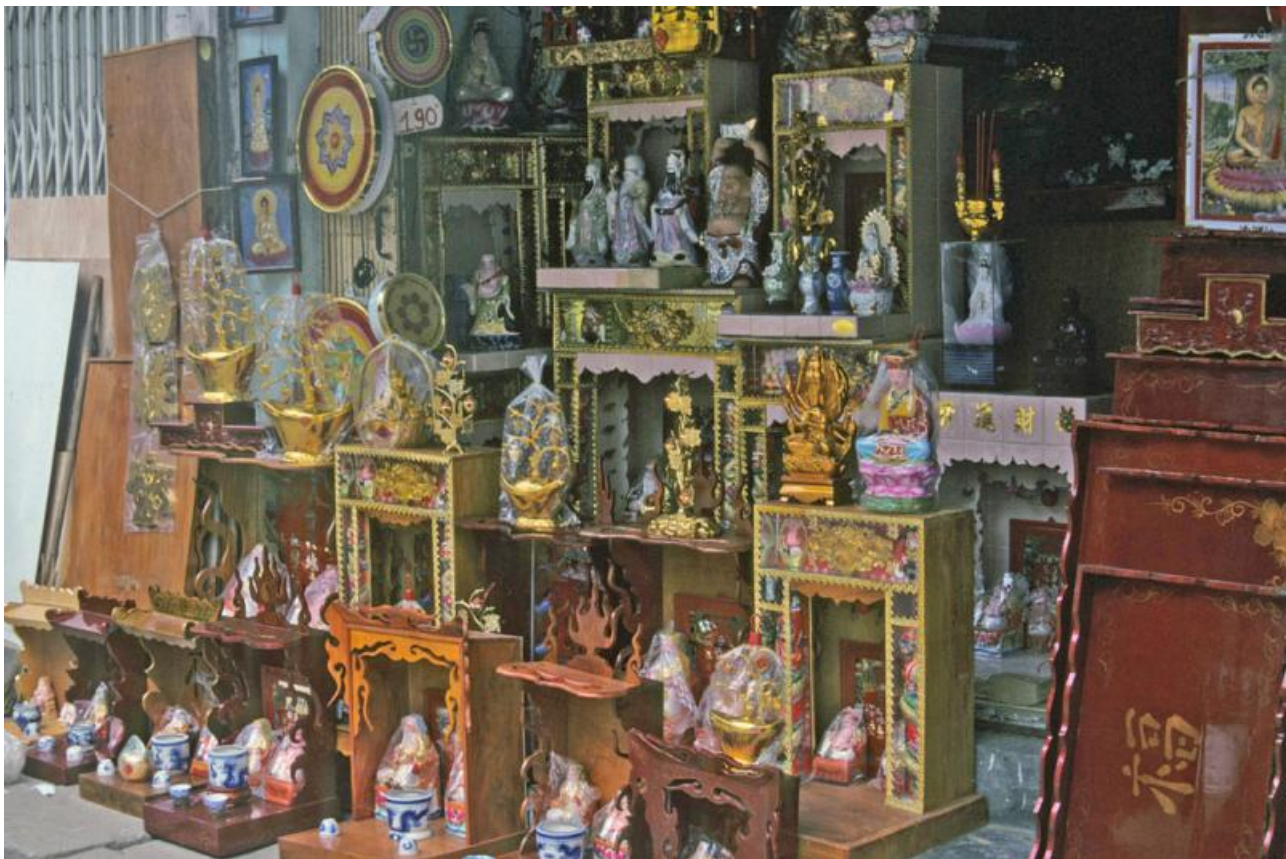


Hanoi storefront displaying statues and other supplies for ancestral altars

Hanoi storefront displaying statues and other supplies for ancestral altars

This storefront in Hanoi displays a colorful variety of statues, dishes, paintings, and shrine boxes that Vietnamese families purchase to decorate their household's ancestral altars. China ruled what is now Vietnam for nearly a thousand years, heavily influencing religious and kinship practices among the Vietnamese majority group. There are also large ethnic Chinese populations within major Vietnamese cities. As a result, Vietnamese people are more focused on the male or father's side of their family than are most other Southeast Asians. They also use clan surnames, much like Chinese people, and pray to ancestral altars in their homes.

The kinds of shrine items displayed here are used in household altars dedicated to patrilineal (father's side) relatives who have died. The statues and framed pictures sold include images of Buddha, popular prosperity gods, and plant images representing family trees. Often several local gods, Buddha images, and male-side ancestors are all prayed to for protection and aid. The altars are supplied with fresh flowers and small containers of food and drink to show appreciation for the ancestors' and gods' attention.



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