

บทบาทเยาวชนไทย-เวียดนามในการสงวนรักษาและส่งเสริม  
มรดกภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรม

THE ROLE OF THAI AND VIETNAMESE YOUTH ON  
PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF  
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

โจว บินห์ นัม เจียง และดิเรก ทรงกัลยาณวัตร

NGO BINH NAM GIANG\* AND DEREK SONGKALAYANAWAT\*\*

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาบทบาทเยาวชนในการสงวนรักษาและการส่งเสริมมรดกภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรมสู่อนุชนรุ่นต่อไป เลือกศึกษาโซนของไทยกับเพลงชนของเวียดนาม เพราะเป็นมรดกภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรมที่ยูเนสโกเคยมีความเห็นว่าเสี่ยงต่อการสูญหายแต่สามารถสงวนรักษาและส่งเสริมให้ฟื้นคืนสู่คนรุ่นต่อไปได้ บทความนี้ใช้วิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลโดยการศึกษาเอกสาร และการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกเยาวชนผู้สืบทอดองค์ความรู้การแสดงโซนของไทย เยาวชนผู้สืบทอดองค์ความรู้การแสดงเพลงชนของเวียดนาม ศิลปินอาวุโสโซนของไทย และศิลปินอาวุโสเพลงชนของเวียดนาม ผลการศึกษาพบว่า

1. เยาวชนมีบทบาทและมีส่วนร่วมสำคัญในการจัดกิจกรรมสร้างพื้นที่และขยายองค์ความรู้การสงวนรักษาและส่งเสริมเพื่อสืบทอดมรดกภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรมที่เป็นเอกลักษณ์ชุมชนเพื่อให้ประชาชนได้เข้าใจปัญหาและบทบาทในการสงวนรักษาและส่งเสริมมรดกภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรมยิ่งขึ้น

2. ภาครัฐและชุมชนของไทยและเวียดนามมีบทบาทสำคัญในการส่งเสริมการศึกษาแก่เยาวชนให้มีความรู้ ให้รู้คุณค่ามรดกภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรมของชาติ ว่าเป็นมรดก

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\* PhD Candidate in Public Administration, Researcher at Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies, Vietnam. Email: namgiangvicas@gmail.com

\*\* Lecturer of Thai History at Lopburi College of Dramatic Arts, Thailand. Email: dereks440@gmail.com

ภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรมที่มีคุณค่าต่อมวลมนุษยชาติในโลก เมื่อเยาวชนของทั้งสองประเทศต่างรู้ซึ่งถึงคุณค่าและความดีงามของมรดกภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรม พวกเขาเหล่านั้นจะเป็นกำลังสำคัญช่วยร่วมมือร่วมใจสงวนรักษาและส่งเสริมมรดกภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรมของชาติให้ยืนยงสืบไป

คำสำคัญ: มรดกภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรม เยาวชนไทยและเวียดนาม การอนุรักษ์ การส่งเสริม

### Abstract

The purpose of this article was to study the role of Thai and Vietnamese youth on preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, focusing on Khon Performance of Thailand and Xoan singing of Vietnam. The research design was qualitative. The data were collected using literature review and in-depth interviews with senior Thai artists, senior Vietnamese artists, Thai youths and Vietnamese youths. The findings of this study revealed that:

1. Thai and Vietnamese youth play a significant role in preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage to the public by creating a platform where people can show their own cultural identity through intangible heritage phenomenon to help people understand the problem and the role of preserving and promoting the culture.

2. Government and community play an important role in supporting the study of heritage by educating young people about the intangible cultural heritage and emphasizing its values to human beings all over the world. When the youths know the core values and the beauty of intangible culture heritage, they will respectfully preserve and promote it.

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage, Thai and Vietnamese Youths, Preservation, Promotion

## Introduction

Thailand and Vietnam have a treasure of valuable intangible cultural heritage. The problem is that the intangible cultural heritage has not received much advocacies and support; it only exists in human memory so it is very susceptible. For a long time, due to the industrialization of the countries, cultural assets were not a priority. Investing in intangible cultural properties has less direct economic benefit than other investments, so safeguarding it has not been important. Thai and Vietnamese intangible cultural assets have been under red alert.

However, trends such as globalization and urbanization have led to the extinction of many valuable intangible cultural properties. Intangible cultural heritage is at stake of continuation and preservation once deteriorated. Therefore, there is a grave necessity to imbue the field of intangible cultural heritage with renewed vitality. (Kim Kwang Hee, 2013, p.1)

Moreover, intangible cultural heritage is none other than the valuable customs that can be applied both in present-day lives and projections of the future. Intangible cultural heritage enhances an understanding of the values, social conventions, worldviews and cosmic vision of our ancestors meanwhile serves a critical role in understanding modern mankind and foreseeing the future through the culture of the past. Such reasons provide ample basis for the protection of intangible cultural heritage.

In recent years, due to the market economy and industrialization, young people in Thailand and Vietnam have moved from the countryside to big cities and industrial areas. This has led to the weakening of traditional values in these regions. How do young people today understand and love their traditional values when they only know vaguely about their intangible culture heritage? To solve this problem, we need new approaches.

## **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this article is to study the role of Thai and Vietnamese youth on preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, focusing on Khon Performance of Thailand and Xoan singing of Vietnam.

The process of preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage investigated regarding the platform on which people can show their own cultural identity through intangible heritage phenomenon to help people understand the problem and role of cultural safeguarding and promotion process.

## **Methodology**

The design of this study is qualitative. The data were collected through documentation study and in-depth interviews. The informants selected by purposive sampling, in which can be divided 4 groups as follow:

Firstly: Thai wisdom elites, the old artists of Thailand are Mr. Somchai Fonramdee, an expert in Khon performance of Lopburi College of Dramatic Arts Lopburi province, Mr.Theeraphat Thongnim, an expert in Khon performance of Banditpatanasilpa Institute, Bangkok, Mr. Chulachart Aranyanak expert in Khon performance of Khon Sala Chalermkrung, and Mr. Chaiyakit Changtor Cultural staff of Khon Sala Chalermkrung, Bangkok, Thailand.

Secondly: Vietnamese wisdom elites, the old artists of Vietnam are Mrs. Bui Thi Hue, Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Bao, Mrs. Bui Thi Kieu Nga and Mrs. Nguyen Thi Sung, an expert in Xoan singing of Kim Duc commune, Viet Tri city, PhuTho province, Vietnam.

Thirdly: Thai youth is Mr. Chaiyakit Changtor, a Cultural staff of Khon performance, Thailand.

Fourthly: Vietnamese youth is Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thanh Hoa, a Cultural staff of Kim Duc commune, Viet Tri city, PhuTho province, Vietnam.

## Findings

The findings can be revealed in 4 parts as follow:

**1. The situation of Khon performance in Thailand.** The intangible cultural heritage in Thailand has been shaped by the definition of “Intangible culture” contained within the UNESCO convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. The intangible cultural heritage is the practices, representations, expression, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated with that communities, groups and in some cases, individuals recognize as part of the cultural heritage. The intangible cultural heritage has been transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by groups and communities in response to their environment, interaction with nature and history, as well as provides them a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

KHON of Thailand was the first recognized by UNESCO in 2018, after Thailand joined the convention for the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO. (Ministry of Culture Thailand, 2017)

KHON is an important traditional style of dance and art dating from Ayutthaya period. The form of dramatic art has its own unique identity incorporating different fields of the arts, literature, rituals and crafts. It is a traditional form of entertainment that has been handed down from generations to generations. KHON of Thailand is a performing art that combines musical, vocal, literacy, dance, ritual, and handicraft elements. Traditionally, KHON of Thailand was transmitted in the royal or princely courts and in dance masters households. (Tanit Yupho, 1968)

## 2. The role of Thai youth on preservation and promotion of Khon performance in Thailand.

According to the interview with Mr.Somchai Fonramdee, of Lopburi College of Dramatic Arts, Thailand. He said that Khon has been inherited from the Ayutthaya Periods under the patronage of a monarch. Traditionally, Khon was one of the royal performance arts. Later, it had been extended to the commoners. Up until now, the authority being in charge of this performing art has been the Fine Arts Department (1993), Ministry of Culture. In terms of education, there are 12 Colleges of Dramatic Arts under the control of the Ministry of Culture which provide performing and musical arts education from the fundamental to tertiary levels. Basic training of Khon for the young generation usually starts at the age of thirteen. Some students can be take leading role of Khon performance and become a professional performer, when they grow up.

According to the interview with Mr. Chulachart Aranyanak and Mr. Chaiyakit Changtor, of Khon Sala Chalermkrung, they mentioned that at the present time, the community engagement in preserving and inheriting Khon performing arts has been found in the Khon performance shows organized and provided by the Crown Property Bureau, Queen Sirikit, various foundations, educational institutions, public agencies, and people interested. Nevertheless, being considered as the Thai cultural heritage and local wisdom among Thai ways of life, a kind of performing arts with a combination of various branches of sciences and art genres, and a unique and advanced performing art which is the symbol of Thailand, Khon traditions' transmission occurs mostly in educational institutions, while still adhering largely to traditional methods. Concerted efforts are made to ensure the continuity of practice including through the establishment of

training and performance clubs that help reach out to the youth or young people.

According to the interview with Mr.Theeraphat Thongnim, an expert in Khon performance of Banditpatanasilpa Institute, he explained that throughout 2019, Thai Government has line up activities to promote and preserve KHON Thailand Masked dance drama in 3 steps:

Firstly, activities to honor individuals and organization that help advance KHON Thailand Masked dance.

Secondly, activities to promote greater awareness of KHON Thailand Masked dance various form including seminars, printed media publicity, book about “KHON Thailand Masked dance”, KHON Thailand animation, “KHON Thailand Masked dance” exhibitions and online publicity.

Thirdly, organizing KHON Thailand Masked dance performed in Thailand.



Fig.1 “KHON Thailand Masked dance drama”,

Image source: Thai Post News, 2018.

### 3. The situation of Xoan singing in Vietnam.

According to the interview with Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Bao, an expert in Xoan singing of Kim Duc commune, Viet Tri city, PhuTho province, Vietnam, he said that Xoan singing or “Hat cua dinh” (singing at the communal house) is a kind of performing art attached to a particular creed when worshipping the Hung Kings and by farmers growing wet rice in the midland areas.

According to the interview with Mrs. Bui Thi Kieu Nga, an expert in Xoan singing of Kim Duc commune, Viet Tri city, PhuTho province, Vietnam, she mentioned that the singing demonstrates the community’s cultural features and the spiritual values of the ancient Vietnamese people. Traditionally, singers from Xoan guilds performed songs in sacred spaces, such as temples, shrines and communal houses during spring festivals. Xoan singing or “Hat cua dinh” (singing at the communal house) is a kind of performing art.



Fig.2 Vietnamese Youth with Xoan Singing  
Image source: Vietnam News Agency, 2019



According to the interview with Mrs. Bui Thi Hue and Mrs. Nguyen Thi Sung, an expert in Xoan singing of Kim Duc commune, Viet Tri city, PhuTho province, Vietnam, they explained that over time, it has become at risk of falling into oblivion due to the modernization of society, despite the fact that UNESCO listed Xoan singing as a world intangible cultural heritage in need of urgent protection in 2011. The Phu Tho province People's Committee swiftly developed an action plan, "Protection and promotion of intangible cultural heritage that needs urgent protection Xoan singing of Phu Tho (from 2012 to 2015), and the next owner is young generation.

#### **4. The role of Vietnamese youth on preservation and promotion of Xoan singing in Vietnam.**

According to the interview with Vietnamese youth, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thanh Hoa, a cultural staff of Kim Duc commune, Viet Tri city, PhuTho province. She said that there are many activities to promote Xoan singing for the young generation. Local managers believed that this program is initially a success because of the participation of many young people. As many as 23 clubs have been established across the province with 1,148 regular members and hundreds of others interested. More than 4,000 CDs and 3,000 books about Xoan singing have been published to promote traditional singing.

Mrs. Bui Thi Hue and Mrs. Nguyen Thi Sung, an expert in Xoan singing of Kim Duc commune, Viet Tri city, PhuTho province, Vietnam, also supported that these have also been used as teaching aids for teachers and students to introduce Xoan singing at schools. A number of projects have also been carried out to preserve and maintain Xoan singing-related relic sites in the locality.

Xoan singing performances and publicity events have been organized and promoted at domestic and overseas scale, along with training classes and activities have been conducted to ensure the continuity of traditional rituals, practices, and festivals. (Minh Hieu - Thai Binh, 2017)



Fig.3 Old Artists of Xoan singing and Author

Image source: Author, 2018

After five years of preservation and promotion under urgent protection, Xoan singing was temporarily out of the list “emergency protection”. It has been accounted for The Phu Tho and Vietnam’s efforts in preserving Xoan singing which resulted in the transfer of the document from the Urgent Safeguarding List to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. It is the first document in the world and created a precedent for UNESCO.



Fig.4 Xoan Singing performance of three generations  
and Festival of youth with Xoan singing

Image source: Vietnam News Agency, 2019

## Conclusion

After analyzing the data concerning the process of preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage through in-depth interviews with the eight informants, it can be said that Thai and Vietnamese youth has a significant role to play on preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage to the public by creating a platform on which people can show their own cultural identity through intangible heritage phenomenon to help people understand the problem and role of cultural safeguarding and promotion process.

According to the interviews with experts in Khon, experts in Xoan singing, Thai youth and Vietnamese youth, they all agreed that Thai and Vietnamese youth has a significant role to play on preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage. Government and community play an important role in supporting the study of heritage by educating young

people on the intangible cultural heritage regarding its values to human all over the world. When the youth knows the core values and beauty of intangible culture heritage, they respectfully preserve and promote it.

## Discussion

Intangible cultural heritage is the soul of culture and symbol of traditional values but its safeguarding has not been paid the utmost attention. In an era of globalization, what makes each country different from others is its culture. In recent years, due to the market economy and industrialization, young people in Thailand and Vietnam have moved from the countryside to big cities and industrial areas. This has led to the weakening of traditional values in these regions. How do young people today understand and love their traditional values when they only know vaguely about their intangible culture heritage? To solve this problem, we need new approaches.

This study contributes the knowledge about the role of Thai and Vietnamese youth to preserve and promote intangible cultural properties to the public and creates platform on which people can be show their own culture identity through intangible heritage phenomenon.

Vietnamese heritage were listed in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as well as List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding also have had the significant support of young people in their preservation and promotion. In short, Vietnamese intangible cultural heritages was recognized by UNESCO has inspired national pride amongst communities, especially among the youth.

The locals also have developed programs to help young people understand and love traditional heritages. In recent years, the national and local television programs have introduced many shows about traditional

culture, such as “Cultural Stories” (Vietnam Television - VTV); “Cultural Space”, “Preservation for ever-after”. In some regions, they also regularly teach folk songs on the radio and television. Xoan singing performances and publicity events have been organized and promoted at domestic and overseas scale, along with training classes and activities have been conducted to ensure the continuity of traditional rituals, practices, and festivals. (Minh Hieu - Thai Binh, 2017)

Competitions about cultural properties are also held in order to urge young people access and learn about their cultural assets, but even more importantly, they encourage them to participate in traditional cultural activities. It is important to preserve the tradition.

Thai heritage, we need to invest in education to help the youth understand and love what their ancestors have handed down to them. Only if they understand and appreciate what has been passed on to them, they will preserve and promote these values and art forms.

The government also must adopt policies and organize practical activities to attract young people to these traditional values. We need to encourage young people to join in the preservation and promotion intangible cultural heritage.

It is important that traditional art forms continue to be included in the school curriculum and that song-writing competition opportunities be offered to children. The clubs and groups have emphasized the prominence of teaching young people national traditional values.

Khon of Thailand by Her majesty the Queen Sirikit’s support, the government and private sectors joined hands in further revival of Khon performance. The young generation performed in “Khon Phra Ratchathan” or “Royal Khon Performance”.

The intangible cultural heritage has been transmitted from generation to generation. Thai and Vietnam have many programs that aim to encourage young generations to participate enthusiastically in the know-how learning process and acquisition of the expertise from old artists. Some local governments provide activities to help young people understand and learn more about national heritage. Intangible cultural heritage refers to the diverse knowledge, techniques, performance arts, and cultural expressions recreated by collectives and communities through the interactions with their surroundings, nature, and history. International organizations and communities, including UNESCO, have recognized the value of intangible cultural heritage, and raise awareness of the importance of its protection.

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