

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
**THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY**

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**HALF CENTURY OF PROSE DEVELOPMENT  
OF MOUNTAINOUS ETHNIC MINORITIES  
IN NORTHERN VIETNAM (FROM 1960 UNTIL NOW)**

**Speciality: Vietnamese Literature**

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**SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION  
IN VIETNAMESE CULTURE AND LANGUAGE**

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Reason for choosing topic

**1.1.** Literature of Vietnamese ethnic minorities includes literary writings of minority writers focusing on the theme of mountainous culture and the lives of ethnic minorities in all regions of the country. The literature of ethnic minorities also has a particularly important position in the history of modern Vietnam literature - a literature of 54 ethnic groups. More than a half of century, this literature has had indispensable contributions to Vietnamese literature having outstanding achievements of writers, breadth development and quality crystallization of authors, compositions. In particular, not only ethnic minority authors but also Kinh writers have contributed to the mountainous literature.

**1.2.** Although the prose works about the minorities were written more than half a century ago, they have still raised many questions among scholars. Many minority writers and writings' names have not been available in the chronicles of Vietnamese modern literature. Some authors such as To Hoai, Nguyen Ngoc, Ma Van Khang, etc. after a few of initial successful works of mountainous ethnic minorities did not write much on that theme. Meanwhile, the ethnic minority writers have been continuing the journey of hardship to conquer readers on the whole country with their works. It is undeniable that the contribution of Kinh writers to ethnic minority literature is important and significant, in terms of not only the quality but also the quantity. However, these Kinh writers observed the mountainous life and culture from a certain distance. They may not have fully integration between creation subject and description object as the minority writers who write about their own people and their own lives. The minority writers and their works would be the main part of the literature of Vietnam ethnic minorities indeed. It is thus necessary to study deeply on the literature of ethnic

minorities, especially in the stage of door-opening and economic integration in Vietnam at present. Vietnamese literatures in general, the literature of ethnic minorities in particular have been making strides to keep pace with the world literature.

Northern mountainous area of Vietnam is a land with a rich historical and cultural tradition, marking important "milestone" of prose of ethnic minorities which have the highest concentration of authors of the ethnic minorities with the amount of works with the richest prizes. Therefore, the study of prose of ethnic minority areas will be necessary in order to affirm the tremendous value of literature of a land with the rich cultural tradition.

**1.3.** The prose of ethnic minorities in northern Vietnam has unique value and identity. The works reflect not only the reality concerning mountainous life and people, but also an indispensable cultural and spiritual part of all ethnic minorities residing on this land. Through the works of the ethnic minorities, the panorama of the mountains is shown with bright, dark colors and real. Vietnamese readers have paid attention to ethnic writings since 1950s. Recently, the team of ethnic writers has been getting crowded and mature; a lot of author names have become familiar with the national literature such as Nong Minh Chau, Vi Hong, Nong Viet Toai, Trieu An, Vi Thi Kim Binh, Ma A Lenh, Cao Duy Son, Bui Thi Nhu Lan, etc. They are typical pens, responsible for nurturing the literature flame of their ethnic minorities (Lam Tien - 2002) and has contributed to the development of ethnic minority literature in particular and Vietnam modern literature in general.

**1.4.** Recently, we have been facing with a situation called "aging" of the ethnic minority writers, a new team of writers has appeared not much or with improper qualification. Even, many ethnic minorities do not have writers representing the voice of their communities. Therefore, putting compositions of the ethnic minorities in general, the prose of the ethnic minorities in particular

to the readers will also develop and expand the influence of the important literature on nationwide.

**1.5.** In the new era, preserving and promoting the cultural identity of peoples, especially in the remote mountainous area, the largest concentration of ethnic minorities, are a matter of urgency concerned by the Party and the state. Therefore, studying the characteristics and pointing out the achievements of the prose of the ethnic minorities is extremely necessary in the current period because these writings transmit educational meaning, and reserve traditional culture. The research topic of *Half Century of Prose Development of Mountainous Ethnic Minorities in Northern Vietnam (From 1960 Until Now)* will also contribute a useful material for teaching the mountainous literature at schools and universities.

## **2. Missions, objectives and scopes**

### **2.1. Research missions**

- An overview of the historical development of the prose of ethnic minorities in mountainous areas of northern Vietnam from its formation until now.

- Pointing out the characteristics of the content and form of the prose of ethnic minorities in the North.

- Introducing the typical writers with unique art styles.

- Affirming the outstanding achievements and determining the precious value of the prose of ethnic minorities in the past half century.

- Pointing out restrictions that the prose of the ethnic minorities still encounter, thereby suggesting countermeasures.

### **2.2. Objectives**

The process of formation and development, the features of content, art and achievement of the ethnic minority prose in northern Vietnam in the past half century

Some issues during the development of the prose of ethnic minorities: the ethnic cultural identity, the relationship between folklore and written literature, tradition and modernity in compositions of some typical authors.

### **2.3. Scopes**

The works of writers of ethnic minority prose in northern Vietnam (including Viet Bac and the Northwest). Within the topic, we primarily focused on short story and novel.

### **3. Purposes**

Through researching the topic of *Half Century of Prose Development of Mountainous Ethnic Minorities in Northern Vietnam (From 1960 Until Now)*, the dissertation shows the process, appearance, content characteristics and art through the works of the typical pens, the success and the limitations of ethnic minority prose in the mountainous area of northern Vietnam.

### **4. Research methods**

The thesis uses the following methods:

- Historical method describes and analyzes the development of ethnic minority prose in northern Vietnam through historical periods.

- Statistical, classification method through statistical table of ethnic minority writers in the mountainous areas of northern Vietnam.

- Comparison method indicates personal characteristics of one or more authors, works compared to that of Kinh ethnic group or other ethnic groups.

- Initially applying interdisciplinary research method to study some literary phenomena surveyed in terms of the cultural perspective - cultural sites.

The dissertation also uses other methods such as analysis method, generalization, synthesis method.

## **5. New contributions of the dissertation**

This is the comprehensive scientific research and the systematic prose of ethnic minority in the mountainous areas of northern Vietnam, giving an overview of the prose of ethnic minorities, especially short story and novel.

The dissertation makes objective and scientific remarks, assessment on achievements of the ethnic minority prose in the past half century.

The dissertation generalizes the developmental history, points out the most basic characteristics of the content and art of the ethnic minority prose in the northern mountainous region with the achievements and limitations.

The dissertation initially mentions issues of the ethnic minority literature: the national identity, the relationship between folklore and written literature, tradition and modernity in compositions of ethnic writers.

The dissertation results can be used in universities and colleges as teaching, research materials on the prose of Vietnam ethnic minorities.

## **6. Dissertation structure**

In addition to the Introduction, Conclusion, References, the dissertation contains four chapters:

Chapter 1: Overview of research on the modern prose of ethnic minorities in Vietnam.

Chapter 2: Overview of half century of prose establishment and development of Vietnamese ethnic minorities in the northern mountains

Chapter 3: Context of life and human image in prose of mountainous ethnic minorities in the north of Vietnam (from 1960 to now)

Chapter 4: Particular identity of prose of mountainous ethnics in narrative form and language

Dissertation refers to 200 references, including 32 latest documents published in 5 recent years.

## Chapter 1

### OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON THE MODERN PROSE OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN VIETNAM

For twenty recent years, especially over ten first years of the twenty-first century, the prose of ethnic minorities has received the attention of many research writers, criticism and some writers, poets of ethnic minorities are deeply conscious about literary voice of their community. So far, aparting from the generalized works, there are many monographs, articles, essays, research thesis on authors, and specific works in many aspects: poetics of narrative artworks; characteristics of content and art of one or several specific works, etc. We brief research in the following aspects:

#### 1.1. Research projects

**Before 1975**, in study of ethnic minority literature, only a few projects appeared. In particular, most of the research works are only scattered articles printed on journals, magazines at the time. Typically, *some issues of literature of ethnic minorities* of Nong



Quoc Chan (1964), Chu Nga with *"Muoi goes to forest" of Nong Minh Chau, the first novel in mountainous literature* (1965), Chu Van Tan had an article of *mountainous art literary matters* (1966), Ha Huy Giap had *The role of the ethnic minority literature in Vietnamese literary history* (1970), Vu Minh Tam had *Mountainous prose, a major victory in the ethnic minority literature* (1972)... In addition, there were two studies of the ethnic minority literature before 1975: *The ethnic minorities in Vietnam in building and defending the country* (1973) and *initially learning Viet Bac art and literature* (1974) of many authors. All of the works above confirm the initial achievements of the ethnic minority prose with the short story and medium story genre.

**After 1975**, the research projects of ethnic minority prose in Vietnam have appeared more with statement, assessment that were both generalized and specific about authors, works. These include works, as follows: *A few thoughts on literature of ethnic minorities in Viet Bac* (many authors - 1976), *Literature of ethnic minorities in Vietnam (before the August Revolution, 1945)* (Phan Dang Nhat - 1981), *Modern writers of ethnic minorities in Vietnam* (many authors - 1988), *40 years of art and culture of ethnic minorities in Vietnam* (many authors - 1995), *Literature of ethnic minorities in Vietnam* (many authors - 1997), *Modern literature of ethnic minorities in Vietnam* (Lam Tien - 1995), *A stilt houses in Hanoi* (Nong Quoc Chan - 1999), *Literature and Mountains (Critics - Essays)* (Lam Tien - 2002), *Writers of ethnic minorities in Vietnam - life and literature* (many authors - 2004), *It is really an array of "reverse domain prose"* (many authors - 2011), *Modern literature of ethnic minorities in Vietnam - some characteristics* (Tran Thi Viet Trung - Cao Thi Hao - 2011), *Vietnam modern prose of ethnic minorities and mountains* (Pham Duy Nghia - 2012), *National cultural identity in prose of ethnic minority writers* (Dao Thuy Nguyen - 2014),

*Traditional and modern literature of ethnic minorities in Vietnam* (Tran Thi Viet Trung - Nguyen Duc Hanh - 2014) .... Generally the projects above have made general assessment of achievements of the prose of ethnic minorities from its formation until now with some typical authors such as Nong Minh Chau, Vi Hong, Trieu An, Cao Duy Son...

Learning and studying of literature of ethnic minorities in general, prose of ethnic minorities in particular not only include in-depth research projects, but also hundreds of articles published in magazines, forums, or papers such as: *The plot in prose of mountain peoples* (2008), *Aspects of culture in ethnicity and mountain prose* (2009) of Pham Duy Nghia; *Prose of ethnic minorities - journey with friends* (2011), *National - mountainous literature with the country building and development in the new era* (2011), *Come and go or required to share* (2014) of Cao Duy Son; *No surprise about talent value* (2012) of Hong Cu; *Limited novel of Huu Tien writer and tragedies have not come to an end* (2013) of Doan Ngoc Minh; *Vi Thi Kim Binh female writer - pioneer of modern prose in Lang Son* (2014) of Nguyen Quang Huynh... Articles mainly focused on, found out some specific characteristics of ethnic minority prose; explained and analyzed the specific characteristics of an ethnic minority writer through a few representative works making up the style of this writer.

## **1.2. Dissertation, thesis, projects and proceedings**

### **\* *Dissertation, thesis, projects***

In addition to essays, articles, there were a number of topics, theses, master theses... researching on issues relevant to succession and absorbing of tradition of ethnic minority literature, features of mountain literature. Surveying the works in the topics, theses, dissertations, we saw that authors mainly focus on two issues.

Firstly, many Vietnamese scholars pay attention to ethnicity and national identity in writings of some ethnic minority writers, these include master theses, as follows: *National identity in short stories of Nong Minh Chau, Hoang Hac, Vi Hong* (Nguyen Thanh Thuy - 2005), *National identity in prose of Trieu An* (Hoang Thi Vi - 2009), *Ethnicity in novel of Vi Hong* (Hoang Van Huyen - 2003), *The influence of folklore in short story of Vi Hong* (Ha Thi Lieu - 2004), *National cultural identity in Cao Duy Son's compositions* (La Thuy Van - 2011), *Folk narrative style in novels of Trieu An* (Tran Thi Hong Nhung - 2010), Doctoral dissertation: *Vietnam modern prose on ethnic minorities and mountains* of Pham Duy Nghia (2010)... The ministry projects at of Cao Thi Hao: *Research on characteristics of ethnic minority literature and teaching method of ethnic minority literature in universities* (2012), Dao Thuy Nguyen: *National identity in compositions of some ethnic minority writers* (2013), Ha Anh Tuan: *The influence of folklore on modern prose of the Tay* (2014)...

Besides, the art world and the character world in compositions of prose writers of ethnic minorities accounted for a large number in scientific essays, as follows: *The art world in novels of Vi Hong* (Duong Thi Xuan - 2009), *The art world in short stories of Cao Duy Son* (Ly Thi Thu Phuong - 2010), *The character world in novels of Vi Hong* (Ma Thi Ngoc Bich - 2005), *Characteristics of short stories of Cao Duy Son* (Dinh Thi Minh Hao - 2009)...

### **\* Conferences**

Conference on Vi Hong writer that was organized in 2006 discussed the folk element in the writer's compositions emphasizing the influence of folklore in the subject, reflection and character image. In the conference on Hoang Trieu An writer that was held in 2007 highlighted his writing career. At the end of 2009, conference on *Ma Truong Nguyen writer - author, work* had comments confirming the position and role of Ma Truong Nguyen in Thai Nguyen literature in particular and literature of ethnic minorities in Vietnam in general. In 2009, *Conference on the subject of ethnic minorities and mountains*

that was held in Sapa (Lao Cai) had many suggestions for mountain peoples prose with the participation of writers of three provinces: Lao Cai, Yen Bai and Tuyen Quang. Conference on *Literature of ethnic minorities in the midland and northern mountainous area* (2011) centered on the role of writers in the ethnic minority literature. At the conference on *Literature of ethnic minorities in the country building and development in the new era* in Lang Son (11/2011), Cao Duy Son, in the opening speech, highlighted the existing problems of the literature of ethnic minorities today. The scholars tried to answer some questions of what we should think, write and how to write to avoid lagging behind the time.

Through listing research projects, we learned some of the following characteristics.

**Firstly**, the projects outline the prose picture of ethnic minorities in Vietnam through author generations, with the prose works of ethnic minorities throughout the northern mountainous region. Thereby, the researchers confirm some achievements of the content, the art of prose works of mountains in the modern era.

**Secondly**, in addition to giving analysis, comments and pointing out some strong points, the unique of the specific works of ethnic minority writers, the researchers frankly find out the drawbacks to be overcome such as limitation of character building art, texture, plot under the influence of traditional folklore. Some ethnic writers pay a little attention to describe the psychological life of character.

**Thirdly**, many studies initially address common issues such as national identity, the influence of folklore in compositions of some ethnic minority writers. Researchers and critics unify concept that any prose work of ethnic minorities considered unique, firstly demonstrate cultural identity in all aspects: content and expression art. Secondly, the compositions show the spirit of each ethnic

minority. The writings however do not separate each people with others; they follow the trend of integration, binding, resonance of the particular and the general. Thereby, the researchers also raise the question of preserving and promoting the cultural identity of ethnic minority writers, especially young writers to inspire love and pride of the national cultural tradition.

In general, modern ethnic minority prose in Vietnam has attracted the attention of many researchers, critics, ethnic minority writers as well as Kinh ethnic group writers. However, it lacks a comprehensive study of ethnic minority prose in the northern mountainous region - a concentration area of writers with the biggest number of compositions today. Therefore, the research projects of preceded scientists are valuable suggestions for us to work on the dissertation of *Half Century of Prose Development of Mountainous Ethnic Minorities in Northern Vietnam (From 1960 Until Now)*. The dissertation would be a significant summary project of development process, appearance, characteristics, achievements, limitations of ethnic minority proeses in the mountainous areas of northern Vietnam during the past half century.

## **Chapter 2**

### **OVERVIEW OF HALF CENTURY OF PROSE ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF VIETNAMESE ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE NORTHERN MOUNTAINOUS AREA**

#### **2.1. The development stage of Vietnamese ethnic minorities in the northern mountainous area**

##### **2.1.1. Formation stage (from 1958 to 1965)**

Vietnamese ethnic minorities' prose is official participated in the national literature with the first short story *Che Men is attended a*

*meeting* (1958) written by Nong Minh Chau. After that, in the 1960s, the prose work became common and initially had its own imprint. Regarding the novel, *Muoi goes to forest* written by Nong Minh Chau (1964) opened a new era for the development of ethnic novels. After this work, a series of short stories appeared and were noted as *Red star on the Phja Hoang mountain* (1960), *Noong y chayote tree* (1962), *Fairyland spring* (1963) written by Vi Hong, *Giving a name* (1962) written by Vi Thi Kim Binh, *Na Pang Canal* (1963) written by Nong Viet Toai, *Salesman in Co Ma* (1965) written by Lo Van Sy, *Story about Thuong* (1965) written by Nong Minh Chau, *Ke Nam* (1965) written by Hoang Hac. The Vietnamese ethnic minority authors in the beginning period centered on reflecting the homeland people and life and through these initial works, the national consciousness were thus awakened.

### ***2.1.2. The development stage of quantity and quality (from 1965 to 1970s, 1980s of the twentieth century)***

The accumulation of internal resources to have the rise of mountainous ethnic prose has been recognized since the 1970s and especially after the war. Many ethnic writings appeared in that short period. From 1965 to 1989, more than ten collections of short stories and works were published. Regarding novels, only within five years, Vi Hong introduced three novels including *Flat country* (1980), *Loved mountain of grass* (1984), *Valley of rock falling* (1985). In that context, the system of prose in the northern mountainous area is thus improved.

The key inspiration of prose in this stage is affirmative and praised. The authors portrayed the relative clarity of the image of typical characters with inner life as more deeply exploited through image, details, specific and vivid language. In comparison to the previous period, the prose of this period was gradually reached a “maturity” on quality of art.

### ***2.1.3. The innovation stage with outstanding achievements of prose, especially fiction (after 1990)***

In the stage of innovation, the ethnic authors had a new and deeper view on social reality of the country. Many prose writers demonstrated their own bravery and creative personality such as Vi Hong, Ma A Lenh, Cao Duy Son. The stage marks the outstanding growth in all aspects of fiction through “jump” development on a number of works. Vi Hong – 11 novels, Ma Trung Nguyen – 8, Trieu An – 4, Cao Duy Son – 5, Ha Trung Nghia – 2, Dich Ngoc Lan – 3, Huu Tien – 2. At this stage, the content of prose reflects ethnic minorities with a new view. The exploitation of individual fates matters has enriched the novel nature of work and upholds the spirit of humanity, which is the mirror of literature general trend innovation period. The development from quantity to quality and from quality to turn on the style is the most important affirmation of the development.

### **2.2. The development of ethnic minority author group in the half of century**

The amount of ethnic minority authors has been developed in the half of century. **The first generation of writers** includes founders such as Nong Minh Chau, Nong Viet Toai, Vi Hong, Trieu An; **the second generation** includes trained authors such as Cao Duy Son, Bui Thi Nhu Lan, Huu Tien, Doan Lu; **the third generation** includes young writers such as Nong Van Lap, Ma Thi Hong Tuoi, Dinh Thi Mai Lan. Recently, the ethnic minority group has developed with representatives in most of ethnic groups in most of provinces. In which, Nong Minh Chau, Vi Hong and Cao Duy Son is three typical writers with many contributions to the development of ethnic minorities prose.

### **2.3. Some theoretical and applied issues of the development process of Northern ethnic minority prose**

There are two problems imposing on ethnic minority prose, that are voice - letters and interference trend, acculturation, integration into the national literary prose of ethnic minorities. In which, solution between traditional and modern relationship is to solve the problem of literary nationalism in the new development. The combination of tradition and modernity in literature requires writers to get creative personality, understanding of cultural – social situation.

#### **\* *Sub-conclusion***

After more than half of century of foundation and development, prose of ethnic minority in the mountainous area of the North has many significant steps in all aspects. Experiencing the period from the start of the formation to the growth in scale and quality of the prose in the 70s, 80's in the twentieth century and to the way of renovation, prose has the development and perfection improvement in all aspects: the rapid increase in the number of works; theme, theme expanded richer; artistic quality is improving and getting closer to the art of modern prose. It is also the contribution of achievements of ethnic minority prose through the way that is continuous growth of writers. Northern mountainous prose has confirmed its solid position in the literature when there is a team of talented generation of writers and wealthy heart with three typical writers representing all unique artistic style including Nong Minh Chau, Vi Hong, Cao Duy Son. Especially, since its establishment up to now, prose of ethnic minorities has harmony and unity between traditional elements and modern in the development process. The combination is an important factor contributing to affirm national identity of prose ethnic minority in northern Vietnam in the general flow of the country's literature.



### Chapter 3

## LIFE CONTEXT AND HUMAN IMAGE IN PROSE OF MOUNTAINOUS ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE NORTH OF VIETNAM (FROM 1960 TO NOW)

### 3.1. Reality of ethnic minority life

#### 3.1.1. Reality of life and mark on history

Ethnic minority prose reflects the true reality of life of ethnic minority through different national historical phases. It is hard but fascinating life during two war period (*Muoi goes to forest* - Nong Minh Chau - 1964; *The turn road* - Nong Viet Toai - 1981; *Vai Dang* - Vi Hong - 1980; *Wind in Mu Cang* - Ha Lam Ky - 1995...) and resurrected life of ethnic minorities in the construction of socialism (*White highland* - Ma A Lenh - 1992; *Ke Nam* - Hoang Hac - 1965; *Flat country* - Vi Hong - 1980, etc). Besides bright colors of life highland, it remains a reality that is opened. That is the subject of human life in the mountains opening integration phase of the country, which is the downside of modern life that is creeping into every family, every man (*Heaven's musical instrument* - Cao Duy Son - 2006; *Life line* - Huu Tien - 2007; *Ghost man* - Ha Ly - 2011...).

#### 3.1.2. Reality of life in daily life and customs of ethnic minorities in the Northern mountainous areas

Real picture of mountainous life is also reproduced in detail in the daily life and unique culture activities of each ethnic group. With many customs such as funeral (*Seeing ghost* - Nong Viet Toai - 1981; *That place is border* - Trieu An - 2004...), matrilineal customs (*Clouds disappear* - Trieu An - 1976; *Begonia flower season* - Ma Truong Nguyen - 1998...), weddings (*Yellow sunshine on Dao village* - Trieu An - 1992; *Fire in sa mu forest* - Ha Trung Nghia -

1996...), **to the total custom** (*Tong khoa* - Nong Viet Toai - 1981; *Son of a friend named Tung* - Hoang Hac - 1998; *Tong friend* - Bui Thi Nhu Lan – 2013, etc); special festivals like Long Tong Festival, Tattoos festival.

### **3.2. Characters image like a typical indication of the artistic world of ethnic minority prose**

#### **3.2.1. Image of mountainous human with many characteristics**

In the prose works of ethnic minorities, the writers attempt to recognize the beauty of human qualities of mountainous people, with the basic characteristics such as being naive, innocent, honest and brave. They own a faithful life, gratitude and desire freedom and personal happiness. We consider these characteristics typical traditional mountainous personality. That is tenacity, brave militia to clear the way for trips (*The girls with responsibility of bridges and roads* - Nong Minh Chau - 1968); new people dare demolish customary law as Dang (*Vai Dang* - Vi Hong - 1980), Nho (*The purple Bauhinia variegates*) - Sa Phong Ba - 1981), Lan (*Yellow sunshine on Dao village* - Trieu An - 1992); those who have such beauty culture such as Mr. Mac, Mrs. San Pi (*Heaven's musical instrument* - Cao Duy Son - 2006), etc. Along with the image of character above are mountains intellectual human in modern times as a prose identifiers of ethnic minorities after Innovation as Thuc, Thuc Vy (*Heaven's musical instrument* - Cao Duy Son - 2006), Tu, Huy, Hoi (*People in tube* - Vi Hong - 1990), On (*Entering the cave*- Vi Hong - 1990), etc.

#### **3.2.2. Personal human in relations of world affairs and private life**

Apart from these images of characters bearing the characteristics of personality and soul is emergence of personal human relationships in world affairs and private life, including

human alienation, the more enriching, enriching the panorama of mountain people in prose of ethnic minorities.

**\* *Sub-conclusion***

In chapter 3, we clarify two fundamental aspects of the content of prose over half a century mountain of formation, development. The first aspect is the picture of real life of ethnic minorities through historical way, in the daily life and cultural life with the mountainous color. In which, the high realism picture are true authors recorded in two historic ways: struggle, resistance against two enemies invading of France - American and the construction of socialist new life in the North. Besides, the writers also recreate the festive atmosphere, customs and traditions, the folk songs in the mood for soul of each ethnic. In particular, people in mountainous prose are also shown in the attachment relationship, closeness but familiar as the spouses, brothers meaning, and community cohesion among villages. The second aspect is the characteristics of characters in ethnic minority writings. Here, we see the appearance of two images of characters: one is mountainous human with the characteristics of persons bringing the beauty of harmony and soul qualities - which we generally call mountains as traditional mountainous human, besides, the intellectuals of the modern mountains of talent who are enthusiastic to dedicate their intellectual, strength to the work of country building. The second is the human individual in the world relationships and personal life. In this pattern, the appearance of human are alienated by money and the name. With the flexible changes in the artistic vision to portray a variety of characters mentioned above, from praise, sympathize to sarcasm, criticism, the authors outline a vivid panorama of image human subjects in these mountains various stages of development of national history.

**Chapter 4**  
**PARTICULAR IDENTITY OF PROSE OF MOUNTAINOUS**  
**ETHNICS IN NARRATIVE FORM**  
**AND LANGUAGE**

**4.1. The plot from linear to multi-line**

***4.1.1. Linear plot and traces of oral storytelling***

This is a traditional plot with these characteristics: small volume events, no overlaps, conflicts between events; Linear time; finish work under the traditional causal thinking (end closed, with happy ending). We can see this type of plots in the works of early writers such as Nong Minh Chau, Nong Viet Toai, Trieu An, Trieu Bao, Huy Hung.

***4.1.2. The plot bearing the mark of modern art thinking***

Prose of ethnic minorities has certain innovations in the development process, especially the plot that has modern signature in twenty years. That is the indication of change in narrative art. The authors of ethnic minorities have been constantly renewed their style of writing, spelling rules to suit development of national literature to more and more highly meet the reader's expectation. One hand, they have inherited the advantages of the traditional plot, on the other hand they have built a modern plot with many conflicts, multidimensional character, multifaceted, time reversibility, work with the open end (ending left implicit, unspecified). The modern signs are demonstrated in the composition of the writers including Cao Duy Son, Bui Thi Nhu Lan, Huu Tien, Cam Hung, etc, which have contributed to increase the realism and quality of privacy for works.

## **4.2. Typical methodologies in character-building art**

### ***4.2.1. A focus on describing characters' appearance***

It is affected by folk traditional literature, there are many characters in the works of minority group writers thoroughly described the appearance and their appearance is in harmony with their characters. Main characters often have nice appearance and notable personality while negative characters are on the contrary (such as in the works of Nong Minh Chau, Vi Hong, Ma Truong Nguyen). However, due to their changing perception of the reality and their thoughts of art, some prose writers of ethnic minority groups had new findings and approaches in building characters' appearance to create new "paradoxes". There are characters with ugly and scary looks but with noble personalities and soul. Typical characters are San Pi (*Heaven's musical instrument* -Cao Duy Son-2006), the principal Bach Kim (*Yeallow sunshine on Dao village* - Trieu An-1992), Mo Chu (*Mo Chu* - Ma A Lenh-1998), etc.

### ***4.2.2. Characters with traditional models***

This is the way to build characters based on folk traditional art model. By finding and analyzing the prose works of ethnic minority writers, we found that characters are built into 3 models: *angelic*, "ugly person" and *going away* model.

### ***4.2.3. Discovery and description of the soul of characters***

It is originated from the complication of life; some works put their characters in complicated psychological conflicts, inner fights and choices between desire and morals (in *Vagrant* (1992), *Heaven's musical instrument* (2006) of Cao Duy Son; *Waiting mountain* (2004), *Words of sli ascross mountain* (2004) of Bui Thi Nhu Lan; *Love on Wang village* (1998) of Bui Minh Chuc, etc).

### **4.3. Narrative language**

#### ***4.3.1. Language with full of portray***

In the works about mountainous theme, minority ethnic writers use abundant and diverse languages: narrative language of writers, dialogue and monologue language, especially language full of portray and nationalism –language of people from mountainous regions.

#### ***4.3.2. Original and distinctive artistic methods***

Comparison and association– the mirror that reflects the thoughts of mountainous people that is popular in many works. The use of glossy language with full of description like folk songs and wise language of proverbs help readers to partly learn about the beauty of people and life in mountainous areas. Another art method used by ethnic minority writers to express ideas and main theme of their works is the personification of things, phenomenon and the nature is personified the most.

#### **\* Sub-conclusion**

In terms of art, a prose of Northern ethnic minority group (from 1960 until now) has gained remarkable achievements. Their plots are originally manifested in two major forms. In the first form, there is simple storyline developed by words of mouth, the time is linear and one-way, events are few or vague with no conflict, the character system is divided into two opposite types with a happy ending. In the second form, plots are modern with reversals, leapfrogging, alternated time; the character system is diversified and complicated with conflicts, with open or unhappy ending. Proses from ethnic minority group uses typical methods of characters building, authors focus on the highlights to make the distinctive appearance of characters. Besides, due to the change of reality sensory and artistic thinking, many writers are innovate to create new “paradoxes” in creating character portraits. Based on the pattern of

traditional folk art, character systems in the works are built in three models: angelic, “ugly person” and going away model. Particularly, in recent years, minority prose has to pay more attention to the exploitation of the inner life of the characters at different angles. Language in prose from minority groups has its own markly demonstrated by use of comparison, personification of things, phenomenon and flowery polished writing style. All of these things create their own echoes and identity for proeses from mountainous area of the north of Vietnam.

## CONCLUSION

1. Through a half of century of establishment and development, proeses of ethnic minority groups have shown a continuous process of efforts and development. Experiencing different development stages in the whole development of modern literature of the nation, proeses of the Northern mountainous areas have gained remarkable achievements. These achievements confirm the central role and increasingly development of proeses. Defining itself in the integration trend into the general development of national literature and keeping their own characteristics at the same time – this shows the rule and trend-setting of proeses in ethnic minority groups in the Northern mountainous region.

The success of proeses in this region is reflected in many aspects: this form is completed with the contribution of short stories, novels; the numbers of authors and works is kept increasing. Until now, most ethnic minory groups in the Northern mountainous region have a large number of passionate and professional authors. Authors from ethnic minority groups really intergrate themselves with modern literature, create many good works, truthfully reflect the life of mountainous people during historic stages of the nation. The art quality of proeses increases when there are new signs in the way of

looking and thoughts of art, especially novels have experienced unprecedented changes, from the way to create characters and structure, the storyline is closer to modern novel.

The combination between tradition and modernity is the important element and inevitable requirement of the development of prose among the ethnic minority groups. Tradition is manifested by inheritance and reception to folk culture in the form of expression such as applying idioms and proverbs; concise words of folk songs; inheriting familiar rhetorical methods such as comparison, personification. Meanwhile, modernity is not only manifested in external factors such as artistic methods but also in internal factors that determines both content and form. The modernization of prose is performed in parallel to catch up and integrate into the overall process of national literature.

2. Besides the content reflecting wars and national building of ethnic minority people, works show a vivid picture of mountainous life and people in their daily activities and through their relationship with their hometown and village. In particular, the spiritual life of the people here are tied to the cultural imprint is transmitted from a thousand generations, about typical festivals of each ethnic group, the traditions or tasty traditional folk. Unique and cultural diversity have made aggregate own prose. The reality of life from ethnic minorities is also reflected through the wild beauty but with lyrical, poetic nature of mountainous group. Besides, each ethnic writers also pay attention to human image through periods with specific characteristics. In addition to the appearance of the traditional people from mountainous ethnic group who brings new progressive ideas, desires freedom and personal happiness, there are intellectual people who have dedicated enthusiasts and there are people who governed by desire and money and became alienated personality. A network of rich and diverse characters with all kinds of shades is built, the



authors help readers to feel more deeply about social picture through stages in the development process of national literature.

**3.** In terms of art, prose of northern ethnic minority groups has also reached the “depth” to express their own characteristic in form and narrative language. In particular, the influence of folk literature - especially folk poetry with comparison, description and flower language creates the distinctive beauty of mountainous prose. In many works, there is also an inheritance of the folk culture in building plots, characters and describing their personalities. This creates its own unique marks of minority writers, but also a certain delay for them in the writing process. In the recent twenty years, the art of prose from mountainous groups have had a remarkable breakout when modernity appear in many aspects: modern plot with folding time, structure of work has frame, stringing, open ending brings a lot of thoughts to readers; characters are built multifaceted with deep soul, artistic language is enhanced and creative which makes distinctive styles of each writer.

**4.** Over the last few years, prose works from ethnic minority groups have brought new and unique innovates to Vietnam literature. In fact, this kind of literature develops well with much potentials of new success. Prose from Northern mountainous ethnic groups and its growth prospects in the coming period have shown in its potential and resilience, especially in the last ten years of general development conditions of national literature.

**5.** In the process to confirm its position and stature in the flow of the national modern literature, prose of ethnic minority groups has been solving the issues of the literary nature such as national identity, the relationship between folklore and written literature, the literature integration between Vietnam and the world... Prose from northern Vietnam mountainous regions has a half of century of establishment

and development. Along with development history, the thesis tries sketching its process and appearance and recognizes the behavior within it. It is a literature not only in the form of potential but also in a promising vivid reality. If it is considered Vietnamese literature as big river, prose of northern mountainous minority groups that is originated from a small stream has grown constantly, integrated in large river flows and reached to the ocean. The growth is not only reflected the development in width but also a continuous effort to achieve full integration into the general national modern literature.

Prose of ethnic minority groups in the northern of Vietnam is in the changing process coordinated with continuous changes of the social life. In the trend of democratization and globalization, it is required that authors must always change and innovative their works to follow the stages of national literature, and at the same time pursue the goal: preserving and promoting the cultural characteristics of their nation in the integration time.

## **PUBLISHED PAPERS RELATING TO THE DISSERTATION**

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