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Homegardens of the Cao Lan, a Tai-Speaking Ethnic Minority in Vietnam's Northern Mountains

Pijika Timsuksai,* Nguyen Dinh Tien,** and A. Terry Rambo***

The Cao Lan are a Tai-speaking ethnic group living in the Midlands of Northern Vietnam. Homegardens are an important component of their agroecosystem. The ecological structures of each homegarden of 17 households of the Cao Ngoi village in Tuyen Quang province were described and modal patterns identified. Most homegardens have organically shaped planting areas with indeterminate boundaries, polycentric planting patterns, and contain multiple species within the same bed or planting area. All of the gardens have multiple vegetation levels, with the largest share having 5 levels and a majority having more than 50% of their planting area covered by overlapping vegetation layers. Biodiversity is high with a total of 113 species recorded. Most plant species are used for food, but smaller numbers have ornamental, medicinal, and construction uses or are used for animal fodder, as stimulants, or for other purposes.

Comparison of the modal structure of the Cao Lan homegardens with several Tai minority groups in Northeast Thailand, shows that, although the Cao Lan have been geographically isolated from other Tai groups for many centuries, their homegardens share a similar structural pattern, one commonly referred to as the tropical forest type. This structure is very different from the temperate type gardens of the Kinh in Vietnam with whom the Cao Lan share a common environment and are in frequent contact. The persistence of a common structural pattern among these related Tai ethnic groups, despite their inhabiting different environments, and having had no direct contact with each other for a very long time, suggests that culture exerts a strong influence over agroecosystem structure.

Keywords: Cao Lan ethnic minority, ethnobotany, agroecosystem structure, indigenous knowledge, biodiversity

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Introduction

After Terra's pioneering descriptions of the different types of homegardens associated with different ethnic groups in the Indo-Malayan region (Terra 1952–53; 1954; 1958). few additional studies were published about Southeast Asian homegardens until the 1980s when homegardens emerged as a major focus of agroforestry research. Much of this research was concerned with describing the architecture, species composition, and functions of homegardens of different ethnic groups in the tropics. Since that time, a considerable number of studies have been published describing the structure, species diversity, and functions of homegardens of ethnic groups in different Southeast Asian countries, including Burma (Terra 1954), Indonesia (Soemarwoto and Soemarwoto 1984; Wiersum 2006), Laos (Kou et al. 1990; The SUAN Secretariat 1990; Dyg and Saleumsy 2004; Nawata et al. 2009), Thailand (Moreno-Black et al. 1996; Jiragorn and Nantana 1999; Nawata et al. 2009; Thanakorn et al. 2010; Kamonnate et al. 2012), and the Philippines (Snelder 2008). There has also been considerable research on homegardens in Vietnam (Le Trong Cuc et al. 1990; Karyono et al. 1993; Hodel et al. 1999; Dao Trong Hung et al. 2001; Luu Ngoc Trinh et al. 2003; Vlkova et al. 2011) but it has mostly been focused on the Kinh (ethnic Vietnamese), the majority ethnic group. Only a very few studies have been done on the homegardens of ethnic minorities. In the case of the Cao Lan, a Tai speaking minority group living in the Northern Mountain region, there are only 2 brief reports (Gillogly and Nghiem Phuong Tuyen 1992; Le Trong Cuc and Rambo 2001) which describe the species composition of their homegardens but not their ecological structure or the functions of the different species.

It was in order to obtain information about the structure and species composition and functions of Cao Lan homegardens, that we carried out a short field study in a Cao Lan community in Tuyen Quang province in Northern Vietnam. This case study was done as part of a larger comparative study of the ecological structures of homegardens of different ethnic groups in Northeast Thailand and Vietnam which was designed to assess the relative importance of culture and environment as determinants of agroecosystem structure (Pijika 2014). The aims of this paper are to describe the modal ecological structure of the Cao Lan homegardens, identify all of the plant species grown in these gardens and categorize their functions, and compare the modal structure of the Cao Lan gardens with those of their Kinh neighbors and ethnically related Tai minority groups in Northeast Thailand.

Background

The Cao Lan Ethnic Group

The Cao Lan speak a language belonging to the Tai family of languages. They are one of 54 officially recognized ethnic groups in Vietnam. They are known officially as San Chay (also often called Cao Lan-San Chi). They first immigrated to Vietnam from China beginning in the 1600s. The Cao Lan numbered about 169,000 people in 2009. They are mainly settled in Tuyen Quang, Bac Can, and Thai Nguyen provinces. Settlements of this ethnic group are also scattered in Yen Bai, Vinh Phuc, Phu Tho, Bac Giang, and Quang Ninh provinces (Dang Nghiem Van *et al.* 2000; Sumitre *et al.* 2003; Ethnologue: Languages of the World 2013). According to the 1999 census, a few thousand San Chay live in the Central Highlands, mostly in Dac Lac with smaller numbers in Binh Phuoc, Dong Nai, Gia Lai, and Kon Tum provinces (General Statistical Office 2001). It is likely that these people migrated south to the New Economic Zones in the 1980s.

According to Gregerson and Edmondson (1998), the Cao Lan-San Chay ethnic group is actually a composite of two groups with two different languages and two non-overlapping cultures. The Cao Lan language has been classified as a Central Tai language of the Kam-Tai sub-branch of the Tai-Kadai language family, while the San Chay language is Han Chinese. In their view "... the Cao Lan and San Chay do not live in a classical diglossic situation of high language vs low language, but as two groups with mostly different identities despite a small overlap today and a common link in the past," when these groups lived in close proximity along the border areas of Hunan, Guangdong, and Guangxi provinces of China (*ibid.*, 152).

According to Gregerson and Edmondson's field study, some Tai speaking Cao Lan groups refer to themselves as San Chay, although this is the official name of the Hanspeaking group. Both Cao Lan and San Chay write using Chinese characters. Some older San Chay people can also speak a Tai language just as some elderly Cao Lan can speak and write in the Han language. It can be concluded that, "All these facts tell us that the two were in some sense one nationality with two partially overlapping speech communities whose original bilingualism has developed into separated mostly monolingualism through separation, as the majority of the San Chay live in Quang Ninh and the Cao Lan live mostly in Tuyen Quang, Thai Nguyen, and Bac Giang" (*ibid.*).

The Study Village

Cao Ngoi village is in Dong Loi commune, Son Duong district of Tuyen Quang province. This village is quite isolated and far away from the main road. The distance from the Son Duong district capital to the village is about 50 km, or 2 hours travel by bus (Fig. 1). The

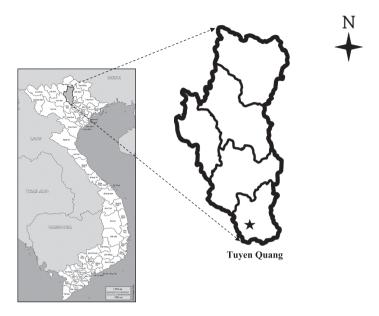


Fig. 1 Map Showing Location of Cao Ngoi Village, Son Duong District, Tuyen Quang Province

narrow and very rough dirt road that connects the village to the main highway crosses paddy fields in lowlands, then climbs up on to the upper terrace with sugarcane fields and acacia tree plantations, before it descends into the narrow valley hidden between steep sloped mountains where Cao Ngoi village is located.

According to the oral traditions of the villagers, Cao Ngoi village was established about 200 years ago by a group of 7 Cao Lan households who migrated there from Hoa Binh province. There are now 21 households with 76 people living there. They all speak the Cao Lan language in their daily activities in the village and also can converse in Vietnamese when dealing with outsiders. Traditionally, Cao Lan was written using Chinese characters but now only one older man in the village can read it. Nowadays the villagers wear Vietnamese style clothes for daily life but they still wear the traditional Cao Lan dress on special occasions.

The villagers live in the traditional Cao Lan style houses which are built on stilts made from large tree trunks. The bottom of each stilt rests on a large flat stone. Most houses have palm leaf roofs. Some houses have walls and floors made of wooden planks and others have woven bamboo walls and floors. They are entered by a wooden ladder on the side of the house. The space underneath the floor of the house is used to store firewood, agricultural equipment, motorcycles and bicycles, and wooden planks for house repairs. A fire-place made of clay is set on the floor of the house and is used for cooking

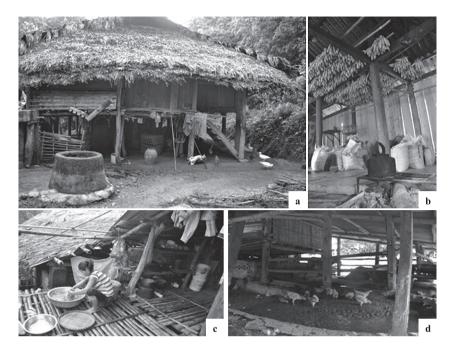


Fig. 2 Traditional Cao Lan Style House and Components; (a) Cao Lan House, Well, and Courtyard, (b) Fireplace inside the House, (c) Balcony, (d) Animal Pens under the House

and heating. The ancestral shrine is mounted on a side wall of the house. Agricultural products such as rice grain and dried maize are stored inside the house. Some houses have large attached balconies built from bamboo where they do laundry and sun-dry food (Fig. 2).

The nearest neighboring Cao Lan village is about 4 km away, or 30 minutes by motorcycle, and the nearest market is about 10 km away. The nearest Kinh (ethnic Vietnamese) village is more than 5 km away. A rudimentary 1 room kindergarten in the village has 1 volunteer teacher and 2 very young students. The nearest primary and secondary schools are about 17 km away in Kinh villages. The older children have to ride bicycles to school there early in the morning and return in the afternoon. The trip takes them almost 3 hours each way.

Natural Conditions of the Study Village

Cao Ngoi village is situated at 169 m above sea level at 21°35'40.18"N, 105°20'52.38"E. The climate is classified as humid subtropical. The soil is infertile sandy loam, with poor drainage in the mountain valley. Although this area has scattered rain all year round with a mean annual rainfall of 1,500 mm (Nguyen Thi Mui 2006), there is a relatively dry

season from August through January and a relatively wet season from February through July. The rains start from late February, with the heaviest rain in July, and then decrease after that with only a slight amount of rain in December. According to the village headman mean temperatures range from 15°C in winter to 35°C in summer. In the village there is a waterfall which the villagers use for electricity generation, for daily household use, to irrigate paddy fields, and which now serves as a tourist attraction in the summer.

The Agricultural System and Its Components

The agricultural system in the village includes paddy fields, upland fields, homegardens, and livestock. The total area of paddy fields is about 5 ha, with an average area per household of about 1,000 m². Two rice crops are grown per year with an average yield of about 4 tons of unhusked rice per crop. The fields are irrigated with water from the stream flowing down from the mountainside into the village. Upland field crops are planted under 3 systems: 1) sugarcane on land belonging to the villagers (under contract to the sugar mill), 2) Acacia trees (*Acacia mangium* Willd) on their own land (under contract to the State Forest Enterprise [SFE]), and 3) Acacia on SFE land (the villagers work as wage laborers for the SFE). The 16 household-owned sugarcane fields cover 8.8 ha. The sugar mill provides the farmers with seedlings and fertilizer. After the harvest, they have to repay the cost of these inputs to the mill. Fourteen hectares, owned by 16 households, are planted with Acacia under contract to the SFE, with the owners receiving 63% of the income at harvest. On the Acacia land owned by the SFE, the villagers who are employed by the SFE receive a regular wage for caring for the trees.

Seventeen households have homegardens (*an toon* in the Cao Lan language). Homegardens include vegetable plots and fruit trees. The gardens surround the houses but are mostly sited in front of the houses. The front side of the house is determined by the location of the ancestor's shrine. Within the homegarden are the house, animal pens, fish pond, bee hives, fenced vegetable plots, fruit trees, a concrete paved area for sundrying crops, and an old-style pit toilet located deep in the garden. The average area of homegardens in this village is almost $3 \, sao$ or about $1,004 \, \text{m}^2$ ($1 \, sao = 360 \, \text{m}^2$, the traditional measurement unit used in the Northern Vietnam region). The $2 \, \text{smallest homegardens}$ are only $1 \, sao$, $6 \, \text{gardens}$ are $2 \, sao$, $4 \, \text{each}$ are $3 \, \text{and} \, 4 \, sao$, with the largest garden having an area of almost $6 \, sao$ ($2,000 \, \text{m}^2$).

Livestock include about 60 cattle and buffalo, 100 goats (belonging to 5 households), 300 chickens, Muscovy ducks and geese, and 1 or 2 pigs per household. There are 11 fish ponds belonging to 11 households. Six households have honey bee hives.

Methodology

Selection of Study Site and Study Households

Cao Ngoi village was selected based on discussions with knowledgeable district officers about Cao Lan settlements that maintained their ethnic traditions and met the following criteria: 1) located in rural area, 2) ethnically homogeneous, and 3) the main purpose of their homegardens was production for household consumption. The village was also selected because it was located some distance away from Kinh villages in a remote area in the mountains, and had no recent connections with other Tai groups in Thailand.

Because of the small size of the community, it was not necessary to employ sampling. Instead, all 17 households having homegardens were included in the survey.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data collection was carried out for 12 days during September 2012. Data were collected at two levels: 1) community level information on village history and ethnic identity was collected in semi-structured interviews with the village headman and village elders, 2) household level information was collected in semi-structured interviews with garden owners and by making direct observations of their gardens, including measurement of horizontal and vertical dimensions, and enumeration of plant species. Data were collected on homegarden components, functions of individual species, and structural characteristics (horizontal and vertical). These data were recorded on sketch maps, photographs, architectural drawings, and species checklists.

Data on all of the homegardens were entered into an Excel database, which was used to compile tables of characteristics for all gardens of households.

Data analysis employed the classification system for describing the characteristics of homegardens developed by Pijika (2014). This system includes horizontal structural dimensions, vertical dimensions, and measurement of species composition and diversity.

Horizontal dimensions include:

- Shape of planting area or plot: *Geometric* forms include plots or beds with square, rectangular, or circular shapes. *Organic* forms include planting areas with irregular or curvilinear shapes.
- Definition of boundaries of planting areas or plots: Boundaries can be *sharp* and clearly marked or *indeterminate* and ill-defined.
- Arrangement of individual plants within planting areas or beds: Individual plants
 can be planted in parallel lines (*lineal*) or in multiple clusters of plants, usually
 including representatives of two or more species (*polycentric*).

• Species composition within each plot: Planting areas or beds can be planted with only a single kind of plant species (*mono-species*) or with a mixture of two or more different species (*multi-species*).

Vertical dimensions include:

- Number of levels of vegetation: Plants of different species have different heights, which were recorded for 5 levels: Level 1 = 1 meter or less, Level 2 = 1.01–5 m, Level 3 = 5.01–10 m, Level 4 = 10.01–15 m, Level 5 = >15 m. All plants in the garden may be of the same height (*single level*) or they may have different heights (*two or more levels*).
- Canopy overlap: The share of the garden area in which the canopies of plants of different heights overlap each other (non-overlapping, <50% overlapping, >50% overlapping).

Species composition and diversity are measured in terms of the:

- Total number of species growing in the garden.
- Species richness, that is the number of species present by using Shannon-Wiener diversity index (H) (Magurran 1988)

$$H = -\mathop{\varepsilon}_{i=1}^{s} pi \ln pi$$

where pi is proportion of the species relative to the total number of plants, and S is the number of species recorded.

• Species abundance, that is how equally abundant the species are by using Simpson's index (D) (*ibid*.)

$$D = \mathop{\varepsilon}_{i=1}^{s} (pi)^2$$

where pi is proportion of the species relative to the total number of plants, and S is the number of species recorded.

Results and Discussion

The Structure of Cao Lan Homegardens

The frequencies with which different structural characteristics of Cao Lan homegardens occur are shown in Table 1. The modal pattern of Cao Lan homegardens is organic shaped planting areas (Fig. 3a) with indeterminate boundaries (Fig. 3c), polycentric plantings (Fig. 3b) of multiple species in the same bed (Figs. 3b and 3d), and having multiple levels (Figs. 3a and 3d) of overlapping canopy layers (Fig. 3a). A large majority of homegardens (72%) have an organic shape of their planting area, 72% have an indeterminate boundary, 78% have a polycentric planting pattern, and 61% have multiple species within the same bed or planting area. All gardens have multiple vegetation levels, with the largest share

Table 1 Modal Pattern of the Cao Lan Homegardens of Cao Ngoi Village, Tuyen Quang Province, Northern Vietnam (n = 17) (Gray shading indicates most common form)

Structural Dimension	Alternatives Forms (%)		Modal Pattern	
Horizontal characteristics				
Shape of planting areas	All Geometric >50% Geometric >50% Organic All Organic	0 0 28 72	Organic	
Boundary definition of planting area	All Sharp >50% Sharp >50% Indeterminate All Indeterminate	6 0 22 72	Indeterminate	
Arrangement of individual plants within planting areas	All Lineal >50% Lineal >50% Polycentric All Polycentric	11 4 7 78	Polycentric	
Species composition within planting area	All Mono-species >50% Mono-species >50% Multi-species All Multi-species	22 17 0 61	Multi-species	
Vertical characteristics				
No. of vegetation levels	1 2 3 4 5	0 0 25 30 45	5 levels	
Share of planting area covered by overlapping layers	Non-overlapping <50% Overlap >50% Overlap	0 44 56	Extensive	



Fig. 3 Homegardens of the Cao Lan of Cao Ngoi Village; (a) Organic, Multi-level and Overlapping Canopy, (b) Polycentric and Multi-species, (c) Indeterminate Boundary, (d) Multi-level and Multi-species

(88%) having 5 levels. More than half (56%) of the gardens have more than 50% of their planting area covered by overlapping vegetation layers.

A comparative study by Pijika (2014) of homegarden structures of 8 different ethnic groups in Northeastern Thailand and Central and Northern Vietnam, including 6 Tai groups (Phu Tai, Nyaw, Yoy, Lao, Kalaeng, and Cao Lan) and 2 Mon-Khmer groups (Viet and Kinh), identified 3 distinctive types of garden structures. The homegardens of most of the Tai groups (Kalaeng, Lao, Nyaw, Yoy, and Cao Lan) have structures that resemble the tropical forest type (Nair 2001), which is characterized by having an organic shape, indeterminate boundaries of planting areas, polycentric planting patterns, multi-species composition, multiple vegetation levels, and extensive canopy overlap. The homegardens of both of the Vietnamese groups (Viet and Kinh) have a temperate type structure (Niñez 1984), with geometric shapes, sharp boundaries, lineal planting patterns, mono-species composition, only a few levels of vegetation, and relatively limited canopy overlap. Fig. 4 compares, the modal structural pattern of the homegardens of the Cao Lan of Cao Ngoi village to that of the Yoy, a typical Tai minority group in Northeast Thailand, and the Kinh of Central Vietnam. It shows that the structure of the Cao Lan homegardens is very similar to the tropical forest type structure found among ethnically-related Tai groups in Northeast Thailand, but is very different from the temperate type garden structure of their Kinh neighbors in Vietnam.

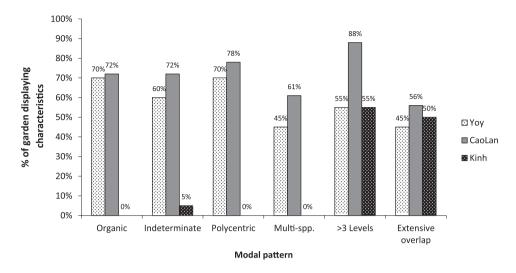


Fig. 4 Comparison of Modal Structural Patterns of Homegardens of Cao Lan with the Yoy, a Related Tai Ethnic Group in Northeast Thailand, and Their Kinh Neighbors in Vietnam (% of gardens of each group displaying characteristics)

Species Composition, Diversity, and Functions

Different plant species are scattered around in different parts of the gardens so as to optimize to their habitats in the different micro-zones of gardens. The total number of plant species found in all 17 gardens was 113. Table 2 presents a detailed list of all species grouped according to their functions. The mean number of species per garden was 25, with a range from 11 to 46 species. Six gardens had 11–20 species, 6 gardens had 21–30 species, 4 gardens had 31–40 species, and only 1 garden had more than 40 plant species.

The most common species are banana (*Musa* spp.) which was found in 15 gardens, ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) and taro (*Colocasia esculenta* Schott.) (14 gardens), guava (*Psidium* sp.) (13 gardens), Ceylon spinach (*Basella albe* L.), sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas* [L.] Lam) and papaya (*Carica papaya*) (12 gardens), and Indian red wood (*Chukrasia tabularis* A. Juss.) (11 gardens).

Plant species richness was measured using the Shannon-Wiener's index (H), in which the higher the index number, the greater the diversity (Table 3). Species richness in the homegardens ranges from H = 1.25–3.04. One homegarden had the highest richness with 35 plant species (H = 3.04). The least rich were 2 gardens with 11 species each (H = 1.25 and 1.36).

The relative abundance of species was measured using Simpson's index (D) (Table 3). Forty-seven percent of homegardens have the lowest number of plants for each spe-

 Table 2
 List of Plant Species in Cao Lan Homegardens

Scientific Name	Common English Name	Cao Lan Name	Vietnamese Name	No. and Percentage of Homegardens Having Species (%)
Vegetable:				
Corchorus olitorius	Tossa jute	Phặc rau đay	Rau đay	2 (11.8)
Solanum spp.	Egg plant	Mặc cơ	Cây cà	8 (47.1)
Solanum spp.	Egg plant (purple)	Mặc cơ	Cây cà tím	5 (29.4)
Luffa aegyptiaca Mill.	Gourd loofa	Cơ mặc kèo	Cây mướp	7 (41.2)
Basella albe L.	Ceylon spinach	Cơ mùng tơi	Cây mồng tơi	12 (70.6)
Brassica juncea	Mustard greens	Phặc cạt	Rau cải	10 (58.2)
Perilla frutescens var. Crispa	Shiso	Phặc hòm làng	Cây tía tô	9 (52.9)
Amaranthus gracilis Desf.	Chinese spinach, Amaranth	Phặc lồm	Rau dền	5 (29.4)
Sauropus androgynus (L.) Merr.	Pak wan tree, Star gooseberry	Phặc rau ngót	Cây rau ngót	6 (35.3)
Piper sarmentosum Roxb.	Wild betal leaf bush	Cơ phặc pạt	Lá lốt	4 (23.5)
Vigna unguiculata subsp. sesquipedalis (L.) Verdc.	Yard long bean	Cơ mặc tồ	đậu đũa	4 (23.5)
Lactuca indica	Indian lettuce	Phặc bàu	Bồ công anh	3 (17.6)
Artemisia vulgaris L.	Mugwort	Cơ ngải	Cây ngải cứu	6 (35.3)
Persicaria odorata	Vietnamese mint	Cơ phặc lặt léo	Rau răm	3 (17.6)
Artemisia lactiflora Wall ex. Bess.	Sagebrush	Cơ phặc ngoi	Cây ngải tía	1 (5.9)
Ficus spp.	Ficus	Cơ lá sung	Cây sung	3 (17.6)
Colocasia gigantea	Colocasia	Co moong linh	Cây dọc mùng	10 (58.8)
Vigna unguiculata subsp. unguiculata	Cowpea	Mạc tổ phừng	Cây đỗ đũa	3 (17.6)
Benincasa hispida	Winter melon	Cơ mặc qua	Cây bí đao	8 (47.1)
Carica papaya	Papaya	Cơ mặc mời	Cây đu đủ	12 (70.6)
Oroxylum indicum (L.) Kurz	Broken Bones Tree	Cơ núc nác	Cây núc nác	5 (29.4)
Ipomoea batatas (L.) Lam.	Sweet potato	Cơ bảy mền	Cây khoai lang	12 (70.6)
Spice:				
Citrus aurantifolia (Christm.) Swingle.	Lime	Cơ mặc chanh	Cây chanh	9 (52.9)
Zingiber officinale ^{b)}	Ginger	Cơ hằng gừng	Cây gừng	14 (82.4)
Capsicum frutescens L.	Bird pepper	Cơ hằng chìu	Cây ớt	5 (29.4)
Cymbopogon citratus (DC.) Stapf	Lemon grass	Cơ ha hom	Cây sả	7 (41.2)
Curcumic longa ^{b)}	Turmeric	Cơ kình	Cây nghệ	9 (52.9)
Eryngium foetidum L.	Long coriander	Phặc hòm nàm	Rau mùi tàu	5 (29.4)
Ocimum basilicum L.	Sweet basil	Phặc húng chói	Húng lìu	4 (23.5)
Mentha cordifolia Opiz.	Spearmint	Phặc hòm nhàu	Cây bạc hà	4 (23.5)
Allium tubreosum Rottler.ex Spreng	Chinese chive	Cà cấu sái	Cây hẹ	5 (29.4)
Alpinia galanga (L.) Willd.	Galangal	Cơ nàng lèo	Cây giềng	4 (23.5)
Atalantia citroides Pierre ex Guill.	-	Cơ mạc chanh đông	Cây chanh rừng	2 (11.8)
Garcinia Cowa Roxb.	Garcinia	Cơ mặc lấu xơng	Cây tai chua	2 (11.8)
Fortunella japonica	-	Cơ mạc quất	Cây quất	3 (17.6)
Allium fistulosum	Spring onion	Cơ xông	Cây rau hành	3 (17.6)
Melissa officinalis L.	Kitchen mint	Cơ phặc hom	Húng lìu	2 (11.8)
Carbohydrate source:				
Colocasia esculenta Schott.	Taro	Cơ phực	Cây môn sọ	14 (82.4)
Pachyrhizus erosus (L.) Urb.	Yam Bean	Cơ mền cạt	Cây củ đậu	5 (29.4)
Maranta arundinacea L.	Arrow root	Cơ miền tinh	Dong riềng	5 (29.4)
Manihot esculenta L.	Cassava	Cơ miền mười	Cây sắn	7 (41.2)
Dioscorea bulbifera L.	Aerial yam	Cơ miền bàn	Cây củ mài	2 (11.8)
Vigna radiata	Mungbean	Đậu nho nhe	Cây đậu xanh	3 (17.6)

Table 2 Continued

	Table 2	Continued		
Scientific Name	Common English Name	Cao Lan Name	Vietnamese Name	No. and Percentage of Homegardens Having Species (%)
Fruit:				
Averrhoa carambola	Star fruit	Cơ mặc phừng	Cây khế	8 (47.1)
Psidium sp.	Guava	Cơ mặc ổi	Cây ổi	13 (76.5)
Musa spp.c)	Banana	Cơ mặc cói tơi	Cây chuối tây	10 (58.8)
Musa spp.c)	Banana	Cơ mặc cói lừng	Chuối tiêu	8 (47.1)
Musa balbisiana Collac)	Banana	Cơ mặc cói mòng	Cây chuối hột	15 (88.2)
Prunus armeniaca L.	Apricot	Cơ mây mai	Cây mai	2 (11.8)
Mangifera indica L.	Mango	Cơ mặc xoài	Cây xoài	9 (52.9)
Artocarpus heterophylus Lamk.	Jack fruit	Cơ mặc mẹt	Cây mít	6 (35.3)
Citrus maxima (Burm.f.) Merr.	Pomelo	Cơ mặc pọc	Cây bưởi	10 (58.8)
Prunus persica ^{d)}	Peach	Cơ mặc đào	Cây đào	4 (23.5)
Zizyphus mauritiana Lamk.	Jujube	Cơ mặc táo	Cây táo	3 (17.6)
Annona squamosa L.	Sugar apple, Castard apple	Cơ mạc na	Cây na	6 (35.3)
Litchi chinensis L.	Lychee	Cơ mặc pai	Cây vải	4 (23.5)
Ananas comosus (L.) Merr.	Pineapple	Cây mặc ló	Cây dứa	3 (17.6)
Syzygium jambos (L.) Alston	Rose apple	Co soi	Cây roi	4 (23.5)
Prunus salicina	Plum	Cơ mạc mắn	Cây mận	4 (23.5)
Dimocarpus longen Lour.	Longan	Cơ mạc nhãn	Cây nhãn	3 (17.6)
Diospyros spp.	Persimmon	Cơ mặc hồng	Cây hồng ngâm	5 (29.4)
Manilkara zapota	Sapodilla	Cơ hồng xiêm	Cây hồng xiêm	2 (11.8)
Lucua mamona Gaerten	Lekima, Egg tree	Mạc lai cay	Cây trứng gà	3 (17.6)
Food dyes:				
Peristrophe bivalvis L.	_	Co bay son	Cây nhuôm cơm	2 (11.8)
Momordica cochinchinnensis (Lour.) Spreng	Spring bitter cucumber	Cơ mò pít	Cây gấc	5 (29.4)
Boehmeria nivea	Ramie	Cơ bảy đáy	Lá gai	6 (35.3)
Medicine:				
Iris domestica (L.) Goldblatt & Mabb.	Blackberry lily	Cơ rẻ quạt	Cây rẻ quạt	1 (5.9)
Crinum asiaticum L.	Crinum lily	Cơ cun	Hoa lá náng/Tỏi lợi tía	3 (17.6)
Plantago major L.	Plantain	Cơ mã đề	Cây mã đề	6 (35.3)
Drynaria quercifolia (L) J. Sm	Basket fern	Et tai thên	Ráng bay	1 (5.9)
Ocimum gratissimum L.	Tree basil	Co hương nhu	Cây hương nhu	7 (41.2)
Zingiber cassumunar Roxb.	Cassumunar ginger	Cơ kinh màng	Cây gừng dùng làm thuốc	1 (5.9)
Xanthium spp.	Cocklebur	Cơ phăn pọt	Cây ké	2 (11.8)
Litsea cubeba (Lour.) Pers	May Chang, Aromatic litsea	Mây thu hênh	Cây màng tang	2 (11.8)
Crinum asiaticum	Crinum Lily, Cape Lily, Poison Bulb, Spider Lily	Cơ cồn	Cây lá náng	3 (17.6)
Abutilon indicum (L.) Sweet.	Indian mallow	Cơ cối xay	Cây cối xay	4 (23.5)
Stimulants:				
Camellia sinensis (L.) Kuntze	Tea	Со ха	Cây chè	2 (11.8)
Areca catechu Le.	Betel nut, Areca palm	Cơ mặc làng	Cây cau	9 (52.9)
Piper betle L.d)	Betel	Cơ đau	Trầu không	5 (29.4)
Nicotiana tabacum L.	Tobacco	Co xin bay	Cây thuốc lá	2 (11.8)
Aesthetic:				
Celosia argentea L.	Cockcomb, Chinese wool	Hoa lợn cảy	Hoa mào gà	4 (23.5)
Gerbera jamesonii Bolus	Gerbera	Va đồng tiền	Hoa đồng tiền	2 (11.8)
Cymbidium aloifolium (L.) Sw.	Aloe-leafed Cymbidium	Phong lan	Hoa phong lan	3 (17.6)
Ficus annlata	Banyan tree	Cơ xì	Cây si	3 (17.6)
Rosa spp.	Rose	Cơ hoa hồng	Hoa hồng	4 (23.5)
Celosia cristata L.	-	Cơ lân cạy	Hoa mào gà	3 (17.6)
Eckipja prortraja	_	Cơ mây moong	Cây thực mực	3 (17.6)

Table 2 Continued

Scientific Name	Common English Name	Cao Lan Name	Vietnamese Name	No. and Percentage of Homegardens Having Species (%)
Ficus bengalensis	Banyan tree	Cơ mây lồng	Cây đa	4 (23.5)
Streblus asper Lour.	Siamese rough bush	Cơ xích xàn	Cây duối	2 (11.8)
Portulaca grandiflora Hook.	Moss-rose	Cơ mười giờ	Hoa mười giờ	1 (5.9)
Chrysanthemum spp.	Chrysanthemum	Cơ hoa cúc	Cây hoa cúc	2 (11.8)
Rhododendorn arboretum Smith	Delavay's Rhododendron	Cơ va hải đường	Cây Hoa hải đường	2 (11.8)
Hura crepitans L.	Monkey's pistol	Cơ vông	Cây vông	3 (17.6)
Cyperus papyrus L.	Papyrus	Nhứ	Cây lác dù	1 (5.9)
Alstonia scholaris (L.) R. Br.	Blackboard tree, Indian devil tree, Ditabark, Milkwood pine, White cheesewood and Pulai	Cσ enh chau	Cây Hoa sữa	3 (17.6)
Arfeuillea arborescens Pierre ex Radlk.	-	Cơ độc cày	Cây xương cá	4 (23.5)
Mila sp.	Cactus	Cơ xương rồng	Cây xương rồng	1 (5.9)
Fodder:				
Colocasia esculenta (L.) Schott.	Taro	Co moon	Khoai nước	8 (47.1)
Sterculia lanceolate Cav.	Po pha sam	Cơ mời liền	Cây sảng	4 (23.5)
Panicum maximum	Elephant grass	Cơ cỏ voi	Co voi	3 (17.6)
Diplazium esculentum (Retz.) Sw.	Vegetable fern	Cơ mây lưng	Rau dướng	3 (17.6)
Morus alba L.	Mulberry	Cơ mày môn	Cây dâu	3 (17.6)
Construction materials:				
Duabanga sonneratioides Ham.	_	Cơ mây tùng	Cây phay	6 (35.3)
Bambusa spp.a)	Bamboo	Cơ mây tê lung	Cây luồng	5 (29.4)
Bambusa spp.a)	Bamboo	Cơ mười họp	Cây tre	4 (23.5)
Azadirachta indica A. Juss.	Quinine	Mời liềm hẳm	Cây xoan dâu	9 (52.9)
Caesalpinia pulcherrima	Peacock's Crest	Cơ phượng	Cây hoa phượng	1 (5.9)
Wrightia pubescens	-	Cơ mời mòng	Cây mức lông mềm	4 (23.5)
Chukrasia tabularis A. Juss.	Indian red wood, Bastard cedar, Chittagong wood, Indian Mahogany, Burmese almond wood, Jamaica cedar	Cơ mai lát	Cây gỗ lát hoa	11 (64.7)
Corypha lecomtei L.	Lan palm	Cơ gui	Cây cọ	4 (23.5)
Food wrapping:				
Stachyphrynium placentarium (Lour.) Clausager & Borchs.	-	Co thong chanh	Lá dong	7 (41.2)
Weaving:				
Gossypium hirsutum L.	Cotton	Mây thoong tooc	Cây bông bạc	1 (5.9)
Firewood:				
Trema orientalis (L.) Bl.	Poison Peach, Charcoal tree	Cơ tặp dêt	Cây hu	3 (17.6)

Notes: a) secondary function as food, b) as medicine, c) as pig fodder, d) aesthetic

cies ranging from 0.01–0.25, followed by 4 homegardens (23.5%) ranging from 0.51–0.75, and 2 homegardens (11.8%) in the range of 0.26–0.50. Only 3 homegardens (17.7%) have the highest frequency of occurrence of each species.

All species were categorized according to their primary use: food and food-related, medicine, aesthetic, stimulants, fodder, construction materials, and other uses (Table 4).

Table 3 Species Composition and Diversity in the Cao Lan Homegardens of Cao Ngoi Village, Tuyen Quang, Northern Vietnam (n=17)

Diversity	No. of Homegardens (%)
1.01-1.50	2 (11.8%)
1.51–2.00	5 (29.4%)
2.01–2.50	4 (23.5%)
2.51-3.00	5 (29.4%)
>3.00	1 (5.9%)
0.01-0.25	8 (47.0%)
0.26-0.50	2 (11.8%)
0.51-0.75	4 (23.5%)
0.76-1.00	3 (17.7%)
	1.01–1.50 1.51–2.00 2.01–2.50 2.51–3.00 >3.00 0.01–0.25 0.26–0.50 0.51–0.75

 Table 4
 Primary Functions of Plant Species in the Cao Lan Homegardens (number and percentage)

•	•	, , ,
Functions (no. and % of species)	Туре	No. and % of Plant Species (n=113 species)
	Vegetable	22 (19.5%)
	Fruit	20 (17.7%)
Food 66 (58.4%)	Spice	15 (13.3%)
	Carbohydrate source	6 (5.3%)
	Food dye	3 (2.6%)
Aesthetic 17 (15.0%)	Ornamental	17 (15.0%)
Medicine 10 (8.9%)	-	10 (8.9%)
Construction meetonicle 9 (7.10/)	House repair	7 (6.2%)
Construction materials 8 (7.1%)	Roofing	1 (0.9%)
	Pig	3 (2.6%)
Fodder 5 (4.4%)	Cattle	1 (0.9%)
	Silkworm	1 (0.9%)
Stimulants 4 (3.5%)	-	4 (3.5%)
	Food wrapping	1 (0.9%)
Other use 3 (2.7%)	Weaving	1 (0.9%)
	Firewood	1 (0.9%)

The majority of plant species (58.4%) are used for food, followed by 17 ornamental species (15.0%), 10 medicinal species (8.9%), 8 species for construction (7.1%), 5 species for animal fodder (4.4%), 4 species used as stimulants (3.5%), and 1 species each for other

uses including food wrapping, firewood, and weaving. No species are used for ritual or to sell for cash. Only 7 species serve multiple functions: Ginger is used for spice and medicine, the fruit of three species of banana (*Musa* spp.) are used for human food and the stalks as food for pigs, and bamboo shoots are eaten as human food and the stalks used as construction materials, peach is used for food and serves an aesthetic function, and betel is used as a stimulant and for aesthetic purposes.

A small number of species are used as stimulants (areca nut [Areca catechu Le.] and betel leaf [Piper betle L.]), as food dye for cooking sticky-rice cake (spring bitter cucumber [Momordica cochinchinnensis (Lour.) Spreng], ramie [Boehmeria nivea, and Peristrophe bivalvis L.]), and as food-wrapping leaves [Stachyphrynium placentarium (Lour.) Clausager & Borchs.]. Three households have mulberry trees in their gardens, the leaves of which used to be used to feed silkworms that yielded thread that was formerly used to weave cloth and one household grows cotton, which also used to be used for weaving.

Conclusions

The homegardens of the Cao Lan of Cao Ngoi village are an important component of their agroecosystem. The many different species of plants grown in these gardens provide food and other necessities for the people as well as fodder for their livestock. With a total of 113 species the gardens also contribute to conservation of biodiversity.

Although the Cao Lan of Cao Ngoi village have been geographically isolated from other Tai groups for many centuries, their homegardens display a tropical forest type garden structure that closely resembles that of several Tai groups in Northeast Thailand. This type of homegarden structure is very different from the temperate type structure of the gardens of their Kinh neighbors in Vietnam with whom they share a common environment and are in frequent contact. The persistence of a common structural pattern among these related Tai ethnic groups, despite their inhabiting different environments, and having had no direct contact with each other for a very long time, suggests that culture exerts a very strong influence over agroecosystem structure. This finding provides empirical support for Richard O'Conner's (1995) earlier suggestion that culture and agriculture are tightly linked together to form durable "agro-cultural complexes" that offer a useful key to reconstruction of the cultural history of Southeast Asia.

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