
Preserve and Promote Cultural Values of the Temple Festival in Bim Son Town, Thanh Hoa Province

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Abstract

The historical and cultural relic of Song Son Temple, also known as Song Temple - where Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh is worshiped, was built to meet most of the people's spiritual life needs for a form of sacred cultural activity which is called the Worship of Mother Goddess. Along with the profound humanistic cultural values, the traditional and modern rituals of the Song Temple festival also need to be learned.

Keywords— Song Temple festival; Mother Goddess; Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh; Bim Son; Thanh Hoa.

I. OVERVIEW OF SONG SON TEMPLE

Bim Son town is located at the northern gateway of Thanh Hoa province, a land of legends and myths. Currently, in Bim Son town, 15 historical, cultural, and scenic relics have been ranked. Among them, there are 9 historical-cultural relics and scenic spots ranked at the National level and 5 relics ranked at the Provincial level.

Song Son Temple was formerly known as Sung Tran Temple, located within the boundaries of Co Dam village, Ha Duong commune, Ha Trung district, Tong Son district (now in Bac Son ward, Bim Son town). Song Temple is famous for its sacredness. It is considered the holy place of Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh. According to folk legend, Princess Lieu Hanh was the daughter of the Jade Emperor. She made a mistake and was punished by going to Earth to experience human life. However, the colorful worldly life makes the fairy unable to stop her heart. Therefore, after many times descending to earth in many different locations (including Pho Cat temple, Thach Thanh district), the heavenly princess is said to have become a Mother Goddess at Song temple today, associated with the story about the dreams and miracles that Mother Goddess sent through the old man of Co Dam village. With great merits in helping the people and the

country, the heavenly goddess was bestowed the title of king and honored by the people as the First Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh. Song Temple relics were also built during the reign of King Le Hien Tong (1740 - 1786) to become a spiritual address for people to pay tribute and express their admiration for the merits of the Mother Goddess.

II. CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL VALUES OF THE SONG TEMPLE FESTIVAL

Song Son Temple Festival - also known as the palanquin procession of the Mother Goddess of Song Temple, is held from the 10th to the 26th of February (lunar calendar) every year with the following important rituals are as follows:

Water procession ceremony: The ceremony is held three days before the main ceremony. Water is taken from nine clear natural wells of the stream in front of Nine Well Temple. Two clay jars tied with peach silk strings, held by eight talented, healthy young men wearing red clothes and yellow cashew scarves around their waists, formed a procession to Song Son temple, followed by young men and participants. The sacred water brought to Song Son temple was brought to Song Son temple by elderly people with descendants of local elders and family members, dressed in robes

and turbans, lit incense sticks to Mother Goddess and then took turns bathing the dharma statues and cleaning the altar furniture, parasols, etc. to prepare for the Holy Mother palanquin procession on the main day.

Announcement ceremony: This is a ritual with the meaning of reporting and inviting Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh, the Jade Emperor, and saints to come and witness the people's sincerity.

Sacrificial ceremony for female mandarin:

The ritual is performed by the girls, the boys, and the village associations, under the direction and arrangement of the head priest of Song temple. In the sacred space, the sound of drums, sometimes bustling, sometimes melodious, blends with the sound of the instrument and the flute, raising the tempo for the melodies of the courtiers, the ladies and gentlemen singing together in sacred, passionate dances. The incarnation depicts the image and merits of the Holy Mother and the Holy mandarins: Hoang Bay, Hoang Muoi, Co Ba, Co Bay, Co Chin... Tourists coming to the festival are so intoxicated that they don't want to leave.

Main ceremony (The palanquin procession for Mother Goddess): In the early morning of the 26th day of the second lunar month, dignitaries and tourists from all over the world gathered in large numbers in front of the yard. After three rounds and one drum sound done by representatives of the Bim Son town government to open the festival, chiefs from Song Son temple, Chin Gieng temple, and Dragon temple, dignitaries, elders, and representatives of the villages held an incense offering ceremony to make requests, warned and then conducted the ritual with prayers and prayers for the country and people [4].

After finishing the ceremony and festival at the ceremony platform, the Mother Goddess palanquin procession ceremony was held. The Dragon Pavilion palanquin used to process Mother Goddess is splendidly decorated. On both sides of the procession are colorful canopies. Ahead of the procession is a Buddha reliquary held in procession by the Buddhist association in the area. The lion dance team walks and dances. The musical team includes drums, trumpets, gongs, lutes, flutes, and barbells, harmonizing procession music. The altar displays all vegetarian and salty offerings. Jewelry items with many colors, symbolizing the clothes, scarves, and jewelry of the Mother Goddess, are respectfully worn by young men on their heads. The Mother Goddess's golden palanquin is the center of the procession, behind the palanquin are thousands of people inside and outside the area,

along with village associations and tourists from all over. At mid-afternoon, the procession reached the top of Ba Doi Pass and offered incense at Chin Gieng temple. After that, the palanquin procession returned to perform the completion ceremony at Song Son temple.

Song Son Temple Festival worshipping Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh in Bim Son, Thanh Hoa contains the cultural identity of traditional Vietnamese festivals. There, people conduct customary rituals and cultural activities, expressing a social consciousness towards the origin in which the Mother is a symbol, a sense of patriotism, and attachment to the motherland. nation, awareness of daily life with needs for health, fortune, and peace.

From a social perspective, the Song temple festival is a phenomenon of cultural religious activities taking place vividly in the daily lives of the people, meeting the needs not only for spiritual life but also cultural life, balancing real and spiritual life, guiding people towards good and noble values. The values of the festival not only belong to each individual and each family but are also expanded as a common cultural asset, honoring cultural values and becoming one of the factors that unite the community.

Coming to the Song Son temple festival, visitors have different wishes. They can directly through their rituals and prayers "communicate" with the Mother Goddess. On the contrary, the Mother Goddess is a symbol, attributed by folk to a supernatural power and ability to save and protect thousands of sentient beings with different worries and misfortunes. That symbol binds destinies together, creating a community, and community sympathy. Festivals are also a place to preserve and transmit culture to the next generation, which makes culture last, ensures unity, and creates cultural memories of the nation, with lasting vitality and spread. radiate in people's lives, expressing the need to create and enjoy material and spiritual cultural values of all classes of people. Therefore, the festival truly becomes a "living museum" of Thanh Hoa culture in particular and Vietnamese culture in general in the flow of history.

Song Son Temple Festival is also meaningful as the first reunion of the year with Mother (Goddess) so that we can share and confide in her, hoping that Mother will always follow the child's steps on the path of life when being I stumble and hope for Mother to help me. Coming to the Song Temple festival at the beginning of the year is to pray to the Mother Goddess

to bestow blessings and health on the workers for a year. Therefore, the Song Temple festival brings many spiritual colors blending and intertwining with the traditional identity of "drinking water, remembering its source".

III. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SONG TEMPLE FESTIVAL - PAST AND PRESENT

Thanh Hoa is a land surrounded by a layer of colorful folk culture and it is not surprising that this is one of the places where the practice of worshipping the Trinity of Mother Goddesses (Mẫu Tam Phủ) belief has been nurtured and developed for many centuries. Until today, this pure Vietnamese belief still shows its position as the national cultural treasure, as well as affirming a strong vitality in the spiritual and religious life of the Vietnamese people. And Song Temple, where Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh is worshiped, has become a major Mother Goddess worship center not only in Thanh Hoa but also in the whole country. Song Son Temple was built around the mid-18th century. After a long period of being damaged by natural disasters and wars, in 1990, the temple was restored and embellished but no longer retained its ancient beauty. However, folk legends still preserve many mysterious stories about the existence of the temple. One of them is the story about the magical fish. That is, every January and February of the lunar calendar, a school of redfish often appears in the lake in front of the temple. The fish lived in the lake until the Song Temple festival ended, then disappeared as if they had never existed. This lake is called God Fish Lake, and the redfish are said to be reincarnations of fairies in the upper world who come to serve Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh [6]

According to ancient documents, the worship was performed by women, called clairvoyants. Clairvoyants are usually single people since they were young, volunteering to work as bronze workers and taking care of the temple of the Mother Goddess, serving the Mother Goddess in many forms such as singing, dancing... During the festival, clairvoyants must live separately. They must live in seclusion and fast to keep their hearts pure.

Every year, the managers of the relic site and dignitaries here try to build a festival program based on traditional rituals with typical features of religious activities worshipping Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh. Song Son Temple Festival not only retains its original value but is also improved to suit the practical situation and historical circumstances. But all still aim for the

sacredness of Mother Goddess. Song Son Temple is not only in the cultural space of Bim Son town, Thanh Hoa province but also a national worship facility. Tourists come to the Song Son temple festival with their sincerity. Due to the poor conditions of farmers living here in the past, they offered to Mother Goddess their home-made agricultural products. Song Son Temple is not only in the cultural space of Bim Son town, Thanh Hoa province but also a national worship facility. Tourists come to the Song Son temple festival with their sincerity. Due to the poor conditions of farmers living here in the past, they offered to Mother Goddess their home-made agricultural products. The sense of a festival also originates from there. Today, offerings to the Mother Goddess are agricultural products made from rice.

Song Son Temple Festival demonstrates the differences between reality and myth to suit modern life. The reality before our eyes is a green landscape bathed in a cheerful spring atmosphere full of vitality and pure nature, bringing visitors peace of mind. The legend of the Mother Goddess or the legend of the sacred Mother is closely connected to everyday life, making reality even more magical and enchanting. Visitors coming to the Song Son Temple festival feel like they have encountered immense goodness, setting aside the usual trivial things in vibrant daily life.

Also from the reality of the Song Son temple festival in Bim Son town, Thanh Hoa province, we have a perspective on the festival organization model throughout the country. In recent years, along with the "outbreak" of folk beliefs, several festivals that were once lost and faded have been restored with expanded scale, and changes in rituals and content... has distorted the meaning and identity of traditional festivals. Many traditional festivals are organized by local authorities according to the same scenario, including separate ceremonies and festivals. The ceremony contains cumbersome administrative rituals. The festival is interwoven with modern art forms and games: music, sports competitions, escapist performances, and games with indigenous nuances...containing the features of a cultural festival or a contemporary celebration [7].

IV. SONG SON TEMPLE, A PLACE TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE HERITAGE VALUE OF PRACTICING THE BELIEF OF WORSHIPING THE TRINITY OF MOTHER GODDESSES OF THE THREE PALACES OF VIETNAMESE PEOPLE IN BIM SON TOWN, THANH HOA PROVINCE

More than 400 places worship Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh nationwide, but not all places are considered sacred Mother Goddess places. Famous places believed to be where Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh include Giay Palace, Tay Ho Palace, and Song Son temple. Among them, Song Son Temple in Bim Son town is known as "the most sacred Mother Goddess worship site in Thanh Hoa". In recent times, local authorities at all levels have issued many documents directing the management and restoration of cultural relics of Song Son Temple to promote the historical and cultural values of Song Son Temple. Accordingly, raising awareness and responsibility of direct management units of religious practice facilities is of particular concern. In addition to State management, the role of the community in protecting and promoting the heritage value of practicing Mother Goddess worship at Song Temple is increasingly demonstrated through the contributions of individuals, groups, and communities, tribes, local people, and even visitors.

Mother Goddess worship is attended by many social sectors, especially followers of Mother Goddess worship and Buddhism. Among Song Son festival activities, on the evening of the 25th day of the second lunar month every year, the Mother Goddess Ceremony was held. Contributing to the religious process of worshipping the Trinity of Mother Goddess, the "mediumship ceremony" (*Hầu đồng*) is an activity that is fully participated by clairvoyants, followers... Through the melodious sound of the guitar and sweet lyrics, listeners Meet again the legendary characters admired by the local people. The graceful and beautiful dances of the followers recreated the images and deeds of the angels and deities who have made great contributions to the country. The "mediumship" ceremony often attracts thousands of people inside and outside the area to pay attention and admire. Currently, Bim Son town has a Club of followers of the Trinity of Mother Goddesses belief led by Ms. Nguyen Thi Duoc. The club, with the participation of 15 members, was established in July 2018, operating on the principles of volunteerism, self-management, and self-funding. The club operates to practice beliefs according to the true meaning of the Mother Goddess belief in Bim Son town

to propagate and mobilize members to implement the guidelines, policies, and laws of the Party, the state and Cultural heritage law on preserving national cultural identity, practicing thrift, avoiding waste, and not being superstitious. Each member of the Club will be an important factor, contributing to preserving and promoting the nation's precious cultural heritage.

Ms. Nguyen Thi Duoc and her followers participate in seminars and scientific discussions in different localities about religious activities of worshipping the Trinity of Mother Goddess. Ms. Duoc accumulates experience, and always guides, guides, and teaches her followers to fully understand the Mother Goddess belief to practice properly. She always believes that the sacred rituals of worshipping the Mother Goddess must preserve morality to protect and promote the value of intangible heritage, creating the spread of folk beliefs worthy of the honor of the Mother Goddess. domestic and international community. According to researchers, currently, documents on Mother Goddess worship, rules, and standards in practicing this heritage are very limited, so teaching is mainly done by word of mouth. According to researchers, currently, documents on Mother Goddess worship, rules, and regulations are very limited. Therefore, the transmission of beliefs is carried out mainly by word of mouth. Realizing the difficulties in preserving, preserving, and promoting this performing art, Ms. Duoc traveled around temples and actively collected ancient texts to pass on to young followers in the club [8].

In addition, at Song Temple, there are 19 groups with nearly 1,000 followers who regularly participate in religious activities to worship the Trinity of Mother Goddess. Besides, the activities of worshipping the Trinity of Mother Goddess are practiced in the spring festival months, the 9th month of the lunar calendar (Lady Chin Temple festival), and the thanksgiving ceremony in the last month of the lunar year. Annually, in Bim Son town, there are over 150 groups and followers participating in the activity of worshipping the Trinity of Mother Goddess with a total of nearly 3,000 people participating in the ritual. The participation of clubs, groups, and individuals in the Song Son Temple festival makes an important contribution to protecting and promoting the value of practicing the Vietnamese belief in worshipping the Trinity of Mother Goddess – an intangible cultural heritage.

V. CONCLUSION

The cultural beauty of the Song Son temple festival is the expression of the tradition of "drinking water, remember its source", contributing to fostering human kindness, filial piety, and moral values that guide people to the truth - goodness - beauty. Visitors come to the festival, participate in the fun with cultural behavior, with respect, remembering the merits of Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh for building and protecting the country.

Song Son Temple Festival, for many generations, has become a traditional festival, a spiritual cultural activity that penetrates deeply into the consciousness of the Thanh Hoa people. Thus, with the Mother Goddess belief of Vietnamese residents, especially farmers, local people created a traditional festival imbued with folk characteristics - Song Son Temple Festival - to commemorate the day Mother Goddess descended to earth. save humanity. That is the traditional cultural beauty inherent in the festival that needs to be preserved and promoted

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