

BAC SON SAFETY ZONE: HISTORY AND PRESENT

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 06/02/2025	According to Decision No. 1714/QĐ-TTg dated September 23, 2013, and Decision No. 2475/QĐ-TTg dated December 19, 2016, by the Prime Minister, 10 communes and 1 town in Bac Son district is recognized as part of the Central Safe Zone in Lang Son province during the resistance against French colonialism. The main purpose of this article is to study the history and role of Bac Son from the Bac Son Uprising (1940) to the end of the resistance against French colonialism (1954) to clarify why Bac Son was recognized as a Central Safe Zone. Additionally, the authors clarify the current status of the Bac Son Safe Zone and discuss issues related to the preservation and promotion of the historical and cultural values of the region. Using historical and logical methods as the main approach, combined with ethnographic fieldwork, synthesis, and analysis methods, the authors conducted the research to address the research goals and tasks. The research results show that from the Bac Son Uprising to the victory of the national resistance against France, the land and people of Bac Son made significant contributions to the revolutionary cause of the nation, deserving of being a Central Safe Zone during the resistance against French colonialism. Today, it is essential to develop solutions to preserve and promote the values of the Safe Zone in this region.
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AN TOÀN KHU BẮC SƠN: LỊCH SỬ VÀ HIỆN TẠI

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài: 06/02/2025	Theo quyết định số 1714/QĐ-TTg ngày 23/09/2013 và quyết định số 2475/QĐ-TTg ngày 19/12/2016 Thủ tướng Chính phủ, 10 xã và 1 thị trấn của huyện Bắc Sơn được công nhận thuộc vùng An toàn khu của Trung ương ở tỉnh Lạng Sơn trong kháng chiến chống Pháp. Nghiên cứu lịch sử, vai trò của vùng đất Bắc Sơn từ khởi nghĩa Bắc Sơn (năm 1940) đến hết kháng chiến chống thực dân Pháp (năm 1954) để làm rõ giá trị lịch sử - văn hóa, lý do Bắc Sơn được công nhận là An toàn khu của Trung ương là mục đích nghiên cứu chính của bài báo. Bên cạnh đó, nhóm tác giả làm rõ hiện trạng An toàn khu Bắc Sơn hiện nay và bàn luận những vấn đề đặt ra để bảo tồn, phát huy giá trị lịch sử - văn hóa của vùng đất. Với phương pháp lịch sử, phương pháp logic là chủ đạo, kết hợp phương pháp điền dã dân tộc học, tổng hợp, phân tích, nhóm tác giả thực hiện nghiên cứu và giải quyết mục đích, nhiệm vụ nghiên cứu đề ra. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy từ khởi nghĩa Bắc Sơn đến thắng lợi kháng chiến toàn quốc chống Pháp, đất và người Bắc Sơn đã có những đóng góp quan trọng cho sự nghiệp cách mạng của dân tộc, xứng đáng là An toàn khu của Trung ương trong kháng chiến chống Pháp và ngày nay cần thiết có các giải pháp để giữ gìn và phát huy giá trị An toàn khu của vùng đất ấy.
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1. Introduction

A safe zone is a territorial area possessing comprehensive elements of “geographical advantage and social harmony”, particularly characterized by a solid revolutionary mass base, ensuring security for cadres and revolutionary leadership organizations to operate. Established during the August Revolution of 1945 and the nationwide resistance against French colonialism (1946 - 1954), safe zones served not only as protective havens for leadership organs and revolutionary forces but also functioned as sites for implementing Party and State policies [1].

The issue of central safe zones during the anti-French resistance period has generally been studied by numerous scholars from various perspectives and scales. Tran [2] elucidated the formation process of the Central Safe Zone in Tuyen Quang and the operational security measures for the strategic resistance headquarters within this safe zone during the anti-colonial French resistance. Regarding the role of the Dinh Hoa Safe Zone in the Viet Bac Autumn-Winter Campaign of 1947, Dang et al. [3] provided a comprehensive overview of the safe zone and its significance for the Vietnamese revolutionary movement. Addressing the same subject, Nguyen et al. [4] highlighted the crucial role of the Dinh Hoa Safe Zone within the Viet Bac resistance base area. Beyond Tuyen Quang and Thai Nguyen, scholars have conducted research on the Bac Son Safe Zone, addressing to varying degrees its historical formation, role, and current status. Regarding the Bac Son Uprising (1940) - a historical event intrinsically linked to the Bac Son region, several studies have elucidated the uprising, its role, and significance for the Vietnamese revolutionary movement [5], [6]. Additionally, Duong [7] highlighted the role of local ethnic populations in the Bac Son Uprising, Bui [8] clarified the interconnection between the Bac Son Uprising and the formation of the Bac Son – Vo Nhai resistance base. The resistance activities and base-building efforts in Bac Son – Vo Nhai from July 1941 to February 1942 have also been the subject of scholarly investigation [9]. Notably, addressing the current status of the Bac Son Safe Zone, Do et al. [10] presented the tangible heritage associated with the Bac Son Safe Zone, emphasizing the importance of the Bac Son Uprising historical site.

In general, the history and current status of the Bac Son Safe Zone have been addressed in research works from diverse perspectives and analytical approaches. However, until now, there has not been a comprehensive, systematic study on this subject. Therefore, this paper aims to elucidate the history and role of the Bac Son region from the Bac Son uprising (1940) through the end of the resistance against French colonialism (1954) to clarify its historical-cultural value and the rationale for Bac Son’s designation as a Central Committee safe zone. Additionally, the authors examine the current state of the Bac Son safe zone and discuss the emerging issues concerning the preservation and promotion of the region's historical and cultural values.

2. Research methods

Based on written material and fieldwork material, the authors primarily employ historical and logical methodologies. The historical method is utilized to study and present the historical progression from the Bac Son uprising (1940) to the victory in the resistance against France (1954). The logical method aims to analyze and evaluate the role and impact of the Bac Son uprising, along with the land and people of Bac Son, on the Vietnamese revolutionary victory during this period, thereby confirming the region’s status as a safe zone. Additionally, the authors employ ethnographic fieldwork methods to conduct on-site research at the present-day Bac Son safe zone, along with interdisciplinary research methods (statistical analysis, synthesis, analysis, etc.).

3. Results and discussion

3.1. From the Bac Son uprising to the August 1945 Revolutionary Victory

In early 1930, the Communist Party of Vietnam was established with a rigorous organizational structure and a sound political platform. It assumed sole leadership of the Vietnamese revolution,

unified the forces and strength of the entire Vietnamese nation, and timely leading the people into a new period of struggle. The revolutionary surge of 1930 - 1931, culminating in the “Xô viết Nghệ Tĩnh” movement, demonstrated the extraordinary revolutionary spirit and immense power of our people. Millions of peasants rose up alongside the working class struggles against imperialism and feudalism. By late 1931, our country’s revolution entered a period of decline. However, due to our people’s patriotic spirit, their fervent desire for independence and freedom, and the loyalty and resolute fighting spirit of cadres and party members, the revolution quickly emerged from this declining period. It then advanced toward a new surge - the democratic movement of 1936 - 1939. The Party Central Committee Conference in November 1939 marked a significant shift in revolutionary direction and methodology. It transitioned from democratic and livelihood struggles to directly overthrowing the imperialist regime and its collaborators. Additionally, it moved from legal and semi-legal activities to clandestine, illegal operations and armed uprising. The conference emphasized that the Party must resolutely focus the masses’ struggles on opposing imperialism and its collaborators.

In June 1940, Nazi Germany captured Paris, forcing the French government to sign a surrender agreement on June 22, 1940. The French defeat in their homeland weakened the French colonial administration in Indochina. Exploiting this opportunity, Japanese forces advanced from Guangxi (China) to occupy Lang Son. Although the French forces there commanded by General Mennerat were numerous, they had lost fighting spirit, with most surrendering to the Japanese forces while the remainder fled in panic via the Diem He - Binh Gia - Bac Son route to Thai Nguyen. The French colonial administration collapsed in many areas, with district chiefs in That Khe, Diem He, Trang Dinh, Bac Son, and Na Sam either fleeing or being captured [5]. In this situation, masses in several locations rose up to destroy government offices, punish mandarins, seize weapons, and resist looting by French stragglers. In Bac Son district, seizing this favorable opportunity, on September 25, 1940, several party members who had recently escaped from Lang Son prison (Nong Van Cun, Hoang Dinh Rue...), joined with party members from Bac Son (Duong Cong Binh, Hoang Van Han...). They decided to mobilize the masses for uprising, establishing an Uprising Committee and armed self-defense units to initiate the insurrection. Faced with conditions ripe for an uprising to fight the French and expel the Japanese, on the evening of September 26, 1940, at Nong Luc village temple (Hung Vu commune), the Hung Vu commune party cell organized a meeting. The meeting had the direct participation of Bac Son District Party Committee members, including: Hoang Dinh Rue, Nong Van Cun, and Duong Van Thuc. Those attending the meeting discussed, analyzed the situation, and determined the direction and actions for attacking Mo Nhai post and establishing the Uprising Command [7].

At 20:00 on September 27, 1940, after ambushing French soldiers at Canh Tiem pass, the self-defense forces and over 300 civilians (including some local militia members, canton, and commune units), equipped with rifles, flintlock guns, spears, and clubs, divided into 3 contingents to attack Mo Nhai post and surround the Bac Son district headquarters. With overwhelming force, the insurgents quickly achieved victory, taking control of the district headquarters, forcing District Chief Hoang Van Sy and the soldiers at Mo Nhai post to flee across Canh Dan pass to Bang Mac. Immediately following the victory, at dawn on September 28, 1940, the Uprising Committee assembled the masses and organized a rally at the Bac Son district administrative center, declaring the abolition of the enemy administration, organizing forces to ensure security, and maintaining activities in the villages. On the same day, people from neighboring localities such as Hung Vu, Chieu Vu, Nam Nhi, and Trang Son simultaneously rose up to expel and disarm the defeated French forces. Faced with the rapid growth of the mass movement and insurgent forces, the Japanese hastily compromised with the French and facilitated French concentration of forces to suppress the revolution. *“On October 1, 1940, the Binh Gia agent brought 17 indigenous guards to recapture Binh Gia post. Boócđiê - the commander of Dinh Ca post (Thai Nguyen) mobilized forces to attack the central area of the Bac*

Son uprising. The French colonialists terrorized the population by burning 14 houses in Minh Dan village, Hung Vu commune” [11, p.112]. Due to disparities in forces and weaponry, the French colonialists recaptured the district headquarters, re-established administrative apparatus in Bac Son, and conducted searches, arrests, torture, and executions of uprising participants, destroying several revolutionary bases and suppressing the uprising.

Although the Bac Son uprising was defeated, it left an immensely significant impact on the Vietnamese revolution. The gunfire of the Bac Son uprising awakened the revolutionary fighting spirit of people throughout the country. As the 8th Central Committee Conference accurately assessed, the Bac Son uprising was *“the gunfire signaling the nationwide uprising, marking the beginning of armed struggle by ethnic groups in an Indochinese country”* [12, p.109]. Later, when discussing the Bac Son uprising, Comrade Truong Chinh remarked that *“the Bac Son uprising will forever be recorded in our nation’s revolutionary history as an exemplar of the revolutionary heroism of the Vietnamese people”* [13].

On October 14, 1940, a public assembly was convened in Vu Lang commune, with over 100 participants. Comrade Tran Dang Ninh officially declared the establishment of the Bac Son Guerrilla Unit and passionately urged the local population to actively support and continue intensifying the revolutionary uprising. He meticulously explained the Party’s strategic approach to combating French colonial forces and expelling Japanese occupation, while articulating the urgent tasks confronting local Party members and citizens: to organize armed military units, establish strategic base areas, and engage in guerrilla warfare to resist enemy white terror tactics.

Implementing the directives of the 7th Central Conference (November 1940) regarding the preservation and cultivation of armed forces during the Bac Son uprising to form the initial military capital for the revolution. In February 1941, on the way to attend the 8th Central Conference at Pac Bo (Cao Bang), convened by leader Nguyen Ai Quoc; a Central Party delegation comprising Comrades Truong Chinh, Hoang Van Thu, Hoang Quoc Viet, and Tran Dang Ninh paused at Khuoi Noi, Vu Le commune (Bac Son). Here, the Central Committee members convened with the Bac Son Party Committee and the Bac Son Guerrilla Unit Command to assess the situation and disseminate the Party’s guidelines. *“Comrade Hoang Van Thu, a member of the Party Central Standing Committee and Secretary of the Northern Regional Committee, communicated to all cadres and Party members of the Bac Son Party Committee the Central Committee’s decision to rename the Bac Son Guerrilla Unit as the Bac Son National Salvation Army”* [11, p.129]. Upon its establishment, the unit comprised 32 comrades, with Comrade Luong Van Tri as the commander. On behalf of the Party Central Committee, Comrade Hoang Van Thu assigned the Bac Son National Salvation Army the mission: *“actively employ armed operational methods, consolidate and expand guerrilla bases, and rapidly develop forces comprehensively to be prepared for the opportune moment to initiate an uprising and seize political power”* [11, p.131]. On behalf of the Bac Son National Salvation Army, Comrade Luong Van Tri pledged to the Party Central Committee and the Northern Regional Committee a resolute commitment to fulfilling the assigned task.

Following its establishment, the Bac Son National Salvation Army reorganized its squads, strategically assigning officers and soldiers to specific operational zones while simultaneously intensifying propaganda and mobilization efforts to develop revolutionary grassroots support and progressively expand the Bac Son - Vo Nhai base area. At the central base of Khuoi Noi, temporary shelters were constructed, and training grounds were prepared to continue organizing military and political training programs. The Bac Son National Salvation Army also launched a bulletin titled “Guerrilla”, with Comrade Luong Van Tri serving as the chief editor, aimed at supporting propaganda work during the revolutionary movement’s development and the establishment of the Bac Son - Vo Nhai base. The platoon simultaneously conducted training and engaged in military operations designed to protect the revolutionary base and continuously develop its forces. This represented the inevitable outcome of an energetic revolutionary

movement, *“the guerrilla unit’s operational territory progressively expanded across multiple communes in Bac Son, including Huu Vinh, Vu Le, and extending to Lau Thuong, Phu Thuong, Trang Xa, La Hien (Vo Nhai) and Cay Thi (Dong Hy, Thai Nguyen)”* [14, p.239].

Following the 8th Central Conference of the Party (May 1941) chaired by leader Nguyen Ai Quoc at Pac Bo (Cao Bang), Central Party Committee members including Truong Chinh, Hoang Van Thu, Hoang Quoc Viet, Phung Chi Kien, and other central cadres remained in Bac Son for 42 days to directly guide the revolutionary movement and disseminate the 8th Central Conference Resolution to Party members of the Bac Son Party Committee and soldiers of the Bac Son National Salvation Army. However, local reactionary elements became aware of the Central Committee delegation’s location. French colonial forces intensified their suppression and terror tactics. *“With such forces, the French colonials hoped to accomplish two objectives simultaneously: capturing leading cadres and the Party’s strategic organs to dissolve the Communist movement in Indochina, and completely eliminating the National Salvation Army while suppressing the revolutionary movement in Bac Son”* [11, p.152]. The enemy advanced by establishing fortifications, systematically dividing forests and villages for sweeping operations. Wherever they progressed, they arrested people, pillaged property, burned houses and farmlands to intimidate the population. Civilians were forced into concentrated camps surrounded by towering bamboo fences and guard watchtowers. Strict regulations permitted residents to leave camps only between 8 AM and 4 PM. The enemy’s insidious strategy of separating the people from the National Salvation Army posed significant challenges. For an extended period, the Bac Son population endured extreme hardships, sacrificing personal comfort to shelter and protect revolutionary cadres. Throughout the Central Committee and Northern Regional Committee’s revolutionary activities in Bac Son, the locals provided absolute protection, and created optimal working conditions. Numerous families selflessly assisted revolutionary cadres, ensuring no personnel were captured or killed during their operations. Upon safely escorting the Central Party Committee members, *“the enemy discovered and implemented white terror against the Bac Son population. The Mo Pia hamlet (Tan Lap commune) was massacred, while Ban It hamlet (Vu Le commune) saw 16 households completely destroyed, burned, and killed, with only one child managing to escape”* [15, p.69].

The establishment of the Bac Son National Salvation Army (National Salvation Army I) marked a critical developmental milestone for the revolutionary movement in Bac Son and the entire national revolutionary endeavor. It is a foundational premise for the Party’s subsequent formation of National Salvation Army II and III. The Bac Son National Salvation Army was one of the first revolutionary armed units organized, educated, and trained by the Party, and simultaneously constituted one of the primordial units that would eventually evolve into the contemporary Vietnamese People’s Army. From its inception, the Bac Son National Salvation Army not only led armed struggle movements in Bac Son but also provided absolute protection for Central Party Committee and Northern Regional Committee cadres throughout their operational period. Critically, the unit ensured the complete safety of Party Central Standing Committee members during their journey to and from the Eighth Central Conference at Pac Bo (Cao Bang province). Progressing from the initial Mo Nhai post assault during the Bac Son Uprising, the unit advanced through establishing the Bac Son Guerrilla unit and subsequently developing the Bac Son - Vo Nhai base area. The unit gradually expanded its operational territory across seven districts (Bac Son, Vo Nhai, Phu Luong, Dinh Hoa, Dai Tu, Son Duong, Cho Don), making a substantial contribution to establishing the Party’s first liberated zone prior to the nationwide August 1945 General Uprising.

3.2. Bac Son during the nationwide resistance against French colonialism (1946 - 1954)

From victory during the August Revolution 1945, the birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam represented a critical turning point in national history. However, the nascent republic

immediately confronted formidable challenges that threatened its very existence. In Lang Son, revolutionary armed forces and locals swiftly entered the town on August 25, 1945, rapidly seizing enemy strongholds. On August 26, 1945, the reactionary army of the Republic of China advanced into Lang Son through Dong Dang. The Republic of China military commanders permitted their soldiers unrestricted occupation of civilian residences as military quarters, engaging in widespread pillaging food and provisions extraction from and residential. The surrounding regional circumstances became exceptionally complex. While the Republic of China military forces occupied Lang Son and several districts including Trang Dinh, Van Uyen, and Loc Binh; Bac Son remained notably unoccupied by these foreign troops. Nevertheless, the Republic of China military strategically deployed several collaborators to Bac Son to gather intelligence, disrupt local security, circulate malicious rumors, and discredit the Government. Simultaneously, these forces introduced depreciated currency to systematically extract goods and destabilize local markets, intentionally impeding production and undermining the population's economic sustainability.

On December 18, 1946, French colonial forces launched an armed assault to capture the capital Hanoi, officially initiating their second invasion of Vietnam. When the resistance against France war erupted, Bac Son district, while not directly confronting the enemy, was strategically positioned as a critical military zone and was consequently selected as the province's resistance base.

In 1947, the Ordnance Unit of the Ministry of National Defense relocated to Ban Thi hamlet, Long Dong commune, Bac Son district, establishing a weapons production workshop to supply the battlefield. Here, 21 households with over 100 inhabitants voluntarily supported by providing raw materials to construct workshop facilities at the base of rocky mountains. Notably, the locals further assisted the unit by extracting earth from Bat Cave to filter water, which was then condensed and mixed with charcoal of chinaberry to manufacture explosive materials for grenades. Additionally, residents generously accommodated 8-10 workers, providing lodging in their personal residences.

Adhering to the spirit of the 3rd Central Committee Conference with its guiding principle "everything for the frontline, everything for victory", the District Party Committee and District Resistance Administrative Committee intensified leadership and guidance, motivating citizens to actively restore production and revive several handicraft industries serving both local livelihood and resistance contributions. The Long Dong commune population autonomously established multiple forges in Tien Dao hamlet, manufacturing weapons, matches, and producing rudimentary armaments to support the resistance efforts. From 1947 to 1950, the Ordnance Engineering Workshop unit successfully produced over 3.000 kilograms of explosives for battlefield deployment. Local inhabitants collectively contributed thousands of labor days to transport raw materials, weapons, and various logistical resources.

From late 1949, the Border Front Command Headquarters (Border Region Command) established its operational base in Bac Mo hamlet, Huu Vinh commune, Bac Son district to facilitate military training and combat simulation exercises in preparation for the Dong Khe Campaign. Supreme Commander General Vo Nguyen Giap and Comrade Chu Van Tan selected Tham Hoay cave in Hoan Thuong hamlet, Chien Thang commune, Bac Son district as a weapons transshipment depot to support the Border Campaign in 1950. Throughout the Border Campaign, the Bac Son Party Committee successfully organized and mobilized 6.352 individuals, with nearly 79.353 person-instances participating in support services. *"The multi-ethnic population of the district contributed 96 cattle, 80 pigs, and 5.220 chickens. Notably, the Duong Van Van family from Lan Pan hamlet, Tan Lap commune, donated over 1.000 kg of provisions, 2 cattle, 3 pigs, and numerous chickens and ducks to support combat efforts"* [11, pp. 202-203]. Simultaneously, Bac Son served as a reserve storage and transshipment station for Soviet Union and Chinese military aid, crucial for supporting the Dien Bien Phu Campaign in 1954.

3.3. The Bac Son safe zone

In the revolutionary and resistance history of our people under the Party's leadership, Bac Son, with its strategic position, became a crucial component of the magnificent Viet Bac base area. Under the Party committee's leadership, Bac Son's revolutionary masses wrote a brilliant chapter in the armed struggle against French colonialism. The heroic Bac Son uprising on September 27, 1940 was the first armed uprising under the Party's leadership. From this, the Bac Son Guerrilla Team was established, later renamed the First National Salvation Squad - the first armed force led by the Party and the precursor to the Vietnamese People's Army. In recognition of the Bac Son Guerrilla Team's profound contributions, on April 14, 1948, President Ho Chi Minh signed Decree No. 163-SL, awarding the First-Class Military Merit Medal to the Bac Son Guerrilla Team.

The ethnic communities of Bac Son district played a significant role in sheltering and ensuring the safety of high-ranking central government officials and the Bac Ky regional committee during their activities in Bac Son. Simultaneously, the area was a communication relay station connecting the central leadership with the Bac Ky regional committee and other areas, and functioned as a repository for documentation supporting the Party's revolutionary cadre training efforts.

With those great contributions, the Bac Son district Party committee and ethnic communities were honored with prestigious state accolades, including: Third-Class Independence Medal; Labor Medals of First, Second, and Third Class; the People's Armed Forces of Bac Son District received the First-Class Military Merit Medal. The Bac Son Guerrilla Team was awarded the First-Class Military Merit Medal by President Ho Chi Minh. Bac Son district was conferred the title of Hero of the People's Armed Forces during the resistance against French colonialism. On September 23, 2013, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 1714/QĐ-TTg recognizing the safe zone communes in Lang Son province. Accordingly, the district has 01 commune received a Second-Class Labor Medal; 05 out of 20 communes were awarded the Hero of the People's Armed Forces title during the resistance against French. According to the decision, 8 communes of Bac Son district were designated as central safe zone communes during the the resistance against French, including: Vu Le, Tan Huong, Tan Lap, Vu Lang, Bac Son, Quynh Son, Huu Vinh, and Hung Vu. On December 19, 2016, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 2475/QĐ-TTg recognizing the safe zone communes in Lang Son province. This included recognizing 4 communes and towns of Bac Son district as central safe zone communes during the the resistance against French: Chien Thang, Chieu Vu, Long Dong, and Bac Son. Bac Son district was officially recognized as part of the central safe zone in Lang Son province during the the resistance against French colonialism.

Currently, the Bac Son safe zone comprises 18 administrative units, consisting of 17 communes and 01 town. The Bac Son safe zone contains 12 historical sites, notably the Bac Son Uprising Memorial Site. This memorial site served as a safe zone for sheltering and protecting high-ranking central government and Bac Ky Regional Committee officials during their revolutionary activities in Bac Son. It functioned as a critical communication relay station connecting the central leadership with the Bac Ky Regional Committee and other operational zones, and served as a repository for documentation supporting the Party's revolutionary cadre training efforts.

The memorial site comprises 12 locations, which were designated as national historical sites in 1992. These sites are distributed across six communes: Tan Huong, Hung Vu, Vu Lang, Vu Le, Tan Lap, and Long Dong. The sites include: Bo Tat (Mo Tat), Na Kheo hill, Nong Luc communal house, Mo Nhai garrison, Tham Thoong - Dap Di, Vu Lang school, Sa Khao (Phia Khao), Khuoi Noi, Lan Pan, Lan Tay - Mo Pia, Mo Re cave, and Tam Canh pass. Currently, artifacts, documents, and historical materials related to these sites are preserved and exhibited at

the Bac Son Museum and the Vu Lang Traditional Exhibition House, totaling 138 items, comprising 127 original artifacts and 11 reconstructed items.

In recent years, recognizing the role, value, and significance of the historical site system within the district, provincial authorities and Bac Son local government have demonstrated heightened attention to site preservation and value enhancement. Inspection and monitoring efforts have been strengthened to ensure public order, environmental hygiene, and preventive measures against site encroachment and damage. Overall, state management of national and provincial historical site conservation and valorization has received leadership oversight from the District Party Committee, administrative guidance from the District People's Committee, and collaborative support from relevant sectoral agencies and local jurisdictions.

From 2019 to present, several district historical sites have received focused investment and restoration, including Nong Luc communal house, Mo Nhai garrison (Hung Vu commune), Quynh Son communal house (Bac Quynh commune), and various components of the Tam Canh pass memorial site. The total funding from governmental and societal sources over the past five years exceeded 20 billion VNĐ. Notably, the district proactively collaborated with relevant authorities to develop conservation, restoration, and valorization plans for the Bac Son Uprising National Special Historical Site. Additionally, memorial sites were demarcated and protected, with commemorative steles, event markers, symbols, and victory monuments installed to communicate the sites' content and significance to the public. These activities have significantly enhanced community awareness regarding local historical site preservation and value enhancement.

However, the preservation and valorization of historical and cultural sites within the Bac Son Safe Zone currently face numerous challenges and difficulties. Primarily, similar to many other localities, Bắc Sơn confronts the inherent conflict between economic development imperatives, urbanization processes, and the requirement to maintain the original integrity of historical and cultural sites. The rapid urbanization, new construction projects, and transportation infrastructure expansion potentially exert negative impacts on the region's heritage sites. Moreover, site preservation demands substantial financial resources, while existing budgetary allocations remain inadequate, and local financial capacities are significantly constrained. Currently, site restoration and conservation through societal mobilization approaches, though prevalent, encounter management challenges due to the absence of professionally trained specialist personnel and competent supervisory teams. This situation precipitates circumstances where certain heritage sites remain either incompletely restored, improperly conserved, or are even demolished and inappropriately modernized. Furthermore, "Due to natural and societal influences, numerous historical sites have deteriorated. Promotional and image-building efforts have not achieved optimal effectiveness. Within the district, 38 traditional festivals have progressively disappeared over time, remaining unreclaimed" [16].

To effectively preserve and enhance the value of historical-cultural sites within the safe zone, local authorities should: 1 – Although Bac Son has yet to experience rapid and robust economic growth, balancing the preservation of historical relics with socio-economic development remains essential. While heritage conservation and economic development may seem contradictory, they are, in fact, interconnected, as both contribute to the overarching goal of sustainable development. 2 – It is necessary to promote the socialization of heritage conservation and the enhancement of historical relics' value. To achieve this, emphasis should be placed on education, public awareness campaigns, and fostering a sense of responsibility among all social groups. Community awareness and education regarding heritage preservation and valorization can be implemented through specific strategies, such as: digital communication and promotional efforts via websites and social media platforms; collaborative outreach with Lạng Sơn newspapers and the Lạng Sơn Provincial Television Broadcasting Station to disseminate information about local historical sites. In addition, agencies at all levels can organize interactive events, knowledge

competitions and educational campaigns; conduct seminars and academic exhibitions to create direct opportunities for the public to participate and explore. In particular, locality need to integrating the historical context and current status of the Bac Son Safe Zone into history and local history educational curricula, including practical learning experiences and organized field study tours for students. Heritage preservation should be carried out flexibly, ensuring it aligns with local residents' daily lives without disrupting their livelihoods. At the same time, a reasonable balance must be struck between the interests of the local community and the value of the relics. When historical sites generate economic benefits, the local population will develop a stronger sense of awareness and responsibility for their preservation. 3 – Historical and cultural activities should be integrated with tourism development, alongside efforts to enhance the visibility and attractiveness of heritage sites to draw more visitors. Bac Son District, in collaboration with the local relic management board, should prioritize marketing strategies and market research, organizing historical and cultural events linked to heritage sites to support sustainable tourism development. 4 – To ensure the effective protection and promotion of heritage values, it is crucial to strengthen monitoring and timely enforcement against violations related to historical sites. Compliance with legal regulations on heritage preservation will improve the effectiveness of conservation efforts. The inspection and supervision process will be more effective when there is close coordination between relevant authorities, local governments, and the community.

4. Conclusion

From the Bac Son Uprising to the end of the resistance against France (1946 – 1954), the land and people of Bac Son made substantial contributions to the ultimate victory of the national liberation struggle. Through these remarkable contributions, Bac Son genuinely emerged as a central safe zone during the resistance against France. Currently, Bac Son has been officially recognized as the Central Committee's safe zone during the resistance against France and has received targeted development investments. However, the preservation and valorization of Bac Son's historical-cultural heritage within the socio-economic development context remain constrained by certain challenges and limitations. In the subsequent developmental phase, preserving and promoting the historical-cultural values of the Bac Son safe zone will necessitate dedicated attention from administrative levels and sectors, with particular emphasis on the responsibility of local communities.

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