

**APPLYING METHOD OF DETERMINING CULTURAL ELEMENTS AND MIRROR
METHOD IN STATISTICS AND DECODE PLACE-NAME
(A case study in the Southwestern region, Vietnam)**

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ABSTRACT

Place-name is a complex research object because it contains the cultural, historical, linguistic and natural conditions of the land. Therefore, when approaching a thousands of place-names in a region, it is very difficult for researchers to classify and decode the origin of the place-names. The history of studying Vietnamese place-names show that, so far, the decryption of place-names by decoding each individual place-name, researchers have not paid attention to the relationship of place-names in a region. Thus, the study of place-names is quite sporadic, the study of place-names is not focusable and does not have a scientific basis to decode a series of place-names. By studying place-names of the Southwestern region, we have discovered method of determining elements of culture and method of mirroring in statistics and decode effectively place-names. As a result, we have classified and decoded the place-names systematically and scientifically, contributing to solving some practical and theoretical problems in researching place-names.

Key Words: Research methods; method of determining cultural elements; method of mirror; place-names of Southwestern region, Vietnam; place-names from cultural perspective.

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, Vietnam toponymy is mainly examined by linguists. They often use methods of statistics, comparison, collation, fieldworks and survey method for mapping to decode place-names from a language perspective. Most of methods are used being general methods, there are no particular research methods of place-names. With thousands of place-names in a land area, linguists often use the method of statistical place-names by common elements to gradually sort the places. This trend is applied by Le Trung Hoa, Tu Thu Mai, Nguyen Kien Truong and so on. Typically, Le Trung Hoa argues that the common elements are words that appear many times in many place-names, they stay at first position and any repetitive phenomena can be called as common elements. Nguyen Kien Truong and Tu Thu Mai consider the common elements as common nouns that appear frequently. We found that, basically, scientists seek to classify and statistics of place-names by nomenclatures. For example: When statistics of place-names of Ben Tre province, researchers have classified place-names such as Cau Duc canal, Chau Hoa canal, Xeo Mon canal, Long Ong canal, Ong Lam canal, Du Nang canal, etc into a group of common elements “canal”; classified place-names such as Chet Say brigde, Ham Luong brigde, Ben Tre brigde, Cai Coi brigde, Cai Moi brigde, Hai Sang brigde, Cong Da brigde, Bung Lon brigde, etc into a group of common elements “brigde”; classified place-names such as Tu Dien market, An Hoa Tay market, Xep market, Cau Ba Mu market, etc into a group of common elements “market”; classified place-names such as Nho river, Con Doi river, Ba Lai river, Tien river, Cho river, Ben Ro river, Ben Tre river, etc into a group of common elements “river”.

However, with the statistics and classification as mentioned above, the decryption of place-names has also encountered some difficulties. In fact, the nomenclature such as provinces, townships, communes, cities, wards, hamlets, camps, wharves, ferries, carports, ports, bridges, markets, parks, drains, barrages, highways, roads, grounds, *bàu, bờ, búng, bung, fields, cồn, islands, doi, đìa, giồng, gò, hóc, lakes, khém, canals, lùm, lung, irrigation canals, ngọn, rạch, forests, rivers, tất, rivulet mouths, bays, xẻo, regions, three-way crossroads, intersections, areas, hamlets, ect.*, which clearly show their meaning, they do not mean hidden, not metaphoricals and do not apply any technique. For example, place-names of rivers, canals and small irrigation canals which their own mean waterways; markets, bridges, culverts and barrages which their own mean construction works with the corresponding functions. Therefore, when researchers classify place-names into nomenclatures so as to decode them in terms of language structure, their meaning or may refer to the frequency of repetition of characteristics associated with place-names. However, this is not the most optimal method of classification to provide a scientific basis for decoding the origin and meaning of place-names. From the research gaps, we have found method of determining cultural elements as a scientific basis to address the need of decoding a large number of place-names. And then, we use method of mirror to best assist the process of decoding place-names. We have applied the case study place name of the Southwestern region within the scope of this article (13 provinces/cities).

2. RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, we utilize some theoretical research methods combined with the following practical research methods: methods of meta-analytical, methods of classification and systematics, field survey method.

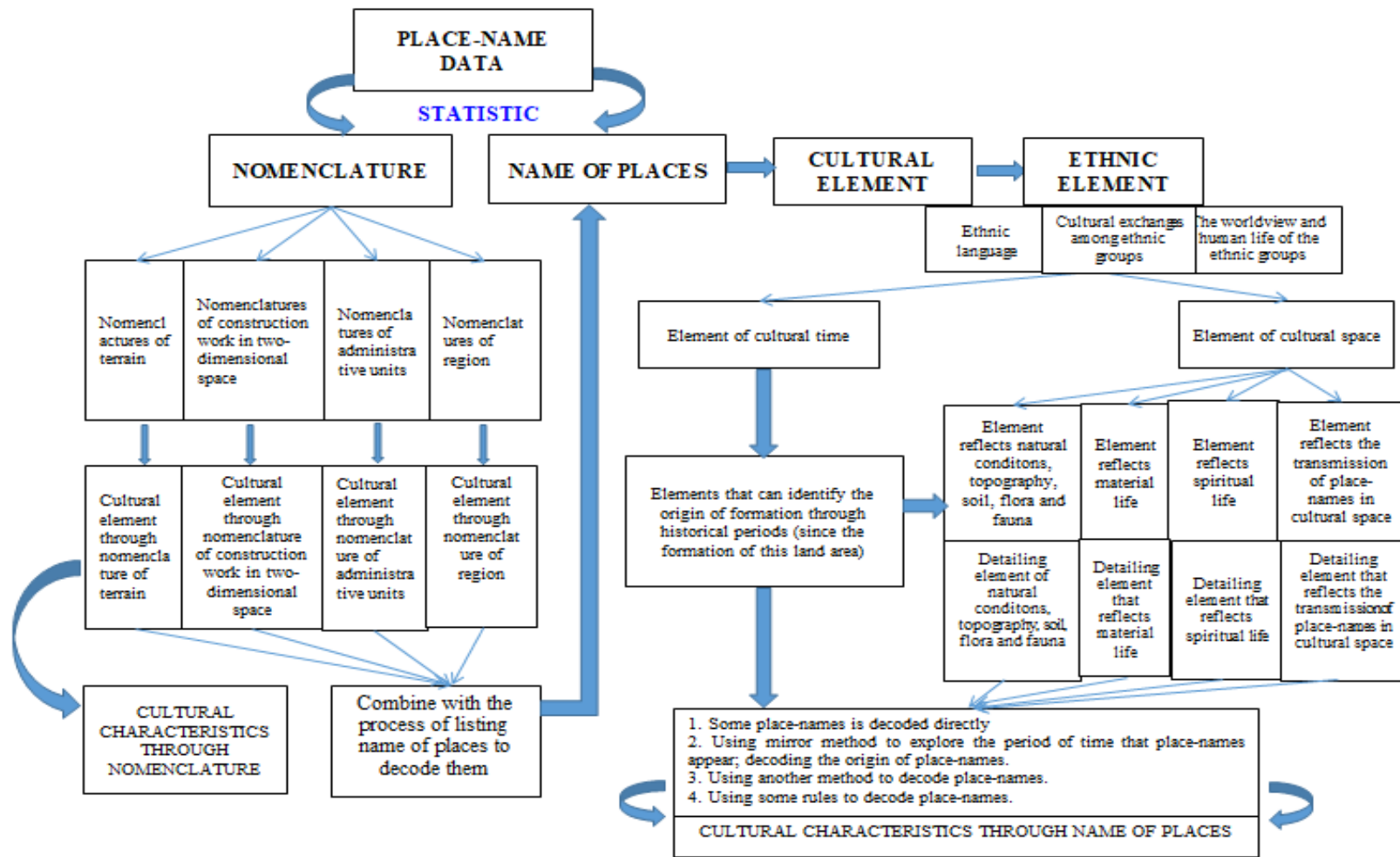
3. FINDINGS

3.1. Method of determining cultural elements is the first step in the process of decoding place-names

By studying place-names of the Southwestern region of Vietnam from cultural perspective, we have discovered method of determining elements of culture in listing place-names. This method solves two tasks that is statistics and orientation for researchers to arrange database to decode place-names. Normally, a place-name consists of two parts: nomenclature and its name. If previous scientists used method of statistics place-names by the common elements associated with nomenclature, then with the method of determining cultural elements, we have listed place-names by both nomenclature and name of places associated with elements of culture. Specifically, it will be divided into two steps: Step 1: Listing nomenclature associated with place-names to identify cultural elements through the nomenclature; Step 2: Listing names of places by cultural elements as a premise to decode their names.

With these two steps, the researcher will create two co-existence statistical tables of place-names. The researcher uses method of determining cultural elements and then considers the cultural elements as a basic unit to explore place-names of a land area step by step, creating a premise that guides the process of decoding place-names comes from the local culture and theories of cultural studies. This is a deep approach to the cultural, historical and social life issues of the local people, making place-names decoding becomes much easier and simpler than traditional statistical methods. It has both statistics and access to the nature of place-names and initial decoding place-names systematically.

Diagram of the process of using method of determining cultural elements and method of mirroring in statistics and decode place-names:



3.1.1. Statistics by nomenclature to identify cultural elements governing place-names

In order to successfully complete the identification of place-name groups by name, we first define the connotation of place-names. Based on the definition of United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Name, "Place-name as a name applied to a feature on Earth. In general, the place-name is a proper name (a specific word, a combination of word, or expression) used consistently in language to refer to a particular place, feature or area having a recognizable identity on the surface of the Earth named feature include: 1. Populated places (for example, cities, towns, villages); 2. Civil divisions (for example, states, cantons, districts, boroughs); 3. Natural features (for example, streams, mountains, capes, lakes, seas); 4. Constructed features (for example, dams, airports, highways); 5. Unbounded places or areas that have specific local (often religious) meaning (for example, grazing lands, fishing areas, sacred areas) (United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Name, 2006). To further clarify the conceptual category, we continue to approach Le Trung Hoa's definition, considers "place-names as words or phrases, which are used to name the natural topography, administrative units, territories and constructions in two-dimensional space" to distinguish the criteria of place-name category. Like previous scientists, we have listed place-names by nomenclature. However, unlike linguists, we have listed and outlined the cultural elements expressed by nomenclature. The identification of cultural elements corresponding to nomenclature contributes to finding out the rules of the cultural region that govern the way of naming places; decoding the people's customs and habits in naming places through decoding nomenclature and percentage statistics by nomenclature group of the researcher. For example, by studying place-names of 13 provinces in the Southwestern region, we found that place-name with nomenclature such as rivers, canals, ponds, lakes and so on accounted for more than 50%, corresponding to the cultural element of river. This shows the Southwestern region has outstanding cultural features of the river.

3.1.2. Determining cultural elements by name of places

This operation will systematize and classify place-names governed by cultural elements of the locality/land area. This is a method of statistics and support for the researcher to determine the origin of place-names, in some cases, many place-names are directly decoded their origin which the researcher does not need to learn more corresponding data. Specifically, examining place-names in provinces/cities of the Southwestern region such as An Giang, Bac Lieu, Ben Tre, Ca Mau, Can Tho, Dong Thap, Long An, Kien Giang, Hau Giang, Soc Trang, Tien Giang, Tra Vinh, Vinh Long, the researcher usually collects about 5-6 thousand place-names per locality (we do not mention place-names are being handed down in folk, place-names are aqueducts, dams and small canals have not been recorded their names in villages of many rural areas in the Southwestern region). Before decoding place-names, the researcher uses the method of determining elements by the following structure.

3.1.2.1. Determining the cultural subject of the land area

- Determining cultural elements of language that the subject uses

Determining cultural elements of language plays a very important role in the statistics and decoding place-names. The researcher's duty is to determine how many ethnic groups living in the area where they are studying, hence determining the ethnic languages govern the way of naming places. It can be concluded that how many ethnic languages are there in a land area, so there will be many types of languages respectively. This is the method helps researchers to understand the

overall picture of a land area with which languages will be in. For the Southwestern region, in the history, the ethnic groups of Vietnamese-Chinese-Khmer-Cham reclaimed this land together. For more than 300 years, the ethnic groups lived in harmony with each other in the Southwestern region. With such characteristics, the researcher will identify and determine language origin of place-names in the Southwestern region is mainly influenced by the linguistic characteristics of four ethnic groups: Vietnamese-Chinese-Khmer-Cham. For example, place-names such as Sóc Mới hamlet, Cà Tum hamlet (Tra Vinh province), Cà Răng canal (Soc Trang province), Càn Giuộc district (Long An province), Mặ Cầ Đung canal, Ta Mol mountain (An Giang province) will be divided into group of place-names that express language characteristics of the Khmer in the Southwestern region.

- Determining element of cultural exchanges among ethnic groups

The determination of this cultural element will help the researcher to identify place-names with the expression of language interference and place-names with foreign language. For the Southwestern people, their cultural exchange process takes place in harmony, solidarity and mutual affection. During the process of living, the cultural assets of the ethnic groups became common assets “Tet festival of Khmer, pagoda festival, dù kê singing “bringing water” attracting Vietnamese people, “Xà rồng is the Vietnamese people’s favorite thing” [Son Nam, ppg. 52]. Therefore, the language expresses through place-names also has a mixture and interference. Based on this, the researcher will categorize complex place-names associated with ethnic languages of Vietnamese-Chinese, Vietnamese-Khmer, Vietnamese-Cham. For example, Chệt Niêu street place-name (Bac Lieu province) reflects the Vietnamese-Chinese name. Chệt is the way to call Minh Huong Chinese (明香 in the Southwestern region; Chiềc canal, Lung Đồng hamlet, Lung Đồng aqueduct, Sóc Rừng canal (Vinh Long province); Sóc Chuối hamlet, Sóc Xoài hamlet (Tra Vinh Province) and Cao Mên bridge (Dong Thap province) are in both Khmer and Vietnamese. In terms of exogenous factors, the ethnic groups living in the Southwestern region are also influenced by the process of cultural exchange between Vietnam and China, Vietnam and France in the modern period. Therefore, the researchers also need to identify place-name groups associated with these cultural elements. For example, place-names associated with the word “Xáng” such as Xáng Búng Tàu canal, Xáng Cái Côn canal, Xáng Cái Trâm canal, Xáng Chìm canal (Soc Trang province) and Xáng Thôi lake (Can Tho city) are place-names which express the characteristics of communicating with French language. Because the original French of word “xáng” means Chaland, during the period of Vietnamese-French cultural exchange, Chaland is called sà-lan (barge) by the people. Normally, people often put a digger and dredge of mud on the barge, so in the people, kinh Xáng means it is dug by xáng (Le Trung Hoa, 2010, p. 149). During this period, wherever the canal was dug by barge, the people named it kinh Xáng or Xáng canal. The determination of this original cultural elements will help the researcher to continue to trace the origin of place-names associated with word Xáng, for example, Xáng Chìm canal where the barge was sunk into the canal and so on.

- Determining cultural elements related to the worldview and human life of the ethnic groups

Using cultural elements related to the worldview and human life of the ethnic group, the researcher will determine the views of life, behavioral culture, ethnic culture or ethnicity. To identify place-names associated with this characteristics, researchers must survey the history of reclaiming in the Southwestern region. The history of breaking fresh ground in the Southwestern region of Vietnam

has shown that, the Central and the North emigrants to the South to break fresh ground with other ethnic peoples had to spend much effort to clear waste land and forests, they did not count on their lives to confront wild elephants, tigers, crocodiles. With fragile life and too much risk, so the values of human culture and virtue are highlighted in this period. Love among spouse, friends, neighbors is always referred in the people's daily life. Thenceforth, researchers could collect and listing place-names associated with cultural elements related to the worldview and human life. Of course, the cultural elements that reflect the human life and the worldview of ethnic group, the researcher could classify more specific cultural elements associated with place-names. For example, cultural elements express the desire to live peacefully, stably, harmonize and the development of new land area of the Southwestern region such as Yên Bình hamlet, Yên Lợi hamlet, Yên Quý hamlet (Kien Giang province); Định An hamlet, Định Bình hamlet, Đại An bridge (Tra Vinh province), Vĩnh An hamlet, Vĩnh Hội hamlet, Vĩnh Phú hamlet, Vĩnh Hưng hamlet and Vĩnh Phát hamlet (An Giang), Mỹ Đức hamlet, Mỹ Long hamlet, Mỹ Phước hamlet (Dong Thap province), An Lạc hamlet (Tien Giang province). The cultural elements express perspectives on simple living and non-sophisticated personality of the Southwestern people are expressed through place-names with simple names, sometimes "freedom" and "humorousness". For example, Chắc Cà Dao bridge (means a solitary place, An Giang province), Chuồng Chó crossroad (dog cages, Ben Tre province), Đìa Thúi bung (the bung which is near the pond with rotten water, Vinh Long province), Canh Dong Cho Ngap (a large field that dogs have to run from the morning to night they are tired and sleepy, Vinh Long province), etc. Researchers also need to pay attention to statistics of place-names that are relevant to the use of language of cultural subjects. For example, using purely Vietnamese, Chinese-Vietnamese and dialect to name places. In addition, place-names related to the name of famous people – those who are land owners should also be listed in this group of cultural elements.

3.1.2.2. Determining cultural elements associated with cultural space

- Determining cultural elements of nature

The Southwestern or also known as the Mekong Delta has a natural area of 39,734 km² with the tropical monsoon climate near the equator, hot and humid. Every year, there are 2 seasons of rainy and sunny. Except An Giang, Kien Giang province, the remaining provinces are flat lands with many rivers and canals (due to natural terrain and made by people), long coast (accounting for 23% of total coastal area nationwide), weak soil, many places flooded, acid sulphate and salt intrusion. Land resources are suitable for agricultural production. The flora and fauna are quite rich. Based on this characteristic, we have discovered the basic cultural elements associated with the natural characteristics of the land area, we have classified group place-names into the following cultural elements: Place-names reflect natural conditions, topography and soil characteristics including places group reflecting river terrain (this type includes nomenclature such as rivers, canals, islands, islets): Tiền river, Xẻo Tre canal, Mười Xinh canal, An Bình canal (Đồng Tháp province), Thốt Nốt river, Rích canal, Lò Gạch rivulet, Hậu river (Can Tho city), Xáng Hậu canal, Bốn Thước canal, Nước Đục river (Hậu Giang province), Thới Sơn islet, Ngũ Hiệp islet (Tien Giang province). Place-names reflecting mountainous terrain such as Núi Nhỏ bridge, Ba Thê mountain, Trọi mountain, Bà Đắc and Ông Két mountain (An Giang province); Place-names reflecting sea terrain such as Ba Động (Tra Vinh), Tân Thành (Tien Giang), Mũi Nai (Kien Giang) and Khai Long sea (Ca Mau). Place-names reflecting the knowledge of soil such as Cát Nhỏ dam, Cát dam, Gò Cát, Đất Sét canal (Vinh Long province) leading to a group of places reflecting

experience in the river such as Lộ Đình Nước Vậ, Nước Vậ bridge, Bình Thuỷ bridge (Can Tho). Place-names display location such as Góc Ngoài canal (Ca Mau), Kinh Giữa road, Cái Cùng river (Bac Lieu). Place-names of dimension such as Láng Dài canal (Ca Mau province), Bung Lón bridge (Ben Tre), Giồng Nhỏ canal (Can Tho city). Place-names display forms or shapes such as Cỏ Hủ canal (An Giang), Ruột Ngựa canal (Vinh Long); reflecting the nature and characteristics of place-names such as Kênh Cũ canal (Long An), Xóm Mới hamlet, Chợ Lách Cũ bridge, Chợ Lách Mới bridge (Bến Tre), Bàu Giai Cạn canal, Bàu Giai Sâu canal (Kien Giang), Cống Trắng road, Sóc Mồ Côi Cũ road (Sóc Trăng), Cầu Sập street (Bạc Liêu province). In addition to place-names associated with the natural conditions, topography and soil characteristics as mentioned above, researchers need to identify the local flora-fauna associated with geographical groups such as places associated with flora including Cái Sắn river (using cassava's name), Thốt Nốt river (using palmyra's name), Xẻo Tre bridge (using bamboo's name), Cây Sung bridge (using fig's name), Bần canal (using sonneratia's name), Rạch Chuối bridge (using banana's name) in Cần Thơ city; Giồng Me road (using the name of tamarindus indica, Chà Là bridge (using the name of phoenix dactylifera), Cái Keo hamlet (using acacia's name), Giồng Nhãn road (using the name of longan) and Bụi Dừa bridge (using coconut's name) in Bac Lieu province; Cây Gáo canal (using the name of nauclea), Cây Còng canal (using the name of samanea saman) and So Đũa canal (using the name of Sesbania grandiflora Pers) in An Giang province; Cà Dăm canal (using the name of Anogeissus Acuminata), Cầu Dừa hamlet (using coconut's name), Gò Tre hamlet (using bamboo's name) in Kiên Giang province; Mù U canal (using the name of calophyllum inophyllum), Mương Điều canal (using the name of anacardium occidentale L) and Chanh canal (using the name of lemon tree) in Tiền Giang province. The fauna is mainly fishes living in rivers, canals; reptiles and domestic animals in rural areas of the Southwestern region. For example, Bò Ót bridge (cow) in Cần Thơ city, Rạch Rắn bridge (snake) in Bạc Liêu province, Mương Trâu bridge (buffalo) in An Giang province, Cá Chốt canal (cá chột), Cái Tôm canal (shrimp) in Đồng Tháp province.

- Determining cultural elements that reflect spiritual cultural life

Studying culture of the Southwestern region, we found that this is a place with a unified culture in diversity. The people have a rich and unique cultural and spiritual life. In terms of beliefs, the ethnic groups have the belief of worshipping Bà Chúa Xứ (Regional Goddess/Lady of the Land), Bà Thuỷ (River Goddess), thờ miếu (worshipping sacred objects and dead). The ethnic Chinese worship Ngọc Hoàng (Jade Emperor), the Khmer ethnic group worships Neak Tà. Regarding religion, Khmer people follow the original Buddhism or Theravada Buddhism; many local Buddhists were born in Southern such as Bửu Sơn Kỳ Hương, Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa, Hoà Hảo Buddhism, Du Tăng Khất Sĩ or Cao Đài religion was born in the 20th century on the basis of synthesizing many types of religions and beliefs. Đạo Ngòi, Đạo Dừa and Đạo Nấm have strongly influenced the people's cultural life. Besides Mahayana Buddhism has strongly flourished in many provinces/cities, major religions such as Catholicism and Protestantism have prevailed in the cultural life. Outstanding cultural activities of Southern amateur music. Culture of communication has its own characteristics. After outlining manifestations of the cultural and spiritual elements as mentioned above, researchers could collect place-names associated with such cultural elements. Examples include: Place-names reflect the local people's religious-belief life such as Rạch Miếu bridge, Chùa aqueduct (Can Tho city); Chùa Phật hamlet (Bac Lieu province), Đạo Nấm bridge (Dong Thap province), Nhà Thờ bridge (Ben Tre province), Ông Cha canal (Tien Giang province), Bến Chùa river and Ông Tà river (Tra Vinh province); Place-names reflect the local people's

cultural and artistic life such as Bà Bàu canal implies someone loves cái lương has organized the troupe to serve local people (Vinh Long province); Cao Văn Lầu street was named after the name of the deceased musician Cao Văn Lầu (Bac Lieu province); Place-names reflect daily life such as occupation, call nicknames humorously such as Mười Điếc bridge (named after the 10th-deaf man), Tám Quấn bridge (named after the 8th man with curly hair), Tám Nháy canal (named after the 8th person with a small body like con nháy) in Vinh Long province.

- Determining cultural elements that reflect material cultural life

In general, the material life of the Southwestern people is very rich. In this sub-category, researchers could mention elements of culture associated with local economy and production activities, labor tools, raw materials or other material cultural activities. Specifically, we suggest place-names in the Southwestern region as follows: Place-names reflect the local economy and production including Lò Heo aqueduct (Can Tho city), Rẫy village, Lò Gạch street (Bac Lieu), Lò Rèn canal (Hau Giang), Đường Cây canal (Ca Mau); Place-names reflect means, labor tools and items for daily life such as Đường Củi canal (Ca Mau), Đường Củi Lớn bridge, Đường Củi Nhỏ bridge (Tien Giang), Đường Xuồng canal (Soc Trang), Đường Xuồng canal (Ca Mau); Place-names reflect materials and raw materials such as Cống Đá street (Bac Lieu), Đá dam (Dong Thap), Đúc Cây Điệp bridge (Vinh Long province), Cầu Ván canal (Tien Giang province).

- Determining cultural elements being handed down in the cultural space

Normally, administrative places named by the state authorities being handed down in daily life but still retain their original names. Because this type of administrative places has been put down in writing from the beginning. For administrative place-names originating from folk place-names (including folk place-names), before being recognized by the authorities on administrative documents, these places are transmitted by word of mouth among the people. During transmission, some place-names are influenced by the way of using vocabulary and pronunciation of the local people, so they may be erroneous compared to the original names. Therefore, researchers should pay attention to list place-names with inaccurate and obscure vocabularies and draft explanatory options based on the most feasible cultural elements. For example, according to researcher Le Trung Hoa, (in Soc Trang province, the place-name Ksách which is in Khmer language is “cát” (sand), in the process of transmitting, this place-name has been Vietnameseized into Kế sách); due to the Southwestern people cannot distinguish [tr] from [ch], so they call Trầu canal, Bờ Tràm and Trao Tráng canal (Vinh Long) into Châu canal, Bờ Chàm and Chao Cháo canal and so on.

3.1.2.3. Determining elements of culture associated with cultural time

Based on the cultural process of the Southwestern region, we classify place-names associated with historical and cultural elements, specifically, in historical periods. Of course, when grouping place-names associated with historical periods of a land area, we use physical and spiritual cultural elements reflecting the cultural values of that period to illuminate the origin of place-names: Place-names reflect characteristics in the reclamation stage including place-names associated with the fight against elephants, tigers, crocodiles and so on. For example, place-names An Toàn village and An Nhơn crossroad (Vinh Long) are derived from the story of the midwife who helped the tigress, to express its gratitude, the tigress does not harm the villagers anymore; Ông Hồ canal (Tien Giang province); Place-names reflect the period of the Nguyen dynasty ruled including place-names display job title under the Nguyen dynasty. Place-names such as Khánh commune (Vinh

Long), Kinh commune (An Giang), Hời commune Dong Thap) and Xiêng commune (Soc Trang) which are place-names reflect job title of the village chief under the Nguyen dynasty; Nhà Việc hamlet (Bac Lieu), Nhà Việc canal (Hau Giang) and Nhà Việc crossroad (Ben Tre) are place-names reflect offices of feudal officials at commune/hamlet level. Tabooed place-names, for example, under the Nguyen Lords, abstaining from taboo name Đuan Quốc Công Nguyễn Hoàng, Huỳnh instead of Hoàng; Nhân Vương Nguyễn Phúc Lan, Nhơn instead of Nhân; Dũng Triết Vương Nguyễn Phúc Tần, Dũng instead of Dũng; Hoàng Nghĩa Vương Nguyễn Phúc Thái, Thới instead of Thái and abstaining from taboo name thuy, Ngãi instead of Nghĩa. Through this cultural elements, researchers could discover place-names dominated by themselves such as Phú Nhơn commune, Nhơn Bình commune, Thới Hoà commune, Thuận Thới commune, Tường Ngãi hamlet (Vinh Long); Place-names reflect the period of resistance war such as Bót Chín Càn market, Bót Số 6 river, Bót Cao Đài village (Vinh Long province); Kênh Dân Quân bridge (Bac Lieu province); Place-names after 1975 such as Giải Phóng canal, Giải Phóng street, Độc Lập street (Hau Giang), Thống Nhất canal (Đong Thap) and so on.

In addition to cultural elements as mentioned above, researchers could also identify other cultural elements dominating place-names, for example, numbering place-names, place-names with two or more nomenclatures, or sophisticated place-names. In sum, by listing and classifying place-names through cultural elements, researchers should pay attention to list repetitions and the percentage of expression of nomenclature and group of cultural elements. This supports greatly researchers to identify the rules of cultural region govern the way of naming places. In addition, when applying determining cultural elements method to classify place-name groups, researchers need to access general groups and then subgroups by rule: from the general to the private – from the big to the small. For example, in the cultural elements of nature, we group them into cultural elements associated with the flora, in this group, researchers then could continue to divide them into place-names associated with freshwater plants (fruit trees), alum water plants, herbal medicine plants, and rare and precious plants. Similarly, other place-name groups need to be classified into detailed subsections, because the more detail, the more specific base for researchers to decode the place-names. Moreover, the determination of cultural elements depends on the diversity and richness of the local culture. A place-name may relate to many cultural elements so we could list them in different groups, to easily distinguish, researchers need to take note to remember statistics in decoding place-names. Depending on characteristics of place-name of a country, region, province, city and the purpose of researchers, when using this method, we could determine place-names associated with elements of culture by the structure of cultural forms or the classification of culture in each area such as natural culture, social culture, philosophical culture, or the expression of culture such as components of linguistics production, religion and belief, as long as researchers could use elements of culture to identify their origin and the process of transmitting place-names of the whole land or region. Although there are great contributions to identifying and systematizing the origins of place-names, as well as outlining the whole face of place-names of a land area, we assume that the method of determining cultural elements by initial framework should also be considered as a hypothesis. Researchers should combine with other methods to support decoding place-names comprehensively. Specifically, the application of fieldwork method and mirror method to retrieve the scientific basis to decode them. In this study, we introduce mirror method to prove the logics and efficacy when combining method of determining cultural elements with mirror method in decoding place-names.

3.2. Applying mirror method to decode place-names

This method assists researchers to identify the origin of place-names through the reflection of dialectical relationship of the collected information and data. Normally, after listing place-names by common elements, linguists conduct fieldworks or analyze based on the language structure of place-names to decode them. However, the analysis and decoding place-names still do not highlight systematically the cultural and historical values of place-names, as well as the process of formation and transmission. By studying place-names in the Southwestern region from cultural perspective, we propose scientific bases of applying mirror method in decoding place-names as follows:

- Using statistical findings and classifying place-names by cultural elements as mentioned earlier as the initial basis for the process of decoding place-names.

- By the logical deductive approach, the researcher puts cultural elements on the axis of cultural space and cultural time to compare with the cultural subject. In order to do this, the researcher must master the historical and cultural process of a land area, the local people's spiritual and material cultural life, and relevant events. Based on place-names picture of the Southwestern region and the cultural development in history, the researcher should list all events associated with cultural elements based on the axis of cultural space and time. After listing, the researcher conducts mirror work which means tracing their detailed reflection. The origin of place-names will appear clearly and easily understand. This method helps researchers to decode place-names in the right direction, avoiding subjective explanation. In some cases, using mirror method along with method of determining elements of culture also supports researchers in determining the period of time that place-names appear.

For example, when decoding place-names related to Ngã Cạy street (An Giang province), Xẻo Bát bridge (Ben Tre), Cái Bát bridge, Tắc Ngã Cạy street and Cầu Cái Bát road (Dong Thap province) belong to element of living culture under the Nguyen dynasty. Putting place-names Bát - Cạy on the axis of time and cultural space to search for relevant data, we can see that these place-names imply the law on waterway traffic at that time. Bát - Cạy means right side and left side regulated by advisor Nghi Biểu who controls military post (Trinh Hoai Duc, 1999). Based on Gia Định Thành Thông Chí, we could guess Bát-Cạy traffic law was issued before 1820; the place-name Sóc Chòm Tre (Vinh Long province) is the cultural element expresses feature of the ethnic language and the cultural element of nature indicating plants. Putting Sóc Chòm Tre on the axis of time and cultural space, we can see, this is a place-name for traditional residence of the Khmer ethnic group equivalent to the Kinh's village. This village has a prominent bamboo hedge of the village so the local people call it Sóc Chòm Tre. In some cases, researcher may not be able to decode exactly the period of time that place-names appear. It is hard to identify their birth dates due to the nature of place-names is a folklore phenomenon, even there are not documents to be taken note at that time, the place-names do not have author. Therefore, if researchers want to determine the period of time that place-names appear, they must conduct fieldworks.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From initial outlines on method of determining cultural elements and mirror method in statistics and decode place-names as mentioned above. It can be said that these are two qualitative research methods and they are necessary for researchers' initial statistics to analyze data and identifying

scientific basis to decode and direct accurately place-names. After applying these two methods, the research findings will greatly assist researchers to continue applying fieldwork method to decode the rest place-names. It can be concluded that all research methods have certain contributions and supports. Therefore, although method of determining cultural elements and mirror method are the optimal methods, researchers should apply many perspectives and coordinate with some other supportive methods and applying some rules of naming places they then could solve all issues related to decode place-names. In order to effectively support, save time and effort for the process of statistics, classification and decoding place-names of a land area or region by the method of determining cultural elements, we could create a specialized software for studying. Creating this specialized software based on scientific basis of studying place-names as mentioned earlier is really necessary for research works on toponymy from language and cultural perspective. This will help researchers to overcome their impulsive act in classifying place-names, as well as some careless errors (if any), they could take note potential problems, connecting place-names that are dominated by many cultural elements in the statistical table, at the same time, the software can also give some logistic conclusions exactly. The software is not only a supportive tool for scientists but also supports the local authorities in managing place-names.

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