

## ALL-WOMEN RITUAL TEAMS IN FESTIVALS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

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**Abstract:** *For the last two decades, tế nữ quan (literally, offering rituals performed by female officiants) have appeared in village festivals across the Red River Delta. Why these groups and their activities have been able to change the structure of traditional festivals, which has remained inherently close? Why has the traditional society in Vietnamese rural villages, which has been harsh toward women, accepted these groups at the most important place – the communal house – which used to be exclusive to male members?*

*By joining teams of female ritual officiants and observing their activities at several traditional festivals in Đồng Kỵ village (Bắc Ninh), Quán Thánh Temple (Hà Nội) and other localities in the Red River Delta (in Thái Bình, Nam Định and Hà Nam provinces), the paper examines the history and development of teams of female ritual officiants as well as their role in traditional village festivals.*

*Based on this data, the paper also points out some changes in the culture of traditional villages, both in terms of ritual practice and the broader implication of acculturation and transformation of women's status in the current cultural environment.*

**Keywords:** *Tế nữ quan, festival, society, transformation, traditional.*