

# Preserve and Promote the Traditional Cultural Values of the Tay and Nung people in Tourism Development in Cao Bang Province, Vietnam

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Received: 19 Dec 2023; Received in revised form: 12 Feb 2024; Accepted: 21 Feb 2024

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## Abstract

*The development of tourism linked to the unique cultural values of each ethnic community is becoming an essential trend in the tourism sector. The Tay and Nung ethnic communities in Cao Bang province are among the ethnic minority groups in Vietnam, with rich cultural and social lives that hold significant importance in tourism development. The traditional cultural values of the Tay and Nung people deeply embody the cultural identity of the ethnic group and represent a rich cultural potential in the tourism development of Cao Bang province. Successfully managing the relationship between preserving and promoting the traditional cultural values of the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang province in connection with sustainable tourism development will contribute to changing livelihoods, enhancing the quality of life for the people, and ensuring the sustainable development of the country.*

**Keywords—** Traditional culture, Tay people, Nung people, Cao Bang, Vietnam.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cao Bang is a mountainous province in the border area of Vietnam and has many ethnic minorities living such as: Tay, Nung, Dao, H'mong, San Chay, etc. Each ethnic minority community in Cao Bang has a unique, diverse and rich treasure of indigenous knowledge. Among them, the Tay and Nung community in Cao Bang province is one of the ethnic minority communities in Vietnam, with a rich social and cultural life and important significance in tourism development. The traditional cultural values of the Tay and Nung people are rich in ethnic cultural identity and are rich cultural potential in tourism development in Cao Bang province such as: features in culinary culture that help create regional specialties, knowledge of traditional arts, festivals,... serving tourism development. The unique characteristics of the customs and beliefs of the people help enrich cultural identity and knowledge of folk remedies that have practical significance in treating diseases, taking care of the people's health and exploiting tourism development,... However, in the face of development trends, the traditional cultural values of the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang province are facing the risk of disappearing, some

traditional cultural and social values are not able to promote their role in local tourism development. Therefore, researching the preservation and promotion of traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities in tourism development is a way to promote potentials, advantages, and increase resources for development of the province in a new period.

Scientists have researched various aspects of the Tay and Nung people's traditional culture in the mountainous provinces of Vietnam, including their way of life, beliefs and customs, environment, animal husbandry and crops, health care, and more. Numerous research projects have up to this point made reference to the Tay and Nung people's traditional culture, both directly and indirectly, such as: Author Tran Tri Doi in *Research on the Languages of Vietnamese Ethnic Minorities* (Doi, 1999) has grasped the general picture of ethnic minorities and the linguistic status of ethnic minorities in Vietnam. Thereby, the author has generalized the picture of ethnic culture, including the culture of the Tay and Nung ethnic groups. Researcher Trieu Thi Mai in *Folklore of the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang* has introduced an overview of some unique types of folk culture of the Tay and Nung people.

(Mai, 2012) In *Some bad luck-relieving ceremonies of the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang*, some concepts, customs and beliefs in the cultural life of the Tay and Nung people are introduced. (Mai, 2016) In the *Custom of carrying, hammering, and discouraging of the Tay people in Cao Bang*, the author introduced the concept and some religious practices in the cultural life of the Tay people. (Mai, 2015) In *Tay - Nung Folk Tales in Cao Bang* by Nguyen Thien Tu and the research team introduced folk tales passed down in the cultural life of the Tay and Nung people. (Tu, 2011) In the *Ceremony of Bestowing the Title of Then Nu Practitioner in the Western Region of the Tay Ethnic Group in Cao Bang Province* studied the rituals and religious practices in the Ceremony granting honor of the Tay people. (Tu, 2009) In the research work *Communication conventions on family life of the Tay people in Cao Bang*, the authors also mentioned the regulations and concepts of the Tay people in the issue of family and clan organization. (Sach, D.V., Dao, D.T., 2016) In the *Basics of traditional village rules of the Tay people, Cao Bang* studied the regulations and conventions in the organization of community social life of the Tay people. (Sach, D.V., Dao, D.T., 2014) In *Cultural Behavior of the Tay people through proverbs about social relations* by Ha Ngoc Tan, introduced a treasure of proverbs about social relations that have been preserved and passed down in the life of the Tay people for many generations. (Tan, 2007) The research team of Hoang Quyet, Ma Van Khang, Hoang Huy Phach, Cong Van Luoc, Vuong Toan in *Tay - Nung Traditional Culture* introduced the characteristics of the rich and unique traditional cultural treasure of the Tay and Nung ethnic groups in Vietnam. (Quyet, H., Khang, M.V., Phach, H.H., Luoc, C.V., Toan, V., 1993) Author Dam Thi Uyen in *Nung Culture in Cao Bang* (Uyen, 2010) and *Tay people's customs, beliefs and religion in Cao Bang* (Uyen, 2012) introduced the traditional cultural identities of the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang with their own unique features in spiritual life through cultural activities in daily life. Research projects on the traditional culture of the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang mainly research and introduce a number of areas in cultural and social life such as folk literature, traditional arts, customs, beliefs, festivals, etc. The research projects have made an important contribution to introducing and preserving the cultural identity of the Tay and Nung communities along with the culture of the great family of Vietnamese ethnic minorities. Ethnologists in historical sciences, cultural studies, folk culture, etc. all assess that the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang province have a rich and diverse traditional cultural identity that needs to be further studied.

The issue at hand in the conservation and promotion of the traditional cultural values of the Tay and Nung ethnic groups in the tourism development of Cao Bang province today is how to preserve and promote the positive values in cultural and social life and exploit tourism development. Simultaneously, it involves eliminating outdated customs, enhancing internal strength and resistance for the cultures of minority ethnic groups, contributing to the construction of an advanced Vietnamese culture, rich in ethnic identity. This article utilizes basic methods such as analysis and synthesis, sociological investigation, statistical comparison to evaluate the current status of preserving and promoting the cultural values of the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang province. Consequently, the article provides recommendations and solutions for preserving and promoting the traditional cultural values of the Tay and Nung people in the tourism development of Cao Bang province, Vietnam.

## II. RESULTS

### **Some traditional cultural values of the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang province**

Originating from their residential areas and main agricultural activities of farming and animal husbandry, the Tay and Nung communities have accumulated a diverse and rich cultural heritage, distinctly showcasing the cultural identity of the ethnic groups.

*Firstly, the Tay and Nung people celebrate many festivals and holidays that reflect the agricultural practices of rice cultivation*, such as: Tet Nguyen dan, Tet Dap noi, Tet Thanh Minh, Tet Doan ngo, Tet Khoan vai, Tet Dong chi, Le Cap Sac; Long Tong Festival, Nang Hai Festival, and many more held in spring at temples and pagodas. These traditional festivals are closely linked to cultural life and beliefs, showcasing the unique cultural identity, reflecting their beliefs about the universe, nature, human beings, and life, embodying numerous traditional cultural values of the ethnic groups.

*Secondly, the rich literary and artistic treasures of the Tay and Nung people include numerous legends explaining the origins and roots of the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang*, such as the legend of "Bao Luong, Siao Cai" and the folklore "Cau chua cheng Vua" of the Tay people, along with various fairy tales, fables, humorous stories, and historical stories. They have a variety of folk genres and poetic forms like proverbs, nursery rhymes, riddles. Among these, Tay folk songs are often associated with traditional dances and incorporate musical instruments such as drums, clash cymbals, gongs, pi le, Dan Tinh (Gourd Lute), tambourine, flute, erhu,

zither, shaking bell. The Tay people perform the Sluong dance mimicking a boat rowing procession escorting officials and Then officers to the court; the Chau dance during the Ceremony of Bestowing the Title of Then Nu Practitioner (Le Cap Sac); the Nhan Co dance, the Tan Hoa dance during the Nang Hai Festival; the Phuong dance, the Hac dance during funerals, etc. The rich folklore of the Nung people is diverse in content and genre, with traditional folk tunes playing a significant role in shaping the cultural identity of the ethnic group. The traditional folk tunes of the Nung people are formed during production labor and daily life activities, including: Luon Nang Oi, Da Hai, Put lan, Luon Phu, Sli Giang, Sli La Hoi, Xa xa, Heo phun, Lullaby, Dong Dao (Children's song), Luon Slam khot, Nay sli, Funeral songs.

In this context, Then singing and "Dan Tinh" (Gourd Lute) (also known as Then Tinh) of the Tay and Nung people serve as both a form of folk performance and a means of expressing beliefs, spirituality, emotions, love for their homeland, and patriotism, as well as showcasing faith, benevolence, etc. Then singing plays a significant role in the spiritual life and has a profound impact on the lives of the people in this region. In December 2019, the practice of Then singing by the Tay, Nung, and Thai people in Vietnam was officially recognized by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage representative of humanity. The Tay and Nung people have preserved and passed down Then singing through generations, integrating it into their communal activities and daily life. Nowadays, the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang continue to use and develop various melodies of Then singing in traditional folk festivals, professional stages, and community singing movements.

*Thirdly, from agricultural products, the Tay and Nung people also have a very rich culinary skills in preparing a variety of dishes and beverages with distinctive flavors not found in other ethnic group* such as: bamboo tube-cooked rice, Nua Lap (pork cut into long, thick pieces, salted and spiced and then hung on the beam, smoking-shelf), sour meat with powdered grilled rice, smoked meat, and smoked fish, etc. The main ingredients for Tay and Nung cuisine are sourced from the forest or from produce grown and raised by their families. During festive occasions like Lunar New Year, they also prepare special dishes such as pork and chicken dishes for Lunar New Year, duck dishes for Mid-Seventh Month Festival (Ghost Festival), and rice-based dishes like multicolored sticky rice, chicken, fish, and roasted pork for Tet Thanh Minh and Festival for Tending Graves. Their daily and festive beverages typically include rice wine made from rice, corn, and cassava, etc.

*Fourthly, the Tay and Nung people reside in close-knit villages and adapt their living spaces according to the terrain.* They have traditional knowledge of constructing suitable houses such as stilt houses, single-story houses, half-stilt half-story houses, and wall-sided houses. In mountainous, remote, and border areas, the Tay and Nung people often build stilt houses raised on wooden poles, tied with ropes, with walls made of bamboo or stone. In flat areas near towns, they tend to build single-story houses. However, the traditional stilt house remains a unique architectural symbol of Tay culture. Currently, stilt houses of the Tay people are still quite popular in some localities in the province. Many stilt houses have existed for hundreds of years and have sturdy wooden frames and columns.

#### **Current status of preserving and promoting cultural values of the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang province, Vietnam**

In recent times, the government and people of Cao Bang province have implemented various measures to preserve, conserve, and promote the traditional cultural values of the Tay ethnic group within the province. Leaders at all levels in Cao Bang province are keenly aware of the necessity to conserve and promote the cultural values of ethnic minorities. The Resolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> Provincial Party Congress of Cao Bang for the 2015-2020 term emphasized: "Preserve and promote the good values of ethnic cultures; continue to implement the master plan for Cao Bang tourism development in the period 2011 - 2020, vision to 2030; preserve, restore, and embellish cultural, historical, and spiritual relics, combined with the conservation and promotion of the value of natural landscapes and scenic spots; enhance promotion and tourism development." The Resolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> Provincial Party Congress of Cao Bang for the 2020 - 2025 term affirmed: Cao Bang continues to preserve and promote the good values of ethnic cultures. Thoroughly grasping and implementing the Party's guidelines, the State's legal policies and the province's policies and guidelines, departments and branches of Cao Bang province have coordinated to implement many plans and programs and projects to preserve and promote the traditional cultural heritage values of ethnic minorities in Cao Bang province. The Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Cao Bang province has developed the "Implementation Plan for Preserving and Promoting the Distinctive Traditional Cultural Values of Cao Bang" and various programs and projects implemented throughout the province, especially in districts with a large population of Tay ethnic people such as Bao Lam, Bao Lac, Tra Linh, Quang Uyen, Trung Khanh, etc.

To enhance public awareness of the cultural value and role of Then singing, contributing to the formation of a passion for Then singing among the younger generation,

propaganda work on the cultural value and role of Then has been emphasized through the mass media system. Teaching Then singing and Dan Tinh (Gourd Lute) through Then singing clubs, associations, and groups in localities across Cao Bang province has been actively carried out. In recent years, the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Cao Bang province has opened many classes for teaching Then singing and Dan Tinh (Gourd Lute) to learners throughout the province, with an average of about 30 learners per class. Master Then singers teach ancient Then songs, new Then songs, Dan Tinh (Gourd Lute) playing techniques, etc., creating attraction for learners and spreading the cultural heritage of Then singing to the community. Participants in training classes become active propagandists, teaching Then singing and Dan Tinh (Gourd Lute) arts when they return to their localities. Cao Bang province also encourages localities and schools to establish Then singing - Dan Tinh (Gourd Lute) clubs. Currently, the province has established more than 73 active and effective Then singing - Dan Tinh (Gourd Lute) clubs. These clubs regularly organize training sessions on Then singing, Then singing - Dan Tinh (Gourd Lute) playing, and hold many cultural exchange events, attracting many participants, such as the First Then Singing and Then singing - Dan Tinh (Gourd Lute) Festival in 2017, the Four Seasons Then Village Life Program of the Easterners in 2017, the Then Festival Program of the people of Cao Bang in 2017, etc. In Cao Bang's high schools, Then singing has become an extracurricular activity, and Then singing lessons are included in the curriculum. Furthermore, Cao Bang province focuses on scientific research to preserve and promote the cultural value of Then singing, organizing many scientific conferences and expert meetings to propose practical and feasible solutions to conserve and promote the cultural values of Then singing, carries out statistics, compiles records, lists and honors artisans of Dan Tinh (Gourd Lute) and has policies to support funding for outstanding artisans and artisans who have not been conferred, etc. The province also encourages artisans to preserve and fully record Then songs, Dan Tinh (Gourd Lute) tunes, and create new lyrics reflecting contemporary life to contribute to the effective promotion of this unique cultural form. The Party committees and authorities at all levels in Cao Bang province closely oversee the search for young people interested in learning Then singing, encouraging and training them to build a young workforce of Then singing artists. Officials involved in the preservation and promotion of the Then singing heritage, as well as officials and specialists from the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Cao Bang province, continuously enhance their knowledge and understanding

of Then culture. Moreover, Cao Bang province invests funds in building cultural facilities and improving cultural infrastructure for Then singing performances. Socialization efforts and attracting social resources for the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage value of Then singing are also emphasized, etc.

The province has always invested in promoting the traditional culture of ethnic minority communities in tourism development. Therefore, conservation and promotion of the traditional cultural values of the ethnic groups associated with tourism development have achieved many results. Tourism in Cao Bang province has witnessed strong development in recent years. In the period 2016-2020, the number of tourists to Cao Bang reached over 5 million, increasing by 98% compared to the period 2011-2015, with an average annual increase of 18.7%; of which, the number of international tourists reached over 420 thousand, increasing by 213% compared to the period 2011-2015, with an average annual increase of 42%; tourism revenue reached over 1,200 billion VND, increasing by 192% compared to the period 2011-2015, with an average annual increase of 36%; the average tourism growth rate reached 25.8% per year. The tourism sector contributes to promoting economic growth, job creation for laborers, and improving people's lives. On April 12, 2018, at the 204<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO Executive Board in Paris, France, the Resolution recognizing the Non nuoc Cao Bang UNESCO Global Geopark was passed. Currently, Cao Bang has 03 special national monuments (Pac Bo Special National Monument, Ha Quang district; Tran Hung Dao Forest Special National Monument, Nguyen Binh district; Special National Monument of the 1950 Border Victory Site, Thach An district), with more than 130 unique natural heritage sites, some of which have international significance. At the same time, the province has completed the construction of 3 tourism routes within the Non nuoc Cao Bang UNESCO Global Geopark: Northern cluster tourism route: Journey back to the origin; Western cluster tourism route: Northern Discovery - Mountains of changes; Eastern cluster tourism route: Experience indigenous culture in the land of fairies. In 2022, Cao Bang province established the Da Hai Thong Hue cultural performance team and organized training courses on Da Hai folk songs for 30 people; Organized seminars, scientific conferences on the conservation and promotion of cultural values associated with tourism development such as the scientific seminar "Promoting cultural values and resources of ethnic groups associated with tourism development, human development in the Northern mountainous region"; Established community cultural performance teams and folk song and dance clubs in communes, towns in districts, cities,... Preservation and

promotion of cultural values in general and the folk song and dance values of the Nung people in particular associated with the province's tourism development have contributed to restructuring the economy, generating income for local people, and enhancing tourists' understanding of customs, traditions, and culture of ethnic groups living in Cao Bang province. In 2022, the total tourism revenue of Cao Bang province is estimated at 550 billion VND, an increase of 650% compared to the same period. The total number of visitors is estimated at 1.04 million, an increase of 150% compared to the same period, including: Estimated international tourists reached 14 thousand, an increase of 930% compared to the same period; Estimated domestic tourists reached 1.02 million, an increase of 148% compared to the same period. (The subcommittee on implementing breakthroughs in development of Tourism - Sustainable Tourism, 2022)

However, despite the efforts made by the province to preserve and promote the traditional cultural values of the Tay and Nung ethnic groups, many traditional cultural values are facing the risk of decline, ancient folk tunes and folk tales in various forms of folk music are fading away and becoming difficult to collect. The scope of performance activities is narrowing, traditional musical instrument players and folk singers are gradually decreasing,... Additionally, the work of transmitting traditional folk songs to younger generations is facing many difficulties, and investment resources for promoting the traditional cultural values of the Tay and Nung people associated with activities Tourism service activities are still modest, "not commensurate with the demand, potential," and have not provided impetus for rapid, sustainable tourism development.

To conserve and promote indigenous knowledge of the Tay people in the tourism development in Cao Bang province, successfully achieving the goals of the Party Congress of Cao Bang province for the term 2020-2025: Making tourism a spearhead economy, Cao Bang becoming the tourism center of the northern midland and mountainous region, it is necessary to implement a number of fundamental solutions as follows:

Firstly, continue researching, reviewing, and compiling statistics on the indigenous knowledge capital of ethnic minorities living in the province in general and the Tay and Nung ethnic groups in particular. From there, develop suitable tourism models to promote the traditional cultural values of the Tay and Nung people. Moreover, diversify tourism products to fully exploit the cultural heritage value of the ethnic groups and connect with the cultural heritage of other ethnic groups in the region to help tourists understand the cultural diversity of the ethnic groups in Cao Bang province more deeply.

Secondly, diversify forms of propaganda about preserving and developing indigenous knowledge in the cultural and social life of the Tay people. Specifically, emphasize the importance of radio and television broadcasting in ethnic languages, propaganda work through reputable figures such as village elders, village heads,... to garner community consensus in promoting the role of indigenous knowledge in the development of tourism in Cao Bang province. At the same time, enhance the promotion of cultural values and cultural heritage destinations extensively, diversify forms of promotion, and implement value chain linkages according to each locality, each tour, and each cultural heritage tourism route.

Thirdly, the leadership of Cao Bang province needs to continue increasing investment in building additional cultural facilities to serve folk performance activities of the people and provide reasonable incentives for artisans, policies to encourage those involved in preserving and promoting traditional cultural heritage in localities within the province. This includes ongoing investment in scientific research resources to develop practical solutions for conserving and promoting the cultural heritage values in the development of tourism in Cao Bang province. Additionally, establishing a team of local tour guides from the Tay and Nung ethnic groups with sufficient numbers and ensuring their professional competence and understanding of the people's culture to effectively convey the cultural heritage values to tourists.

Fourthly, promoting the participation of local residents and socio-political organizations in activities to preserve and promote the role of indigenous knowledge. Strengthening measures to ensure environmental sanitation at tourist sites, especially by increasing the number of trash bins for tourists, implementing waste water and garbage treatment systems in relic sites, mobilizing local residents to participate in environmental hygiene and waste collection at tourist sites,... Regularly assessing and monitoring the impact of tourism activities on the conservation of cultural heritage values and the livelihoods of local residents at tourist sites.

### III. CONCLUSION

The development of tourism tied to the unique cultural values of each ethnic community is becoming an essential trend in the tourism industry. Effectively addressing the relationship between preserving and promoting the traditional cultural values of the Tay and Nung people in Cao Bang province, in conjunction with sustainable tourism development, will contribute to "protecting and preserving cultural resources for future generations," transforming livelihoods, improving the

quality of life for residents, and ensuring the sustainable development of the country. Successfully managing this relationship requires proactive and determined efforts from all levels of government, relevant sectors, tourists, and the Tay and Nung communities in Cao Bang province. It demands serious implementation with a comprehensive system of solutions tailored to the cultural characteristics of the communities and the practical situation of the locality.

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