

PRESERVE AND UPHOLD NATIONAL CULTURAL CHARACTERS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*Summarized by
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Preserve and uphold national cultural characters for sustainable development is topic of International Conference held by University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hanoi National University and Bansomdejchaoraya Rajabhat University (Thailand) in Hanoi on 17/12/2010. The Conference attracts attendance of many scholars and lecturers of anthropology, ethnology, linguistic, sociology... from Thailand, China, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

At the opening speech, Prof. Dr. Nguyễn Văn Khánh – Rector of University of Social Sciences and Humanities stressed the trend of regionalization, internationalization which is taking place strongly and bringing many opportunities of development for many nations as well as challenges, difficulties to choose polices, ways of developments, preserve traditional cultural values. Under the impact of globalization, each culture can not exist isolated but it has to interfere and follow the influence of outside cultures. For countries with multi ethnic group, preservation and

uphold national cultural characters with specific lifestyles associated with cultural diversification and sustainable development become one of the urgent issues. The Conference focuses on 5 topics:

1. *Culture and regional nuance*
2. *Customs and language are foundations of cultural nuance*
3. *Process of forming native knowledge and development.*
4. *Preserve cultural heritage in the trend of regionalization, globalization*
5. *Attitude of authorities and communities.*

Three speeches were presented at the conference: From approach of local knowledge development of ethnic groups for sustainable development under viewpoints of anthropology (made by Asst. Prof. Dr. Lâm Bá Nam, Hanoi National University) to impact of lingual and cultural knowledge on second language development (made by Asst. Prof. Dr. Panornuang Sudasna Na Ayudhya, Bansomdejchaoraya Rajabhat University, Thailand) and Acknowledgement of relations between

Choang, Thái and Tày ethnic group under viewpoints of diachronic and modern (made by Prof. Phạm Hồng Quý, Guangxi National University, China). After that, 43 reports were introduced at two subcommittees. Subcommittee 1: Culture and sustainable development discuss the formation and development of native knowledge, culture and regional cultural nuance, customs and practices and languages especially preservation and uphold traditional cultural values for sustainable development of each country. Subcommittee 2: Experience in planning and implementing policy of preservation, uphold cultures of ethnic groups for sustainable development focus on discussion of proposals, solutions direction of community to preserve culture. Particularly, one of urgent issues to preserve practices, language of ethnic group, policy of community to preserve cultures, roles of mass media to preserve and develop traditional cultural values, anti violence in communities, especially among the youth...

Besides, there are some deep studies about development of information security, effectiveness of websites...

Herein under is main contents which discussed at the Conference:

1. Issues which attract most attention is the formation and development of "local knowledge", is defined as ever-knowledge system about the world created by human community, developed and attached to history of community such as specific details of each local. It does not exist as a

scientific theory but attached to an area however, it is not completely popular.

Emphasize the role of "local knowledge" which lowered by chauvinist, considered as "unscientific" even "undeveloped", experience shows some consequence of defiance of local knowledge on the implementation of "green revolution" in India in 60s-70s of the 20th century, because they did not pay attention to the participation as well as experience of community, it caused exhaustion of reproduce natural resources, reduce soil quality, people is lack of food; or during tree conversion in 40s-50s of 20th century when they reject poly-culture model- traditional intercrop and change all agriculture land to single-culture model because it brings high productivity. However, this model faced with many kinds of epidemic causes to a dead loss in many cases. In Vietnam, some development projects are showing similar insufficiency such as household separation and dissolution of long house in Tây Nguyên in 80s of 20th century; the construction of common house for native groups within the scope of agricultural diversification project in Trường Sơn - Tây Nguyên area from 2002 to 2004; resettlement model in Tân Lập for Sơn La Hydroelectric Plant... Consequently, this defiance leads to destruction of ecological environment, exhaustion of natural resources due to inadequate attention on folk knowledge about water for sloping land cultivation and terraced fields cultivation which have specific advantage in environment

protection but exploit soil, water, forest unsystematically.

Thus, forecast of natural and social phenomenon of Thái ethnic group in Northwest of Vietnam, of citizens in Trường Sơn – Tây Nguyên, or more specific, knowledge about traditional food of Bangkradee group, Bangkok (Thailand),... generally, native knowledge need to be filtered, preserved and upheld for present and future life.

Although fold medicine and pharmacy was paid attention early (for example, there is a famous works of Prof. Đỗ Tất Lợi), there are many remedy to cure folk disease of Dao, Thái, Mường, Mông, Ê đê, Gia rai ethnic group... which should be analyzed deeply to apply scientifically, including traditional food with nutritional values and strengthen our health and for treatment, if vegetation is interested in by the world.

Study practice about house, land use, village management shows that anthropology needs to find adaptive value of popular local knowledge in many times, it is suitable to scientific knowledge. Before 1945, there were village patriarch, order, hierarchy reserved in traditional village to support society management.

For example, among 65 customs which was record in document hundred years ago, besides normal customs like: pray for east weather, longevity anniversary, reach old age ceremony, marriage ceremony, mourning ceremony, customs of responsibility for mourning ceremony, membership, customs of

enrollment for the army, watching and punishment for watching evasion, saboteur, thief, robber, stolen user, bandit abetting, gambler, superstition... Commend and reward for those who report crime, arrest thief, robber, tiger hunter... And remarkably is customs of public expense punish slave trafficking, private revenge, fire causing, forest fire causing, forest trees felling... These customs govern life of people here in constant war years, destroyed by enemies. When life was disordered, it required people “not to forget their task during new happiness” many unwritten rules established and applied. Due to hard life during and after war, people can ignore and lessen the requirement...even forget regulations agreed by whole community as in Hữu Thu commune (Thoát Lãng district, Lạng Sơn province).

When look back this document, we can see many values up to now, not only here but larger because it can contribute to the construction of new cultural lifestyle or build lifestyle for mountainous people to adapt changeable society. After Democratic Ordinance for local established (2003), there is head of village, public security of village in addition to civil regulation, self-control with many layers: village - relatives - family, at residential place : street – neighbor, in term of association : coeval – peer – group (badminton, sports..) or in higher level: corporation (sport, arts..).

In context of globalization, modern lifestyle, Western civilization – may be just behavior of visitors – can affect

many areas, regions in all around the world, gradually lose special cultural characters of many nations. For instance, many traditional cultural characters of Sán Dìu ethnic group (in Thái Nguyên) were lost quickly just maintain belief.

Study interfere between regions, areas as survey Prof Phạm Hồng Quý) about situation in Vietnam (Cao Bằng, Bắc Cạn, Lạng Sơn), Thailand and China in recent 20 years shows that Singing market (unique character of traditional market, not only place for buy and sell) of Tày, Nùng, Thailand people, Choang people is rarely find now. It still remains but it is difficult to find singing people at market, especially the youth. Preservation singing voice in ethnic area can fail because the youth does not like that (instead, here and there is music that native people just hear the melody but not understand the content, along with many new kinds of entertainment such as TV, movie, volleyball, basketball...). Therefore, if we want to preserve traditional music, we must change so that the youth love it or it will only song of ethnic group on the stage or service for visitors then language and dress of ethnic group would be doffed. Actually, previously, in Quý Châu (China) young people of Mèo ethnic group must sing to express love, now they only have to say "I love you". Is that the world movement? Meanwhile, in general, spiritual cultural values are kept more than material values, for instance, to make a traditional dress, Mèo ethnic people must spend 3-4 years, not only cost

money but time, now they can buy with cheaper price and faster time. In many areas, ethnic dress with western trousers becomes popular.

When outside culture flock into one region, if it is contrary to traditional culture, we must know to refuse, if it is positive elements, we must know how to acquire to make it become ours and propagate to our people; here we see responsibility of university.

2. Preserve and develop sustainably culture and cultural nuance including many elements and level so we need to provide direction and solution for the problem: Propagate to increase awareness for officials and people of ethnic group; define works of preservation and uphold traditional cultural values in context of integration is work of ethnic community; environment to preserve and uphold is village with self-control structure; appreciate target of getting better living condition, eliminate hunger and reduce poverty for ethnic community; gradually eliminate underdeveloped unsound customs, desolate and waste living styles in forest area.

Improve awareness for departments, sectors and propagate relations between culture and environment as well as evident relationship between culture – environment and socio-economic development among sustainable development policy of nation and region.

Acquire from outside but we must affirm subject role of culture to preserve and uphold, strengthen methods to preserve and develop

culture: opening and maneuvering, diversification of ethnic group as well as area, region.

Preservation national cultural characters set up among moving group, Cambodia's student move to study in Thailand (up to 500 pupils and 100 students mainly are girls who want to study natural sciences and want to work in Thailand. Or Thailand people move to Korea as the philosophy of "economic effectiveness", labors must have awareness to inherit cultural heritage, especially labors must have awareness to inherit cultural heritage, especially immaterial culture and protect traditional culture, among those is folk literature and protect environment, should not destroy the nature.

Language at ethnic area was discussed ebulliently with remarkable contents: 1/ Urbanization makes ethnic language overshadowed; 2/ More and more young people of ethnic group does not know their mother language (they are force to preserve and uphold language and writing of ethnic group); 3/ Ability to use Vietnamese of ethnic student is weak; 4/ Studying conditions of ethnic student is facing many difficulties; 5/ Language of Ethnic group as role of regional language is being overshadowed and replaced by Vietnamese.

Looking back at the lingual polices before lingual conditions, we can see three stages: 1930-1945, even officials works at ethnic regions have to study ethnic language; 1945-1975: use Vietnamese script to represent ethnic

language; from 1975 up to now, particularly at VIII National Assembly expressed the preservation and uphold ethnic language in context of globalization, modernization, urbanization with increasing role of English. Choice of language for community appears if there are 3 elements affect: live intermix, immigration and market condition. In addition to mother language and regional language, are popular language, foreign language (compulsory and optional). The establishment of policy is very important because it origins from social – political conditions to be sustainable and practical.

Preservation of ethnic language, writing is affirmed rights, but there is gaps between policy and practice: Gia-rai language is taught at Tây Nguyên University but the training program and issuing certificate is not united. State officials need to study regional ethnic language such as in Thanh Sơn (Vĩnh Phúc province), officials can compete in Mường language to improve their level, but there is lack of united standards over our country. Disordered manipulation phenomenon of ethnic language such as Chăm or Thái language with different alphabet cause difficulties to choose writings on publication and ethnic language education.

Establish suitable management polices: policies of government need to be supported by community: pupil, student must cooperate. We should educate new generation awareness about

traditional culture: combine change and preservation in the movement of the world.

Mention role of mass media, awaken policies to be renewed and improve quality of mass media, including divide up data effectively as well as define the contents, methods and object. For example, define which language will be used to propagate in intermix ethnic areas besides popular language (for instance, Sán Dìu ethnic people who under 35 years old in Thái Nguyên just speak Vietnamese and Dao ethnic people in Lạng Sơn just speak Nùng language after Vietnamese).

3. Since 10 years ago, there have been many conferences over the world. It can be divided into two “sides”: globalization can include culture and globalization can include economy but not culture, or in other words we must preserve cultural diversification.

When the world enters a game with general regulation system, cultural characters is the foundation for the unique, specific character and creates advantage for each country, nation in the game. Many ideas address the role of national cultural characters, local knowledge also provide examples of consequence due to defiance. However, the problems are how to conserve national cultural characters and how to preserve reasonably?

By inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary, the Conference focuses on determining role of culture and general

and national traditional cultural characters for sustainable development of each country, region, and area before the trend of requirement of regional and international integration. At the same time, the Conference raises experiences of some countries in policy planning, preserving, and upholding national cultural values for sustainable development.

Must the conference not solve all problems but it showed common concerns of scientist in the world to “local knowledge” or “native knowledge”, it needs deep study what is able and necessary to preserve and uphold. The Conference also call for larger cooperation in study between nations, regions to share experience, contribute to sustainable development of each nation, in context of economic integration of globalization with not many challenges.

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