



Ancient Houses in Ben Tre City: A Multifaceted Approach to Preserve Artistic Architectural Heritage and Boost Local Tourism

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Abstract

The ancient houses of Ben Tre city, dating back to the French colonial period, transcend their historical significance to become essential cultural landmarks with global connections. These houses play a pivotal role in safeguarding Ben Tre's artistic and architectural heritage, aligning seamlessly with the vision of a "Green Ben Tre" in contemporary tourism development. Their unique value lies in the harmonious synthesis of material and spiritual elements, fostering cultural exchange and connecting communities worldwide.

This article not only presents initial research findings on the preservation and promotion of the rich values encapsulated within Ben Tre's ancient house system but also explores additional crucial technical solutions. Beyond the study of the effectiveness of the Cement-Stabilized Base (CSB) additive in enhancing soil load-bearing capacity, the paper introduces various technical strategies aimed at conserving the artistic architectural heritage. The focus extends to sustainable construction practices, ensuring the longevity of these historical structures.

The study emphasizes the urgent need for conservation, acknowledging the imminent threat of demolition faced by

some ancient houses in Ben Tre city. It underscores the importance of sustainable tourism development as a key factor in preserving these invaluable cultural assets for future generations.

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1. Old Houses in Ben Tre City - Historical Value and Tourism Potential

The concept of urban heritage was first mentioned by Italian architect Gustavo Giovannoni in the 1930s (Zucconi, G. 2014), showing a change in the concept of preserving and promoting cultural values. Urban heritage value is not only concerned with an individual project but also includes linked elements such as the architectural setting, urban environment, and the preservation and honoring of the integrity of the heritage. From there, the heritage not only exists but also "lives" in the modern urban context, contributing to building an urban identity and rich culture.

According to research from archives and direct initial surveys by the research team, in Ben Tre City, there is a quite diverse and rich system of ancient houses, although initially we only learned about 10 ancient houses ¹. The concept of ancient houses in Ben Tre City used here is understood as houses built with architecture associated with the art, materials, effort, and manual labor skills of Ben Tre people since the French period., which is about over 100 years.

Historical artistic value of ancient houses in Ben Tre City over time. through a survey of 10 ancient houses, the origin of these relics and architecture dates back to the French period (before 1920), which is more than 100 years old. has shown that the ancient houses here have rich and unique cultural and artistic values, including the silhouette of *Mosaic art*. This (also known as "piecework" or "mosaic") is a form of decorative art – creating images from collections of small pieces of material – called "mosaics". Mosaic tile art with pieces made from many different materials, but with modern technology today, they are often produced with high-quality materials, durable, beautiful, shiny, and non-slip...

Up to 9/10 houses surveyed by the authors were recorded in the book *Ben Tre - Land and People* as follows: " *In addition to ancient communal houses and pagodas associated with the process of opening land to establish settled villages, and the settlement of the people, there are also houses with beautiful ancient architecture.*" ² This is the conduit of stories and legends related to the owner and has directional value for connection, preservation, promotion, and contribution to promoting interest, exploitation, and promoting the effectiveness and impact of culture and ancient house architecture to meet the requirements of sustainable development; These are historical values, cultural values, scientific values,

architectural and artistic values, educational values, economic values, values of cultural diversity, geology, and geomorphology, and spirituality ...³.

The historical value of Ben Tre city's ancient houses is associated with typical historical and cultural events of the locality; associated with the status and career of the owners are famous people, historical figures, and religious dignitaries who have had a positive influence on the development of Ben Tre through historical periods such as: Bishop Nguyen Ngoc Tuong, Venerable Nguyen Buu Tai, Colonel Pham Ngoc Thao, Doctor Tran Que Tu...

The cultural value of ancient houses in Ben Tre city is an organic system of material and spiritual values associated with ancient houses due to the painstaking creation and accumulation through the process of practical activities, in interaction with each other, and in interaction between humans and the natural and social environment. Every ancient house, whether it is a national monument or not, contains certain material and spiritual values. The material value is not just an architectural work, a relic..., and the spiritual value can be an expression of a language, ideology, good traditions, customs, beliefs, Festivals related to the house. The cultural value of Ben Tre ancient houses is a combination of both material and spiritual values, thereby creating the value of connection and international cultural-academic exchange such as cultural stories from *relics. The residence and activities of Colonel Pham Ngoc Thao, the ancient house of Mr. Thuong Cong Minh, the house of Apostolic Bishop Nguyen Ngoc Tuong...* generations of descendants of Colonel Pham Ngoc Thao, Apostolic Bishop Nguyen Ngoc Tuong, engineer Engineer Nguyen Ngoc Nhut, Head of the Thuong Cong Minh Court, are abroad... increasingly looking to their roots, looking for their ancestors from the houses that their ancestors left behind on the land of Ben Tre today⁴.

The technological value of ancient houses in Ben Tre city is a treasure trove of invaluable tangible and intangible documents serving researchers, surveys, data collection, relationship analysis, and research. Impact factors, existence, and development of phenomena related to Ben Tre ancient houses. Ben Tre ancient houses are valuable for serving natural science and social science research for researchers both at home and abroad. The scientific and technological value also includes relevant data, rarity, quality of representation, and the extent to which Ben Tre ancient houses contribute important information such as: architecture, material structure, construction date and art, feng shui, design, drawings... especially useful materials in research and teaching, and in restoring time-valuable works.

According to research by the author group, up to now, the system of 10 ancient houses in Ben Tre has been known to domestic and foreign researchers through 2 National-level Scientific Conferences *on Culture in the sustainable development of the Southwest region: Current situation and solutions* organized by Tra Vinh University in August 2020 and the IACSC-2020 International Scientific Conference on the topic " *City of the people: Theory and practice*" with live domestic and online forms. Hosted by the IACSC network - International Academic Consortium for Sustainable Cities, Yokohama University, and organized by the Faculty of Urban Studies, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNU-HCM representative in Vietnam in September 2020.

Research groups in Ben Tre have sent two research articles in Vietnamese and English to two national and international academic forums, which have attracted the attention and discussion of domestic and foreign scholars. In addition,

lecturers and students of the Department of Urban Studies, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University-HCM, also conducted two surveys, collected the ancient house systems in the Ben Tre urban area, and connected researchers and vocational associations. Businesses and organizations are interested in accessing communication support and preserving the connected architectural heritage to develop tourism through ancient houses in Ben Tre.

- *The architectural and cultural values of ancient houses in Ben Tre city* are the artistic values of organization, spatial design, environment, materials, structure, decoration... of construction works and locations.; great ideological, aesthetic, and cultural values for visitors to enjoy with their senses, thereby admiring them for their qualifications, skills, and techniques that go beyond the common level, such as national relics. *The residence and activities of Colonel Pham Ngoc Thao*, or relics that have not been inventoried, are ranked as *the House of Apostolic Bishop Nguyen Ngoc Tuong, the House of Apostolic Catholic Nguyen Buu Tai...* Ancient houses "... at one time also created the unique beauty of this land" ⁵.

Aesthetic educational value of ancient houses in Ben Tre city is the transmission and dissemination of the values of ancient houses and the owners, those who have lived and worked in these houses... to all people., especially the younger generation, are conscious, aware, and proud of the traditions and values of ancient houses, realizing the benefits of ancient houses in Ben Tre City in the process of meeting the needs of survival and development. of people and society through historical periods... thereby being conscious of preserving and promoting the value of Ben Tre ancient houses in particular and Ben Tre cultural heritage in general in contemporary life. In March 1981, when he visited and worked with Ben Tre, the late Vice Chairman of the State Council, Architect. Huynh Tan Phat, in front of the planning map of his home province, enthusiastically presented the general idea of urban development planning for Ben Tre Town into a civilized and modern urban area, not with a short-term planning vision of 5 - 10 years. year but hundreds of years later. He emphasized that there is rarely an urban area like Ben Tre Town: there is the Ben Tre River, the Ham Luong River, and ancient architectural houses... He suggested that the leaders of Ben Tre province should pay attention to preserving and taking advantage of the *Ben Tre River. Bamboo as the urban center, taking the Ham Luong River bank as the facade* and preserving *houses with ancient French architecture as the highlights* of Ben Tre Town ⁶.

- *Economic value of ancient houses in Ben Tre city* is the value brought about when distributing, exchanging, and consuming products connected to ancient houses on the basis of exploiting the values of ancient houses in Ben Tre city. Bamboo is not only real estate, but also a display of artifacts, information provision, souvenir sales, art performances, simulations... It is also an added value for real estate around the area. Ancient houses located in prime locations, especially ancient houses in the "front" position such as the Ben Tre Museum, the Department of Finance, the French Public Works Building... are today the destinations of communication hubs. information... The exploitation of Ben Tre ancient houses serves the needs of tourists if it is guaranteed not to adversely affect the landscape, while satisfying tourist needs, preserving cultural identity, and ensuring social justice., community participation, environmental protection; Bringing tourists to Ben Tre ancient houses will therefore increase the value of coconut culinary tourism services, products, and traditional craft villages, thereby expanding and increasing the sustainability of livelihoods when developing. Developing tourism based on ancient houses in Ben Tre ⁷.

In addition, Ben Tre ancient houses also have values of cultural diversity, geology, geomorphology, spirituality... In particular, the connecting value of Ben Tre ancient houses is the synthesis of both material values. and spirit, creating the value of connection and international cultural-academic exchange such as cultural stories from Mr. Phi Bang's Ancient House (Bang Long Pagoda), the Ben Tre Department of Reference (now Ben Tre Museum). Bamboo) - relics of the residence and activities of Colonel Pham Ngoc Thao, Apostolic Bishop Nguyen Ngoc Tuong, Head of the Cong Minh Thuong Court... The descendant generations of owners of ancient houses are increasingly looking towards their roots, looking for information about ancestors from the ancient houses that their ancestors and predecessors left behind on the land of Ben Tre today ⁸. These are instructions for a valuable lesson not only about the urban architecture of ancient houses but also a connecting channel, cementing the strong attachment and *"working together"* of the people of Ben Tre. Unfortunately, for many different reasons, there has recently been news that 2 out of 10 ancient houses in Ben Tre will be demolished...

2. About the Old House in the Center of Ben Tre City That Is About to Be Demolished

The ancient house located in the center of Ben Tre, according to public opinion, is about to be demolished. It is the French-era public office building (located at 03 Tran Quoc Tuan Street, Hai Ba Trung Street, An Hoi Ward, Ben Tre City; this building is adjacent to 2 main street frontages in the inner suburbs of Ben Tre City).



The French public house is currently waiting to be cleared (left photo) - PVL photo, and when it was still the headquarters of the Ben Tre Provincial Farmers' Association (right photo) (Source: Photo in the book Ben Tre Land and People, p. 102.)

The French public building was formerly the headquarters of the Ben Tre Provincial Farmers' Association for a long time, then was assigned to the Land Registration Office under the Department of Natural Resources and Environment of Ben Tre province as an office until now, when it was handed over awaiting clearance. This building was built around the early 30s of the twentieth century; according to seniors in Ben Tre City, the French public park building was formed at the same time that France dug Chung Thuy Lake, now Truc Giang Lake, and opened a major construction phase of the ancient Ben Tre urban area, creating the current appearance of the Ben Tre urban area after completing large buildings such as Tham

Bien Palace (now Ben Tre Museum)...



Office building from two perspectives at Hai Ba Trung and Tran Quoc Tuan streets Source: (Photo: Pham V.L, 2021)

The French public office building is located on a land area of about 600 m² and built in a combination of Asian and European architecture; the interior of the ceiling, windows, and dome are decorated with precious wood patterns. The house has a construction area of about 300 m² with 1 ground floor, 1 floor, and a yard of nearly 80 m²; in front of the main door facing Chung Thuy Lake. Once completed, the building was used as a residence (public office) for French civil servants. In 1962, Bui Van Manh, Principal of Kien Hoa Public High School, lived there. In 1970-1975, it was the public house of the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court⁹. After 1975, it was the Provincial Farmers' Association, and from 2016 up to now, it has been the Land Registration Office under the Ben Tre Department of Natural Resources and Environment.



Windows, balconies, floors and ceilings of the French colonial building (Source: Pham V.L, 2021)

Recently, according to public opinion from a reliable source, the French Public Works Building will be demolished to implement the project to expand and upgrade Tran Van On Park. It is known that next to the French Public Works Building, which will be destroyed, only about 500 meters away and with a similar fate, is the ancient building of the Nguyen Buu Tai sect, often called Doc Tai, 75 April 30 Street, An Hoi Ward., Ben Tre City, owned by Ben Tre Import-Export Joint Stock Company (Betrimex) and now a member of Thanh Thanh Cong Group (TTC). According to reliable

sources, TTC Group will demolish the ancient house to build a new building... This is information that many Ben Tre City residents, architects, and heritage conservationists inside and outside the province were surprised and regretful to hear...



Ancient house of Pope Nguyen Buu Tai (Source: Pham V.L, 2021)

3. Orientation to Connect, Conserve, Promote the Heritage Values of Ben Tre Ancient Houses Through Tourism

With the special values of urban ancient houses, preserving ancient houses in Ben Tre is a very important job, not just the job of departments related to the fields of construction, culture, industry, resources - environment, but also of other sectors and social organizations... However, currently, this work is facing difficulties; the story of the French Public Works Building, or Mr. Nguyen Buu Tai Building about to be demolished, is a convincing proof. Those who made the decision to demolish the house all had their reasons for thinking that this old house had been renovated a lot and was no longer as original as before, not least because they considered the house in the overall park area - that is, that there should not be a house in the newly established park, where the house has been located for nearly a hundred years; the Group wants to have a new building to operate more effectively on the land under its ownership instead of leaving the old house in its current state...

Discussing whether or not it is advisable to preserve ancient houses in the context that these ancient houses are not yet relics and have not been inventoried and included in the conservation list, we have the following grounds:

3.1. Legal basis

According to *the Cultural Heritage Law*(2009), there are two things that need to be considered and referenced in the case of the French Public Works Building: (i) Article 10 stipulates that " *State agencies, political organizations, and socio-political organizations Associations, social organizations, socio-professional organizations, economic organizations, people's armed units (hereinafter referred to as organizations) and individuals are responsible for protecting and promoting the value of cultural heritage. chemistry* ". (ii) Article 28, Clause 1 talks about historicity and architecture in section d) " *Architectural works, artistic works, architectural complexes, overall urban architecture and residential locations have exemplary value." represents one or more stages of architectural and artistic development.*" In addition, for the French Public Works Building that has not been identified as a relic for protection under the Cultural Heritage Law, it is still necessary to carry out an inventory according to the criteria specified in Clause 9, Article 1 of the Law on Amendments and Supplements, supplementing a number of articles of the Law on Cultural Heritage and Clause 2, Article 28 of this Law.

The Construction Law (2014) also mentions the elements of preserving, embellishing, and promoting the value of historical relics, cultural heritage, beliefs, and religions (article 10). On the other hand, this law also requires construction planning to ensure "synchronization of architectural space" (article 14). In particular, the Construction Law stipulates that construction planning projects must seek opinions from the residential community, individuals, and organizations before implementation (articles 16 and 17). Here, in the case of upgrading and expanding Tran Van On Park, leading to the demolition of the French Cong Am building, so far, according to public opinion, many people in Ben Tre are unaware!

Meanwhile, *the Law on Architecture*(2019) has raised many important principles related to aesthetic and aesthetic factors. For example, part b, article 10 of the law requires: - The use of colors, materials, and exterior decoration of architectural works must ensure aesthetics and not adversely affect vision, human health, or the environment. school and traffic safety (part b, article 11). In addition, Article 11 also requires housing works, urban utility works, traffic works, and even monuments, advertising and decorative works to meet public aesthetic requirements and to be consistent with the overall architecture of the area.

Recently, *Decree No. 85/2020* of the Government has detailed regulations on organizing competitions for architectural plans for many important and highlighted projects of the urban area. The Decree also sets out regulations for areas with specific management requirements, including architecture that reflects the historical development process and contributes to creating a unique identity for the urban area (article 8, appendix 2). In the case of *the French Public Works Building, the Building of Pope Nguyen Buu Tai* , it has enough data to refer to *Decree 85* because it reflects the history of the urban architectural development of Ben Tre City.

3.2. From experts on public opinion: The French public office building if demolished

According to Nguyen Thi Hau, Lecturer at Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities:

"The status and value of ancient houses in Ben Tre have been recorded quite comprehensively; I have some suggestions

as follows.

- The first thing is, although the age of this ancient house is not too old (in the first half of the 20th century), the architecture reveals many things about the general social context, the economic status of the owner, and the family style. Family style: traditional house or ancient house combining East and West, the decoration and interior arrangement all reflect Vietnamese culture in the South. This chronology is an "advantage" for preservation. Because of this, quality architectural structures and construction materials are not yet in the stage of serious damage or degradation. The form is intact, so conservation, repair, and restoration are convenient and can continue to be used, becoming a "living relic" that promotes spiritual and economic value from cultural heritage.
- This ancient house is currently managed and used by a state agency. It is worth noting that for many years this ancient house has not been demolished, expanded, damaged, or deviated much in architecture. Therefore, preserving the value of ancient houses, creating consensus, as well as coordination between user and management agencies and heritage conservation agencies and organizations will have many advantages when preserving the original state, both the architecture and landscape of the ancient house.
- In the immediate future, it is necessary to inventory and immediately put it into the list of inventory and conservation while it is not possible to prepare a relic classification dossier for the French Public Works Building (currently the building is not in this category so the Culture Department is not yet concerned). Deal with ancient houses according to *the Cultural Heritage Law* and local regulations on heritage preservation. Absolutely no demolition for new construction or construction of infrastructure or public works...
- If the area surrounding the building becomes a park, *this building must not be demolished, it must be retained because it is a heritage building that becomes a highlight* of the park area and surrounding area, and can be used. Used as a restaurant, cafe, or place for exhibitions, activities, and cultural activities of the area...
- Regarding the management and operation method, it should be as follows: Currently, the building's function is an office, it is best to restore the old function with a new mission: becoming a tourism service facility for domestic and foreign tourists. Foreign guests: either small-scale hotels or high-quality homestays. There, visitors can live and experience the lifestyle of well-off Southern families of the 20th century. Or it can be used as a film studio or field setting for cultural activities.
- Management method: The Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism coordinates with the Cultural Heritage Association and the Association of Architects of Ben Tre province to be the main management agency in terms of operational content, management regulations, and standards. Cultural activities, tours, prices, coordination between accommodation activities and local cultural activities, ensuring food safety, traffic safety, environment... create a chain of houses. ancient/historical - heritage/architecture – hotels, restaurants/culture.
- It is recommended to let private individuals (individuals, companies) carry out activities at relics and ancient houses because they have the advantage of a compact, flexible apparatus (can be a family-owned company), easy to operate, manage activities, and create a friendly environment for tourists. Regarding ownership of the project: in the immediate future, it still belongs to the state (managed by an agency with authority) to facilitate the management of general activities. But in the long term, it is necessary to research appropriate forms of ownership, for example, privatization but

with mandatory conditions: Private ownership must preserve cultural heritage. Accompanied by a number of tax incentives and rewards that recognize the role of that individual or company in preserving the heritage."

With the above specific and reasonable analysis, Nguyen Thi Hau recommends:

"Hopefully, Ben Tre province/city will decide to preserve these heritage sites because of their precious values. Turning cultural values into values in the heritage economy, indigenous cultural resources become assets and important sources of social capital."

According to Bui Hoai Son

"... Should keep the house because of the priceless persuasion of the house. Destroying a monument is easy, but it is the memory and history of a community. If lost, no structure can replace it. Nothing can buy the community's memories expressed in such works. If you can keep it and know how to promote it, it will be an advantage for the province. Not only economics and education, but also politics. While other localities want to have a monument, a local memory like that, it would be a waste for me to throw it away...Nothing can buy the memories of the community expressed in such works. Each house is a different memory, a different experience, nothing can be compared."

Agreeing with the opinions of the above experts, architects from the Hanoi University of Architecture, who are former lecturers of the Ho Chi Minh City University of Architecture, and leaders of the Center for Research, Promotion, and Conservation of Heritage under the Vietnam Cultural Heritage Association in March, when inspecting *the French Public Works Building*, expressed their regret if it was demolished. This old building!

3.3. Proposal for maintenance and conservation through technical construction solutions

The authors' opinion, through surveying the current status of ancient houses in Ben Tre:

Regarding architecture: Most of the ancient house architecture in Ben Tre city has a fairly typical style following Indochina architecture because there is a very extensive interference between Indochina architecture and Western architecture, such as dividing public spaces. The floor plan features - French-style shapes, but the architectural space structure is creative according to traditional Vietnamese and Khmer architectural styles to best adapt to local climatic conditions. These can be seen as relics of a creative blend of French-Vietnamese architecture found only in Vietnam in the early 20th century.

In terms of superstructure stability: despite a long period of time without maintenance during exploitation, the architectural parts were heavily damaged. In particular, the plastering of walls and ceilings, due to the use of triple mortar, is greatly affected by the hot and humid climate, leading to peeling and some ceiling structures being seriously damaged. But overall, the structure of the project is still quite solid.

Regarding the ground surface, because it is located on weak soil, the buildings tend to sink with the characteristic of rolling hills. The grounds of the campus are sinking a lot because the drainage system is no longer working and is affected by the daily underground water level, increased due to sea level rise.

The author's opinion is that we should focus on repairing and renovating the system of ancient houses in Ben Tre city; in addition to maintaining the historical and cultural space, it also maintains the architectural development through the ages, demonstrating talented hands. The culture of Vietnamese workers, including the people of Ben Tre, has breathed life into projects that are both Western modernity but not lacking in Eastern tradition and characteristics that are difficult to confuse. Of the people of Ben Tre like arched doors and windows, they are not curved and round like the ancient houses in Can Tho, Ho Chi Minh City Post Office, Ho Chi Minh City Art Museum, or with straight edges like King Bao Dai's villa in Da Lat; it is semi-curved, rounded at the corners but slightly straight in the center.

Regarding the finishing solution, the author recommends that the architectural panel of the building be kept intact, but the walls that are peeling still use triple mortar with the DH101 additive to increase the strength of the mortar but still ensure the adhesion of the old and new mortar..

Regarding the foundation solution, the author suggests using the soil method mixed with cement with ECO CSB and DH101 additives to ensure that the foundation creates a large mass with enough strength to avoid softening when flooded, but the copper still ensures the difference. The difference between the self-weight of the soil and the original soil after reinforcement is not much and does not lead to settlement due to the self-weight when concreting the foundation, while still ensuring the original aesthetic of the project.

3.4. *Propose exploitation and conservation through tourism development*

Designing specialized tours to collect and explore Indochina architecture or French architectural works for guests who want to learn deeply, such as nostalgic guests, overseas Vietnamese, or intellectuals, is a complex task. This type of sightseeing tourism is currently very developed abroad, and the cost is not cheap. Countries have combined these tours in the form of smart tourism, applying ITC technology in restoring cultural stories and art history through the application of 4.0 technology, using current applications great to attract special customers.

Development combined with urban heritage that does not exceed the threshold will not be subject to adverse reactions. Avoiding the phenomenon of "empty" cultural statues in heritage sites when visitors visit, and when a city is gradually losing its indigenous culture and community cohesion in the face of excessive commercialization, tourism helps preserve and promote its values, as developed countries are doing. This is a way to solve the problem between "stagnation" and "flow", so that the values of heritage still "stay" and are not lost before the "flow" of life. ***The architectural and artistic heritage of ancient French houses in the Ben Tre urban area in tourism development is about time, chronology, history, memory, and commemoration.***

4. Discussion

The authors delve into the challenges facing ancient houses in Ben Tre city, proposing impactful preservation solutions. Their architectural analysis highlights a unique blend of Indochina and Western styles, showcasing creativity from the early 20th century. Despite climate-induced plastering issues, the overall structural integrity remains robust. Challenges with sinking ground surfaces necessitate strategic repair and renovation to maintain cultural significance. The proposed solutions focus on retaining architectural panels, addressing peeling walls, and utilizing soil-cement mixtures, balancing modernity and tradition for the enduring resilience of Ben Tre's ancient houses in the face of environmental challenges.

5. Conclusion

To preserve and protect ancient artifacts in general, and ancient houses in particular, the state, local authorities, and functional agencies need to soon organize a workshop to evaluate the current status of Ben Tre's ancient houses, consult with experts and managers, and promulgate policies to protect ancient houses. They need to urgently organize the inventory, selection, ranking, and inclusion in the list of ancient house relics for conservation in the Ben Tre urban area and throughout Ben Tre province. Every year, we invest money in painting, preventing termites, cracking walls, preventing roof leaks, etc.

Projects linked to tourism should be developed to mobilize resources for preserving ancient houses. Organize connections, invite, and prioritize the transfer of ownership of ancient houses to descendants of owners and figures closely related to ancient houses if they have a need to take over and preserve ancient houses for their own purposes. These actions will facilitate cultural exchange and create a premise for sustainable tourism development. For example, for the French Public Works Building that is about to be demolished, there is currently a construction industry interested in cooperating in preserving it and exploiting it for cultural and tourism purposes, authorities and local authorities need to meet and discuss soon to have a plan to change the demolition item of this house in the project to upgrade and expand Tran Van On Park.

Entering the 21st century and in the future, no matter how remarkable the development of urban architecture is, there will appear many houses with similar styles and appearances that are methodically designed and built using proper ancient house-style techniques... But the lessons from ancient houses are what the academic-architectural-cultural community always reminds each other to promote, study, experience, and introduce for many people at home and abroad to admire. This is the way that posterity can preserve Ben Tre's ancient houses - cultural and historical relics, historical witnesses, and treasures that ancestors have built and created to pass down to future generations.

In the context of the development of the 4.0 industrial revolution, all areas of life are changing, and the face of urban areas in general, and Ben Tre's urban architecture, has been undergoing many innovations, while its ancient features, the time stamp on physical heritage, will become precious. If we care about cultural heritage with an approach from ancient to modern urban architecture, we will create a long chain like a pink thread linked by the culture and traditions of Ben Tre people from the past to the present and the future. On the contrary, if you do not pay attention to preserving ancient houses, Ben Tre's ancient house system will certainly no longer exist. The legends and stories hidden in each ancient

house will be forgotten, and generations of descendants will not have the opportunity to understand a time when ancestors worked hard to build and leave traces and images that are worthy of respect in every old house.

In addition to the goal of preserving heritage values, evaluating and recognizing the heritage value of an urban area also has the meaning of honoring the value of Ben Tre city in the process of integration, creating a brand, and contributing to tourism promotion, serving as a foundation for orienting and promoting urban potential in an effective and sustainable way.

It is the responsibility of researchers, managers, and local and central functional agencies to soon have an official research program on the city's ancient house system, and for Ben Tre to soon issue appropriate policies to promptly preserve, protect, and promote the quintessence that our ancestors have created so that we have what we have today. This is also an extremely valuable lesson for researchers in History, Urban Architecture, Urbanism, Cultural Management, and others to make worthy contributions to the sustainable development of *Ben Tre Xanh* on the foundation of ancient urban heritage architecture.

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Footnotes

¹ Do Van Cong, Pham Van Luan, Tran Dong Phu (2020), *Preserving ancient houses in Ben Tre for sustainable development in the Southwest region*, Proceedings of the National Scientific Conference on *Culture in the sustainable development of the Southwest region: - Current situation and solutions*. Tra Vinh University. Page 238.

² Union of Science and Technology Associations of Ben Tre Province (2020), *Ancient architectural houses in Ben Tre city, Ben Tre - Land and people*, People's Public Security Publishing House. Page 95.

³ Pham Van Luan, *Preserving Ben Tre cultural heritage and developing tourism*, Journal of Cultural Studies, No. 1 (47) 2020, P65.

⁴ Pham Van Luan, *Personal fieldwork documents*, Ben Tre 2020. Page 7.

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⁸ Pham Van Luan, *Ben Tre cultural heritage in the context of modern technology development* Culture and Resources Magazine, No. 1 (21) 2020. Page 68.

⁹ Do Van Cong *Personal fieldwork documents*; 2019. Page 10.

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