

# PRESERVE AND PROMOTE TRADITIONAL CULTURAL VALUES ASSOCIATED WITH SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL ETHNIC MINORITIES IN DAK LAK PROVINCE<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *Preserving and promoting traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities associated with livelihood development is especially important for the socio-economic development of localities. Over the past many years, Dak Lak Province has promptly and effectively implemented the Party and State's guidelines and policies on preserving and promoting traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities associated with economic development. design, especially with local ethnic minorities. However, up to now the work of preserving traditional cultural values associated with developing the livelihoods of local ethnic minorities still faces many difficulties, many traditional cultural values have not been exploited properly. has not yet promoted its economic value and served the life of the community. Based on the analysis of the current situation of traditional cultural preservation associated with livelihood development of local ethnic minorities in Dak Lak, the article proposes appropriate solutions, contributing to the preservation and promotion of local ethnic minorities. Traditional cultural values of local ethnic minorities in Dak Lak province are associated with effective livelihood development.*

**Keywords:** *Preserving and promoting traditional cultural values; Local ethnic minorities; Developing sustainable livelihoods; Dak Lak Province.*

## 1. Introduction

Preserving traditional culture and developing sustainable livelihoods have a close relationship, interacting with each other, in the development process. Preserving traditional culture plays an important role in socio-economic development and is the foundation for sustainable economic development. In contrast, livelihood development creates material and spiritual conditions for cultural preservation. Livelihood development and sustainable poverty reduction promote and affirm the national cultural identity of ethnic minority communities, thereby creating many new cultural values, making the national cultural identity richer and more diverse. In this relationship, preserving the system of national cultural values is the decisive factor, a solid

foundation for effective livelihood development and vice versa, proactively and actively developing livelihoods and reducing multidimensional poverty will promote the potential advantages of local ethnic minorities, while taking advantage of new conditions for development. In fact, to effectively preserve the traditional culture of ethnic minorities in Dak Lak province, it is necessary to combine cultural preservation with community livelihood development. The rational exploitation of cultural values, creating specific products will increase income for ethnic minority communities, contributing to sustainable poverty reduction for the province's ethnic minority areas.

## 2. Research overview

Research on cultural preservation associated

<sup>1</sup> This article is the result of research from a provincial-level scientific project titled: "Developing an Educational Model to Preserve and Promote the Traditional Cultural Identity of Ethnic Minorities in Dak Lak Province", for the period 2022–2025.

with livelihood development has attracted the attention of many scientists. Typical works are: Phan Dinh Dung "Preserving and promoting cultural heritage associated with livelihood and developing local communities", *Journal of Political Theory*, 2016; "The issue of livelihood and cultural development of the Muong people in Cam Luong (Thanh Hoa)" by author Nguyen The Anh published in the *Culture and Arts* magazine No.387, September 2016 analyzed the dialectical relationship between culture and livelihood as well as the role of "resources" of culture in sustainable development for the benefit of the community. Lan Diu "Associating with livelihoods to preserve the culture of ethnic minorities", published in *Nhan Dan* newspaper, 2021... Research works on cultural preservation associated with livelihood development in the Central Highlands include: "Developing a model to improve livelihoods, sustainability for the community based on the potential of indigenous knowledge of ethnic minorities - through case studies of the Ede and Gia Lai ethnic groups of Dak Lak and Mong and Dao of Lai Chau" by Ngo Quang Son, a presentation at the International Conference on Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction jointly organized by the World Bank and Thai Nguyen University in June 2014. Author Tran Van Binh (2004), "Culture of ethnic groups in the Central Highlands - Current situation and issues raised" (Reference book), National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, deeply assessed the work of preserving the traditional culture of ethnic groups in the Central Highlands. The group of authors believes that it is necessary to do a good job of educating the community in cultural preservation work. The article "Preserving and promoting the traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands today" by the group of authors Doan Thi Hai Thuan and Nguyen Thi Hong Hien (2017) has presented viewpoints and methods to preserve the traditional culture of local ethnic minorities. The study "Preserving and promoting the effectiveness of gong culture in Dak Lak" by Nguyen Cong Ly, published in *Nhan Dan* newspaper on July 20, 2020, clearly pointed out the need to do a good job of educating, propagating and mobilizing people to do a good

job of preserving the cultural values of gongs. The article "Dak Lak: Developing tourism associated with preserving the cultural identity of ethnic groups" on the Electronic Information Portal of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (2020) mentioned a number of solutions, including the model of developing tourism associated with preserving traditional culture. In particular, the Ministry-level topic (2019) of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences "Discourse on development, livelihood transformation and cultural change among the Ede and Co Ho people in the Central Highlands" analyzed the livelihood transformation and cultural change among the Ede and Co Ho people in the Central Highlands. On that basis, some policy suggestions for preserving the culture of ethnic minorities were proposed. However, the above works have not deeply analyzed the dialectical relationship between livelihood development and cultural preservation of ethnic minorities, have not deeply and comprehensively studied the current situation of preserving and promoting traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities associated with sustainable livelihood development in Dak Lak today, as well as proposed policies linking cultural preservation of ethnic minorities with sustainable livelihood development. Therefore, it is really necessary to study the current situation and propose effective solutions to link the preservation and promotion of traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities with sustainable livelihood development in Dak Lak province.

### 3. Research methods

To conduct this research, the authors used secondary data from summary reports of Dak Lak province, research by scientists through presentations at national and international conferences and at the same time exploited primary data through survey results of the topic "Building an educational model to preserve and promote traditional cultural identity of ethnic minorities in Dak Lak province". Implementing these methods and based on personal research perspectives, the author analyzed the current situation of preserving traditional culture associated with sustainable livelihood development in Dak Lak, on that basis, proposed a number of solutions to effectively exploit

cultural preservation associated with livelihood development in Dak Lak province today.

#### **4. Research results**

##### **4.1. Current status of preserving and promoting traditional cultural values of local ethnic minorities associated with sustainable livelihood development in Dak Lak**

Dak Lak is one of the five Central Highlands provinces with a large population of ethnic minorities. In recent years, the province has always paid attention to preserving the traditional culture of ethnic minorities. The Provincial People's Council issued Resolution No. 05/2016/NQ-HDND on "Preserving and promoting gong culture in Dak Lak province, period 2016 - 2020"; The Provincial People's Committee (PPC) issued Decision 2615/QĐ-UBND dated May 5, 2021 approving the "Project to preserve and promote the value of relics in the area until 2025, with a vision to 2030", Plan No. 46/2022/KH-UBND on "Preserving and promoting the fine traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities associated with tourism development in Dak Lak province"... In order to effectively preserve the traditional culture of ethnic minorities, the province has directed the work of preserving traditional culture with tourism exploitation and development activities, at the same time, through livelihood development to preserve and promote the traditional cultural values of ethnic groups.

In recent years, the province has collected and compiled 70 Ede epics and 145 M'nong epics. The province has organized many classes to teach epic singing and storytelling to Ede and M'nong teenagers; compiled a list of over 70 traditional festivals of the Ede and M'nong ethnic groups belonging to the system of rituals - festivals of the human life cycle and the system of rituals - festivals of the rice plant cycle (also known as agricultural rituals - festivals). Every year, many traditional festivals are restored such as: New house worshipping ceremony, coming-of-age worshipping ceremony, naming ceremony and ear blowing ceremony for newborns, health worshipping ceremony, traditional wedding ceremony of the M'nong ethnic group... At these festivals, gong culture, matriarchal culture, long house culture, culinary culture, brocade culture,

epic culture, musical instrument performance, folk songs, folk dances... are performed very vividly by ethnic minority artisans. The province has also collected 30 Ede folk tales; 5,000 pages of prayers in the human life cycle ritual, the rice plant cycle ritual of the Ede and M'nong ethnic groups; 3,000 pages of content in the Ede and M'nong customary laws. On that basis, the following books have been published: Ede customary law on protecting forests, land and water resources; M'nong customary law on protecting forests, land and water resources; applying Ede and M'nong customary law to building cultural families, villages and hamlets. The whole Dak Lak province currently has 609 traditional villages of the Ede and M'nong ethnic groups, of which over 40% of traditional villages still retain the traditional village features. In recent years, implementing the direction of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the Provincial People's Committee, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism has focused on implementing the project "Preserving the ancient M'lieng village", located in Dak Lieng commune, Lak district. This project has been basically completed, including preserving 6 traditional long houses and building a new community cultural house; building a traditional art troupe; practicing gong playing for 60 children of M'lieng ethnic people. The ancient M'lieng village has been preserved, maintained, and promoted, helping the community have a place for cultural activities, thereby educating the young generation to be aware of preserving and conserving traditional culture to serve tourists, contributing to improving the lives of the community...The Provincial People's Committee submitted to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism to recognize 14 historical, cultural, and national-level scenic sites; at the same time, the Provincial People's Committee recognized 5 provincial-level sites. These sites have been restored, preserved, and exploited effectively, thereby contributing to educating traditions for all generations, as well as developing tourism and developing livelihoods for ethnic minorities (Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Dak Lak province, 2020).

In particular, a lot of local knowledge of ethnic minorities has a positive impact and is being used

in their livelihood activities such as: knowledge in handicrafts, knowledge in cultivation, knowledge in health care... On the basis of the traditional cultural capital of the community, the province has formed a model of livelihood development associated with cultural preservation and has brought high economic efficiency such as the community tourism development model converted from community cultural values. The local ethnic minorities of the province have taken ethnic culture as the foundation to create tourism products, while at the same time linking tourism exploitation with the preservation of ethnic minority culture to attract tourists. The model is implemented through the Tourism Development Project for the Poor. Accordingly, the province has developed and implemented the project "Developing cultural - tourism villages in Dak Lak province", based on the inherent advantages of traditional ethnic minority culture of Ja villages, Hoa Son commune, Krong Bong district; Yang Lanh village, Krong Na commune, Buon Don district; Tring village, An Lac ward, Buon Ho town of the Ede, M'Nong, Gia Rai ethnic groups to develop those villages into cultural - tourist villages. In addition to preserving traditional residential architecture, preserving and developing culinary culture, preserving traditional folk arts, recreating and preserving traditional festivals, the province focuses on restoring and developing traditional handicrafts. Priority is given to supporting a number of traditional crafts with unique characteristics of the Ede, M'Nong and Gia Rai people in the villages, which are capable of creating products for tourists such as brocade weaving, knitting, production of traditional musical instruments and making rice wine... Implementing Plan 116/KH-UBND dated August 23, 2022 of the Provincial People's Committee on the implementation of the National Target Program on New Rural Construction in 2022, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism issued Plan No. 2202/2022/KH-SVHTTDL on Propagating and raising people's awareness of rural tourism development in new rural construction. The province carries out tourism promotion activities, builds a network of destinations, typical rural tourism products associated with new rural construction, and at the

same time, surveys and develops community tourism in 8 other villages in the province. The province has organized training courses on knowledge of building and developing community tourism products, homestay services, and skills in preparing dishes to serve tourists; training on responsible tourism with the environment and local culture for the people, aiming to build and create community tourism products, unique homestay services, and achieve quality service for tourists (Dak Lak Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2022). Many traditional cultural values have been restored and developed through cultural preservation such as brocade weaving, processing folk dishes, restoring and developing traditional festivals on many scales... Developing livelihoods, restoring and developing traditional occupations has contributed to solving employment and increasing income for workers. Many livelihood development models have contributed to solving employment for the labor force, especially the surplus of unskilled workers. New job models have contributed positively to the preservation and promotion of cultural values and traditional occupations, thus contributing to sustainable tourism development from the perspective of resources and tourism environment. Creating conditions to promote cultural and economic exchanges between ethnic groups, between regions in the province, between Dak Lak province and other provinces in the region and the whole country... This is an important factor in preserving and promoting Vietnamese cultural values while creating opportunities for the culture of ethnic minorities in Dak Lak to exchange and integrate with world culture (through tourists, exchange, trade of goods and transfer of science and technology in livelihood development...), in order to develop the economy in difficult areas, ensuring sustainable development of ethnic minority areas.

The province has established many traditional brocade weaving cooperatives in the following villages: Kmrong Prong A village (Ea Tu commune); Ale A village (Ea Tam ward), Dam Ye (Tan An ward), Ako Dhong (Tan Loi ward), Tong Bong (Ea Kao commune), Kna village (Cu M'gar commune, Cu M'gar district) and Ea Bong village (Cu Ebur commune)... These cooperatives have

gradually caught up with the trend of the market economy by creating products from brocade fabric, meeting the needs and tastes of society and tourists. Buon Ma Thuot city established Tong Bong Brocade Weaving Cooperative with 45 members, all of whom are Ede ethnic people, proficient in weaving and sewing men's and women's clothing, handbags, ties, tablecloths, pillows, ao dai, children's clothing, with an average income of 3.2 - 3.5 million VND/person/month. It is also thanks to this weaving profession that weavers have a better understanding of the ethnic cultural identity so that they can confidently act as tour guides to promote and introduce their ethnic products and daily life to tourists. Many Ede and M'Nong brocade weaving clubs and groups have cooperated with tourism companies to create new tourism products such as visiting craft villages, contributing to increasing income, improving life and motivating households to preserve the traditional profession of the ethnic group. In the investigation and survey under the topic "Building an educational model to preserve and promote the traditional cultural identity of ethnic minorities in Dak Lak province", when asked "What solutions should be implemented to educate on preserving and promoting the traditional cultural identity of ethnic minorities in Dak Lak province?", 118/170 votes from leaders at the commune, district and provincial levels (accounting for 69.4%) answered that it is necessary to link the preservation and promotion of traditional cultural values with livelihood development and community tourism development. Also within the framework of the topic, in response to the question "Do you want to continue to preserve and promote the cultural values of your ethnic group in association with livelihood development?", 325/400 votes (accounting for 81.2%) of people in 4 districts of the topic proposed to continue to link the preservation of ethnic culture with livelihood development. The survey results show that people have a great need to preserve ethnic culture in conjunction with livelihood development. Many cultural values of ethnic minorities have become important factors in economic development, improving the material and spiritual life of people. However, the process of livelihood development

is causing negative impacts on sustainable cultural development. Some livelihood development models have lost the national cultural identity. When the economy mainly focuses on trade and tourism, rituals in agricultural cultivation and preserving traditional customs are also lost. Many rituals have been restored and performed, but are quite far from the original. Gong cultural activities, which are the basis for connecting members of the community, have gradually lost the social space to continue to exist. The market economy also has a significant impact on the decline of traditional crafts. Brocade weaving products are now only used by some middle-aged and elderly people. The weaving profession is still maintained, however, due to the increasingly scarce resources from the forest, some sophisticated products that consume a lot of materials are gradually disappearing. After a long time of thoroughly exploiting forest resources, people are gradually losing traditional knowledge and understanding of the forest ecosystem that has been accumulated over many generations. Precious medicines from forest plants used to treat diseases are no longer passed down and are gradually forgotten in ethnic life. The exploitation of local knowledge for economic development has not received much attention, and solutions have not been found to apply knowledge with positive values in supporting livelihood development. The lack of interest in inheriting local knowledge is also one of the reasons why the effectiveness of the economic restructuring process as well as the structure of crops and livestock is not as expected. Currently, when most farmers have applied new varieties of rice and corn in cultivation to bring about commercial products and high profits, the knowledge related to traditional local crops is gradually being forgotten. This situation can lead to a huge loss of genetic resources that people have spent hundreds of years creating. "The proportion of people who no longer wear traditional costumes and do not know how to speak their own language is increasing; folk songs, folk dances and traditional musical instruments of many ethnic minorities are only restored during festivals and rarely performed in daily life...There are no effective policies and measures in teaching and learning literacy and language for ethnic minority



students, which is an extremely important and key issue in preserving and developing the culture of each ethnic group” (Committee on Ethnic Minorities and Embassy of Ireland, 2019).

The above shortcomings stem from the attention of sectors and levels on cultural preservation and development that is not really close, not synchronous, and does not meet the cultural needs of the community. Facilities and means for serving cultural activities for ethnic minorities are still lacking. The staff working on cultural creation and research in Dak Lak is still sparse. In the process of implementing the policies of the Party and the State, local authorities have not promoted the role of the community, so the endogenous strength of the locality in cultural preservation and in linking cultural preservation with livelihood development has not been promoted.

#### **4.2. Some solutions to preserve the culture of ethnic minorities in place associated with livelihood development, sustainable multidimensional poverty reduction in Dak Lak province in the coming time**

##### *4.2.1. Group of solutions for preserving traditional cultural values of local ethnic minorities*

To preserve traditional culture associated with the livelihood activities of local ethnic minority communities in Dak Lak, it is necessary to raise awareness for the subjects who create traditional cultural values and awareness for tourists. Perfect the leadership and management mechanism, ensure the harmonious development relationship between economy and culture. Organize and implement various activities to effectively exploit cultural values for the economic development of ethnic minorities. Strengthen the collection, research and promotion of artifacts and traditional cultural products of the Ede, Xo Dang, M'Nong, Ba Na... to serve community tourism; increase the use of traditional handicrafts such as brocade weaving, patterns of ethnic minorities in agencies and organizations. Invest funds for cooperatives to organize traditional craft demonstrations with the participation of artisans in villages, in order to attract tourists to experience the process of creating textile products as well as feel the uniqueness of traditional crafts.

##### *4.2.2. Solutions to preserve and promote the traditional cultural values of local ethnic minorities in Dak Lak associated with livelihood development and sustainable multidimensional poverty reduction*

Activities to preserve traditional culture must be associated with local economic development activities and local tourism development. It is necessary to exploit cultural values into specific products to serve tourists, turn cultural values into commodity values, promote local economic development, contribute to increasing income, and improve the lives of the community. It is necessary to expand established cultural preservation models, improve products to suit customer tastes on the basis of traditional culture. Through local socio-economic development activities, cultural activities are integrated to promote in practice. Models need to expand the market, not only stopping at the provincial market but also need to expand to the whole region and outside the Central Highlands. In addition to traditional markets, cooperatives must find new directions and outputs for brocade weaving products, for artisans, cooperatives, and traditional craft villages in the whole province, aiming to link and closely link with the development of diverse tourism products, meeting the needs and tastes of visitors.

##### *4.2.3. Group of solutions on mechanisms and policies*

For the Central Highlands provinces in general and Dak Lak in particular, the Government needs to continue to have policies to support funding sources to continue implementing programs, projects and support policies to serve economic, cultural and social development such as: Policies to support production land, residential land, housing and domestic water for poor ethnic minority households with difficult lives; policies for regional socio-economic development. In addition, it is necessary to invest adequately in the collection, preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage values of local ethnic minorities.

It is necessary to have policies to innovate content, mechanisms, and investment and to strengthen the role of the State in the preservation and development of culture, sports and tourism in ethnic minority areas. Raising the issue of preserving ethnic minority culture in association

with livelihood development, sustainable multidimensional poverty reduction in ethnic minority and mountainous areas in relation to human development, human resource development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, paying attention to investing in developing the mental, intellectual and physical strength of the people.

### 5. Discussion

Currently, the work of preserving culture associated with sustainable livelihood development in Dak Lak is also posing a number of issues that need to be resolved such as:

Firstly, culture has not developed in proportion to the general development of economy, society, and education. In recent years, due to the negative impacts of the market economy, urbanization and international integration, many traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities in Dak Lak are facing great challenges, many cultural values are being transformed and have not been properly exploited.

Secondly, although the preservation and promotion of traditional cultural values are closely linked to people's livelihood activities, the transformation of those cultural values into commercial products for profit sometimes lacks appropriate methods.

Thirdly, in Dak Lak today, many types of traditional cultural activities of local ethnic minorities are being lost. Gong festivals, epic culture, folk songs and folk dances are becoming less and less common during festivals.

Customs and production methods have changed, and village spaces have shrunk, affecting festival spaces and gong cultural spaces. The image of traditional long houses, which contain many community cultural values, has faded and degraded without being restored or preserved. Due to economic difficulties, many families have sold their precious gongs and jars to buy production tools; the young generation is not interested in the traditional culture of their ethnic group; many talented artisans have not had time to pass on their traditional culture to the younger generation; the

role of village elders, village chiefs, the role of water port owners, and community customary laws have also faded in the cultural life of many villages. Therefore, it is necessary to promote the protection and promotion of the fine traditional cultural values of ethnic groups. This is one of the key tasks in the construction and socio-economic development of Dak Lak province.

Based on the above reality, solving the relationship between economic growth and development, preserving and promoting cultural values in the process of industrialization and modernization must become an important content of the strategies and plans for socio-economic development of the province.

### 6. Conclusion

The work of preserving and promoting traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities associated with sustainable livelihood development in Dak Lak province has achieved encouraging results. Some traditional cultural values have been exploited into products of economic value in the tourism and household economy sectors. Thereby, preserving traditional cultural values, developing the economy and increasing local income. However, besides the achieved results, cultural preservation associated with sustainable livelihood development in Dak Lak sometimes does not have a suitable connection.

Therefore, the process of developing the livelihoods of ethnic minorities has led to a series of cultural changes. In the past, community and sharing were always considered a cultural trait that should be respected, but now, that spirit has changed, affecting more or less the social resources in supporting livelihoods. When the way of making a living changes, the behavior towards the environment also changes, leading to a series of changes in cuisine, clothing, housing... This is one of many issues that need to be raised when considering cultural changes from the current livelihood changes for ethnic minorities in Dak Lak province.

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# **BẢO TỒN VÀ PHÁT HUY CÁC GIÁ TRỊ VĂN HÓA TRUYỀN THỐNG GẮN VỚI PHÁT TRIỂN SINH KẾ BỀN VỮNG CỦA CÁC DÂN TỘC THIỂU SỐ TẠI CHỖ Ở TỈNH ĐẮK LẮK<sup>2</sup>**

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**Tóm tắt:** Bảo tồn và phát huy các giá trị văn hóa truyền thống của các dân tộc thiểu số gắn với phát triển sinh kế có ý nghĩa đặc biệt quan trọng đối với sự phát triển kinh tế-xã hội của các địa phương. Trong nhiều năm qua, Tỉnh Đắk Lắk đã triển khai kịp thời và hiệu quả các chủ trương, chính sách của Đảng và Nhà nước về bảo tồn và phát huy các giá trị văn hóa truyền thống các dân tộc thiểu số gắn với phát triển sinh kế, đặc biệt với các dân tộc thiểu số tại chỗ. Tuy nhiên, đến nay công tác bảo tồn giá trị văn hóa truyền thống gắn với phát triển sinh kế của các dân tộc thiểu số tại chỗ còn gặp không ít khó khăn, nhiều giá trị văn hóa truyền thống chưa được khai thác hợp lý, chưa phát huy được giá trị kinh tế và phục vụ đời sống của cộng đồng. Trên cơ sở phân tích thực trạng về bảo tồn văn hóa truyền thống gắn với phát triển sinh kế của các dân tộc thiểu số tại chỗ ở Đắk Lắk, bài viết đề xuất những giải pháp phù hợp, góp phần đưa việc bảo tồn và phát huy giá trị văn hóa truyền thống của các dân tộc thiểu số tại chỗ ở tỉnh Đắk Lắk gắn với phát triển sinh kế đạt hiệu quả.

**Từ khóa:** Bảo tồn và phát huy các giá trị văn hóa truyền thống; Dân tộc thiểu số tại chỗ; Phát triển sinh kế bền vững; Tỉnh Đắk Lắk.

<sup>2</sup> Bài viết là kết quả nghiên cứu của đề tài khoa học cấp tỉnh: “Xây dựng mô hình giáo dục bảo tồn và phát huy bản sắc văn hóa truyền thống của các dân tộc thiểu số ở tỉnh Đắk Lắk”, năm 2022-2025.