

**DOCTORAL THESIS IN BRIEF****NGUYEN THI THANH THAO. *Gourd Lute (tính tẩu) in the Cultural Life of Tay Ethnic People in Tuyen Quang Province****Major: Cultural studies**Code: 9.22.90.40*

The gourd lute (tính tẩu) has been bound up with Then rituals in the Tay people's religious life for a long time. In 2013, the Then practice and the gourd lute of the Tay ethnic group were recognized as national intangible cultural heritage. By 2019, the Then practice of the Tay, Nung, and Thai ethnic groups including the gourd lute was inscribed by UNESCO as a representative intangible cultural heritage of humanity. The thesis systematically studies the gourd lute in the cultural life of the Tay people in Tuyen Quang province in terms of both religious as well as artistic life; thereby contributing to identifying the position of this musical instrument in the cultural life of the Tay ethnic group in general and those in Tuyen Quang province in particular in the historical process, especially since the Reform until now.

The thesis is presented in 4 chapters. Chapter 1- Literature review, theoretical basis, and research area; Chapter 2- The gourd lute in the religious life of the Tay people in Tuyen Quang province; Chapter 3- The gourd lute in the artistic life of the Tay people in Tuyen Quang province; Chapter 4- The gourd lute in the cultural life of Tay people in Tuyen Quang province: Discussions. Some highlights from the thesis results are as follows.

The gourd lute (tính tẩu) or Then lute refers to a type of musical instrument in religious rituals of the Tay, Nung, and Thai ethnic groups in Vietnam. The Tay people in Tuyen Quang also have many different ways of calling this musical instrument.

In the previous practice of Then rituals, Then master who was both a shaman and a singer, played the gourd lute and sang the Then songs to lead the troupe of spirits to offer sacrifices to the Heaven. After 1945, under the policy of selective preservation and promotion of the national culture quintessence, the gourd lute was removed from the Then rituals which were previously considered superstitious, to become a musical instrument serving the people's demands for music and dance compiled of the masses. After the Reform, the state policy for preserving the national cultural identities and religious freedom has officially restored the Then rituals. The preservation of cultures of ethnic groups such as Tay people in general, Then Tay in particular, is concerned and invested. The gourd lute associated with the Then singing has been considered a typical representative of the traditional culture of the Tay people. Over time, playing the gourd lute has gradually become the daily activity of the Tay people.

*On the gourd lute in the religious life of Tay ethnic group in Tuyen Quang province (as a part of the Then rituals).* Traditionally, the gourd lute, an integral instrument of the Then rituals, was a sacred symbol in the spiritual life of Tay people, which had its

power in the Then rituals and was used only for communicating with the spiritual world. The Tay people think that the holy sound of a gourd lute both has a soul and message from the shaman to the gods when he leads the troupe of spirits to make offerings to the gods. The Then master's gourd lute playing and singing in Then practice is considered hypnotic energy that brings the Then believers into a state of mediumship.

The gourd lute, as a sacred musical instrument, has greatly contributed to the unique characteristics and appeal of the art performance of Then rituals. The fact that a Then master is both a shaman and an artist who can play a musical instrument and sing satisfies the attendees' needs for spirituality and to enjoy art performance.

Like the Tay people in other localities, today the Then rituals and the gourd lute of the Tay people in Tuyen Quang, after many ups and downs, have returned and presented in their cultural life with a new position. However, under the influence of many subjective and objective factors in the new context, the Then rituals in general and the art of performing gourd lute in Then practice in particular have undergone many changes. The Then shaman and gourd lute not only appear in Then practice but also present on the performance stage with modern music and stage lights.

*On the gourd lute in the cultural and artistic life of Tay ethnic group in Tuyen Quang province (in the Then art performance).* Currently, artisans who know how to sing Then songs and play the gourd lute in Tuyen Quang province are diverse in composition, age, and occupation, but are divided into two groups: those who perform Then singing

and gourd lute playing, and those who act as a Then shaman and playing gourd lute. The teaching and popularization of Then singing and gourd lute playing is expanded by many forms such as organizing formal classes, short-term training courses, or other forms of self-study through personal communication and/or social networks. The diverse performance spaces for Then singing and gourd lute playing in Tuyen Quang province today range from indoor (household) to stage and online spaces. Currently, the gourd lute has been separated from the religious ceremonies and performed in different spaces. Starting as a musical accompaniment in the Then rituals, the gourd lute has been known as a popular accompaniment instrument for the new Then singing, especially has gradually appeared everywhere and is recognized as a typical representative of the Tay people's culture thanks to 4.0 technology.

The Then artistic performance spread widely in the life of the Tay ethnic group, the use of gourd lute to accompany singing also developed. The playing techniques are also focused on by the new Then artists. To meet the needs of improving performance quality, besides smooth Then lyrics, accompanists also focus on techniques for a more refined sound. The teaching of playing the lute is also paid more attention, methodically, uniformly showing strong beats or strong parts of beats to create nuance and intensity during a performance. While playing, the gourd lute player can demonstrate techniques that are cared less in the Then practice.

The sound of the gourd lute has also become a special source used by musicians

in composing dance music or new songs to serve the cultural needs of the community. It can be seen that the love, awareness, and responsibility for preserving the ethnic culture of the Tay ethnic group together with the guidelines and policies of the State on the preservation of ethnic cultural values help preserve and enrich the Then singing and gourd lute playing in Tuyen Quang province. In the context of Then practice of the Tay, Nung, and Thai ethnic groups with their gourd lute recognized as a representative intangible cultural heritage of humanity, the

preservation and promotion of the gourd lute as a typical musical instrument of the Then rituals in the cultural life of the Tay people in Tuyen Quang province faced many problems related to community rights, which should be addressed in the coming time.

The thesis was successfully defended before the Thesis Examination Council of Graduate Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences in 2021.

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