

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE NAME “RED THAI” IN VIETNAM

VI VAN AN

1. Introduction

In October 1996, I had the chance to participate in the VIth International Conference on Thai Studies held in Chiang Mai, Thailand. After I delivered my paper, “Some ideas about the social structure and land tenure system of Thai people in the region of Highway 7 in Nghe An province,” and people came to know that I am myself a Thai person of Nghe An, many scholars came to see me to ask about the “Red Thai”. Their questions were: Are there or are there not “Red Thai” people in Vietnam? What are Vietnamese researchers’ current thoughts about this? Since time was limited, I could not answer them definitively, because this question is still being debated and many ideas remain disputed. However, it is clear that the name “Red Thai” has attracted the attention of many researchers¹. That is why I feel it necessary to write a short article presenting my personal ideas about this, hoping to contribute to resolving in part the questions and different ideas about the name “Red Thai” in Vietnam. I concur that the question is very interesting, since I am Thai myself, born in Nghe An — a province where we find many communities who identify themselves as Tay Deng and who have been identified (incorrectly, as I will argue) as Red Thai.

¹ In this paper, I use “Red Thai” in English to correspond to the terms Thai rouge in French sources or Thai/Tay Do in Vietnamese sources. Where sources refer specifically to Thai Deng (or Tay Deng, etc.). I preserve the exact spelling here. I follow the same usage for White Thai and Black Thai (as translations from sources using the corresponding French or Vietnamese terms), preserving Thai Khao (Tay Khao, etc.) or Thai Dam (Tay Dam, etc.) where sources use those terms.

1.1. The use of the name “Red Thai” in previous research work

It seems that the name “Red Thai” has been taken up by many people since the appearance of the monograph *Notes sur les Tày Đèo de Lang Chánh* (Thanh Hóa-Annam) by R. Robert, a French scholar, published by the Imprimerie d’Extreme-Orient in Hanoi in 1941 (Robert, 1941). Even acknowledging certain shortcomings, it can be said that this is a good ethnological monograph that took up the economical, cultural and social aspects of the people. Included therein was an explanation of the name a Thai group called Tày Đèo in Lang Chánh district, Thanh Hóa province, Vietnam.

In the book: *Các dân tộc ở miền núi Bắc Trung Bộ* (*The ethnicities in the North-Central mountainous region*) written by the ethnologist Mạc Đ-ông, published by Sử Học in Hanoi in 1964, particularly in his chapter “Sự phân loại dân cư và những đặc trưng văn hoá” (Classification of inhabitants and cultural characteristics), the author used the name Tày Đèo to denote Thai groups living in the mountainous districts of two provinces, Thanh Hóa and Nghệ An (Mạc Đ-ông, 1964:26). However, he did not further analyze the meaning of the name Tày Đèo. That is to say that, when classifying Thai groups, the author followed the usage of R. Robert in the monograph mentioned above.

In the late 1960s, study on Thai people in Vietnam was encouraged and many documents in Thai language were collected and translated systematically, especially those of Thai people in Northwest Vietnam. The first Vietnamese

monograph on the three ethnic groups Tay, Nung, and Thai in Vietnam was published. Its authors were two ethnologists named Lã Văn Lô and Đặng Nghiêm Vạn. The sections about the Thai people were written by Đặng Nghiêm Vạn. He wrote: “The Thai branch in Mộc Châu emigrated from Laos to Vietnam in the 19th century. And, it is clear that the family name Xa is the ancestor of the noble family of the Red Thai branch in Mộc Châu, Vietnam today” (Lã Văn Lô and Đặng Nghiêm Vạn, 1968:154). The author emphasized that the period when the Red Thai branch were first present in Mộc Châu, Vietnam can be dated to the 9th year of the dynasty of Trần Hiến Tông (1337 C.E.), according to historical documents such as *Toàn th- and C-ong Mục*. Thus, according to Đặng Nghiêm Vạn, one group of Thai people in Mộc Châu, Vietnam belongs to the Red Thai branch and is not a local sub-group of another ethnicity². However, the author did not explain why the people concerned are called Red Thai.

In the book, *Các sắc tộc thiểu số ở Việt Nam (Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam)*, published in 1972 by Sai Gon Publishing House, the

² It is important to explain that Vietnamese ethnologists draw a distinction between an ethnicity or ethnic group as such (*dan toc*) and a “local group” (*nhom dia phuong*) which is an identifiable community but is itself a part or sub-group of a larger ethnicity. Đặng Nghiêm Vạn defines “local groups” as “communities that have some consciousness of being culturally and ethnically distinct from others, but at the same time recognize that they are culturally and ethnically related to-or indeed a part of — some larger ethnicity,” (Đặng Nghiêm Vạn, 1998:25). He continues: “A local group must first of all be part of a given ethnicity, possessing historical, linguistic, and cultural links with that ethnic parent group, and having a clear consciousness of belonging to that parent group. It must at the same time have a distinct, discrete identity as a group-an identity that it seeks to maintain. Such a community is then properly considered as a local group” (Đặng Nghiêm Vạn, 1998:26-27). Other Vietnamese ethnologists have also introduced the category of “branch” (*nganh*), which is smaller than an ethnicity (*dan toc*) but larger than a local group (*nhom dia phuong*). In the discussion that follows here, these terminological distinctions are important.

researcher Nguyen Dac Tri mentioned the Red Thai living in Hoi Xuan district, Thanh Hoa province (Nguyễn Đắc Trí, 1972:109). However, he offered no explanation about the meaning of their name.

In an article published in *Tạp chí Dân tộc học (The Ethnology Review)* number 4/1992, apart from explicating the meaning of the name Tay Deng, the people, meaning Thai people living in Muong Deng (this *muong* no longer exists at present). The meaning of Deng is ‘red’, that is why we have made a mistake for a long time and called them Red Thai, like White Thai or Black Thai. Now, it is determined that this Thai group call themselves Tay Khao, meaning “White Thai” (Cầm Trọng, 1992: 14-20). This is a well-grounded definition, but it is regrettable that the author did not analyze and argue the problem more thoroughly, and that he did not offer necessary comparative data. In addition, he mistakenly confused the Tay Khao (i.e., Thai people living in Muong Khao) with the Tay Khao (i.e., White Thai), and wrongly concluded that the former are White Thai.

Recently, in an article, “Ng-ời Thay Đeng ở Lào và mối quan hệ văn hoá lịch sử với ng-ời Thái ở Việt Nam” (Thay Deng People in Laos and Cultural-historical Links with Thai People in Vietnam), the amateur researcher Dao Van Tien has suggested three different ways to analyze the meaning of the name Tay Deng:

- Tay Deng people are those who live in Muong Deng.
- Tay Deng is a name derived from the Red River (Nậm Đeng), because historically the ancestors of the Tay Deng in Laos originated in south-west China. They immigrated into Vietnam by the Red River, passed through Thanh Hoa province, and then came to settle in Laos (Đào Văn Tiến, 1998:353-354).
- They call themselves Tay Deng, because when parents die, their daughters and daughters-in-law must wear red costumes and stand near the dead.

Of these three explanations, the author found them all reasonable and persuasive. He came to affirm that the name Thay Deng is the basis which proves that they constitute a Red Thai branch, comparable to the Black Thai or White Thai. Apart from establishing the historical relations between the Thay Deng in Laos and the Tay Deng in Vietnam, the author also provided some information about the Thay Deng population in Hủn Phăn province of Laos (in 1985:53,200 people), which makes up 70% of the total population of Phu Thay groups in the province.

Before continuing, I would like to provide some more information related to the red costume which is common among the Tay Muong and Tay Do groups in Nghe An (who call themselves White Thai). During a funeral, all of the daughters-in-law of the family must wear a red tunic to stand next to the coffin of the death. Concerning this point, further information can be found in the epic *Quám tổ m-ông* of the Black Thai in Northwest Vietnam. These texts of Thai people in Muong La, Son La Province were collected and studied by four ethnologists--Đặng Nghiêm Vạn, Cẩm Trọng, Khả Văn Tiến and Tông Kim Ân--and they published them in the book titled: *T- liệu về lịch sử xã hội dân tộc Thái* (Documents on History and Society of Thai People). They write that: “Ta Ngần [a Black Thai who was chief of M-ông Muối territory, Thuận Châu district, Son La Province, Vietnam], who was named lord in the 19th century by the King, was head of a large region where people were living in stilt houses and wearing red costumes” (Đặng Nghiêm Vạn — Cẩm Trọng — Khả Văn Tiến — Tông Kim Ân, 1997:78). According to Đặng Nghiêm Vạn, during battles among different groups in the highlands, the generals always wore red costumes. So, “people wearing red costumes” here should be understood generally to include all of the different minorities in the mountainous areas of Northwest Vietnam. This detail proves that wearing red costume is only a ceremonial habit of generals

during battles or a custom practiced during funerals by certain individuals. That is why explaining the meaning of the name Tay Deng through the costume color is not persuasive enough. However, I would like to add that Tay Deng women always wear skirts with red belts. That is why, in Nghe An, Vietnam, other Thai groups call them *Tay xin hun deng* (Thai people wearing red-belted skirts). In this case, it is clear that the name “Red Thai” relates to the color of the costume—particularly—to the skirt belt.

Thus, most researchers accept the fact that one part of Thai people living in the mountainous areas of Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam is called Tay Deng. The question then has been raised whether Tay Deng is a separate branch--the Red Thai branch--that is equivalent to the other two branches, Black Thai and White Thai, or whether they are only one local group of the Black or White branch. (See the note above about the specific terminology used by Vietnamese ethnologists.) This has given rise to much debate that has yet to reach a consensus. Briefly stated, there are two opinions in Vietnam:

- One holds that Tay Deng is only a local group, which belongs to either the White Thai or the Black Thai branch.
- The other affirms that Tay Deng means Red and they belong to a separate branch, co — equal with the White Thai and Black Thai.

Besides some Vietnamese researchers, there are also some from Thailand who accept this second idea. Their argument for this is based on the result of research on the historical origins, language, and especially the ethnic consciousness of the Thay Deng group who are one of many groups of Phu Thay people living in Phong Sa Ly, Hua Phan, Xieng Khoang, and Kham Muon provinces of Laos. If there are Black Thai and White Thai branches in Vietnam, why are there no Red Thai? As for this point, I would like to say that the research and knowledge of researchers from Thailand about Tay Deng in Vietnam has not been thorough.

In my opinion, to find a conclusive answer for this question, it is necessary to resolve two things:

- First, we must analyze and explain the meaning of the term Tay Deng. This will answer the question whether Tay Deng is a local group or a separate branch.

- Secondly, we must use the comparative study method to compare Tay Deng with others groups of the same family in different locations in Vietnam, especially with the two branches Black Thai and White Thai, by comparing some principal characteristics such as language, costume, custom, historical origin, and so on. This can answer the question whether Tay Deng (if we resolve that it is a local group of a larger branch) properly belongs to the Black Thai or to the White Thai branch.

1.2. The meaning of the name Tay Deng

Thai people in Vietnam call themselves *Con táy* or *Phu Tay* (following the Black Thai tone system), *Con Tày* or *Phu Tay* (following White Thai tones). These terms all mean Thai people. The words *Tay* or *Tay* have both a broad meaning (indicating an ethnic community which is equivalent to “ethnicity” or “nation”) and a narrow meaning (indicating a part or a specific local group, corresponding to the Vietnamese scholars’ usage “local groups”).

Thai people in Vietnam are classified into two branches, which are *Tay dam* (Black Thai) and *Tay Khao* or *Tay Don* (White Thai). Researchers did not invent this classification; it has existed for ages and is used by Thai people themselves. However, while the classification is clear in the Northwest of Vietnam, in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An the division of Black and White is not so clear. In many cases when people are asked whether they belong to the Black or White branch, they cannot answer, because they are accustomed to using their local names.

It is necessary to remember that the classification of Black and White branches

embodies social meanings and has a long historical origin, even if there are not any conclusive explanations about the origins of the classification system. Normally, the classification is based on differences of clothing, houses, language, custom, habit, and so on. Moreover, the differences in these characteristics between the two branches Black and White are real. For more information about this, please refer to the articles written by Cam Trong and Le Sy Giao (Cầm Trọng, 1978; Lê Sỹ Giáo, 1988).

Coming back to the names of various Thai peoples, there is a popular phenomenon of calling people according to the characteristics of agriculture, the environment, and the location (past and present). As a result, ethnic names often express very specific descriptions and qualities. In fact, there are names to distinguish *Tay Huoi* (Thai people living along the stream) and *Tay Pao* (Thai people living along the river); *Tay Hay* (Thai people practicing swidden agriculture) and *Tay Na* (Thai people practicing irrigated agriculture) or *Tay Men* (Thai people living in Muong Xieng Men), *Tay Xang* (Thai people living in Muong Xang), *Tay Muoi* (Thai people living in Muong Muoi), and so on.

In Thanh Hoa and Nghe An provinces, sometimes local groups have different names: *Tay Deng* people have other names, such as *Tay Nhai*, *Tay Thanh*, *Man Thanh*; *Tay muong* people have other names, such as *Tay Xieng*, *Tay Do*, *Hang Tong*, and so on.

The practice of calling people by their location is very popular for the Phu Thay groups in Laos. According to figures published in the book *Cấu trúc tộc ng-ời ở Lào (Ethnic Structure of Laos)* by Nguyen Duy Thieu, the Phu Thay community in Laos consists of 29 local groups, and many groups among them take the name of the areas where they live: *Thay Vat* (people living in the village Chua), *Thay Xam* (people living in Muong Xam), *Thay Pao* (people living along rivers), *Thay Men* (people who emigrated from Muong Xieng Men, Tuong Duong district, Nghe An) (Nguyễn Duy Thiệu, 1996:35).

It is necessary to remember that in his monograph R. Robert said: “To speak precisely, Tay Deng people are those who live in Muong Deng”. Since the meaning was broadened, the author added more explanation: “We call all of the indigenous people who have their own language and custom Tay Deng, that means Tay people of Chau Lang Chanh, Quan Hoa, Ngoc Lac, tong Nhan Son chau Thuong Xuat, and villages gathering in the South of Chu river. In Nghe An, they are known by the name of Man Thanh and they call themselves Tay Nhai” (Robert. 1941: 8-9).

Using general descriptions on language, writing, clothing, and other factors to affirm his opinion, he emphasized that Tay Deng is only a linguistic and cultural group and the name Tay Deng is only a convention. He wrote: “If the local people are asked if they are Tay Deng, they usually say no and they affirm that they are Tay Khao (people living in Muong Khao) or Tay Mot (people living in Muong Mot)... But if we ask them if they are in the same family with others having the common name Tay Deng, they will say yes” (R. Robert. 1941:10).

It seems that the confusion of Tay Deng and Red Thai results from the fact that the location where Tay Deng live in Lang Chanh, Thanh Hoa is called Muong Deng; in addition, Tay Deng women wear skirts with red cloth attached in the upper part. In Thai languages, *Deng* means “red”, and as a result of this coincidence of place name and clothing color, many people, including European researchers, have made a mistake and called them Red Thai, considering them an independent branch, equivalent to the other Thai branches in Vietnam.

As I have mentioned above, in his monograph R. Robert said that, apart from Thanh Hoa, Tay Deng people are present in Nghe An, Vietnam and Hủn Phần, Sầm N- a, Sầm Tớ, Xiêng Khợ, M- òng Xôi, and elsewhere in Laos. However, his research field was concentrated in Muong deng, Chau Lang Chanh, Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam. Since he had no chance to do research

in the provinces mentioned above (as he acknowledged), he did not know about the familial cultural relationship between Tay Deng people in Lang Chanh, Thanh Hoa and their relatives in Nghe An, Vietnam and in several provinces of Laos. Many Thai manuscripts such as Quam To Muong, Piety Muong, legends, narratives or family histories of Thai landlords in Vietnam were studied by many researchers and these sources prove that the relation of a shared origin and culture among Thai groups in Vietnam and Phu Thay in Laos is indisputable history. In fact, many locations where Thai people are currently living in Vietnam can be shown to be the original homelands of various communities of Phu Thay in Laos. Among these are Muong Vat (in Yen Chau), Muong Xang or Muong Mock (in Moc Chau), Muong Va (in Song Ma), Muong Luan (in Dien Bien Dong and Son La), as well as various locations in the mountainous districts of Thanh Hoa and Nghe An.

Thus, from analysis and examples, we find that Tay Deng is a name derived from the location to indicate a group of Thai people living in Muong Deng, Chau Lang Chanh, Thanh Hoa province. This name is only coincidentally related to the red parting their costume. They are a local group, not a separate branch that is equivalent to Black Thai or White Thai branch in Vietnam. Additionally, our ideas about this will be further reinforced if the Tay Deng are not only named for the location where they live, but also have shared linguistic and cultural characteristics with other groups.

1.1. Some comparisons on linguistic and cultural characteristics.

After having analyzed the meaning of the name Tay Deng and having given some examples, we have come to the conclusion that Tay Deng is a local group, and not a separate Red Thai branch. So, which of the two branches do they belong to, Black Thai or White Thai? In the articles about them that have been published in Vietnam, this problem has been seen in

different ways. According to Dang Nghiem Van, “After having occupied the Northwest region, one part of Black Thai passed through Ma river valley, Laos and came to Thanh Hoa, Nghe An. All of the groups--Hang Tong, Man Thanh or Tay Thanh, Tay Muoi, Tay Deng—are originally Black Thai” (Đặng Nghiêm Vạn, 1998:153). He added that these groups were then influenced culturally by their neighbors. That is why they have some differences from their brethren in Northwest Vietnam. The book, *Văn hóa truyền thống M-ông Ca Da (Traditional Culture of Muong Ca Da)*, edited by Hoang Anh Nhan and published in 1985 by the Cultural Service of Thanh Hoa, in the part of the legend about the same group as Tay Deng people of Thanh Hoa, states that, “The ancestors of these Thai people are White Thai who emigrated from Bac Ha district, Lao Cai province to Muong Pa in the Northwest region, one sub-group came to Muong Xang (Moc Chau), the other arrived in the west of Thanh Hoa, Nghe An in the 13th-14th centuries” (Hoàng Anh Nhân, 1988:15).

As we have mentioned above, the conception of Black Thai and White Thai in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An is unclear. However, when they are asked, members of the Tay Deng group, like their brethren in Nghe An, such as Tay Thanh (Man Thanh), Tay Nhai, and others, call themselves Tay Dam (Black Thai). Otherwise, the Tay Muong, Tay Xieng, Hang Tong, and Tay Do call themselves Tay Don (White Thai).

Like their relatives in the Northwest, the division of Black Thai and White Thai for the Thai of Nghe An is based on differences of pronunciation, spelling, color of clothing (mainly women's clothing), ancestor cult practices and especially customs such as marriages, funerals, family ceremonies, and so on. According to their explanation, the origin of the name Tày Đăm (Black Thai) is based on the fact that in the past, men and women always wore black costumes and black headdresses. In their families, the color white has been forbidden: white mosquito nets, white costumes, white headdresses, and so on are prohibited. This taboo has been strictly

respected. The color white appears in the family only when they have a funeral, for it is a sign of death.

Although they call themselves Black Thai, in fact, the cultural practices of these groups in Nghe An are not identical to those of Black Thai in the Northwest. By contrast, these cultural characteristics argue that they are closer to the White Thai branch. We do not intend to affirm that they indisputably belong to the White Thai branch, because during the process of migration, cohabitation, and cultural exchanges, they have been and are influenced by Mon-Khmer people, by their relatives in Laos, as well as Viet-Muong people living in the same areas. That is why, even in the same ethnic family, there are differences among them and things that distinguish them from both branches, Black Thai and White Thai, in the Northwest. These differences are local and they can easily be seen. However, among these cultural characteristics, we can find a number of shared characteristics with the White Thai in the Northwest of Vietnam, though these similarities are not comprehensive.

As we well know, language is the expression of a culture. From this point, we can find similarity in the pronunciation of Tay Deng in Thanh Hoa and their relatives in Nghe An and in Laos, when compared to the speech of the White Thai in the Northwest of Vietnam such as those in Mai Chau (Hoa Binh), Moc Chau, Yen Chau, Bac Yen, Phu Yen (Son La), Muong Lay, Phong Tho, and Muong Te (Lai Chau). I would like to add that I myself had many chances to do research in these areas and I can talk with them easily and exactly, and even sing folksongs with their proper pronunciation. In 1986, during my fieldwork in Nghe An, I had an opportunity to listen to a folksong of Tay Deng recorded in Kham Cot, Kham Muon, Laos by the Deputy Head of the Committee for Ethnic Peoples of Nghe An. I fully understood the song and felt very close to it, because it is the same melody as that used among Tay Deng in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An.

In his article, R. Robert had some comments: “Tay Deng people have an Indian alphabet writing system, which is close to Khmer, Thai and White Thai writing. Their language of Da river region” (Robert 1941:16). The writing systems of Tay Deng, Tay Thanh, and Tay Nhai in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An are very close to the one of Lao people. These writing systems are called by many names, such as Xu Thanh, Xu

Tay, Lai Tay or Lai Pao, and so on, and they are written horizontally. In their pronunciation, there is a falling intonation at the end of sentences, long vibrations and there are some regular sound shifts among consonants, vowels, and tones that correspond more closely to White Thai than to Black Thai dialects. Consider the following examples:

Correspondence	English	Tày Đăm	Tày Đèng, Tày Đón
đ- => l-	Black	đăm	Lăm
nh- => j-	To walk	Nhạng	Jiáng
h- => kh-	To climb	Hừm	Khúm
-ên => -in	To startle	Xên	Xin
-êm => -in	Full	Têm	Tim
-ôm => -um	To boil	Tôm	Túm
x- => t-	Short	Xắn	Tến
p- => ph-	To cut	Pát	Phát
c- => kh-	Gold	Căm	Khằm

Despite these sound shifts, the differences are not so large that speakers of any dialect could not understand each other. In particular, it is easy to distinguish Black Thai and White Thai languages by their tone systems. In general, culture has its rule of exchange and influence, so language and voices are not exceptions. And the languages of Thai local groups in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An tend to be similar to one another. This means that people belonging to one group can not only understand the language of others, but can also speak the language of other groups with appropriate pronunciation. This leads to fewer differences in words or pronunciations among them (in phonetics and meanings). The phenomenon of many ancient words disappearing and introduction of many Vietnamese ones used in communication provides an example.

Clothing is a component of material culture. Clothing and jewelry have undergone many influences and changes during their development. Following this tendency, clothing of the Tay Deng group in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An is distinguished by its local characteristics from the costume of the White Thai in the Northwest of Vietnam. However, going back in time, we can find many similarities among them. One is the habit of men and women wearing indigo clothing. On the black skirts of White Thai (as well as of Black Thai) in the Northwest, we cannot see any embroidered part on the bottom. In contrast, embroidery on the bottom of the skirt is very popular from Mai Chau and Hoa Binh to Thanh Hoa and Nghe An. This habit is also popular in Phu Thay communities in Laos.

This proves clearly that they have cultural and historical relations. Relating to clothing, for Tay Deng and White Thai women, gathering their hair on the head (*tǎng cẩu*) is considered a sign of married women, but they always have to wear headdresses. Being without a headdress is regarded as a taboo. But for Black Thai, it is popular to wear nothing on the head when they are at home. They put on a head scarf (*pieu*) only when they go to work or to the market.

As for houses, the common characteristic of

the stilt houses of Tay Deng and White Thai is that they have two-sided roofs (in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An) or four-sided roofs (in the Northwest region). There are not any *khau cut* (fern leaves-buffalo horns) as decoration on the roofs.

Transportation means: White Thai And Tay Deng community has the habit of using head strap baskets without shoulder yokes. Black Thai carry baskets with shoulder yokes and they also use hanging buckets.

Tay Deng and White Thai groups		Black Thai
Houses	- 2 roofs (Thanh Hoa-Nghe An); 4 roofs (Northwest region)	- “Tortoise-shaped” roof with Rounded ends
	- No <i>khau cut</i>	- Decorated with <i>khau cut</i>
Means of Transport	- Basket without shoulder support - Bags - Good at boating	- Use dangling buckets - Bags
Clothing and Jewellery	- Embroidered black skirt, Skirt worn high - Short black blouse, Round buttons	- Black skirts without Embroidery, skirt worn low - Short black blouse, flat Buttons in form of a butterfly or cicada
	- Man clothing is black or brown	- Man’s clothing is black
	- Black scarf with designs	- <i>Pieu</i>
	- Always wear headdress	- Headdress optional
	- Belt made of fibers	- Belt made of cloth
	- Women wear many jewels	- Women do not wear many jewels
Symbolic cult	- Swift	- Dragon, naga
Offerings for God cult	- White buffalo	- Black buffalo

Conclusions

- In Vietnam, Tay Deng is a local group (nhóm địa phương), not a branch (nhánh) that is equivalent to Black Thai or White Thai.
- They call themselves Black Thai (Tay Dam) voluntarily, but their cultural characteristics are closer to those of the White Thai branch than to the Black Thai branch in the Northwest of Vietnam.
- They have a common historical origin and share cultural characteristics with the White Thai in the Northwest of Vietnam, with Tay Thanh, Man Thanh, Tay Nhai groups in Nghe An, and with Phu Thay groups in Laos.

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