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THE ROLE OF THE SPIRITUAL FORESTS IN LIFE OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE VIETNAM'S CENTRAL MOUNTAINOUS AREA

***Abstract:** For ethnic minorities residing in the Vietnam's central mountainous area, the meaning of forest does not simply refer to materials, environment, and resources but also the spiritual culture. The spiritual forest has been located in the consciousness and life of the ethnic minority for a long time. It is based on the concepts of the universe, animism and represented in the forms of forest of the sacred and forest of ghosts. Religious beliefs formed spiritual forests in Vietnam and in other countries in the world and this helped to preserve truly primeval forests. Moreover, spiritual forests have played an important role in the material, spiritual, and social lives of the ethnic minorities. The roles of the spiritual forests in the social life can be seen in the activities of maintaining and creating the social space where people practise and hand down customs, indigenous knowledge, taboos associated with forest trees, wild animals, rituals with offerings for the god of the forest, etc. Therefore, the spiritual forest is a valuable asset of the ethnic minority communities in the Vietnam's central mountainous area.*

***Keywords:** Spiritual, sacred forest, ethnic minorities, customary law, traditional management, central mountainous area, Vietnam.*

1. Discussion on spirituality and spiritual forests

Currently, we often use the term “spiritual” such as spiritual life, spiritual world, spiritual culture when mentioning religion, belief in the sacredness or the spiritual, mystical aspect. Thus, how spirituality

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and spiritual culture is understood by researchers in the world and in Vietnam. There are some perspectives as follows:

In the work *Totem and Taboo*, Sigmund Freud indicated some conception about the origin and the development of the taboo. According to his opinion, the meaning of taboo branches off into two directions. On the one hand, it means to us sacred; but on the other hand it means, uncanny, dangerous, forbidden, and unclean. Thus, the word “taboo” contains potential concept, the taboo systematically expresses the prohibition and restriction. Various classes of taboo in the wider sense may be distinguished: 1/ Natural or direct, the result of ‘mana’ mysterious (power) inherent in a person or thing; 2/ Communicated or indirect, equally the result of ‘mana’ but (a) acquired or (b) imposed by a priest, chief or other person. Taboo is expression and result of the primitive people’s belief in the demon power. Then, the taboo is decayed this root and exists as a kind of power, because it is simply based on a kind of psychological inertia; it becomes the origin of our customs and customary laws¹.

In Vietnam, there are some perspectives that consider spirituality and spiritual culture as a form of mental culture: “Spiritual culture is a term used to refer to a specific type of mental culture of the Vietnamese. It is the expression of spiritual feelings, sacred beliefs, gratitude of the living to the dead, to the national heroes, the martyrs be honored as divine, god, tutelary, etc. It has taken place in a sacred space and the determined sacred time. Spiritual culture and its activities are vintinically positive, good and human”².

According to Nguyễn Đăng Duy “The spiritual culture is a cultural expression of sacred values in everyday life and the sacred faith in the religious life”. The author also showed that the important issue in the study of spirituality is faith. “Faith is the trust, admiration a human being, a fact, a doctrine, a religion which is manifested by action. Faith is a decisive factor in establishing the social relationship”³. The belief in the mind is the sacred faith, the harmony of emotion and reason leads to the passion, passionate voluntary action in accordance with that belief.

For the ethnic minorities, spiritual culture and spiritual life is significant, it is considered as the source of life before the grandeur, the mystery of the mountains, the forests and the surrounded forces. Their life is based on the nature, so it is fastened on the spiritual activities. They pray to deities for bumper harvest, peaceful village. Therefore, they often organize rituals in order to thank the deities, ancestors. Throughout the long history of ethnicity, people have built up a diverse system of spirituality such as the cult of the Heaven, the Earth, forests, rivers, streams, plants, animals, even the inanimate objects such as stones. The “sacralization” (thiêng hóa) of beliefs in the deities is their adaptation to the nature and spiritual forests are one of the of the spiritual culture expressions of the mountainous residents.

The Marxist approach has shown that the basis of labor/ economy in forming of social consciousness, culture, religion, customs and the relationship between social consciousness and individual personality. However, human activities, especially individual behavior, are not just conducted by consciousness, but they are sometimes driven by unconscious motivations in the mind which is sometimes identified with the instinct⁴. These unconscious motivations lead to the ethnic minorities’ concepts of world view, human life.

In fact, village life is always an entity that is intimately connected with many supernatural powers (deities, demons dwell above, within the village); the villagers’ activities could be disastrous or happiness under the judgment of the divine. It is reflected in their worldview and view of the universe (the division of the Heaven - the Earth, the realm of the dead - the living, the realm of human being - deity, the relationship of deity - human being - devil). In particular, the divine, the devil forces are important, they are present or inhabit everywhere in rivers, streams, mountains, forests, trees, rocks, unusual natural phenomena and especially the death. They dominate every dimension of human life. The system of supernatural powers “governs” the village in all aspects, so it is considered as the metaphysical system of social order management (*hệ thống quản lý trật tự xã hội siêu hình*)⁵.

The concept of the universe, the world and “animism” of the ethnic minorities is the basis for the formation of sacred forests, ghost forests, a kind of forest has been present through the time in the spirit and in the life of the ethnic minorities in general and central mountainous areas in particular: *spiritual forests*.

The term “spiritual forest” derived from the research process of some researchers, it refers to the long-standing forest tied up in the life of the ethnic minorities, sacred forests or ghost forests based on the concepts of the universe and religious beliefs. In fact, the ethnic minorities do not have the concept of “spiritual forest” but they only have the specific, visual concepts as “sacred forest” associated with the sacred phenomenon, sacred place (forbidden forest⁶) and “ghost forest” (associated with the cemetery). According to the conception of the ethnic minorities in the central mountainous areas, the forest is not only material, natural resources, environment but it is also “the spiritual forest”⁷. The spiritual forest is reflected in many aspects of the religious life, such as legends, stories related to sacred forests/forbidden forests, beliefs in ghost forests/cemeteries, forbidden forests/watershed- forests...

Therefore, the concept of “spiritual forest” in the mountainous area of the Center means [i] The forests are “sacralized” by the natives through the existence of supernatural powers; [ii] They are owned and managed by the community and divine; [iii] They are protected by customary law and “spiritual sanctions”.

2. Characteristics of spiritual forest of the ethnic minorities in the Central mountainous area

The ethnic minorities in the Central mountainous area obviously have a perception of the sacred forests/forbidden forests in general. However, the sacred forests and ghost forests are the most popular with clear identifiable characteristics such as [i] The “sacred forests” is a type of forest with large trees (almost in watershed) where are habitats of the fierce animals (white snake, python, tiger, etc.), where are residences of the powerful deities that are admired, revered by human beings and they always protect the villagers from the disaster, disease and bountiful harvests, green trees bestowed on the villagers

by the deities; [ii] the “ghost forest” is the place where the dead buried, the whereabouts of the devil - the forces always cause the villagers’ accidents, fear and sufferings. The process of “sacralization” of spiritual forests in the region of the ethnic minorities does not only reflect the respect of the deities inhabit in the sacred forest, but it also shows the fear of ghosts, devils inhabit in the ghost forest. Thus, it is associated with religious activities (religious practices), the taboo of the community.

The spiritual forest of the ethnic minorities in the Central mountainous region is a type of community forest with the characteristics sacred forest, ghost forest [i] the sacred forest is located in the watershed, large scale (distributed in many villages, the residence of many ethnic groups). It is not determined by the measure, the map, but by the mind, the “sacralization” of belief in sacred space. Therefore, in the process of determining the area and space of the ancient spiritual forest, the village elders just estimate relatively, because many elders do not dare come in the sacred forest⁸. [ii] The ghost forest is usually small scale, located nearly their habitats in relation to specific village. It reflects the separation, independence of the divine and the demon system associated with the specific village area, story, clan as well as the members of the village. In addition, the sacred forests and the ghost forests have specific signs. Almost sacred forests naturally have ancient big trees, thick trees; many precious animals such as tiger, snake, etc,...; they are located in watersheds. In terms of religious belief, these forests are often associated with mysterious stories of sacred and ferocious animals, sacred trees, mysterious death, and so forth.⁹ Besides, some sacred forests also have their unique characteristics such as having special trees¹⁰; trees emit sound or have bizarre shapes; mysterious and dark place, toxic gas,...¹¹. The ghost forest in the ethnic minority areas is clearly determined, the boundary between two villages, which is different from the sacred forest without specific boundaries because of large scale. The ghost forest is a cemetery area, next to the village where bury the members of the community when they die.

According to the custom, people never go into the ghost forest of the other village. The ghost forest is considered as a sacred space, whether it is the place buried the good or the bad dead. However, there is always a clear distinction between the two types of forest where is the habitat of the good ghosts and the bad ghosts in order to have appropriate behaviour. The conception, the distinction between good and bad death has formed two types of ghost forests: [i] Forests where buried the good dead, whose death with clear reason such as sickness, elderly people, death at home. They are buried in coffins, held the rituals as “leaving the tomb” (bỏ mã) and “built the tomb” (dựng nhà mồ). [ii] Forests where buried the bad dead (unknown cause of death) such as disease, madness, bitten by tigers or snake, drowning. It is unusual death so the corpse has to be buried far from the habitat because people fear of evil spirits harassment. They have a fearful and respectful behaviour towards the forests buried the bad dead where there are spirits cause accidents and sufferings. This discrimination derived from the conception of “binary world” (thế giới lưỡng phân) that prevails among almost ethnic groups: deities and demons, life and death, normal and abnormal deaths, good ghosts and bad ghosts. Each ethnic group, each region has different behaviours so there are different forms and names of ghost forest/ cemetery, forbidden forest, sacred forest¹².

3. The roles of the spiritual forests in the ethnic minorities' life in the Central mountainous region

The spiritual forest is a positive product of religious belief, although it is rudimentary, simple but it helps people love, respect and live in harmony with the nature, consider the nature as a crucial part of their life. Furthermore, spiritual forests have played an important role in the life of ethnic minorities, both physical and spiritual dimensions.

The role of spiritual forests in religious activities and practices

Many viewpoints showed that forests are the centre of human life on the Earth, the spiritual forests are the soul of life. It can be said that the productive forests play a key role in the economic life and material life through the supply of resources and products while the spiritual

forests play a major and direct role in spiritual life, religion. It is different from the productive forests, sacred forests and ghost forests affect the spiritual life, have indirect effects that strengthen and maintain social stability¹³. For the ethnic minorities in the Trường Sơn mountain range, the forests are the spirituality, a source of culture. “No one can find a cultural expression there without the relation to the forest or the relationship of human beings to forest”¹⁴. The spiritual forests where the rituals, religious practices of the community have been taken place for many generations. Every two or three years, the community organizes the ritual of worshipping the forest with many kinds of offerings, praying for the divine blessing, bestowing good harvest, avoiding natural disaster. This ritual has created a spiritual unity, an awareness of the sacred forests and the ghost forests’ role and formation of a “coalition” to protect the spiritual forests¹⁵.

The ethnic minorities have lived on the forest for many generations. Thus, the forest is not only the relationship between the nature (forest) and the society (human beings), but it is also the sacredness, belief in the divine. The spiritual forest is both visible space and time as well as invisible space and time - sacred space, dwelling place of deities. Thus, the spiritual forest is the most valuable asset, the most important thing for the community. The “sacralization” of beliefs in the spiritual forest is a “cultural” and “ethical” behavior towards the communal forests in general and the spiritual forests in particular.

The role of spiritual forests in protecting and maintaining the natural resources and habitats

The spiritual forest is important so it need to be preserved. From conception to practice, the ethnic minorities on the Trường Sơn mountain range have formed norm, sanctions, and especially “sacredness” in order to bind the inhabitants’ behavior, activities to the possession, management and protection the spiritual forests in particular and the natural resources in general. Based on the perception that the spiritual forests belong to the nature, managed by the deities, so the deforestation, the encroachment offends to the

deities, make them angry that cause drought, diseases, floods, crop failures and “moving forest”¹⁶... Therefore, the regulations aim at protecting these forests from deforestation, hunting, fishing, grazing livestock, illegal entry,....

As a religious role, the protection of the spiritual forests also has its own characteristics with spiritual regulations and sanctions originated from “sacralization”. From the conception that of sacred forests contains risks that affect the stable life of the community, which forms the basis of protection and “spiritual sanctions” in the punishment of violations. In other words, customary law tied with “sacralization” forms the rules for both “ghost forest” and “sacred forest” such as do not “offend” against the sacred forest, ghost forest: insult, cutting trees,...; do not make sound (disturb the spirit, the devil) when entering the forest; do not touch anything without the “consent”; worship, ask for permission of the gods, the demon before taking the products; items taken from these forests must be used for the common purposes; preventing forest fire in the process of reclamation. Rights to use and exploit the buffer forest between the villages are complied with these regulations¹⁷ in order to minimize the material and economic impacts that contribute to the conservation, maintenance the primeval forests and resources of the community.

The important role of the spiritual forest is linked to the watershed forest and the ancient forest, so that the environment and resources are better protected than other forests. The spiritual forests bring great benefits to the protection of human habitat. For steep slope areas, the forests are important in preventing erosion and landslides; help to prevent wind, regulate rainwater and groundwater; provide water for life; create shade, air conditioning and air humidity, creating a peaceful and fresh environment. Many spiritual forests are the source of water supply for living and producing¹⁸. Some precious plant species are used by the inhabitants, but this harvest is controlled by a number of principles established by the community in order to conserve and avoid degradation resources¹⁹. Indirectly, as spiritual roles, these forests have contributed to avoid the reduction of forest

size, the mechanical impact on forests and forest land, flora and fauna. Most of the people aware of the exploitation and hunting in these restricted forests which contributes to the management and protection of the natural environment. In a long-term livelihood strategy for the ethnic minorities, these forests reserve and protect plant and animal species in danger.

The role of spiritual forests in ensuring the social life stabilization

The spiritual value brought by the spiritual forests is rarely measured in a clear and specific way. The symbol of the “spiritual forests” is appreciated in research on the ethnic minorities who are closely associated with the tropical forests in the Centre of Vietnam as well as in the Southeast Asia. The role of the spiritual forest in the field of social life is expressed in terms of maintaining and creating social spaces that practice and transmit traditional customs, indigenous knowledge and taboo connected with forest trees, wild animals, forest rituals, sacrifices,....

The traditional village was established from the forest, which is a valuable land for every community. In the traditional society of the ethnic minorities in the Central mountainous areas of Vietnam, village space is closed and self-sufficient that creates a cohesive community, equality, stability and durability in the relationship of the divine - human beings - the nature.

In particular, the form of management and rational use of forest resources in spiritual form has increased the relationship among individuals in society. The role of spiritual forests for social life is the harmony and social equality through rituals associated with forest deity, especially sacrifice ritual dedicated to the god of forest governance. Beside meaning of a religious ritual, the forest ritual also plays a social role in resolving conflicts among individuals and communities. At the ceremony, the village owner on behalf of the villagers prays for bumper harvests, peace. The friction between the two villages is also resolved through this ritual²⁰.

The role of spiritual forests in management and protection of forest resources

According to the point of view of natural resources management, the spiritual forests - a particular type of public land in ethnic minority areas, play a very important role in the exploitation and conservation of resources in general and forests in particular. As the role of the religious activities of the community, the spiritual forests have a function of protecting the resources with the rules of management, exploitation and use. In the conception of the people, the owners of the forest are invisible and paramount, they are the gods that control the entire forest, land. The spiritual cohesion of forests and human beings is the relationship between human beings and divine, so all transgressions are not merely related to social relationships but they are also spiritual relation with the deities. The sanctions against damage to the spiritual forests are the basis for establishing an order that ensures the harmony and stability towards the protection of forest resources.

At present, many challenges have been posed to the management and possession of the spiritual forests, which were strictly protected by religious and customary law. Changes have impacted on the absolute compliance of people, who previously believed in the divine, in the taboo related to the sacred forest. Among the causes, it is noteworthy that the process of “desacralization” is going on and breaking the spiritual regulations, affecting to beliefs. When the belief is reduced and the demand of life is increasing, people will be no longer hesitate to come the jungle and the sacred forest to cut trees, hunt animals.

4. Spiritual forests and current issues

In general, the State has made great efforts but it still can not prevent the forest degradation at present. There are too many changes to public land as well as forest resources and spiritual forests. Policies on forests in general and the spiritual forests in particular in the mountainous areas are facing many challenges, obstacles from living

conditions, differences in traditional culture, customs, habits and conflicts arise from management mechanism, decentralization, exploitation.

The form community- forest under traditional concepts, including spiritual forests such as the sacred forests and ghost forest have not been recognized by the texts, as well as the issued policies. The forests allocated to village communities have difficulty in identifying their rights, obligations and responsibilities in the case of deforestation, forest fires, etc. The existence of the sacred forest, the ghost forest, the forbidden forest has caused obstacles in the implementation of forest management and protection in general, between management agencies and local communities. The policy on forest land and forest allocation is not based on the characteristics of each type of forest such as special forest, protection forest and production forest or the traditional forest of community as spiritual forests (the ghost forest), sacred forests, forbidden forests, etc.), which are closely associated with watershed protection forests or primeval forests. On the other hand, the role of the community in forest management and protection is lacking.

The traditional spiritual forest of the ethnic minorities was a common property which was effectively managed by the community for many generations. Therefore, maintaining the spiritual forest type is very necessary, besides promoting the positive value of spiritual life, preserving cultural identity, it also contributes to the conservation of primeval precious forests (which are not managed appropriately and effectively).

First of all, it must be retained in the traditional spiritual forests because they are watershed forest that have the economic, cultural and religious significance for the ethnic minorities in the Highlands. At the same time, it needs to have a re-planning the forests for different purposes (timber supply forest, production forest, watershed forest and ghost forest, sacred forest).

To recognize and pay attention to the planning of forest to protect water resources, sacred forests and ghost forests of the community, return to the community their forests which they owned in the past and recognize the right to legally use. On the other hand, maintaining or respecting and recognizing the sacred forest, ghost forest, forbidden forest, etc., it needs to make statistics and classify forests as the basis for proposing appropriate management. Beside the law, the management of the community by “sacralization” is an important feature should be considered as a dialectical relationship, an inheritance in the preservation and promotion the values of spiritual forests as well as the other traditional cultural values.

It is necessary to implement the “ethics of forests” (đạo đức của rừng) management- a valuable management of land in ethnic minority areas. At present, there are three types of forest management, such as administrative management of the state agencies/managers; specialized management/ specialized agencies; traditional management/local community. The traditional management is a way of managing based on the indigenous knowledge, customary law and the “ethics of forests”, which has been recognized and promoted in the society of ethnic minorities. The “ethics of forests” or “culture of forest” is a term used to refer to a way of behavior/managing of local residents to their habitat.

The perceptions of possessions, behaviour, management, conventions, spiritual regulations reflect the worldview and human life of the people. For ethnic minorities in the mountainous areas, forest protection - forest conservation is very important. Therefore, it should integrate the “ethics of forests” norms and “culture of forest” into forest management regulations, it contributes to realizing the forest management of the State: preservation and sustainable development of forest resources. It needs to have a “co-management” to ensure sustainable development: the State (law) + Community (customary law) + faith.

In establishing the forest protection and development regulations, it needs to raise the role of customary law and the “sacralization” in

current management. Beside many legal documents on forest management, the village conventions and customary laws of ethnic minorities, which have been persisted throughout the time and social structure, still have their effects. The formation and existence of customary laws in protecting forest meet the conditions of ethnic minority so it should be recognized it as an important element²¹. The regulation establishment must have the participation of the community in order to have a consensus and its articles are consistent with the customary law, perceptions of the people. Promoting the role of customary law and “sacralization” in management will have an effective preservation the spiritual forests in the current condition.

It is necessary to restore, preserve the spiritual forests in the context of changing and integrating because many traditional cultural values as well as the indigenous knowledge towards the community forests and the spiritual forests is being eroded. In fact, people have been carrying out various activities such as deforestation, fishing, cattle grazing without following the rules in the sacred forests and ghost forests.

The economic profit of the forest has led to the violation the traditional laws on protecting the forest of many people in order to meet their material needs. In addition, the conflicts, the challenges in the aspect of faith in the community forests, the spiritual forests are common in every ethnic minority. Therefore, this study shows that restoration the traditional values, experiences and indigenous knowledge in protecting forest, faith in the spiritual forests is one of the most effective ways to protect and preserve forests. Understanding the role of the community forests, the spiritual forests, in having experiences of forest management, contributing to sustainable development of forest resources. /.

Notes:

- 1 Sigmund Freud (2001), *Nguồn gốc của văn hóa và tôn giáo (Vật tổ và cấm kỵ)* [Totem and Taboo], Nxb. Đại học Quốc gia, Hà Nội: 65 - 75.

- 2 Dương Văn Lượng (2008), “Một số vấn đề về văn hóa tâm linh ở Việt Nam hiện nay” (Some Issues of Spiritual Culture in Vietnam at present), *Cộng sản*, số 4/148.
- 3 Nguyễn Đăng Duy (1996), *Văn hóa tâm linh* (Spiritual Culture), Nxb. Hà Nội: 8 - 12, 27 - 29.
- 4 Sigmund Freud (2001), sđd: 9 - 10.
- 5 Nguyễn Hữu Thông, Lê Anh Tuấn, Trần Đình Hằng, Nguyễn Phước Bảo Đàn, Tôn Nữ Khánh Trang, Trần Đức Sáng, Trần Thanh Hoàng (2005), *Văn hóa làng miền núi Trung Bộ: Giá trị truyền thống và những bước chuyển lịch sử*, (Village Culture in the Central Mountainous Region: Traditional Values and Transformation), Nxb. Thuận Hóa, Huế: 309 - 310.
- 6 Phạm Ngọc Dương (2007), *Bí mật rừng cấm ở Pờ Ly Ngải*, (Secret of Forbidden Forest in Pờ Ly Ngải), <http://www.antg.cand.com.vn>.
- 7 Nguyễn Ngọc (2005), “Rừng trong văn hóa Tây Nguyên” (Forest in the Central Highlands’ Culture), in trong *Tản mạn nhớ & quên*, Nxb. Văn Nghệ Tp. Hồ Chí Minh: 61 - 64.
- 8 (Phan Đăng Nhật, Tô Đông Hải, Sakaya, Chamaliaq Riya Tienq, Trần Vũ (2003), *Luật tục Chăm và Luật tục Ra-glai* (The Customary Laws of Cham and Ra-glai), Nxb. Văn hóa dân tộc, Hà Nội: 754.
- 9 The sacred forest K’Mrong Prông A (Ea Tu, Buôn Ma Thuật, Đăk Lăk) still retains the original, associated with the love story between Y Đhin and H’Lăm that is handed down through generations with the sacredness, mystery.
- 10 According to experiences of the Katu/Cotu people in the North of Trường Sơn mountain range, when going to the forest to meet the palm trees, the banana trees they will turn back because these trees are considered the gateway, the beginning of the sacred forest.
- 11 The Thai people have “ghost forests”, the Hmong and the Tay people have “forbidden forests”, they like “rừng cãi” of the La Chí people: they are usually watersheds or primival forests; There is a custom law that people are not allowed to disturb the forests; have to respect, protect them in order to bring the majesty for the forests.
- 12 The La Chí people have “rừng cãi” where “bury” the sadness, resentment, disunity or hatred among members of the village. The forests play a very important role in community life. Therefore, establishing this forest is the first thing to do when setting up the village. (Nguyễn Quang, Thiều Gia (2010), *Rừng cãi* (www.thanhvien.com.vn)).
- 13 (Trần Văn Hạc (2010), *Vài nét về rừng thiêng của dân tộc Thái* (The Sacred Forests of the Thai People) (www.thiennhien.net)).
- 14 In the northwestern mountainous region, “for the Thai people, forests - especially sacred forests, have a very crucial role in their life and in spiritual life. These forests do not only provide fresh water for the village but they also give the Thai people many precious products. Besides, the forest is also a place of worship “Đông Xên”, the burial place of the deceased “Đông Pá Heo”.
- 15 Nguyễn Ngọc (2005), *ibid*: 61 - 64.

- 16 Lê Anh Tuấn (2001), “Lễ hội đâm trâu trong đời sống các dân tộc thiểu số ở Trường Sơn - Tây Nguyên”, *Thông tin Khoa học*, Phân viện Nghiên cứu Văn hóa Nghệ thuật tại Thành phố Huế, số tháng 9.
- 17 “rừng động” (Vibration forest) is a popular concept among many ethnic minorities in Vietnam, the natural phenomenon causes fallen trees, rebel animals, vandalism ...
- 18 Nguyễn Văn Mạnh, Nguyễn Xuân Hồng, Nguyễn Hữu Thông (2001), *Luật tục của người Tà Ôi, Cơ Tu, Bru-Vân Kiều ở Quảng Trị - Thừa Thiên Huế*, (The Customary Laws of the Tà Ôi, Cơ Tu, Bru-Vân Kiều People in Quảng Trị - Thừa Thiên Huế), Nxb. Thuận Hóa, Huế: 301 - 304.
- 19 Nguyễn Văn Mạnh, Nguyễn Xuân Hồng, Nguyễn Hữu Thông (2001), *ibid*: 301 - 304.
- 20 Lê Thị Diên (2002), “Rừng thiêng - một tập quán bảo tồn tài nguyên rừng cổ truyền của người Dao tại Chiêm Hóa - Tuyên Quang, (The Sacred forests- a Customary law of the Dao in Chiêm Hóa - Tuyên Quang), *Thông tin Khoa học Lâm nghiệp*, số 2: 19 - 22.
- 21 Lê Thị Diên (2002), *tlđđ*, tr. 19 - 22.
- 22 Forest worship is called “Nghê bhuôi chung” in Katu language, “Chéc Vát” in Bru-Vân Kiều language, “Nhu Yang Bri” in Mạ language...
- 23 It should pay attention to the customary law. It does not pay much attention to the punishment, to responsibility, but rather to the prevention of crime, education. As a result, the customary law has effectively influence the lives of the people.

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