



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### SOME ISSUES TO PRESERVE TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF VERY SMALL ETHNIC GROUPS IN VIETNAM

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#### ABSTRACT

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic country with 54 ethnic groups living together. In which, 38 ethnic groups have a population of over 10,000 people, 16 ethnic groups have a population of less than 10,000 people (very small ethnic groups). While ethnic groups with large populations mainly live in the midlands and plains, where living and production conditions are favorable; then mountainous areas, which account for nearly three-quarters of the country's natural area, are the main areas of residence for most ethnic minorities. So what needs to be done to ensure social justice, close to the development level of very few mountainous and downstream ethnic groups, and preserve the traditional culture of these peoples? On the basis of identifying the preservation of traditional culture of very small ethnic groups in Vietnam over the past time, the article offers some basic solutions to contribute to the preservation of traditional culture of very small ethnic groups in Vietnam in the next period.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the field of preserving and promoting the values of cultural identities of ethnic minorities in general, including very small ethnic groups in particular in Vietnam, has always been paid special attention by the Party and the State, reflected through many investment programs, schemes, policies and development of the cultural sphere. This shows that the life of ethnic minorities has gradually been significantly improved, the appearance of the highlands is increasingly renovated and developed, and the issue of preserving traditional cultural identity is also paid special attention by the cultural sector, local authorities and people. In order for traditional cultural heritages to be truly preserved, preserved and promoted in the cultural and spiritual life of the people, it is necessary to have a long-term roadmap with many practical solutions. The Party and State of Vietnam have always affirmed that culture in general, national culture very few people in particular is an important part and a driving force of development because: "Culture is the soul of the nation, expressing the identity of the nation"; "Culture remains, Ethnicity remains" (Nguyen P. T, 2021). Resolution of the 5th plenum of the VIII session "On building and developing an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with national identity" identifies culture as the spiritual foundation of society, both a goal and a driving force for socio-economic

development; Vietnamese culture is a unified but diverse culture within the Vietnamese ethnic community. Resolution of the 9th plenum of the XI session "On building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the requirements of sustainable development of the country" continues to affirm the view that building culture really becomes a solid spiritual foundation of society, an important endogenous strength to ensure sustainable development and solid protection of the Fatherland for the purpose of a rich people, a strong country, democracy, justice and civilization; build an advanced Vietnamese culture, imbued with national identity, united in diversity of the Vietnamese ethnic community, with national, humanistic, democratic and scientific characteristics. The resolution also emphasizes the task of preserving and promoting cultural heritages of ethnic minorities, especially traditional voices, scripts, costumes and festivals; proactively receive development opportunities, overcome challenges to preserve and perfect the national cultural identity.

## RESEARCH OVERVIEW

The issue of preserving traditional culture of ethnic minorities in general in Vietnam has so far been studied by many authors and scientists, including some typical works such as: Institute

of Ethnology (1978), Ethnic minorities in Vietnam (northern provinces); Institute of Ethnology (1984), Ethnic minorities in Vietnam (southern provinces); Le N. Q (2000), Traditional costume of the Si La people; Dang N. V (2002), Preservation and development of the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities in Vietnam, in: "Vietnam's cultural diversity – Approaches to conservation"; Tran V. A et al. (2006), Pu Peo people's culture; Phan V. H (2007), Traditional and developed Ro-mam ethnic group; Trinh Q. C (2009), Ministerial Project Synthesis Report, "Evaluating the effectiveness of a number of projects on conservation and development of some ethnic minorities (Si La, Pu Peo, Ro-mam, Brau, O-du); Nguyen T. N (2009), Understanding the culture of the Gie-Trieng, Brau; Hoang Nam (2011), Overview of traditional culture of ethnic groups of Vietnam; Vuong X. T and Tran H. H (2012), Sustainable development of ethnic culture in the integration process in the Northeast; Vuong X. T (2014), Culture with sustainable development in Vietnam's border regions; Vuong X. T (2015), Ethnic groups in Vietnam, Volume 1, Vietnamese-Muong language group; Vuong X. T and Vu D. M (2016), Transnational ethnic relations (Southern Regional Studies); Vuong X. T (2016), Ethnic groups in Vietnam, Volume 2, Tay-Thai Kadai language group; Vuong X. T (2017), Ethnic groups in Vietnam, Volume 3, Mon-Khmer language group; Vuong X. T (2018), Ethnic relations with the nation-state community in Vietnam in the context of market economy development and international integration; Vuong X. T (2018), Peoples in Vietnam, Volume 4, Book 1, Hmong-Dao and Tang-Mien languages; Vuong X. T (2018), Peoples of Vietnam, Vol. 4, Vol. 2, Han and Ma Lai - Da Dao languages; Vuong X. T (2019), Constructive Community: Nation-to-Nation Ethnicity in the world and in Vietnam; Bui T. B. L (2021), Some issues of socio-economic development and preservation of traditional culture of ethnic minorities in Vietnam today; Phuong Hien (2021), Development of ethnic minority areas,... The above studies have dealt with the culture of ethnic minorities, including very few people,... From gaps in previous research works, this article discusses and analyzes more deeply some issues of identifying traditional cultural values of very small ethnic groups in Vietnam, and offers some basic solutions to contribute to preserving. Preserving traditional cultural values of these peoples is becoming more effective and sustainable.

## METHODOLOGY

The article uses a number of basic methods such as: Methods of collecting secondary documents from legal documents, Party Congress documents, guidelines and policies of the Government, research works of scholars; The method of synthesizing and analyzing documents related to the preservation of traditional culture of ethnic minorities in the current context aims to clarify and propose basic solutions to preserve the traditional culture of very small ethnic groups in Vietnam effectively and sustainably in the next periods.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

**Identifying the situation of preserving traditional culture of very small ethnic groups in Vietnam:** Vietnam has 16 ethnic minorities with small populations (La Ha, Phu La, La Hu, Lu, Lo Lo, Chut, Mang, Pa Then, Co Lao, Cong, Bo Y, Si La, Pu Peo, Brau, O-du, Ro-mam), scattered throughout the

country, mainly concentrated in the mountainous areas of Northern Vietnam. These peoples mainly reside in particularly disadvantaged, deep-lying, remote and border areas, but play important roles in politics, socio-economy, security, defense, foreign affairs and protection of the ecological environment. Over the years, the Party and State of Vietnam have adopted many guidelines and policies for ethnic minorities in order to preserve and develop the country's human resources. Specifically, up to now, 5 ethnic groups with a population of less than 1,000 people, namely Si La, Pu Peo, Ro-mam, Brau, O Du, have been included in the list of special concern. Since 2005, these five-ethnic development assistance programs have been implemented in addition to other national poverty reduction support programs. In the following years, the Government approved many other important projects and projects such as the project "Education development for very small ethnic groups in the period 2010-2015" (2010); the project "Preservation and cultural development of ethnic minorities in Vietnam to 2020" (2011) and the project "Emergency conservation and support, strengthening capacity for conservation and development of ethnic cultures and elimination of customs in ethnic minority areas" (2013); Project "Socio-economic development of ethnic minority areas: Mang, La Hu, Cong, Co Lao" (2011). The most recent is the project "Support for socio-economic development of ethnic minorities with very few people in the period of 2016 - 2025".

With the policy of building a unified and diverse culture in the Vietnamese ethnic minority community, in which priority is given to the cultural development of very few ethnic groups, the Party and State of Vietnam determine, along with taking care of socio-economic development, ensuring social security, hunger eradication, poverty reduction, the preservation and promotion of ethnic minority cultures are both urgent and strategically significant tasks that must be implemented persistently and long-term. The Government has approved policies and schemes aimed at effectively preserving, promoting and developing the values of ethnic minority cultures, especially ethnic minority cultures. On September 15, 2020, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 1409/QĐ-TTg on the issuance of the plan to implement the National Assembly's Resolution No. 120/2020/QH14 dated June 19, 2020 on approving the investment policy of the National Target Program on Socio-economic Development of Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas in the period of 2021-2030 in which the cultural sector, emphasize the focus on preserving and promoting the fine traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities associated with tourism development and pay special attention to investment in the development of very small ethnic groups and ethnic groups still facing many difficulties. According to Subsection 6 Section III of the National Target Program on Socio-economic Development of Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas in the period of 2021-2030, phase I: From 2021 to 2025. Objectives: Restore, preserve and promote traditional cultural values, foster and train cultural workers; support material foundations and cultural equipment for ethnic minority and mountainous areas to raise the level of cultural enjoyment for ethnic minorities in association with the development of community-based tourism, with priority given to ethnic minorities. Restore, preserve and develop traditional cultural identities of very small ethnic groups; surveying, inventorying, collecting and

documenting traditional cultural heritages of ethnic minorities; organize the preservation of local traditional festivals to exploit and build products for tourism development; formulate policies and support people's artisans and elite ethnic minority artisans in transmitting and disseminating traditional forms of cultural activities and training, fostering and teaching their neighbors; organize professional and professional training courses and teach intangible culture; support research, restoration, conservation and promotion of intangible cultural values of ethnic minorities at risk; building traditional cultural models of ethnic minorities (models of experiencing and understanding the specific cultures of ethnic minorities, models of protecting intangible culture of ethnic minorities; models of building cultural life of ethnic minorities; heritage models associated with heritage tourism itineraries for community development ethnic minorities with similar heritages); building folklore clubs in villages in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, migrant resettlement areas; operational support for the traditional arts team; support investment in the construction of typical tourist destinations; develop contents and publish books and documentary films on traditional culture of ethnic minorities for distribution to ethnic minority communities; organizing festivals, exchanges and festivals on traditional cultural and art forms of ethnic minorities; organize traditional sports competitions during festivals, festivals and exchanges in order to preserve traditional sports and folk games of ethnic minorities; support propagation and wide promotion of typical traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities; tourism promotion programs in ethnic minority and mountainous areas combined with research and survey of tourism potentials, selection and development of tourism products typical for ethnic minority and mountainous areas; support investment in the preservation of villages and typical traditional cultures of ethnic minorities; support the construction of community bookcases for communes in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; support the repair, embellishment and anti-degradation of special national relics and national relics of typical value of ethnic minorities; support investment in building cultural, sports and equipment institutions in villages in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; The results of the preservation of traditional culture of ethnic groups are very few.

Thanks to the above guidelines and policies, the socio-economy of very small ethnic groups has been raised, the culture of very small ethnic groups has been preserved and developed, contributing to building and defending the sustainable Vietnam Fatherland. However, in the process of deepening integration, there is also an impact that distorts and transforms many traditional cultural values of very few ethnic groups. In particular, the voice, writing, costumes and traditional cultural spaces of most of these ethnic groups are facing a gradual loss of identity. Intangible traditional culture, traditional crafts of ethnic groups such as Bo Y, Pu Peo, O-du, Brau, Ro-mam, Mang, Cong, Lo, Chut, Si La,.. are also being lost. Among the 16 ethnic groups, very few people today have ethnic groups that no longer exist traditional living models and villages. Ethnic groups have a small population, economic life is always at a disadvantage, making cultural life more difficult, at risk of losing national cultural identity (Nguyet Ha, 2015).

#### **Some problems in preserving traditional culture of very small ethnic groups in Vietnam in the coming time**

#### **Problems**

Preservation of cultural values and cultural heritages in the context of globalization and current international integration is an affirmation of its worthy role and position in modern social life. Vietnam must necessarily take advantage of and promote the usefulness and ability of community linkage, orientation of thinking and social actions of values to practically serve the needs of national development in the period of industrialization, modernization and international exchange. Sustainable development is defined as the ability for continuous, long-term economic development without consequences to the natural and socio-cultural environment. On the contrary, economic development without moderation or excess, favoring economic growth can lead to environmental pollution, moral erosion, and tarnishing of cultural identity. Once social morality is corrupted and degraded, it will create resistance, negatively affecting the development process.

The economic development and improvement of living conditions only meet human needs biologically, give people a good physical genetic biology, but in order for people to live in harmony with nature and society, be able to work creatively and contribute to the community and humanity, it is necessary to maintain, nurturing "cultural genetics". And cultural heritages, most typically represented by traditional cultural values contained, "materialized" or crystallized in cultural heritages, are fully capable of meeting the needs of education and training to improve creative capacity, richness and diversity in human spiritual life. Therefore, creating harmony in the "dynamic balance" between conservation and development requires synchronization, which means putting in place mechanisms, policies and conditions for linking solutions capable of advancing each other towards common goals such as: (1) Preservation of cultural heritages must create a healthy socio-cultural environment for economic development, not in the name of cultural heritage preservation that hinders development; (2) Economic development and the preservation of cultural heritages must be linked to social life, considering the service of human material and spiritual needs as common goals to be strived for; (3) Development must not infringe on cultural heritages and degrade traditional cultural values, on the contrary, they must also create material foundations for cultural creation.

The protection and promotion of traditional cultural values requires Vietnam to master the following basic competencies: i) the ability to identify and identify typical aspects of traditional cultural values of the national community; ii) the ability to preserve and elevate traditional cultural values to new heights, and at the same time create cultural values suitable to the needs of the times, contributing to enriching the national cultural heritage treasures; iii) Preservation of traditional cultural values combined with cultural exchange, absorption of human cultural quintessence; iv) the ability to point out the limitations of tradition in the renovation and development of the country. In order to turn the above-mentioned abilities into reality, people need to be educated, learn a lifestyle friendly to the natural environment, know how to love fellow human beings, value national cultural identity, know how to receive the quintessence of human culture and

especially have a respectful attitude, tolerant, accepting the cultural differences of the nations of the world.

Community is a social entity as an organizational structure of individuals who voluntarily share common interests and responsibilities, and at the same time bind and linked together through common features of living space and specific historical conditions, established through interaction and exchange between members throughout the process of symbiosis and development. Therefore, the ecological and humane environment of the community needs to be considered as the factors that bind and link community members in a strong and long-term way.

### **Solutions**

Conservation associated with sustainable development is human-oriented development, better meeting human needs, that is, developing human creative capacity, improving the quality of human life (both material and spiritual), establishing and strengthening socio-cultural institutions that are most beneficial to people, create equal participation for all individuals in society. In order to preserve the traditional culture of very small ethnic groups in Vietnam sustainably, it is necessary to focus on the following basic solutions:

**Firstly**, it is necessary to continue to renew awareness in policy making to preserve and promote cultural values of ethnic minorities in general, including very few people. In particular, first of all, focus on raising awareness, capacity and legislative quality of the National Assembly on culture; consider culture as a goal, endogenous resource, breakthrough driving force of the development process. In the process of policy making, it is necessary to properly identify the cultural objectives to be achieved and fully assess the cultural impact before issuing policies, laws, as well as deciding on important issues of the country. Continue to implement the policy of formulating and perfecting policies on "cultural development in economic development and economic development in cultural development", in order to both develop the economy and preserve ethnic cultural values. Having a truly cultural attitude and perspective, that is, not to see and act towards other national cultures through the lens and value system of one's own people, but to have a respectful attitude towards the cultural heritage of peoples. At the same time, it is necessary to have a respectful attitude towards the cultural values of peoples, not for the sake of economy and material values, but sacrificing national spiritual and cultural values. Respect the overall principle of culture in the process of promoting and inheriting cultural values because each cultural element is inseparable from the overall culture and further from the socio-economic whole. The preservation and promotion of ethnic minority culture must necessarily be placed in the community cultural living environment. Synchronously build and improve the quality and efficiency of operation of community cultural institutions, really promote the role of the community in organizing community activities. Adopt policies to promote the role of cultural actors in conservation and sustainable development. Renovate thinking, improve the quality of policies on culture, literature and arts, especially the voices and scripts of ethnic minorities, adapting to subjective and objective impacts and factors in the process of development integration.

**Secondly**, it is necessary to continue reviewing documents, institutionalizing the Party's guidelines and perfecting the State's legal document system on preserving and promoting cultural values of ethnic minority communities. In particular, priority should be given to developing an overall strategy on preserving and promoting cultural values of ethnic minorities to 2030 with a vision to 2045. From there, there are orientations and bases for planning and implementation: Investment policies to build a system of grassroots cultural institutions in ethnic minority areas; protect and promote the values of folk culture and traditional festivals of ethnic minorities; Policies to encourage society and people to collect, preserve and effectively promote the tangible and intangible cultural values of ethnic minorities; Policies to organize the transmission of typical intangible cultural heritages of peoples to young generations; Policies on renovation and conservation of historical and cultural relics; support the preservation and promotion of traditional culture of ethnic groups, the development of traditional crafts associated with the development of community-based tourism; Special policies in the preservation and promotion of unique national art forms. Focus on inventorying, assessing, restoring and digitizing cultural values of ethnic minorities in order to preserve and promote long-term and effective values. Properly assess the current situation of the conservation, restoration and promotion of the values of folk songs, folk dances and folk music of ethnic minorities in order to gradually build a system of mechanisms and policies and solutions to exploit and promote the values of conservation, restoration and promotion of folk song values, Ethnic minorities are associated with tourism development.

**Thirdly**, it is necessary to renew the state management in preserving and promoting ethnic minority cultural values. The State should pay attention to allocating sufficient resources for programs, projects, schemes and scientific research on cultural preservation and raising the efficiency of cultural management in ethnic minority areas; adopt policies to support and restore traditional festivals; works of cultural products; honor and adopt remuneration policies for artisans, artists who have created cultural works and products; disseminate and teach traditional arts and professional know-how of cultural value to ethnic minority areas; support unique cultural models, point models in villages; support the preservation of the language and writing of ethnic minorities. Strengthen activities of proactive and regular inspection and supervision of the preservation and promotion of cultural values of ethnic minorities. Take initiative in reviewing and consolidating organizations, apparatus, functions and tasks of management agencies in the direction of streamlining, improving the efficiency of conservation activities and promoting cultural values of ethnic minorities. Attach importance to the coordination mechanism in the operation of the cultural sector at all levels. Strive to remove "bottlenecks" in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage values. Promote and improve the efficiency of cultural tourism development and promote the values of national cultural heritages so that international friends can better understand the beauty of the country, Vietnamese people in general and ethnic minority communities in particular.

**Fourthly**, it is necessary to renew thinking, improve the quality of policies to preserve and promote cultural identities

of ethnic minorities in association with national target programs on socio-economic development of ethnic minority areas. The State should prioritize investment and organize the effective implementation of Project 6: "Preservation and promotion of fine traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities associated with tourism development" and Project 9: "Investment in development of very few ethnic groups and ethnic groups still facing many difficulties" under the National Target Program on Economic Development socio-economic in ethnic minority and mountainous areas in the period of 2021-2030. In particular, it is necessary to promote and improve the quality and effectiveness of propaganda to raise awareness of all levels, branches and people of ethnic groups about the unique values of traditional culture of ethnic groups as the spiritual foundation, motivation and content resources for socio-economic development of ethnic minority areas. Position and properly promote the role of people as subjects in the work of self-preservation and promotion of traditional cultural values of their people, focusing on: Maintaining and promoting good cultural values and identities, eliminating backward customs; associating the preservation and development of the nation's traditional culture with political stability, socio-economic development, ensuring national defense and security, solving social issues and well implementing national policies. It is necessary to continue to concretize the contents of the policy Urgent cultural conservation of ethnic minorities (with a population of less than 10,000 people), ethnic minorities in areas resettled in interconnected hydropower projects, comprehensively connected with programs, related projects. This is an urgent policy with important and specific content requirements that need specific solutions to be recognized in terms of policy contents and methods of management, implementation and investment. Invest in formulating specific contents on policies to build cultural life and cultural environment in ethnic minority areas; closely associate activities of building cultural life with socio-economic development tasks suitable to each region, each region, each ethnic group and religion.

## CONCLUSION

The diverse and rich cultural picture of Vietnam is thanks to the presence and presence of 54 ethnic groups, including very small ethnic groups. Therefore, in order to effectively protect and promote traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities in general and very small ethnic groups in particular, in addition to the self-advocacy of the community, state management agencies at all levels need to be responsible for creating a legal corridor, appropriate mechanisms and policies, formulation of plans, plans as well as projects related to the protection and promotion of cultural values. At the same time, the State shall create conditions for scientists to provide professional guidance or implement programs on "heritage education", propagating and disseminating knowledge and understanding of the law, helping the community to more deeply identify the cultural values they hold. The goal is to build a healthy social environment, educate and train quality human resources, create human cohesion, social consensus, solidarity, reconciliation and national harmony. These are the most important prerequisites for the preservation of traditional cultural values of ethnic communities in general and very small ethnic groups in particular for the sustainable development of Vietnam in the coming time.

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