

A traditional wooden stilt house with a thatched roof, surrounded by lush greenery. The house is built on stilts and has a balcony. The text is overlaid on the image.

Customary Law and Old Saying in Relation to Ecosystem services of Thai People in Viet Nam

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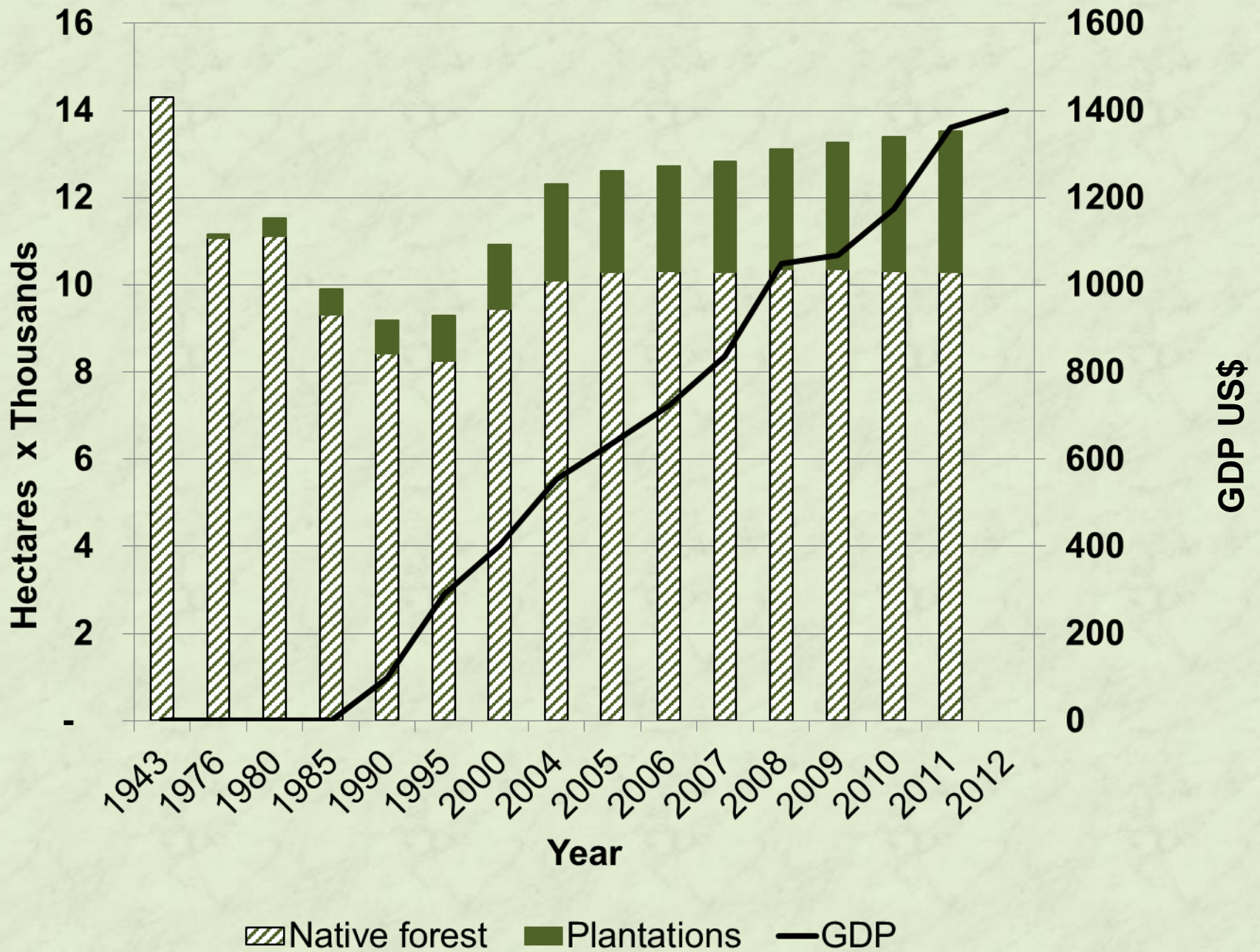
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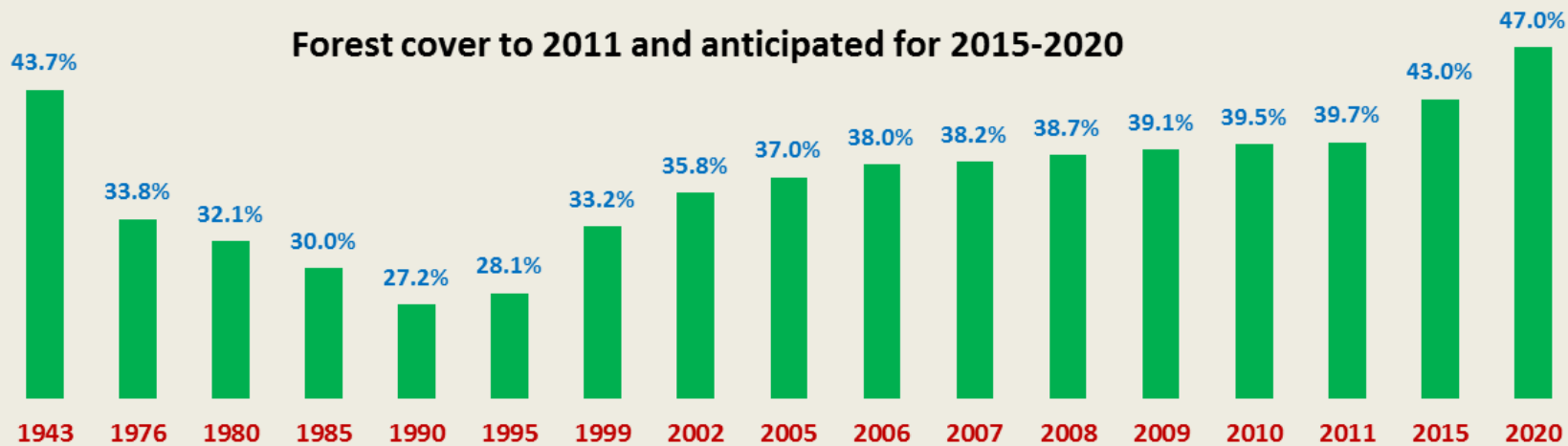
Introduction - Background

- Viet Nam locates in Southeast Asia
- Shares boundaries with China (1400 km), Laos (2067 km), and Cambodia (1080 km).
- Total land area: 331,688 km² + over 4,200 km of inland waters + over 4,000 islands.
- Population: 90 million
- People: 54 ethnic groups
- Language: Vietnamese
- Capital: Hanoi





Forest cover to 2011 and anticipated for 2015-2020



Ethnic groups of Vietnam



Ethnic groups of Vietnam

	Ethnic group	Total (People)	Urban (People)	Rural (People)	Rural (%)	Total (%)
	Entire country	85,846,997	25,436,896	60,410,101	70.37	100
1	Kinh	73,594,427	23,885,666	49,708,761	67.54	85.73
2	Tày	1,626,392	220,938	1,405,454	86.42	1.89
3	Thái	1,550,423	99,781	1,450,642	93.56	1.81
4	Mường	1,268,963	65,683	1,203,280	94.82	1.48
5	Khmer	1,260,640	197,276	1,063,364	84.35	1.47
6	Mông	1,068,189	25,682	1,042,507	97.60	1.24
7	Nùng	968,800	101,751	867,049	89.50	1.13
8	Hoa	823,071	573,050	250,021	30.38	0.96
9	Dao	751,067	23,588	727,479	96.86	0.87
10	Gia Rai	411,275	42,349	368,926	89.70	0.48
...					-	-
54	Ơ Đu	376	26	350	-	-

Source: UNFPA 2011

Ethnic groups of Vietnam

- Among 54 groups of VN, the Viet (Kinh) people account for 88% of the country's population and mainly inhabit the Red River delta, the central coastal delta, the Mekong delta and major cities.
- The other 53 ethnic minority groups accounting for over 8 million people, are scattered over mountain areas (covering two-thirds of the country's territory) spreading from the North to the South.
- Among ethnic minorities, the most populated are Tay, Thai, Muong, Hoa, Khmer, Nung... with a population of around 1 million each, while the least populated are Brau, Ro Mam, O Du with several hundred people each.



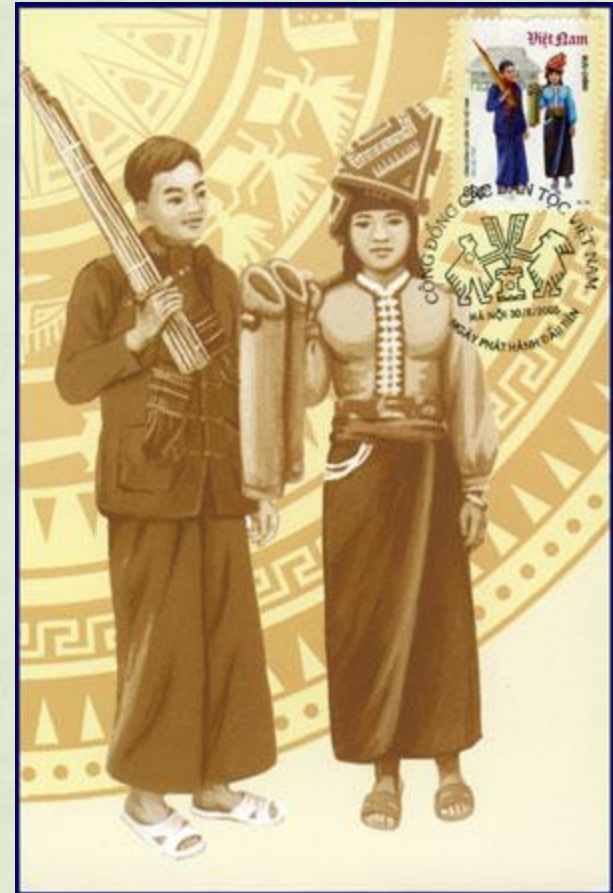
Customary law and old sayings of Viet Nam

- Around 25 million people live in and around forests, most of them are from 53 ethnic minorities.
- Their daily life depends on forests for food, timber, firewood, Non-timber forest products, water, culture...
- Customary law and old sayings have existed for ages, playing a significant tool to manage and control communities and ecosystems.



Thai Group

- Population: 1,550,423 people (1.81% of national population)
- Distribution: in all 63 provinces and cities, but most focus in northern provinces.
- Thai village normally locates near water source, and paddy rice is one of their main livelihood.
- The boundary of Thai village is determined by experienced patriarchs, using stream, river or mountain gorge.
- The boundary is not official, but it is respected local people.



Sacred forests of Thai people

- Worship forest (Đông xựa): A good forest near a village is used to workship annually deities and holy spirit.
- Sacred forest (Pã hạm): A good and old forest near a village owns secret legends. To Thai people, sacred forest is a house of forest ghost and spirit.
- Ghost forest (Pá heo): A forest near a village to burry dead people.

Those forests are well respected and protected by Thai People, through customary law.



Forbidden forests of Thai People

- Watershed: Watershed (forest) protection is compulsory and responsibility of every Thai people, due to the importance of watershed.
- The law determines clearly rights and responsibilities of villagers in using and protection of watershed and water sources, and punishment applied if the law is broken.
- Forest for harvesting products: This forest is managed and controlled by customary law.
- Owned trees and forests: Respect trees and forests that have been owned by people.



Customary law of Thai People

- Sacred forests are well respected and protected by Thai people. Damage and harvest of this forest are strictly forbidden.
- Harvest and damage of watershed are strictly forbidden.
- For bamboo forest for shoot production, cutting bamboo is strictly forbidden. The way to harvest shoots is to dig and get both top and stump of the shoot, not only the top of the shoot.
- Harvesting bamboo shoot will start from late May (lunar calendar) only, and is well controlled by the village to make sure that bamboo forest is not strongly impacted by harvest.

Customary law of Thai People

- Cultivation is not allowed in production forest and bamboo forest.
- Agricultural cultivation is only implemented in young or degraded and bamboo forests that determined by the village for agriculture cultivation. It is forbidden to damage good natural forest for cultivation.
- Burning for cultivation is well controlled by the village, to make sure fire will not impact forests.
- In production forest of the village, if one is allowed to harvest one tree for housing or other purposes, he/she has to plant 10 or more seedlings of the same species in gaps of that forest.
- It is forbidden to harvest or damage trees/forests of other people

Customary law of Thai People

- Who breaks the law will be fined by the village, leading by the eldest person:
 - ✓ Warning if breaking the law for the first time.
 - ✓ Fine (money);
 - ✓ Fine (rice; meets for villagers to eat as a protest).
 - ✓ Standing for half of a day
 - ✓ Admit mistakes/guilt in front of villagers
 - ✓ Broadcasting name of person, who breaks the law.
 - ✓ Educate young people to respect old people, love the country side and forest...



Customary law of Thai people

- Annually, the village organizes festivals to worship the holy spirits for happy year, fruitful crop and good health of people.
- Villages could worship in ghost forest for safe and happy life and crops.
- Community meetings are held within village, in which old people educate and transfer knowledge and awareness to young people



Old sayings of Thai people

- Thai People have also developed and maintained very diverse old sayings, of which ecosystem protection is well reflected.
- By using two sides of sentences to compare a right event/issue, Thai People like to confirm the experiences or truths that have been widely confirmed.
- Those sentences of the Thai language are normally simple and easy to remember, so that old sayings have been greatly restored and disseminated from one generation to another of Thai People



Old sayings of Thai people

TT	Châm ngôn (Người Thái)	Thai old sayings
1	Sống rừng nuôi, chết rừng chôn	Live: forest feeds, dead: forest buries
2	Giữ rừng cho muôn đời phát triển; cho muôn mỏ nước tuần trào	Protection of forest for development of future regenerations; and for great water source generation;
	Ai không nhớ điều này thì không thể là người	Without remembering this issue, one could not become a person
	Đất đen thì trồng lúa	Black soil grows rice
3	Đất đỏ thì trồng dưa (sau khi đốt có nhiều nhiệt)	Red soil grows water-melon (soil after burning is better for water-melon)
	Đất cửa suối không dựng nhà	Do not build house in stream mouth
4	Đất quá dốc không được ở	Do not settle on steep land
	Làm nương phải ủ mùn	Terraced-field cultivation must make humus
5	Làm ruộng phải ủ đất ngấu	Paddy rice cultivation must make soil ripe
	Đất tốt đảo lên mới cho năng suất	Good soil turn up side down gives good yield

Old sayings of Thai people

TT	Châm ngôn (Người Thái)	Thai old sayings
6	Đất tốt đảo lên mới cho năng suất	Good soil: turn up side down gives good yield
	Đất xấu đảo xới nhiều lần mới bền	Bad soil: turn up side down many time to use it stable
7	Muốn ăn chuối phải trồng	Want to eat banana, must grow banana
	Muốn có con phải lấy chồng	Want to have children, must get married
8	Muốn khó làm nương rừng sặt	Want to be hard, cultivate terraced-field in sat forest (one negative bamboo)
	Muốn nhà om sòm thì lấy vợ lẽ	Want to make noise in house, get married another wife.
9	Muốn ăn đừng ngồi	Want eating, do not seat
	Muốn giàu đừng ngủ	Want to be rich, do not sleep
10	Ngăn nước cần đất sét	Prevent water, need glay
	Dựng mường cần người già	Build village, need old people

Old sayings of Thai people

TT	Châm ngôn (Người Thái)	Thai old sayings
11	<p>Đánh cá phải chung bè Thả lưới chung nơi Ăn chuối phải chung nải Ăn hoa phải chung cọng Ăn lạp phải chung thớt Bò, trâu phải chung bãi cỏ Voi ngựa phải chung bịch thóc</p>	<p>Fishing, must share raft Drop fishing net, must share place Eating banana, must share bunch Eating flower, must share blade Eating lạp (traditional Thai food), must share chopping – board Buffaloes, cows must share weed area Elephants, horses must share rice tank</p>
12	<p>Miếng cơm ở trong đất Miếng ăn ở trong rừng Một hạt cơm chín hạt mồ hôi</p>	<p>Cooked rice piece is in the land Food is in the forest A cooked rice seed, 9 seeds of sweat</p>
13	<p>Quả đa chín thì gieo mạ Quả nhội chín thì cấy ruộng Mưa rơi gieo mạ Trời sấm làm ruộng sớm</p>	<p>When Da fruit is ripe, scatter rice seeds When Nhoi fruit is ripe, grow paddy rice Raining, scatter rice seeds Thundering, soon grow paddy rice</p>

Old sayings of Thai people

TT	Châm ngôn (Người Thái)	Thai old sayings
14	Nương đầy mắt không bằng ruộng một mảnh	Milpa (field in the mountain) is full of eye, but is not equal a piece of paddy field.
15	Trời nắng đừng đi trên cây nương cũ Trời mưa đừng đi trên cây nương mới	Do not go on trees in old milpa when it is sunny Do not go on trees on new milpa when it is rainy
16	Trâu đực non thích húc Người ấm no thích nói nhiều	Young buffalo likes to butt Propertied people like to be talkative
17	Làm cái nào phải chăm cái ấy	Do which work must care about that work
18	Khi nước lên cá ăn sâu bọ Khi nước xuống sâu bọ ăn cá	When the water rises, fish eats insects When the water decreases, insects eat fish.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Customary law and old sayings are very diverse and important in regard to effective protection and management of ecosystem and daily life of rural people.
- Customary laws and old sayings of Thai People have been neglected for ages.
- Further study and collection of customary law and old sayings are needed to strengthen and extend the to contribute to the ecosystem services and daily life of local communities.





A photograph of a lush, green landscape featuring terraced rice fields. The terraces are arranged in a series of steps down a hillside, with the rice plants in various stages of growth, showing shades of green and yellow. In the background, there are more terraces and a small cluster of buildings on a hillside. The overall scene is vibrant and scenic.

Thank you for your attention!