SOLUTIONS TO THE PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF UNIQUE CULTURAL FEATURES OF THE CHAM IN NINHTHUAN PROVINCE

CÁC GIẢI PHÁP BẢO TỒN VÀ PHÁT HUY NÉT ĐỘC ĐÁO VĂN HÓA CỦA NGƯỜI CHĂM Ở TỈNH NINH THUẬN

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Abstract - The ethnic Cham in Ninh Thuan, with many traditional practices such as rituals, festivals, wedding and funeral ceremonies, creeds, religions, customs, literature and such tangible cultural artifacts as temples and towers, craft and trade villages… bear their own cultural identity. The Cham culture has a variety of unique characteristics. These are manifested by their own language, script, arts and techniques of shaping earth towers, carving stone statues as well as making embroidered fabrics, brocades or pottery items and utensils for daily use. However, in fact, the work of preservation and promotion of Chams' cultural features in the current period is really still restricted. Therefore, the introduction of preservation measures and promotion of unique cultural features of Cham people in Ninh Thuan is intended to propose new feasible solutions which, thereby, can contribute to enhancing the preservation of Champa culture in Ninhthuan Province and in the whole country.

Key words - the Cham culture; preservation; towers; Cham people; unique culture

Tóm tắt - Người Chăm ở ở Ninh Thuận với nhiều tập tục truyền thống như nghi lễ, hội hè, tục cúng tế đền tháp, tục cưới gả, tang ma, tín ngưỡng, tôn giáo, luật tục, văn chương, làng nghề… mang bản sắc văn hoá riêng. Nền văn hóa Chăm có rất nhiều nét đặc sắc, độc đáo; được thể hiện từ tiếng nói, chữ viết, từ nghệ thuật và kỹ thuật tạo dáng của các ngôi tháp bằng đất, các pho tượng bằng đá đến các sản phẩm vải thêu, dệt hoa văn, dệt thổ cẩm hoặc đồ gốm và các vật dụng phục vụ cho cuộc sống hàng ngày. Thế nhưng, thực trạng bảo tồn, gìn giữ và phát huy nét văn hóa Chăm trong giai đoạn hiện nay còn nhiều hạn chế. Vì thế việc đưa ra các giải pháp bảo tồn và phát huy nét độc đáo văn hóa của người Chăm ở tỉnh Ninh Thuận là nhằm đề xuất những giải pháp mới có tính khả thi. Qua đó, góp phần đẩy mạnh công tác bảo tồn nét văn hóa Chăm cho tỉnh Ninh Thuận và cho cả nước.

Từ khóa - văn hóa Chăm; giải pháp bảo tồn; tháp; người Chăm; nét độc đáo văn hóa

1. Introduction

Ninhthuan is the land imbued with most of Cham cultural artifacts – rich in intangible and tangible cultural heritages whose cultural characteristics have been preserved until today. However, in face of changes through times, Cham culture is encountering challenges, gradually dwindling and endangered to be ignored by the people, even by young Chams.

Up to now, there have been many concerns relating to the investigation into Cham culture, but the restoration and methods of preservation have been rarely mentioned or some of the researches were conducted on how preservation had been performed and some solutions had been unproportionally conducted, which had been made only by the people, not by the Central and local governments. The article on "How Has the Preservation of Cham Culture Been Made? written by a Cham scholar named Phu Tram under the penname of Inrasara or the article on " The Ethnic Cham in Ninhthuan, with the Preservation and Promotion of National Cultural Characteristics" written by Dong Van Dinh…[8]. In the past few years, the province of Ninhthuan has paid attention and taken a number of measures in the preservation of Cham culture. This work has contributed to the propaganda of Cham cultural characteristics to people and tourists. However, it is not really effective in the preservation work. It is for this reason that there should be new measures taken to make contributions to the preservation and promotion of unique characteristics of Cham culture, not ony in Ninhthuan Province, but also in the cities and provinces where the Cham are living.

2. Solutions

Field study is also used to synthesize and evaluate the reality of preservation, restoration and promotion of the features of Cham culture in Ninhthuan Province and in the whole country. Through the direct survey conducted by Cham intellectuals and cultural and artistic workers on the following questions:

- Should unique characteristics of Cham culture be preserved and propagated in the Cham community?
- In what ways is Cham culture preserved nowadays?
- Are there any solutions to the preservation and and increasing promotion of the characteristics of Cham culture?

With the opinions from the survey, the study has generalized and selected a number of meaningful suggestions used as solutions to the preservation of the characteristics of Cham culture.

3. Studied Results and Comments

3.1. Cham Cultural Characteristics in Ninhthuan

In spite of living with the Vietnamese community, the ethnic Cham still keep their own cultural beauties such as festival ceremonies, anniversaries of the death, weddings, religions, Cham customs, architectural works, craft and artistic villages…

The Cham intangible cultural heritages in Ninhthuan are abundant with more than 100 festivals held around the year, of which the typical festivals include Kate Festival organized at Cham towers every July in the lunar year. It is the unique people's festival in the Cham cultural heritages,

which reflects the communal activities of the locality. This Kate Festival is the manifestation of the two opposite extremes: yin and yiang. This two-extreme structure is the typical Cham characteristics manifested in many profound heritages such as uniforms, colors, feasts and festivals, festivities and typical theatre performances.

According to that spiritual conception, Chams always divide things into two halves: male and female, day and night, brightness and darkness, high and low (Tribe of Areca Palms and Tribe of Coconut Trees). All of them reflect the aspirations of prosperity in marriage, and wishes for the fertility of human beings, animals, crops in agriculture.

Figures 1. *Kate Festival at PoKlong Garai Tower in Dovinh Ward, Phanrang City*

Source: http://phanrangninhthuan.com/

The unique characteristics are manifested in the organization of festivals, in the making of uniforms for festival participants. The festival is properly organized, but it still bears the classical features of the Cham. There are in the festival two banners, of which one has the Vietnamese words on it and the other has the Cham language on it. All the festival goers wear traditional Cham uniforms, with umbrellars and parasols… The traditional Cham uniforms are one-piece dresses and sarongs. Both sarongs for men and women have no belts and worn by tightening at one side of the sarong.

With the origin of the local polytheist belief, the system of agricultural festivals are abundant including Palau Sah (Festival of Pray), Cuh Yang Apui (Festival for the Deity of Fire), Gay Bhong (Festival of the Deity's Cane of Acar), Kap Krauang Halau (Festival of the Blocking of Water Resources), Yor Yang (Festival for Thanking Fire), Paka Halau Kraung (Festival for Thanking Wood), the festival for offering white buffaloes and a variety of festivals relating to the cycles of rice-growing. Especially, the system of Rija dance festivals is characterized by its artistic values. They are Rija Nugar (Realm Dance), Rija Pruang (Big Dance), Rija Haray (Day Dance) and Rija Dayuap (Night Dance). The system of communal festivals which are closely linked to the Cham religions is also very special. The festivals that deserve to be mentioned most are the Kate Festival of the Ahier Cham, (which is now considered to be their Tet Festival), the Ramuval Festival of the Awal Cham and the Suk Yuong Festival (Urban Festival). The system of Cham's Cycle of Life Festivals also reflects the points of view on universe, human life and the life span from birth to death. Of the festivals, the wedding ceremonies between the two Cham communities in Ninhthuan have a number of interesting similarities as well as dissimilarities [1].

The unique characteristics in Cham culture in Ninhthuan is that the people there are preserving an abundant source of intangible cultural heritages which are considered a living museum of Cham people. It is the system of festivals, folk literature, musical arts, dances…The most interesting attraction of Cham festivals is closely related spiritual factors and the manifestation of unique folk arts and culture. They are characterized by the names of festivals and the participants in these festivals.

In addition, in the enhancement of unique beauties of Cham culture, there are musical shows and dancing styles in a single festival. The system of Cham musical instruments is relatively varied and they are sufficiently included in a band. The sytem of Paranung Drums, Ghi nang Drums, gongs, cymbals, stone musical instruments, wooden bells, stringed musical instruments including Karong, Kanhi, Champi, and flute-like instruments including Saranai, buffalo-tusk horns, oval horns, flutes…The Cham people are preserving a treasure of folk songs with rhythms and pitches closely related to the Bacninh Quanho folk songs. Many lyric songs such as "Thay Mai" (Those who come from afar), "Ainich Lo", "Lekdiphik" or "Dohdamdara" (Repartee singing), "Klaymrailopan" (Multi-Colors Thread) bear lyric and special harmony. Cham people also have Ariya singing, a type of long poems sung in the form of storytelling, the singing of poems and they also have a treasure of lullabies and festival music and singing propagated by the monks of Brahmanism and these kinds of music are sung at festivals. They are ceremonial songs originated from Brahmanism in former times of India.

Fan dances are popular dances expertly performed by any Cham women. The dancers hold colorful cloth fans with laces and wear long scarves which symbolize bird wings such as in the Pidieng Dance (Peacock), Kamang (Loi Chicken), Marai (Pheasant)…

Figures 2. *Kate Dance*
Source: http://nld.com.vn/

The Cham dancing always goes hand in hand with music and the names of drums are also the names of dances. The traditional Cham dancing styles are also manifested in sculpture such as Trakieu Dancers, Apsara and Hinduism Deity statues such as Siva, Uma, Brahma, Visnu… The choreographers have created dances by transforming relievos, stone statues into real dancers who appear from ancient temples and towers and that they are interested in abundantly rhymical dances accompanied by

Cham folk music [1].

At present, Cham people live in 22 Palei villages under 13 communes and 4 urban districts (Districts of Ninhphuoc, Ninhhai, Ninhson and the City of Phanrang--Thapcham) and they are divided into 3 communities including Ahier Cham (Brahmanism), Awal Cham (Islam) and Bani [6].

To mention the beauties of Cham cultural artifacts, we cannot ignore Cham towers which are characterized by the clusters of Poklong Garai Towers and evaluated as one of the most beautiful remaining tower clusters in Vietnam. Until now, these clusters of towers still remain intact and the sculpture existing on these towers still bears the imprint of ancient Cham architecture.

The clusters of Poklong Garai are the places where Cham ceremonial festivals are often held, especially Kate Festival, one of the beauties of intangible cultural heritages of Cham people.

Deeply imbued with the Cham culture are craft and art products which are made in the pottery village of Bautruc and this is considered to be one of the oldest villages in South East Asia since it still has traditional ways of producing pottery products made by Cham artisans.

Through the traditional brocades of Cham women in the village of Mynghiep, we can visualize the picture of life of ancient Champa people [6].

Through the survey on 37 tourists who visited Ninhthuan, 53 local residents and 135 students majoring in Asian history and civilization and Oriental civilization, the results have been indicated in the following table:

Table1. *The Necessity to Preserve Cham Culture*

Cultural Features	Necessity for Preservation (quantity/rate)			
	Very necessary	***Necessary***	***Less necessary***	***Unnecessary***
Festival Ceremonies	157 *69.16%*	41 *18.06%*	13 *5.73%*	16 *7.05%*
Beliefs	98 *43.17%*	63 *27.75%*	49 *21.59%*	17 *7.49%*
Custom Laws	114 *50.22%*	68 *29.96%*	31 *13.66%*	14 *6.17%*
Architetural Works	178 *78.41%*	39 *17.18%*	9 *3.96%*	1 *0.44%*
Trade Villages	182 *80.18%*	41 *18.06%*	3 *1.32%*	1 *0.44%*

3.2. Real Conditions for Preservation of Cham Culture in Ninhthuan Province

The preservation of traditional cultural values is the effort made by our Party and State. As to Cham culture, the preservation has been realized in many central documents and the order No. 121-CT/TW, issued by the Central Committee of the Party dated Oct.26th, 1981 on the work of Cham people. In the order dated February 18 th, 1981, the Government directed that: "The Ministry of Information and Culture should invest, direct and support the provinces where the majority of Chams live and properly restore, preserve and promote the culture of Cham people"…In the past years, the province of Ninhthuan has taken many measures to preserve and promote Cham culture and these efforts have achieved certain results; however, there are still some shortcomings that need to be overcome.

3.2.1. Achievements

With practical policies and deeds, the Department of Culture, Information and Tourism, the Ethnic Committee and the Centre for Cham Cultural Research in Ninhthuan Province have coordinated in the organization of a number of programmes in view of propagating and preserving Cham culture. Ninhthuan Province has paid attention to the development of researches on festivals, culture, art and the compilation of books, publication of Cham newsletters, broadcasting programs in the Cham language on the radio and teaching the Cham language on TV, studying and restoring tangibe and intangible cultural heritages by investing in the construction of the Center for Display of Cultural and Folk Artifacts, preservation of Hoalai Tower at the cost of VN$ 29 billion and more than VN$16 billion was spent on developing and preserving the pottery trade in Bautruc Village and Brocade Trade Village of Mynghiep. All the cultural villages and the work of preservation and development of culture, musical and sport activities and organization of festivals according to the traditional ceremonies of ethnic groups in mountainous and highland provinces have been properly conducted [8].

In addition, the Culture, Information and Tourism Department of Ninhthuan Province have organized "Gathering Day for Cultural, Sport and Tourist Activities in the Localities of Ethnic Cham in Ninhthuan". In 2002 and 2012, the conferences and worshops were aimed to introduce people to Cham cultural values and seek solutions for preservation. These activities have made contributions to the propaganda of Cham culture and to the further understanding of the culture which has existed for generations in Vietnam [7].

3.2.2. Drawbacks

In spite of certain achievements, through practical observations, there are still shortcomings which have not been overcome by preservation experts yet.

In recent years, by paying attention to the development of services, especially tourism, the economic development of Ninhthuan Province has improved. Together with tourism in general, the visit to craft and trade villages of Cham people has become attraction for domestic and international tourists. This has brought many chances of development for Chams in particular and for Ninhthuan in general.

However, this is also the reason for the challenges that cham culture is facing. With economic benefits, the values of culture tend to be gradually faded. In response to tourist development, the cultural artifacts made and displayed as products only manifest the extensive aspect of culture, but they donot signify profound spirit of Cham artisans, Champa history, and the beauties and unique characteristics of the old-age culture. In the context of intergration and cultural admission, there exist some hybreed and miscellaneous culture which no longer bears the cultural characteristics of Champa people.

Besides, the aspiration for folk culture among the young

Champ people is gradually fading and they tend to follow the common trends of culture. Like the Vietnamese, the majority of young Chams have the same ways of life. They also adopt foreign cultures and their adoptive inclinations are evident. They can understand and imitate quickly modern songs and dances, but they become tired and indifferent to folk songs and traditional dances. Except for a few people assigned and selected for festivals and village organization, most of the young people are unaware of this kind of work and rarely understand their national culture. This is the biggest challenge for Cham culture and the fading as well as dwindling of this culture can be unavoidable.

In addition, the illiteracy of Chams is a problem at the present time. According to the people interviewed, many Cham people are illiterate. Especially, the majority of young Chams has never been educated in this language. This has prevented the writing of Chams in the community. The keeping of Cham archives in the families of dignitaries and clergies is encountering difficulties as the old pass away and younger generations pay no attention to keeping them, which leads to gradual loss of old archives, not to mention old-age materials written in the ancient Champa language. These materials are precious books and at present, nobody but young researchers can translate and comprehend them.

3.3. .New Solutions for Preservation and Promotion of Cham Cultural Features in Ninhthuan

3.3.1. Maintaining Cham Festivals

The purpose of this solution is to provide ethnic Cham with favourable conditions for organizing official and large-scale festivals. The attention of all local levels of authorities may contribute to the preservation, circulation of cultural traditions of ethnic Cham to future generations and make them known to the Vietnamese community.

It is essential to have main cultural and social Cham workers who can implement the organization of festivals. The leading officials will assign jobs to lower levels for implementation. In addition, the State should pay attention to the allocation of budgets for the organization of feasts and festivals. And through these activities, the ethnic Cham and Kinh have many opportunies to access ceremonies, traditional uniforms, dancing styles and singing melodies…

In addition, the biggest solution for the challenge of Cham culture is concerned with the duty and responsibility of ethnic Cham, especially the role of village leaders and cultural workers. They are responsible for passing national culture and the original history to younger generations. The disemnination of Cham culture can be made by including in village meetings, youth's meetings, Communist Youth Union's activities the ancient folk tales such as the story of King Po Klong Garai who taught his people how to irrigate the ricefields or the story about the Goddess of Po Ina Nuga Realm who taught Cham people to dance…Those are the legends of ethnic Cham, but few people know them.

Through the stories mentioned above, the young ethnic Cham can understand more about their national culture and their passions and nostalgia can be aroused. The festivals and the organization of a traditional festivity should be popularized. And the contents of these festival activities should be included in the academic programmes of schools, especially in the elementary school education. In this way, most of the unique festivals of ethnic Cham can be maintained and young generations can understand and realize their roles in the development of the community. As a result, they can hope and wish to restore lofty cultural values in their community.

3.3.2. Popularization of Written Language and Culture among Ethnic Cham

The objective of this work is to keep the unique characteristics so that young Chams can be literate and understand their culture. In this way, they can be aware of preserving unique features of Cham culture in the context of the intergration period.

It is necessary to include the Cham language teaching programmes in the elementary education together with the teaching of Vietnamese for pupils, to teach Cham on TV and to encourage learners of all ages in the Vietnamese and Cham communities to engage in the examinations on speaking and writing Cham language. With many literate people who are capable of speaking and writing Cham, it is easier for the community to pass on Cham culture to future generations.

In a field study, a cultural worker in the village of Phunhuan (Ninhphuoc District, Ninhthuan Province) said that he had tried to organize a Cham-learning class at his house to popularize the Cham language for the youth and teenagers in the village in hope of propagating what they had learned to their younger generations. In this way, the Cham language can have favourable conditions for propagating the language in the community. This is really a practical activity which is greatly significant to the preservation of Cham speech and script.

3.3.3. Establishment of Center for Research on Cham Culture and Promotion of Intensive Research and Preservation of Cham Culture

In addition to the collection, research, and development of Cham culture, the purpose of this centre is to further investigate into the unique characteristics of Cham tangible cultural objects, festivals, songs and prays used in traditional festivals… so as to make young Chams in particular and the Vietnamese community in general understand these features.

3.3.4. Development of Resources of Cham People in the Province's Departments, Services, Branches

At present, the number of ethnic Cham living in Ninhthuan totals 67,274 (2009 statistical figures), accounting for nearly 12% of the province's population and about 50% of the whole country's Cham people. However, none of them belongs to the leading officials of the province. Only one official belongs to the ethnic minority. Therefore, there is a big question: "The ethnic minorities, including ethnic Cham are incapable of leadership or their capability is ignored and 'wasted'?"

There is no ethnic localization, but Cham cultural features are really so unique that no other ethnic groups can fully understand them. For this reason, the development of

Cham human resources in the preservation and protection of Cham culture can be conducted by those who are really sympathetic to the community and the culture handled down by ancestors.

3.3.5. Strenthening the Cham People's Activities in the Province

In most of the cities and provinces where the majority of Chams live, their activities and intensive movements are initiated by ethnic Kinh, since ethnic minorities account for a small number of people. Similarly, in the intensive organizations in Ninhthuan Province, the main organizers are rarely Cham people or other minorities. Therefore, it is necessary to organize clubs and entertainment centres for the Cham… where they can exchange information and views with other people and discover Cham culture, enhancing understanding and national solidarity. This may help local people understand each other and avoid ethnic discrimination. It is essential to provide more opportunities for Cham people to enhance their roles in the work of cultural preservation of their own ethnicity.

3.3.6. Constantly Organizing Conferences, Forums on Cham Culture and Making Researches on Measures to Restore Cham Architectural Works

In 2012, the province of Ninhthuan organized a cultural, sport and tourist day of gathering in the areas where Cham people live in Ninhthuan entitled "Cham Culture – Preservation, Promotion and Intergration". The province also held many conferences and forums on the research of Cham culture, especially on craff and trade villages in order to make a file in presentation to UNESCO for recognizing the trade village of Bautruc and Cham pottery as the world's heritages, in view of achieving successfully the policies of preservation and development of traditional trade villages in association with the expoitation of tourist potentialities for craft and trade villages and preservation and promotion of cultural values in the regions where Cham people live in the plan of developing tourism in the period from 2010 to 2015 and up to 2020.

In addition to preserving intangible cultural artifacts, the province of Ninhthuan should make preservation solutions to tangible cultural artifacts. The projects on restoration of weather-beaten architectural clusters and full preservation of tangible cultural features possessed by Cham people in Ninhthuan should be discussed and carried out.

4. Conclusions

Preservation of culture is Vietnam's long-term plan which has been applied not only to Cham cultural characteristics, but also to any other ethnic culture. This protection is not concerned with keeping old objects, but gradually eradicating unproportional elements which are unsuitable to present life, and at the same time, adopting new ways of life based on the national and traditional cultural aspects. Preservation should be based on development and vice versa. These are two faces of a coin, with dialectical relations and interrelations. Therefore, the traditional culture of Cham people will not fade away, but it has been constantly preserved and developed since former times. This work is not assigned for certain people, but it is the responsibility for all the members of Cham community and for all the departments and agencies concerned. And the roles of the contingent of government officials, Party members, leading officials, scholars, intellectuals, prestigious Cham clergies and especially the workers as Party members who are in charge of ethnic affairs and researchers of Cham culture.

The solutions mentioned above can be applied not only to Ninhthuan Province, but also to any other province where ethnic Cham are living. Especially, Danang is the major city in Cenral Vietnam, where there are several vestiges and remains of ancient Champa. If we combine this preservation with tourist development, Cham culture will become a prospect for the city to attract more tourists and strengthen friendly relations between cities and among countries. Danang has been successful in organizing the workshop on "Cham Civilization and the Relations between Vietnam and India" on June 26th, 2012 and this worshop attracted much attention from a number of researchers. Until now, there is still a Cham water well located in the yard of Thien Y Ana Pagoda on Hoabinh 8 Street, in Khuetrung Ward, Camle District.The city should make further researches so as to present them to the National and International Commitees on Heritages for regconizing it as a human cultural heritage. If this is carried out, Danang City will have a charming tourist site which attracts those who are interested in Cham culture.

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(The Board of Editors received the paper on 14/04/2014, its review was completed on 05/06/2014)