

UNDERSTANDING BINH DUONG PROVINCE'S IDENTITY THROUGH ITS PLACE NAMES

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Abstract

This paper explores the identity of Binh Duong Province through its place names, highlighting how these names reflect the region's historical, cultural, and economic transformation. Binh Duong, once a primarily agricultural province, has experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization; and how the evolution of place names mirrors these shifts, encapsulating themes of resilience, pride, and modernity in the province's identity. Applying the Toponymic Analysis method to analyze the etymology, origin, and meaning of 3,462 toponymic words consisting of 4,155 subtypes of place names discovered in 91 communes and wards of Binh Duong province, the findings reveal that place names in Binh Duong not only serve as geographical markers but also function as symbols of Binh Duong identity. The place names are often closely tied to the region's geography; reflect the rich cultural mix of its inhabitants; carry traces of colonial influence; have presented political and economic changes; serve to unify its population, invoking themes of strength, resilience, and local pride, equality. This research implies that toponymy is a powerful tool for understanding social and cultural identity of a place.

Keywords: Binh Duong province, cultural identity, place names, toponymy

1. Introduction

Toponymy, the study of place names, holds a profound significance in understanding the culture, history, and identity of a place. Place names are not mere labels assigned to locations; they are deeply intertwined with the region's past, societal structures, geographical features, and the collective memories of its people. Through toponymy, we gain insights into the evolution of language, migration patterns, and the cultural and political events that have shaped a region over time. Each place name carries stories, reflecting how a community perceives its surroundings and its history. Understanding toponymy, therefore, is key to unveiling the hidden layers of a region's identity and heritage.

This paper based the data of the provincial – research project “Studying on place names in Binh Duong province” chaired by Dr. Huynh Ngoc Dang (2022) (the author of this paper is one of the participants). This study employs a multi-disciplinary approach that

incorporates linguistics, historical analysis, geography, and comparative studies. The methodology integrates qualitative data collection through fieldwork and secondary sources, combining them with an analytical framework derived from historical toponymy and social anthropology.

Applying the Toponymic Analysis method to analyze the etymology, origin, and meaning of 3,462 toponymic words consisting of 4,155 subtypes of place names discovered in 91 communes and wards of Binh Duong province, this study aims to:

Examine the historical and cultural influences on the toponymy within the province (e.g., colonial history, indigenous languages, cultural practices);

Identify patterns in the types of names given to different regions (e.g., names related to geography, significant events, ethnic groups, or religious references);

Discuss how the linguistic features of place names (e.g., language families, phonetic structures) reveal information about the province's historical interactions with neighboring regions or colonizers;

Explore how these linguistic markers reflect the province's cultural identity, diversity, and historical development;

Analyze how place names have changed over time due to political events (e.g., name changes after independence, during regime shifts, or in response to social movements);

This paper makes a significant interdisciplinary contribution to the fields of toponymy, cultural geography, historical linguistics, and Vietnamese regional studies. Its primary value lies in demonstrating how place names serve as a linguistic archive of socio-cultural memory, historical transitions, and spatial identity formation in Binh Duong Province.

2. Literature Reviews and Research Method

2.1. Literature Reviews

Toponymy, or the study of place names, is a specialized field within both linguistics and geography that examines the origins, meanings, and evolution of geographical names. As Murray (1975) notes, toponyms are not merely labels for places but rather "linguistic markers" that encapsulate historical, cultural, and social narratives. They reflect human interaction with the landscape and are often deeply linked to the identity of the region. According to Baker (2008), toponyms are vital sources for understanding the cultural landscape of a region, providing insights into the socio-political contexts, historical events, and economic transformations that have shaped a place over time.

In the context of understanding a province's identity, toponyms serve as more than just linguistic constructs; they act as repositories of collective memory and social experiences. Sahlins (1999) argues that place names are not only about geographical identification but also about belonging—serving as expressions of collective identity, whether local, regional, or national. In this sense, toponyms contribute to the construction of a province's identity by reflecting and reinforcing the collective consciousness of its inhabitants.

Historical toponymy plays a critical role in understanding the development of regional identities. Smith (1996) highlights that place names often carry a "historical narrative," reflecting significant events, such as colonization, conflict, migration, and settlement patterns. In post-colonial contexts, place names can carry the imprints of imperialism, as

new names were often imposed to replace indigenous names, thereby reshaping local identities. This process can be particularly prominent in places that experienced long periods of foreign rule, such as Vietnam, where French colonial influence is still reflected in place names across the country.

Hansen (2004) in his work on colonialism and toponymy suggests that the renaming of places under colonial rule served as a method for colonial powers to assert control, erase indigenous identities, and reshape the cultural and historical landscape of the colonized territories. For instance, in Bình Dương, the colonial period left its mark on toponyms, particularly in urban areas such as Thủ Dầu Một, where French influences are still evident. Place names from this era serve as reminders of the past power dynamics, while also contributing to the broader provincial and national identity in post-colonial Vietnam.

At the same time, place names can reflect local and indigenous histories. Orel (2003) argues that some toponyms preserve ancient linguistic forms and traditions, offering valuable insights into the region's pre-colonial identity. The study of indigenous place names can shed light on the early settlement patterns, cultural practices, and natural features that shaped the history of the region long before foreign influences.

Linguistics plays a crucial role in toponymy, as the language used in place names often reveals significant insights about the identity of a region. As Jones (2009) points out, the linguistic characteristics of place names—whether they reflect local dialects, language shifts, or foreign influences—help construct a narrative about the people who inhabit a place. In Vietnam, linguistic diversity is significant in understanding the toponyms, as the language of the Kinh (Vietnamese) majority is influenced by Chinese, French, and indigenous languages.

Toponymy is also a reflection of social and cultural identity, as Woods (2012) suggests. Place names are often tied to collective memory and social practices, shaping the way a community identifies itself. In Bình Dương, place names can be tied to agricultural traditions, religious practices, and local folklore. For instance, the name Thủ Dầu Một—the provincial capital—has historical roots linked to the region's agricultural past. The name itself reflects the region's rural origins, while more recent urban development has altered the character and meaning of the name over time.

Similarly, Hughes and O'Rourke (2001) show that toponyms often carry emotional and symbolic significance, reflecting the identity of the people who live there. This is especially true in places like Bình Dương, where names such as Bến Cát and Thuận An evoke strong historical and emotional connections to the region's natural and social environments. The toponym Bến Cát, for instance, recalls the area's history as a trading hub and a site for riverine transport, which formed a crucial part of the province's socio-economic identity.

As provinces undergo urbanization and industrialization, the evolution of place names can reflect broader socio-economic changes. Modern toponyms often reflect contemporary economic activities, such as industry, commerce, and technological innovation. In Bình Dương, the rapid growth of industrial parks and urban centers has led to the creation of new place names that reflect the province's modern identity. For instance, Khu Công nghiệp (industrial park) and Khu Đô thị (urban area) are commonly used to describe new development zones that have come to define the province's economic landscape.

These modern toponyms play a critical role in shaping the province's contemporary identity. As Lappin (2016) notes, industrialization brings with it not only changes in physical infrastructure but also a transformation in social structures and values. The establishment of new places like Binh Duong New City signals a shift towards modernization, while also maintaining a connection to traditional toponyms that carry historical weight. The challenge lies in balancing the old and new, preserving the region's cultural identity while embracing the changes brought on by industrial growth.

Toponymy also plays a significant role in the politics of memory, particularly in post-conflict societies. Hutchinson (2000) explores how place names can act as symbols of resistance, resilience, and political change, especially in regions recovering from war or colonization. In the case of Binh Duong, the province's toponymy reflect both its colonial past and its subsequent wars for independence. Many place names from the wartime period, such as Bến Cát, serve as markers of resistance and survival.

The significance of toponymic memory is further highlighted by Brubaker (2004), who discusses how place names in post-conflict societies can help communities reclaim their identities and reassert their sovereignty. In Binh Duong, the ongoing use of historical place names alongside new names linked to economic development reflects the province's attempt to reconcile its past with its modern identity.

The study of toponymy provides invaluable insights into the historical, cultural, and social identity of a province. As illustrated in this review, place names not only reflect geographical features and historical events but also embody the cultural values, social structures, and collective memories of a community.

2.2. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the cultural and historical identity of Binh Duong Province through the analysis of its place names. The research is grounded in toponymy—the study of place names—as an interdisciplinary method that integrates linguistics, history, geography, and cultural studies to uncover the socio-cultural meanings embedded in geographic nomenclature.

The data collection process was conducted in two main stages: archival research and fieldwork. In the first stage, historical documents, old maps, administrative records, and local gazetteers were reviewed to identify and catalog significant place names across Binh Duong Province. These sources were accessed through the Provincial Archives Center, local libraries, and online governmental databases. The selection criteria included both current and historical place names that hold cultural, ethnic, or historical relevance.

In the second stage, field visits were conducted in 9 districts within Binh Duong—including 5 cities (Thuan An, Tan Uyen, Di An, Ben Cat, Thu Dau Mot), 4 districts (Dau Tieng, Bau Bang, Phu Giao, Bac Tan Uyen)—where interviews with local elders, historians, and community leaders were undertaken. These semi-structured interviews aimed to gather oral histories, local interpretations, and meanings associated with specific place names. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of individuals with deep knowledge of local traditions and history.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Place names were categorized based on their linguistic origins (e.g., Vietnamese, Khmer, Chinese), semantic meanings (e.g., names related to geography, flora, fauna, historical events, or cultural symbols), and their changes over time. Particular attention was paid to the socio-political context in

which certain names were introduced or modified, especially during key historical periods such as the colonial era, the Vietnam War, and post-reunification.

The analysis was further supported by Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping to visualize the spatial distribution of place names and identify patterns related to ethnic settlement, historical events, or economic development. This spatial analysis contributed to understanding how the landscape and place names interact to construct and reflect regional identity.

By integrating archival, linguistic, oral, and spatial data, this study offers a multi-dimensional understanding of how Binh Duong Province's identity is embedded in its toponymy. The methodological framework underscores the value of place names as cultural texts that reflect the complex interplay of history, ethnicity, and memory in regional identity formation.

3. Results and Discussion

In the toponymic analysis of Binh Duong province, the relationship between place names and provincial identity reveals several important insights:

3.1. *The place names are often closely tied to the region's geography*

Place names are often closely tied to a region's geography, as they frequently reflect the natural features and physical characteristics of the landscape.

The terrain of Binh Duong province is mainly plains and low mountains, with a dense network of rivers and streams including the Dong Nai River, Saigon River, Thi Tinh River and Song Be River systems. The terrain of Binh Duong province has many typical elements of the midlands with low-mountain plains accounting for about 40% of the area, and plain terrain accounting for about 60% of the province's area (Bui Chi Hoang, 2010). In the same or nearly similar terrain conditions, similar place names are often repeated (Le Trung Hoa, 2011). Based on the shape, terrain, nature, and characteristics created by nature or by humans, the residents here create place names related to the terrain. Topographical place names account for a large number of 1,310 place names with many common elements: *ao* (pond), *bãi* (alluvial), *bán đảo* (peninsula), *bàu* (wetland), *bố*, *bóng*, *búng*, *bưng*, *bực vịnh*, *cánh đồng* (field), *cồn*, *cù lao* (small island), *cua* (a turn), *đảo*, *đập*, *đầu*, *dốc*, *đồi*, *đồng*, *gò* (high terrain), *hàn*, *hang* (cave), *hố* (hole), *ngọn* (), *rạch* (canal), *suối* (stream), *kênh*, *mương* (ditch), *tắt*, *trảng*, *trũng*, *trường*, *vàm*, *xẻo*, *ụ*, *vùng*, *vũng* in which place names related to rivers and water, associated with common elements: pond, peninsula, bung, island, canal, stream, canal, ditch.... are 280 place names, lake/pond: 157 place names, canal: 148 place names (Huynh Ngoc Dang, 2022). For example:

An Son commune (Thuan An city) is located along the Saigon River with many crisscrossing canals, so it has many famous places: (canal) 2 Diêu, (canal) 5 Trận, (canal) 5 Trận, (canal) An Nghiệp, (canal) Bà 6 Hộ, (canal) Bà Lụa, (canal) Bọng, (canal) Cầu Quay, (canal) Chòi, (canal) Lớn, (canal) Hay Bình Nhâm commune has (canal) Bà 3 Lư, (canal) Bà Chiếu, (canal) Bà Đệ, (canal) Bà Đơn, (canal) Bình Nhâm, (canal) Cây Dầu, (canal) Cụt, (canal) Mương Chuối, (canal) Nhum, (canal) Ông Vui. And any area that has many places related to rivers and canals will have bridge named places. Bình Nhâm commune has (bridge) 2 Dĩ, (bridge) 2 Hòa, (bridge) 9 Chua, (bridge) Bà 3 Lư,

(bridge) *Bà 7 Cung*, (bridge) *Bà Cả*, (bridge) *Bà Chiếu*, (bridge) *Bà Đệ*, (bridge) *Bà Don*, (bridge) *Bà Học*, (bridge) *Bà Tư Màu*, (bridge) *Bình Nhâm*, (bridge) *Bình Nhâm 2* ... While Bình Hoa and Bình Chuan communes are hilly areas, there are place names (hill) *Chai*, (hill) *Đu Đủ*, (hill) *Mùa Cua*, (hill) *Bình Chuẩn*, (hill) *Cây Me*...

Tam Lap Commune (Phu Giao District) has many streams, so there are up to 12 place names related to streams: (stream) *Cây Khô*, (stream) *Cựa Gà*, (stream) *Dên Dên*, (stream) *Đác*, (stream) *Đôi*, (stream) *Đuôi Chuột*, (stream) *Gia Hú*, (stream) *Lồ Ổ*, (stream) *Lùn*, (stream) *Rạch Bé*, (stream) *Say*, (stream) *Tre*, (stream) *Triết*, or Cay Truong commune (Bau Bang district) has (stream) *Bà Tứ*, (stream) *Cạn*, (stream) *Cây Trâm*, (stream) *Đòn Gánh*, (stream) *Ông Chày*, (stream) *Ông Hoàng Seiko*, (stream) *Than*, (stream) *Ông Thanh*, (stream) *Sa Minh*. There were also rice fields here, so the place names "field" such as (field) *Bà Ba*, (field) *Bảy*, (field) *Mả Gai*, (field) *Giao Liên*, (field) *Trống*. Lai Uyen commune (Bau Bang district) is a low-lying area with many ponds, commonly called "bau" (wet-land): (bau) *Cà Tông*, (bau) *Cà Thung*, (bau) *Dây*, (bau) *Đồng Cạp*, (bau) *Đồng Dài*, (bau) *Hốt*, (bau) *Tròn*.

In short, many place names are derived from geographical elements such as rivers, lakes, mountains, forests, and valleys, which have historically shaped the way people interact with and understand their environment. For instance, names that include terms like "bàu" (lake or pond) or "sông" (river) are direct references to water that were significant for transportation, agriculture, and daily life. These geographic markers not only help to identify the physical location but also carry cultural and historical significance, illustrating how the inhabitants have adapted to and utilized their surroundings. This deep connection between place names and geography is a common feature worldwide, as people have long used descriptive names to navigate and make sense of the land they inhabit. Thus, place names in Bình Dương, like in many other regions, act as linguistic records of the natural world and the ways in which it has influenced local culture and development.

3.2. The province's place names reflect the rich cultural mix of its inhabitants

The place names in Bình Dương province indeed reflect the rich cultural mix of its inhabitants, serving as a living testament to the region's diverse history. Over the centuries, Bình Dương has been home to various ethnic groups, including the Kinh, Khmer, Stieng, Cham, and Chinese communities, each of which has left its mark on the local toponymy. Many place names born in the 19th century that are derived from Kinh language and cultural traditions, but they also incorporate elements from Stieng, Khmer and Cham, Mạ languages, reflecting the deep historical roots of these communities in the area. Additionally, the influence of the Chinese community, particularly in urban areas, can be seen in certain town and market names. For example:

The Mã Đà River is a large tributary of the Be River (Sông Bé), playing a very important role in the Southeast region, so it was written in the Hoang Viet Nhat Thong geographical monograph (early 19th century) with the name of Rạch Mã Tung (Horse cannal) (Le Quang Dinh, 2003) which was "read and spelled from "Ma-da" in the Malaysian language, meaning stream/river and was Vietnamized into Mã Đà (Đinh Thanh Huy, 2022).

Phu Giao, Dau Tieng, Bau Bang used to be areas with a large population of ethnic minorities, so many place names originated from the Stieng and Khmer languages. For

example: (stream) Bó Chôn¹, (*hamlet, wet-land, area*) Cà Na², (stream) Đác³, (*bàu*) Rương⁴, (stream) Ngủ⁵, (*bó*) Minh⁶, (stream) Sam⁷, Sam Bring⁸ in Phú Giáo; (*bàu*) Cà Thung, Cà Tông⁹ in Bàu Bàng, Dầu Tiếng originate from Stieng language.

Place names of Khmer origin such as (*hamlet*) Cầ Lố¹⁰, (*bàu*) (wet-land) Chu, (*suối*) (stream) Chú¹¹, (*cannal*) Rìng¹², (*stream*) Say¹³, Sem¹⁴, Sa Dup¹⁵, Tà Eng¹⁶, (*hamlet*) Tà Này¹⁷, (*cầu, suối*) Tham Rôn¹⁸, (*bàu*) Thốt Nốt¹⁹, (*bàu*) Trư²⁰ in Phú Giáo; (*cannal, wet-land, stream*) Gốc²¹ in the North of Tân Uyên, (*stream, bridge, hamlet*) Xà Mách²² ở Bàu Bàng.

In Lai Thieu district, two *xóm* (*residential area*) Chùa Bà (on Lê Văn Duyệt street), *xóm* Chùa Ông in are residential areas of the Hoa (Chinese) people were founded in 19 the century²³. "Most of them do business, make pottery, few own fruit gardens. The Chinese are an important factor in making the markets in the area bustling" (Huynh Ngoc Dang, 2022). Currently, these two *residential areas* have many the Kinh group living together, especially the *xóm* Chùa Ông .

The Chăm *residential area* in Hoa Loc, Minh Hoa Commune, Dau Tieng District consists of 130 Cham households, living on an area of about 70 hectares, most of whom are self-employed, mainly working as fishermen on the lake. The hamlet names are associated with ethnic groups (Cham village) or typical cultural institutions of the ethnic groups (Chua Ba, Chua Ong residential areas) or place names originating from the languages of ethnic minorities, reflecting the multi-ethnic nature of Binh Duong.

¹ Bù chom/chôn meaning "an area with many fragrant flowers or an area with many cicadas chirping in the summer"

² Karnār: sour and astringent fruit

³ Dak/daac : water, river, stream

⁴ Rmurl/ rmut : gold

⁵ Ngul: a Stieng clan

⁶ Min: wild buffalo

⁷ Svam : river, stream, cannal

⁸ Svam bri : cannal in forest

⁹ Ka lontong : a kind of fish (cá lòng tong)

¹⁰ Tonlé/Canlòh : area adjacent to rivers, streams, canals

¹¹ Túr : water

¹² Pring : The canal has many freshwater woody plants with straight trunks and black, edible fruit.

¹³ Rusei : bamboo tree

¹⁴ Sem: keep, stay, stop station

¹⁵ Sra Diop : The name of a vine plant that resembles a pumpkin but has a fragrant scent at night

¹⁶ Tà Eng : Mr. Eng

¹⁷ Tà Này : Mr. Này

¹⁸ Xam rông : a cannal where many aquatic species grow

¹⁹ Th'not : name of a typical tree of the Khmer people « thốt nốt »

²⁰ Túr : water

²¹ Prek Kol: stream

²² X'math : aquatic species

²³ Based on the year - 1843 (the year of Cat) engraved on the horizontal plaque at Phu Tan Hoi (the earliest temple to worship Thien Hau Thanh Mau of the Chinese in Lai Thieu - around the 40s of the 19th century on the tombstones at the Chinese cemeteries in Lai Thieu, it can be determined that the Chinese had settled in Lai Thieu before 1843, so in Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi, the section about Binh An district clearly states "in the 6th year of Thieu Tri (ie in 1846), Binh Tho commune was divided and Binh Lam commune was established, now comprising 6 communes, 58 communes, villages, hamlets, and 2 Chinese ethnic groups".

3.3. Place names still carry traces of colonial influence

Place names of French origin that were born during the French colonial period are associated with the French colonial exploitation process in Binh Duong, reflecting the legacy of French rule in the region. This historical imprint highlights the ongoing negotiation between traditional Vietnamese identity and the lingering effects of colonization in shaping the province's modern identity. These are the names of French capitalists and rubber plantation owners during the French colonial period such as: Blăngba, Blanchy, Campi, Cô Đô, Cê, Đêrăng, Rivaud – Hallet, Ótali and Xuyno; the names of construction works during the French colonial period such as: Baraque, Dépôt (train), Rail, Paris, Piscine, Tuor de guet (12, 17, 18) and Ciment; according to the names of objects there such as: Kaolin, Lambretta/ Lambro; according to the titles and properties of objects such as: Commis, Consigne/ Consignation (Consigne + Pog (Xi-Công-Heo); Soldat citadel (Thành Săng Đá) in Thu Dau Mot was formerly a military post built in the early years of the French colonial period. Later, it became the garrison of the Artillery unit, so it was called the Artillery citadel. People often called this citadel Săng Đá citadel due to the mispronunciation of the word "Soldat" which means soldiers, military camp. The pronunciation of "Soldat" in French is similar to the pronunciation of " Săng Đá " - a popular tree in this area in the past, so people often called this place Săng Đá citadel (Dinh Thanh Huy, 2022).

3.4. Place names have presented political and economic changes

The evolution of place names over time can provide insight into broader political, social, and economic changes. When examining a region like Binh Duong, a province in southern Vietnam that has shifted from a primarily agricultural base to a hub of industrialization, place names serve as mirrors of that transformation. There are several ways place names can reflect political and economic changes:

As Binh Duong shifted from an agricultural economy to an industrial one, the names of its districts, towns, and regions began to reflect this economic shift. For example: Khu Công Nghiệp VSIP (The Vietnam-Singapore Industrial Park (VSIP) is a prime example of how place names reflect economic changes. Established in the early 1990s, VSIP was one of the first industrial parks in Vietnam to attract foreign direct investment, particularly from Singapore. The name itself reflects the international partnership between Vietnam and Singapore, signaling a shift from local, state-run industries to global economic integration. The development of VSIP and other industrial parks in Binh Duong has been pivotal in transforming the province into a key manufacturing hub in Southeast Asia, with place names like VSIP symbolizing this new global economic focus. Another important industrial development in Binh Duong is the My Phuoc Industrial Park. Like VSIP, My Phuoc was established with the goal of attracting foreign investment and encouraging industrial growth. The name "My Phuoc," which may originally have had more traditional connotations, now represents an area synonymous with industrial activity, housing a wide range of industries from textiles to electronics. The establishment of such industrial zones has transformed the landscape of Binh Duong, turning areas once dominated by agriculture into bustling industrial centers.

Place names reflecting urbanization and modernization

As Binh Duong became more industrialized, urbanization followed. New towns, neighborhoods, and urban developments emerged, and their place names reflect the desire to modernize and create an image of progress. For example: Thành Phố Mới Bình Dương

(Bình Dương New City) is the one of the most significant examples of urban development in Bình Dương is the creation of Bình Dương New City. This modern urban development project aims to create a city that reflects Vietnam's aspirations to become a developed nation. The name "Bình Dương New City" was first used in June 2009, when the Bình Dương Provincial People's Committee approved the detailed construction plan at a scale of 1/500 for this project. However, this is not the official name of an administrative unit, but only the name of an urban planning project in the Bình Dương Industrial - Service - Urban Complex. This name reflects the region's ambition to embrace modernization and urbanization, with state-of-the-art infrastructure, international business districts, and residential areas. The creation of such a city demonstrates the provincial government's commitment to improving the standard of living for its citizens and positioning Bình Dương as a key player in Vietnam's economic growth.

Political shifts reflected in place names

Bình Dương has undergone various administrative changes over time. In the past, it was part of other provinces, but it was officially established as a province in 1997. With the creation of Bình Dương as a distinct administrative unit, place names like "Bình Dương Province" became more prominent, marking the political significance of the area. The province's increased political and administrative importance has mirrored its economic development, and the way it is referred to in official terms reflects this shift in status.

As Bình Dương's urban areas expanded, districts like Thuận An, Dĩ An, and Tân Uyên were renamed or elevated in administrative status to accommodate the growing population and economic significance. For example, Thuận An and Dĩ An, once rural districts, are now urbanized cities with burgeoning economies. Their renaming and reclassification symbolize their growing political importance and role in Bình Dương's industrialization.

As Bình Dương became a center for foreign investment, particularly from countries like Singapore, Japan, and South Korea, place names began to reflect this international connection. The presence of foreign companies and multinational corporations had a significant impact on the local economy and, by extension, the place names in the region.

Bình Dương's evolution from a primarily agricultural province to an industrialized center can be traced through its place names. As the province developed politically and economically, the names of districts, cities, industrial parks, and urban centers changed to reflect the region's growth and transformation. These place names symbolize more than just geographical locations; they encapsulate the political decisions, economic policies, and global partnerships that have shaped Bình Dương's identity.

The transformation of Bình Dương, from a quiet rural area to a thriving industrial hub, is mirrored in the names of its places, and these names are powerful symbols of the region's past, present, and future. They reflect the province's role in Vietnam's economic development, its embrace of industrialization, urbanization, and modernization, and its growing importance in the global economy. As such, place names are not static; they evolve and change in response to the political and economic currents that shape the region, making them key indicators of broader societal transformation.

3.5. Place names serve to unify its population, invoking themes of strength, resilience, and local pride, equality.

Place names not only reflect the region's historical and economic developments but also play a crucial role in building a shared sense of belonging among the province's residents.

They connect people to both their historical roots and their modern aspirations, reinforcing the province's collective identity in the broader narrative of Vietnam's economic transformation.

Place Names as Anchors of Collective Identity

Place names have long been instrumental in shaping the identities of regions and their people. The naming of a place can imbue it with historical, cultural, and social significance, making the name an integral part of the collective identity of its residents. A place name can evoke memories, traditions, and aspirations, creating an emotional connection between people and the space they inhabit.

In the case of Bình Dương, place names play a significant role in reflecting both the province's traditional roots. As the province underwent significant political and economic changes, particularly with the rapid development of industrial zones and urbanization, the place names of Bình Dương began to reflect this transformation. These names not only mark geographic locations but also foster a shared sense of community among residents, grounding them in their historical and modern identities.

Historical Significance in Place Names

Bình Dương, like many provinces in Vietnam, has a rich history that spans many centuries. Place names often serve as a connection to the past, linking residents to the traditions, struggles, and achievements of their ancestors. In Bình Dương, several place names reflect the region's historical and cultural heritage, helping residents maintain a connection to their roots, even as the province modernizes.

For example, the name “Thủ Dầu Một”, the capital of Bình Dương, has deep historical roots. The name "Thủ Dầu Một" was historically associated with the role of the town as an administrative and political center of the province, dating back to the early 19th century during the Nguyễn dynasty. The name itself evokes the region's long-standing political and administrative significance within the broader context of Vietnamese history.

As Bình Dương transitioned from an agricultural base to an industrial hub, its residents, particularly in the urban areas, began to embrace the historical names of these areas as symbols of continuity. While these places have undergone significant transformation, such as the expansion of urban centers and industrial zones, the historical names of places like Thủ Dầu Một provide a lasting connection to the province's historical legacy. The sense of pride in these names builds a deeper connection to the province's identity, reinforcing the notion that the residents are inheritors of a long history, even as they contribute to the province's modern-day economic success.

Fostering a Shared Sense of Belonging

Place names in Bình Dương help build a shared sense of belonging by linking residents to both their past and their future. As the province transforms, these names create a cultural continuity, ensuring that people living in urbanized areas or new industrial zones still feel connected to their local identity. The historical names serve to anchor the residents, reminding them of their roots, while the modern names reflect their aspirations and their contribution to the province's growth.

The emotional attachment to place names helps form a cohesive community identity. When people live in places with meaningful names—names that are tied to their history, their culture, and their aspirations—they develop a stronger sense of belonging. This

sense of belonging can foster social cohesion, pride, and a collective identity that transcends individual experiences. In the case of Bình Dương, the names of places like Thủ Dầu Một, VSIP, and Bình Dương New City are integral to this sense of community. They not only define geographical boundaries but also tell the story of the people who live there, their history, and their place in the broader narrative of Vietnam's economic transformation.

Additionally, the modern and historical significance of place names in Bình Dương can act as a powerful tool for building social capital. Shared identities and cultural ties based on meaningful place names can encourage collaboration, cooperation, and solidarity among residents, contributing to the overall success of the province. People who feel a strong sense of belonging are more likely to participate in local initiatives, contribute to community development, and support economic growth.

In conclusion, place names in Bình Dương serve as powerful tools for building a shared sense of belonging and enhancing the province's collective identity. Through the historical significance of traditional place names and the modern aspirations embodied in the names of industrial zones and new urban centers, Bình Dương's residents are able to connect to both their past and their future. These place names foster social cohesion, pride, and a sense of purpose, helping to unify the province's diverse population around a common narrative of growth, development, and progress. As Bình Dương continues to evolve, its place names will undoubtedly continue to play a key role in reinforcing the province's identity, ensuring that both its historical legacy and its modern achievements remain central to the collective consciousness of its residents.

Place names reflect the equality of local residents, regardless of gender or social status in naming

According to statistics, female place names (accounting for 49%) are characterized by the title "Mrs": Mrs. Giang, Mrs. Khoe, Mrs. Lieu, Mrs. Loi, Mrs. Thanh... which is almost equivalent to male place names (52%) (out of the total number of place names) expressed by the title "Mr": Mr. Ca Ruong, Mr. Ky, Mr. Tra, Mr. An, Mr. Hieu, Mr. Huan... these place names appeared in the 20th century. When using a person's name to name a place, it seems that people do not distinguish whether that person is male or female, but only pay attention to their contributions, popularity, and special features. Through place names in Bình Dương, it can be seen that the role and position of women are equal to that of men in the land reclamation, resistance for national independence, and influence in the locality. Place names named after female characters are the first people to reclaim land and establish villages, and are remembered by the people for their merits, so their names have entered the place name. For example: (Hamlet) Ba Thiem is named after Mrs. Thiem - an elderly woman who pioneered this land, formerly in Thạnh Hòa village, Chánh Mỹ Hạ commune, Biên Hòa district, now in Đuôi Chuột hamlet, Tam Lập commune, Phú Giáo district, Bình Dương province (Dinh Thanh Huy, 2022).

Women also participated in the resistance war, their names entered the place names in the way of calling secondary names, such as (Bridge) Bà Sáu Thảo crossing Cá Trèn canal to enter Cồn Miếu, in Cây Đa quarter, Thạnh Phước ward, Tân Uyên town (Dinh Thi Hoa, 2022).

Not only contributing to the land reclamation and resistance war for national independence, women also play an important role in the family's livelihood, the name of their job (selling fish sauce) is associated with the title (Mrs. Hai) which also becomes a

place name: (Bến Đò) Bà Hai nước mắm (Ferry Wharf) Mrs. Hai Fish Sauce) (Dư Khánh Quarter, Thạnh Phước Ward) originated from the fact that Mrs. Hai's house is right at the ferry wharf, selling drinks, candy, wine and fish sauce.

The equal relationship among Bình Dương people is also expressed through the naming of places without distinction of social status of the person's name used to identify. Many place names originate from the names of ordinary people who have no role in society, but their popularity is no less than a place name originating from the name of a person of high social status and wealth: The place name Bà Lụa (Thu Dau Mot city), an ordinary woman, is by no means less popular than the famous place name Bà Nghè (Tan Uyen), the daughter of the Imperial Commissioner Nguyen Cuu Van who governed a region.

4. Conclusion

The toponymic analysis of Bình Dương province offers valuable insights into the complex and evolving relationship between place names and the provincial identity. Through the study of its toponyms, it becomes evident that the identity of Bình Dương is deeply rooted in its history, geography, cultural diversity, and political evolution. Place names in the region serve as a living testament to the historical influences of both local traditions and colonial legacies, while also reflecting the province's adaptation to modernity and economic growth.

Geographically, the province's place names maintain a strong connection to its natural environment, reinforcing a collective identity tied to the land. The diversity of ethnic groups within Bình Dương is also reflected in its toponyms, highlighting the region's cultural richness and the blending of traditions over time. Furthermore, place names act as markers of political and social change, from the colonial era to the post-colonial period, capturing shifts in the province's governance and economic landscape.

Ultimately, the place names of Bình Dương not only preserve the past but also point toward the future, showcasing the province's ongoing development and the unification of its people. They offer a glimpse into the broader process of provincial identity formation, where historical legacies, cultural diversity, and modern growth converge. The dynamic interplay between these elements through place names underscores the strength and resilience of Bình Dương's identity, providing a foundation for continued progress and unity. In this way, toponymic analysis becomes an essential tool for understanding the evolving sense of place and belonging in Bình Dương province.

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