

International Journal of Social Science Exceptional Research

The festival of singing love songs with fairies of the Bó Y ethnic group in Vietnam

Quoc Viet Tran ^{1*}, Nhi Yen Tran ²

¹ Department of Cultural Tourism, Hanoi Metropolitan University, Cau Giay, Ha Noi, Vietnam

² Department of Education, Hanoi Metropolitan University, Cau Giay, Ha Noi, Vietnam

* Corresponding Author: Quoc Viet Tran

Article Info

ISSN (online): 2583-8261

Volume: 03

Issue: 03

May-june 2024

Received: 10-03-2024;

Accepted: 13-04-2024

Page No: 64-69

Abstract

The detailed study explores a festival of the Bó Y people in Vietnam, where fairies from the moon are invited to the earthly realm to sing serenades. The research identifies that despite the influence and homogenization of the Han culture on the language of this ethnic group, they still retain and express many traditional cultural values through the festival. This serves as evidence for the significant role of the festival in preserving cultural heritage and coping with the strong influence from the Han culture. Our aim is to provide a profound insight into the important role of the festival in cultural preservation and propose directions for policymakers to promote and conserve the cultural identity of ethnic minorities.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54660/IJSSER.2024.3.3.64-69>

Keywords: festival, sing, love songs, fairy, Bó Y ethnic group, culture, preserve the cultural identity, Vietnam

Introduction

The Bó Y people are an ethnic group originating from China, who migrated to settle in the high mountainous regions along the northern border of Vietnam. This ethnic group comprises two subgroups: one in Ha Giang province, Vietnam, with a population of around 808 people, and the other in Lao Cai province, Vietnam, with a population of about 1398 people (as per the 2009 population census).

Earlier studies indicated that the cultures of both Bó Y subgroups had almost been assimilated: the Bó Y in Ha Giang province had assimilated with the Nung people, while the Bó Y in Lao Cai province had been Sinicized (Son, 1975, 1983). However, our research indicates that the Bó Y people have preserved some traditional cultural activities that reflect the cultural identity of their ethnic group. Particularly, the Bó Y subgroup in Lao Cai province has a unique festival called the "singing love songs with fairies." This is a captivating and unique spiritual entertainment festival. In this festival, there are aspects that strongly reflect the cultural essence of the indigenous people, serving as evidence of their successful preservation of many traditional cultural values, which we will present in this article.

2. Overview of Research and Methods

2.1. Research Overview

In literature on the Bó Y people in Vietnam, several notable research works have been published, contributing to the understanding of this ethnic group. Cultural researcher Chu Thai Son was one of the first in Vietnam to study the Bó Y people, aiming to identify the composition of ethnic minorities in the northern mountainous regions of Vietnam. His initial research on the Bó Y people was published in 1975, featured in the book "Issues in Identifying Ethnic Minorities in Northern Vietnam" (Son, 1975, pp. 331-364). This research briefly outlines the cultural values, both tangible and intangible, of the Tu Di people (an alternative name for the Bó Y people in Lao Cai, Vietnam), providing a foundation for distinguishing the Bó Y ethnic group from others in Vietnam.

Chu Thai Son continued to write about the Bó Y people in Lao Cai in 1983 in the book "Minority Ethnic Groups in Vietnam (Northern Provinces)" (Son, 1983, pp. 273-282). While providing detailed insights into the cultural activities of the Bó Y people

in Lao Cai, he did not mention any festivals involving the invitation of fairies to sing. In 2015, the researcher Tran Quoc Viet first introduced the festival where fairies are invited to sing alongside the local people among the Bô Y community in Lao Cai, Vietnam, in his book "Folk Music of the Bô Y People and Related Cultural Issues". This work predominantly delves into the musical aspects of the festival (Viet, 2015).

Additionally, there are a few short articles on cultural activities of both Bô Y subgroups on various websites, but the content largely echoes the findings of the previously mentioned studies.

Overall, research on the Bô Y people in general, and specifically the Bô Y people in Lao Cai, Vietnam, is limited. Existing studies predominantly cover overall culture or lean towards folk music, lacking in-depth research on the singing love songs festival with fairies and their cultural identity.

There are notable observations from researchers about the culture of the Bô Y people in Lao Cai province, as follows: Regarding language, according to Chu Thai Son, elderly Bô Y individuals in Lao Cai could only recall a few words in their native language. He wrote: "For almost a century, the Tu Di people no longer remember the language of their people. That language has truly become a dead language." (Son, 1975, pp. 274).

Concerning overall cultural practices, Chu Thai Son also mentioned: "In all cultural activities, we only find small details expressed in religion, customs, and rituals of weddings and funerals" (Son, 1975, pp. 362). Therefore, superficially, in daily life, the Bô Y people in Lao Cai appear similar to the Han people.

In terms of traditional folk music, according to Tran Quoc Viet: "Their music still retains some distinctive features, especially in the celestial singing festival..." (Viet, 2015).

2.2. Research Methods

To investigate the culture of the Bô Y people, we have utilized a range of research methods, including:

Theoretical synthesis method: We use this method to analyze, synthesize, and systematize materials on the culture of the Bô Y people from primary and secondary sources. This approach provides us with the opportunity to comment on and evaluate previous research findings and to explain changes in their cultural behaviors, especially regarding festivals.

This study was conducted with enthusiastic consent from the local community, as demonstrated by their collaboration with the research team. It is noteworthy that at the time of the study, no organization was identified as an ethics review board for this field. Therefore, prior to commencing the study, we held meetings and discussions with the Bô Y community to explain the project's objectives and methods. The positive cooperation from the community allowed us to carry out research activities smoothly and effectively, while ensuring respect and transparency in the data collection process. We employed the method of fieldwork to conduct the study, which included direct participation and observation of the local festivals in the Bô Y village. Additionally, we conducted interviews with elder villagers, priests, and artisans to gather specific and detailed information about the festivals. This enabled us to directly access information and gain a deeper understanding of the culture and traditions of the Bô Y people. Importantly, each research activity was conducted with strong consent from the community, and we

consistently adhered to ethical principles and respect throughout the process of engagement and data collection.

Interdisciplinary knowledge utilization: We also integrate knowledge from related fields such as Cultural Studies and Musicology to analyze the traditional musical rhythms of the Bô Y people during festivals. This enables us to gain a deeper understanding of the role of music in their culture and how it is expressed during festivals.

3. Research Results and Discussion

3.1. The Origin of the Bô Y People in Lao Cai Province, Vietnam

3.1.1. Ancestors and Migration

According to Chu Thai Son, around the early 19th century, a group of Bô Y people migrated from Quy Chau province, China, gradually moving south in search of fertile land. Crossing the Vietnam-China border, they settled in the high mountainous areas of Lao Cai province, Vietnam, forming the Bô Y group in this region (Son, 1975, pp. 319, 334, 335). (Author) notes that in 1797, many Bô Y people from Quy Chau province participated in the peasant uprising "Nan Lang," initiated by the Mong people. The failure of the uprising led to the oppressive measures by the feudal dynasty in China against those involved, compelling many Bô Y people to flee their homeland and move south. Initially seeking refuge in Yunnan province, China, and coexisting with the local Han people, a segment of this group, after several generations, continued their migration further south. They reached the high mountainous region near the border of Lao Cai province, Vietnam, and settled there (Viet, 2015).

According to Lo Lai Suu, a folk artist from the Bô Y ethnic group in Lao Cai province, the Bô Y people originally came from Quy Chau province, China, and later moved to Yunnan province, China. From Yunnan, many families continued their journey to settle in Lao Cai province, Vietnam. Presently, there are still many relatives of the Bô Y people in Vietnam residing in Yunnan, and both sides continue to visit each other.

Therefore, the ancestors of the Bô Y people in Lao Cai province originated from the Bô Y people in Quy Chau province, China. Due to oppression and the need to find new fertile lands for livelihood, they migrated to settle in Lao Cai province, Vietnam.

3.1.2. Residential Area of the Bô Y People

Lao Cai is a province in the highland region of Northwestern Vietnam, renowned for the highest peak in Vietnam, Fansipan (at an elevation of 123,822.5 inches), and the mountainous town of Sapa, a popular mountainous tourist destination. This province is home to various ethnic groups, among which the Bô Y people reside in the border region of Mường Khương district, located in the northern part of the province. This area, with an average elevation of approximately 39,370 inches, shares its border with Yunnan province, China (Tỉnh Lao Cai, 2010).

Muong Khuong district boasts a majestic landscape characterized by picturesque natural scenery, encompassing towering mountains, cave systems, and harmonious waterfalls. In addition to impressive caves like Ham Rong Cave, Na Mang Cave, Nam Ooc Cave, Seo Tung Cave, and Ngua Than Cave, there are captivating waterfalls such as Cay 2 Waterfall, Vang Leng and Pao Tung Waterfalls, and Na Pao Waterfall. Landmarks like Co Tien Mountain and Phao Dai

Mountain contribute to the spectacular natural beauty of the region (Hao, 2023).

Furthermore, Muong Khuong district possesses a diverse and unique cultural heritage of its ethnic communities. This includes the Gau Tao festival (the festival for seeking blessings to conceive a child) of the Mong ethnic group, Su Gie Pa festival (the buffalo thanking ceremony) of the Bô Y people, the traditional embroidery art of the Mong, Pa Di, and Nung ethnic groups, among others (Hao, 2023). The delicate blend of the breathtaking natural landscape with the rich cultural diversity of the local ethnic groups makes Muong Khuong not only a captivating destination for cultural researchers but also an appealing attraction for tourists.

3.2. Overview of Festival of Singing Love Songs with Fairies

Fairies are a common phenomenon in folklore, fairy tales, and mythology worldwide. They are often described as extremely beautiful beings with supernatural powers, capable of enchanting others with their exquisite singing voices. However, they also exhibit human-like traits such as anger and jealousy.

According to Kirk (1961) and other authors like Keightley (1980, 1892) and Thiselton-Dyer (1906), fairy women are often imagined as mysterious creatures living hidden in forests or mountains. They have the ability to create alluring and fascinating illusions, but at the same time, they can become jealous and betray when intruded upon.

The beliefs about fairies among the Bô Y people share similarities with other beliefs regarding beauty and magical powers. Additionally, there are specific details such as the usual number of fairies being seven, their residence in the moon palace, their singing voices resembling those of humans (some fairies even admit to singing poorly), and their friendly demeanor and everyday life similar to indigenous women.

This festival is a prominent festival of the Bô Y people in Lao Cai Province, which takes place in the early days of the lunar new year. The Festival of Singing Duets with Fairies among the Bô Y people encompasses a variety of special scientific and cultural meanings, reflected through aspects of space and time, preparation activities, language and attire, as well as the unfolding of the festival and folk music.

3.2.1. Purpose, Space, Time, Preparation, and Attire in the Festival

a) Purpose of the Festival

In leisure times, the Bô Y people often organize singing sessions for socializing and finding suitable companions. These sessions predominantly involve unmarried young men and women or those who are married but still young and wish to reminisce about the past through singing. Such gatherings lack spiritual elements, typically consisting of small groups of fewer than 10 individuals without the presence of elderly or children.

However, these singing sessions with the fairy element are not solely aimed at finding companions but also serve the purpose of providing the community with a singing platform, fostering joyful interactions in the early days of the year. Although the songs sung during these sessions are largely symbolic, they offer an opportunity for people to showcase their spontaneous singing talents in an atmosphere of spiritual imagination, mingling with beautiful fairies descending from

the moon palace.

For this reason, the ritual part (conducted by the shaman) plays a supplementary role, lasting only a few minutes, while the communal part (activities of the people) constitutes the main segment, occurring throughout most of the festival time.

b) Space and Time of the Festival

The festival is organized in a spacious room, resembling a community activity center in the village. The festival usually takes place on a night in the lunar January. The Bô Y people believe that during these days, fairies in the sky take a break from their duties (in the peach blossom garden) to welcome the new year, allowing them to either go out for leisure or descend to the mortal realm. The night for the festival is chosen by the shaman or village chief, preferably with a bright moon. According to Shaman Lo Si Van, the Bô Y people believe that the night belongs to fairies, and the seven fairies live on the moon. Therefore, when night falls, the gates to heaven open. At that time, human can enter the heavenly realm. When the moon rises, the houses of the fairies appear, and that's when the inviter can meet and invite fairies from the moon to come down and sing.

c) Preparation for the Festival

Preparations for the festival are meticulously carried out, starting from laying out mats, arranging seating for the attendees, to selecting individuals to invite the fairies.

The village chief and the shaman are responsible for assigning tasks to the villagers. Mats are spread around the room, placed against the walls to provide seating for those participating in welcoming the fairies and for the villagers attending.

With the belief that there are seven fairy goddesses in the sky, approximately seven individuals are chosen to invite these fairies. The criteria for selecting these individuals are that they must be born in one of the years of the Rooster, Horse, or Monkey in the Chinese zodiac, eloquent, and articulate. According to the beliefs of the Bô Y people, the path to heaven is imagined as a tall thorny bamboo reaching up to the sky. Those born in the Year of the Rooster (the chicken), Horse (the dragon), and Monkey are believed to have the ability to fly and ascend the bamboo, while the Monkey is skilled at climbing and can also ascend.

Usually, during a ceremony, it is not possible to invite all seven fairy goddesses to sing, but only a maximum of six. The reason being that one fairy goddess must stay in heaven to guard the house, often considered the Eldest Fairy. It is believed that the Eldest Fairy often refuses invitations and takes responsibility for guarding the house while her younger sisters descend to earth to sing. Additionally, some fairy goddesses are considered temperamental and difficult to invite. However, if the inviter knows how to speak persuasively, the likelihood of successfully inviting the fairy is higher. For example, according to the translation by Mrs. Lo Lai Suu regarding the dialogue between an inviter and a fairy goddess, when the fairy goddess wants to decline the invitation to descend and sing because she feels old and unable to sing, the inviter can respond by respecting and encouraging her.

The roles of welcoming and singing in response to the fairies are undertaken by some skilled singers who can respond quickly. Thick fabrics are used, including short black scarves to blindfold the fairy inviters and long multicolored scarves

to make wings for the fairies. This is because it is believed that fairies fly with wings. When descending to earth, fairies will enter the inviter's body, using the long scarves as wings, raising them with their hands and continuously waving them as if flying.

d) Language and Attire for Attending the Festival

The Bó Y people have lost their native language and now use Quan Hoa, a dialect of Southern Chinese, as their language. This is also the language that people in the region use to communicate with each other on a daily basis, indicating Sinicization in their culture. The attire for attending the festival is the traditional costume of the Bó Y people. In Lao Cai Province, the traditional costume for Bó Y men has long been lost without a trace. They wear black clothes, buttoned like traditional Han men's clothing. Therefore, only traditional women's clothing remains in the festival. This attire is characterized by a combination of blouse, trousers, and accessories, creating a unique appearance that reflects their culture and beliefs.

The women's attire of the Bó Y people includes a split-tail blouse, with a long flap down to the hips and detachable sleeves. The blouse is worn with black straight-leg trousers. The suspenders are also made of black fabric, with curved upper edges embroidered with floral patterns and worn from the chest, hanging down to the thighs. Bó Y women wear embroidered scarves. When wearing a scarf, they evenly balance the embroidered part on both sides of the forehead.

The jewelry of Bó Y women is made of silver, including silver chains, necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. The crafted silver chains are in the form of hooks or eel bones, with small round loops at both ends to hook onto pendants shaped like butterflies, fish, and bells. The bracelets are cast in one piece, polished, engraved with flower, fish, and butterfly patterns. The earrings also feature fish engravings. When wearing jewelry, women thread the silver chains from behind the neck to the front, then attach them to the upper edges of the suspenders, forming a silver suspender strap, the remaining chains are hooked onto the fabric buttons on the right chest, the other end hanging down for fish-shaped pendants and butterflies to dangle down in front of the chest. These motifs carry deep cultural significance, symbolizing life in nature, livelihood activities such as fishing on rivers and streams, and the spiritual values of the Bó Y community in the past.

3.2.2. Festival Proceedings

a) Ascending to the Sky to Invite the Fairies

This process is not only a combination of traditional culture and religion but also a deeply symbolic spiritual development. The concentration of the people on this special moment, under the colorful moonlight, creates a sacred atmosphere.

In the Bó Y people's fairy-welcoming ceremony, the villagers sit in a circle not only for practical purposes of visibility but also to express consensus and spiritual connection among all members of the community. Blindfolding the fairy inviters with black scarves is not only a part of the ritual but also creates a mysterious feeling and a separation between the mundane world and the spiritual realm. This also holds profound significance: by not seeing outwardly, they can focus on the inner spiritual world, facilitating a deeper spiritual experience.

Conducting rituals under the moonlight is not just a traditional spiritual act but also a symbol of reverence and

respect for the supernatural world in Bó Y culture. In their belief, the moon is not merely an object in the sky but also the abode of the fairy goddesses. The pure and refined moonlight symbolizes the awakening and presence of the spiritual world, creating a sacred and solemn space for their rituals and beliefs.

While some undergo states of swaying and murmuring, expressing deep connection with the spiritual world, others may not experience similar states. This demonstrates the diversity in spiritual perceptions and access to the supernatural world among individuals within the community. Thus, the ritual is not only an event focused on actions but also a personal and communal spiritual experience, reflecting the profound connection between humans and the supernatural world.

b) The Fairies Descend to Earth and the Enchanting Love Songs

In the Bó Y fairy welcoming ceremony, the fairies entering the invitees and immersing themselves in the singing and interaction with the people is not only an artistic experience but also a profound spiritual approach, symbolizing the Bó Y people's aspiration towards beauty and perfection. The perfect combination of language, music, and performance creates a unique spiritual space, fostering interaction and exchange between the mundane world and the supernatural realm. Particularly noteworthy is the interaction between male and female participants in the festival, which, although symbolic, reflects the diversity and intricacies of social culture. Even when the fairies enter male bodies, they still sing the songs traditionally sung by females, while the attendees, regardless of gender, sing the songs traditionally sung by males. This action not only honors roles and genders but also demonstrates consideration and interaction between two worlds, creating a meaningful connection and mutual support within the community.

The songs typically begin with greetings, self-introductions, and then proceed with flirtatious lyrics expressing desires and love between males and females. The flexibility of the fairies in transitioning between different groups of participants plays a crucial role in creating an interactive atmosphere and natural development of the festival.

A notable aspect is the ability of the fairies to enhance the mystical atmosphere of the event. Among those chosen for the fairies to enter and sing alongside the people, there are individuals like Mr. Giang A Pao, who usually lack singing skills. However, upon being possessed, he performed skillfully, even using falsetto to express himself. This adds to the mystical and peculiar nature of the participants' spiritual experience.

c) Bidding Farewell as the Fairies Return to the Heavens

The singing and dialogue session lasts for nearly 24 hours, at which point the fairies must return to their abode before the celestial gates close. When a fairy returns to the heavens, she ceases singing and dancing, stops flying, and falls to the ground. The people come to help her up, gently patting her back, and the possessed individual wakes up.

In the Bó Y people's fairy welcoming ceremony, the reasons, timing, and manner in which the fairies end the singing and return to the heavens are not only part of the ritual but also noteworthy aspects in the study of spirituality and folk culture. The phenomenon of some fairies singing for only a

short time before giving up, as well as instances where a fairy sings enthusiastically and forgets the time to return, requiring intervention from the people... these are interesting signals demonstrating the diversity and richness in the interaction between humans and the supernatural world in their festival. The appearance and disappearance of the fairies can also be understood as a manifestation of the sacredness and the ability to connect between two worlds.

3.2.3. Folk Music during the Festival

During the festival, people mainly use three traditional folk tunes: "San Sa Co" - Mountain Song, "San Hoa Co" - Flower Song, and "Goai Xoat" - Love Song. All three of these melodies are performed in an improvisational singing style without accompanying musical instruments. These are the folk tunes that the Bó Y people often sing in their daily singing dialogues.

According to Mrs. Lo Lai Suu, the "San Sa Co" tune is a traditional tune of the Bó Y people, brought from Quy Chau, China. This tune consists of four seven-word lines using only four notes, for example: E, G, A, C.

The "San Hoa Co" tune seems to have developed from the "San Sa Co" tune. It differs from "San Sa Co" in having more interjections, exclamations, and trills during the singing. According to Mrs. Lo Lai Suu, due to these characteristics, this melody is challenging to be spontaneously sung by individuals from other ethnic groups and is usually mastered only by the Bó Y people. The "San Hoa Co" tune uses five notes, such as: A1, E, G, A2, C.

The "Goai Xoat" tune has a graceful and concise melody, each verse also consists of four seven-word lines like the "San Sa Co" tune. Many ethnic groups in the region often sing this tune. The "Goai Xoat" tune utilizes four notes, for example: D, F, G, A.

These three tunes are also widespread in the Bó Y community in Yunnan, China. Mrs. Lo Lai Suu mentioned that she often goes to Yunnan to participate in festivals and engage in singing dialogues with the Bó Y people there. During the singing dialogue, people use these three tunes randomly without following any specific order.

3.2.4. Current status of the festival

According to the shaman Lo Si Van and the artisan Lo Lai Suu, the preservation and conservation of Bó Y traditions are still highly valued today. Although the festival maintains its original form and fundamental content according to tradition, the changes of the times and the influence of Han culture in the region have led them to use the Quan Hoa dialect during the festival. Additionally, some regulations, such as the mandatory requirement for everyone to wear traditional clothing when attending the festival, have been relaxed. This reflects the flexible changes in culture, aligning with the economic situation of the community, as the cost of traditional attire is excessively high for many people. Economic difficulties have also led to the festival no longer being held regularly as before. Only the Bó Y community in Thanh Binh commune, Muong Khuong district, Lao Cai province, still maintains the organization of this festival.

Despite changes in frequency and organization, the festival continues to strongly attract the attention of other ethnic groups in the region. The Pa Di, Nung, Mong, Dao, Giay, and others participate in the festival as companions and contributors to the event. The ethnic diversity makes it

difficult to identify who is Bó Y among the crowd unless they wear the distinctive traditional attire of the ethnic group. This demonstrates the richness and allure of ethnic culture in the region.

3.3. Discussion

The research findings reveal that, although Han culture has had a significant influence on the Bó Y people and their language has been completely Sinicized, the festival still embodies the unique cultural values and characteristics of the Bó Y ethnic group.

A notable feature of the festival is the singing and courtship with fairies, a unique ritual only found among the Bó Y people and not present in the cultures of the Han or other ethnic groups. The traditional attire of Bó Y women, including dresses and silver jewelry, is still preserved to this day, serving as one of the distinguishing symbols of Bó Y women from those of other ethnic groups.

The three traditional folk tunes of the Bó Y people, including 'San sa co,' 'San hoa co,' and 'Goai xoat,' are still passed down and sung during the festival. Particularly, the melody of 'San hoa co' reflects sophistication in expression, aligning with the Bó Y people's use of the Quan Hoa language. This creates a creative and vibrant aspect, reflecting the uniqueness of Bó Y musical culture.

The purpose and rituals of the Bó Y festival are entirely focused on entertainment, unlike the festivals of the Tay and Thai people, where fairies are invited to the earthly realm for blessings, seasonal prayers, or divination.

The Bó Y festival is not just an event for unmarried youth like typical courtship singing festivals. Instead, it aims to satisfy the recreational and singing needs of the entire community. It's a special opportunity for people to enjoy musical space, meet and interact with fairies, and experience the imagined beauty of fairies.

The uniqueness of the festival is also evident in the process of inviting and singing in dialogue with fairies. The Bó Y people depict fairy women much like ordinary girls, with human-like characteristics such as liking to sing, being temperamental, and enjoying witty remarks. The festival is a profound exploration of intimacy and connection with the supernatural world. This differs from the supernatural image of fairies in the beliefs of the Han and other ethnic groups.

Overall, despite years of Han cultural influence, the Bó Y people continue to uphold and preserve numerous traditional cultural values, thereby showcasing the festival's vitality as a crucial aspect of their ethnic culture. This serves as clear evidence of the significant role festivals play in preserving and developing cultural identity.

There are several important factors that strongly influence the awareness of preservation and development of the traditional festivals of the Bó Y people, as manifested through these festivals, including:

Preservation of Traditional Cultural Knowledge: Elders in the Bó Y community play a significant role in transmitting and preserving folk culture. They serve not only as living sources of traditional cultural knowledge but also as leaders in supporting artistic activities and organizing festivals. For example, folk singer Lo Lai Suu not only teaches singing and dancing to young people in his village but also leads the organization of festivals to invite deities down to the earth.

Community Spirit and Ethnic Consciousness: The Bó Y people take pride in their ancient culture and aim to preserve

and share it with other ethnic groups. Strong community spirit helps them maintain and develop traditional festivals, facilitating cultural dissemination and exchanges. They eagerly participate in festivals and actively share responsibilities to serve the events.

Uniqueness and Attractiveness of the Festivals: The singing festival, "giao duyên," of the Bó Y people possesses unique and creative elements, making it appealing and attracting a large number of participants. The combination of Saman spiritual elements and stage performances creates a new and interesting singing style, enriching the festivals and making them distinctive.

Environment for Cultural Exchange and Promotion: Festivals serve not only as places for the Bó Y people to enjoy and maintain their traditional culture but also as environments for them to exchange and promote their culture to other ethnic groups. Many people from other ethnicities also attend these festivals, opening up opportunities for cultural integration and exchange between communities.

Research Activities and the Promotion of Cultural Values: The recognition and elevation of traditional cultural values by cultural management authorities play a crucial role in enhancing awareness for the preservation and development of festivals. Promoting research and preservation activities also instills pride and confidence among the people in maintaining and developing traditional festivals. The Bó Y people are very joyful and cooperative when researchers interview them or film videos about their festivals.

In summary, the ritual of inviting celestial beings to earth for singing courtship not only represents a unique cultural activity but also serves as clear evidence of the significant role of festivals in preserving and fostering cultural identity.

Public significance statements

This study explores the festival of the Bó Y people in Vietnam, featuring the appearance of fairies from the moon. Despite the influence of Han culture, this ethnic group still maintains and expresses traditional cultural values, highlighting the significant role of the festival in preserving cultural heritage and maintaining cultural identity.

4. Conclusion

Despite being heavily influenced by Han culture to the extent of homogenization in language and daily activities, the Bó Y people still retain many unique aspects of their traditional cultural values during these festivals. Although the primary purpose of the festival is purely focused on entertainment and New Year celebrations, across generations, they have managed to preserve both the ceremonial (rituals to invite fairies) and festive (singing courtship songs to fairies) elements.

Research indicates the significant role of this festival in preserving and honoring traditional cultural heritage. This is evidenced by the sustained existence of fairy-inviting rituals, spontaneous performances of traditional folk songs by artisans, folk dances, and the utilization of traditional costumes during the festivities. Therefore, conserving this festival and honoring the artisans are essential to preserving cultural authenticity.

The extensive participation of the Bó Y people, along with other ethnic groups and tourists, also demonstrates the festival's ability to foster community cohesion and create opportunities for cultural exchange among the region's

diverse ethnicities. This could assist cultural management agencies in developing policies and strategies for the future of the local cultural industry.

However, the festival of singing courtship songs to fairies is currently facing various pressures, including competition from modern forms of entertainment, inadequate support for aging artisans, and economic challenges among the Bó Y people, making it difficult to sustain this festival. To maintain and enhance the value of this festival, close collaboration between the Bó Y community, cultural management agencies, and researchers is necessary. In addition to offering favorable policies for artisans and this festival, the government should prioritize propaganda and education about the unique cultural significance of this festival.

With these research findings, we hope that the Bó Y people and their festival of singing courtship songs to fairies will be widely promoted, contributing to local economic development, improving the lives of the local community, and fostering cultural tourism in the region in the future.

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