in specific spaces is regulated. While some entertainment instruments like flutes may be used more freely in cultural programs, they are not employed in the rituals of the Ta Oi people.

The final instrument is a type of chordophone called *Tam pre a po*, which has two strings. According to an instrument maker, the instrument consists of two parts: the resonator and the neck. The resonant gourd is made of dried gourds, while the neck is made up of a piece of bamboo or cork that is around 50-60 cm in length and has a diameter ranging from 5-7 cm. A shaft is placed on the neck to hold and tune the guitar. The two strings are separated by an octave, with the upper string playing the melody and the lower string accompanying the melody with beautiful basses and keeping rhythm for the orchestra. The main function of this instrument is to perform folk songs, either as a solo instrument or as an accompaniment to other instruments. The *Tam pre a po* is typically used in daily entertainment but is not used in funerals.

In conclusion, this study confirms that the folk instruments mentioned above are indigenous to the Pa Ko people and represent the cultural and musical identity of this group. Through in-depth interviews investigating the relationship between these instruments and the cultural life, beliefs, and folk religion of the Pa Ko people, the author has confirmed that these instruments are unique to the Pa Ko. It should be noted that the Pa Ko people also borrow and use some musical instruments from the Ta Oi and Ka tu people, such as *A bel* (which has a similar structure to the Ka Tu *A bel*), the *khen*, and the bell (which is used to call compatriots to a place, similar to a tarpaulin, made of aluminum) and other vibrating musical instruments. However, the Pa Ko people, especially the old artisans, have confirmed that these instruments were acquired from other ethnic groups but have become an influential part of their musical culture.

Unlike the Pa Ko, the Ta Oi have a different string instrument system. The first instrument in this category is the *Am poeh*, a plucked instrument played by using the fingers to pluck the strings. Through an in-depth interview with an instrument maker, we have gathered the following information about its structure: The body is crafted from oval wood, with a wall height of approximately 6 cm. The neck spans around 25 cm and features five attached keys. Two stringing shafts are affixed to the top of the body/neck. The instrument is equipped with two strings, each tuned to a distance of 5. Typically played by men, the *Am poeh* serves as a solo instrument and is occasionally used to accompany folk songs.

In addition to the *Am poeh*, the trumpet is another noteworthy instrument, which is a plucked branch instrument. The back of the instrument is crafted from a crown, approximately 27 cm long, holding two tips with a diameter of about 9 cm. The strings are created by stripping off the kidney part of the tubular body and elevating it using three short bamboo pieces. During performances, a small piece of wood, roughly 20 cm long and 2 cm in diameter, is used as a sounding awl. At times, performers also use their fingers to pluck the instrument. The unique sound of the trumpet emanates from the resonance between the strings and the body of the pipe. This musical instrument serves the purpose of accompanying certain folk songs of the Ta Oi people, primarily performed solo during village festivals and cultural activities.

The Ta Oi artisans utilize readily available materials found in the village and forest to craft their musical instruments, enabling them to express their emotions towards nature and convey their sense of community responsibility and the desire for a fulfilling life. They work and create with genuine passion, driven by their love for the art itself rather than monetary or material gains. However, it saddens to acknowledge that many of the artists I have encountered here lead difficult lives and struggle with poverty. One artisan of the *Am poeh* shared: “Sometimes when I play alone, or when I perform for friends, I feel very happy. I have never received any money from anyone. I do it because I love music.”

## Discussion

Every culture exhibits its own identity, which is prominently manifested in folk and traditional music. Music that represents identity and communicates people's emotions serves as a symbol of society (Shepherd and Wicke 1997; Woma 2012; Folkestad 2002). Music is also an essential element in resisting the assimilation of ethnic cultures (To Ngoc Thanh 1981). At the same time, folk music has functions that other music genres cannot replace (To Ngoc Thanh 2007).

Through research and fieldwork, the author confirmed that the folk music of the Pa Ko and Ta Oi people have distinct characteristics. This uniqueness is reflected not only in the features and names of some folk songs and musical instruments but also in their use in religious and belief-based rituals.

Although both ethnic groups use musical instruments in many similar cultural and religious contexts, the musical characteristics, instrument structures, and usage concepts differ between them. The musical cultural identities of these two ethnic groups are distinct. This underscores the significant distinction between the Pa Ko and Ta Oi peoples as separate ethnic groups, rather than one unified group.

Based on field research on the folk music of the Pa Ko people in Thua Thien Hue, it is evident that they have a unique musical culture that is distinct to their ethnic identity. This is strongly supported by folk legends surrounding specific musical instruments belonging to each ethnic group, with different legends for each group (Minh Phuong 2000: 83-94). In-depth interviews with artisans 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 16, and 18 revealed that the songs "Father Level" and "Car loi" are used by Ta Oi and Ka Tu people but are identified by the Pa Ko as their typical folk songs. This is a crucial factor in evaluating ethnicity and ethnic origin, as folk music is an essential element of traditional culture that is produced and refined within a specific culture. Therefore, the study of folk music is a valuable source of scientific information for determining whether an ethnic group has a shared blood relation and origin with another group or not.

In the author's view, to accurately distinguish the unique characteristics of a folk music culture of an ethnic group, it is necessary to conduct a detailed study on the role of artisans and the community, who are the creators of traditional music systems. Discussions with artisans, as discussed above, demonstrate that they can easily distinguish their ethnic group's folk songs from those of other ethnic groups. The musical aesthetic and community psychology are reflected in each folk song and musical instrument, as well as in the thinking, habits, and perception of artisans and the communities of each ethnic group. Drawing erroneous conclusions that some folk songs or instruments are similar and that the folk music is of one origin is a subjective assumption. Researcher 2 explains that recognizing an element of folk music of a particular ethnic group requires a serious discussion with the artist, as only they can describe the content, meaning, and usage of each musical instrument and song, and how it reflects their mood, consciousness, and desires about life that create their own identity. Fieldwork also revealed that a folk song of an ethnic group that is not the creative subject is vastly different because of language differences. Even though the musical tone may be similar, the rhythm and music are significantly distinct. Therefore, only artisans and the community, from the process of creating, practicing, and maintaining their folk music, can accurately distinguish the folk music's cultural identity of their people.

Every culture has its unique identity, which is not only evident in material cultural elements like clothing and housing, but also in intangible culture. In addition to the rituals, beliefs, and religions of the Pa Ko and Ta Oi ethnic groups, folk dances, along with folk music, require detailed study. The author's observations show that these dances, although closely related to the folk music of these ethnic groups, possess unique linguistic and artistic elements. The footstep movements, hand movement techniques, and body language are unique legacies that need professional dance researchers to decipher their features.

Manager 1 further emphasized that the folk dances of the Pa Ko people are distinct from those of the Ta Oi people, not only in dance language, but also in the concept of using dances in cultural activities and religious rituals. Since folk music and dance are interrelated, and the folk music and dance of each ethnic group have their own identities, folk dances will exhibit their unique characteristics associated with the folk music of each ethnic group. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth study on the folk dances of the Pa Ko and Ta Oi people, particularly in future works.

In conclusion, traditional music, particularly folk music, is a vital factor in confirming a culture and studying the identity of a particular ethnic group. Determining a specific ethnic name also requires a comprehensive and serious examination of cultural factors, including folk music and related local documents. The importance of this lesson can be observed in the Eastern Renaissance of Uzbekistan, where the local documents were not fully studied. According to Abdumutalibovich and

Maftuna (2022), when discussing the Renaissance in Central Asia, it must be considered a national Renaissance based on an ancient culture that was more advanced and affluent than the Renaissance influenced by foreign cultures and Islamic beliefs that emerged between the 9-12th centuries (Abdumutalibovich and Maftuna 2022:170-174).

Preserving the cultural identity of ethnic music involves its practice, maintenance, and development in future generations. In Thua Thien-Hue province, as well as most provinces and cities in Vietnam, professional training schools for the arts, including music, dance, and theater, have been established. Hue Academy of Music and Thua Thien-Hue Intermediate School of Culture and Arts are two significant art schools in this province that focus on training and nurturing artistic talents for Thua Thien Hue province and the central region of Vietnam. Both schools have made the conservation and promotion of the folk music heritage and traditions of the ethnic groups in Thua Thien Hue province a core objective in their training goals. The folk music of the Pa Ko and Ta Oi people have been included in the training program of these two art schools. The author argues that this is the best approach to help the Pa Ko and Ta Oi people realize the crucial value of their traditional music, promoting and creating musical works influenced by their folk music that is suitable for the contemporary social context. Young artisans, with their knowledge and modern music theory, can better identify the musical cultural identity of their nation and, in turn, preserve and develop their own music color. Preserving the original form of Pa Ko folk music in all forms and agreeing to develop it into modern songs should be done simultaneously. Each genre of music has its unique place and value in a culture and in a particular historical period. It is not advisable to assume that it does not fit the contemporary cultural context, but neither should we deny its place and significance as a cultural product distilled from a particular culture. This is the best way to preserve and promote the folk music of each ethnic group and the entire Vietnamese traditional music culture.

In addition, at present, there are differing opinions on the preservation and promotion of traditional folk music. Some believe that it is necessary to develop traditional music to suit contemporary cultural life. Sinmida Tasaki asserts that traditional music cannot resist change forever and can transform from one form to another. For example, traditional musical activities among the ethnic minorities of Borneo show signs of change, especially due to limited socio-political possibilities (Sinmida 2004). However, according to the author, while modernizing the folk music genres of each ethnic community, it is also essential to implement static conservation by preserving intact traditional music forms and genres. This entails conducting research, recording, and storing them in national data warehouses, specialized academies, and universities. Based on the research results, these folk music genres can be digitized using modern technologies like 3D, 360, and slow motion. This approach will help preserve the original values of the genre. Moreover, these technologies will assist composers who wish to exploit and develop the Pa Ko folk music genre to prevent creating music products that do not match its characteristics and soul. This approach will avoid hybridization and the loss of transmission.

## **Conclusion**

Folk music and tradition are significant factors in determining the cultural identity of each ethnic group. The Pa Ko people in Thua Thien-Hue province have their musical culture with unique characteristics that have withstood the test of time. Their folk music is present, developing, and closely associated with their cultural activities, customs, and beliefs.

From the moment a child is born until they pass on, Pa Ko folk music is associated with the human life cycle. It performs the function of lulling children to sleep, conveying emotional and moral educational content for Pa Ko children from birth. Moreover, their folk music is a means for Pa Ko boys and girls to express their love for each other. During festivals or weddings, it also serves as a means for the elderly to educate the younger generation on being human, loving their grandparents, parents, and being patriotic.

The function of religion and belief is another aspect of Pa Ko folk music. It is the "string" linking people with their gods. In times of mourning, music is a means for people to express the pain of losing a loved one or neighbor. During village festivals and traditional religious ceremonies, the village elder or village head also uses prayerful music to convey requests to the gods, praying for good luck and dispelling bad things.

Each melody of the Pa Ko folk songs, gongs, flutes, and other musical instruments serve a specific function. Their music expresses the soul and cultural nuances of the Pa Ko people through the system of melodies, scales, and rhythms in the folk songs of *Cha Chap*, *Amieng*, *Xieng*, and their musical instrument system. The traditional folk music of the Pa Ko people in Thua Thien Hue has been molded and developed by their ancestors, passed down from generation to generation. It is an integral part of their community life, contributing to the Pa Ko people's unique characteristics and identity compared to other ethnic groups in the area.

Through the analysis and comparison of their musical culture, it can be initially confirmed that the Pa Ko people have their cultural identity, both tangible and intangible. Besides folk music culture, their identity is also evident in elements such as costumes, houses, languages, folklore, folk dances, and more. These aspects of their traditional culture require in-depth research to fully understand the relationship between music, dance, and cultural activities of the Pa Ko people.

Currently, the Pa Ko people in Thua Thien-Hue province seek recognition as an independent nation, not dependent on the Ta Oi people like other ethnic groups. This study contributed to the source material supporting the identification of their national cultural identity and recognition of their own ethnic name.

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## Interviewees

### *Artisans and Related Persons of the Pa Ko People*

1. Vo To, 105 years old, A Nam village, Hong Van commune
2. Quynh Quyen, 75 years old, A Nam village, Hong Van commune
3. Quynh La, 70 years old, A Nam village, Hong Van commune
4. Quynh Sao, 70 years old, A Nam village
5. Cu Doi, 35 years old
6. Quynh Tin, 80 years old, Ca Cu village, Hong Van commune
7. Quynh Chien, 80 years old, Ca Cu village, Hong Van commune
8. Cu La, Ker village, 70 years old, Hong Van commune
9. Ho Van Hanh, 80 years old, An Trieng village, Trung Son commune, A Luoi district
10. Quynh Ngoan, 85 years old, An Trieng village, Trung Son commune

11. Ho Cu Rai, 85 years old, A Deng village, Trung Son commune
12. Quynh Thoan, 55 years old, A Deng village, Trung Son commune
13. Ho Van Im, 50 years old, Dut village, Trung Son commune
14. Le Van Tuong, 45 years old, An Trieng village, Trung Son commune
15. Ho Van Bong, 40 years old, A Deng village, Trung Son commune
16. Ho Van Cam, 80 years old, Tam Mu village, Quang Nham commune
17. Quynh Phien, 90 years old, A Luoi Town
18. Can Phien, 80 years old, A Luoi Town
19. Ho Van Thuc, 80 years old, A Luoi Town
20. Quynh Thuy, 80 years old, Ra Loc village, Hong Bac commune
21. Pe Ke Do, 48 years old, Ra Loc village, Hong Bac commune
22. Pe Ke Thieng, 48 years old, Prieng village, Quang Nham commune
23. Ho Van Buong, 45 years old, Tang Hoi village, Hong Bac commune
24. Ho Van Bay, 35 years old, Ra Loc, Hong Bac commune
25. Ho Van Tum, 47 years old, Ra Loc village, Hong Bac commune

***Cultural Officers and Experts on the Pa Ko People***

26. Le Thi Them, 53 years old, Head of the Culture and Information Department of A Luoi district
27. Ho Thi Tu, 54 years old, NNUT, Deputy Head of Culture and Information Department of A Luoi district
28. Le Van Toan, 69 years old, Associate Professor, PhD, Vietnamese Institute for Musicology

***Artisans and Related Persons of the Ta Oi People***

29. Le Van Trinh, 80 years old, Ca Vin village, Lam Dot commune
30. Le Thi Hieu, 41 years old, A Roh village, Lam Dot commune
31. Ra Pat Ngoc Ha, 25 years old, A Dot village, Lam Dot commune
32. Ho Van Minh, 65 years old, A Ka village, A Roang commune
33. Tran Thi Phuong, 61 years old, Pâr Nghi village, A Ngo commune