

LIVING WITH CULTURAL HERITAGE:

Building the Brocade Weaving Club Of The
Jrai Women In The Context Of The Cultural
Space Of The Gongs In Pleiku City, Gia Lai
Province, Central Highlands, Vietnam



Living with cultural heritage: Building the Brocade Weaving Club of the Jrai Woven in the Context of the Cultural Space of the Gongs in Pleiku City, Gia Lai Province, Central Highlands, Vietnam

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INTRODUCTION

Gia Lai is a mountainous province in the Northern Central Highlands. According to the 2019 population and housing census, the province has a population of 1,513,847 people in 374,512 households and is home to 44 ethnic groups. Among these, Bahnar and Jrai make up 42.88% of the population. Notably, the Jrai people, who possess a long history, established a sense of community earlier than other local groups. Today, the Jrai reside in Chu Pah, Ia Grai, Duc Co, Chu Prong, Chu Se, Chu Puh, and Pleiku City.

The Jrai people belong to the Malayo-Polynesian language family. Their population growth rate is rapid and ranks 10th among the ethnic groups in Vietnam (Nong Bang Nguyen, 2018a). In this context, the discussion turns to the socioeconomic and cultural transformation experienced by the Jrai community over the past few decades.

Over the more than 40 years since liberation, the socioeconomic conditions of the Jrai ethnic community and other ethnic minorities in Gia Lai have demonstrated positive development. The material and spiritual life of these communities has improved significantly. However, while research often focuses on these advances, there has been less attention paid to the rapid diminishment of traditional cultural values as modern society advances—a trend seen in the erosion of social organization, folk culture and arts, architecture, sculpture, traditional crafts, language, costumes, and festivals. In Pleiku City, increasing urbanization has accelerated the transformation of Jrai culture and society, a process that has not been fully examined in the existing literature. Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the ongoing cultural changes and decline of traditional values among the Jrai in the context of urbanization and socioeconomic shifts.

The Report on Poverty Reduction in ethnic minority areas by the Gia Lai Provincial Ethnic Minorities Committee showed that the province had 19,958 poor households, accounting for 5.38% of all households. Among these, 17,178 were poor ethnic minority households, representing 86.07% of all poor households. The province had 36,004 near-poor households, accounting for 9.70% of all households. Of these near-poor households, ethnic minorities made up 28,815, or

80.03% of the total (Ban Dan toc tinh Gia Lai, 2021). The Jrai ethnic group had a very high rate of low income, with 19.7% and 16% of households in Gia Lai province classified as poor (Uy ban Dan toc & Tong cuc thong ke, 2020). Given these statistics, it is important to examine how such challenges influence the younger generation's relationship with traditional practices, as discussed in the next section.

At the same time, another challenge arises: the younger generation of Jrai people is increasingly less interested in learning their ancestors' traditional trades, including weaving, carpentry, and knitting. This is often due to a tendency to adopt new cultures indiscriminately or an inability to adapt conventional cultural values to new contexts. To understand the efforts currently underway and the limitations faced in preserving these traditions, the following section highlights recent initiatives and shortcomings in Pleiku City.

Additionally, statistics from the Gia Lai Women's Union indicate that the province has 106 brocade weaving clubs with more than 1,600 members, mainly concentrated in the Chu Pah, Phu Thien, and Kong Chro districts. In contrast, Pleiku City has no clubs, despite the presence of skilled artisans. This situation highlights the urgency of revitalizing local heritage, discussed in the following evaluation of cultural heritage loss and economic opportunity.

As a result, the unique cultural heritage values of ethnic minorities in Gia Lai are rapidly fading. While many cultural heritages possess significant potential to enhance the material life of local people, this potential remains largely unrealized, and initiatives for preservation and promotion are limited. Consequently, local people are losing both their cultural heritage and opportunities for poverty alleviation. In Pleiku City, the risk of traditional crafts disappearing is substantial without increased attention and investment. Addressing this challenge requires concerted action from key stakeholders, as discussed in the following strategy section.

The preservation and promotion of traditional cultural values of local ethnic minorities remain essential. Given the potential for traditional occupations to persist in ethnic minority villages in Pleiku City, this area requires focused attention from the Party Committee, government,

and relevant departments. Therefore, development strategies, research directions, and appropriate investments are required to safeguard these cultural heritage values, alongside fostering local tourism. This approach aligns with the objectives and content of current policies implemented in Gia Lai province, such as Decision No. 22/2020/QĐ-UBND (August 3, 2020) on supporting traditional occupations; the tourism development plan for 2017–2020; the “One Commune One Product” Program (OCOP Program) in Decision No. 34/QĐ-UBND (January 23, 2019) for 2018–2020; the National Target Program on New Rural Development in Pleiku City; Decision 116/QĐ-UBND (February 24, 2017) approving the Gia Lai Province Tourism Development Plan, and Resolution No. 13-NQ/TU (August 26, 2008) on tourism development with a vision to 2020.

In response to these challenges, the project seeks to develop a model of a traditional handicraft club for the Jrai ethnic group in Pleiku City. The main research objectives are to assess the current status of traditional handicrafts among the Jrai community, identify factors influencing preservation and decline, and design a sustainable model that both conserves cultural heritage and contributes to poverty reduction, socioeconomic development, and sustainable livelihoods for the Jrai in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province. To achieve these objectives, the following section outlines the research approach and guiding principles adopted by the project.

Building on these aims, the specific research objectives are to:

- (1). Conduct surveys and in-depth studies to identify the core values, essence, and characteristic features of traditional brocade-weaving products of the Jrai ethnic group in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province;
- (2). Analyze the socioeconomic context and cultural changes affecting brocade weaving;
- (3). Propose interventions aimed at promoting sustainable livelihoods through cultural heritage preservation.

Based on these foundations, the project establishes a club model in which Jrai artisans serve as core members, ensuring the transmission and preservation of valuable traditional skills. The project also incorporates vocational training programs for the younger generation of Jrai people,

aiming to form a dedicated team of successors for traditional crafts. Furthermore, the vocational club will collaborate with local businesses to bring handcrafted products to market, thus meeting consumer demand and providing a stable source of income for sustainable livelihoods. This model is expected not only to prevent the erosion of traditional cultural practices but also to foster community cohesion and enhance local economic development by generating employment opportunities and elevating the profile of Jrai cultural heritage. The subsequent section outlines promotional strategies and the anticipated benefits for the community resulting from this model.

The project also establishes a display and promotion model for industry products to attract tourists to the Jrai ethnic community tourism village in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province. Building on this, the project seeks to highlight the distinctive cultural products of the Jrai ethnic group, boost income, contribute to poverty reduction efforts, and develop local cultural tourism. Ultimately, these combined efforts aim to enhance the quality of life for the Jrai people in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province.

In summary, the research objectives are considered from two principal perspectives:

First, the research topic addresses several policies of Pleiku City, Gia Lai province, concerning socioeconomic development and the preservation of traditional handicrafts. Although these policies have received comprehensive discussion at multiple governmental levels, their practical implementation is limited by funding, the availability of actionable programs, and the availability of consulting support from scientists and business professionals.

Second, the research group has brought together Jrai artisans in Pleiku City to form a brocade weaving club. The decision to develop a club is based on the relatively large number of artisans, their expertise in traditional products and market-oriented production, and the recommendations and cooperation of local government authorities.

The handicraft club embodies the core values, quintessence, and most typical characteristics of the people's craft products. Based on this framework, the products produced will have specific criteria before being brought to the market and displayed. The urgency of this

provision is to build the collective strength of the handicraft club and secure support from Pleiku City's authorities. This item aims to provide a stable source of income and create a sustainable livelihood by generating stable, continuous jobs.

Gathering traditional artisans and creating handicraft clubs to increase the value of products made by Jrai women artisans because: First, the products are produced and consumed with the support of the Gia Lai Provincial People's Committee; Second, product standards are unified among club members, gathering all the knowledge and intelligence of artisans together.

The club is also a place and environment that attracts young Jrai people who love their jobs and want to learn traditional brocade weaving. A vocational club that can pass on its skills to the younger generation is an essential factor in preserving the profession's cultural values and in creating a generation of successors who promote indigenous cultural values.

The Jrai ethnic community tourism village in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province, displays products from these handicraft clubs. This activity aims to promote the quintessential cultural characteristics of Jrai ethnic handicrafts to visitors, increase income, and spread the most typical cultural values for visitors and tourists who want to learn more about Jrai culture.

The project's results are sustainable and ongoing. The research results of the project are both reference materials for social policy makers, proposing policies and strategies on preserving and promoting ethnic and cultural values in the current process of international exchange and integration, and teaching materials in many schools related to the folk culture major in our country, as well as reference materials for people working in grassroots cultural work, literary and artistic creators, and mass mobilization workers. At the same time, it supplements the work of displaying and introducing cultural heritage artifacts in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province, contributing to propaganda and education on protecting and developing the heritages with unique cultural values of this ethnic group in the locality. The project also has significant applications, turning ethnic minority cultural values into capital, helping people recognize the value of traditional products, increasing income, and moving towards sustainable livelihoods.

1. Literature reviews about the handicrafts of the ethnic minorities

❖ Research on traditional ethnic minority occupations and handicraft villages abroad

Handicrafts are products made by human hands and embody artistic and cultural appeal (Fabeil et al., 2014; Development Cooperation Act 1979, 2006), based on materials, design, and workmanship.

Several other studies worldwide have also shown that the creation of groups, clubs, and handicraft villages plays an essential role in preserving traditional culture and creating sustainable livelihoods. Varutti (2015) offered a nuanced assessment of the creation of Indigenous ethnic heritage in Taiwan, arguing that the process is shaped not only by cultural practices and linguistic interpretations, but also by strategic decisions about the transmission of heritage. While Varutti highlighted that cultural heritage in Taiwan often draws on legendary stories or historical events and is maintained through copying, simulation, or the recreation of traditional products, she also problematizes the tension between authenticity and adaptation. Varutti observed that heritage-making is an active, interpretive endeavor in which creators must balance historical fidelity with innovation and contemporary relevance. By emphasizing the need for heritage custodians to act as researchers with historical knowledge, effectively convey it to audiences, and teach the next generation, Varutti suggested that heritage was not passively inherited but actively reconstructed. This critical perspective is particularly relevant to our study, as it highlights the complexities of preserving Jrai traditional products, which similarly blend legendary elements, history, and specific events, and underscores the importance of reflective, informed cultural transmission.

Trupp (2015), in his study of the Akha people selling souvenirs such as jewelry and toys on the streets of Thailand, showed that products with strong ethnic identity would attract many foreign tourists, who would be interested in and purchase them. Therefore, although the Akha people can produce their products anywhere, they often return to Chiang Mai, their ancestral land, to collect them and transport them to big cities for sale. This study showed that the ethnic identity factor associated with the product was a key factor in attracting tourists.

Muller et al. (2020), in their study on Sustainable Community Tourism Development in Cambodia, applied the concept of *Willingness to Pay* (WTP) to tourists. Based on a survey of domestic and foreign tourists, these authors stated that tourists are willing to pay a high price for regionally typical food and beverages. The idea of willingness to pay challenges the notion of a product's economic worth and utility, which economics often assumes. According to Muller et al., the region's and the community's distinct cultural values determined sustainable socioeconomic development.

Among the world's countries, China has a clear cultural strategy. Culture is *soft power*. China brings the culture and artistic products of ethnic minorities into products that meet market and tourism needs, thereby creating a stable source of income for ethnic minorities (Chio, 2014). According to Chung (2013), China has transformed the countryside to achieve developed-country status.

Lor et al. (2019), in their study evaluating ethnic minority tourism for poverty reduction in Guizhou province, showed that many tourist villages increased their income when they learned to preserve their ethnic identity and produced handicrafts associated with it for sale to tourists. In some research villages, after graduating from university, many young people even returned to their hometowns to support their families in developing tourism rather than staying in the city. Lor et al.'s study showed that ethnic minority households diversified their income sources to reduce poverty. Significantly, they relied on tourism to preserve ethnic identity, village landscapes, costumes, houses, and traditional artistic values.

Research in Yunnan province, China, a province bordering Vietnam, Yang and Wall's (2009) study on ethnic minority tourism showed that there are different views between cultural preservation and economic development, commodity production and environmental protection, state policy and the status of ethnic minorities, the relationship between profit-based enterprises and the awareness of ethnic minorities. According to this study, Yang and Wall argued that it was necessary to define the roles and positions of relevant parties, including managers, ethnic minority

communities, individuals, tourism businesses, tourists, and tour guides. These two authors argued that the local government has built a framework to assess common interests, align goals and objectives, ensure mutual benefits, and prevent conflicts of interest. This research shows us that it is necessary to precisely define the interests and relationships between artisans, ethnic minority communities, businesses, and local authorities.

During a 4-month research and survey in 2017, specializing in Indigenous ethnic minority policies in Taiwan, the project leader had the opportunity to visit and study the model of preserving Indigenous cultural heritage combined with developing community tourism, thereby creating a sustainable livelihood model for the Atayal people right in the capital city of Taipei, Taiwan. We also had the opportunity to exchange with several centers specializing in researching handicraft villages and in developing the socioeconomic development of Indigenous ethnic minorities here, such as the Indigenous Research Center at Chengchi University (Nong Bang Nguyen, 2018c). This research has shown that if we know how to select, cherish, and create a good environment in line with government policies, traditional cultural heritages can be preserved in their entirety and promoted sustainably for ethnic minority communities in any urban environment.

❖ **Research on traditional occupations and handicraft villages of ethnic minorities in Vietnam**

For ethnic minorities in Vietnam, handicrafts, alongside the primary agricultural sector, play a vital role in their economic structure, daily life, and culture. Promoting research on traditional crafts is an urgent need with the new requirements of current practice (Lam Ba Nam, 2008).

The projects by Oxfam Hong Kong for Nung ethnic women in Cao Loc district, Lang Son province, and Thai Hang Tong women in Con Cuong district, Nghe An province (1998) clarified the socioeconomic impacts and the project's effects on the Nung and Thai people. The handicraft projects increased family income, helped them manage their finances, and enabled them to control

their finances. The report also noted the environmental and gender impacts; specifically, there were no adverse environmental impacts, and it did not place an excessive burden on women.

In their studies of the traditional handicrafts of the Tho and Ha Nhi people, Nguyen Thi Thanh Nga (2004) and Tran Binh (2005) provided overviews of weaving, knitting, carpentry, and forging. According to the authors, handicraft activities end at the small-scale production stage; families handle both production and consumption, and there is no evidence of handicraft villages or professional artisans. Market economic development has significantly transformed some handicrafts, presenting many challenges, especially in preserving ethnic culture. Due to the scope of the article, these studies end with ethnographic descriptions rather than in-depth analysis.

Based on surveys in Cao Bang, Lang Son, Bac Kan, and Thai Nguyen provinces, Nguyen Thi Thuy (2006) provided readers with a picture of the traditional crafts of the Nung people. According to the author, the Nung people, such as those who weave, forge, and cast, were closely related to agriculture. Besides material values, the handicrafts of the Nung people also had great cultural and spiritual significance, primarily reflecting the ethnic group's economic, cultural, and social life, as well as its technical and aesthetic thinking. In addition, it was an artistic product that expressed the ethnic lifestyle, showed regional nuances, and promoted cultural exchange.

In 2007, in a ministerial-level research project by Nong Quoc Tuan on traditional handicrafts of the Tay people in Vietnam, the author clarified the current situation and changes in handicrafts to adapt to the market mechanism and tourism development. In addition, the author delved deeper into the potential of different occupations, especially emphasizing the role of handicrafts in economic, cultural, and social life. Cultural exchange through handicraft products provided scientific arguments for preserving and promoting the cultural identity of the Tay people.

In a study of the traditional handicrafts of Vietnamese ethnic groups, Lam Ba Nam (2008) stated that crafts have produced a wide range of products to meet residents' consumption and daily living needs, including weaving, pottery, knitting, metallurgy, and forging. However, handicrafts among ethnic minorities were still mainly intended to serve local exchange needs. Producers

produced commodities in small quantities because they operated under low economic conditions, used simple tools, had limited space, and employed rudimentary production techniques, with only slight improvements and slow innovation. As a result, ethnic communities struggle to create traditional handicrafts.

Still on this theme, Mai Van Tung (2014) reaffirmed that handicrafts among ethnic groups have rich and diverse values, contributing to meeting daily living needs; however, they remain of a “small-scale” and self-sufficient nature and have not yet become an independent economic sector like agriculture. The author also pointed out the conservatism of a society that “takes agriculture as the foundation” and “first scholars, second farmers”; moreover, the secret nature and transmission of handicrafts in handicraft villages fostered a closed localism that hindered the development of handicrafts.

One of the traditional handicrafts that plays an essential role and serves daily consumption needs is weaving, by growing cotton to spin yarn, growing mulberry to raise silkworms, or growing flax to get silk thread. Therefore, this topic attracts the attention of many scholars. Sakaya (2003), in researching the traditional weaving of the Cham people, stated that Cham weaving in My Nghiep village, Ninh Phuoc district, Ninh Thuan province, was not only essential for daily life but also closely associated with aesthetics, customs, religions, and beliefs. In addition, the author also presented the role of weaving in traditional Cham handicrafts, in the Cham art treasure, and the relationship with other ethnic groups. Studies on the weaving of the Cham people also appear in many different publications by Vo Cong Nguyen (1996), Huynh Thi The (2012), Nguyen Thi Hao, and Phan Manh Duong (2013).

In other ethnic groups in the Northern mountainous region or the Truong Son-Tay Nguyen region, weaving is also entirely developed. Among textile products, brocade patterns such as ferry faces, pillows, bags, scarves, and skirt waistbands are notable for their variety and color, as well as for their clear ethnic identity. Many researchers also believe that the patterns on textile products are a valuable source of historical data for studying ethnic history and ethnic relations.

The research on the weaving profession of various ethnic groups in Vietnam includes several notable works such as Nguyen Thi Thanh Nga's study on the Thai people in the Northwest (2003), To Thi Thu Trang's research on the Tay people in Ha Quang district, Cao Bang province (2007), Tran Thi Mai Lan's work on the White Thai people (Thai Trang) in Mai Chau, Hoa Binh (2011), and Nguyen Van Son's research on the Co-Tu people in Quang Nam (2013). Besides the weaving profession, some ethnic groups in our country also have much experience in pottery production, typically Bau Truc pottery of the Cham people in Ninh Thuan, Muong Chanh pottery of the Thai people in Son La, of the Tay-Nung people in Lang Son, Cao Bang, and the Khmer people in Tri Ton and Soc Xoai towns, Kien Giang province. In addition, weaving and woodworking are prevalent everywhere. In a study on the wood and stone handicrafts of ethnic groups in Cao Bang province, Duong Sach and Duong Thi Dao (2010) clarified the natural characteristics and specific properties of wood and stone exploitation and processing; the formation and development of traditional wood and stone handicraft and the values of wood and stone handicraft for ethnic minorities in Cao Bang province, especially the values of ecology, environment, value of natural improvement as well as the humanity of the handicraft (Duong Sach and Duong Thi Dao, 2010).

Although research on the traditional handicrafts of ethnic groups is diverse and rich, research on handicraft villages of ethnic minorities in Vietnam remains quite limited. In 2005, Hoang Thi Nhuan and Nguyen Thi Yen (2005) researched the handicraft village culture of the Nung people. They focused on introducing the traditional blacksmithing of the Nung An people in Phja Chang village, Phuc Sen commune, Quang Uyen district, Cao Bang province, through the blacksmithing process and the cultural values of blacksmithing as reflected in folk literature, beliefs, songs, and knowledge. The authors clarified the role of blacksmithing in economic development, environmental protection, and the preservation of traditional ethnic culture. They showed that the Nung An people exceeded the limits of self-sufficiency and became a prestigious handicraft village for market-oriented commodity production.

Nguyen Thi Bich Thuy (2014) emphasized the significance of handicraft village development for the Cham people in the Mekong Delta. The author argued that handicrafts improved the quality of life for the Cham people. Therefore, the state should invest in handicraft villages for tourist activities and secure social security for ethnic people. In another study of Chau Phong village, Kieu Anh Vu (2014) identified and compared trends among the Cham people in My Nghiep village, Ninh Thuan province. The market mechanism was the launching pad for My Nghiep village products to develop domestically and internationally. As a result, Chau Phong weaving village narrowed its distribution market and even returned to the production of traditional consumer goods. The author highlighted that cultural differences between the Cham community in Ninh Thuan and the Cham Islam community in the South shape the development trajectories of these two traditional villages. This study highlighted how the two Cham weaving villages were dynamically developing and integrating within the context of globalization.

From the perspective of cultural tourism, Son Ngoc Khanh & Nguyen Dinh Chieu (2015) introduced several typical Khmer handicraft villages in Tra Vinh, including Tra Cuon banh tet handicraft village, Thach vermicelli handicraft village, and Luong Hoa weaving and handicraft village. The authors believe that the Khmer traditional craft villages in Tra Vinh bring economic, cultural, and tourism value. The study also showed that products from Khmer craft villages shared standard features across locations, labor forces, production materials, and production processes. These factors have created a unique cultural value for handicraft products from villages, helping attract tourists. However, traditional Khmer craft villages faced many challenges in preserving conventional cultural values to support tourism development.

In the research about Hop Tien linen weaving cooperative in Lung Tam commune, Quan Ba district, Ha Giang province by Hmong people, Hoang Thi Hoai Linh (2018) stated that the conventional linen weaving and fabric growing of the Hmong people in Lung Tam commune had a long history, and went through many ups and downs in development, but still affirmed their enduring vitality, and therefore helped their households in poverty reduction. More details: the

author clarified the role of the traditional linen-weaving village in poverty reduction in Lung Tam commune, including creating jobs for workers, reducing idle time on farms, increasing income and improving workers' lives, exploiting local resources and raw materials, preserving cultural values, and developing tourism.

In another study by Bui Thi Bich Lan (2019), the author examined traditional craft villages in Ha Giang province. She argued that the province was currently focusing on developing conventional craft villages based on existing advantages and potential. Based on surveys conducted in four districts of Ha Giang, the author introduced and clarified the unique cultural values of several handicraft villages, including preserving ethnic cultures, promoting tourism, shifting the labor structure, reducing poverty, and protecting the ecological environment. These results recorded the government's and people's determination in a mountainous province that still faces many difficulties and obstacles in socioeconomic development. Despite signs of improvement, the handicraft villages in Ha Giang still faced many challenges, including limited investment resources. Local raw materials for handicraft production did not meet consumers' needs and tastes.

Research on the traditional hand-weaving craft of Pa Then women in Bac Quang, Ha Giang province, researchers at one research institute also showed the specific gender roles in this traditional craft and the role of this weaving craft in preserving the language through brocade motifs, creating more jobs during the off-season, increasing income for people, and aiming at hunger eradication and poverty reduction (Vien tu van phat trien kinh te-xa hoi nong thon va mien nui, 2002).

In a 2016 study, Nong Bang Nguyen et al. (2018b) showed that the silver jewelry production group of the Churu people in Lam Dong provided a significant source of income for the group leader and the group members. Taking advantage of the so-called national cultural identity, several small businesses have linked up with the group leader to increase jewelry production, aiming to industrialize it.

Nong Bang Nguyen (2020), in his research about changes in the lives and livelihoods of the Ede ethnic group in Ea Nuol commune, Buon Don district, Dak Lak province, showed that the market economy, ethnic relations, and Protestantism have had a significant impact on the traditional occupations of the people there. Traditional handicrafts such as weaving and carpentry have gradually disappeared. The Ea Nuol commune had only 1-2 women who knew how to weave, and there was no successor. However, textile products were in high demand in the market, and this area was right next to the famous Buon Don tourist destination.

The Thai people in Muong Chanh, Mai Son, and Son La were also well-known for their pottery, including jars, vases, mortars, bowls, kettles, and ceramic toys (Tran Dieu Anh, 2015). According to this author's research, these products still exist and have significantly improved, as they are suitable for the weather, ideal for people's lives, affordable for rural people, and guaranteed to be durable.

The Chinese were an ethnic group with many traditional occupations, and they brought the most significant economic benefit to themselves and to Vietnam. Nguyen Anh Tuan's (2018) overview study showed that the Chinese had many traditional occupations, such as incense-making, Buddha statue-making, worship statue-making, salt-making, and pottery-making. Many conventional occupations gradually became industrial goods with very high value, such as confectionery production, household plastic products, paper, and iron and steel processing. In Ho Chi Minh City, many streets became major tourist attractions, creating jobs and boosting incomes through craft products. Guilds and associations were instrumental in the success of Chinese craft villages. They provided spiritual and material support to people in the same occupation and to ethnic groups sharing the same language and locality, forming a solid social network (Guangxi).

The Cham ethnic group in Vietnam was famous for its handicrafts, such as pottery in Bau Truc, Ninh Thuan (Truong Van Mon, 2001), weaving in My Nghiep, Ninh Thuan (Huynh Thi The, 2014; Sakaya, 2003), and An Giang (Vu Hong Thuat, 2004). Studies on the traditional crafts of

the Cham people have shown the diverse development of manufactured products that met the maximum demand of domestic and foreign customers for traditional ethnic products.

In the field study at the beginning of 2025, we also found that the processed products have changed in design and materials compared to the traditional ones. As a result, the designs and prices of goods were more diverse, meeting the needs of many customers.

Most recently, Nguyen Van Minh (2021) has also been working to preserve and promote the traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities to support the socioeconomic development of Ha Giang province. This work comprehensively collects the policies of the Party and the Vietnamese Government on cultural preservation, builds a socioeconomic development model centered on the topic, helps the topic inherit and apply these policies, and compares them with those of Ha Giang province.

❖ Research on traditional occupations, occupational groups, and craft villages of the Jrai ethnic group

The Jrai ethnic group in Gia Lai province is an indigenous minority with many unique traditional occupations. In recent years of research on Gia Lai, the project leader and members of this project have shown remarkable changes in ethnic minorities in Gia Lai and the Central Highlands in general in terms of livelihoods, traditional occupations, and people's adaptation to the new context (Nong Bang Nguyen et al. 2020, Nong Bang Nguyen and Hoang Thi Thanh Huong 2019; Hoang Thi Thanh Huong and Nong Bang Nguyen 2019a, Nong Bang Nguyen 2018a; Nong Bang Nguyen et al. 2018b, Nong Bang Nguyen et al. 2017, Nong Bang Nguyen 2017a, Nong Bang Nguyen 2017b). The following specific studies are the foundation for building a framework of values, core, and quintessence of Jrai ethnic products in Pleiku City shortly:

Specific research on each traditional profession of the Jrai ethnic group shows that their costumes have existed and developed for a long time, reflecting changes in their lives from birth to the present. As the market economy develops, the traditional costumes of this ethnic group are fading. Based on previous research, we found that most scholars have recognized the potential

value of the Jrai ethnic group's traditional costumes and have deeply explored their beauty, designs, decorations, and uses. In 2006, Tran Tu published the book *"Hoa van Jrai, Bahna."* In his book, he outlined how to research costume patterns, including two significant steps: collecting and processing documents. It is necessary to classify patterns by ethnicity for comparison, classify according to artistic style to grasp the voice of each period and region" (p.86). Tran Tu's research is significant for this project. From that, the project can continue, inherit, and understand the change process in materials, designs, patterns, and weaving techniques in brocade weaving of the Jrai people in Pleiku City today.

In research on the traditional culture of the Jrai people in the Central Highlands, Ro Cham Oanh (2002) outlined the basic features of Jrai costumes and ceremonial attire. He asserted that "In Gia Lai, depending on the Jrai ethnic region and especially on each occasion, men wear different types of loincloths; the fabric and decorations on the loincloths are also different. Jrai women have two types of beautiful, thin skirts worn on ceremonial occasions, in addition to skirts worn daily or when working in the fields".

Dang Nghiem Van (1981), in the book *Ethnic Minorities of Gia Lai-Kon Tum*, briefly introduced the Jrai costume: "In daily life, men often wear loincloths. Jrai women wear tight-fitting shirts, looking neat and simple. Because it is hot all year round, men and women are usually shirtless." The shorter skirt of the Jrai and Ede people is just a black cloth with a length that goes across the waist and is rolled up." In this section, he also introduced the idea that women use copper rings wrapped around their waists to beautify themselves, with a cloth attached to the back.

The research report on the topic "History of Gia Lai from the Origin to the Present" by Nguyen Thi Kim Van (2015) provided an overview of the tools and materials used by the Bahnar and Jrai people for weaving, which they made themselves, and of the yarn they had to grow and spin. The dyeing process involved using tree bark and colored tubers, such as bal tree bark, banana leaf silk, and turmeric tubers, to create black, yellow, and red colors. The author briefly introduced the costumes of the Jrai Chor people in the Ayun Pa and Ia Pa regions of Gia Lai, the Jrai H'drung

costumes in the Pleiku City area, and the districts of Chu Prong, Ia Grai, Chu Pah, and Mang Yang. The costumes of the Jrai Tbulan group along the Vietnam-Cambodia border in the districts of Chu Prong and Duc Co. This document is practically helpful for focusing on the field survey direction and, further, more in-depth research on the costumes of the two ethnic groups with each specific group and residential area can recognize the decorative patterns, colours, and clothing designs for each gender, age, and wearing situation.

Ma Ngoc Dung (2014) on the research about traditional costumes of ethnic groups provided much necessary information to help the author and the research team refer to more about the characteristics of costumes of ethnic groups in the Central Highlands belonging to the Austronesian language group, including Ede, Raglai, Chu Ru, Cham, Jrai, including the Jrai people in Gia Lai (p. 45-75). Ma Ngoc Dung briefly described the Jrai Chor costumes of the Ia Pa and Ayun Pa regions. The author introduced the jewelry section and the types of jewelry Jrai women wore daily.

Dang Truong Hoai Thu (2013), in the book “*Traditional Costumes of Vietnamese ethnic groups*,” provided the author with important information on the costumes of the Jrai people (p. 399-246). The author's general introductions to costumes by language group have helped the research team obtain more information about the issue under study.

Nguyen Thu Phuong (2005), in her research on *Vietnamese costumes from traditional to modern*, provided concepts of costumes and culture across historical periods. Her article helps the research team have an overview of the development process of Vietnamese costumes from the Hung King period to the present.

For this topic, the members of the project paid special attention to the works on costumes of the Bahnar and Jrai ethnic groups and costumes of ethnic groups in the Central Highlands, such as Xe Dang, E De, costumes of other ethnic minorities, such as Tay, Muong, Thai, H'mong, Cham, and other research projects related to this topic and in the project *Preserving and Promoting Bahnar, Jrai ethnic costumes*, Nguyen Thai Binh et al. (2011) described characteristics of

costumes and patterns on costumes of the Bahnar and Jrai people in some areas in Gia Lai province. The research team uses this essential source of documents to refer to and select appropriate content for further development into the research content.

Project members produced works such as Bahnar and Jrai folk wooden statues in Gia Lai province, along with studies on preserving and promoting their cultural value. They also recorded numerous documents during surveys and field trips across 17 districts, towns, and cities from 2014 to the present. Researchers will use these documents to continue discussions with artisans and clubs. Through this process, the project will unify the criteria framework to identify the quintessential, core, and characteristic values before producing products for the consumer market.

An essential visual document about the Jrai ethnic group, published by Nguyen Van Ku et al. (2018) in *The ethnic groups of the Central Highlands*, presented brocade patterns, how to build stilt houses, and wood carvings at the gables of stilt houses. This book gathered images from 1988 to the present, helping readers better understand the value of Jrai handicrafts.

Research on straw liquor (*Ruou Can*) is a popular everyday drink, especially at festivals. The Jrai people can brew wine with corn, potatoes, cassava, or millet. Each family usually brews many jars of wine to prepare for festivals and to serve guests (Le Van Liem, 2012).

Recent studies show that carpentry among the Jrai ethnic group is well developed, encompassing stilt houses, communal houses (nha Rong), warehouses, coffins, and tombs. According to Le Van Liem's (2012) research, the Jrai people's community dwelled but gradually crumbled; the effects of climate change have not caused any communal houses to fall due to storms. The highest form of turmeric folk art is wood carving, which is associated with woodworking. The Jrai and Bahnar ethnic groups used and carved wooden statues for various purposes, including decorating the village's communal house, stilt houses, tombs, and house gates. Tools for carving were mainly chopping knives and axes; later, these ethnic people used saws and planes (Hoang Thanh Huong, 2018).

The ethnic family knows how to weave products such as baskets, trays, and winnowing trays. The raw materials used for weaving are bamboo, rattan, and thorns. Knowing how to split bamboo, sharpen bamboo strips, and weave household items is the standard for men when they reach adulthood. Among the woven items, the basket was a famous product of the Jrai ethnic group. Like many other ethnic groups in the Central Highlands, the basket was a multi-purpose item used to hold clothes, jewelry, and other necessities when traveling (Institute of Ethnology, 2015).

Ruou Can is a popular drink in the Central Highlands, used to quench the daily thirst of the Central Highlands ethnic groups' men. The raw materials are available foods in daily life with slash-and-burn farming characteristics, such as rice, cassava, millet, corn, and bo, and this is an indispensable drink at life-cycle and agricultural festivals of the Bahnar and Jrai people in Gia Lai (Hoang Thanh Huong, 2018).

The topic yields many research documents on the traditional occupations of ethnic minorities in Vietnam, particularly the Jrai ethnic group. These documents provide an essential foundation for the topic of restoring, selecting the quintessence, identifying the most critical factors, and forming different scenarios for building groups and the traditional occupation club to preserve cultural heritage associated with tourism development and to support sustainable livelihoods in the new context. Some studies have identified relationships among traditional occupations, tourism, livelihoods, and cultural preservation. However, in the overview, we find very few works and projects on building models for vocational clubs and ethnic minority craft villages, which align with the urgency and objectives of this project. Most previous research is from craft villages of the Kinh (Viet) ethnic group. Therefore, it is also a challenge and an opportunity for the research team when implementing this project.

2. Research objectives

- ❖ General objective: Building a model of a traditional craft club of the Jrai ethnic group in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province, to ensure a sustainable livelihood.

❖ Specific objectives:

First, developing a theoretical framework for modeling traditional ethnic minority craft clubs to ensure sustainable livelihoods.

Second, assessing the current status of traditional brocade weaving of the Jrai ethnic group in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province.

Third, building a brocade weaving club of the Jrai ethnic group in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province.

Finally, proposing solutions and policy recommendations for local authorities to develop traditional occupations for ethnic minorities, artisans, and businesses that support their livelihoods in Pleiku City, Gia Lai Province.

3. Research methodology

The project's approach was interdisciplinary and multidimensional. This methodology was justified by the complex nature of traditional occupations, which intersect issues of ethnicity, societal structure, cultural norms, and religious beliefs. Addressing such multifaceted phenomena required integrating perspectives from ethnology, economics, tourism, and sociology. The combination of these disciplines enabled a holistic understanding of the factors influencing traditional crafts, as well as the interactions between cultural heritage preservation, socioeconomic development, and community livelihoods.

The project used a multidimensional approach, combining top-down and bottom-up approaches (Creswell, 2003; Babbie, 2004; Bryman, 2001; Kothari, 2004; Bernard, 2000).

In a top-down approach, implement the views, policies, and opinions of local leadership agencies where the project was implemented. The research also collected opinions from local leaders of Pleiku City, ward, commune, and department chairmen, and unions at all levels from the province down to the ward and commune levels.

In the bottom-up approach, the study collected opinions from people directly related to the topic in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province. The subjects surveyed include village elders, artisans, private enterprises, and people skilled in weaving brocade and carpentry. The research aimed to

collect opinions from all residents, regardless of age, education level, gender, or socioeconomic status, including the elderly, children, and the disadvantaged. Ensuring broad representation within the sample was intended to capture the diversity of perspectives and lived experiences among community members, thereby increasing the validity and inclusiveness of the study's findings. The study ensured that the voices of all research subjects were respected and presented in the report, thereby ensuring the representation of residents at the research sites.

The research also collected opinions and views from businesses involved in community tourism, including tourism businesses, businesses, and cooperatives.

Based on the research objectives and approaches, the project employed interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research methods, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data. These two data sources were specifically demonstrated through the methods listed below as follows:

Document review method: The project gathered works, books, magazines, articles, and other documents related to the topic, both domestically and internationally, to review, evaluate, analyze, and compare them with the research results.

Questionnaire interview method: The project conducted 200 questionnaire interviews at research sites, planning to form a vocational club. The questionnaire collected data on households, education level, health status, income, traditional cultural knowledge, traditional vocational knowledge, understanding of community cultural identity, market access, and cultural heritage preservation.

In-depth interview and group discussion method: The project conducted 35 in-depth interviews and group discussions with households, as well as several targeted in-depth interviews/group discussions. The research's interviews were diverse in age, gender, ethnicity, and economic conditions. The content of the in-depth interviews focused on household history, characteristics of local cultural and social issues, knowledge of traditional occupations, understanding of community cultural identity, market access, preservation of cultural heritage, the role of local authorities, and government support for the development of traditional occupations.

The in-depth interviews/targeted focus group discussions focused on artisans and households and examined the community's typical strategies for promoting traditional crafts, preserving cultural heritage, and ensuring sustainable livelihoods. The project consulted with the elderly and prominent members of the community. These interviews helped the topic understand the community's history, outstanding cultural and social issues, well-developed industries, and lost crafts.

In-depth interviews with local leaders at all levels. These interviews aimed to understand better the process of implementing policies related to traditional occupations for ethnic minorities, as well as the challenges, barriers, and advantages of implementing such policies by the ministries and departments involved in the project. These interviews also helped the project understand the viewpoints and action plans for developing traditional ethnic minority occupations in the locality in the coming years.

Recording and filming method: The project took photos and films of research sites, traditional craft activities, and community tourism. Field documents served as a valuable source, providing additional evidence on the views of artisans, students, businesses, and local leaders, as well as attitudes toward the traditional crafts of the Jrai ethnic group. The project also displayed this source of documents in the locations where it planned to showcase products.

Data analysis method: The data analysis procedure involved several steps. First, the researcher compiled and organized all collected data, including both qualitative and quantitative sources. Quantitative data were subjected to statistical analysis to identify trends, distributions, and notable patterns, while qualitative data were coded and thematically analyzed to extract recurring themes and insights. The researcher synthesized findings by cross-referencing survey data, interview transcripts, and documentary evidence collected from fieldwork. Additionally, official statistical data sourced from the General Statistics Office, relevant Ministries and Departments, and the Statistical Yearbook of Gia Lai province were reviewed to establish a comprehensive understanding of the research context. These government statistics were

systematically compared with the field data set to triangulate information, enhance validity, and provide a robust basis for the final summary report.

Research sample: The overall survey covered 14 wards and 8 communes in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province, where many Jrai ethnic brocade weavers and woodcarvers lived. This survey aimed to identify brocade weavers and woodcarvers. This survey also sought more businesses that supplied raw materials and consumed products made by the club.

The research sample for the topic also included leaders of provinces, cities, economic and cultural departments, communes, and villages. These subjects offered perspectives that were similar to or different from those of people involved in the development of traditional crafts today. The research examined the current status of traditional occupational activities among the Jrai ethnic group from 2016 to the present.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL BASIS IN UNDERSTANDING HANDICRAFTS OF THE ETHNIC MINORITIES

1. Theoretical framework

Concept of traditional crafts: In this study, traditional crafts are products created by hand. Artisans make them, giving each item artistic and cultural value. These products arise from specific materials, designs, and skills, and are passed down through generations (Adamson, 2019; Fabeil et al., 2014; Development Cooperation Act 1979, 2006).

Concept of traditional craft club: A club is a voluntary organization of people with common professions or interests, gathered to share knowledge, protect rights, support members, and contribute to socioeconomic development (Decree 45/2010/ND-CP).

In the context of these clubs, the concept of an artisan plays a significant role: someone with deep knowledge of handicrafts who can pass the craft on to others.

The recognition of artisans shows in honorary titles and roles. “Folk artist” is a title for those who preserve and promote intangible cultural values. This title, awarded by the Vietnam Folk Arts Association, honors those who create, own, and teach folk values in fields such as Cheo, Ca Tru, Quan Ho, Xoan, and Chau Van. Article 26 of the *Law on Cultural Heritage* (passed on June 29, 2001) states: “The State honors and has preferential policies for artisans and artists who hold and have contributed to the dissemination of traditional arts and professional secrets of special value.” Article 65 of the Law on Emulation and Commendation only awards “People’s Artisan” and “Excellent Artisan” to those working for many years, maintaining, creating, and developing traditional handicrafts. Artisans outside traditional handicraft fields do not receive this title. Traditional handicrafts are only one of eight basic fields of intangible culture.

In addition to the above roles, specific traditional crafts have unique cultural significance. For instance, brocade weaving is an art form with material and spiritual value, created from fabric fibers through the skillful coordination of the hands and feet of Jrai ethnic women.

Shifting the focus from traditional crafts, it is important to define the concept of sustainable livelihood, which serves as a basis for understanding the socioeconomic context of handicraft practices.

The concept of livelihood has advanced, incorporating capabilities, assets, and activities required for a means of living (Scoones 1998; DFID 2001), building on the work of Chambers and Conway (1992).

National perspectives have also contributed to our understanding. According to Bui Dinh Toai (2004), the livelihood of a household or a community was a set of human resources and capabilities combined with the decisions and activities they will carry out to not only earn a living but also achieve more diverse goals (Bui Dinh Toai, 2004).

To understand livelihoods in practice, classify resources. People's livelihoods depend on resources and activities. Livelihood resources include: natural assets like land, forests, and water; physical assets such as tools, equipment, and housing; human assets like skills, knowledge, and labor; financial assets, such as income, savings, and credit; and social assets, including networks, institutions, and community support. For example:

- Natural resources: Land, water, ecosystems, and forest resources.
- Material resources: Housing, means of living, traffic, electricity, and market systems.
- Financial resources: Income, savings, bank loans.
- Human resources: number of employees, qualifications, and workforce health.
- Social capital: Social relationships of the household.

Alongside resources, various livelihood activities contribute to household and community survival. Livelihood activities include jobs in sectors such as farming, animal husbandry, forestry, services, and handicrafts.

In summary, a sustainable livelihood is the diversity of resources, capital, and jobs needed to carry out economic activities and ensure continuous income to meet the family's needs.

Building on these concepts, the next section introduces the theoretical framework for developing a vocational club model. This framework conceptualizes a traditional craft club as an organization for sustainable development, with collaborative member engagement, legitimate leadership, effective supervision, honesty, and protection of members' and stakeholders' interests.

This model promotes fairness, openness, transparency, and accountability. The democratic associational view says board members must represent the organization's members. Their job is to resolve conflicts, choose among interests, and set policies for staff to carry out. High expertise is desirable, but not essential.

Agency theory is the leading theory of corporate governance. It treats the cooperative or club model like a business. Group owners and members have different interests. As the club operates, the head and members may pursue their own interests instead of the group's.

A democratic model with a board can complement representative theory by monitoring the club head and ensuring fair distribution of benefits. Profit is a means to an end, not the end itself.

Club shares cannot be bought or sold on the open market. Thus, there is no pressure from members or a change in management roles for leaders.

Stewardship theory differs from agency theory. It appears in private or non-profit organizations. The main point is that the leader wants to do a good job as a resource manager. The leader and members work as partners, improving performance. This lets the manager's ideas be fully implemented. Team members trust the leader's expertise and help add value.

However, there are potential problems for clubs, cooperatives, and associations. There is no guarantee that the managing members can lead the organization to success, even if they have expertise. Leadership skills for business decisions are also needed.

Resource dependence theory: Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) argue that organizations depend on resources and must manage their dependence on them. They must get the resources and information they need. Organizations use governing boards to reduce uncertainty and build

important external relationships. These boards help secure resources and support responses to change.

Stakeholder theory, as noted by Hung (1998), says management must answer to societal stakeholders, not just owners. Including diverse stakeholders on the board helps organizations address social interests, resolve conflicts, and achieve broader goals.

Hutton (1997) and Tricker (2000) say that stakeholder theory emerged from debates over the management of private businesses and social enterprises. This model also reduces controversy for non-profits by addressing the needs of many involved parties.

Managerial hegemony theory holds that a professional management class controls the organization, with the head fully responsible for its activities. While this theory focuses on large enterprises, it can also apply to a club or cooperative if members trust the leader.

Cornforth said a board is mainly symbolic, just rubber-stamping managers' decisions (Cornforth 2004: 18). The board provides legitimacy under regulations. This theory explains cooperatives, which were first developed for big businesses. It describes the split between owners and managers and encourages the development of professionalism in management. According to Itkonen (1996), a few leaders hold most of the power and make the key decisions. Over time, these groups run with little member involvement (p. 20).

After reviewing these various theoretical perspectives, it is helpful to synthesize their relevance for small-scale organizational management. In particular, three core issues emerge as critical for practical application: the distribution of governance authority between top management and members, the specific roles and performance expectations of board members, and the balance between managerial control and member support. These insights clarify how the discussed theories can be applied to address key challenges. First, who governs whom among top management and members? Stewardship theory says board members need expertise and experience to add value. They should be chosen for their knowledge and skills. In contrast, the democratic and, to some

extent, stakeholder theories emphasize board members as lay representatives who serve the stakeholders they represent.

Second, what are the roles of the board/club's key members, and what are the expectations for organizational performance? Agency theory emphasizes the board's and key members' compliance roles in ensuring that the organization acts in the interests of owners and serves as a steward of their resources. In contrast, stewardship theory emphasizes the board's role in promoting organizational performance by enhancing organizational value. One problem for boards is that these contrasting roles require board members to behave in very different ways. Group or organization members may have to take risks or face conflicts of interest. Therefore, organizational leaders and key members must have specific action plans and long-term strategies to minimize risks.

Finally, the relationship with management reduces the tension between control and support. Competing theoretical perspectives view the relationship between the board and the organization's head in very different ways. Representative, democratic, and stewardship perspectives emphasize the importance of monitoring and controlling the organization's head's work. In contrast, stewardship theory emphasizes the board's role as a partner of management, working collaboratively to improve top management's decision-making process.

Sundaramurthy and Lewis (2003) argued that organizations can decline or become reactive if members place too much emphasis on control or cooperation. To reduce this tension, members needed to trust and support the head of the organization, engage in transparent discussion and negotiation in the event of any problem (Mole, 2003), or have the roles of each person in the organization clearly defined (Harris, 1993).

The above theories that help explain the operations of organizations such as clubs and cooperatives can be summarised as follows:

Table 1: Theories on organizational management

Theory	Benefit	Board Member	Board role	Model
Agency theory	Owners and members have different benefits	Owner/member representative	Fit : - Ensure owner benefits. - Management supervision. - Compliance check.	Compliance model
Management theory	Owner/Member shares benefits	Expert	- Improved performance. - Add value to top decisions/strategies. - Partner management/support.	Collaboration model
Democratic view	Members/ public have different benefits	Member representative	Politics: - Representing member interests - Policy planning - Controller.	Democratic model
Stakeholder theory	Stakeholders have different interests	Representatives of stakeholders	Politics: - Balancing stakeholders - Policymaking - Manage control.	Stakeholder model

Resource dependence theory	Stakeholders and organizations have different interests.	Selected to influence key stakeholders	Boundary span: - Safe resources - Stakeholder relations - Outside perspective.	Co-participation model
Management hegemony theory	Owners/members and managers have different interests	Owner/member representative	Symbolise: - Approve decisions. - Provide legitimacy: the manager has absolute power.	Model “nodding council”

Source: Cornforth, 2004: 20.

Other viewpoints are also noteworthy in explaining the role and operation of traditional vocational clubs, based on cooperative, supportive relationships among group members regarding employment, social security, income, and knowledge. From this perspective, scientists view the club as a collaborative model.

According to Develtere et al. (2008), everyone had the right to access and use resources to earn a living, which is an issue when organizing cooperatives. Cooperatives also create employment opportunities for members, individuals, and organizations that do business with cooperatives.

The International Labor Organization (ILO), one of the organizations that supports the establishment of cooperatives, argued that cooperatives have economic, social, and political impacts on development. In the 2003 report, the ILO stated that cooperative members must rely on one another, innovate together, increase control over their livelihoods, and raise awareness of product production to reduce poverty (Birchall, 2004).

The ILO noted that cooperatives generated income, which members used to support children's education, obtain adequate housing, invest in savings or other income-generating activities, and meet household consumption needs.

Furthermore, the ILO argued that cooperatives could facilitate access to credit and increase purchasing power through production. Cooperatives also played a political role by representing their members' views or enabling access to welfare services such as health care and education (Mukarugwiza 2010: 3-4).

Holmen (1990) argued that cooperatives cannot function fully without being fully connected to the market (p.36).

According to Develtere et al. (2008), one obstacle for many cooperatives was the lack of support from state policies. However, according to Münkner (2001), for cooperatives to positively impact people with low incomes, the state needed to reduce its involvement and allow cooperatives to control their activities, take responsibility for their actions, and avoid overly intrusive intervention in all production processes. The state provided external support through education, training, and opportunities for organizations to access markets; without this support, these cooperatives were unlikely to develop.

Lele (1981) argued that cooperatives aim to deliver social, political, and economic benefits, yet these three goals rarely align. Achieving them usually requires trade-offs.

Thus, analyzing various theoretical models of economic organizations, it becomes clear that a club must secure appropriate scale, tangible member benefits, productive capacity, and stable consumer markets to achieve sustainable development. Notably, existing theories often overlook the specific mechanisms by which clubs can sustain themselves in the long term, particularly in governance and the alignment of member interests. For the Jrai traditional craft club examined in this study, these theoretical considerations suggest that sustainability depends on establishing clear operational regulations and fostering equitable collaboration among members. In addition, integrating the Jrai community's cultural values with sustainable development principles is

essential, ensuring the club functions not just as an economic entity but also as a vehicle for cultural preservation and adaptive growth.

Culture is considered the fourth pillar of sustainable development. Protecting cultural heritage is a meaningful way to transmit cultural values through generations. Culture in sustainable development is highly topical (Kangas et al., 2017). For decades, UNESCO and multilateral organizations have focused on the role of culture and sustainable development. In 2005, in Paris, France, UNESCO proposed *the Convention to protect and promote the multiple forms of cultural expression, with culture and development as its focus* (UNESCO, 2012). The 2013 UNESCO International Conference on *Culture: A Key to Sustainable Development* further proposed that culture is the fourth of the three pillars (social, economic, and environmental) of sustainable development (Sabatini, 2019).

Cultural heritage protection is one topic that aims better to understand the relationship between culture and sustainable development. Cultural heritage protection shares the same principle of intergenerational equity with sustainable growth. It requires a long-term vision to protect future generations' ability to access cultural resources and meet their artistic needs. In 2003, UNESCO adopted the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which recognizes the skills of crafts as cultural heritage, identity, and cultural diversity, and as an urgent matter requiring protection (UNESCO, 2012).

These intangible cultural heritage and traditional crafts are among the most essential elements.

To protect traditional and sustainable cultural elements, Holden (2015) argued that cultural space must be viewed as an ecosystem, with sustainability, the precautionary principle, and intergenerational equity, to create a new cultural perspective. A complete system must intertwine between the micro and macro levels in the cultural ecosystem. He argued that cultural ecology can be divided into three categories: publicly funded culture, commercial culture, and homemade

culture. Moreover, it employs the concepts of “guardians,” “connectors,” “nomads,” and “platforms” to demonstrate the role of culture.

Many studies have adopted the philosophy of viewing sustainable development in culture as a natural ecosystem to demonstrate the importance of “cultural, ecological reserves” in traditional cultural tourism. For example, Hwang and Huang's 2019 study on the traditional weaving of the Seediq people in Taiwan exemplifies this approach.

Sustainable, long-term cultural development and continuity are key development projects, especially in the socio-cultural context of ethnic minority areas. The perspective on sustainable cultural development here is the continuity of handicrafts across generations, the maintenance of traditional products, and adaptation to the socioeconomic development context. Different from the perspective of sustainable development in protecting the environment and ecosystem in keeping the environment for future generations (United Nations, 2015), sustainable development of Jrai handicrafts in Pleiku City, Gia Lai Province, Vietnam must be based on reality to ensure compliance with the above contents, ensure proper implementation of Vietnamese law, and must have continuity, inheritance between generations and adapt to the socioeconomic context of the country.

Thus, in this topic, the research and development of a model for a traditional craft club should be based on the above-mentioned viewpoints and theories, selecting points that are suitable for the Jrai ethnic community, the local context, and appropriate state policies. The primary goal of the topic is to promote sustainable socioeconomic development for the Jrai ethnic group and increase income for artisans and club members. People recognize the economic value of their work only when they earn income, and this process aims to raise awareness of the importance of preserving their cultural values. From there, project participants will also know the importance of maintaining and sustainably developing traditional crafts, even without any policy intervention.

+ Vietnam's legal basis for establishing and managing traditional craft clubs:

Regulations on the organization, operation, and management of associations through Decree No. 45/2010/ND-CP of the Government and Circular No. 03/2013/TT-BNV detailing the implementation of Decree No. 45/2010/ND-CP dated April 21, 2010, of the Government, regulating the organization, operation, and management of associations. According to the provisions of Clause 2, Article 2 of Decree 45/2010/ND-CP on the organization, operation, and management of associations, associations have different names: Association, federation of associations, general association, federation, association, the club *with* legal status, and other names according to the provisions of law.

The conditions for establishing a club are as follows:

1. Have an operating purpose that is not contrary to the law and has no overlap in name and main field of operation with a previously legally established *club* in the same territory.

2. Have regulations;

3. Headquartered;

4. Voluntary, self-governing.

5. Democracy, equality, openness, transparency.

6. Self-funding.

7. Comply with the Constitution, laws, and club regulations.

8. There are several Vietnamese citizens and organizations registered to participate in establishing the club: The club operates within the province/city and has an application to participate in establishing the association.

+ Size: At least three members.

+ Operating principles: Voluntary, equal, transparent, and sharing.

+ Key personnel: Artisans with deep knowledge of Jrai ethnic crafts and culture.

+ Legitimate interests of members: Ensure members' legitimate interests by sharing craft knowledge recognized by local authorities.

+ Location of operation: Headquarters and product model display space at the club leaders' homes for easy management, visitor introduction, and vocational training convenience.

+ How to manage a craft club: Ensure regular activities during the day and week; have a list of artisans; have a table of patterns/product types; have regulations and operating criteria; collect and spend publicly and transparently.

+ Product types and product value creation: Diverse, handmade, ensuring criteria, standards, core values, and quintessence of the Jrai people.

+ Linking businesses and markets to ensure sustainable livelihoods: Products are displayed and sold at clubs, OCOP stores, restaurants, and cafes, all fully accessible to visitors and tourists, and convenient for anyone who wants to buy.

+ Evaluate model effectiveness (SWOT):

- Strengths: Excellent professional qualifications and knowledge of artisans; deep understanding of ethnic culture; good relationships with authorities at all levels, fellow ethnic people, and Vietnamese people; excellent ability to use and convey Vietnamese; responsible, dedicated, and passionate about the traditional craft of his people; understanding of market demand for the products he makes.

- Weaknesses: Not yet well-applied knowledge of state policies in supporting and borrowing capital for industry activities and industry development.

- Opportunities: Many state and local policies on preserving traditional crafts; policies on developing Indigenous, cultural, and craft-village tourism; policies on accessing capital for ethnic minorities; policies on preserving gong cultural spaces.

- Threats: Products reaching the market are not diverse; the COVID-19 pandemic means manufacturing products takes much longer.

2. Handicraft development policies in the world and lessons for Vietnam

❖ The case of Malaysia

Malaysia has developed traditional craft tourism since the tourism industry boomed between 2011 and 2015. Malaysia exemplifies the development of handicrafts associated with tourism, preserving and creating culture. The handicraft industry complements tourism as a sister industry. Crafts help communities generate income and improve the socioeconomic conditions of rural areas. The handicraft industry serves as a platform for a country to showcase its culture to tourists. Halsall (2008) argued that cultural uniqueness could represent a brand asset that outsiders recognize. According to Ibrahim (2004), Malaysian tourism changed the landscape of rural areas by introducing a small quantity of village culture into the urban areas. As a developing country, Malaysia has been continuously developing its infrastructure for communication and connectivity through roads, air, and water to improve the socioeconomic conditions of its people. Although Malaysia aims to become a developed country over the next few years, the infrastructure for domestic tourism is lacking, particularly in communication, accommodation, and road connectivity between urban and rural areas. Most rural people have never traveled abroad or experienced foreign cultures. Therefore, some local communities do not welcome tourists. Providing hotel services in rural areas is also a challenge. Most management staff are selected to work in resorts and hotels as an initiative to provide better hotel services in rural areas.

Liu (2006) stated that the Malaysian government's policy to create positive economic momentum in rural areas is to develop the handicraft industry to support the tourism industry. The handicraft industry is considered a sister industry to tourism, and they can complement each other. They can help the local community generate additional income, thereby improving the socioeconomic conditions in rural areas. The handicraft industry is a platform for a country to showcase its culture to tourists. Halsall (2008) stated that a culture's uniqueness can represent a country's brand value if outsiders recognize it.

Women in rural areas of Malaysia often engage in handicrafts. The ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women (AMMW) has recognized and reaffirmed the role of women in countries' socioeconomic development. The ASEAN Women Leaders' Meeting in 1975 first highlighted women's contribution to a country's overall growth (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2014). There is a growing trend of women becoming entrepreneurs across fields and professions. The efforts of Malaysian women who work hard to generate income, especially from the handicraft industry, should be highly appreciated.

The plan to get tourists to purchase handicrafts is crucial. Selling handicrafts in tourist areas rather than remote, empty locations will make a big difference. The primary market for the Malaysian handicraft industry is the domestic market (86.8%), compared to the international market (13.2%). Most handicraft producers sell their products directly to customers or through wholesalers and distributors. Some also sell directly to retailers or use different distribution channels (Amin, 2006). Fabeil et al.'s (2012) research showed that most handicraft artisans sell their products directly to customers or through individual orders to earn more income. Tourists show greater interest when they purchase handicrafts directly from producers, engage in conversation with them, and observe the production process. As a result, they tend to spend more on handicrafts.

The handicraft industry provides local communities with employment and income opportunities, as well as a way to showcase their culture and heritage (Fatt & Bakansing, 2014). The availability of handicraft products in the market is a result of the efforts of handicraft entrepreneurs. In India and Nepal, enterprises must sell handicraft products destined for Japan; individuals cannot import them directly into these countries (Dana, 2007). The handicraft industry is known to be environmentally friendly, labor-intensive, and to use local resources (Berma, 2001). Most handicraft entrepreneurs come from rural areas (Kader et al., 2009), and 95% of handicraft producers have low levels of education (Amin, 2006; Redzuan & Aref, 2009).

Further research has also found that 46.5% of craft producers in Sarawak lack formal education (Berma, 2001). However, successful craft entrepreneurs must equip themselves with basic technical and business skills, especially in marketing, accounting, management, and communication (Kader et al., 2009).

There are over 10000 craft entrepreneurs in Malaysia, most of whom are women from Sabah (Malaysian Craft Industry Study Core Report, 2001; Shaharudin, 2002). Many female craft entrepreneurs work from home, especially in rural areas (Berma, 2001; Fabeil et al., 2012). Crafting skills are often learned from elders (Ngo, 2010), and most craft producers work part-time (Fabeil et al., 2012). Most part-time craft producers do not intend to earn massive incomes, but their income supplements their families' existing household income. Researchers have discovered that full-time entrepreneurs do not necessarily earn higher incomes than part-time and home-based craft producers.

Women craft entrepreneurs were found to have diverse profiles (Ramadani et al., 2015a) and have different reasons for becoming entrepreneurs (Ramadani, 2015). This heterogeneity is responsible for varying levels of commitment and performance (Fabeil et al., 2014). Even the location of craft production influenced the income generated by craft entrepreneurs.

The handicraft industry was a breeding ground for the development of entrepreneurial talent and skills in rural communities (Berma, 2001). The Malaysian government has seen handicrafts as a channel for developing entrepreneurship to support the tourism industry (Fabeil et al., 2012). Despite strong government support for developing the handicraft industry, only 1.5% of Malaysian handicraft entrepreneurs have participated in a government program, while 98.5% have never done so (Amin, 2006). It showed that most handicraft entrepreneurs preferred independence to government support. The lack of awareness of government support could be one reason, as most entrepreneurs are located in rural areas and lack formal education.

In addition to generating income, commercial handicraft production can be significant for women's well-being and poverty alleviation (Khan, 2013). The handicraft industry had the

potential to employ many people in rural areas, including women, the elderly, the young, and those with low levels of education (Berma, 2001). The handicraft industry could be the answer to the socioeconomic development of rural areas (Dana, 2006) and has not been considered inferior or secondary to other existing industries. It also provided opportunities for anyone to use continuous and consistent work to become a successful handicraft entrepreneur. Most successful handicraft entrepreneurs had been working in the industry for a long time and earned high incomes (Redzuan & Aref, 2009). The influx of new entrepreneurs into the handicraft industry has made the business environment more competitive. A competitive handicraft industry in rural areas further enhanced the country's economic development (Iman, 2014).

The reality is that not all products in Malaysia are handmade, entirely handcrafted. So far, the craft has been innovated and modernized by replacing old equipment, building factories, and using new machines (Redzuan & Aref, 2009). These require initiative, investment, and additional efforts from craft entrepreneurs. The willingness of craft entrepreneurs to expand their businesses depends on certain personality traits, such as self-confidence, perseverance, and a motivation to earn a high income (Fabeil et al., 2014). Initiatives using computers or machines to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of craft production have become a basic need in the industry. Entrepreneurs also used computers to display pre-designed 3D batik or craft products for customers who want to pre-order. With high-tech and engineering skills, it was possible to design machinery to support handicraft production. Entrepreneurs using machinery also sped up production and met higher customer demand more quickly.

Innovation in using handicrafts also needs to be enhanced in line with current trends. For example, artisans have transformed socket sarongs into clothing and fashion accessories, such as bags and shoes, as well as household products, including rugs, cushions, table runners, and souvenirs (Ngo, 2010).

Additional efforts, such as creative competitions by local craft makers, could encourage people to pay more attention to preserving traditional culture and heritage. For example, efforts by

some state governments to organize a 'Miss Kebaya' beauty pageant could go a long way towards highlighting to society the value of traditional kebaya (Penang State Tourism Development, Culture, Art & Heritage, 2013; Ratu Kebaya, 2014). In addition to clothing and accessories, handicrafts extend to furniture design, stationery, and kitchenware.

Branding also impacted the promotion of craft entrepreneurs and the rejuvenation of the craft industry. Branding strategies made specific craft products more unique. A good brand management strategy highlights the name, logo, design, or a combination of several elements (Kent, 2003) to make the business more attractive. Consumers were attracted to buying branded craft products (Liao et al., 2014) because the brand provided a cue to the product's quality. For example, Noor Arfa was a famous batik maker from Terengganu, and ToKo Ce'Rose was a famous Kebaya Nyonya maker from Melaka. Craft entrepreneurs found it easier to protect the design and quality of their products through patents if they have a reputable brand. Craft production used information technology to improve its brand through visuals and storytelling. To attract clients, it also inspired craft business owners to create original designs.

❖ The case of South Africa

Preston-Whyte (1983) distinguished four different types of craft production in South Africa. First, objects were produced for the family's use rather than for sale. Second, products were both modern and traditional, including baskets, clay pots, beer filters, beads, and sleeping mats. Third, rural areas produced handicraft products such as quilts, shawls, plant holders, bedspreads, and leather goods. Fourth, high-quality, mass-produced, factory-made products such as carpets or cushion covers exist.

Rogerson (2000) argued that globalization encouraged the South African government to promote the handicraft industry. Policymakers began to recognize crafts as tools for tourism development, export growth, and local economic empowerment. Before the 1980s, however, scholars and officials paid little attention to handicrafts, and the sector remained largely invisible in both research and policy debates.

The main constraints on the expansion of rural handicraft production are a significant focus of attention. Entrepreneurs often argue that finance and raw materials are their two most critical problems. Overall, six main constraints hinder employment and income opportunities for rural households engaged in handicraft production in South Africa:

Markets and marketing. The main problems were minor and insecure markets due to low rural incomes, seasonality, poor access to large markets, and fierce producer competition (Arnold et al., 1994; FAO, 1987). Many craft producers faced several marketing problems that made achieving market size for large-scale production or product quality difficult. Such issues were often compounded by low input levels, leading to intense competition among producers, reduced profit margins, and difficulty generating the surpluses needed to reinvest in productivity improvements and growth. Furthermore, with improved rural road infrastructure, the markets for some traditional rural crafts faced stiff competition from products of larger, often urban, producers. For example, factory-made furniture was increasingly replacing handmade products such as handbags or hats.

Raw material shortage. The shortage of raw materials increasingly constrained the development of rural handicraft production and related activities. Researchers recognized this challenge early in the first wave of handicraft studies. To address it, scholars and policymakers analyzed the market structures that shaped the supply of raw materials, with particular attention to the role of intermediary suppliers. For most rural handicraft producers, escalating shortages and rising costs remain challenges they cannot control (FAO, 1987).

Access to finance. Working capital-constrained rural producers (Arnold et al., 1994; Townson, 1995). Early research rarely addressed the financial challenges faced by artisanal producers. Later studies, however, highlighted how inadequate access to finance severely limits artisanal production and undermines its growth potential (FAO, 1987).

Access to technology. Adopting appropriate technology was critical to the development of craft enterprises. In policy formulation, it was essential to recognize the distinct technological

needs of emerging enterprises compared to those of more established craft enterprises. For micro-producers, the key issue was improved efficiency within the context of existing technologies rather than developing new production techniques (FAO, 1987; Townson, 1995).

Management weakness. Weak management was a prevalent issue with craft businesses. Since entrepreneurs cannot assess situations and develop plans to mitigate adverse effects on their businesses, a lack of managerial or entrepreneurial abilities may exacerbate other problems facing rural producers. An important policy was issued regarding the training and education of craft entrepreneurs to increase their competitiveness, especially in globalization (King & McGrath, 1998).

Weaknesses in institutional support structures. Most developing countries have inadequate institutional frameworks and support systems. For the smallest artisanal producers, support was effectively provided in a well-organized group setting.

Since 1994, policymakers and researchers have actively developed the South African craft industry in the post-apartheid period. The Integrated Conservation and Development Program expanded rural craft production in local communities (Venter et al., 1995). Scholars also began to address environmental management concerns. For example, Shackleton (1996) highlighted the ecological challenges linked to exploiting local cogon and timber resources.

Many studies have shown that craft groups have provided an essential source of employment for vulnerable groups of society, especially rural women.

The craft economy often relied on traditional female skills such as sewing, beading, and braiding. Because craft production took place at home, women have integrated their economic activities with household responsibilities. Communities have regarded handicrafts as an essential entry point into the economy, particularly for individuals with limited education and literacy.

Policymakers and researchers have recognized the importance of crafts within the broader framework of small business development. Since 1994, the national government has committed to promoting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and craft enterprises fit naturally into this

agenda. The craft sector incubated and tested innovative production and marketing ideas, which businesses scaled up. By experimenting with new techniques and consumer strategies, craft enterprises generated models that informed broader business development and contributed to the growth of SMEs. In addition, the craft economy has integrated closely with other vital sectors of the South African economy, particularly tourism. Scholars have emphasized the role of international tourism in expanding markets for rural handicraft producers and in creating new opportunities for local economic growth (Mafisa, 1998).

❖ The case of China

The Republic of China (PRC) is a multi-ethnic country. To date, 56 ethnic groups have been identified and recognized by the central government. The populations of the different ethnic groups vary greatly. The Han ethnic group holds the largest population, while the other 55 ethnic groups remain relatively small, so people often refer to them as “minorities.”

The South, West, and North of China host most of the country’s 55 ethnic minorities. Only the Tibet Autonomous Region and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region have official ethnic-minority-majority populations, while all other provinces, cities, and regions of China have Han-majority populations.

According to the National Statistics Office, the population of ethnic minorities increased to 125.47 million in 2020, while the Han population increased by 4.93% to 128631 million, accounting for 91.11% of the total population.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang introduced the concept of “craftsmanship spirit” in his government report in March 2016 to encourage the handicraft industry to improve techniques, professionalism, and refine product quality to restore consumer confidence in domestic products in the face of fierce competition from foreign products (Meng & Hitchcock 2020: 212). In 2017, the Chinese government issued the “Traditional Craftsmanship Revitalization Plan” to promote traditional Chinese crafts further, create momentum to protect Chinese culture and heritage,

increase employment opportunities, and enhance product diversity in the handicraft industry (Hu, 2017).

The Chinese government has sought to develop the cultural industry market to meet the diverse material and spiritual consumption needs of people in modern society. The government also created a market atmosphere for handicrafts, promoted related cultural products on mobile devices, and let tourists who have never been to all regions across the country, from the wilderness, cold, to the remote border areas, to feel the uniqueness of traditional ethnic handicrafts, and understand the distinct culture and rich style of all ethnic minority communities in the country.

Intangible cultural heritage preserves historical memory and sustains cultural bloodlines, so communities must transmit it vividly across generations. The Chinese state strengthened its protection and preservation of intangible heritage by advancing policies that integrated intangible heritage into modern society. By embedding traditional practices within contemporary cultural and economic frameworks, the state ensured that heritage remained relevant while safeguarding its authenticity.

In the article on China's traditional craft industry policy, Le Ngoc Huynh (2022) showed that China had many policies on this issue. The Chinese government has established a legal system to protect the intellectual property rights of technology holders, as well as regulations on origin and geographical indications, to help products enhance their reputation and competitiveness in the market. At the same time, China also introduced a tourism-driven development model to maximize economic value while preserving the cultural identity and quintessence of the product, thereby fostering the sustainable development of traditional crafts. For example, from 2014 to 2019, the ceramic industry of Jiangxi province grew strongly. In 2014, the total product value reached 291.6 billion yuan; however, in 2019, it reached 423 billion yuan, and in the same period, export value increased from 7.95 to 10 billion USD (p. 115).

Over the past several decades, China has experienced an unprecedented and powerful “cultural heritage boom.” Across the country, the Chinese government has invested heavily in the

classification and protection of heritage and its applications in ethnic minority communities. The concept of “authorized heritage discourse” has been widely used in critical heritage studies in China during this period (Smith, 2006).

Chinese heritage studies have adopted Smith’s (2006) concept of “authorized heritage discourse.” This framework argued that heritage extends beyond policies that recognize places; it also operates as a discourse about conservation status, in which state leaders at both central and local levels continuously use cultural heritage as a political instrument (Oakes, 2013). Since then, scholars have treated heritage not merely as a noun but as an active process of *heritageisation*. Harvey (2001) explains that this process transforms heritage into industry and modernization, embedding it within broader economic and political agendas.

This presentation presents the development of handicrafts among some ethnic minorities in China. The Orochen is one of China’s 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities. Numbering just over 8,000, they live in the Da Xinganliang Mountains of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Heilongjiang Province. However, the expansion of the logging industry and the immigration of Han Chinese into the territory have led to cultural assimilation and language loss, environmental degradation, and a decline in wildlife populations. With the economic reforms of the mid-1980s, the Orochen have made serious efforts to improve their livelihoods through government subsidies for housing, health care, and education, and have shifted their traditional livelihood from hunting to agriculture. In recent years, their lives have intersected with the rise of cultural heritage and ethnic tourism, which promote economic development and the so-called “protection” of minority cultures (Fraser 2020:2).

In the Da Xinganliang region, heritage and tourism intersect with the unique environmental conditions of that part of the country—the cold climate, taiga, and subarctic wildlife—and with the region’s ethnic minorities. The region is marketed as “China’s Siberia,” with places renamed “Arctic Village,” “China’s Coldest City,” and “Northern Lights City.” These areas attract tourists who enjoy outdoor, environmentally based activities such as hiking, skiing, and camping. The

Orochen people are incorporated into this narrative through propaganda about their “hunting,” “subarctic,” and “forest-based” culture, as well as through the metaphor of “China’s Last Hunter-Gatherers” (Fraser 2020: 4).

Since then, the area has become famous as a tourist destination, with visitors coming to buy Orochen handicrafts, birch bark items, deerskin clothing, folk theatre, forest products such as berries, mushrooms, and game skins, and animal body parts used in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Over the years, investments totaling billions of yuan have transformed the area into a nature reserve, a museum, a cultural park, housing, and roads. All these upgrades and redesigns reflect Orochen culture and people's stylization. An essential factor in such development projects is the traditional culture used in the ethnic tourism market. For example, authorities prioritize handicraft workshops focused on birch bark and deerskin processing, since both are part of the national intangible cultural heritage.

The local government also established Orochen settlements and established private shops selling handicrafts. The local government provided maximum support to the people by installing banners outside their homes and shops, advertising them as “the official source of traditional Orochen products.” As a result, the Orochen were able to resurrect their traditional culture, identify themselves, and join the market economy by establishing “Ethnicity Inc.” with the government (Fraser 2019: 11).

The Orochen community successfully petitioned local authorities to label Orochen-made items as “traditional,” thereby distinguishing them from Han- or Mongol-made products. They also petitioned for permission to harvest birch bark within two local nature reserves. In doing so, they argued that, as officially recognized heirs of the craft, they deserved support in competing with unrecognized producers.

In addition to selling their crafts, the Orochen formed groups that performed music and dance at various events throughout the summer and winter. Many tourists saw it as a viable avenue for secure employment that incorporated their cultural identity.

In traditional Orochen society, women specialized in birch bark and deerskin crafts, while men primarily hunted. After the government banned hunting in 1996, this division of labor shifted dramatically. The classification of birch bark and deerskin crafts as cultural heritage elevated the value of women's traditional occupations and gave them a clear economic advantage in ecotourism initiatives. By contrast, Orochen men have struggled to adapt to the new economic landscape and remain underemployed.

Local authorities encouraged Orochen men to raise deer for family and economic purposes, aiming to reduce household conflicts and mitigate the effects of the government's ban on wildlife hunting. Orochen men established several deer farms to supply animal skins to clothing manufacturers. Deer farming also generated income by providing animal parts and organs for sale in traditional medicine markets.

Since then, the Da Xinganliang region of the Orochen people has developed a vibrant market for the trade in animal viscera, and it is considered a tourist attraction for high-quality deer viscera and products (Fraser 2019: 12).

Thus, from a desolate and underdeveloped area, the Orochen people in the Da Xinganliang region, through cultural heritage practices by the Chinese government, have helped this area become a tourist destination associated with handicrafts, diversified employment, and reduced conflicts within the community and with state policies.

Another study on the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region also identified ways to promote the preservation and development of traditional crafts through government and people's efforts. Historical and archaeological records have revealed the long-standing cultural significance of handicrafts for the people of Xinjiang (Herbert 1987). The people of this region are attached to the production of handicrafts, such as carpets, knives, jewelry, hats, and clothing. Uyghurs have produced local-style items using local materials and technology. The unique costumes of Uyghurs include hats, knives, coats, boots, and cloth, which distinguish Uyghurs from other ethnic groups.

Uyghur carpet products are well-known worldwide. Xinjiang carpets hold an essential place in China's carpet history, featuring colorful, unique patterns. Xinjiang is considered the birthplace of carpets in China. According to archaeological evidence, people in Xinjiang were weaving colorful velvet blankets more than 2,500 years ago. A small flower hat is a handicraft with decorative beauty. The products adopt traditional embroidery, weaving, and hand-woven methods with various patterns. They all have bright textures, are full of light and beautiful features, and are colorful. The Yingjili knife, named after its origin in Yingjili County, is famous for its exquisite shape, attractive patterns, and sharp edges. With a unique shape and magnificent artistry, it is both practical and beautiful, serving as a functional knife and a piece of art. The handle is elaborately inlaid with silver, copper, jade, and precious stones, making it extremely popular worldwide.

Stanley Toop's (1993) research showed that the Uyghur method of vocational training was “firsthand” in nature, without formal schools. Therefore, apprentices spent many years to become skilled workers. In large towns, entire households participated in production. Crafts were an economic activity that increased household income (Toops 1993: 90).

Tang's (2019) study pointed out the weaknesses of this region's handicrafts, including (1) poor market access, (2) poor product quality, (3) lack of product development, sophistication, and product diversity, and (4) no clear brand.

The handicraft industry in Xinjiang has rebounded since the post-Mao era, from 1992 to the present. While government policy has focused on the economic aspects of handicraft production, it has also addressed the cultural needs of Xinjiang's local people. The government's commitment to continuing to produce products with ethnic characteristics stems from both development policy and ethnic policy. Tourism has developed into a new market for the handicraft industry. Traditionally, Xinjiang has had a viable handicraft industry; items such as carpets, fabrics, musical instruments, and knives have all become tourist souvenirs. Tourism requirements have shaped the duality of handicraft production and the handicraft market.

In the context of the Chinese government's "Belt and Road" project since 2013, Xinjiang has seized the opportunity to fully tap local traditional cultural resources and continue promoting and playing an essential role in the ancient *Silk Road*. Xinjiang's traditional crafts have become increasingly important in enhancing China's soft power in international cultural exchanges and trade. In the new era, in addition to inheriting the core of ancient cultural spirit, Xinjiang traditional crafts have combined new technology and materials, cared for the happiness of modern people, built brands with international influence, promoted cultural exchanges and economic cooperation between countries along the line of traditional crafts that have been constantly improved and recreated in the course of history, and finally become a symbol, a symbol of national culture. Nowadays, the standardization brought about by large-scale machine production has far-reaching significance for protecting the diversity of human culture. At the same time, these local resources containing ethnic culture have become the most valuable material in contemporary international exchanges. As pointed out in the "Outline of the National Cultural Development and Reform Plan for the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan Period," we should vigorously develop foreign cultural trade and build an international cooperation system. By promoting the consumption of traditional crafts in Xinjiang, the spirit of local culture can effectively spread, stimulate economic development in ethnic regions, and protect and preserve ethnic culture.

Toops (1993) identified the most critical factors for successfully promoting the preservation and development of traditional Uyghur crafts.

First, crafts flourished in areas with large Uyghur populations. In regions such as Kucha, Gulja, and Kashgar, the indigenous population accounted for more than 90% of the population. Meanwhile, crafts were less significant in Turpan (50% Han) and Urumqi (80% Han).

Second, policymakers included crafts in local tourism economic development programs. Wagner's (1985) study demonstrated how tourism promoted craft development in Gambia. He explained that local government has supported craft village cooperatives, and that, combined with tourism growth and improved infrastructure, this has led to improvements in housing, health, and

education. Toops (1993: 104) further emphasized these benefits, showing how tourism-driven craft initiatives contributed to broader community development.

Third, the classification of Uyghur handicrafts reflected ethnic identity, but the handicrafts also needed to be changed in form to suit the tourist market, for example, carpets with colorful designs and images instead of just vases and pomegranates as in the tradition. The handicraft industry must be adaptable, flexible, and linked to business projects.

Local governments added traditional crafts to the national list of intangible cultural treasures to reduce the risk of extinction and established policies to safeguard and encourage their growth. For instance, the national representative's list of intangible cultural treasures includes silk weaving and knife forging.

In the context of industrialization and globalization, people increasingly recognized the value of traditional culture and understood that traditional crafts played a significant role in addressing problems in modern life.

The Xinjiang government formulated a branding plan that emphasized the historical uniqueness of handicrafts and conducted an in-depth analysis to position target markets and customers. Officials and researchers explored the core values embedded in traditional culture, such as filial piety and blessing, and aligned them with contemporary values to guide macro-level brand development. For example, artisans designed ceramic products with glazing only on the exterior, leaving the interior unglazed to protect users' health (Tang, 2019).

The products also have precise brand positioning within market segments and consumer groups, based on their advantages, market needs, and the enterprise's future development orientation. For example, traditional fabrics are produced and traded through cooperation with garment enterprises, quality standardization, adaptation to urban life, and adherence to Uyghur market conventions.

Forming a complete handicraft chain based on the basic direction of family workshops, small-scale production, and cooperation to create a network is also a way to build a brand.

Building good products and effective brand communication. Producers supported high-quality products through display platforms that enable the public to recognize, appreciate, and purchase them. As carriers of Xinjiang's unique culture, traditional crafts established dedicated handicraft shops and display counters in airports, high-speed railway stations, and museums. Artisans and cultural organizations also actively participated in exhibitions and cultural exchanges, both domestically and internationally. In addition, retailers reorganized product displays in stores and indoor spaces to create more engaging platforms that deepen public understanding of Xinjiang's cultural heritage. These display platforms not only promoted awareness but also served as points of sale, linking cultural appreciation with economic opportunity.

Craft education for future generations was developed through the appreciation of products, their aesthetic qualities, cultural significance, and the positive effects of traditional crafts. Educators foster this learning by encouraging students to engage with traditional objects, recognize their cultural meaning, and value their role in sustaining heritage. Educators will also cultivate hand-eye coordination and creative imagination as part of this process. Ancient and distinctive patterns and motifs in traditional crafts carry deep meaning, expressing a love of life and reverence for the natural world. To support this transmission, the government has introduced special rewards that encourage elementary and high school students to visit museums and learn directly from designers about product design. By integrating historic values into design education, the nation ensures that cultural traditions endure in the new era and remain relevant for future generations.

Promoting and developing handicrafts in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region has accelerated poverty reduction in communities with high levels of disadvantage. Policymakers stress that poverty alleviation must accompany robust growth in ethnic handicrafts, which create jobs and revitalize intangible cultural heritage. By linking craft production to both economic development and cultural preservation, the region advances poverty reduction while sustaining traditions that reinforce community identity.

In 2018, Xinjiang eliminated absolute poverty by lifting 486,900 people in 513 poor villages out of poverty. The poverty rate declined from 18.3 percent at the end of 2017 to 10.51 percent at the end of 2018. In 2019, the region made decisive progress in its poverty alleviation campaign, lifting 645,000 people out of poverty. These efforts succeeded in 976 villages and two counties previously designated as poor, reducing the poverty rate to 1.2 percent (Wang and Ding, 2021: 6–7).

Thus, reviewing the successes in developing traditional crafts among some ethnic minorities in China, we see that the state plays a leading role in their development. Local governments find key factors in implementing and promoting crafts through implementing state policies by recognizing handicraft products as a national cultural heritage, creating brands with clear geographical indications, and linking crafts with the economy in general and tourism in particular; state media always accompany state and local policies, forming craft groups, craft cooperatives, and e-commerce alongside traditional commerce.

3. Policies and guidelines of the Party and State of Vietnam and Gia Lai Province on developing handicrafts of ethnic minorities

The policy of the Vietnamese State on cultural preservation is stated in the 2013 Constitution as follows: “The State and society preserve and develop Vietnamese culture, national, modern, humanistic, inherit and promote the values of the culture of Vietnamese ethnic groups... absorb the quintessence of human culture, promote all creative talents among the people. The State and society preserve and develop national cultural heritages; take care of the conservation, museum work, restoration, embellishment, protection, and promotion of historical and revolutionary relics, cultural heritages, works of art, landscapes, and scenic spots. All acts of encroachment on historical and revolutionary relics, works of art, landscapes, and scenic spots are strictly prohibited.” The state enacts cultural development policies through legislation, targeted programs, and strategic initiatives. It advances grassroots-level efforts to cultivate cultural life, exemplified by the campaign “*All people unite to build a cultural life.*”

Resolution No. 33-NQ/TW, dated June 9, 2014, of the Central Executive Committee of the Party (11th tenure) *on Building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the requirements of sustainable national development*, emphasized that culture was one of the pillars of national development.

The 10th National Assembly passed the Law on Cultural Heritage at the ninth session on June 29, 2001, effective from January 1, 2002, consisting of 7 Chapters and 74 Articles. This Law was further amended and supplemented in 2009 and 2013. *The Law on Cultural Heritage* is the highest legal basis for protecting and promoting Vietnamese cultural heritage.

Chapter IV, Section 3, Article 47 of the Law stated: “A museum is a place to preserve and display collections of natural and social history to serve the needs of research, education, sightseeing, and cultural enjoyment of the people.”

Regarding the issue of ownership, use, and promotion of cultural heritage, Article 53 of the Law also states: “The State encourages owners to organize the exhibition and widely introduce their collections of relics, antiquities, and national treasures.” To contribute to promoting cultural values, Article 61, Clause 1 of the Law states: “The State encourages organizations and individuals to contribute funding for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage values.” Article 63 states: “The State has policies and measures to promote cooperation with foreign countries, organizations, and individuals in the protection and promotion of cultural heritage values based on respect for national independence and sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit, by the provisions of Vietnamese law and international treaties to which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a signatory or participant. Contributing to promoting the values of world cultural heritage, enhancing friendly cooperation and mutual understanding among nations.”

Following the *Law on Cultural Heritage* are the government's decrees and decisions (such as No. 1706/2001/QĐ-BVHTT, dated July 24, 2001) of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism on *Approving the Master Plan for Conservation and Promotion of the Value of Historical and Cultural Relics and Landscapes to 2020*.

Based on the situation of Gia Lai province, Program 77-CTr/TU, dated September 17, 2014, of the Provincial Party Committee (term XIV) in implementing Resolution 9 of the Central Committee (term XI) “On building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the requirements of sustainable national development.” On that basis, Gia Lai province planned to survey and evaluate the social impact and effectiveness of programs, goals, and tasks that have already been completed and implemented. It focused on completing programs, goals, and tasks that remain unfinished or unimplemented, following a specific roadmap and timeline. Through these efforts, the province continued to implement Resolution 33-NQ/TW, dated June 9, 2014, of the Central Committee of the Party (term XI) on building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the requirements of sustainable national development.

Building cultural life and cultural environment in ethnic minority areas. Intricately linking activities to build cultural life with socioeconomic development tasks suitable for each region, area, ethnic group, and religion is essential for each locality. Therefore, the Provincial Party Committee, the People's Committee, and the Provincial People's Council must study and issue specific resolutions to preserve and promote local cultural values that support socioeconomic development in each period. Increase investment in cultural activities in the area, prioritize construction, renovation, and the development of cultural works. Focus on funding scientific research and project development to preserve tangible and intangible cultural values at risk of being lost. Restore and enhance traditional festivals, crafts, and the typical cultural activities of the Jrai and Bahnar people.

State management agencies in the cultural field and related professional agencies need to develop plans, guidelines, programs, projects, and specific proposals to guide and implement in close synchrony with the economic and cultural lives of ethnic minorities in the current situation. Pay attention to building, developing, planning, training, and fostering a team of cultural cadres to meet the requirements of the new situation, especially those engaged in cultural and social work across the province's 215 communes, wards, towns, and districts. Provide appropriate

remuneration for cadres engaged in cultural work in challenging communes. Party committees, authorities at all levels, departments, branches, sectors, fronts, and socio-political organizations of Pleiku City, Gia Lai province, regularly propagate the Party's guidelines and policies, the State's policies and laws to the people; deploy and widely disseminate movements, campaigns, and new cultural beauties that are consistent with traditional national culture to all classes of people.

The Resolution of the 16th Gia Lai Provincial Party Congress, term 2020-2025, from September 27 to 30, 2020, has set out general goals and emphasized the continued rapid, effective and sustainable socioeconomic development, improving growth quality towards the goal of green growth, effectively using financial resources, investment capital sources to develop the economy, culture, society; improving the material and spiritual life of the people; well-implementing policies related to ethnic minorities, exploiting well the potential, advantages, and resources to build Gia Lai to develop rapidly, sustainably, and rich in identity, striving to become a driving force of the Central Highlands by 2030.

The core tasks of the Resolution related to the research issue include:

Focusing on effectively implementing solutions to stabilize growth and restructure the economy. Direct the development of agriculture and the rural economy associated with new rural construction. Improve the quality of development in key service sectors and focus on developing tourism commensurate with the province's potential and strengths. Well, implement the policy of building new rural villages among ethnic minorities.

Paying attention to implementing social policies, solving employment and income issues for workers, and ensuring social security. Promote the application of science and technology in production and life. Promote traditional and revolutionary cultural values. Exploit, preserve, and embellish typical cultural heritages associated with tourism development.

Regarding the preservation and promotion of traditional costumes of Vietnamese ethnic minorities, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism issued Decision No. 209/QĐ-BVHTTDL

approving the Project “Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Costumes of Vietnamese ethnic minorities in the Current Period” for the period 2019 to 2030.

The objective of the Project is to preserve and promote the traditional costumes of ethnic minorities to meet the requirements of cultural heritage, which is both a driving force and a goal contributing to the sustainable development of the culture of ethnic minorities in Vietnam and making traditional costumes more popular in the lives of ethnic minorities, raising pride and awareness of preserving and promoting traditional costumes of ethnic groups.

The project aims to complete 100% of the inventory and cataloging of intangible cultural heritage on traditional costumes of ethnic minorities by 2021, to establish ten intangible cultural heritage records on conventional crafts, embroidery art, and decorative patterns related to traditional costumes of ethnic minorities to be included in the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and to honor 05-10 outstanding handicraft artisans.

In addition, the Project organizes training courses on skills to preserve and promote ethnic minority costumes during the integration period and the 4.0 Industrial Revolution. It opens classes to teach skills in brocade weaving and the traditional costumes of ethnic minorities. Build five models to display, introduce, and sell traditional costumes; 05 models to preserve and develop raw materials; produce, sew, and embroider traditional costumes. At the same time, the project organized two festivals to display ethnic minority costumes. The project also organized three festivals: “Colors of ethnic Cultures,” the Vietnam Brocade Culture Festival associated with the Great Unity Day of Vietnamese ethnic groups, and Vietnam Heritage Day. Build a website to introduce and promote traditional costumes associated with ethnic minority cultures; periodically organize performances featuring these costumes at cultural festivals or local events.

By 2022, the project aimed to have 100% of students at ethnic boarding schools in provinces and cities wear traditional costumes for two sessions/week and on holidays, including the New Year and festivals. Support 05 points to introduce and sell products about conventional costumes.

From 2026 to 2030, the Project aims to establish 10 intangible cultural heritage records for traditional crafts, embroidery art, and decorative patterns related to the conventional costumes of ethnic minorities, to be included in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List. The Project will also honor 20-30 outstanding artisans from ethnic minorities and build a model to preserve and promote their traditional costumes.

The project also sets out several key tasks such as Organizing surveys, assessments, conducting inventories, and cataloging intangible cultural heritage of traditional costumes of ethnic minorities; Preserving, restoring, and promoting intangible cultural heritage of traditional costumes of ethnic minorities; Organizing training on methods of preserving, promoting and teaching skills to preserve conventional costumes of ethnic minorities; Organizing the wearing of traditional costumes at provincial and district boarding schools for ethnic minorities; Organizing propaganda, promotion and promotion of intangible cultural heritage of traditional costumes of ethnic minorities associated with tourism development.

In 2022, the Prime Minister of Vietnam issued a policy on preserving and developing craft villages through Decision No. 801/QĐ-TTg dated July 7, 2022, approving the “Program for preserving and developing Vietnamese craft villages for 2021-2030”.

On that basis, Gia Lai province also issued Directive No. 1761/UBND-NL, dated August 8, 2022, on implementing the above Decision of the Prime Minister.

According to the viewpoint stated in the Decision, the preservation and development of craft villages play an essential role in promoting economic restructuring, rural labor, creating jobs, and improving people's lives; protecting and preserving the landscape and space of craft villages, accelerating the cause of industrialization and modernization of the country, and building new rural areas.

Preserving the cultural values of craft villages in association with developing the tourism economy to protect and promote the traditional cultural identity of different ethnic groups, regions, and localities. Arousing the potential, advantages, and traditional values bearing the imprint and

brand of the locality and the nation through developing products of craft villages, especially products of traditional craft villages, sophisticated handicrafts associated with conferring, honoring, and creating a team of artisans, skilled workers, and workers in localities, craft villages, and traditional craft villages. Developing craft villages in association with the market and international economic integration, promoting exports in line with the strategy and orientation of sustainable socioeconomic development, green growth, developing a closed-loop production model that saves raw materials, protects the environment, and adapts to climate change; applying digital technology in managing, promoting, and trading craft village products.

The program for preserving and developing craft villages has concrete goals divided into two stages as follows:

a) By 2025:

- Restoring and preserving at least 56 traditional occupations and 85 traditional craft villages at risk of being lost.
- Recognizing 116 new occupations and 40 traditional craft villages, developing 181 craft villages associated with tourism.
- Operating effectively in over 70% of craft villages and traditional craft villages.
- Training vocational skills, occupational safety and hygiene skills, and basic information technology knowledge for at least 80% of workers in craft villages.
- At least 50% of traditional craft villages have products registered under the One Commune One Product (OCOP) program.
- At least 30% of craft villages have products with registered trademarks.
- The 10% average annual growth rate in production value for craft villages.
- The average income of workers has increased by at least 1.5 times compared to 2020.
- Increasing the export turnover of handicrafts of craft villages to about 4 billion USD.
- 100% of production facilities and households in craft villages meet environmental protection regulations.

b) By 2030:

- Restoring and preserving at least 129 traditional occupations and 208 traditional craft villages at risk of fading away or being lost.
- Recognizing 213 new occupations and 96 traditional craft villages, developing about 301 craft villages associated with tourism.
- Over 80% of craft villages and traditional craft villages are operating effectively.
- Training and improving for 100% of workers in craft villages in vocational skills, occupational safety and hygiene skills, and basic information technology knowledge.
- Villages with at least 50% of craft products bearing protected trademarks.
- The average growth rate of production value of craft villages is reaching about 10%/year.
- Increasing the export turnover of handicrafts of craft villages to about 6 billion USD.
- 100% craft villages meet environmental protection regulations.

For the Craft Village Conservation and Development Program. There are four tasks to be performed.

Firstly, promoting the role of artisans and skilled workers. Maintaining and developing the team of artisans and skilled workers; creating a core to promote training, transfer of skills, and practice of traditional crafts, and creating more valuable new products and works.

Collecting, preserving, and organizing exhibitions of typical and outstanding works of artisans, skilled workers, and exceptional artisans at all levels.

Organizing the awarding and honoring of titles for skilled craftsmen, excellent artisans, people's artisans, the Golden Board of Vietnamese Traditional Craft Families, and typical craft village products.

Secondly, preserving and developing traditional occupations and craft villages, and supporting recognized, effective traditional occupations and craft villages, enabling their development and replication.

Thirdly, developing craft villages associated with tourism and building new rural areas. Restoring and embellishing relics related to the cultural values of traditional crafts and craft villages; restoring and organizing festivals and folk cultural activities; promoting the cultural values of crafts and craft villages in building a cultural tourism environment and organizing value chain linkages, developing craft villages associated with tourism, contributing to developing the rural economy, and creating new rural areas.

Finally, developing new craft villages to preserve traditional cultural values, promoting environmental friendliness, and supporting sustainable development. Particularly for villages with existing crafts: Restoring, preserving, and maintaining conventional cultural features in products and craft secrets while designing new products suitable for the market, improving production capacity and product consumption, and protecting the landscape and environment of craft villages.

The program for preserving and developing craft villages proposes thirteen implementation solutions, including:

- Reviewing and rearranging craft villages and traditional craft villages in accordance with the provisions of the law on planning, land, construction, and relevant legal provisions.
- Developing criteria and organizing the assessment and classification of craft village activities in line with the Sustainable Development Goals; Building and digitizing a database system to support the management, preservation, and development of Vietnamese crafts and craft villages.
- Restoring and preserving traditional occupations and craft villages at risk of fading away or being lost.
- Supporting the development of craft villages, traditional craft villages operating effectively, and new craft villages.
- Developing raw material areas to serve craft villages.
- Building centers to preserve and develop the values of occupations and craft villages.

- Improving the capacity of artisans, skilled workers, and human resources to serve the development of craft villages.
- Transfer of science and technology, application of digital technology in production, and meeting international standards.
- Promoting trade and brand building.
- Building a value chain for craft villages.
- Improving the quality of industry associations.
- Strengthening propaganda work.
- Review and complete policies on the conservation and development of craft villages.

In recent years, Gia Lai province has also had several policies to implement government decrees, such as Decision No. 22/2020/QĐ-UBND dated August 3, 2020, which supports the development of traditional industries. Directive No. 10-CT/UBND, dated June 10, 2022, on “Preserving and promoting cultural heritage values and culture in Gia Lai province.”

Gia Lai Provincial People's Committee requested relevant departments, branches, units, and People's Committees of districts, towns, and cities to continue to perform tasks under the direction of the Provincial People's Committee in Official Dispatch No. 1556/UBND-NL dated July 20, 2018 on the implementation of Decree No. 52/ND-CP dated April 12, 2018 of the government on rural industry development and proactively monitor and fully update the directives and instructions of the Central Ministries and branches on the implementation of the “Program for preserving and developing Vietnamese craft villages for the period 2021-2030” for timely and effective implementation.

Accordingly, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development presides over and coordinate with relevant departments, sectors, agencies, and localities to organize the implementation of the Program on preserving and developing craft villages in the province; guided the reorganization of production, built concentrated raw material areas, and value chains linking

craft villages and craft village products in association with the One Commune One Product Program (OCOP Program).

The Department of Industry and Trade coordinates with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to review and develop legal documents, policies, and industrial promotion programs, organize inspections, and guide the implementation of related policies and mechanisms. Take the lead and coordinate with relevant departments, branches, and units to promote trade activities, introduce and promote craft village products, and support craft village OCOP products participating in events, promotional activities, and trade promotions domestically and internationally.

The Department of Science and Technology presides over and coordinates with relevant agencies to advise the Provincial People's Committee on implementing scientific and technological tasks to serve the conservation and development of craft villages; and disseminate, guide, and manage production technology to ensure the sustainable development of craft villages. Support the building and development of brands for craft village products and traditional craft villages; guide and support enterprises and production establishments in the province to apply advanced quality management systems in production, traceability, code systems, and barcodes; protect intellectual property rights for products and goods produced by craft villages.

The Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism shall preside over and guide the proposal of tourist destinations for development associated with craft villages and traditional craft villages. Promote tourism activities; encourage and collaborate with businesses offering tourism services related to craft village products.

Policies about the development of rural industries are distributed and promoted by the People's Committees of the districts, towns, and cities. Organize the review, statistics, appraisal, and classification of occupations and craft communities, directing specialized agencies and units at the district level and People's Committees at the commune level. Create events that celebrate local crafts, artisans, and skilled laborers; plan the preservation and restoration of traditional crafts

and craft villages at risk of disappearing; repair and adorn artifacts; and, in compliance with local laws, create a cultural tourism environment for the region's craft villages.

Preserving and promoting traditional crafts is intimately connected with the sustainable livelihoods of ethnic minorities because these practices facilitate the transmission of cultural values into economic opportunities, particularly through tourism. As evidenced by both policy initiatives and empirical studies, integrating traditional crafts into the tourism sector not only generates income for artisan communities but also fosters the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. This synthesis allows cultural expressions to serve dual purposes: sustaining economic well-being and reinforcing ethnic identity. Thus, by transforming cultural assets into marketable products and experiences, traditional crafts serve both as a means of livelihood and as a mechanism for safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage among ethnic minorities.

Accordingly, in 2017, the Standing Committee of the Gia Lai Provincial Party Committee proposed Program No. 43-CTr/TU dated June 26, 2017, on the implementation of Resolution No. 08-NQ/TW dated January 16, 2017, of the Politburo on developing tourism into a spearhead economic sector in Gia Lai province. Gia Lai Provincial People's Committee also proposed Plan No. 29/KH-UBND dated January 6, 2022, on “Developing tourism in Gia Lai province in 2022”. Pleiku City implemented the plans of Gia Lai province. It proposed a Resolution on “Developing tourism into an important economic sector of Pleiku City from 2021 to 2025 and orientation to 2030” of the Executive Committee of the City Party Committee (term XII). The content of this resolution has specific objectives closely linked to the culture and crafts of ethnic minority communities, as follows:

- Renewing awareness and thinking about tourism development, building and protecting the image and environment, and contributing to the sustainable development of Pleiku tourism.
- Diversifying and improving the quality of tourism products; Promoting traditional tourism products and the city's advantages while developing new, unique, distinctive, and attractive

tourism products to attract tourists; Prioritizing the development of community, experiential, and homestay tourism products.

- Promoting the effectiveness of propaganda and promotional work in mass media; applying information technology to tourism promotion activities; and encouraging social networks (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok) to promote tourism images. Edit and publish high-quality publications to widely promote and introduce unique and distinctive cultural heritages, cultural tourist attractions, and attractive communities to tourists. Annually organize local traditional cultural festivals to ensure national identity and attract tourists.
- Encouraging and supporting community participation in tourism activities. Enhance the role of the community, especially people in ethnic minority villages, in participating in tourism development and in the preservation and development of traditional craft villages, tangible and intangible cultural values, and typical local cultural products. Encourage, facilitate, and support people in participating in community tourism activities, rural tourism, high-tech agricultural eco-tourism, and traditional cultural tourism of ethnic minorities to diversify tourism services effectively.
- Developing plans to implement incentive policies to invest in developing and producing tourism products and services that diversify and enhance the value, uniqueness, and cultural identity of the locality. Prioritize the development of tourism products that support the socioeconomic development of ethnic minorities (brocade weaving, wooden statues, weaving, and OCOP products). Invest in preserving and promoting the traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities to form unique tourism products.

To implement Resolution No. 120/2020/QH14 dated June 19, 2020, of the National Assembly on approving the investment policy of the National Target Program on SocioEconomic Development in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas for the 2021-2030 period in a synchronous, timely, unified and effective manner, the Prime Minister of Vietnam has approved

the National Target Program on SocioEconomic Development in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas for the 2021-2030 period (also known as Program 1719).

The objectives of Program 1719 specifically mention the issue of handicrafts of ethnic minorities, including exploiting the potential and advantages of localities in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; innovating, promoting economic development, ensuring social security; reducing poverty quickly and sustainably, and gradually narrowing the gap in living standards and average income of the region compared to the national average. Preserve and promote the acceptable cultural identity of ethnic minorities. Preserve and develop the acceptable traditional cultural values and identities of ethnic groups, with 80% of villages having community houses and 50% having conventional cultural and artistic teams that operate regularly and with quality.

Organized about 320 training courses, professional development, and teaching of intangible culture; supported 200 projects to collect, restore, preserve, and promote intangible culture of ethnic minorities at risk of extinction; preserved 120 festivals, 80 traditional villages and hamlets to serve tourism development; built 240 traditional cultural models of ethnic minorities, 800 folk cultural clubs in ethnic minority areas; supported investment in building 3,590 cultural and sports facilities in villages; supported investment in building 80 typical tourist destinations in ethnic minority and mountainous regions.

Among the particular projects that Program 1719 addresses are Project 6 on the issue of *Preserving and promoting the acceptable traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities in association with tourism development*, restoring, preserving, and promoting traditional cultural values, developing community tourism, building products to serve tourism development, building policies and supporting folk artisans and excellent artisans of ethnic minorities in transmitting and popularising traditional cultural activities and training, fostering and teaching successors; Organize training courses, improve professional skills, and teach intangible culture; Support research, restoration, preservation, and promotion of intangible cultural values of ethnic minorities at risk of extinction; Build traditional cultural models of ethnic minorities.

Thus, the Party and Government of Vietnam implement policies to preserve and promote the traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities, including handicrafts. In recent years, Pleiku City, Gia Lai province, has introduced measures to concretize these viewpoints. The policies of Gia Lai province provide both the orientation and theoretical foundation for this study.

4. Characteristics of ethnic minorities in Pleiku City, Gia Lai Province

Residents in Gia Lai divide into two groups: long-term residents and newly arrived populations. The long-term residents include the Jrai and Bahnar ethnic groups, who have lived in the province for generations and continue to live in villages. Before French colonial domination of the Central Highlands, these groups were in the final stage of primitive communal society and were transitioning toward a class-based society. Newly arrived residents include Vietnamese and other ethnic minorities who later migrated to Gia Lai and are not considered part of the original resident population. Settlement patterns remain uneven, with concentrations of people in district, town, and city centers. As a result, population numbers vary dramatically across regions, hindering uniform economic development.

In recent years, Pleiku's tourism industry has flourished, with steady growth in both visitors and revenue. Between 2017 and 2020, the number of visitors increased at an average annual rate of 12.18%, while revenue grew by 15.72%. In 2021, Pleiku welcomed approximately 248,000 visitors and generated revenue of 136 billion VND. By 2022, arrivals surged to 625,570, a 252.25% increase over 2021, and revenue rose to 447.68 billion VND, marking a 321.24% year-on-year gain. In the first half of 2023 alone, the city attracted 465,000 visitors, up 31.9% from the same period in 2022, with estimated tourism revenue reaching 335.75 billion VND, a 36.2% increase year-on-year (Quang Tan, 2024).

To continuously increase its appeal to tourists, Pleiku City has had many suitable solutions and directions to diversify its products and build increasingly attractive destinations. Not only does the city invest in building infrastructure at some tourist destinations, but it also focuses on training human resources, especially for community tourism. Homestays and farm stays are increasingly

flourishing in the inner city and the suburbs, expanding and diversifying Pleiku's tourism space. Another characteristic of the highland town is that it has villages within the city with strong indigenous cultures, such as Ia Nueng, Phung (Bien Ho commune), Wau village (Chu A commune), Plei Op (Hoa Lu ward), and Chuet village (Thang Loi ward). Gia Lai province is also famous for its tourist attractions, including Kon Ka Kinh National Park, Chu Dang Ya volcano, Ayun Ha Lake, Phu Cuong waterfall, Bien Ho, Ia Ly Hydropower Plant, and a chain of hydropower plants on the Se San River. Ferry 10 Po Co River, Duc Co, Plei Me, Dak Po, and Krong are for visitors to the old battlefield. With its highland characteristics, Pleiku has catered to diverse tourist needs, from relaxation and sports tourism to exploring indigenous culture and experiencing the natural ecosystem. Authorities increasingly promote Pleiku's tourism image to both domestic and international visitors. They actively invest in tourism infrastructure, constructing new hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues while upgrading and modernizing existing facilities.

In addition to the typical types of tourism services of type I urban areas, Pleiku also preserves the unique cultural activities of the Jrai and Bahnar ethnic groups, such as the cultural space of the Central Highlands gongs, architecture of communal houses, stilt houses, tomb statues, handicrafts such as weaving and brocade weaving. In particular, the Jrai weaving craft is becoming a vibrant tourism resource. Therefore, researching and promoting the weaving craft of the Jrai people in Pleiku City within tourism activities will help create sustainable livelihoods and preserve the Jrai people's culture in the current context.

❖ **Jrai people**

The Jrai people live mainly in Gia Lai province (90%), a part of Kon Tum province (5%), and the north of Dak Lak province (4%). The Jrai language belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian language family.

In Gia Lai province, the Jrai constitute the most significant ethnic minority, numbering 412,544 people (Nong Bang Nguyen, 2018a). This group has a long history of development, and

its collective consciousness emerged earlier than that of other Central Highlands communities. The residential areas of the Jrai are mainly located in the west and south of the province, on critical terrains, incredibly fertile lands in the Pleiku plateau, in the districts of Chu Pah, Ia Grai, Duc Co, Chu Prong, Chu Se, Chu Puh, Pleiku City, and the Ayun and Ia Pa river basins. Previous research identifies five local groups of the Jrai, all of which reside in Gia Lai province (for example, Dournes, 2021). These groups are distributed across specific districts and towns, forming distinct settlement patterns within the region:

The Jrai Chor group resides in the Cheo Reo basin valley, now Ayun Pa town, Phu Thien district, Ia Pa district. The Jrai Hdrung group resides in the Hdrung mountain area to the Northeast of Pleiku City, Chu Pah District, Chu Prong District, Ia Grai District, Dak Doa District, and Kon Tum Province. The Jrai Arap group resides in the northwest of Pleiku City, in Chu Pah District. The Jrai Tbuăn group resides in the Duc Co district and in some border communes of the Ia Grai district (Ia O and Ia Krai communes), as well as in the Chu Prong district, along the Vietnam-Cambodia border. The Jrai Mthur group resides mainly in the Krong Pa district.

Pleiku City is the political, economic, and cultural center of Gia Lai province, with a total area of 26,076.8 hectares and a population of 260,389 (2020 data), including 22 communes/wards. Pleiku City has a unique terrain and natural landscape, highlighted by Bien Ho Lake, making it well-positioned for tourism development.

The Jrai are one of the ethnic groups residing in Pleiku. Their lives remain closely tied to the mountains and forests, with slash-and-burn agriculture forming the foundation of their livelihood. They also engage in other economic activities based on cultivation and appropriation. The cultivated land is primarily flat, half garden, half field, along the Ayun and Ia Pa rivers. Around Pleiku City and Ayun Pa town, people cultivate gardens around their houses. The Jrai people base their economy on cultivation, with upland rice cultivation being decisive. They grow upland fields in a closed cycle, transferring them to new land after using them for a few years (3-5 years). After a period, they cultivate the fields again. Over the past 20 years, socioeconomic life

has changed significantly. In addition to upland cultivation, the Jrai people know how to grow wet rice and take care of and exploit rubber, coffee, pepper, and tea.

Like other ethnic minorities in Gia Lai province, the Jrai people in Pleiku City have experienced many upheavals, not only through each period but continuously, over many centuries, due to wars between tribes, between villages, between regions, invasions of foreign feudal forces, and later the period of occupation by French colonialists and American imperialists. For many years, the enemy concentrated its headquarters in Pleiku City, forcing people of all ethnic groups to endure the fierce destruction of war. As a result, the social structures of ethnic minorities in the area changed significantly.

In Pleiku City, the Jrai ethnic group has about 15,700 people living in 37 villages, interspersed with Kinh residents in the communes of Gao, Chu Hdrong, Chu A, An Phu, Bien Ho, Tan Son, and the wards of Tra Ba, Thong Nhat, Yen Do, and Hoa Lu.

The Jrai people living in Pleiku City belong to the Jrai Hdrung group. Hdrung is often called Hon Rong (or Ham Rong), an extinct volcano located in the south, 11km from the city center. According to locals, the Jrai ancestors lived around this mountain and gradually spread to other areas. The Hdrung group was concentrated around Pleiku City and in other districts, including Chu Prong, Chu Pah, and Dak Doa. During our interviews, some Jrai people identified themselves as the “volcano Jrai” (Nguoi Jrai nui lua).

The level of science and technology is still low. Production depends on natural factors. Production is self-sufficient. Production tools are still primitive: rakes, hoes, knives, machetes, axes, and sticks. Currently, people know how to apply many scientific and technical advances to production to increase crop productivity, such as growing two rice crops, fertilizing, spraying pesticides, using plows, harvesters, and threshing machines, and knowing how to plant, care for, and exploit coffee, rubber, pepper, tea, dragon fruit, and avocado.

In addition to agricultural activities, the Jrai also have some popular crafts, such as weaving, knitting, carpentry, and blacksmithing, which are self-sufficient and serve daily life. In

the past, the Jrai's living facilities were quite simple. Well-off families had many jars of wine, buffaloes, gongs, and jars. Later, the Jrai learned to raise livestock to expand production, thereby improving their material lives and developing the economy. To have more food, the Jrai also hunted and gathered. The forest area is increasingly narrowing, so hunting and gathering are almost no longer popular.

The form of social organization that has long existed and continues to exist in the Jrai community is the village. In the Jrai Chor and Jrai Mthur areas (Phu Thien, Ia Pa, Ayun Pa, and Krong Pa), it is called bon. Natural conditions, specific living environments, landscapes, terrain, and economic factors determine whether villages separate from one another and develop as large or small settlements. In the Ayun Pa region, the land is flat and fertile, with many rice fields; the hamlets are pretty significant, with up to several hundred houses. The hamlets have only a few dozen houses on the mountain slopes and narrow valleys. Jrai villages are residential units of matriarchal families. Women play an essential role in all family matters. The village council regulates work. The head of the village is the village chief. The village council decides on the village's everyday work.

Some villages have communal houses where community activities take place, such as organizing festivals and hosting guests. Villages without communal dwellings, such as Ayun Pa, Krong Pa, Ia Pa, and Phu Thien, have communal activities held in long houses or at the village chief's house. In addition to residential land, there is land for production, land for grazing livestock, and land for burying the dead. Villagers usually locate tomb-making areas to the west of their settlements. The Jrai worship many gods and conduct religious activities associated with the forest.

People's beliefs are primitive-polytheistic beliefs, also known as the belief: "All things have animism." The Jrai people believe that the first human was born from the God of Heaven. This supreme god created heaven, earth, and all species. The Jrai people hold this god in great respect. In addition, the Jrai people worship many other gods throughout the land. Before doing essential things, the Jrai people often organize worship ceremonies. They must offer the gods many fresh,

delicious foods (such as buffalo meat, pork, and chicken) and ask for their blessings. If they do not have time to provide the offerings due to urgent work, they can swear and promise the gods that they will give the offerings later if the work achieves the desired results. These worship ceremonies are a form for people to communicate with the Yang.

The Jrai believe that gods exist everywhere and divide them into distinct groups. Those who determine life and those who influence the family and community. The gods that govern the natural world include gods in the sky, gods who rule the earth and water sources, mountain gods, and gods who reside in household appliances and strangely shaped objects.

The Jrai believe that humans possess souls, and this worldview shapes numerous customs related to life and death, particularly funerals. They hold that the dead are souls captured by Yang, and when illness occurs, families seek shamans to recover and return the soul to the living. During life, individuals remain deeply attached to their families, relatives, and ploi (villages). After death, they journey to the atâu world to reincarnate into another existence. In this belief system, souls transform into ghosts (atau), who inhabit villages and houses in atâu and require food and shelter just as in the mortal world. Consequently, the living divide property and recreate material objects to accompany the deceased, ensuring continuity between worlds. Funerals, therefore, involve complex rituals, most notably the grave abandonment ceremony, which provides a rich environment for the expression and preservation of folk culture and traditional arts.

The Jrai have a unique folk culture. Their unique art treasure reflects the rich spiritual life of the people living in the mountains and forests of the Central Highlands. These are material and spiritual values, tangible and intangible, that have brought confidence and pride to their owners, contributing significantly to humanity's shared cultural values. Festival activities, dance, literature, music, and visual arts express these cultural values.

Festivals. Based on their meanings, natures, scales, and spatial organization, researchers have divided festivals into three groups: festivals associated with agricultural production cycles, festivals of human life cycles, and community festivals. Festival activities involve synthesis:

Festivals integrate cultural activities such as gongs, dancing, music, cuisine, visual arts, and literature.

Folk art is unique. These are the rich patterns expressed on knitting, woven fabrics, working and living tools (slingshots, knife handles, pipes, drums, baskets), and in the architectural works of communal houses, stilt houses, and especially tombs. The wooden statues reflect life's liveliness and the people's diverse feelings.

The means and types of Jrai artistic activities are varied. They have a long tradition of creating musical instruments from natural materials, including percussion and wind instruments. In addition, artisans combine metal with natural materials to create musical instruments such as gongs, brôs, goongs, and kôrnis. The folk dances of the Jrai include soaring melodies and folk songs, which are familiar activities in spiritual life. Jrai folk literature includes folk songs, proverbs, fairy tales, jokes, riddles, and epics. All have contributed to making the spiritual and cultural life of the Jrai rich and imbued with national identity.



Picture 1: Jrai children playing football in the community garden

❖ **Bahnar People**

The Bahnar are an ethnic minority belonging to the Mon-Khmer family language group, who have been present in the highlands for two or three thousand years (Dang Nghiem Van, 1981).

The Bahnar population in Gia Lai is currently 168,388. They live mainly in Dak Doa, Mang Yang, Dak Po, An Khe, Kong Chro, and Kbang, and a few in Pleiku City.

Although divided into many local groups, the Bahnar people share a common cultural tradition. Production methods, customs, festivals, literature, art, and religious beliefs embody this tradition.

The life of the Bahnar people connects closely to the mountains, forests, and fields, as well as to their economic practices of cultivation and appropriation. They align their calendar with the cultivation cycle, which also aligns with the year's festival cycle. They calculate each month according to the moon phase. A month begins when the new moon rises and ends when the next new moon appears. They also measure time by season, using a calendar system based on cultivation. This system divides the year into six seasons: cicada season, rice-planting season, wedding season, rice-blooming season, harvest season, and entertainment season.

The Bahnar people also calculate by month; a year has 12 months, starting with Khei môn, which falls around March in the solar calendar. Sporadic rains this month mark the beginning of a new farming season. In the past, the Bahnar people began production only during the rainy season. The months Khei bar and Khei pêng correspond to April and May in the solar calendar, when rice planting begins. From June to October, they care for plants and protect crops. They harvest rice in November and December. The remaining two months serve as a period of rest. During this time, jubilant festivals often take place, especially the Tomb-leaving Ceremony of the Bahnar people (Nguyen Thi Kim Van 2013: 20–21).

The Bahnar raise a variety of livestock, including buffalo, goats, pigs, chickens, cows, horses, and elephants. They primarily raise buffalo to serve religious rituals and to exchange valuable assets in the village community, such as jars and gongs. Their cattle-raising practices

combine herding with free-range methods. Over time, the Bahnar promoted cattle breeding, including crossbred varieties, which enhanced material living standards and supported economic development. To secure additional food, they employ appropriation-based economic practices. Bahnar women and children collect firewood, gather wild vegetables, and catch fish and shrimp daily, while men hunt and shoot wild birds and animals to supplement meals. They often rely on slingshots and traps for hunting. The system distributes labor products according to the principle of equality. Today, hunting and gathering have nearly disappeared, partly because of shrinking forest areas and partly due to state regulations protecting forests and rare animals.

The Bahnar people's level of science and technology is still low, relying mainly on manual labor and providing little support from machines or traction. Production depends heavily on natural factors and is self-sufficient. The Bahnar people's production tools are rudimentary: rakes, hoes, knives, axes, and machetes. Farmers use ubiquitous tools, especially table hoes. They cut down large trees and clear fields with machetes and axes. They cultivate fields using sticks, knives, scrapers, and small hoes. To cut and slice, they use small, sharp blades. People use plows and harrows pulled by oxen in areas where rice is grown. Nowadays, people know how to apply scientific and technological advances to production and life, care for their health, and live hygienically.

In addition to agricultural activities, the Bahnar people have some popular crafts such as weaving, knitting, carpentry, forging, and pottery. The Bahnar people have not yet commercialized their traditional crafts; they are only self-sufficient and use them in their daily lives. Some crafts are divided by gender: women weave, make wine and yeast; men weave, forge, and do carpentry. Carpentry is limited to making houses, tents, barns, granaries, tombs, and communal houses. They only use very rudimentary tools such as axes, knives, and chisels when doing these jobs.

The living conditions of the Bahnar people remain poor. The house usually has only a few pots, jars, gongs, drums, wine jars, dried gourds, mats woven from bamboo leaves, baskets, rice mortars, pestles, and winnowing baskets. "The number of precious gongs and jars often measures

the rich.” In the house, the buffalo herd outside the barn, the target number, the five (enslaved people) came to live” (Nguyen Thi Kim Van 2013: 135).

The houses of the Bahnar people are usually long stilt houses, roofed with thatched grass. The east gable is where the homeowner and his wife live. There is a fireplace and a sacred stone. The floor stores firewood and objects, and raises pigs and chickens. Each house is a small family consisting of parents and unmarried children. In addition to the main entrance, the people also made doors at both gables. In addition, the village Bahnar community has a communal house. The community regards this house as significant because it hosts festivals, religious ceremonies, and other collective activities.



Picture 2: A Bahnar village in An Phu commune, Pleiku City

The costumes and characteristics of the Bahnar people stand out. Men wear pullovers with slits, open chests, and loincloths. Women wear pullovers without slits and skirts. Both men and women wear blankets when it is cold, and both have sleeveless shirts. The primary decorative colors are black, white, red, and blue. During festivals, they often dress more elaborately. The

Bahnar people love to wear jewelry, including beaded and copper bracelets on the neck, arms, and legs. When attending festivals, they also wear bells.

In general, the Bahnar people base their traditional economy on nature and practice subsistence living. They use most of their agricultural and livestock products to organize annual festivals. Their lives still face many difficulties.

The Bahnar area, including the village, has long maintained its traditional social organization. Many Bahnar folk ceremonies and beliefs draw on these traditions. Women play vital roles in the family across many aspects of life. Although sons-in-law frequently relocate to live with their spouses, Bahnar households trace their ancestry through the father (Nguyen Thi Kim Van 2013: 142). Village members voluntarily gather to form a unified block rather than relying on blood relations. The community shows interest and participates in events and tasks even when they involve only one person or one family. Members divide all obligations and benefits according to the principle of fairness. The Bahnar people enjoy making friends, drinking, dancing, and singing. They respect people with many friends for their kindness, courtesy, and extensive social connections.

A self-governing organization of prominent men aged 40 and over governs the village. The village chief leads the organization. The self-governing council (village elders) in each village has a different number of members. They decide on everyday tasks such as moving the town, organizing festivals, producing, fighting, punishing those who violate customary laws, and organizing sacrifices. Today, the customary laws of ethnic groups coexist with the laws of the State. The punishment in the village often includes compensation for the victims and apologies to the gods.

Land for cultivation is forest land within each village. Each family has the right to use that land. In addition to the residential land area, there must be land for forest production, burial grounds, and grazing land for livestock.

Besides maintaining independence, some villages link together to form a large community called Toring. However, the connection between the Toring is still loose; the villages still exist independently, but together accept the social prestige and economic potential of a famous person in the area.

Like the local people in the Central Highlands, the Bahnar people's beliefs are primitive polytheistic (Dang Nghiem Van, 1981). The Bahnar people believe that there are three worlds: one is the world of humans and what they can see around them on the ground and in the sky; two is the world of souls, where the dead live; and three is the world of gods (Nguyen Thi Kim Van 2013: 37).

Buddhism, Cao Dai, Protestantism, and Catholicism are various religions that the Bahnar people practice. The traditional culture of the Bahnar ethnic minority and ethnic groups in the Central Highlands has rapidly declined due to the participation of some faiths, particularly Protestantism, due to the acceptance of the doctrines and extremist teachings of the missionaries of this religion.

❖ **Other immigrant minorities**

Ethnic minority migration to Gia Lai province occurred in two distinct waves. The first wave took place in 1954. The second wave followed after 1975, when the Northern border war of the late 1970s brought a significant portion of ethnic minorities from the Northern mountainous region to Gia Lai. Specifically, the Tay ethnic group is in Kbang, Chu Prong, and Phu Thien. The Tay people appeared in Gia Lai after 1975. The earliest group that settled in Gia Lai was the Tay communities currently living in Nam Cao village, To Tung commune, Kbang district, from the end of 1979 to the end of 1980” (Nguyen Thi Kim Van 2019: 44-45).

After the liberation and reunification of the country (1975), some northern ethnic minorities from the provinces of Cao Bang, Lao Cai, Lai Chau, and Tuyen Quang arrived in Gia Lai as small households and clans. These households were often too poor to leave

their hometowns for work elsewhere. They moved sporadically in many waves. The households built huts, rented and bought land from local ethnic minorities, cleared forests, and cultivated fields. Some households had relatives in Gia Lai province, lived with relatives, or borrowed land to build houses for economic development.

Northern ethnic minorities who come to Gia Lai often settle in remote, difficult-to-access communes in Duc Co, Dak Po, Ia Pa, Chu Prong, Ia Grai, Chu Puh, and Kbang, Phu Thien.

As of 2019, the newly arrived population in Gia Lai is 50686, accounting for 3.35% of the province's total population. The largest ethnic minority groups outside Gia Lai's local population are the Nung, Tay, Muong, Thai, Dao, and Mong.

According to Report No. 417-BC/TU, dated May 29, 2019, of the Gia Lai Provincial Party Committee, the Mong ethnic group in the province currently has 455 households and 2238 people. The Tay and Nung people also have a large number, specifically in Phu Thien; the Tay people have 654 households and 2,710 people. The Thai people have 447 households and 1956 people; the Nung people have 496 households and 2112 people; and the Muong people have 117 households and 440 people. The remaining ethnic minorities, such as the Hoa and San Diu, are very few in number and scattered. Households settle in villages, live near local ethnic minorities, or intersperse among them.

Most ethnic minorities from the North who migrate to Gia Lai province build and live in ground-floor houses. They construct these houses from planks, wood, or other solid materials.

The economy of ethnic minorities in the North still relies on farming and livestock. Production is self-sufficient. The main foods are rice, corn, cassava, and beans. Some people care for and tap rubber trees for companies and rubber plantations in districts such as Chu Prong, Duc Co, and Chu Pah. The ethnic minorities in the North

also cultivate fields. However, they are more proficient in growing wet rice than the local ethnic minorities. They skillfully use agricultural tools such as harrows, plows, rakes, hoes, sickles, and scythes. People also know how to apply advanced techniques, use buffaloes, plows, and threshers, select new rice varieties, and apply fertilizers and pesticides to care for rice, thereby significantly increasing rice productivity. They help residents change their thinking and ways of doing things. Not only do they grow rice, corn, and green vegetables, but the ethnic minorities in the North also grow many kinds of fruit trees, such as avocado, jackfruit, mango, banana, tubers, and fruits such as squash, pumpkin, potato, luffa, galangal, and some herbs in their garden land. They not only engage in agriculture but also cultivate and exploit industrial crops, including coffee, rubber, pepper, sugarcane, and tea. A part of the Tay and Nung people also do business.

CHAPTER 2

CURRENT STATUS OF BROCADE WEAVING OF JRAI WOMEN IN PLEIKU CITY, GIA LAI PROVINCE

1. Current status of brocade weaving

This section examines the current status of brocade weaving among Jrai women in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province, focusing on its role as a supplement to agriculture and as a means of cultural preservation. Jrai women commonly weave brocade in ethnic minority areas, primarily for family needs and additional income. Weaving, typically taught from a young age, embodies the creativity and skill valued across generations.

Brocade weaving remains important for Jrai identity, passed down through daily practice and oral instruction. Girls learn weaving for self-support and marriage, aided by portable looms that can be used anywhere.

Traditional Jrai textiles include women's skirts and shirts, loincloths, and men's shirts, decorated with patterns inspired by nature. Pattern complexity highlights the skill of Jrai women.

Jrai weavers use cotton yarn, and their products feature patterns symbolizing nature and tradition. These costumes are showcased during festivals to express community identity.

Costumes reflect their makers' history and values but change over time. After 1975, government policies transformed Jrai life and culture in Gia Lai and Pleiku, affecting the practice of brocade weaving.

Costumes have aesthetic, practical, and productive values that change over time. After 1975, socio-economic policies transformed Jrai life and altered brocade weaving, particularly the materials and tools used. Looms, formerly bamboo and wood, now use plastic pipes.

Jrai women stretch fabric and arrange colored threads for each pattern. The loom, tied to a fixed bar, is movable. Using a backstrap, they weave vertically and horizontally. Creating patterns requires precision and skill.

Jrai weavers use five colors: black (indigo), red, white, yellow, and blue. Blue was added after synthetic dyes appeared; before that, plant dyes were used.

Jrai women's clothing is characterized by horizontal stripes that run across skirts and shirts, often filled with geometric and nature-inspired motifs. Men's clothing typically features vertical stripes, especially on shirts, with patterns and decorations concentrated on the chest, waistband, skirt, and edges of loincloths.

Jrai women's skirts are ankle-length with geometric or stripe patterns along the sides. Shirts are long-sleeved or sleeveless. Men's loincloths, over 30cm wide and 4m long, feature tassels and patterned strips. Artisans favor bright red motifs on black. Jewelry mainly consists of metal rings.

Jrai skirts are ankle-length and decorated along their edges and at the hip with bands of patterns and tassels, often incorporating beads in clusters. Unlike Bahnar women, Jrai women do not wear extra fabric strips or copper rings as decoration.

Jrai women's shirts may have long or no sleeves and consistently use five colors: black, red, yellow, blue, and white. Striped or patterned bands are placed along the neck, chest, hem, armpits, elbows, and wrists, and these bands often feature geometric motifs.

Women wear shirts and wrap skirts around the lower body. Men wear shirts and a warrior-style cloak, wrapping a T-shaped loincloth with a tail at the back.

Jrai men's shirts are about 70cm long and 55cm wide, in sleeved or sleeveless styles. Sleeveless shirts feature a heart-shaped collar, front ties, red borders, and two vertical patterned stripes along the sides ending in tassels. Long-sleeved shirts have round or heart-shaped necks, horizontal stripes at the shoulders and wrists, and may also be finished with tassels at the hem. The main patterns on both styles are geometric and repeat along the stripe bands.

Jrai men wear indigo or black loincloths about 4m long and 29cm wide. Edges and ends feature patterns and tassels with seeds.

Today, many products are made from industrially woven brocades produced by machines. Although patterns are simpler, these affordable fabrics are popular choices for modern and practical uses, such as office wear, uniforms, performance costumes, and interior decorations.

Traditionally, Jrai people used homegrown cotton for weaving. Today, ready-made threads bought at markets are common; they are made of polyester, which speeds weaving and makes the fabric softer and more durable. This adaptation increases productivity and meets modern needs, including those of tourists.

Originally, Jrai people grew cotton and flax, sometimes using tree bark. Modern methods make greater use of commercially available threads in various colors and patterns, speeding up weaving, improving quality, and making them adaptable to changing climates.

Many Jrai villages have discontinued cotton cultivation, such as Bo in Ia Yok, Ia Grai, Kuăi in Ia Blu (Chu Puh), Toat in Ia Rsum (Krong Pa), and Kenh San in Ia Le (Chu Puh).

In several remote villages, raw cotton production remains minimal, as in Achong (Ayun, Chu Se); Po Yau (Lo Pang, Mang Yang); Kon Bong, Kon Trang, Kon Lanh Te, Ha Dung 1 and 2 (Dak Rong, Kbang); Nhoi (Tu An, An Khe); De Cho Gang (Phu An, Dak Po); Tul Doa, De Gôl, Pral Somei (Dak Somei, Dak Doa); and Hluh (Ia Grang).

Decision No. 681/QĐ-UBND (October 7, 2010) approved the Gia Lai cotton cultivation planning until 2015 and the vision to 2020. By 2015, farmers were to maintain 3,500 hectares and produce 7,000 tons. By 2020, the cotton area would reach 5,000 hectares, with yields averaging 2.65 tons/ha and output of 13,500 tons. Main cotton areas include Chu Se, Chu Prong, Krong Pa, Kong Chro, Dak Po, Phu Thien, and Ia Pa. Cotton cultivation has declined due to lower market demand. For example, Kong Chro's area dropped from about 3,000 hectares to under 200 hectares. Other districts, like Chu Se, Chu Puh, and Krong Pa, have seen similar reductions.

Recently, cotton income has been negligible, so people have shifted to growing crops like cassava, sugarcane, and beans. As a result, the traditional supply of Jrai raw materials has decreased.

Traditionally, Jrai fabrics were hand-dyed with herbal dyes such as indigo leaves, turmeric, and ants. With new dyeing methods, inorganic dyes made colors brighter and contrasts sharper. Artisans also used new colors, like pink, bright yellow, purple, and banana green, in blankets and fabric accents. A prominent red appeared on the industrial fabric used to border men's shirts, and decorative patterns began to cover more of it.

Traditional Jrai textiles served daily needs, including clothing, shawls, blankets, slings, bags, and headbands. Men's and women's clothing have changed to suit modern life. While women's styles are similar, there are changes in cutting, sewing, zippers, and buttons to fit better. Collar designs have become more diverse, including square, round, and shirt collars. Men's garments now feature advanced cuts and sharper lines for a more refined look. These developments enhance the appeal of clothing and reflect evolving textile skills and cultural expression.

In response to evolving tourism trends, brocade products have undergone significant innovation, integrating advanced cutting and sewing technologies that have facilitated the introduction of numerous new product designs. Empirical observations from local markets and sales records indicate that many Jrai artisans have adapted their offerings to meet broader consumer demands, diversifying from traditional clothing to include jewelry and accessories such as scarves, handbags, ties, earrings, bracelets, and necklaces, which are actively marketed to tourists. For instance, Ms. Pel in Phung village, Bien Ho commune, has leveraged both local and tourist markets by producing and selling brocade ties, handbags, and wallets at community venues, including the Protestant church, as well as to visiting tourists. Market surveys (Nong Bang Nguyen & Vu Thi Huong Ly, 2022) further confirm the appeal of brocade in contemporary fashion contexts, particularly through its incorporation into Ao Dai and other modern garments, which consistently receive positive customer feedback. Additionally, consumer demand for brocade in interior decor is increasing, with products such as curtains, pillows, pillowcases, bed

sheets, tablecloths, and wall paintings gaining traction in regional markets, as evidenced by rising sales at souvenir shops and OCOP product outlets in tourist centers.

In response to the needs of modern life, brocades have become a favorite souvenir item; this is the condition for the brocade-weaving profession of the Jrai people to continue to exist and develop in a new direction in the context of the market economy and tourism development in Pleiku City.



Picture 3: Jrai women at the weaving loom

The Jrai do not use fixed looms, but their weaving tools are separate parts, with long wooden bars used to thread the warp and crimp the weft. Depending on the product type, the craftsman hangs the thread on a short or long frame. The thread is stretched into a closed loop with a round bamboo piece about 1.2m long at both ends of the loop to stretch the thread straight; the Jrai people also call this technique *Mrai*; when the weaver finishes the product and takes it apart, the *Mrai* is no longer there, and the tools that participated in stretching the thread return to the position of the separate parts (Tran Tu, 1986). Nowadays, when using sewing thread to weave,

the Jrai do not stretch the thread on a pre-built frame anymore, but they stretch it on a small bamboo bar. When weaving, women sit on the floor, back straight and legs straight, stepping on a fixed support point, a brick or a horizontal wooden bar, to stretch the thread on the frame. After weaving, the fabrics will be transferred to the sewing machine, which completes the final stage of the product. According to artisan H'Prat in Kep village and artisan Pel in Phung village, it only takes about 1 day to weave a piece of fabric on a small bamboo frame, and one can sit in one place to weave the thread. At the same time, in the past, they had to walk around the frame for the same amount of time, which was time-consuming and effort-intensive.

In the past, cutting and sewing were done entirely by hand. Nowadays, people can buy fabric or use woven fabric to take to the shop to cut and sew, or buy a sewing machine to sew themselves. The shape has changed slightly, but there are also some minor changes. For example, women's shirts were trimmed at the waist to be smaller and tighter to the body, highlighting the woman's slim figure, and sewn with heart-shaped, V-shaped, and deep-boat necklines to accentuate the sexiness of the neck and chest. Women's skirts exhibited diverse construction techniques. They were wrapped to form a tube skirt, tailored with an added waistband to produce a slightly flared silhouette, or sewn to a shorter length that reaches the knee. These variations demonstrate both functional adaptability and aesthetic innovation within traditional dress practices.

2. Reasons affecting the current status of brocade weaving of the Jrai ethnic group

Ecological change. Gia Lai is one of the five Central Highlands provinces with large forest reserves. The forestry area is 1,112,452.8 ha, accounting for 72% of the natural land area. The forest cover is 47%, the second-highest rate in the country. Of which, the forestry land area for special-use forests is 61,304.8 ha (accounting for 5.5% of the forestry land area). The protected forest area is 277,613.5 ha. The forestry land area for production forests is 773,447.7 ha (69% of the forestry land area).

The Bahnar and Jrai people used to live in the mountains and forests. The traditional

culture, including wooden statues, also has deep roots in the long-term attachment to the forest. The forest is the most essential part of their lives. However, as the forest shrinks, its area has decreased significantly. Over the past 30 years, the Central Highlands has lost more than 1.5 million hectares of forest, accounting for 41% of its total area. According to the synthesis of the General Department of Forestry (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development), the Central Highlands currently has 2.5 million hectares of natural forest, a decrease of about 500 thousand hectares compared to 10 years ago, meaning an average reduction of 50 thousand hectares per year from 2005 to 2012, the Central Highlands lost nearly 26 thousand hectares of forest per year on average, of which the loss of forest due to conversion to rubber plantation accounted for 46.7%.

According to statistics from 2010 to 2014, the wood reserves of the Central Highlands forests decreased by more than 57 million m³ (equivalent to a decrease of 17.4%). The proportion of rich wood forests in the Central Highlands is only 10.4%; the average type is 22%; the remaining nearly 67% is poor and exhausted. Valuable woods are scarce and found only in remote areas. Districts were formed and expanded. Urbanization is progressing faster and stronger. In addition, the French and American wars in Vietnam destroyed many forests in the Central Highlands, leaving many harmful effects to this day.

The Bahnar and Jrai people have been tied to the forest for generations, living off it. They are found in firewood, fruits, rattan, and bamboo in the forest to support their survival and meet their material needs and spiritual culture, including statue-making. The Bahnar and Jrai cultures are firmly rooted in village and forest traditions. However, with forest depletion and a scarcity of wood, finding raw materials for sculpture has become increasingly complex. The depletion of wood makes it difficult to preserve and express the people's typical and beautiful cultural features, including statue-making.

Influence of religions. Over the past century, starting with the French invasion of the Central Highlands, many religions have been introduced, bringing about changes in spiritual and cultural life in general and religious beliefs in particular. This reason has contributed to

transforming many aspects of the Jrai community's awareness and socio-cultural life.

Before 1945, Catholicism and Protestantism were present in the Northern Central Highlands but remained limited due to many barriers imposed by the authorities' policies. Recently, Protestantism has increased significantly, causing many difficulties in managing and protecting traditional culture. Protestantism is present in almost all districts of Gia Lai province, concentrated in Dak Doa, Mang Yang, Ayun Pa, Chu Se, Chu Prong, Chu Pah, and Pleiku City. According to a survey, artisans and followers of this religion are not enthusiastic about the cultural activities in their locality. They believe absolutely and entirely in God, only worship God, and do not worship any other gods. People listen to pastors and deacons more than village elders, chiefs, and government officials. They listen and follow the teachings more than the propaganda of the civil service, culture, and propaganda cadres. They attend religious festivals at churches and with missionaries rather than community festivals. Therefore, when following a religion, especially Protestantism, many folk cultural activities, including community festivals and the art of carving wooden statues, are restricted because, if organized or created, they will be considered a violation of faith.

These imported religions have substantially impacted the social culture of the Jrai. The priests have also erased part of the belief system in the traditional beliefs of the people. The followers are forced to abandon the gods they have always believed in, prayed to, and hoped would bless them. Instead, they have replaced them with Catholic saints. Therefore, people have abandoned many customs and practices, such as refraining from beating gongs, refraining from organizing festivals, refraining from holding grave-leaving ceremonies, and refraining from organizing or participating in traditional cultural activities. Religious festivals are gradually replacing traditional festivals. Thus, religion has slowly changed the beliefs, customs, and practices of the local ethnic minority residents. "When the majority of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands no longer believe in gods and do not perform traditional rituals, cultural values will be diminished, or these cultural values will not disappear completely, but their position in

daily life, the objects of belief, and their spiritual purposes will also change” (Nguyen Thi Kim Van, 2014). Traditional beliefs and culture are declining in areas where people follow religion. Among the religious population, some do not organize traditional festivals but instead hold religious festivals, such as in Pleiku City, Duc Co, Chu Puh, and Ia Grai districts.

Folk culture forms will have difficulty finding a living environment without traditional cultural activities. Artisans carve wooden statues for both decorative and ritual purposes, integrating them into spaces of worship and cultural expression. Many villages have now abandoned the custom of holding grave-abandoning ceremonies. Artists have no environment to express their talents. The lack of demand also means their elimination. Therefore, many artists have not held machetes, knives, or axes to make wooden statues for many years. Making statues is a profession. Without regular practice, skills will decline, and interest will gradually decrease. Young people who do not have the opportunity to approach and enjoy beauty will find it challenging to develop an interest in it. Therefore, it is difficult for a successor force to be formed and evolved. The reduction or complete loss of the artisan force is inevitable.

The influence of modern life is a new culture. Over the past few decades, modern life has significantly impacted the traditional culture of the Central Highlands, including the organization and maintenance of festivals. The socioeconomy has changed a lot. The people grow rice, coffee, pepper, tea, rubber, sugarcane, and cassava. The agricultural calendar has changed, and there is less free time left. The grave-leaving ceremony is now organized briefly, with simplified decorative arts and reduced patterns. Tomb statues have been hunted down and stolen, and the art of tombs has degraded. Many villages have received state support to build cultural and communal houses, but this institution is not suitable for the town's living needs. In many villages today, old, dilapidated communal houses must be replaced by new, tiny, simple ones less impressive than before. A new culture has rapidly penetrated every village, causing traditional culture to shrink or disappear. The youth quickly adapted to the new culture, became fond of it, and accepted it without being selective.

Along with the lack of timely propaganda, education, and training, they gradually forgot their traditional culture. According to our research, many people over 50 still maintain a traditional lifestyle compared to those under 35. For example, in Chu Prong, Kbang, Duc Co, and Dak Doa, in some grave-leaving ceremonies, weddings, and coming-of-age ceremonies held according to traditional rituals, very few young people wore traditional costumes, played conventional musical instruments, drank rice wine, or cooked traditional dishes. They wore Vietnamese clothes and drank white wine, beer, and soft drinks. They turned on the CD player, sang, and danced to vibrant pop music.

Villages located far from city centers, towns, and townships preserve traditional cultural elements more effectively, while areas near urban centers experience the convergence of new cultural values and lifestyles. When local authorities provide orientation and invest in preserving and developing ethnic culture, communities retain their traditions and transform them into effective cultural and tourism products. However, investment in such villages often remains limited and unfocused, so the effectiveness of cultural preservation and development stays low and largely formal.

In the past, people made clothes to wear at home, for work, and for weddings, ceremonies, and festivals. Children, especially boys, were often shirtless. They only wore a cover when the weather changed. In contemporary practice, clothing is typically produced from ready-made fabric rather than hand-woven textiles. Even at ethnic boarding schools, students wear formal clothes according to regulations. Young people's clothes have also changed fundamentally. Because they attend school and live in a multi-ethnic environment, young people quickly adopt new ways of dressing. At this age, wearing formal clothes is the main thing. People in towns and cities near the communes' centers have changed their dress to resemble that of the Kinh people (shirts, matching trousers, T-shirts, shorts, jeans) to suit their work and social life. In markets and shops, there are many ready-made clothes for sale. Materials, prices, and colors are diverse, convenient for all ages, and suitable for each person's economic ability, conditions, and usage environment. With many

such factors, nowadays Bahnar and Jrai people often wear industrially produced costumes, preferring ready-made clothes over traditional ones. At weddings, the bride also likes to wear some; the groom wears a suit, like at Kinh weddings. Thus, children's and adults' costumes have changed significantly. However, most people and artisans are still very interested in and love traditional costumes and the craft of weaving them. Of the 212 artisans asked, 109 (51.4%) said they were very curious, and 80 (48.6%) said they were interested. Older people show less change in cultural practices. Middle-aged and older women continue to value traditional costumes, though they rarely wear them in daily life; when they do, it is usually in villages located far from the center. Most community members wear traditional costumes primarily during festivals, competitions, and local cultural and artistic performances.

Perception of the next generation. According to the law of historical development, material, spiritual, and social changes are inevitable. Therefore, changes in traditional culture are unavoidable. Among the elements of traditional culture, costumes are the most deeply preserved element, and the number of artisans is also the largest. However, the weaving profession has changed significantly, leading to shifts in the number of artisans.

During surveys of villages near the center and in urban areas, the number of artisans decreased, as in Op, Choet, and Kep villages in Pleiku City, where only 3-10 people knew how to weave. Phung One Village, Bren Village, and Ia Nueng Village in Bien Ho commune still have about 30 women who know how to knit and follow the profession.

During our discussions with Brocade artisans, many told us, “Weaving is a traditional profession.” Although women know how to weave, the practice is increasingly abandoned due to several economic challenges. A closer examination of these challenges reveals several interrelated factors undermining the economic viability of brocade weaving. Learning to weave demands significant hard work and diligence, as creating a single piece of fabric takes about 15 to 20 days. Despite this substantial investment of time and labor, decreased demand for traditional brocade has led to reduced sales opportunities, while mass-produced industrial fabrics saturate the market

with cheaper alternatives. This heightened competition disproportionately disadvantages artisanal producers, whose unique products command higher prices yet struggle to compete solely on cost.

Furthermore, artisans typically lack reliable access to markets or established distribution networks, which further restricts their ability to commercialize products and realize consistent income. In addition to limited market reach, broader macroeconomic forces—such as rising material costs and declining local purchasing power—further reduce the profitability of weaving relative to alternative occupations, such as hired labor or commercial agriculture, which offer faster returns and greater financial security. These compounded economic pressures not only suppress artisans' immediate earnings but also deter younger generations from pursuing or inheriting the craft, thereby threatening the continuity of brocade weaving as a sustainable livelihood. Consequently, only a small number of older women continue to maintain the weaving tradition under increasingly adverse conditions, highlighting the urgent need for strategic interventions to enhance the sector's economic sustainability.

In the past, the Jrai people lived in isolated communities; their economy was self-sufficient, so each family had to provide its own food and clothing. Female children were introduced to weaving by their grandmothers, mothers, and sisters from a very young age. Therefore, every family had someone who knew how to weave. Girls 16 years old and up could weave proficiently. However, the economy is developing strongly today. Industrial products are abundant and suitable for everyone's needs, fully meeting everyday life. In addition, the majority of ethnic minority youth are educated and exposed to new things, leading to a new way of thinking about beauty tastes. They wear more Western clothes and prefer Western costumes to traditional ones. Therefore, most young people know about weaving but are not passionate about the profession, and do not know how to weave. The next generation shows worrying signs of indifference toward traditional professions. Our survey revealed that 86% of ethnic minority students did not know how to weave traditional costumes, and only 14% knew how to knit.

For adults, especially as they enter the final stages of life, each person becomes aware of

their roots. Many people voluntarily seek out the past, including those who love and protect traditional costumes. Older people still like to wear traditional costumes during holidays and festivals. Many older women still preserve the weaving profession. According to the results of a field survey of 300 artisans and residents in 17 districts, towns, and cities of Gia Lai province conducted from July 2019 to the present, the average age of weavers is 45 years. Ages 50 and older account for about 62%; those aged 30 to 50, about 20%; and those under 20, about 18%. Some villages have people who know how to weave but no longer continue to weave due to old age, illness, or lack of tools, such as Mrs. Blam, born in 1958 in Tul Doa village, Dak Somei commune, Dak Doa district, Mrs. Dinh Thi Grol, born in 1961 in Leng To the village, Dak Po town, Dak Po district, Mrs Him, born in 1961 in Bong Pim village, Dak Jo Ta commune, Mang Yang, Mrs Nay Hnhuin born in 1968 in Plei Rbai, Ia Piar commune, Phu Thien district.

In regions and villages that still retain a strong national cultural identity, cultural elements, including costumes, also maintain their distinct identities. The quality and quantity of artisans depend mainly on the traditions of that region and village.

The passing of artisans' knowledge and skills to the younger generation is not adequately recognized. Older people who know how to sculpt statues in the villages do not proactively remind their children to learn to sculpt statues. The younger generation is less interested in their ancestors' craft, leading to a situation in which those who understand can do it, while those who do not cannot. Most young people do not know how to appreciate the beauty of national culture, including the grave-leaving ceremony and statue sculpting. The elderly take their ancestors' precious craft to the grave, and the younger generation forgets the unique craft of their people. Artisans have no place to show their skills. These factors have affected the maintenance and development of the artisan force.

Awareness of cultural values. The majority of people have limited awareness of the value of cultural heritage and the preservation of the culture left by their ancestors. Their cultural enjoyment is straightforward, and in remote areas, which is more different from that in urban

regions. In contrast, the cadres at the grassroots level are both lacking and weak, not adequately trained in professional skills, and passive in activities; cultural institutions such as communal houses, cultural houses, libraries, provincial and district art troupes, football fields have been invested in by the state but have not yet promoted the function of gathering, training, and providing cultural guidance, the efficiency of use is still low, formalistic.

Although the preservation of the province's cultural relics has been a focus, funding remains limited. From 2012 to 2013, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism supported national target programs on cultural preservation, relic restoration, and the conservation of traditional villages for tourism development, allocating a total of 23 billion VND to 7 projects. Every year, the Department of Industry and Trade of Gia Lai province provides funding to organize training in traditional occupations such as weaving, brocade weaving, making musical instruments, making rice wine, tuning gongs, carving statues, and boatbuilding. However, according to statistics from 2009 to 2013, only in 2010 did it support one training class on fine woodworking in Ia Dom commune, Duc Co district.

In reality, one-sided preservation, imposing Vietnamese culture as a model for the traditional culture of local ethnic groups, has impoverished the culture of ethnic minorities, such as encouraging ethnic minorities to build ground-floor houses with brick walls and corrugated iron roofs and abandoning stilt houses, and theatricalizing ethnic minority art programs at provincial and regional cultural events.

Besides, local authorities and relevant sectors have not yet fully recognized that preserving and developing cultural values must be prioritized alongside economic development, as culture is the nation's root.

In the past, the local economic development orientation and goals have prioritized the province's advantageous industries, such as hydropower, mineral exploitation, farm economy, agricultural and forestry processing, construction material production, and cultural tourism, which have received little attention. The province's investment-attraction policy is neither attractive nor

preferential to investors, mainly because it is based on the government's regulations. The capital for cultural investment is low and insufficient to organize large-scale cultural events and to build cultural tourism clusters and points to serve domestic and international tourists. The government's support for culture in the Central Highlands remains limited, and it lacks the leverage to promote cultural development at the local and regional levels.

Funding for cultural promotion, preservation, and development has not received sufficient attention, thereby limiting efforts to preserve and promote local cultural heritage. Education is still weak, while ethnic minorities have a low cultural level and are easily lured, enticed, and deceived by reactionary forces. Therefore, focusing on education for the people, helping them raise their awareness and understand the value of the precious culture they possess, will increase their awareness of the importance of preserving and promoting their own ethnic culture.

Restrictions in belief. Sculpting statues is a profession that, according to the elderly artisans, is given by the gods, so depending on the region, the people have certain taboos when carving, such as abstaining from drinking alcohol, sleeping with the wife, the wife is pregnant, the family has a sick person, is a teenager or according to polytheistic beliefs, they believe that when going into the forest to get wood, they must make offerings to ask for the axe, knife, ask the forest god for timber, the tree god for permission to cut down. The above beliefs also limit artisans when individuals and units need to buy new statues to order them to carve. Some artisans carve very beautifully, with a high level of artistic and technical skill, but because of the fear of taboos, they refuse to accept. A notable characteristic observed among Jrai and Bahnar men is their frequent consumption of alcohol. This practice often leads to a rapid decline in health and contributes to memory deterioration over time. Therefore, at 45-60, their limbs are weak, their eyesight is poor, and they cannot hold tools to carve statues when villagers or art dealers request it. Sculpting statues is a profession passed down through the generations. Traditionally, creative products primarily served ritual functions, particularly in funeral practices, and were also used to embellish everyday life. As a result, the notion of transforming such items into commodities was absent from

community thinking. Over the past decade, however, local artisans have increasingly recognized that newly crafted statues can be traded and sold to individuals and organizations seeking to preserve traditional cultural values. These statues are now purchased as souvenirs, used in community events, and displayed in diverse settings, such as coffee shops, eco-tourism sites, parks, folk restaurants (e.g., Bazan, Plei Tieng, Ia Gui), and places of religious activity, such as the Choet 2 Village Church in Pleiku City. They are also collected and exhibited in both domestic and international museums. In this way, newly produced statues have acquired commodity status, generating output and providing artisans with modest income opportunities.

Given the above factors driving changes in the value of folk wooden statues and the artisanal skills of two local ethnic minorities in Gia Lai province today, there is a need for specific solutions to preserve and promote the intangible cultural heritage of wooden statues.

Lack of livelihood resources. The survey results on artisans' lives show that the average income is only about 2 million/person/month. Only a few artisans, such as Mrs. Pel or Mr. Ksor Hnao, earn high incomes. The families of these artisans have diverse livelihoods, including growing coffee and rice, seasonal work, weaving brocade, and running a restaurant. Almost all families have solid houses, means of transportation such as motorbikes, and complete communication facilities. In the project survey, many artisans argued that it is easy for people to make products now that raw materials are readily available, but the products are complex. Young people who work outside earn income faster; they have money in just a few days, but weaving brocades or making statues takes more time and costs less. However, they need products immediately to give to shops or tourists in the rainy or tourist season. The artisans are all in excellent health. However, the average education level of the artisans is only grade 7. Among Jrai families living in the center of Pleiku City, natural resources are scarce, especially arable land. However, Jrai families in Bien Ho commune have a significant advantage due to Bien Ho's location, which is a symbol of Pleiku City. Anyone who mentions Gia Lai province thinks of the beautiful and poetic Bien Ho. Therefore, artisans can use this location to increase product sales,

serve tourists, and connect with tourist routes to boost income.

CHAPTER 3

BUILDING BROCADE WEAVING CLUB OF THE JRAI WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURAL SPACE OF THE GONGS

Building a club operation model requires ensuring scale and harmonious interests among group members; the products produced must meet the needs and tastes of group members and adapt to the market to sustain the development of traditional crafts and the clubs' existence. The club model also requires strict principles and regulations to ensure harmonious interests among group members. The club model cannot ignore the cultural values of the Jrai ethnic group for the sake of existence.

The cultural values embedded in each Jrai handicraft product are considered the core of the club's offerings. These values help distinguish Jrai products and create a unique identity that differentiates them from other ethnic groups.

Preserving cultural heritage through building the brocade-weaving club is the most crucial way to transmit cultural values across generations of Jrai people, helping the public understand them and even helping Jrai people appreciate them. The cultural values of the Jrai people are considered the foundation for sustainable social development. For decades, UNESCO and other multilateral organizations have recognized culture as a driving force of sustainable development. In 2005, in Paris, France, UNESCO proposed the Convention to protect and promote the Multiformity of cultural expressions, with culture and development as its focus (UNESCO, 2012). The 2013 UNESCO International Conference on Culture: Key to Sustainable Development proposed culture as the fourth pillar of the three pillars of sustainable development (social, economic, and environmental). Among them, crafts are cultural heritage, an urgent issue that needs to be protected (UNESCO, 2012).

Sustainable, long-term cultural development and continuity are key development projects, especially in the socio-cultural context of ethnic minority areas. The perspective on sustainable cultural development here is the continuity of handicrafts across generations, the maintenance of

traditional products, and adaptation to the socioeconomic development context. Different from the perspective of sustainable development in protecting the environment and ecosystem in keeping the environment for future generations (United Nations, 2015), sustainable development of Jrai handicrafts in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province, Vietnam must be based on reality to ensure compliance with the above contents, ensure proper implementation of Vietnamese law, and must have continuity, inheritance between generations and adapt to the socioeconomic context of the country.

In building a model of a traditional craft club, the core approach is to draw on scientific theories, identify the key benefits for members participating in the craft club, and select points that align with the Jrai ethnic community's context, local conditions, and appropriate state policies. The project's primary goal is to promote sustainable socioeconomic development for the Jrai ethnic group and increase income for artisans and club members. Only when people have income will they feel that their work has economic value, aiming to raise awareness of the importance of preserving their cultural values. From there, project participants will also know the importance of maintaining and sustainably developing traditional crafts, even without any policy intervention.

1. Developing criteria for forming a vocational club

❖ Building criteria for forming a brocade weaving club

Building a brocade weaving club must be based on the available artisans in Pleiku City. Operating rules: specializing in weaving ethnic Jrai brocade; members must be Jrai women living in Pleiku City; ensuring traditional Jrai patterns on weaving products; the process of creating products is mainly manual; the club director is responsible for promoting, developing, and maintaining the club's activities; the club director is responsible for teaching the profession to people who want to learn.

Number of members: 23, with Ms. Pel as the club leader. The process of establishing the club began with the Women's Union and the People's Committee of Bien Ho commune. The process of negotiating, requesting permission, carrying out procedures, and covering part of the

establishment cost was supported by the project members and some benefactors in Gia Lai province.

Table 2: List of Jrai brocade weavers in Pleiku City

TT	Name	Address
1.	Pel	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
2.	R'Com H'Myr	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
3.	H'Huyên	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
4.	Dui	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
5.	Byunh	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
6.	Yaih	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
7.	Ngưn	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
8.	Pun	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
9.	Phyeh	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
10.	Anglunh	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
11.	Pram	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
12.	Pyut	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
13.	Bíu	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
14.	Hmyum	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
15.	Ngik	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
16.	Hyu	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
17.	Hmer	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
18.	Hyem	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
19.	Prut	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
20.	Rơ Lan Han	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
21.	Sen	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune

22.	Blum	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune
23.	Pyuri	Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune

- Location of operation: Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune, Pleiku City, Gia Lai province.

- Operating expenses: The project and some sponsors have provided initial funding for the club to create operating capital, buy weaving thread and looms, and decorate the club model. The amount is about 50 million VND (about \$2,000 US dollars). However, the club director and members also fund the project by providing weaving looms and weaving threads.

- Product manufacturing criteria:

- People: Jrai artisans in Pleiku City
- Specifications and sizes: Various, depending on the product.
- Material: Industrial fabric, traditional cotton fabric, cotton (raw, plain);
- Price: Lowest 20,000 VND-700,000 VND, depending on the product. For traditional fabrics, the product price is very high, up to 15 million VND/woven fabric.
- Color: The primary colors are black (indigo), red, white, yellow, and blue. The colors are as shown in the image below.

• Pattern: Striped or vertical pattern. Women's clothing features horizontal striped patterns that emphasize the chest, abdomen, waistband, and skirt, and may include multi-patterned patches on the buttocks. Men's clothing features vertical patterns, with motifs along both sides of the loincloth and at both ends. As for other products (handbags, bracelets, and patches), the layout varies based on customer requirements (**Picture 4**).

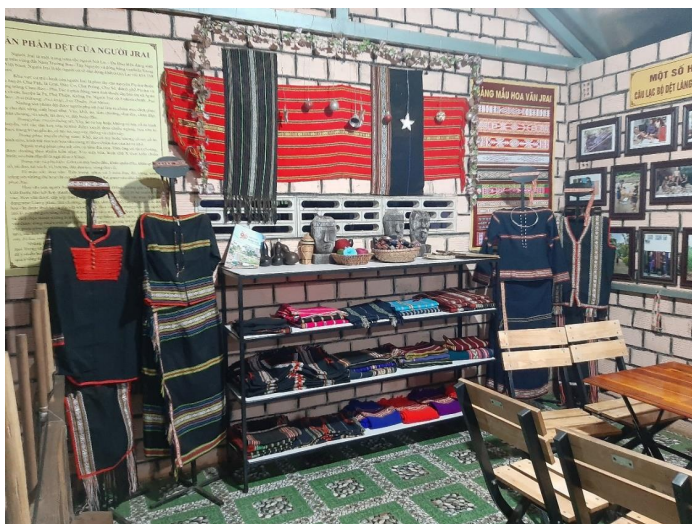
• Products: Dresses, short shirts, long shirts, key chains, tablecloths, wristbands, handbags, blankets.

- Raw materials for the product: Originated from Gia Lai province (traditional cotton fibers) and industrial fibers imported from Ho Chi Minh City.

- Product quality assessment: The fabric is wholly hand-woven and can be assembled using a sewing machine or overlock machine, depending on the product type (shirt, key chain, handbag).



Picture 4: Jrai brocade weaving patterns



Picture 5: Brocade textile products

2. Setting up a product display model of the brocade weaving club

Product display perspective: Products are made by Jrai women and club members with their own hands, ensuring the cultural values of the Jrai people.

Product display content: Diverse products, including traditional cultural values of the Jrai people, and innovations and product creations from raw materials.

Product types: Skirts, short shirts, long shirts, loincloths, key chains, tablecloths, wristbands, handbags, blankets.

Number of products: 100 products of all kinds.

Presentation: Beautiful, eye-catching, neat images of the club's chairman and members, weaving frames always ready for visitors to operate, tables introducing brocade weaving, tables of traditional patterns of the Jrai people, and learning about patterns of the Bahnar people.

Time and space for presentation: Product showroom with an area of 30m²; this is also where students learn the craft of weaving brocade.

Meaning of the displayed products: The products show the stylized patterns from nature, people, and the surrounding world of Jrai women, including patterns of the sun, the soan dancer, the communal house roof, the tomb, the centipede leg pattern, the drum, the chair, the buffalo stabbing pole, the rice plant, wavy patterns, diamond patterns, rectangles, folds, and spirals. The patterns' meanings reveal a high level of aesthetic thinking among Jrai women about people, the natural world, and their surroundings.

Artisans present, exchange, and introduce products: The club's president and key members can introduce visitors to the types of patterns and meanings, and to how to weave a piece of fabric or any brocade-related product.

Exhibition location: Phung Village, Bien Ho Commune, Pleiku City, Gia Lai province.

3. Ensuring sustainable livelihoods for members of the traditional brocade weaving club

Operation and implementation of the viewpoint of a stable and sustainable livelihood from practice: To date, research on the topic shows that most families of brocade weavers and

woodcarvers have diverse sources of income and livelihoods. For example, the family of Mrs. Pel, the club's head, has sources of income from growing coffee, cooking for hire, selling coffee, and weaving brocade. Diversification of income sources is a very important factor for ethnic minorities here, as seasonal and shift-based jobs ensure a continuous source of income. The club's formation is essential for creating more jobs for the club's head and other members as more products are consumed.

Deployment Brocade Weaving Product Introduction Space: Up to now, the project has successfully implemented a space to introduce a brocade weaving exhibition house in Phung village, Bien Ho commune, Pleiku City, Gia Lai province. Implementing the exhibition house has advantages in terms of location, as it is right next to Bien Ho, a scenic spot and symbol of Gia Lai province. The exhibition house creates a chain of cultural tourism values; visitors can travel short distances to visit many places. The house also serves as a place to preserve the Jrai community's cultural values.

Moreover, product introduction time: The exhibition house has a permanent staff member to provide specific information to visitors who want to learn; flexible hours are from 7 am to 9 pm. For the OCOP store at Bien Ho, where artisans' products are sold, sales hours are 7 am-7 pm.

Promote products on the website of Pleiku City, the Provincial Ethnic Committee, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and the Provincial People's Committee: All information about the formation process of the club, the wooden sculpture garden, and the product content has been continuously posted by mass media agencies such as Gia Lai provincial television, Gia Lai newspaper, Ethnic newspaper (Ethnic Committee), and the website of the Vietnam Women's Union. More than 10 articles on the topic have been posted and shared with readers across the country. This broad media coverage has significantly increased awareness and public interest in the club, attracting more visitors and potential consumers of Jrai brocade products. By leveraging these media channels, the club not only expands its reach to diverse

audiences but also enhances its reputation and legitimacy, thereby supporting sustained consumer engagement and the preservation and promotion of traditional handicrafts within the community.

Within the framework of the project, the research team also produced a documentary, Plei Pho, that introduces the life of the Jrai people and promotes brocade weaving and wood carving. The film link was posted on YouTube for wider promotion and easy access for anyone wanting to watch. The link is available at the following address: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4C_oyxIyX8A.

Connecting businesses and the traditional craft club: Products have been sold in many places in Gia Lai province, including coffee shops and restaurants, most notably at the OCOP store in Bien Ho, the province's most attractive tourist destination. The store can connect craft clubs with businesses. Therefore, artisans can earn more income to ensure sustainable livelihoods for craft club members, preserve and promote artisans' skills, and serve as a bright spot for younger generations to be interested in, learn about, and love traditional crafts.



Picture 6: An OCOP store in Bien Ho Lake

Thus, within the framework of this project, the project members are scientists in Gia Lai province, Jrai artisans, and leaders of Pleiku City. Within the framework of the June 2021 workshop and the project discussions, they identified favorable conditions and challenges that the two clubs and their members might encounter during their operations, according to the SWOT analysis framework, as follows:

- *Strengths:* The club's leaders and members profoundly know their ethnic culture. Their expertise in handicrafts is excellent. Their products are designed to meet customer needs. Artisan Pel has experience training hundreds of Jrai students in brocade weaving through vocational schools and cultural preservation programs in Gia Lai province. Artisan Ksor Hnao is the best woodcarver in Gia Lai province. The artisans at the two clubs are highly regarded in their communities and have good relationships with authorities at all levels, including fellow ethnic groups and the Vietnamese people. In the wood carving group, there is also the elder Nui of Op village, Pleiku City, who is highly prestigious with the local government. Artisans such as Pel and Ksor Hnao currently have classes of students with excellent skills, ensuring the long-term sustainable development of the club and craft group. Almost all members of both professional groups can use and speak Vietnamese fluently; they are responsible, dedicated, and passionate about their traditional profession, and they understand market demand for their products. Throughout the research process for the topic, the club leaders and members consistently emphasize the product's output as the key factor in the club's existence.

- *Weaknesses:* Artisans have not yet effectively used the policies of Gia Lai province and Pleiku City to support and borrow capital for the development of traditional crafts. When applying for loans, most artisans focus on borrowing capital for farming or small-scale livestock farming. To date, Gia Lai province has had many support programs for ethnic minorities to develop their crafts, but they have not yet fully taken advantage of them. Artisans have high skills but have not yet formed craft clubs, which would create collective strength and enable them to access development capital.

- *Opportunities:* Gia Lai province is essential in the *Cultural Space of the Gongs* in the Central Highlands. The Vietnamese Government has long prioritized the development of this province. The government also has policies on livelihood development, preserving traditional crafts, developing tourism associated with ethnic minority culture, and policies on access to capital for ethnic minorities.

- *Threats:* Over the years, local products have had little access to the market. Previously, Pleiku City established a brocade club in Bien Ho commune in 2002, but it failed after a period of operation. The main reasons are that the products are not diverse, there is no product output, and there is a lack of direct support from Gia Lai provincial authorities. The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in 2021, has significantly impacted people's lives. Products are made by hand, with simple tools, ensuring cultural values. Hence, people need much time to create complete products, making it difficult to mass-produce and deliver to customers immediately when needed.

4. Establishing a framework of core values, quintessence, and characteristics of brocade weaving products

Type of clothing. Jrai women's clothing uses skirts, sleeveless shirts, and boat-shaped collars. Large and small floral patterns are dotted horizontally. Large clusters of floral patterns are decorated at the hem, cuffs, waistband, the back of the buttocks, and the skirt.

Nowadays, thanks to modern sewing techniques, traditional costumes are transformed into modern tailoring, with innovative collars such as shirt, vest, and round collars, and zippers and buttons for skirts and shirts, which are very convenient for the user while still made from traditional brocade materials.

Jrai men's clothing consists of a loincloth combined with a shirt, with or without sleeves. Round or heart-shaped collar, with or without sleeves, with vertical patterns on the shirt and loincloth. Nowadays, the loincloth is sometimes transformed to suit the times by sewing two strips of brocade used as loincloths into the pants, helping the wearer feel more confident.

In addition, women also have baby carriers. Men have cloaks, worn in many styles such as diagonally on one side, X-shaped like a warrior; there are blankets for sleeping at night at festivals, blankets are made from woven brocade 70-80cm wide, about 2-2,5m long, the weaver will fold the brocade in half and sew one side of the brocade length together to create a blanket.

Color, pattern. Jrai weavers use five primary colors: black (indigo), red, white, yellow, and blue. Blue is a color introduced after the invention of dyes.

The main patterns are wavy, spiral, zigzag lines; fern shapes; rice bundles; communal houses; song dances; poles; frog caves; snakes; spider nests; and stars. Hand-drawn patterns are stylized into basic shapes, such as triangles and polygons, as well as complex shapes. Secondary patterns are wavy, zigzag dots. The main decorative patterns are on the hem, chest, and skirt of women's garments; along the front and edge of women's shirts; on the chest of men's shirts; on the two loincloths; and on the edge of men's loincloths.

Unique and vivid patterns with large motifs on the hem, skirt, butt patch, and stylized images of nature, animals, and people.

Brocade weaving method. Brocade weaving is entirely done by hand, with the foot. Sewing machines are only auxiliary tools for making small products, such as keychains, bracelets, bags, shirts, and loincloths.

Cultural value of Jrai brocade. Costumes represent historical values. Ethnic costumes contain profound historical values, clearly expressing the philosophy of life and worldview of ethnic groups. Through costumes, ethnologists can learn about the past. The formation and development of human society began when people learned to use leaves, tree bark, and animal skin to cover their bodies, and continued with the creation of clothing, such as shirts, skirts, loincloths, and pants. According to the development process, each stage of clothing gradually evolved to adapt to the living environment, labor in production, and social factors. Clothing is a factor in distinguishing people's social positions. Throughout each historical period, clothing has innovated more or less based on the foundation of materials, designs, colors, decorative patterns,

and motifs, an inevitable development. Through clothing, we can see the face of the society in which people live, as well as the aesthetic thinking, ideals, and beliefs of the people who make and wear it.

Costumes express national identity. National culture encompasses a rich array of elements, including housing, production methods, cuisine, costumes, customs, folklore, music, and literature. Each ethnic group expresses its distinct cultural nuances through these elements, which range from subtle to overt. Costumes are one of the most immediate indicators of a nation's cultural identity. The costume's appearance distinctly conveys its ethnic origins, allowing outsiders to identify the ethnicity through its cut, sewing, and style. Costumes feature details, colors, decorative patterns, buttons, and overall designs that carry cultural significance, reflecting each ethnicity's unique nuances through their attire.

Clothing represents economic value. In production, daily life, fighting, and other cultural and social activities, clothing is a material means by which people cope with or adapt to their living environment.

Traditional costumes provide economic value by protecting wearers from harsh environmental conditions and safeguarding their bodies. Communities also exchange and trade these garments as commodities, thereby enhancing material well-being and improving livelihoods.

The climate in Gia Lai has six months of the dry season and six months of the rainy season. Although the temperature is not as high as in the South, the weather in the dry season is quite hot, while the early morning and late afternoon are pretty cold. Therefore, the Jrai people in Gia Lai, to adapt to the hot weather, go shirtless, and cope with the cold weather, use a blanket to wrap around their bodies to keep warm. According to the Geography of Gia Lai Provincial People's Committee, "in Gia Lai, men often wear loincloths, women wear skirts, and go shirtless. That is when the weather is hot, when working indoors. When it is necessary to be formal, to welcome guests, or to have fun, they wear shirts. The cape is also typical clothing for most ethnic groups

in Gia Lai. It is a piece of dark indigo fabric, decorated with patterns, used by both men and women in cold weather” (UBND tỉnh Gia Lai 1999: 741).

The economic value of Jrai costumes also emerges through the production and sale of brocade fabrics. Artisans weave brocade not only to meet the needs of their own community but also to supply customers beyond it, thereby generating income and improving their livelihoods.

Brocade has become a favorite among many people, who transform it into trendy products such as scarves and handbags sold on the market. Designers have firmly established the trend of incorporating brocade into the fashion industry, especially when combined with ao dai and other costumes. Artisans also craft souvenirs from brocade, including earrings, bracelets, necklaces, and decorative shoes. For interior decoration, households increasingly use brocade to make curtains, coordinate with pillowcases and bed sheets, or create wall paintings. Because modern life demands both utility and cultural expression, brocade is now a popular souvenir and appears in many everyday products.

Costumes represent aesthetic values. Communities use traditional costumes in festivals, holidays, and important life events, making aesthetics an indispensable factor. This requirement is also increasingly demanding on the path of society's integration and development, expressed through colors and patterns woven into the fabric, which are continually refined and perfected.

The owners of the costumes, especially the girls, are very conscious of the beauty function, so their costumes are often elaborate, with bright patterns and beautiful jewelry. To contribute to perfecting those functions, the traditional costumes of ethnic groups usually focus on the following characteristics:

The art of costume design. Our research argued that different ethnic groups, and groups within each ethnic group, share standard practices in cutting, sewing, and design. The Jrai groups have the same way of making women's costumes: tube-shaped wrap skirts, boat-neck pullovers, long sleeves or sleeveless; men's costumes are designed by a T-shaped loincloth in the front,

forming a loincloth tail in the back, pullovers or shirts with a slit in the middle with buttons, long sleeves or sleeveless, round or heart-shaped necks, the front is usually shorter than the back.

In addition to clothing, the Jrai craft and use slings, blankets, and cloaks. They weave slings about 60–80 cm wide and 2–3 m long, and mothers wear them diagonally across the back or in front of the belly to carry babies. They assemble blankets from two pieces of brocade, and they construct cloaks from two brocade panels measuring roughly 1.2m wide by 2m long. Artisans sew the cloak together at one end and along the edges, creating a garment large enough to fit an adult's body. When people wear the cloak, it envelops them like a cocoon, and they can drape it diagonally to expose one shoulder or cover the entire body from the shoulder down.

Decorative art. The patterns on Jrai costumes depict a vivid world of nature and people, rendered in straight, curved, zigzag, triangular, polyhedral, and complex shapes.

Common patterns include straight lines, zigzags, and diamond shapes. Each Jrai group has a different way of creating patterns based on these patterns. People have created aesthetic functions for costumes through decorative forms or color-coordinated patterns. Geometric patterns are woven together, interwoven, and parallel to each other. Different colors, red, black, yellow, and white, are woven together.

The pattern is the most important highlight of the costume. The pattern is created directly by the Jrai groups as they weave the costume. Only the pattern strips along the side of the skirt, across the two ends of the loincloth, and the shirt hem are created separately by hand-knitting thread and sewing them into place.

The Jrai people mainly use straight lines and small zigzag lines, combining them into large clusters to emphasize the places they want to highlight. They arrange the patterns in strips on the brocade according to the intended use, such as making clothes, shawls, blankets, slings, and other accessories. For each woven product, they design and arrange the pattern strips differently. This version highlights the Jrai people as the active agents, making the description more direct and engaging.

Artisans arrange patterns according to specific rules for clothing. They place patterns horizontally on women's clothing and vertically on men's clothing. They make women's clothing more decorative with richer patterns.

The patterns reflect daily life and animals close to their lives, such as water carriers, rice pounders, knife carriers, dogs, cats, crabs, fish, dove necks, fly heads, centipede legs, bird eyes, beeswax, spider nests, and festival activities such as people dancing, drumming, communal houses, tomb roofs, poles, and the sun.

Artisan Pel stated that "my brocade patterns are diverse on the Jrai pattern sample board. In this gallery, the patterns above are traditional Jrai patterns, and the last pattern I learned from the Bahnar people. Patterns such as rice flowers, communal houses, poles, and diamonds are easy to make and popular."

The art of using colors. The aesthetic value of Jrai costumes also emerges through their distinctive color combinations. The Jrai costumes come in five colors: black, red, white, yellow, and blue. Among the colors used in Jrai costumes, artisans dye black, red, and yellow with forest plants, while white remains the fabric's original color. In contrast, they later introduced blue using imported chemical dyes. This distinction highlights both the continuity of traditional ecological knowledge and the adaptation to modern materials. According to Tran Tu, "black and white are not colors, but just colorless, and all colors are also different degrees, the extreme degrees of color" (Tran Tu, 2006). From that extreme, black becomes the costume's background color, highlighting other colors, especially red. Black and red are two hot colors that match the heat of the mountains and forests. The Jrai believe that black is the color of the forest land, where people, animals, and plants grow; where there is land, there is life; red is the color of the bright sun, the color of the light of the gods; white, yellow, and green symbolize the forest trees, flowers, and grass around their living environment.

Among these colors, red is the most essential for creating patterns. The favorite red is bright red; it is even more brilliant when combined with white and yellow. Sometimes red is used

as a background color for white, yellow, and blue to create patterns. Therefore, the costumes of the Jrai people are always bright and oriented towards the bright side. It is set against a dark background, making the outfit stand out.

According to Linh Nga Nie Kdam, “Almost all ethnic groups in the Central Highlands use four main colors: black (indigo) as the fabric background and white, red, and yellow to weave patterns. Black and indigo symbolize the land, nurturing and connecting people throughout their lives. Red is fire, blood, life, aspiration, and passion. Yellow is sunlight, the harmonious combination between people and nature” (Linh Nga Nie Kdam, 2014: 119).

The Jrai people's clothing patterns represent a belief and faith in gods and the natural world. The Jrai worship all the gods (yang) from the natural environment. They believe that these gods are very sacred. Notably, the sun symbol pattern, with its stylized eight-pointed star, depicts the sun as the god who gives life to humans. The pattern is most present in costumes and other decorative items such as baskets, pots, quivers, communal houses, and tombs.

Within the Jrai people's festival system, the grave abandonment ceremony is the most significant ritual. Artisans incorporate patterns symbolizing this ceremony, such as the tomb house, tomb roof, ceremonial pole, and song dancer, into many of the Jrai costumes. These motifs not only embody the ceremony's spiritual and communal values but also transform ritual symbolism into wearable cultural expression. By embedding these images into textiles, the Jrai people preserve collective memory and transmit cultural meaning across generations. The costumes thus function as both artistic artifacts and living documents of identity, linking everyday aesthetics with the sacred dimensions of Jrai tradition. The grave abandonment ceremony is an occasion for the whole community to say goodbye and send the dead back to their world; from then on, they will no longer have anything to do with living. Therefore, the deceased's relatives will use the most beautiful costumes to decorate the tomb house, and the community participating in the festival will also wear their finest costumes to show their respect for the deceased.

Communities clearly distinguish the deceased, including their costumes, and bury with them the garments they loved most in life to accompany them into the other world.

The colors on Jrai costumes have spiritual meanings, connecting humans and the natural world. Similar to this explanation, artisan Pel in Phung village, Bien Ho commune, Pleiku City, said, “Black symbolizes darkness, the ground; red symbolizes light, the sky; yellow symbolizes fruits in the garden, on the mountains and forests; white symbolizes water.” According to Ms. Pel, the gods gave humanity colors so people could identify raw materials, dye fibers, and beautify their clothes. The Jrai regard women who excel at weaving as blessed with skillful minds and hands.

The Jrai people's costumes also reflect a high fertility rate. They emphasize many beautiful patterns in areas associated with women's fertility, such as the neck, chest, belly, buttocks, and legs, especially the thick, patterned patch on the buttocks. The most noticeable pattern on men's clothing is at the two ends of the loincloth. During our field trips, we heard artisans and villagers say they like making patterns in those places because, when they dance at festivals, their bodies move to highlight them.

CHAPTER 4

SOLUTIONS IN PRESERVING AND PROMOTING THE VALUES OF TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFTS OF THE JRAI ETHNIC MINORITY IN PLEIKU CITY, GIA LAI PROVINCE

1. New socioeconomic contexts

Preserving and promoting the nation's traditional cultural values requires the whole community to cooperate over several decades or more to ensure stability and sustainable development. Communities must carry out preservation and promotion under feasible conditions and in moderation, alongside other cultural heritages of the Jrai people.

Preserving and promoting the handicraft values of the Jrai ethnic group in Pleiku City, Gia Lai province, involves both advantages, such as the community's access to urban infrastructure, improved connectivity, and proximity to key markets, and challenges, including competition from mass-produced goods, evolving cultural preferences among younger generations, and limited resources for sustaining traditional crafts. This comparative advantage in urban locations positions the Jrai community to leverage greater institutional support and market access than Jrai groups in more remote areas. However, it also introduces distinctive obstacles that must be addressed to ensure the sustainable development of their handicraft traditions.

Recently, many tangible and intangible cultural heritages of Vietnam, in general, and the Central Highlands in particular, have been recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. The material and spiritual lives of the people have constantly improved. The people's intellect has developed. Awareness of culture and traditional cultural values has deepened. A large number of people within and outside the Jrai ethnic community have become deeply aware of traditional cultural values and are struggling to preserve and promote them. Although there are few artisans, most are old and weak, they are still full of enthusiasm and the capacity to teach their descendants. In the “Strategy for the Development of Culture, sports, tourism, and Family to 2020, vision 2030” of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, in the section on orientations for the development

of cultural and artistic sectors, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism determined: “In the field of relics, synchronous investment, restoration of typical historical and cultural relics to become high-quality heritages in terms of conservation science and cultural environment, serving traditional education and tourism economic development; In the field of intangible culture, continue to carry out comprehensive investigation and collection of typical intangible cultural values of the nation, carry out education and widely disseminate intangible culture; honor and have preferential policies for artisans and artists who hold and have contributed to teaching and disseminating intangible culture. Develop policies to encourage research, collection, preservation, teaching, and introduction of the intangible cultural heritage of the Vietnamese ethnic community”. The Resolution of the Gia Lai Provincial Party Congress determined: “Invest in provincial cultural institutions, cultural works honored by UNESCO, preserve historical and cultural relics, promote traditional cultural values.”

Life is progressing in a positive, upward direction. Many backward customs are being eliminated, such as common burial, long festivals, money, and time, but many good traditional cultural values are also at risk of fading away. Modern means of transportation, audiovisual media, information, and entertainment are direct influences. Aesthetic tastes and aesthetic ideals have changed. The indifference of the young generation, even turning their backs on traditional culture, is a concern. However, that does not mean we do not actively support and intervene to create the best conditions for wooden statues to live long in folk life and continue promoting their value.

Tourism development in Pleiku City closely reflects the culture of ethnic minorities. As a center of the UNESCO-recognized Gong Cultural Space of the Central Highlands, Pleiku plays a pivotal role in preserving and promoting this intangible cultural heritage. Although Gia Lai province possesses significant potential, it remains a latecomer in tourism development. It is a “lowland” with many difficulties and limitations in human resources, infrastructure, and transportation, so Gia Lai tourism has not developed commensurate with its potential. In a recent

workshop on building the potential of Gia Lai province tourism associated with Indigenous cultural values, there were critical opinions as follows:

Director of Fivestar Travel Company, Luong Duy Doanh, suggested: “For tourism products to not be monotonous and overlap with other localities, Gia Lai needs to exploit indigenous cultural elements such as rowing dugout canoes on Bien Ho Lake; recreating gong cultural activities, introducing customs and culinary culture in communal houses to diversify experiences, contributing to increasing the length of stay and spending of tourists.”

Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Lich, Vice Chairman of Gia Lai Provincial People's Committee, shared: “We always consider the conflict between preserving identity and developing tourism. If we are impatient and unprepared, we may have to pay a high price for losing cultural identity and destroying tourism resources. However, if we do not dare to develop, we will be unable to turn potential into a driving force for economic development. Therefore, to develop sustainable tourism, we must focus on people who directly protect heritage and are the “messengers” connecting destinations with tourists. In the coming time, we will focus on culture, people, and natural resources to make Gia Lai province an attractive and sustainable destination” (Bao Khanh, 2022).

Gia Lai province demonstrates a rich convergence of cultural heritage and natural landscapes, as reflected in reports issued by the Gia Lai Provincial People’s Committee. The province hosts a variety of traditional festivals and rituals that embody both historical memory and ethnic identity. In An Khe town, the Ngoc Hoi Dong Da Victory Celebration commemorates the Tay Son army’s triumph, while the Hue Singing Festival preserves central Vietnamese musical traditions. Phu Thien district features the Jarai community’s rain-praying ceremony led by Yang Potao Apui, which underscores the spiritual relationship between humans and nature. The Ia Grai district organizes dugout canoe racing on the Po Co river, and the Chu Prong district celebrates the Golden Cassia flower festival, both of which highlight communal participation and seasonal

rhythms. Alongside these cultural practices, Gia Lai offers notable ecological attractions, including Bien Ho tea hill, Ayun Ha lake, Phu Cuong waterfall, and Hang Doi waterfall in Kbang district.

Furthermore, Kon Ka Kinh National Park and Kon Chu Rang Nature Reserve serve as critical sites for biodiversity conservation and ecotourism. Collectively, these cultural and natural assets position Gia Lai as a significant locus for both heritage preservation and sustainable tourism development in Vietnam's Central Highlands. In particular, Pleiku City has many significant tourist attractions, including Bien Ho, Dai Doan Ket Square, Dong Xanh Park, the Op Village community tourism village, and Ia Nueng Village.

However, the tourism industry in Gia Lai province has faced many limitations in the past. From 2017 to 2020, the number of tourists increased by an average of 18.2% per year, and total tourism revenue grew by an average of 7.1% per year. These targets did not meet the set plan (20-25% per year), and this decline was affected by the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020. Before COVID-19, Gia Lai mainly welcomed domestic tourists, mostly short-term visitors, who sought to visit natural areas and indigenous cultural sites. As for resorts and high-end tourism, it did not develop.

Thus, the leadership of Gia Lai province and Pleiku City emphasizes that the traditional culture of ethnic minorities, particularly the Jrai ethnic group, is a fundamental component of the local tourism economy. This perspective reflects a broader recognition that intangible cultural heritage not only preserves community identity but also generates economic value through tourism. By integrating ethnic rituals, festivals, and artistic expressions into tourism strategies, local authorities seek to promote sustainable growth while reinforcing cultural continuity. Such an approach positions traditional culture as both a resource for economic diversification and a mechanism for strengthening social cohesion within the Central Highlands.

Transforming cultural values into development resources. The Jrai ethnic group in Gia Lai province still has a very high rate of multidimensional poverty. The report on poverty reduction in ethnic minority areas in Gia Lai province by the Provincial Ethnic Committee shows that the total number of poor households in the province is 19,958, accounting for 5.38% of the total households.

Of which, the number of poor ethnic minority households is 17,178, accounting for 86.07% of the total number of poor households; the total number of near-poor households is 36,004, accounting for 9.70% of the total number of households in the province and the number of near-poor households, Ethnic minority people, 28,815 households, accounting for 80.03 % of the total number of near-poor households (Uy ban Dan toc tinh Gia Lai, 2021).

Many ethnic minority households in Gia Lai province remain economically disadvantaged because they have not yet succeeded in transforming the cultural values of their communities into sustainable sources of livelihood and development resources. Within this broader context, the Jrai ethnic group in Pleiku City possesses comparative advantages over other groups due to its urban location and access to superior infrastructure in the provincial center. Recognizing these conditions, Pleiku City has, in recent years, implemented a range of policies designed to support ethnic minorities by facilitating the conversion of traditional cultural capital into economic capital. Such initiatives aim to foster positive socioeconomic development while simultaneously safeguarding cultural heritage, thereby positioning ethnic minority culture as both a driver of growth and a foundation for identity preservation in the Central Highlands.

2. Viewpoints and orientations on developing traditional ethnic minority clubs and handicraft villages associated with sustainable livelihoods

Resolution of the Central Executive Committee of the Party (11th tenure) on *Building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the requirements of sustainable national development* (No. 33-NQ/TW, June 9, 2014). Assessment of cultural construction and development is sometimes irregular and untimely, especially at the grassroots level. Investment resources for preserving the cultural quintessence of ethnic groups remain limited; cultural institutions remain small-scale; the annual investment budget for cultural development is not commensurate with the potential and does not meet people's need for spiritual and cultural enjoyment; mechanisms and policies to prioritize cultural development are neither attractive nor open. The management of cultural services and activities remains limited. Training, fostering, and

improving professional qualifications and political capacity for the team of civil servants and public employees in the cultural sector have not yet met the requirements for developing cultural careers in the new situation. Experienced and dedicated artisans of all types of heritage have not received attention or support, so they are at risk of gradually disappearing. The movement to establish cultural villages, hamlets, residential groups, cultural families, cultural agencies, and culturally standardized schools has received limited attention in certain localities. As a result, these initiatives have not generated exemplary models or distinctive cultural highlights that could be widely replicated. This lack of emphasis reflects both institutional and community-level challenges in translating cultural development policies into sustainable practices. Without effective implementation, the movement risks remain symbolic rather than substantive, thereby limiting its potential to advance broader goals of cultural preservation and socioeconomic development.

The resolution of the 16th Gia Lai Provincial Party Congress, term 2020-2025, from September 27 to 30, 2020, sets out general goals, emphasizing the effective use of investment capital to develop the economy and culture, and to implement policies related to ethnic minorities.

The resolution also mentions the effective implementation of the policy of building new rural villages among ethnic minorities, paying attention to implementing social policies, addressing employment and income issues, ensuring social security, and promoting traditional and revolutionary cultural values, as well as exploiting, preserving, and embellishing typical cultural heritages associated with tourism development.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism also issued Decision No. 209/QĐ-BVHTTDL approving the Project “Preserving and promoting traditional costumes of Vietnamese ethnic minorities in the current period” for the period from 2019 to 2030.

The objective of the Project is to preserve and promote the traditional costumes of ethnic minorities to meet cultural heritage requirements, serving as both a driving force and a goal in the sustainable development of the culture of ethnic minorities in Vietnam.

In 2022, the Prime Minister of Vietnam approved Decision No. 801/QĐ-TTg dated July 7, 2022, on the “Program for Preserving and Developing Vietnamese Craft Villages for 2021-2030”.

On that basis, the Gia Lai Provincial People's Committee also issued Directive No. 1761/UBND-NL on August 8, 2022, in implementing Decision No. 801/QĐ-TTg dated July 7, 2022, of the Prime Minister.

The preservation and development of craft villages has four tasks:

- First, promote the role of artisans and skilled workers.
- Second: Preserve and develop traditional occupations and traditional craft villages.
- Third: Developing craft villages associated with tourism and building new rural areas.
- Fourth: Develop new craft villages to preserve traditional cultural values, promote environmental friendliness, and support sustainable development.

Gia Lai province also issued policies to implement government decrees, such as Decision No. 22/2020/QĐ-UBND dated August 3, 2020, on supporting the development of traditional occupations, and Directive No. 10-CT/UBND dated June 10, 2022, on “Preserving and promoting heritage values and culture in Gia Lai province”.

Gia Lai Provincial People's Committee requests relevant departments, branches, units, and People's Committees of districts, towns, and cities to continue to perform tasks under the direction of the Provincial People's Committee in Official Dispatch No. 1556/UBND-NL dated July 20, 2018 on the implementation of Decree No. 52/ND-CP dated April 12, 2018 of the Vietnamese Government on rural industry development and proactively monitor and fully update the directives and instructions of the Central Ministries and branches on the implementation of the “Program for preserving and developing Vietnamese craft villages for the period 2021-2030” for timely and effective implementation.

On January 6, 2022, the Gia Lai Provincial People's Committee proposed Plan No. 29/KH-UBND on “Developing tourism in Gia Lai province in 2022.”

On that basis, Pleiku City implemented the Resolution on “Developing tourism into an important economic sector of Pleiku City from 2021 to 2025 and Orientation to 2030” of the City Party Committee (XII). The resolution articulates specific goals that maintain a close connection to the culture and traditional crafts of ethnic minority communities. Annually organize local traditional cultural festivals to ensure national identity and attract tourists. Enhance the role of the community, especially people in ethnic minority villages, in participating in tourism development and in preserving and developing traditional craft villages, tangible and intangible cultural values, and typical local cultural products.

Prioritize the development of tourism products associated with the socioeconomic development of ethnic minorities (brocade weaving, wooden statues, weaving, and OCOP products). Invest in preserving and promoting the traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities to form unique tourism products.

Thus, the viewpoints and orientations of the Party and Government of Vietnam on the development of traditional ethnic minority occupations, clubs, and craft villages reflect a multidimensional approach to sustainable livelihoods. These orientations encompass the preservation and revitalization of traditional crafts, the institutionalization of craft villages as socioeconomic units, and the integration of artisanal production with tourism development.

These views are also entirely consistent with the opinions of domestic and international scientists. In the section on reviewing documents and global experiences, the topic finds that the orientation of developing traditional occupations of ethnic minorities has integrated mechanisms, policies, assigned focal points, and precise tasks of agencies, improved the efficiency of investment resources, and ensured comprehensive, focused, objective, scientific, and accurate allocation. The orientations of developing traditional occupations among ethnic minorities in Vietnam are very similar to those in China, one of the world's leading countries in developing domestic and international tourism based on cultural and natural resources (World Economic Forum, 2019).

3. Recommendations and solutions

Recommendation 1: The primary recommendation is to prioritize a comprehensive, targeted shift in awareness and responsibility within organizations and management agencies at all levels of government to preserve and promote Jrai ethnic cultural values in Gia Lai province. Emphasis should be placed on safeguarding and revitalizing Jrai cultural traditions and traditional crafts, as these practices constitute both key elements of intangible heritage and essential practical skills. These efforts are central to ensuring that Jrai artisanal knowledge is effectively harnessed as a critical foundation for the community's sustainable livelihoods, thereby enhancing the relevance and applicability of cultural preservation strategies within current socioeconomic development frameworks.

The survey results indicate that the sustainable development of traditional crafts is fundamentally shaped by the efficacy and scope of support policies implemented by the State, local authorities, and relevant organizations. In particular, brocade weaving and wood carving not only serve as crucial vehicles for safeguarding the cultural heritage of the Jrai people but also depend on policy measures to function as viable sources of livelihood. Effective policy interventions directly facilitate artisans' income generation and enhance their socioeconomic well-being, demonstrating that comprehensive and targeted support is essential for linking cultural preservation with tangible improvements in community livelihoods.

The solution to this recommendation needs:

Firstly, it is necessary to thoroughly grasp the Party and the Vietnamese Government's viewpoints on preserving and promoting the cultural values of the Vietnamese people. It is essential to learn and flexibly and adequately apply the Party and Government's views on preserving traditional crafts and intangible cultural values and improving the lives of ethnic minorities. From there, educate and thoroughly understand so that all organizations and forces related to the activities of preserving and promoting the cultural values of the Jrai ethnic group in Gia Lai province need to fully and correctly perceive the position, role, and importance of this

work, and need to overcome the situation of overlooking and loosening the leadership and direction of Party committees, authorities, functional agencies, and socio-political organizations.

Continue to innovate and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of state management of culture; review, supplement, and adjust cultural development plans and projects, and legal documents on cultural activity management to suit local conditions.

Secondly, regularly educate and raise awareness to support organizations and forces participating in the work. Preserve and promote the cultural values of traditional crafts of the Jrai ethnic group in Gia Lai province.

To effectively carry out the above education and propaganda, the authorities must organize well-structured training sessions, introduce management topics, share experiences, and display models of craft villages. Organize closely and qualitatively the forms of community activities and cultural exchanges; at the same time, through practical activities, significant events of the Party, the State, the locality, and the villages to educate, propagate, and unify awareness, raise responsibility for organizations, forces, and people in the work of preserving and promoting the cultural values of traditional crafts of ethnic minorities in Gia Lai province.

Thirdly, the focus should be on training and improving the qualifications of staff engaged in cultural work to meet the requirements of the industrialization and modernization period.

Training the expertise of ethnic minority civil servants and cultural officials at all levels, as they are the ones who do the best job and understand their communities best in preserving local cultural heritage.

Finally, education thoroughly understands the functions and tasks of organizations and forces in promoting the cultural values of the Jrai ethnic group. Strengthening propaganda works on the role and position of artistic development, making the whole society aware of participating in building and developing culture. Propagating and raising awareness of building and developing culture is an essential and ongoing task for Party committees, authorities, sectors, and organizations. Cultural development must be closely integrated with the specific socioeconomic

trajectories of each locality. This linkage ensures that cultural initiatives do not remain abstract or symbolic but instead contribute directly to the material well-being and social progress of communities. At the same time, building goals and solutions for the economic development of sectors and localities must be linked to those for cultural development.

Improving the capacity, leadership, management, and awareness of Party committees and authorities at all levels of culture and the people, especially the team of cadres directly responsible for directing and managing the cultural field.

Directing the effective implementation of the movement “All people unite to build a cultural life” and the campaign “*All people unite to build new rural areas and civilized urban areas.*”

Promoting the cultural values of the Jrai ethnic group in Gia Lai province involves many organizations and forces; each organization, agency, cadre, party member, artisan, and citizen in different positions plays a role, performs functions, assumes responsibilities, and carries out tasks. Only when each organization and individual has a clear perception of their position and role will the promotion issue be effective and deliver practical benefits.

Recommendation 2: Preserving traditional crafts with cultural subjects as the focus; researching; gathering artisans together; promoting creativity; suitable for the market-economy context; harmoniously integrating tradition and innovation; applying scientific and technical advances in production, promotion, and customer approach.

The solution to this recommendation needs:

Restoring and preserving the artisan workforce by creating an environment in which artisans can operate. Regularly organize the “Cultural Festival of the Central Highlands Ethnic Minorities,” with provinces in the Central Highlands taking turns hosting, making artisans more excited and young people more eager to learn and improve their skills. Select young, genuinely talented artisans to study and train at schools with fine arts majors to enhance creativity and innovation, and supplement the local creative force of the visual arts.

Traditional crafts and artisans are closely tied. Traditional crafts and artisans remain inseparably linked, as the survival and growth of these practices depend on the skills and creativity of those who sustain them. The production of handcrafted goods requires not only individual talent but also collective organization, since teams of artisans provide the continuity and innovation necessary for traditional crafts to endure and expand. Consequently, attention must be directed across all levels of governance and multiple sectors to enhance both the scale and capacity of artisan groups. Without the active engagement of artisans and creative practitioners, traditional crafts cannot be effectively preserved, revitalized, or transformed into sustainable resources for cultural continuity and economic development. Craft products are the quintessence of intelligence and feeling: touch and man's skillful hands. Nowadays, the number of artisans is declining. The list of forces statistics shows that the current woodcarving artisans in the villages of Gia Lai province are old and face many difficulties in life. The age of 55 and above accounts for more than 70%. The age of 40 and above accounts for about 20%. The group under 40 is small, accounting for 10% (Nong Bang Nguyen & Hoang Thi Thanh Huong, 2019a). Like other members of the community, they need more and more practical care and attention.

From 2011 to present, Gia Lai province has inventoried 456 intangible cultural heritage records; however, the whole province has only three heritages included in the list of national intangible cultural heritages by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 23 outstanding artisans in this field have been honored through 2 rounds of awarding titles, including Central Highlands Gong Cultural Space, Epic of the Ba Na people (Dak Doa, Dak Po, Kbang, Kong Chro districts), Rain Praying Ceremony of Yang Potao Apui (Plei Oi, Ayun Ha commune, Phu Thien district) (Hoang Ngoc, 2022). Meanwhile, traditional craft groups have not received the attention they deserve. Therefore, artisans in craft types such as brocade, wood carving, winemaking, and musical instrument making need to be evaluated from the grassroots level to propose that the State recognize and confer the title of “Excellent Artisan” so that artisans are both honored and receive support and encouragement subsidies (Nong Bang Nguyen and Vu Thi Huong Ly, 2022). After

that, Gia Lai province needs to urgently compile documents and recognize the intangible cultural heritage of leading craftspeople and artisans in the province.

Gia Lai province currently has schools such as the Intermediate School of Culture and Arts, Gia Lai College of Education, vocational schools, and ethnic boarding schools. These schools are both places to teach and to develop programs that teach traditional crafts to local ethnic minorities, as well as places to introduce the values of folk arts. Therefore, schools should prepare plans to submit to the Gia Lai Provincial People's Committee to supplement the teaching of traditional crafts in the specialized training program system, prioritizing students from ethnic minority groups in Gia Lai province.

It is necessary to create favorable conditions for the younger generation to access work with artisans through a supportive working environment and to discover and nurture the next generation of artisans. These include activities in festivals, organizing competitions, and opening statue-making classes. Only then will those who know the craft have the responsibility and enthusiasm to pass on the craft to the younger generation; in return, the younger generation will have the awareness, responsibility, and love to learn the craft of their ancestors to become future artisans, contributing to preserving the precious heritage of their nation.

It is necessary to preserve craft rights in community life. Restore and promote the grave-abandoning festival, build new houses, restore, renew, and repair degraded traditional communal houses, and encourage people to preserve the architecture of stilt houses and long houses that still exist in villages, so that artisans have an environment to continue to demonstrate their talents and make many contributions to the community.

Preserving and promoting the value of traditional crafts of the Jrai ethnic group, adapting them to the new living context while preserving their originality and integrating them into the market economy.

Traditional handicraft products now blend prototypes with innovations to meet the needs of modern consumers. Artisans miniaturize wooden statues and sell them as souvenirs or use them

for interior and garden decoration. Communities apply brocade weaving products in diverse ways, expanding their relevance beyond traditional contexts. Therefore, we must adopt a perspective that adapts to the current realities of traditional products. We should reject the notion that tradition cannot change.

The Gia Lai Provincial Museum and Dai Doan Ket Square constitute central exhibition spaces in Pleiku City, offering expansive areas and scenic landscapes that attract nearly 200,000 visitors annually. As the cultural nucleus of the province, these venues host major political and cultural events, thereby reinforcing their role as focal points for community engagement. Within this context, the design and display of wooden statue models representing the Jrai and Bahnar ethnic groups emerge as a necessary initiative. By thematically organizing statues around motifs such as daily life, family affection, and heroic characters, these exhibitions can simultaneously serve residents and tourists while honoring and promoting the cultural heritage of the Central Highlands. Such efforts not only preserve traditional artistic practices but also integrate them into contemporary cultural policy, positioning ethnic minority art as both a medium of identity expression and a resource for sustainable tourism development.

Recommendation 3: Convert traditional cultural values into sustainable development resources; develop overall socioeconomic development for participants in occupations, occupational groups, and occupational clubs; create livelihood diversity for ethnic minorities; and integrate handicrafts into local socioeconomic development programs and actions.

The solution to this recommendation would be:

Selecting the quintessence and identity of each traditional craft of the Jrai ethnic group, particularly ethnic minorities in Gia Lai province, to build an action framework and promote, introduce, and integrate it into the locality's overall socioeconomic development action programs.

The Gia Lai Provincial Ethnic Committee is the focal point for this issue. The Ethnic Committee needs to develop a particular action program for each year and stage, with evaluation and inspection of the following solutions:

Creating a tourism development policy associated with traditional crafts, for example, linking wood carving and brocade weaving with local tourism activities.

Strengthening the promotion, exchange, and development of tourism. Establish traditional tourist villages or leverage each town's strengths to develop the tourism industry.

Investing more in roads, renovating architecture, building public toilets, and opening on-site cultural tourism services. These places become cultural tourism destinations that specialize in the cultural heritage of local ethnic minorities.

Considering products from the traditional crafts of ethnic minorities to be able to buy, sell, exchange, decorate, and give as gifts.

Opening shops selling traditional cultural souvenirs of local ethnic minorities, with different sizes, suitable for carrying far away, using the transportation of tourists. Ensure input and output for products.

Promoting exchange and trading activities so that ethnic minority handicrafts become unique commodities that generate profits for artisans, helping skilled artisans make a living from their profession. Only then will artisans have the conditions to maintain and develop their profession, contributing all their talents and creativity to enhance the beauty and value of the folk culture treasure of Vietnamese ethnic groups.

Creating brochures, publications, and short films to introduce and promote Gia Lai handicrafts' products across mass media, websites, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter, specializing in culture and tourism, and targeting tourism TV channels in the province, region, country, and internationally.

Proactively calling for investment and supporting cooperation with businesses operating in cultural tourism to preserve and promote the value of ethnic minority handicrafts in the province.

Mobilizing and connecting with businesses interested in cultural tourism in the locality, domestic investors, and non-governmental organizations to proactively invest in supporting programs and projects to develop cultural tourism in Gia Lai province and to build and renovate

cultural works to serve people and improve their material and spiritual lives; Organizing cultural activities to introduce local cultural heritage during Tet holidays, and to promote cultural products.

Connecting with travel agencies so that companies can connect and organize tourists from other regions in the country and international tourists to the province to visit and buy and sell cultural and artistic products of local ethnic minorities.

Paying attention to investing in infrastructure and equipment for community cultural activities; preserving and promoting traditional festivals of ethnic groups; Building and promoting the unique cultural values of ethnic groups in Gia Lai province; Building cultural models for widespread replication; Innovating and improving the quality of political and ideological education and professional ethics for cadres, civil servants, and public employees. Timely reward good people, good deeds, and typical factors, and strictly handle violations.

Increasing operating expenses and cultural investment commensurate with annual economic growth; Focusing on grassroots cultural institutions; Linking investment with exploitation for promoting operational efficiency; Promoting some products, traditional art forms, and intangible culture that must be preserved and promoted; Encouraging the formation of training funds, fostering learning, developing talent, and promoting the culture and people of Gia Lai.

For Pleiku City, developing a long-term plan and strategy for village cultural tourism is a critical priority. The city government must first invest in the construction and restoration of original Jrai villages to safeguard both tangible and intangible cultural assets. Villages such as Op, Kep, Phung, and Ia Nueng, which already possess significant cultural and architectural value, including the distinctive stilt houses of the Jrai people, can serve as focal points for tourism development.

To preserve authenticity, authorities should avoid the current tendency to mix traditional stilt houses with flat-roofed or corrugated-iron dwellings, as this dilutes the cultural landscape. Although the physical area of such traditional villages need not be extensive, it must remain compact and cohesive to create a distinctive cultural space. Within this framework, each individual

and family in the community functions as a cultural guide, since only the Jrai people can fully interpret and transmit their heritage to visitors. This approach positions the Jrai community not merely as passive beneficiaries of tourism but as active agents in shaping cultural experiences, thereby ensuring that tourism development aligns with heritage preservation and community empowerment.

Pleiku City, Gia Lai Province, must form legally registered traditional craft groups and clubs. Products are made in accordance with specific standards and carry brands, copyrights, and geographical indications to support the “One Commune One Product” (OCOP) Program. From there, artisans display products at OCOP booths, supermarkets, and shopping centers, and they boldly connect with commercial and tourism enterprises to sell and promote their goods.

Local authorities continue to draft documents requesting that all levels recognize the “Excellent Artisan” title to encourage recognition of “Folk Artisan” for competent artisans and to secure long-term human resources for the weaving and wood carving professions. Ensuring adequate remuneration and increasing operating costs for Folk Artisan Associations at all levels is necessary. Socialize funding sources to increase remuneration paid to artisans passing on to the next generation; organize vocational training classes for children to develop the next generation for tourism, develop intangible culture, and build homestay services. There should be a mechanism to commend and reward dedicated artisans and promising students in the class. Local authorities should encourage families and schools to continue passing their love of the profession to the younger generation. In addition, consistently organizing competitions and performances creates opportunities for women to participate, helping maintain and develop traditional crafts and make them known to more people.

Strengthening propaganda and promotion to consume Jrai hand-woven products through exhibitions and fairs to find outlets for the products.

The tourism industry should focus on exploiting the diverse cultural beauty of the Jrai people. Local authorities need to raise further people's awareness of preserving cultural values and traditional crafts, and link them with tourism development in Pleiku City.



Picture 7: Tourists at the brocade-wearing club in Phung village

Pleiku City authorities should consider the cultural capital of local ethnic minorities in tourism development.

Enhancing the appeal of investment in culture and tourism involves creating favorable conditions for private enterprises to engage in cultural preservation and tourism development. This strategy includes restoring the cultural and historical significance of relic sites and actively connecting regional, domestic, and international tours to ethnic minority communities.

Investing in funds to restore festivals, repair communal houses, restore traditional villages and crafts to preserve culture and develop tourism, and providing funding for exploitation activities in the newly completed phase. In areas such as the Museum, the Provincial People's Committee Traditional House, and the Square, there should be models and exhibition houses showcasing

suitable crafts to help the public better understand the intangible cultural heritage of local ethnic minorities.

CONCLUSION

In the context of rapid market development, tourism expansion, and urbanization, Jrai handicrafts not only provide essential income and contribute to poverty reduction for local populations but also play a vital role in promoting tourism and safeguarding ethnic culture. Additionally, crafts help alleviate challenges such as labor surpluses, deforestation, and environmental degradation associated with migration and urbanization. Despite these benefits, Jrai handicrafts in Pleiku City currently confront persistent obstacles, including unstable market prices, constrained consumer demand, and a dwindling pool of younger artisans. The adverse impacts of market mechanisms on traditional crafts have become increasingly apparent, resulting in the erosion of cultural elements as younger generations embrace new aesthetic preferences. To effectively address these complexities, it is crucial to synthesize existing policy frameworks and implement targeted, actionable strategies that balance economic development with cultural preservation. Key priorities should include institutionalizing collaborative networks between local authorities and community members, expanding market access through diversified product pathways, and investing in youth-centered training programs to revitalize artisanal skills. Moreover, integrating traditional crafts as core components of tourism and local development planning will ensure their sustained relevance and viability. Ultimately, by grounding interventions in both government policy and proactive community engagement, Pleiku City can more effectively achieve the dual objectives of fostering economic growth and maintaining the cultural heritage of the Jrai people, offering a replicable model for sustainable rural development.

Research indicates that the Jrai people no longer wear traditional costumes in daily life, choosing instead to use them only during festivals and important events. When communities restored the weaving profession, they reintroduced traditional costumes into everyday use, helping sustain and reinforce cultural identity. This revival demonstrates how the restoration of artisanal practices can directly influence cultural continuity, ensuring that heritage remains visible and relevant in contemporary contexts. By linking weaving with both ceremonial and everyday

functions, the Jrai people actively preserve their cultural features while adapting them to modern social realities. However, in the context of tourism development in Pleiku City today, the Jrai people's weaving profession faces many challenges, including instability in market prices, limited outlets for product consumption, and a shortage of young artisans. The negative aspects of the market mechanism affecting the traditional weaving profession are inevitable, leading to the loss of cultural elements among younger generations with new aesthetic views and feelings. The harmony between economic benefits and the preservation of traditional culture is a significant challenge for the weaving profession of the Jrai people in Pleiku City, amid urban development, the market economy, and tourism today.

Culture is the spiritual foundation, both the goal and the driving force for the country's economic, cultural, and social development. Preserving and promoting the traditional craft values of the Jrai people in the urban context of Pleiku City, Gia Lai province, is of great significance for safeguarding the community's cultural values regarding the Cultural Space of the Gongs and for converting traditional cultural values into development resources.

Research results show that the number of brocade weaving artisans in Gia Lai province remains quite large and that they possess strong skills. Artisans know how to apply information technology and social networks to promote their products.

In the context of strong economic development, tourism, and urbanization, the Gia-rai people's handicraft weaving not only provides income, diversifies livelihoods, and contributes to poverty reduction among local people, but also promotes tourism and preserves ethnic culture.

The socio-cultural context of ethnic minorities in Gia Lai province is changing rapidly. Most notably, religion, tourism, new lifestyles, and livelihood pressures have had a significant impact on the handicrafts of ethnic minority communities.

In that context, the policies of the Party and the State of Vietnam show great concern, reflected through hundreds of policies supporting ethnic minorities. Ethnic minority policies can be said to cover all aspects of people's lives, including traditional handicrafts.

The results of the analysis of policies on the preservation and development of traditional handicrafts of ethnic minorities in Gia Lai province show that the policies' content clearly reflects traditional values, preserving identity, promoting development, adapting to socio-economic changes, and fostering cultural and community tourism.

However, when implementing policies in Gia Lai province, they are slow, not resolute, and lack monitoring mechanisms and accountability. For example, in the whole province of Gia Lai, only one brocade weaving club in Bien Ho commune operates effectively, bringing fame to the province and helping the livelihoods of many Gia-rai ethnic households.

In the context of rapid market development, tourism, and urbanization, the handicrafts of the Gia-rai ethnic group not only generate income and contribute to poverty reduction for local people but also promote tourism and preserve ethnic culture.

Crafts also help address problems of labor surplus, deforestation, and environmental destruction caused by migration and urbanization. In the context of economic and tourism development in Pleiku city today, Jrai crafts are facing many challenges, especially market price instability, limited sources of product consumption, and a shortage of young artisans. The negative aspects of the market mechanism affecting traditional crafts are inevitable, leading to the loss of cultural elements as new aesthetic views and feelings of the younger generation prevail. The harmony between economic benefits and the preservation of traditional culture is a big challenge for the crafts of the Gia-rai and Ba-na people in Gia Lai province. This issue requires not only the attention and investment support of local authorities but also the efforts of the people themselves. Culture is the spiritual foundation, both the goal and the driving force, for the country's economic, cultural, and social development. Preserving and promoting the value of traditional crafts of ethnic minority communities in Gia Lai province today is very important for safeguarding the community's cultural values, the Gong Cultural Space, and converting traditional cultural values into development resources.

Research shows that traditional cultural flows among ethnic minorities remain strong in contemporary life. Here, artisans are very conscious of preserving and understanding their people's cultural values, and they want these values promoted and recognized by society.

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