

Cultural Heritage in Vietnam With the Requirements of Sustainable Development

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In the process of development, especially in the context of modernization and globalization, cultural heritage in Vietnam is facing many challenges and difficulties in resolving relationships between conservation and development, safeguarding and exploitation, economic and cultural goals, the roles of the government and the community, political and cultural factors. By studying the cases of some elements that UNESCO has inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and List of the World Heritage Sites in Vietnam (including Vietnamese Court Music, Xoan Singing of Phu Tho province, Worship of Hung Kings in Phu Tho, the Cultural Space of the Gongs in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, Ha Long Bay, Trang An Landscape Complex and Complex of Hue Monuments), this paper aims to analyze the specific issues in the above relationships in order to clarify the challenges that the heritage is facing in compliance with the UNESCO's Conventions on the safeguarding of cultural heritage as well as towards the sustainable development.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, Vietnam, conservation, safeguarding, sustainable development

Introduction

With a thousand-year history, Vietnam has a rich treasure of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. This treasure is a valuable resource for generations to inherit, preserve, and exploit for socio-economic and cultural development.

During past years, the safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage in Vietnam has achieved great results, contributing to producing attractive tourism products and as a results, contributing to the national budget. However, in the context of the current strong industrialization and modernization, the task of safeguarding is facing with many challenges regarding dealing with relationships between safeguarding and development, safeguarding and exploitation, economic objectives and cultural objectives, the role of the State and the community, especially when they have to face requirements of sustainable development.

This paper provides more insights into specific contents of the above-mentioned issues, and through that identifying challenges to the safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage to meet requirements of sustainable development. The cultural heritage treasure of Vietnam is spread across the entire territory. Within the framework of this paper, the author will limit to the heritages which have been inscribed by UNESCO and some other representative cultural heritage.

Vietnamese Government's Policy to Cultural Heritage

Though there have been different periods in history, the Vietnamese Government has always followed a consistent policy in cultural heritage safeguarding. In 1945, right after the country gained independence from the French colony, in the difficult context of the country, President Ho Chi Minh signed Act 65/SL “Assigning tasks for the Institute of Oriental Studies (Phương Đông Bác cổ học viện)” to safeguard all the “antiques” in the entire territory of Vietnam. The concept “antique” is equivalent to the current concept of “cultural heritage”. The Act writes: “It is strictly prohibited to destroy temples, communal houses or other worship venues, palaces and tombs, stelas, objects, conferment, documents and texts, books which bear religious characteristics or not, useful to the history but have not been safeguarded yet”¹.

Going through two wars against the French colony and American troupes with a lot of damage for the cultural heritage, right after the country gained independence, Vietnam actively joined international organizations focusing on the safeguarding of cultural heritage. In 1976, Vietnam officially joined UNESCO and seriously observed the conventions in protecting heritage, namely, *Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972), *Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003), *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (1975). The UNESCO Conventions contribute to both awareness and the action of the Government of Vietnam, promoting the development and improvement of the system of legal documents and policies on culture. In 2001, the National Assembly of Vietnam promulgated the Law on Cultural Heritage and this law was amended in 2009. Subsequently, the system of legal documents have been improved and finalized such as the Government's Resolutions *Guidelines in the Implementation of Certain Papers in the Law on Cultural Heritage and the Amended Law, Some Additions to the Law on Cultural Heritage* (2010); *Guidelines on the Authority, Steps, and Procedure in the Development and Approval of Projects in Safeguarding and Restoration of Historical-Cultural Heritage and Attractions* (2012); *Guidelines in Granting the Title of “National Artisan”, “Excellent Artisan” in the Field of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2014); *Guidelines in the Safeguarding and Management of Cultural and World Natural Heritage in Vietnam* (2017); Circular by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism *Detailed Regulations on the Safeguarding and Restoration of Cultural Heritage*, etc. In general, the policy and legal document system has been added and revised so that it meets requirements of the reality of the diverse and ever changing cultural life.

Thanks to all this, the safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage has achieved certain results. By the end of 2017, Vietnam has 26 cultural heritage inscribed by UNESCO, 3,447 national heritage; 95 special national heritage; 142 national treasures; 228 intangible cultural heritage inscribed to the list of national intangible cultural heritage. The system of museums has been expanded to 159 museums, including 125 public museums, 34 private museums, where there are over three millions documents and antique objects². Many historical-cultural heritage and attractions have been restored by the State's budget or from the budget mobilized from other social sources. The work of research and promotion of intangible cultural heritage of 54 ethnic groups of Vietnam has been receiving much attention. The process of safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage has always been closely associated with honoring folk artisans. Many museums, including

¹ Chủ tịch Hồ Chí Minh với bảo tồn di sản văn hóa dân tộc [Ho Chi Minh and the safeguarding of national cultural heritage], The State Archive Office, <http://www.archives.gov.vn>.

² Report on the work of culture, sports and tourism in 2017 by Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in the document 14/BC-BVHTTDL dated 18 January 2018 to the Prime Minister.

public and private, have been trying to change the way they are working, aiming at more audience-oriented approach and have met requirements of the society.

Some Theoretical Viewpoints in Safeguarding and Promotion of Cultural Values and Sustainable Development

Currently, there are different viewpoints in the safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage and in the academic circle; these viewpoints have caused hot academic debate. G. J. Ashworth, a British scholar, sums up the views of heritage preservation in many countries around the world and divides it into three groups, corresponding to three models of safeguarding: (1) intact safeguarding; (2) inheritance-based safeguarding, and (3) safeguarding and development (Ashworth, 1997; B ù, 2009, pp. 37-38).

The Viewpoint of Intact Safeguarding

In this viewpoint, cultural heritage should be preserved as it is to avoid the distortion of the heritage by the present generation. Each heritage contains in its certain socio-cultural values that might not be understood by the present generation so that they can promote those values in a right way. Moreover, influence of the present will create new cultural layers which do not overlap with the cultural layer handed over by the previous generation. Therefore, if they change those cultural values, it might be impossible for coming generations to trace back to authentic values of the existing heritage. This viewpoint developed since 1950s in the world and was prevalent for a long time, playing almost a dominant role in managing heritage in many countries in the world (B ù, 2009, p. 38).

In Vietnam, the viewpoint of intact safeguarding has been supported by many scholars, especially those working in museology and in the field of tangible cultural heritage. Tô Ngọc Thanh believes: “If today we preserve objects/things that are not authentic and the generations tomorrow will base on or refer to that, that will be a disaster”³. Tô Vũ confirms: “Talking about safeguarding, we need to think of safeguarding in the whole and intact the object to be preserved” (Tô 2002, p. 242). Đinh Gia Khánh, while pointing out viewpoints of certain researchers criticizing the mixing of traditional and modern elements, requires removing that rough mixture (Đinh & Lê 1993, p. 28).

Those who keep that viewpoint believe that it is important to keep the status intact so that when it is possible, next generations will deal with that, interpret and find ways to inherit and promote the heritage in the best way. In that sense, there is no concept of “modification”, “enhancement”, or “development”. The main requirements of this viewpoint are “Preserving all that can be preserved, the source of the heritage is immutable, the authenticity of the heritage is the ultimate determinant of its value”.

However, there is the fact that heritage, especially intangible cultural heritage exists and develops in the course of history, and it is inevitable that there are new elements, movements, and changes so that the heritage fits into the life. And it will come the time that it is very difficult to say which are the original elements and which are the elements derived from the development process. Therefore, it is an inadequate aspect of this viewpoint.

Inheritance-Based Safeguarding Viewpoint

This view states that each heritage can only perform its historical tasks at a certain time and space, so the social and cultural values of the heritage that are appropriate to the current society should be promoted and

³ Interview with Professor, Doctor Tô Ngọc Thanh, Chairman of Folklore Association.

those values which are not appropriate should be removed (B ù, 2010, p. 34). Safeguarding on the basis of inheritance is not an attempt to retract the original, maintain it intact, rather it is the safeguarding with both inheriting the traditional and at the same time adding the new elements, making the heritage be adapted into the new context.

This viewpoint seems to be prevailant in the academic circle regarding the safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage. This also fits into the movement and development of cultures in general and cultural phenomena in particular. For example, the modern form of *ch àu singing* nowadays is the safeguarding on the basis of inheriting the ancient *ch àu singing*—retaining the essence of *ch àu performance* in the communal house yard of Vietnamese villages and combining it with new *ch àu sing* elements, turning it to a new arts performance form which can develop in the modern society. In principle, culture can only exist and develop on the basis of preserving cultural achievements from the past and continue to develop in the next context which is both modern and still bearing traditional elements (T ù, 2013a, p. 42).

However, in the practice, this viewpoint also faces a lot of challenges in identifying which are elements with values which should be inherited and promoted and which are inadequate elements to be removed. The inclusion of new elements in an improper way has led to the distortion and deformation of the heritage, causing the disagreement of the academic circle and society in general. Besides, there is also the risk that the next generations might remove/eliminate true cultural values that they cannot understand yet.

The Viewpoint of Safeguarding and Development

Those who hold this viewpoint do not care about how to preserve the heritage intact, which elements should be inherited from the past. Rather they focus on how for the heritage to live and promote its values in the context of the contemporary society.

If the traditional viewpoints believe that the authenticity of the heritage is the essence of the heritage and it is important to inherit that authenticity, the viewpoint of safeguarding and development underlooks the role of authenticity. It is believed that authenticity is not an objective value, rather it is measured with experience. With this approach, a heritage can be turned into an event or a tourism product which can serve different purposes and functions in which the authenticity has just a relative meaning (B ù, 2010, p. 27).

Following this viewpoint, in preserving cultural heritage there is no objective is which can be considered as the only, the ultimate, the right way in all cases. Cultural heritage has a multiple meaning, multiple objective and is not stable with time. Therefore, its safeguarding does not necessarily totally depend on the data from the past. Instead, there can be creativity, addition, even inclusion of modern cultural elements to enhance its attractiveness, or change the heritage into a product with economic value which can contribute to the national budget (B ù, 2010, p. 28).

This is the way in safeguarding in development that cultural activities nowadays, regarding intangible cultural heritage, are following and applying, namely, this is the organization of traditional festivals as a cultural-tourist event, modernization of traditional performances, bringing spiritual rituals such as spirit possession in the Mother Goddesses worship onto the stage, organization of cultural festivals with the integration of traditional and modern elements, etc. The strength of this model is that it enhances attractiveness to the audience, increases the liveliness and diversity of the heritage, creating a new vitality to the heritage.

However, the weak side of this approach is the commercialization of the heritage, or even the heritage is vulgarized as it is now happening with the gongs performance of the Highlands, Hue royal *nh ã nhac* music,

Xoan singing for tourists or the performance of *Ca Trù* and *Quan họ* singing for tourists in restaurants and hotels, etc.

From the three above models or viewpoints in safeguarding, we can see that each model has its advantages and disadvantages. The author believes that there is no one-fit-all model which can be applied to all cases. On the contrary, the models and theories should be applied flexibly and in a creative way depending on the specific features and values of each heritage.

The author believes that in general there are two main approaches to two types of cultural heritage: tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

- *Tangible cultural heritage*: Despite being defined by UNESCO as “Architectural works, sculptures and paintings, archeological elements or structures, inscriptions, cave dwellings ...”, “Individual or group construction works, archaeological relics” (UNESCO, 2012, p. 10) or defined by the Vietnam Law in Cultural Heritage as “material products which have historical, cultural and scientific values including historical-cultural heritage, attractions, ancient objects and national treasures” (The National Assembly Office, 2013), the “originality”, and “authenticity” should always be enhanced. In this case, the viewpoint of *intact safeguarding* is dominant. It is impossible to act on behalf of “inheritance-based safeguarding” or “safeguarding and development” to renew the objects or distort the heritage sites. Such behavior is the destruction of heritage.

This is also in lines with the spirit of international conventions such as *Athens Charter for the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage* (1931), *Venice Charter for Safeguarding and Restoration of Monuments* (1964), *Bura Charter* (1979), *Nara Document* (1994), *Guiding Principles of Education and Training on the Safeguarding of Monuments, Clusters and Sites of ICOMOS* (1993), *Convention on the Safeguarding of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972) by UNESCO, etc.

- *Regarding intangible cultural heritage*, with the meaning “customs, expression forms, knowledge, skills and together with this tools, objects and artifacts and associated cultural space” (as defined by UNESCO) (Vietnam Institute of Culture and Arts Studies, 2009, p. 330) or “spiritual products associated with the community or individuals, objects and associated cultural space, having historical, cultural, and scientific values, bearing the community identify, continuously being recreated and handed over from generation to generation orally, formally, through performance and other forms” (as defined by the Vietnam Law in Cultural Heritage) (The National Assembly Office, 2013), it is very difficult to apply the viewpoint of *intact safeguarding*. Different to tangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage is always moving and changing over the time and in the life of community to adapt to the natural and social environment. Therefore, they do not remain unchanged as tangible cultural heritage.

The UNESCO convention also emphasizes “Intangible cultural heritage is handed over from generation to generation, continuously being recreated and modified by the community to adapt to the environment and the interrelationship between the community and its history” (Vietnam Institute of Culture and Arts Studies, 2009, p. 330). As such, regarding intangible cultural heritage, the creation and inclusion of new elements “continuously being recreated to adapt” is inevitable. In the process of safeguarding of this heritage, the application of the viewpoint *inheritance-based safeguarding* or even *safeguarding and development* (to the certain extent) is acceptable. Only then those heritages can survive in this modern society.

Sustainable Development

The term “sustainable development” first appeared in 1980 in the works *Strategies for the World*

Safeguarding published by International Union for Conservation of Nature-IUCN with the following content: “The development of humanity can not only focus on economic development, but also on the social needs and the impact on the ecological environment”. This concept was widely disseminated in 1987 thanks to the Brundtland Report (also called *Our Common Future*) by the World Committee of Environment and Development-WCED (nowadays called Brundtland Committee). According to the definition “sustainable development” is understood as “Development meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations ...” (Trương, 2017, p. 56). The content of the concept of sustainable development includes ensuring effective economic development, social equality and environment safeguarding. To achieve this, all the socio-economic components and social organizations should cooperate with each other.

In the last years of the 20th century, in the context that many countries considered economic growth to be the focus, used energy-consuming technological foundation, over abused natural resources, polluted the environment and tried to avoid their responsibility towards future generations, UNESCO put forward the viewpoint of *sustainable development* in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, in “The Global Agenda for 21st century” (shortly referred to as the *21 Agenda*). According to this, the three pillars of sustainable development were identified as, first, sustainable development in terms of economy, or sustainable economic development, which means the development is fast but also secure and with high quality; second, socio-cultural sustainable development which ensures the social equality and human development; third, ecological-environment sustainable development: appropriate exploitation and use of natural resources, environment safeguarding, and improvement of the quality of the living environment.

So far there have been more than 60 definitions of sustainable development and thus there are different understandings of this concept (Trương, 2017, p. 57). Many believe that sustainable development should be built on the four main pillars which are economy, society, environment, and culture. Some believe that culture is not just a component or pillar of sustainable development, or an aspect which should be taken into consideration during the development process. Rather, culture should be considered as the foundation of sustainable development, because culture is everything that humanity creates during their process of existence and development (Vũ, 2017, p. 2). By nature, it can be said that culture dominates and determines the three above pillars.

From general viewpoints of sustainable development, some Vietnamese researchers have tried to shed light on its specific contents associated with different aspects in the social life such as in the field of economy (Trần N. N, 2007; Vũ V. H, 2014; Phạm T. T. B, 2016), culture (Nguyễn T. C, 2017; Nguyễn Q. H, 2017), tourism (Phạm T. L, 2002; Từ T. L, 2017), heritage (Đặng V. B, 2017; Phan T. H, 2017; Nguyễn T. H, 2017), etc. Regarding the safeguarding and promotion of the values of cultural heritage associated with sustainable development, the main contents include:

- *Economy*: Ensuring the long-term economic activities, providing socio-economic benefits to all the beneficiaries in an equal way, including all professions and opportunities, social services to all local communities.
- *Society and culture*: Respecting the social and cultural authenticity of the local communities, preserving the cultural values and traditional values which have been developed and exist, contributing to the intercultural understanding and sharing.

- *Environment*: Using best natural resources which play the key role in socio-economic development, sustaining the key ecological processes, helping to sustain the natural heritage and biodiversity (Tũr, 2017, p. 131).

To sum up, sustainable development requires that during the process of safeguarding, promotion and exploitation of cultural heritage, besides focusing on achieving economic objectives, it is necessary to pay proper attention to safeguarding of the local culture, ensuring social equity and the environment safeguarding.

The Situation of Safeguarding and Promotion of Cultural Heritage Values in Vietnam at the Present

The Title of Heritage and Changes in the Fate of Heritage

The recognition of titles for heritage, especially the inscription by UNESCO as the world heritage, intangible cultural heritage of humanity is a turning point which has changed the fate of many heritages.

Most heritage after the recognition of inscription have become the pride of the local community, have received more attention by the local authority and the media, and have received investment opportunities by enterprises, etc. The recognition and inscription also contributes to introduce the heritage to foreign tourists, creating opportunity for tourism development, thus opportunity for the local budget increase. The economic benefit, in its turn, has become the catalyst for people to actively protect the heritage, preserving and recreating cultural and traditional practices and values.

From the perspective of the Government, after the recognition of the heritage, the central and local authority has specific policies and support programs and mechanism to preserve and promote those heritages. Namely, restoration, inventory, and collection of heritage have received proper attention; the promotion and dissemination of the heritage is carried out. The State also creates opportunity for general schools and arts schools and colleges to teach about heritage.

From the community, the recognition of the heritage is a spiritual push, arousing in them the pride of cultural tradition of their homeland, thus motivating them to work together in safeguarding and promotion of the heritage.

From the community perspective, after receiving the inscription by UNESCO or recognition at the national level (national heritage, special national heritage, national intangible cultural heritage, etc.), the heritages of Vietnam have become more famous, attracting more tourists, creating more job opportunities for people, and contributing more to the socio-economic development. Some world heritages such as Hạ Long Bay, Tr ầng An Heritage Complex, Huế Ancient Complex, Hội An Ancient City, etc., have remarkable development steps, creating enormous benefits for the local budget. Intangible cultural heritages such as *Quan họ Bắc Ninh* [folk] singing, *Huế Royal singing*, *V íGiặm Nghệ Tĩnh* [Nghệ Tĩnh Folk] singing, *Đờn ca tài tử Nam Bộ* [Nam Bo folk singing], all have developed well in the social and cultural life of each locality. For cultural heritage in needs of urgent safeguarding, the inscription/recognition also contributes to preventing the degradation of those heritages.

A good example in the story of “post inscription” is *Xoan singing*. In 2011 *Xoan singing* was inscribed by UNESCO to the list of intangible cultural heritage in needs of urgent safeguarding. Thanks to the decisive efforts by the authority of Phú Thọ province and the local community, the safeguarding of *Xoan singing* has achieved positive results. In 2017, this heritage was moved to the list of intangible cultural heritage of the humanity and this is the first case in the development history of UNESCO.

However, the negative side of the recognition and inscription is the “syndrome of heritage” which means localities compete with each other in compiling profiles to be submitted to UNESCO and for the recognition of other titles. This depends much on the economic potential, “political will”, and the attention of the local authority. There are localities where there are valuable heritages but they do not have the capacity to compile the heritage profile. There are other cases when the locality has economic potential and necessary relationship and capacity to compile the heritage profile and they benefit from this.

Especially regarding different domestic titles of heritage in the recent years there has been the situation of “too many titles” and the real heritage and fake heritage are mixed. Some social organizations and associations purposely have granted titles or certificates such The Heritage Tree, Vietnam Sacred heritage (Việt Nam linh thiêng cổ tự), Folklore artisans, Temples meeting standards of temples of cults of Three Palaces, Four Palaces, etc., in a “spontaneous way” to make money. Therefore, in 2017, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism carried out a campaign to “fight with titles”, requiring social organizations which do not have the authority to stop honouring and granting titles in this way.

From the scientific perspective, some researchers believe that the policy of “selective safeguarding” with the classification of historical-cultural heritage and festivals into provincial level, national level, special national level, etc., has explicitly divided heritage into heritage of “high value and low value”. Some scholars investigating the culture of Vietnam have also tried to analyze the weak side of this viewpoint. Some Vietnamese researchers believe that this is the remaining of the evolution theory which is out of date in culture studies (Lê Đào, Nguyễn, & Hoàng, 2012b). And moreover, this is in contrary to the spirit of respecting cultural diversity of UNESCO. The fact that UNESCO inscribes certain heritage does not mean that heritage is “grandiose”, “more deserving”, “or more valuable than other heritage”. Rather, it is the confirmation of the cultural diversity of the humanity and demonstration of different cultural expressions.

Protecting Cultural Heritage Before Challenges of Economic Objectives

It is undeniable that nowadays cultural heritage has become a big and valuable resource for the socio-economic development in the locality. According to the statistics, revenue from cultural heritage has increased considerably in the recent years, contributing much to the national economic growth. At the Complex of Huế Imperial city, only revenue from the entry tickets increased from 80 billion VND in 2011 to 317 billion VND in 2017. If the ticket sales for the performance “Đại Nội at night” is included, then the total revenue is over 320 billion VND which is more than four times increased after seven years⁴. The ticket sales from Hạ Long Bay accounts for nearly 1,000 billion VND in the total of 11,000 billion VND from tourism activities of Ha Long City in 2017, which is an increase in 39% compared to the same period⁵. The revenue from ticket sales to the attraction and boat tickets at the Tràng An Attraction Complex in 2017 also reached over 652 billion VND⁶.

Festivals have become a big source contributing to the local economies, namely Festival *V ú Bà Chúa Xứ [Xu Goddess]* at Sam mountain festival, Trần Temple Festival, Hùng Temple Festival, Hương Temple Festival, etc. Even some cultural heritages which traditionally did not bring economic values such as *Bắc Ninh folk singing*, *Nam Bộ folk singing*, etc., can also be exploited for economic benefits.

⁴ 2017 Annual Report by the Center of Safeguarding of Hue Ancient City.

⁵ Data from 2017 Annual Report by Quang Ninh Department of Tourism.

⁶ Data from 2017 Annual Report by Ninh Binh Department of Tourism.

From the economic problem there has been negative tendency regarding the safeguarding of heritage such as the tendency of commercialization or exaggeration of heritage. *The tendency of commercialization of heritage* is demonstrated in efforts to expand the festival scale, distort the nature of the heritage, create fake traditional cultural activities, all for the sake of attracting more tourists to get more benefits from related services. *The tendency of exaggeration of heritage* is demonstrated in the fact that localities compete with each other in restoring and renewing the heritage, making them “bigger”, “more modern”, and more famous to attract tourists.

The Temple Trăm Gian [Hundred-Room Temple] in Chương Mỹ district, Hanoi City is a valuable heritage which was built in 1185 under the time of King Lý Cao Tông. The temple has an ancient architecture and exquisite carvings, thus it has been recognized as a national heritage for over 40 years. However, it has been continuously being restored in the way of “renewing the heritage” with new materials and structures. Especially, in 2012, the ancestor room and ancient stupas were destroyed and new ones were built.

The heritage at national level—a thousand-year Khúc Thủy Temple in Thanh Oai district of Hanoi has also been harmed with many “strange” structures, which do not fit into the ancient and traditional architecture with the religious features of the Red River Delta.

Because of the economy issues, many people do not hesitate to violate the Law on Culture and UNESCO Convention regarding the world heritage. In the Trùng An Attraction Complex, right in the middle of the heritage, an enterprise has drilled into and carried out construction activities on the sacred mountain to construct hundred concrete pillars to build a road more than a kilometer long with over 2,200 steps leading to the mountain summit as a way to attract tourists. All this has seriously damaged the natural landscape and caused harm to the heritage complex.

In the beautiful caves of Phong Nha-Kẻ Bàng and Hạ Long Bay, in order to get more benefit, beauty competitions and big events and festivals have been organized there, causing harm to the stalactites and stalagmites that the nature takes thousands of years to create.

Besides, there have been a number of cases of restoration in the way of “upgrading heritage” such as the restoration of Ngô Quyền Tomb (2014), the construction of the Gate of Bồ Đà Temple (2017), restoration of Stela of Huế Literature Temple (2017), the construction of the second new statue of Bà Chúa Xứ Goddess on Sam mountain (2017), etc. There are even cases of building fake caves and temples to make money. In the area surrounding Hương Temple, in 2002 the authority cleared up 42 fake temples and shrines. All these efforts in restoration of heritage in the direction of exaggerating the heritage, renewing the heritage, even trying to create heritage from nothing, has caused harm to the overall task of heritage safeguarding.

In the field of intangible cultural heritage it is the story of competing with each other in beating “Guinness records”, for example, the choir with 3,500 singers for a Quan Họ folk singing in Bắc Ninh (2012), enormous *chưng* cake of 5.7 ton used in the offering ritual at the Quốc Mẫu Âu Cơ Temple in Hưng Yên (2014), *dầy* cake more than 2 tons at the festival at Độc Cước Temple, Thanh Hóa (2017). Besides there are other records such as the biggest drum, the biggest vase, the biggest group of *áo dài* show, etc. All these “records” have created bad practice in the safeguarding of culture, absolutely not in lines with the spirit of the safeguarding of heritage promoted by UNESCO and the Law on Cultural heritage of Vietnam.

Safeguarding Cultural Heritage Before Challenges of Tourism Development

Since Vietnam moved to the market economy and opened the door to the world, tourism in Vietnam has

developed fast with the increasing number of foreign tourists coming to Vietnam. Especially in the recent five years, the exploitation of cultural heritage to serve tourism has become more effective and has achieved remarkable results. In 2017, Vietnam met nearly 13 million foreign tourists, which is 30% increase compared to 2016; 74 million of domestic tourists used the service, increased by 19%; the total revenue from tourism reached 515,000 billion VND, increased by 23% compared to 2016. Vietnam is becoming a favorable destination on the world tourism map. The growth rate of foreign tourists coming to Vietnam in 2017 is highest in the region and Vietnam is in the top 10 countries in terms of the tourist growth rate, compared to the increase by 20% in Indonesia, 15% in Cambodia, 12% in Philippines, 10% in Myanmar, 8% in Thái Lan, and 7% in Singapore⁷.

Most localities have identified their specific cultural values and strengths in terms of cultural heritage to develop specific tourism products, creating the cultural branding and image different among regions and localities. The development of the tourism branding and products specific for the locality based on cultural heritage differences is a foundational step for the development of a tourism which focuses more on in-depth values.

However, the rapid development of tourism has also caused big challenges towards the safeguarding and sustainable exploitation of values of cultural heritage. The tendency of vulgarization and bringing the heritage to the stage to serve tourism development seems to be widespread.

The tendency of vulgarization of heritage started quite long ago together with the the atheistic viewpoint in the new regime. The movement of criticizing “superstitious phenomena”, promotion for the building “new lifestyle”, “new life customs” contributed to the secularization of religious beliefs, making folk beliefs less sacred and rituals and customs simpler. In the context of promoting tourism, this tendency takes place even faster and has become more widespread. This is demonstrated in the fact that rituals, performance, and music with sacred elements are gradually taken from the sacred space to be performed in the secular life, serving tourists and customers in the venues and places for entertainment, and in these context, the secularization/vulgarization of those rituals and performances is inevitable.

Namely, *nhã nhạc* [royal music] is the music of Huế royal court, including *đại nhạc* [grand music] and *tiểu nhạc* [insignificant music]. Grand music was performed during big and important rituals of the court such as Nam Giao ritual, Miếu ritual, X ã Tắc ritual, Đại Triều ritual. *Tiểu nhạc* was performed in dinners and other holidays and festivals such as Tet holiday, etc. (Lê 2008). Before grand music was the music for the rituals and could be performed only in the court, not for entertainment and the wide public. However, in the changed historical and cultural context *nhã nhạc* has gradually become a form of theater performance and has been brought to the squares and streets during Huế festivals and brought to tourist boats for the tourist entertainment, brought to events and workshops and conferences. Therefore, this type of music gradually loses its formality and notability.

In the old time, gongs in the Highlands were always associated with the sacred life cycle rituals (namely, wedding ceremony, the tomb ritual, etc.), the tree life cycle (ritual to clear the field, ritual of sowing, ritual of harvesting, ritual of new rice, ritual to worship rice spirit, ect.), everyday life rituals (ritual to worship the new wharf and new house, ritual to see off warriors to the battle field, evening of telling epics, etc). At the present, the living space, production way and the beliefs of people in the Highlands have changed a lot. From the belief of animism, the movement of “buidling new cultural lifestyle” contributed to removing the belief in Gods and

⁷ Statistics data by Department of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

the spiritual needs from people's life (Từ, 2009). In the context of promoting tourism, as the identity of the ethnic groups, gong performance has drawn attraction and has become a typical tourist product of the Highlands. According to some researchers, the secularization of the gongs performance has caused the loss of their religious and symbolic meanings (Lê, Đào, Nguyễn, & Hoàng, 2012a). And because the gongs have become less sacred and because of other needs, many families in the Highlands have sold valuable gong sets that their parents and grandparents have handed over to them, causing serious loss of gongs in the area.

The tendency of secularization has also changed the awareness and behavior regarding cultural heritage of those selected by the community to be *Hiệu* [general], *cô Tướng* [female general] in the *Giống Festival* at *Phù Đồng Temple*, *chúa Gấm* [female goddess] in the beliefs of worshipping *Hùng Kings* as well as in many other heritages.

Another prevailing tendency is the tendency of bringing cultural heritage to the stage. Its expression can be seen in many different heritages; however, perhaps it is most obvious in the *Hùng Temple Festival*, a festival at national level to honor the merits of *Hùng Kings*—the first kings in the history of Vietnam. In the past, this festival was mostly practiced by the community of villagers of *Cổ Tịch*, *Vi*, and *Trợ* villages, since it became the national festival, the procedure of incense offerings is performed following the scenario developed by the culture sector with the participation of group of soldiers carrying flags and guns, music groups, group beating drums, 100 young guys symbolizing 100 children of *Hồng* and *Lạc Kings* in the costumes imitating costumes of “*Hùng Kings time*” etc. (Từ, 2013b, pp. 1022-1033). As evaluated by some researchers, the process of “bringing heritage to the stage” and “creating tradition” has changed the nature of the *Hùng King festival*, from the practice to its content and meaning (Lê, Đào, Nguyễn, & Hoàng, 2012b).

The *Lam Kinh Festival* to honor the *Lê Kings* have also been controlled by the professionals and has increasingly become a product of the stage, losing its community features and has become a festival “of the State”. Traditional ceremonies and rituals are increasingly overwhelmed by the performances performed by professional art troupes, and villagers only play supporting roles and are spectators watching the ceremonies and rituals. The fact that the Government pays for villager to “act” out the festivals has created the thinking that villagers are doing this for the Government rather than the festivals are their and they organize the festivals for themselves. Spiritually, the local community does not consider the festival their. As the festival finishes and the professional groups leave, it does not leave any impression on the community (Từ, 2005).

In general, when tourism develops, it will create job opportunity and income for people. Tourism also creates a big income for heritage, and then this income is used for the maintenance and restoration of the heritage and related intangible cultural heritage. However, without a proper management, it will be difficult to protect cultural heritage.

Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage Before the Pressure of Urbanization and Modernization

The process of strong urbanization and modernization at the present has created opportunity for the rapid development of the economy, human resource, and infrastructure, etc. However, it also has caused problems in the issue of how to balance the relationship between safeguarding and development. From the safeguarding practice regarding cultural heritage in Vietnam, certain lessons can be drawn.

For example, with its remarkable values in the culture, history, and natural landscape, *Huế Imperial City* was inscribed by UNESCO as the world heritage in 1993. However, after a period of rapid development, in 2006 Hue was included into the “black list” by UNESCO. This is because rapid urbanization has breached the

Heritage Belt with the construction of highways, hotels, resorts, invasions along the Huong River, restoration and improper safeguarding. It is not until 2013 that after the efforts to adjust the planning and implementation of programs and projects to protect the heritage and environmentally friendly, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee removed Hue from the “black list”.

Sustainable development always requires that the process of exploiting the heritage to strictly comply with the requirements of environmental safeguarding. In 2009, Ha Long Bay was listed by UNESCO in the “black list” and was requested to regularly report on reclamation activities, coal mining, hot tourist development, hotel and restaurant construction, aquaculture, and waste disposal which causes the pollution of sea water, invasions of environmental landscapes, threats to global values of the heritage. Some professionals have expressed their grievances: “There is no such place that people bring rock and soil to dispose in the area of the world’s natural heritage as in Vietnam”⁸. Until now, although there have been many interventions from the Quang Ninh provincial government, Ha Long Bay has not been withdrawn from the “black list”.

For the world heritage, the possibility of being “stripped of the title” is possible. “Problematic” heritages will be recommended by UNESCO, if there is no improvement after long time of recommendation, the heritage will be included in the list of “World Heritage List of Endangered Species”. And finally, if there is no improvement, the heritage will be removed from the list of world heritage.

In the field of intangible cultural heritage, the process of urbanization, modernization also greatly changes the cultural space and living environment of communities, causing difficulties in protecting the heritage. The case of the Highlands’ gongs can be an example. The Highlands’ gongs have always been closely associated with its typical space of villages and forests. At the present, the area of forests has been increasingly narrowed, and gong performers are brought to the stage to perform for tourists. They even feel offended, as if they are paid to entertain tourists (Tù, 2014). Similarly, *Quan họ singing* in the new way is absolutely different from the traditional Quan họ singing or “village Quan họ singing” in the good traditions of the old time. And this has led to the misunderstanding of the inheritance of traditional elements (Tù, 2006).

The context of international exchange and integration has also led to significant changes in the awareness, needs, and taste of people. Before the strong invasion of new arts forms, the public, especially young people do not feel like or attracted to traditional arts forms, thus the number of people enjoying this art form has reduced significantly. From villages young people go to cities for study and job, thus those who stay in villages are mostly the elderly and children. The mobilization of young people in the festivals is not easy. The role and importance of those who practice the heritage is also overlooked and they do not have such a role as in the past.

Conclusions

From the above analysis and evaluation, certain conclusions can be drawn regarding the safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage to meet requirements of sustainable development:

First, it is necessary to ensure the balance between the two processes of safeguarding and promotion. The practice over many years has showed that when the heritage is treated in a proper way in terms of both safeguarding and promotion, safeguarding and exploitation, the results are positive and long-term. Cases of failure are those when too much focus is on the aspect of exploitation or over abuse without sufficient attention to the work of safeguarding and safeguarding. Nowadays, many countries in the world have paid much

⁸ Interview with architect Ngô Doãn Đức, Vice Chairman of Vietnam Association of Architects.

attention to the calculation of the capacity of the heritage to exploit it to a reasonable extent, limiting the number of visitors. For certain cases of caves and special heritage, the limitation is even stricter, or there is even periodical closing so that the heritage has a period of “rest” and be recovered.

On the other hand, it is also not necessary to only pay attention to the safeguarding aspect without taking advantage and promoting the heritage. Such an extreme is a passive way, and is a waste of a resource which can be used to serve the socio-economic development.

Second, it is necessary to balance the relationship between economic and cultural aspect during the process of exploitation of the heritage. Economy and culture are the two interactive and interdependent aspects. The economic aspect of the culture can be exploited to create the motivation for development of the heritage and the cultural heritage should be viewed as an integral component in the process of socio-economic development. However, while trying to achieve economic objectives, it is necessary to take into consideration cultural objectives and protect the culture. The heritage and culture cannot be sacrificed for the sake of economic objectives.

Third, it is important to solve well the relationship between the State and the community, clearly distinguishing the role and responsibility of both sides. It is necessary to ensure the long-term economic activities, bringing economic and social benefits to all beneficiaries, thus motivating them to actively take part in the safeguarding of heritage, creating the bond of the community and heritage. Nowadays, community-based development is a tendency of the world and is one of the effective measures for the sustainable exploitation of heritage. The Conventions by UNESCO have also enhanced the role of the community—those who are owners and play an important role in the creating, sustaining, and handing over cultural heritage.

Besides, it is also necessary to avoid the tendency of “administratization”, “institutionalization” of the heritage and the authority does everything on behalf of people in the practice related to the heritage. This invisibility will push people away from the essence of heritage and separate the heritage from its true environment. Only when the people have a deep understanding and active participation in the safeguarding and promotion of heritage values, then the effects are sustainable and long-term (Tù, 2010).

Fourth, it is necessary to be flexible and creative in ways to protect and promote heritage. It is not always possible to rely on the already available formulas or models. On the contrary, the models and theories should be applied in a flexible way depending on the historical context and characteristics of each heritage.

For tangible cultural heritage, priority should be given to the safeguarding and promotion of its historical, cultural, and scientific values. It is important to preserve and hand over to next generations the original and authentic elements of the heritage so that the next generations—those who have better technical conditions—can provide better safeguarding measures. It is important to sustain traditional functions of the heritage besides creating their new functions.

As for intangible cultural heritage, the safeguarding and promotion is for preserving the values of traditional culture, and at the same time blowing a new-life energy into it so that it can survive in the contemporary life. Therefore, preserving heritage is the same as “keeping the fire and making the fire stronger” for the heritage.

To sum up, if a nation wants to develop, it should preserve and promote its cultural heritage from the past. Besides, the development process requires a continuous creativity and flexible application of scientific rules to select the most optimal safeguarding measures so that the economic potential of the heritage is exploited, and at the same time historical and cultural values of the heritage are preserved and sustainable development is ensured.

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