



**BASIC CHARACTERISTICS IN THE TRADITIONAL  
CULTURE OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS  
– THE CASE STUDY OF THE BA NA ETHNIC GROUP,  
KON TUM PROVINCE, VIETNAM**

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**Abstract:**

Kon Tum is not only a countryside with many revolutionary traditions but also a land of multi-ethnic cultural identities with 28 ethnic groups living together, in which ethnic minorities account for over 53% with 7 ethnic groups in the locality, including Xo Dang, Ba Na, Gia Rai, Gie Trieng, Brau, Ro Mam, Hre (Hre) [2, p.1]. Each ethnic group has its own traditional cultural identity, which has been handed down through generations. Cultural values such as language, writing, festivals, architecture, traditional costumes, etc. create the unique value of each community, are the link that connects each individual in the community, and also are the door to exchange, develop and integrate with other communities. Ba Na ethnic culture is an important component in the rich Kon Tum culture, imbued with national identity. Through the process of researching and surveying the opinions of artisans, village elders and experts on the Ba Na ethnic group in Kon Tum province, we found that the culture of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands in general and Ba Na ethnic group in Kon Tum province has the basic characteristics of forest culture, upland farming culture, and gong culture. Those characteristics have created the unique and the charming in their traditional culture.

**Keywords:** traditional cultural characteristics of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands; Ba Na ethnic group; cultural characteristics of the Ba Na ethnic group

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## 1. Introduction

Along with economic resources, natural resources, national defense and security, etc., culture with human quality, intelligence and creative values is an important endogenous resource that determines the sustainable development of the country. In a letter to artists on the occasion of the painting exhibition in 1951, President Ho Chi Minh affirmed that *“Culture, art, like all other activities, cannot be left out, but must be in economy and politics”* [4, p.246]. As an important strategic area in terms of politics, economy, defense - security, the Central Highlands is also a unique land of traditional folklore of ethnic minorities. The system of tangible and intangible cultural heritage is very rich and unique with its own unique identity. The contents of the article discuss the basic characteristics in the traditional culture of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands, within the scope of our research, we delve into the case of the Ba Na ethnic group in Kon Tum province - a typical ethnic group with the cultural identity of the Central Highlands, it is typical for forest culture, upland farming culture and gong culture. It is worth noting that the research results in the article are based on our actual survey. Based on that survey results, we have detailed comments and assessments.

## 2. Content

### 2.1 Forest culture

In the community culture of the Central Highlands in general and the Ba Na ethnic group in Kon Tum province in particular, the forest is not only a place where they hunt and find food sources but also a source, spirituality, and the place where people are born and after their death to return to the mountains and forests. The forest is the survival space of the ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands in general and the Ba Na ethnic group in particular. The forest provides people with food, clothing, and nurtures the soul of each person in Ba Na village. Also from the forest, music, painting, poetry, sculpture, costumes, houses, communal houses and traditional festivals of Ba Na ethnic group were born. Jacques Dourne in his study *“Forest, Woman, Madness”*, said: *“Civilization in the Central Highlands is a herbal civilization, even in the village there is still a forest. Everything in the village, in the house, everything for life is “made from” the forest: house pillars, floors and walls, roofs..., communal houses or long houses for community activities, a pole to tie the buffalo to sacrifice, rice seeds and vegetables to eat, lutes for love... And when the village has moved in other places, that land becomes a land called rongol, a kind of intermediate land between the village and the forest (between culture and nature)...”* and *“Central Highlands people cannot live without the forest, but Central Highlands people are also afraid of too many forests”*. Without the forest, it's crazy because it's arid; too much forest is crazy because *“infatuation”* with the forest [6, p.79].

Secondly, the forest is the place to build the village, the residence of the Ba Na ethnic group. It is a piece of forest that the village has asked for, borrowed from nature, and used as a living land for villagers. In the long-standing traditional culture of the Ba

Ba Na ethnic group, the village is the most basic unit, and the village originates from the forest. From the early days when establishing a new village, which is the most important event in the community life of the Ba Na ethnic group, the elderly in the village is experienced, wise, attached and most experienced in the mountains and forests on behalf of the village to find land (land of the forest) and choose the best location for the village. The making of communal houses in the village also originates from the forest. Since preparing to build communal houses, the village elders gather all the most talented people in the village to discuss. They spend weeks or even months choosing where to build their communal house. The place to build the communal house must be high, cool in the dry season, and warm in the rainy season, located in the center of the village. From the stage of choosing the land to the preparation of materials such as wood, le bamboo, bamboo, thatch, etc. to make communal houses, all are taken from the forest. After the communal house is completed, the Ba Na ethnic group hold a buffalo stabbing festival to celebrate the new communal house. Pillars are erected in the middle of the communal house yard, made of wood or bamboo (called gung sakapô) taken from the forest by the young in the village. From choosing land to build a village to choosing land to build a communal house, the Ba Na ethnic group also choose and ask for the forest land. The materials for making communal house with all parts: communal house pillars, roof, slats, floorboards, stairs up and down, and even pillars used in the festival to celebrate the new communal house are taken from the forest.

Thirdly, the forest provides land for upland farming and provides raw materials for the Ba Na people to do handicrafts. After being stable in accommodation, the Ba Na ethnic group asked for land from the forest while finding land for cultivation. The work of selecting fields (roi chặ mir) is done by man in the family, combined with hunting and fishing for two months after the harvest season. The selected fields are usually secondary forests from 10 to 15 years old. The fields need to have flatness, otherwise they need to have a moderate slope, near water. The ground is covered with soft rotten leaves. When stepped on, the foot felt smooth and the blade felt a little wet, a sign of fertility and high humidity. In the past, under the conditions of large land, a sparse population, the Ba Na ethnic group practiced rotation of upland fields in a closed cycle, also known as closed rotation. Accordingly, the upland for cultivation of each household includes current cultivation land and retired land. Each upland field is cultivated for one year in turn and then left fallow. After a certain number of years, usually no less than 10 years, it can be burned again. At that time, on the fallow fields, the soil fertility was restored, the forest was able to regrow; when clearing, burning fields, this provides the necessary amount of ash for the crop to achieve a positive yield. The period of time an upland field is cleared from the previous time to the next is called a closed cycle of upland fields. Depending on natural conditions and population, this cycle can be long or short, but usually not less than 10 years and not more than 15 years, because if it's too short, the forest won't grow back in time, if it's too long, the upland fields will be too far from the village. The implementation of rotation of swidden land by the Ba Na ethnic group has an important meaning in protecting land resources as well as restoring swidden land, thus contributing

to the sustainable development of land for agricultural cultivation. Until the farming tools such as sticks to poke (long rơ mul) and bamboo tubes (đing soi) to sow, hoes, small baskets (hjac), big baskets (reng prông) to harvest, the Ba Na ethnic group also get raw materials from the forest. Upland farming is a part of the village, of the culture, also a piece of nature that people can cut and tame for themselves, but then they have to regularly return it to nature and to the wild. Here, the relationship between man and nature is shown and between nature and man.

From upland farming to traditional handicrafts of the Ba Na ethnic group, all come from the forest. In the Ba Na ethnic group, handicrafts such as knitting (tan), brocade weaving (tn prai) are popular. Knitting with raw materials is different types of bamboo to make bamboo lath, the forest bamboo to make belt, the forest rattan to tie the strap, the forest wood to make the bottom of the basket are all taken from the forest. Raw materials used for brocade weaving; the Ba Na ethnic group often grow cotton together in the rice fields. In their production experience, they often choose the forest areas with many mandarin trees to grow cotton, the cotton yield is very high. And to have colored threads, people use leaves, stems and roots in the forest to create colors, Artisan A Luu shared: *“For example, to dye indigo, the Ba Na ethnic group go to the forest to pick up the leaves of the long t’rum tree and put it in a jar, soak it until puree, then dip the yarn in it; to get red color, the Ba Na ethnic group take the roots of two types of long mết pơ rai and long pup eh, pound them into a jar and dip the yarn in; In order to get yellow color, they use the loong nhau tree...All kinds of leaves, stems and roots to dye the yarn are made by the Ba Na ethnic group from the forest”* (In-depth interview results of Artisan A Luu, 2 Kon Klor village, Dak Ro Wa commune, Kon Tum city).

Bui Minh Dao, Tran Hong Thu and Bui Bich Lan (2006) argue that: *“Once, the Ba Na ethnic group in Kon Plong and Kon Ray districts had to use the bark of sui (long búc) trees taken from the forest to make blankets and bras”* [1, p.175].

The patterns on the brocade of the Ba Na ethnic group also show the color of the mountains and forests, such as black on brocade is the main color that makes a strong impression on style, the patterns on brocade reflect the traditional culture and daily life of the Ba Na ethnic group. The bright, brilliant brocade is like the dreams and aspirations of human. And each color in the Ba Na ethnic brocade pattern has its own voice. According to the Ba Na people, black is the main color, symbolizes the strength of the mountains, forest and nature. Red represents the color of fire, blood, symbolizes vitality, the rise, passion, love and aspiration. It is dyed with sap of kxang, kobai tree. Yellow represents sunlight, a harmonious combination between man and nature. It is dyed with turmeric or the color of the kmếch tree. Blue represents the color of the sky, the color of the leaves is dyed with the sap of the chuông nhây tree, kpai tree...

Fourthly, the forest is also a place for activities and festivals of the Ba Na ethnic group. From the land of the forest chosen for upland farming, the Ba Na ethnic group have organized festivals, such as, the festival of repairing agricultural tools (soi yang ktuh or soi vang mam), the land selection festival for farming (soi yang chặ mir), the field clearing festival (soi yang pang mal h'le), the burning festival (soilsmá yang sor mir),

water offering festival for rice (soi yang dach ba), the new rice festival, the rice warehouse closing festival (soil smá yang tec mang h'nam ba)...In music, cultural activities of the Ba Na ethnic group also come from the sounds of the mountains and forests such as streams, birds, animals, the forest rain and even the moon at the end of the forest all from the forest and become the spiritual life of people. Finally, forest with the meaning of sacred forest, or ghost forest. Forest is the place where the gods reside. No one is touched. It is also the watershed forest which keeps water and the life of the village.

For the dead of the Central Highlands community in general and the Ba Na ethnic group in particular, every ritual is also related to the forest. At this time, the forest became a place to bury the dead. After a period of burying the dead, they perform the festival of building the grave (spư past atâu, sủ atâu) or called the closing festival of the tomb for the dead. This is a big festival of the Ba Na ethnic community. It is a ceremony to say goodbye to the dead to the mountains and forests. The ceremony of building the grave usually takes place in the month of leisure, when the Mother of rice has been brought to the warehouse. *“After the ceremony, the dead person does not need the care anymore, they are assigned to the forest so that the forest can take over that part of the wild nature that has become human and culture. The Central Highlands people believe that the soul of the dead after a number of cycles, will eventually turn into dew drops on the leaves of trees in the forest. That is, once again we see, at a deeper level, the forest is not only space but also time. The forest is an eternity, a realm of infinity, a place of infinity and no end, a place from which people come out and a place into which people disappear, they disappear without a trace. The forest is the original source, the source at one end, but also the abyss at the other end”* [8, p.1].

In summary, forests play an important role for the survival of the Ba Na ethnic group in particular and the ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands in general. In the book *“We Have Eaten the Forest”*, George Condominas shared: *“When I asked a Mjong Gar couple in what year they got married, they would answer him: “The year that our village ate forest of Gô God Stone”. That was the year that the village farms in the forest which had such a name. In that way, there are many things that can be discerned: Here people “eat the forest” (it means, people work in the upland fields, take food from the forest), the forest enters the human blood and flesh, just like we say we drink breast milk; mother gives us food, give me blood and flesh. I am an inseparable part of the mother of the forest. I come from the mother of the forest; Forest is not only space, forest is also time. People use space to measure time. The calendar of the Central Highlands people is a biological calendar, the lunar calendar of the biological relationship between humans and the forest. That person’s life is calculated by the cycle of forest mother giving them flesh and blood through each farming season; That person’s “world” or “universe” is a village, which is in a survival relationship with the forest. Each village has not only its own space but also its own time, a space-time thing that takes the forest as the coordinate system....* [5, p. 98]. The forest surrounds and protects the Ba Na ethnic group from birth, adulthood until they return to the forest foliage. Forests provide food for the Ba Na ethnic group from eating and wearing to building means of residence, and warehouse of important medicinal herbs to protect the health of everyone in the village. In the Ba Na ethnic group's

thinking, the forest is not only the residence of animals and plants, but also the abode of the gods.

## 2.2 Upland farming culture

Upland farming plays an important role in the life of the Ba Na ethnic group in particular as well as ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands in general. Not only is it a place of production, upland farming is also a place of cultural activities of the Ba Na ethnic group. On the upland fields, the Ba Na ethnic group build houses, raise livestock, work, eat, sleep, drink wine, worship and entertain. The custom of the whole family leaving the village to live in the fields for many months of the year, especially the months of the sowing and harvesting seasons, was very common in the Ba Na ethnic group. Until now, many old people of Ba Na ethnic group have still maintained the habit of living in the upland fields all year round, they only return to the village when they have personal work or have a leisure time. In the season of clearing, the sowing and harvesting are like the festival season in the fields. The dances and music of the Ba Na ethnic group were formed and inspired mainly by production and cultivation on upland fields. The habits of eating with hands, eating the grilled food, drinking water, and the habits of wearing loin cloths, topless clothes, wearing skirts, community bonds, solidarity, mutual affection, etc. directly or indirectly originate from cultivation in upland fields. Therefore, in the tradition of the Ba Na ethnic group, they have formed and stabilized a lifestyle, a mind, and a farming culture.

Upland farming is a traditional farming activity of the Ba Na ethnic group in the process of formation and development. That process has shaped the diverse, rich and adaptive swidden production practices, reflecting the local knowledge which are experienced and summarized over many generations of the Ba Na ethnic group. A long time ago, in the condition of wide land, a few people, with rudimentary agricultural tools with only axes, knives, sticks for poking holes, especially with closed shifting cultivation techniques, thus reflecting the selective behavior of man towards nature. Upland farming of the Ba Na ethnic group used to ensure human survival without leading to destruction of natural resources and living environment. Therefore, under the previous natural and population conditions, the Ba Na ethnic group has formed a sustainable agricultural farming system. Mr. Tran Van Lam, Deputy Head of Cultural Professional Office, Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Kon Tum province, said: *“In Kon Tum, there are leisurely farming seasons and the upland farming seasons, so there are many festivals for each season. Each festival is associated with gongs and xoang dance to create a gong cultural space in Kon Tum in particular and the Central Highlands in general”* (Results of in-depth interviews during the field survey in Kon Tum province).

As a type of dry farming, completely depend on nature, favorable weather is the most important factor affecting the results on upland fields. The Ba Na ethnic group are very afraid of the rice that has been sown for a long time without rain. When the sowing is finished, rice plants are faced with a long drought, and the common behavior is that the villagers hold a ceremony to pray for rain (soi yang dii h'poi or soi yang đấc mi).

Artist A Luu shared: *“O bok glaih, yang mi, yàng đắk. Mơ nát nhôn kon plei pla sâu kơ ih trong xa nhôn kơ lir kơ nhôn uh kđây mi. Nar âu kon plei pla con sâu a pinh đê bok đê yang tơ ruh tơ âu san hem et sik, apinh yang glaih, yang đắk, yang mi tơ nhur ăn kơ nhon đắk mi wạ kơ nhon goh e rih”*.

Translation: *“Dear God of thunder, god of rain, god of water. The villagers and descendants of the god are suffering very badly because there is no rain. Today, the villagers and their descendants gather here to invite the gods to come down to eat meat, drink wine, and pray to the thunder god and the rain god to let rain down so that we can have water to make a living.”* (Results of in-depth interview Artisan A Luu, Kon Klor 2 village, Dak Ro Wa commune, Kon Tum city).

Stemming from natural conditions, geographical location, land, climate, rivers, etc., upland farming is a long-standing form of agricultural production associated with ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands in general and Ba Na ethnic group in Kon Tum province in particular. Upland farming is associated with daily livelihoods and is also the main source of income of the Ba Na ethnic group. In their upland farming activities, the Ba Na ethnic group have formed and maintained traditional rituals. These honestly reflect the daily activities of the Ba Na ethnic group. From the ceremony to repair agricultural tools (soi yang ktuh hay soi vang mam), the ceremony of selecting upland land (soi yang chặ mir), tree cutting ceremony (soi yang pang mal h’le), ceremony of burning (soilsmá yang sor mir), ceremony of sowing (soi/smá yang ch’mul ba hay soilsmá yang choi ba), water offering ceremony for rice (soi yang đắk ba), new rice ceremony (soi yang Ba Nao, hay soi yang sa mok), rice warehouse closing ceremony (soil smá yang təc măng h’nam ba). Among the above ceremonies, the rice warehouse closing ceremony is the biggest one, conducted when the entire harvest on the fields has been completed, this opens the two-month-long Tet holidays of the Ba Na ethnic group. The hostess is the dancing mother, after presenting new wine, meat and rice, the hostess prays to invite the rice god to eat, thank the rice god and pray that next year the god will fill the warehouse with rice again. The woman - the landlady, after reviewing the offerings one by one, with reverence she recited her prays, Artisan A Luu shared: *“Dear the god of rice, the creator of rice and crops, today we want to thank God for giving us rice to eat, we invite you to come down to witness the offerings we have prepared to offer and worship god, hope that the god receive”* (Results of in-depth interview with Artisan A Luu, Kon Klor 2 village, Dak Ro Wa commune, Kon Tum city).

From upland farming production activities that affect the daily activities of the Ba Na ethnic group, from house architecture to culinary culture, and even in traditional costumes, the colors of upland fields are shown. Each color on the costume symbolizes its own sacred meanings such as red symbolizes strength and love; white symbolizes aspirations, dreams; Black symbolizes the power and strength of the mountains and forests, of nature. In which, black is the most meaningful color and is the color to express the power of nature. Especially, it is in the upland production activities that the Ba Na ethnic group has formed and developed diverse and rich cultural activities, especially Xoang dance. Xoang dance is closely associated with and follows the entire human life

cycle, each upland rice season of the Ba Na ethnic group. Although taking place in different festivals, each movement directly or indirectly simulates, describes, and revives the daily life and production on the fields of the Ba Na ethnic group. Xoang dancers often move their bodies to the rhythm of the gongs, move with short, rhythmic steps in a synchronized lineup, coordinate between bending and stretching their legs, arms, bounce and sway their bodies. Every activity of walking, standing, catching, burning, cutting, poking and pruning in the fields, and exchanging crops, daily life and feelings of love and anger are all included in the Xoang dance in festivals. Artist A Luu shared: *“As in the dance of eating the buffalo, the movements of hunting are revived, the dance of celebrating the rice entering the warehouse recreates the practice of do the upland farming.”* (Results of in-depth interview with Artisan A Luu, Kon Klor 2 village, Dak Ro Wa commune, Kon Tum city).

Musician A Duh - former deputy head of art the delegation of Kon Tum said: *“Xoang dance attaches to and follows a whole human life cycle, crop cycle and each upland rice season. Therefore, xoang dance is a bridge between the past - the present and whether it is performed on different occasions, each movement directly or indirectly simulates, expresses, revive the daily life and production of villagers. From the daily activities of walking, standing, cutting, burning, poking, pruning, to loving or disliking attitudes and emotions... all are included in the xoang dance in the fun”* [7, p.1].

According to Elder A Thun from Plei Dơ Rốp village, Dak Nang commune, Kon Tum city, shared: *“Everyone is holding hands, filled with friendship, in a multi-dimensional behavioral relationship, in the spirit of mutual affection. The villagers danced and exchanged stories about crops, family, in all aspects of life, the hatred was dispelled, love was rekindled. People forgive each other all the dissatisfaction or problems in daily life and establish a new and better relationship. And also, from this Xoang dance, the people who were engrossed in farming yesterday, now in the flickering firelight they become real actors, who are passionate and soaring. Xoang dance, thus, becomes a message of love, solidarity of the villagers and immerses, enchants people”* (Results of in-depth interviews during the field survey in Kon Tum province).

It is also from upland farming that have formed customs associated with the life cycle of the Ba Na ethnic group, as popular as the custom of sawing teeth (cutting teeth) for the young in the village at the age of 15, 16. Sawing teeth is the ceremony of coming of age, a sign of adulthood. Having passed the challenge of sawing teeth, they can build a family. According to the Ba Na ethnic group, sawing teeth aims to make people look like buffalo.

In short, the upland farming culture has laid the foundation for the formation and development of festivals in the human life cycle as well as festivals in production, from those in the beginning of the upland field selection to the festival of celebrating the end of the crop.

### **2.3 Gong culture**

For ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands in general and Ba Na ethnic group in particular, gongs are not merely a musical instrument but also are considered as a language of human communication with the surreal world, are the human soul, express



joys and sorrows in their work and daily life. In the important rituals and festivals of the Ba Na ethnic group, from the early days of human life, the festivals on the upland fields to the festivals to celebrate the victory, to celebrate the ripe rice harvest..., it is indispensable for the sound of gongs. For example, the sound of gongs at the “ear blowing” ceremony when the child is born, the child grows up to the rhythm of the gong of the life-cycle festivals such as the coming-of-age ceremony, the ring-giving ceremony, the health celebration ceremony, etc. The gong also sounds when there is a wedding, when working in the fields, building a house and until the death, the sound of the gong see the deceased off to the grave. Gongs are present in all large and small festivals, and in the upland farming seasons.

*“The strangest thing in the ning nong month of the Central Highlands is the sound of gong. All day and all night, the sound of gongs resounds from this side of the mountain, echoes through the mountainside on the other side, reverberates on this side of the mountain, echoes like the humming sound of the soul of the earth, the soul of the forest, the soul of the mountain and the river.”* [9, p.7]. Gongs are closely associated with the lives of the Central Highlands ethnic community in general and the Ba Na ethnic group in Kon Tum province in particular, is the voice of spirituality, human soul, to express joy and sadness in life, in labor and daily activities as well as express their desire for a good life. Artist A Luu shared: *“The Ba Na ethnic group all believe that in each gong, there is a resident god. Appreciating, protecting and respecting the gong is not simple because it is a musical instrument. In fairy tales, the songs of the Ba Na ethnic group, the mighty chieftains, the rich have not many gold, silver, houses, land... A rich and powerful person must have a herd of elephants and cows as many as leaves in the forest. And first of all, there must be large and small gongs hanging on the walls, large drums to occupy the corner of the house, wine racks to display goods. The gong is a symbol of wealth and strength of each family, but when used, it belongs to the whole village community. Therefore, the more the life connects the community, the more the value of the gong is multiplied”* (Results of in-depth interview with Artisan A Luu, Kon Klor 2 village, Dak Ro Wa commune, TP. Kon Tum city).

*“From the very beginning, gongs were used to celebrate new rice and celebrate going-down to the fields; gongs are expression of beliefs - are a means of communication with the supernatural...The sound when humming deeply, when urging deeply, blending with the sound of streams, the wind and the sound of the human heart, living forever with the earth, heaven and the people of the Central Highlands. All festivals of the year, from the ear blowing festival for babies to the burial festival, the water trough offering festival, the new rice festival, the warehouse closing ceremony, the buffalo stabbing festival...or in a Khan listening session (a type of singing epic of Tay Nguyen heroes and elsewhere), there must be a gong sound. The sound of gongs is longer than human life, the sound of gongs connects and binds generations”* [10, first paragraph].

From the romantic and fanciful gong culture space, the image of dancing-people-rings around the sacred fire, next to the the jars of càn wine in the sound of gongs echoing the mountains and forests, it has contributed to creating epics and poems imbued with mountain culture that are both romantic and majestic. The Ba Na ethnic group has

famous gong songs such as Xa Trang, Sakapo, Atau, Toroi. The sound of gongs attracts everyone in the village to participate. Mr. A Dep, residing in Kon Ro Bang 1 village, Vinh Quang commune, Kon Tum city, shared: *“According to the concept of the Central Highlands people, behind each gong, there is a god. The older the gong is, the higher the power of the god is. Gongs are also valuable assets, a symbol of power and wealth. There was a time when one gong was as valuable as two elephants or 20 buffaloes”* (Results of in-depth interviews during the field survey in Kon Tum province).

In short, gongs are invaluable assets of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands and Ba Na ethnic group. The sound of gongs is not only an artistic value but also a crystallization of the sacred spirit of the mountains and forests through generations. Gongs are not only meaningful in terms of material and artistic values, but they are also the “voice” of humans and gods, expressing the aspiration for a good life of human beings. Each set of gongs is the spiritual voice, the soul of the Ba Na ethnic group, to express the joys and sorrows in their working life and daily activities. Over the years, gongs have become a typical cultural feature of the Ba Na ethnic group in particular and the Central Highlands in general. Gong is the life of Ba Na ethnic group. Listening to gongs, you can see the hunting space, farming space, festival space.

During the ceremony to announce the Central Highlands gong culture as a masterpiece of humanity's intangible culture, Mr. Koichiro Matsuura - Director General of UNESCO said: *“I have enjoyed the very unique Vietnamese style of gong music and have also seen very unique musical instruments in the gong orchestra of ethnic groups in the Central Highlands. This is a very unique traditional culture of Vietnam, very wonderful and unique. The recognition of the title of Masterpiece of the Intangible and Oral Cultural Heritage of Humanity for the Central Highlands Gong Culture is very deserved.”* [10, last paragraph].

### 3. Conclusion

Culture of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands in general and Ba Na culture in Kon Tum province in particular and the preservation and promotion of the values of this culture have a particularly important position in the construction and the sustainable development of the country. In 1943, President Ho Chi Minh stated the concept of culture as all material and spiritual values were created by mankind. *“For survival as well as the purpose of life, mankind created and invented language, writing, morality, law, science, religion, literature, art, tools for daily life in terms of clothing, food, accommodation and methods of use. All those creations and inventions are culture. Culture is the synthesis of all modes of living together with its expression that mankind has produced in order to adapt to the needs of life and the requirements of survival* [3, p.431]. The conditions of nature, climate, rivers and land...have formed and defined the basic characteristics in the traditional culture of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands in general and the Ba Na ethnic group in the Kon Tum province in particular. These are forest culture, upland farming culture and gong culture. Those culture are not only the nutrition that nourishes and ensures the survival and development of the Ba Na ethnic group, but moreover it is also an important resource

in the overall development of the ethnic minorities in Kon Tum province in particular and ethnic minority communities in the Central Highlands in general today.

### **Authors' Contribution**

Both authors contributed equally to the conception and writing of the research work.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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