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Manifestations of Indigenous Culture in the Traditional Residential Architecture of the Tay Ethnic Group in the Northeastern of Vietnam

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Abstract

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The traditional housing architecture of the Tay ethnic group in Northeast Vietnam is an important heritage, reflecting the diversity of indigenous architectural and cultural values. However, the development of the tourism economy, the gradual indifference in the context of modern society, and the increase in cultural exchange have negatively impacted and led to the disappearance of this type of heritage. Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify the indigenous cultural expressions embedded within the architectural space of traditional Tay houses.

The research methods employed include field surveys, historical and documentary analysis, synthesis and statistical methods, analytical and evaluative approaches, comparative techniques, and expert consultation. The new contributions and uniqueness of this research lie in its identification of the tangible and intangible cultural expressions contained within the architectural space of traditional Tay ethnic houses in the Northeast region.

Keywords: Manifestations; indigenous culture; traditional residential architecture; Tay ethnic group; Northeastern Vietnam.

1. Introduction

The Tay ethnic group has 1,351,018 people (General Statistics Office, 2020), living mainly in the Northeast region, the mountainous areas of Vietnam, and has the second-largest population after the Kinh ethnic group. The traditional housing architecture of the Tay people currently preserves many indigenous cultural values through the process of creation in daily cultural life and production, maintained and passed down for thousands of years. Tay villages are built on low hillsides, near valleys, and along streams to obtain water for eating, drinking, daily activities, and to facilitate agricultural production. Each village consists of about 10–50 households living in a clustered manner. The houses in the village all face toward the valley in the southern direction to catch cool winds in the summer; if a house is near a stream, it faces downstream with the flow of water; the back faces the mountains to the north to avoid cold winds in the winter (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Tay ethnic village (Source: Mai Khanh).

The traditional housing of the Tay ethnic group has three types: stilt houses, semi-stilt-semi-ground houses, and ground houses, of which the stilt house is the oldest traditional form. The layout of a stilt house usually has three to five compartments with two side wings, divided into two sections: on the left, where the guest fireplace is placed, is the living space for men, and this section has the main staircase for welcoming guests; on the right is the living space for women,

where cooking and sleeping take place, and this section has a secondary staircase for women's use. The central compartment is arranged with the guest fireplace and the ancestral altar, serving as the place where family members gather to talk and eat. The stilt house space is vertically divided into three levels: the area beneath the floor is used for raising pigs, chickens, ducks, and storing agricultural tools; the middle level is the main living space for eating, resting, and daily activities; and the attic space is used as a storage loft for food. The stilt house has two roofs and two side wings, with roofing made of thatch or yin-yang tiles; the floor and walls are assembled from wooden planks or flattened bamboo and reeds. The staircase in a stilt house must have an odd number of steps, typically nine, symbolizing women; at the foot of the guest staircase, a water trough is placed for guests to wash their feet before entering. The semi-stilt–semi-ground house is a variation of the traditional stilt house, with the layout divided into two parts: the front half is leveled ground used as a guest sleeping area and a porch or drying yard; the rear half, leaning against a hillside, is the stilt section containing the guest fireplace, cooking area, and the owner's sleeping quarters. The ground house is built with rammed earth walls 40-50 cm thick, or with stone walls, or wooden planks and bamboo panels plastered with mud; it has two sloping roofs covered with thatch or yin-yang tiles (Figure 2).

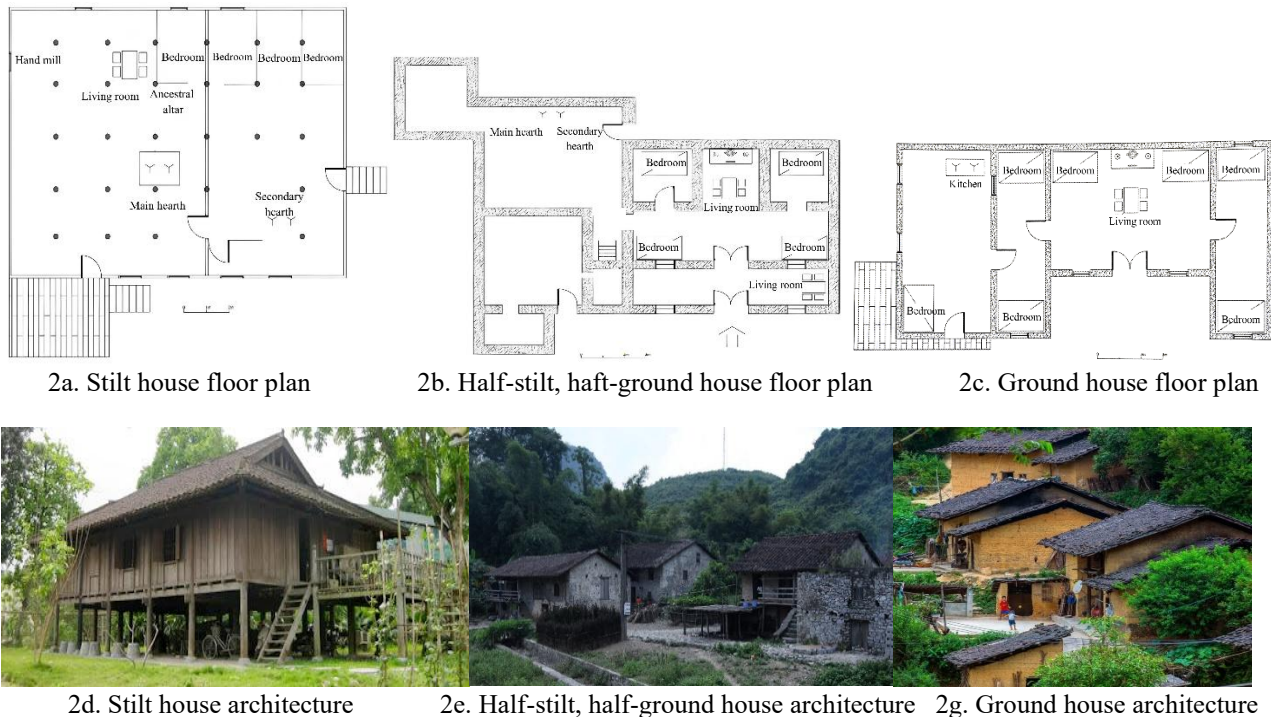


Figure 2. Space and architectural forms of traditional Tay ethnic houses in the Northeast region of Vietnam.

Nowadays, in the context of urbanization, rural modernization, and cultural exchange, the traditional housing architecture of the Tay ethnic group has been negatively affected. Many traditional houses have been demolished to build modern single-story houses, with walls made of fired brick or reinforced concrete, and roofs covered with metal sheets or fibro-cement panels—materials that are unfamiliar and less environmentally friendly to the local setting. Thus, if not properly preserved, in the near future the traditional architectural and cultural heritage values of the Tay people are at risk of disappearing.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify the manifestations of indigenous culture in the traditional housing architecture of the Tay ethnic group, thereby contributing to the preservation of ethnic cultural identity. Accordingly, the novelty and uniqueness of the research lie in identifying both tangible and intangible cultural expressions within the architectural space of Tay housing, thereby supporting the sustainable development of Tay housing in the Northeast region.

2. Literature Review

Author Ettehad, S., & et al. (2014), in the study “The Role of Culture in Promoting Architectural Identity”, affirmed that architecture is not merely material but also a mirror reflecting social values, ideologies, and history; culture creates behavioral norms, thereby influencing functional organization and architectural space, as well as affecting architectural symbolism and form (Ettehad et al., 2014). Author Farshchi, H. & et al. (2016), in the study “Manifestation of Culture in Traditional Architecture of Iranian House”, focused on clarifying cultural factors “expressed” in architecture through the relationship between internal functions and the external environment connected to nature (Hamidreza Farshchi et al., 2016). Author Owoicho, B. C., & et al. (2024), in the study “Cultural influence on architectural evolution in Nigeria: A case study of Igala indigenous homestead”, pointed out that culture is the primary factor determining housing types and structures; the house is a material representation of the community's socio-cultural heritage, through which spatial organization reflects culture (Aziz Amen & Ahmad NIA, 2021; Owoicho et al., 2024). The group of authors Nie, Zh., Li, N., & et al. (2022) proposed the theory of “Spatial Genome”. This is a new perspective to decode indigenous culture into mathematical parameters to measure five types of Genome: natural environment, village boundaries, public space, transportation, and housing (Nie et al., 2022). Referring to previous studies presented at the ICCAU conference, authors Naik, P., & Kawathekar, V. (2023), in the study “Place Identity translating into Culture: the town of Rajapur in the cultural region of Konkan”, analyzed and highlighted place identity formed from belief culture, architectural space, and natural landscape; especially the central role of deities and festivals in spiritual life (Naik & Kawathekar, 2023). Authors Michael

T. Tabao & Junar P. Tablan (2025), in the article “Ethno-sustainability of an Indigenous Architecture in the Northern Philippines Using Grounded Theory”, studied ethno-sustainability in the traditional architecture of the Itawit community in Cagayan province, Northern Philippines. Through grounded theory methodology and ethnographic research, the authors systematized the unique characteristics of indigenous housing, from spatial structure to systems of traditional ecological knowledge transmitted orally across generations. The study emphasizes that Itawit architecture is not only physical structures using local materials such as bamboo, wood, and thatch, but also a complex ecosystem interwoven with spiritual rituals, environmental sensitivity, and social conventions. The research also proposes a reference framework for preserving cultural heritage and integrating indigenous values into modern urban planning, helping to enhance resilience and sustainable development for communities under the pressure of modernization (Tabao & Tablan, 2025). Author Almira Khafizova (2018), in the article “Vernacular Architectural Preservation of Material and Spiritual Interconnected Cultural Heritage”, studied vernacular architecture as vivid evidence of the intersection between tangible and spiritual heritage values. The author analyzed spatial organization in traditional housing types through linguistic and genetic approaches, affirming that architecture is not only shelter but also a cultural link across continents, helping preserve ethnic identity in the face of urbanization pressures (Khafizova, 2018).

Author Tran Bao, Q., & et al. (2024), in the study “Impacts of Culture on Traditional Housing Architecture of Ethnic Minorities in the Northern Mountains of Vietnam”, propose that culture and architecture have an organic, inseparable relationship, identified through five key cultural factors influencing living space: lifestyle culture, clothing, labor and production, customs and practices, and religious beliefs (Bao et al., 2024). Author Thi, N. D. (2023), in the study “The Influence of Culture on Architecture”, analyzed theories on the adaptation of architecture to the living environment and indigenous culture, focusing on cultural influences such as housing and daily life, labor and production, lifestyle and customs, and religious and belief systems (Thi, N. D., 2023; Aziz Amen & Nia, 2018). Authors Thi, N. D., & Thang, N. T. (2022), in the book “Culture and Architecture”, argue that architecture is an expression of national culture, closely tied to spiritual and social life, while also identifying the impacts of both material and spiritual culture on architecture. The book “Architectural Culture” by author Kinh, D. H. (2012) emphasizes heritage preservation, asserting that architecture represents a deep layer of culture, memory, and place. The book “Socio-Cultural Aspects of Architecture” by author Thiem Nguyen Duc (2008) approaches architecture from a socio-cultural perspective, analyzing it in relation to community, social behavior, and the organization of living space, while also clarifying influencing factors such as culture, economy, and environment.

An overview of the above studies shows that most authors agree that culture and architecture have an organic relationship, interacting with and influencing each other, in which architecture is a direct expression of cultural and social life, behavior, and ways of interacting with nature. However, these studies mainly approach the issue at a general scale and tend to generalize across ethnic minority groups, without delving into the unique identity of each ethnicity. In particular, there is still a lack of specific research on Tay ethnic housing architecture that clearly clarifies the manifestation of indigenous cultural elements in architectural space. Therefore, studying and identifying the expression of indigenous culture in the architectural space of traditional houses in the Northeast region is necessary to fill this research gap, while also contributing to the preservation of the cultural identity of the Tay people.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Developing a theoretical framework for the study

The research approaches the study from the perspective of linking objectives, architecture, society and culture, daily activities, and the landscape environment; specifically, from the perspective of the textual representation of addresses in the traditional architectural space of the Tay ethnic group in the Northeast region. The research subject is indigenous cultural values, and the research question is: what indigenous cultural values are expressed in the traditional architectural space of the Tay ethnic group? Accordingly, the research hypothesis is formulated the distinctive characteristics of indigenous culture as manifested in Tay vernacular housing architecture include: (i) a strong integration with nature, whereby dwellings are constructed in adaptation to climatic conditions, topography, natural environments, and productive activities; (ii) the preservation of indigenous knowledge, reflected in accumulated construction experience developed over thousands of years; (iii) the intergenerational transmission of architectural knowledge through oral traditions and everyday labor practices; and (iv) a pronounced sense of communality, as Tay houses are typically built through collective efforts within the village community.

To build sufficient scientific arguments to prove the published results, the article focuses on analyzing two theoretical foundations: Indigenous culture theory and Indigenous knowledge theory. Accordingly, the theoretical framework on indigenous culture, according to the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), emphasizes that intangible cultural heritage consists of practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as part of their cultural heritage, which are continuously recreated in response to their environment and history (UNESCO, 2003). In a similar vein, Jenna McQueen, a coordinator of UNESCO's Heritage Programme, characterizes indigenous culture as "a way of life".

Within the scope of this study, the indigenous culture of the Tay ethnic group is understood as the totality of both tangible and intangible cultural values, encompassing traditional culture, beliefs, lifestyles, customs, practices, conventions, experiential knowledge, and social norms. These values have been created, preserved, and transmitted across generations by Tay communities who have long resided in the Northeast region of Vietnam. This cultural system has been formed through processes of production, subsistence, and continuous adaptation to both social conditions and the natural environment. The concept of indigenous knowledge, as defined by UNESCO within the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) Programme, refers to the understandings, skills, practical competencies, as well as philosophies and worldviews developed by societies with long-standing interactions with their natural environments. Accordingly, indigenous knowledge of the Tay in housing construction comprises long-established experiential practices in adapting

to natural living environments and utilizing natural resources for dwelling creation. It also encompasses the transmission of accumulated knowledge related to material selection and construction techniques across generations. Traditional Tay housing architecture constitutes a form of tangible cultural heritage, shaped over millennia through the intergenerational transmission of construction knowledge. It has evolved in close response to climatic and environmental conditions, while simultaneously expressing cultural identity, lifestyles, and customary practices of the ethnic group. Beyond serving as spaces for habitation, daily activities, education, and household economic production, traditional houses also function as repositories of memory, a sense of place, and spiritual beliefs within Tay communities. This study focuses on the architectural space of Tay dwellings, including settlement layout organization, functional spatial configuration, architectural form, and construction materials. Through this lens, it seeks to identify the manifestations of indigenous cultural values based on an approach grounded in the traditional culture of the Tay people in the Northeast region. The research scope emphasizes functional spaces, formal and structural characteristics, materials, and construction methods of traditional housing (Figure 3).

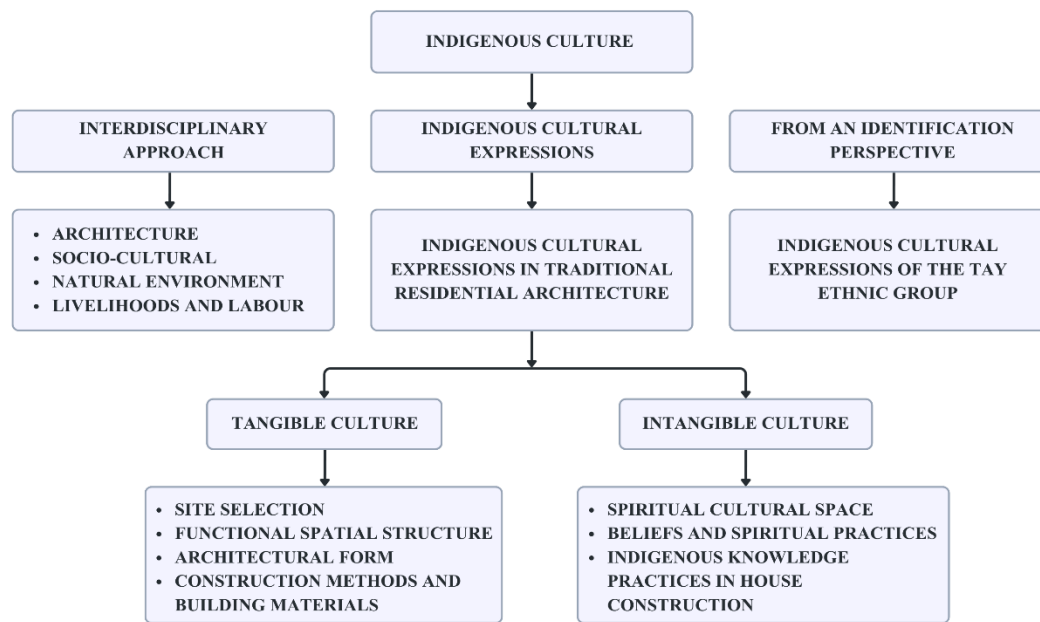


Figure 3. Theoretical framework of the research.

3.2. Research Methodology

This article employed research methods such as: document and data synthesis; survey; analysis and evaluation; comparison and inductive reasoning. Specifically, the document and data synthesis method utilized primary and secondary sources to provide a comprehensive overview, identify research gaps, and establish a theoretical basis for the proposed results. The survey method involved a general field survey in the Northeast region, focusing on Na O village, Bac Giang province, through drawing, photographing, studying spatial structure, construction methods and materials, and creating questionnaires to directly interview 61 homeowners in Na O village to understand local culture, customs, habits, and practical experiences in traditional house construction of the Tay ethnic group. The analytical and evaluative methods used in analyzing and evaluating practical data on traditional residential architecture, along with theoretical and practical foundations, help to propose reliable results. The comparative method is used to compare and select, helping to identify local cultural values in residential architecture. The inductive method is used to develop arguments from common spaces to private spaces, from detailed parts to the overall structure of the house, thereby finding general patterns objectively. This helps to delve deeper into the study of the relationship and explore the essence of local culture and residential architecture.

4. Results

4.1. Survey and Investigation Results

Na O village, Bac Giang province, comprises 61 households with a total population of 287, of which 92% belong to the Tay ethnic group. Survey findings indicate that 18 traditional stilt houses and earthen houses have undergone minor renovations (accounting for 29.5%), while 42 houses have been either significantly renovated or newly constructed (68.8%). Results from direct interviews with 61 household heads reveal that 39 respondents are male (63.93%), and 42 respondents are elderly individuals aged between 60 and 95 (68.85%). When asked about the experience of selecting building sites, 100% of respondents stated that decisions are based on accumulated experience and long-established village conventions. Regarding spatial organization, construction methods, and material selection, all respondents affirmed that traditional houses were historically built and modified through orally transmitted knowledge and practical experience under the guidance of village elders. The organization of the hearth and the ancestral altar is similarly inherited from previous generations and continues to be preserved and practiced by subsequent ones. However, a small proportion of younger individuals under the age of 35 expressed a preference for constructing modern houses using contemporary materials. This tendency raises concerns about a generational shift and the potential erosion of traditional cultural values and identity among the Tay community.

4.2. Manifestations of Tangible Culture

Tangible cultural values in Tay vernacular housing architecture are primarily identified through site planning, functional spatial organization, architectural form, and construction materials.

- *Site planning and layout organization:* This is reflected in the placement of the dwelling in accordance with customary conventions. Houses are typically located on elevated and level ground within the residential compound. The main façade faces south to capture cool breezes during the summer, overlooking open landscapes such as fields or valleys that provide expansive, well-lit views. The rear of the house is oriented toward hills or mountains to shield against cold winter winds. Traditionally, Tay houses were constructed as stilt houses. However, due to cultural exchanges and the increasing scarcity of timber resources, there has been a gradual transition to semi-stilt (half-stilt, half-ground) houses and eventually to ground-based houses. These practices reflect indigenous knowledge systems in site selection and orientation, ensuring adaptation to local climatic conditions - particularly the harsh northeast monsoon winds. Stilt houses, in particular, provide ventilation during summer, warmth in winter, protection from flooding, avoidance of ground moisture, and defense against wild animals.

- *Functional spatial organization:* The internal layout of the house is distinctly organized into clearly defined zones along left-right and front-rear zones. The left side is designated for male activities, while the right side is reserved for female activities. Within the male domain, the central bay includes a front area for the guest hearth, used for receiving visitors and dining, and a rear area for the ancestral altar, considered the most sacred space in the house. In contrast, the female domain includes the cooking hearth at the front and sleeping areas at the rear. The guest hearth (the principal hearth) is also a sacred element dedicated to the fire deity and is regarded as the symbolic center of familial cohesion, warmth, and well-being. This spatial arrangement reflects deeply rooted cultural beliefs and spiritual values within Tay society.

- *Architectural form:* The Tay ethnic group believes that odd numbers, considered "positive numbers," symbolize growth, fertility, and prosperity (yang energy), bringing good fortune, abundance, and happiness. Therefore, houses are often built with an odd number of bays, typically 3 or 5 bays (stilt houses often have two additional wings at the gable ends). Furthermore, if the number of bays is odd, the central bay is used for the ancestral altar, a sacred space. Notably, the staircase inside the house is usually oriented towards the South or East, bringing good feng shui, good luck, and warding off evil spirits. The staircase has an odd number of steps (9 steps) to ascend to the house, based on the belief that it corresponds to the 9 spirits of the female head of the household (Figure 4). This is a long-standing traditional cultural belief in feng shui, spirituality, and the Tay people's faith.



4a. Traditional three-bay house design

4b. Kitchen

4c. Odd-numbered staircase with 9 steps

Figure 4. Architectural form, kitchen, and staircase of a stilt house in Na O village, Bac Giang.

- *Regarding building materials for houses:* This is evident in the Tay people's experience in exploiting and using materials such as wood, bamboo, reeds, thatch grass, earth, and stone from around the village to build houses. Stilt houses are built with wood and bamboo harvested from the forest; half-stilt, half-ground houses use wood, bamboo, and reeds combined with earth and stone; and earthen houses use earth, stone, bamboo, and reeds to build the house. Wood is used for columns, rafters, beams, wall cladding, and flooring; bamboo and reeds are used for walls and floors; earth is used for rammed earth; stone is used for foundations and walls; and thatch grass or roof tiles, pressed and fired from hillside soil, are used for roofing. Notably, the traditional building materials of the Tay people are often harvested locally, from forests, hills, mountains, and land around the village. Thus, their traditional experience is to exploit and use building materials from nature and in an environmentally friendly way (Table 1).

Table 1: Manifestations of Tangible Cultural Values in Traditional Tay Housing Architecture.

Traditional Housing Architecture	Manifestations	Indigenous Cultural Values
Site Planning & Layout	- The house is oriented toward the south, overlooking fields or valleys with open, expansive, and well-lit views - The rear of the house faces hills or mountains - Construction of traditional stilt houses and semi-stilt (half-stilt, half-ground) houses	- Adherence to customary conventions of the Tay community regarding house orientation - Feng shui-related cultural practices reflecting indigenous knowledge in site selection and orientation to adapt to harsh climatic conditions - Traditional experience in stilt-house construction to avoid flooding, ground humidity, and wild animals
Functional spatial structure	- Clear division of the house plan into left-right and front-rear zones; the left side (from the main entrance) is designated for men, and the right side for women - The central bay accommodates the ancestral altar and the guest hearth for reception and dining	- A traditional cultural expression reflecting the beliefs and spiritual values of the Tay ethnic group
Architectural form	- Houses are typically constructed with an odd number of bays (three or five bays; stilt houses often include additional lean-tos at the gable ends) - Staircases are commonly oriented toward the south or east - Staircases have an odd number of steps (typically nine), aligned with the belief that it corresponds to the 9 spirits of the female head of the household	- A long-standing cultural conception associated with feng shui, spirituality, and ancestral worship within Tay culture
Building materials	- Transmission of knowledge on the use of locally sourced materials such as timber, bamboo, thatch, earth, and stone - Stilt houses utilize timber and bamboo from forests; semi-stilt houses combine timber, bamboo, earth, and stone; ground-based houses primarily use earth, stone, bamboo, and reed materials - Timber is used for columns, beams, trusses, wall panels, and flooring; bamboo and reed for walls and floors; earth for rammed walls; stone for foundations and walls; thatch or tile for roofing	- Traditional building materials are sourced locally from forests, hills, and surrounding land - Indigenous practices emphasize the use of natural, locally available, and environmentally sustainable materials

4.3. Manifestations of Intangible Culture

Intangible cultural values are identified through traditional spatial practices, belief systems, and customary conventions in the transmission and application of indigenous knowledge in Tay housing construction.

- **Spiritual cultural space within the dwelling:** The spatial division between male and female domains reflects established conventions that simultaneously affirm the patrilineal cultural structure of the Tay community. The male-designated space encompasses the ancestral altar and the reception area for guests, symbolizing the authority of the male household head and his responsibility in conducting ancestral worship. In contrast, the female-designated space is associated with cooking, washing, and domestic labour, and is typically accessed via a separate staircase. Women traditionally avoid passing through the area where the ancestral altar is located. This spatial organization represents a cultural practice that reinforces patrilineal values while diminishing matrilineal elements, a pattern observed across many ethnic minority groups in Vietnam.

- **Belief-related cultural space within the dwelling:** The worship of the fire deity is symbolically embedded within the hearth space, representing the perpetual presence of fire within the home. This cultural practice is also shaped by environmental conditions, as the Northeast region experiences prolonged periods of cold, wet winters, necessitating the use of fire for warmth and illumination. The fire worship tradition contributes to a sense of spiritual security while also fostering familial cohesion, warmth, and well-being. Additionally, the veneration of parents, grandparents, and ancestors constitutes a long-standing cultural tradition among Vietnamese ethnic groups in general and the Tay in particular. This practice signifies a profound intergenerational connection, serving as a moral framework through which descendants are encouraged to emulate ancestral virtues, uphold ethical conduct, and contribute positively to both family and community.

- **Belief systems embedded in housing construction:** The use of odd numbers in the spatial configuration of the house (3 or 5 rooms) and in the number of staircase steps (commonly nine) symbolizes the “nine spirits” associated with the female members of the household. This reflects a cultural expression of respect for women, particularly the maternal figure, within the family structure. This symbolic system stands in contrast to the male-centred spatial organization of functional areas within the house, thereby illustrating a distinctive and nuanced expression of gender balance. It is considered one of the most representative cultural characteristics of gender relations within the Tay community.

- **Experiential practices in housing construction:** Indigenous cultural values are most prominently manifested in the communal transmission of practical knowledge related to house construction. When a household undertakes the building of a new dwelling, the village head assumes responsibility for organizing and assigning tasks to community members, who collectively contribute their labour. Elders provide guidance to younger generations in tasks such as cutting bamboo and timber, shaping structural components (columns, beams, and trusses), preparing earth for rammed walls, and carving stone for foundations and walls. Roofing materials, such as thatch, are gathered and prepared for installation, while women contribute rice and take responsibility for cooking and domestic support. The house-building process is regarded as a communal event akin to a village festival, during which all members are expected to participate until the construction is completed. Through this mode of experiential transmission, all male members of the Tay community acquire knowledge of traditional construction methods, thereby ensuring the continuity and preservation of indigenous architectural practices (Table 2).

Table 2: Manifestations of Intangible Cultural Values in Traditional Tay Housing Architecture.

Traditional Housing Architecture	Manifestations	Indigenous Cultural Values
Spiritual cultural space	- Spatial division between male and female domains within the house - Clear organization of spaces for worship, guest reception, communal activities, dining, and sleeping	- Affirmation of the patrilineal cultural structure of the Tay - Expression of the authority of the male household head and his responsibility for ancestral worship
Belief-related cultural space	- Worship of the fire deity symbolized within the hearth space - Veneration of parents, grandparents, and ancestors	- Fire worship fosters a sense of peace, familial cohesion, warmth, and well-being - Ancestor worship symbolizes the enduring connection between ancestors and descendants, serving as a moral framework that educates younger generations to uphold virtues and follow ancestral teachings
Belief systems in housing construction	- Use of odd numbers in the number of bays (typically three or five) - Use of odd numbers in staircase steps (commonly nine)	- Cultural expression of respect for the mother within the family - A distinctive cultural feature reflecting gender balance, particularly emphasizing the symbolic role of women in the household
Experiential practices in housing construction	- Elders guide younger generations in tasks such as harvesting timber and bamboo, shaping structural components (columns, beams, trusses) - Collective participation of all community members in house construction	- Cultural transmission of experiential construction knowledge within the Tay community - Strong communal values of mutual assistance and collective labour

5. Discussion

The findings of this study contribute to the systematic articulation of indigenous cultural expressions in the vernacular housing architecture of the Tay ethnic group. In comparison with previous related studies, the results have effectively narrowed existing research gaps. The outcomes provide a valuable reference for academic training and scientific research in the fields of cultural studies and vernacular architecture, particularly concerning Tay housing. Furthermore, they offer a foundation for promoting sustainable development strategies grounded in the preservation and enhancement of indigenous cultural values in contemporary housing practices.

However, the study is subject to certain limitations. Notably, it lacks the application of quantitative research methods, as it primarily relies on observational approaches combined with experiential and orally transmitted indigenous knowledge preserved within the Tay community to construct its theoretical framework. In addition, due to constraints in time and funding, the research has not been able to conduct extensive surveys across a broader range of Tay villages throughout the Northeast region.

To develop a more comprehensive theoretical system regarding indigenous cultural expressions in traditional Tay housing architecture, future research is recommended to undertake large-scale sociological surveys across Tay communities in five provinces within the Northeast region. Such an approach would enable the quantification of data, thereby enhancing the reliability and scientific robustness of the research findings and their contributions.

6. Conclusions

This study systematically categorizes the cultural heritage of traditional Tay housing in Northeast Vietnam into tangible and intangible domains. Tangible values are manifested through four dimensions: (i) site selection and settlement layout; (ii) functional spatial organization; (iii) architectural morphology; and (iv) the application of vernacular materials. Concurrently, intangible values encompass: (i) spiritual spaces; (ii) belief-related practices; (iii) construction rituals; and (iv) the intergenerational transmission of indigenous building knowledge.

These findings contribute new insights into the tangible and intangible cultural values within the architectural space of Tay ethnic housing in Northeast Vietnam, creating an important framework for policymakers, heritage conservationists, and tourism stakeholders to strategically coordinate conservation efforts. Furthermore, they highlight the potential of traditional Tay architecture as a catalyst for sustainable socio-economic development in the region. To achieve this, the study recommends integrating cultural conservation with livelihood initiatives, particularly community-based tourism and heritage tourism. The research results will contribute to promoting sustainable conservation, ensuring that younger generations cherish and maintain the cultural heritage of the Tay ethnic group.

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Funding, Conflicts of Interest

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors. This study was conducted entirely through the authors' own investment of time and financial resources, including field surveys, interviews, and direct engagement with local residents, in order to address the stated research questions.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest with respect to any individuals or organizations related to this study.

Data Availability Statement

All data generated or analyzed in this study are included in the published paper and its supplemental files. Anonymized interview transcripts are available from the contact author upon reasonable request. Furthermore, the authors express their sincere gratitude to all residents and participants who took part in the sociological surveys and generously shared their time, experience, and valuable perspectives, which contributed to the successful completion of this study.

Institutional Review Board Statement

This study uses publicly available datasets and therefore ensures ethical standards.

CRedit Author Statement

Argumentation and theoretical systematization: T.N.D.; Methodology: T.N.D.; Original manuscript writing: T.N.N.; Writing, reviewing, and editing: T.N.D.; Visualization: T.N.N.; Supervision: T.N.D. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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