

PRESERVING THE CULTURAL VALUES OF HAI CHAU VILLAGE COMMUNAL HOUSE FESTIVAL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DA NANG CITY

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Abstract - Hai Chau Village Communal House Festival is attached to the same name of an ancient temple, has experienced a remarkable long history. In 2009, Hai Chau District People's Committee decided to restore Hai Chau village communal house festival with the hope of raising awareness and appreciation of the roots and history of Danang in local people and tourists. This paper aims to show the current situations of preserving and promoting cultural value of the festival that encounters great difficulties. Therefore, the paper will recommend some solutions that partly contribute to enhancing the quality of the festival as well as preserving its value in the development of Da Nang city.

Key words - Hai Chau Village Communal House Festival; Hai Chau Village Communal House; Da Nang; current situations; preserve cultural values,

1. Introduction

An ancient festival with long history as Hai Chau village communal house Festival, which went through many historical events, has finally been invested in and restored since 2009. Hai Chau village communal house Festival is annually held in the third lunar month. Despite being organized with large scale and investment, the festival seems not to be attractive to the public. The fact is that modern life makes people forget the traditional values of the nation and disregard cultural activities such as traditional festivals. In fact, there are many students, especially students majoring in social sciences and humanity in Danang, know nothing about the festival.

In addition, the preservation and promotion of heritage values through the celebration of Hai Chau village communal house Festival are still limited for many reasons. This paper will focus on the cultural characteristics of the festival, highlight the current status of the festival and thereby offer some measures to preserve its heritage values.

2. Hai Chau village communal house Festival

2.1. Introduction of Hai Chau village communal house

Located in alley No 48 of Phan Chau Trinh Street, Hai Chau 1 ward, Hai Chau district, Hai Chau village communal house was built in 1806, the 5th year of Gia Long's reign.

According to Nguyen Van's family genealogy, one of the earliest clans in Hai Chau, their ancestor was originally from the North, in Hai Chau village, Thanh Binh, Thanh Hoa province today. In the process of following King Le Thanh Tong to explore the new land, they set up Hai Chau village and settled in this land in 1471 [6].

In 1804, the first foundation of the village communal house was built in Nghia Loi area on the bank of Han River to the east. In the early years of the resistance war against the French colonialists in Da Nang from 1858 to 1860, the house was severely damaged by the devastation of the war. In 1860, the people rebuilt the new family house on the

grounds of today's Danang Medical College [2].

By 1903, the French used the village communal house as a hospital for patients with smallpox. In 1904, according to the application of all villagers, the French returned the village communal house. However, people think that the holy place had been infected by the epidemic. Once again the people made a petition to King Thanh Thai for rebuilding a new village communal house. This time, they decided to build the system of Hai Chau village communal house with the following areas: Village communal house, church of worshipping ancestors, church of worshipping 43 clans, Ba shrine (worship Thien Y Ana), a gate and a Lotus pond [2].

In order to preserve, promote and honor the values of Hai Chau village communal house, on July 12, 2001 the Ministry of Culture and Information (now the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism) recognized the architectural component of Hai Chau village communal house festival as National Cultural Historical Monument.

Nowadays, Hai Chau village communal house is a harmonious, large-scale, beautiful structure in Danang. In front of the house, there is a rectangular lake, a fake paint and a large banyan with a three-door gate. The three-door gate consists of a main door and two-side doors. The whole gate is 6m long, 5m high; the roof of the main door is embossed with four Chinese characters, translated as "Hai Chau commune".



Figure 1. The three-door-gate of Hai Chau village communal house.

At present, the Nguyen Van's family still preserves many horizontal lacquered boards, and pot scrolls in Chinese characterers, along with bronze bells and ancient stones. [5]

a. Horizontal lacquered boards: Hai Chau village communal house is preserving nine paintings made in the reigns of King Gia Long, Minh Mang, Thieu Tri, Tu Duc and Bao Dai. In particular, the horizontal one made in Gia

Long reign is the largest.

b. Pot scrolls: There are two couples of pot scrolls:

Two sentences were made in the spring of Bao Dai's 10th year, by virtue of the Phan family and the leader of the Le family worship. Two sentences were made in the fall of Bao Dai's 10th year by Truong Dinh Thao, Mai Chinh Tam, Luu Van Vinh co-worship

c. Bronze bells: The bronzer bell is 1.3m high, the mouth diameter is 0.7m, made for hundred of years ago and being hung on a wooden shelf. At the top of the bell, two dragons are wrapped tightly together. The bell body is divided into eight cells, the letters are cast.

d. Ancient stones: Inside the Hai Chau village communal house, there are three marble stones. One of them was made in the 14th year of Tu Duc reign (1861). Two others were established in Bao Dai's reign (1926) to record Hai Chau people's merit in contributing money to repair the village communal house and church.

2.2. The festival of Hai Chau village communal house

2.2.1. The meaning of the festival

Up to the present, there is no document that accurately records the origin of Hai Chau village communal house festival. According to Nguyen Duy Minh, the person in charge of the Culture and Sports project of the People's Committee of Hai Chau Ward, is also the sixth generation grandson of one of the 43 seniors who were worshiped in the village communal house. The origin of the festival was the rituals in spring and autumn.

By 1865, the elders of the village began to perform the rituals. In 1978, the policy of eliminating bureaucratic superstition was enacted. This made all the temples smashed because of the misperception between spiritual culture and superstition. At that time, Hai Chau village communal house was not demolished. However, it was abandoned for a long time. Since then, the festival was also forgotten.

For the purpose of praying for good weather, good work as well as of worshipping and expressing gratitude to the ancestors who publicly set up the village, Hai Chau village in the past. The Festival of Hai Chau Village communal house is an intangible cultural heritage created to fulfill the spiritual needs of people here. Moreover, Hai Chau village communal house festival is also considered as a useful tool in introducing traditional values to young generations.

2.2.2. Main activities of the festival

Hai Chau Village communal house Festival is held in 3 to 4 days with the ceremony taking place in two days. These days usually drop on the 9th and 10th lunar March (the Hung King's death anniversary). From 3 to 7 pm of the first day, there is a ritual worshipping all the dead spirits.

For the ceremony, a total of 21 men taking part in the festival have to wear "ao dai", traditional costume. The group includes a chief priest, two auxiliaries, 12 young men, 1 literati, and five musicians. The ritual is held on the 10th day of the third lunar month with saluting national flag as the first activity. In traditional ritual, the first is to worship heaven and earth in front of the gate aiming to pray

for peace and good things. The next ritual of the festival is the praying ceremony. The end of ceremony of Hai Chau village communal house festival is the ceremony of releasing pigeons. [3]

For the event, Hai Chau Village communal house Festival is a space that revives many traditional folk games such as making lanterns, drawing calligraphy, chess, sticking, tugging and jumping. In addition, there are contests interwoven before the ceremony as the making "banh chung", as well as folk singing contest, traditional costumes...



Figure 2. The festival of Hai Chau village communal house in 2017 (Source: <http://tourism.danang.vn>)

3. Preservation of the festival

3.1. Current difficulties

According to Nguyen Duy Minh, Head organizer of the festival committee, in order to have a full-fledged festival, the budget would be approximately 500 million Vnd and most of it would come from the local government's budget. The amount of about 500 million is quite difficult to disburse. Mobilization from individuals and organizations to contribute is frequently applied but not highly effective. With the district scale, the organization of the Hai Chau village festival requires a large number of participants to undertake various tasks. During the preparation time, shortage of human resources has become one of an unsolved problem. In fact, having experienced many historical events, many families left the hometown for new life. These people, for many reasons, find it difficult to join or contribute in the festival's activities. The impact of the market economy, the hectic life of working eight hours a day, and the pressure of earning money may make people no longer interested in the cultural values and traditional festivals. Otherwise, the festival with many traditional ceremonies requires performers to be knowledgeable and experienced while our young generations seem no longer to be interested in such a traditional festival. It is difficult to encourage young people to participate in the festival. Therefore, it becomes harder to nurture enthusiastic ones to inherit and develop the festival. [5]

Before the festival, the organizers always take contact with DRT, Da Nang Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism to cooperate in advertising and doing public relation for the festival in mass media. However, the fact that the presentation of information about the festival is

quite superficial.

Most companies and enterprises that wish to invest in the festival have certain calculations in order to bring economic benefits to them. Typically, the condition associated with the amount of support is the requirement about advertisements, brand logos in the festive space, using the company's "sponsorship" products during festival activities.... Because of the practical requirements, the cooperation between the festival organizers and most enterprises seems to be rare or not very effective. [6]

We have done a small survey among 155 students from Oriental Studies, Department of International Studies, University of Foreign Languages Studies, the University of Danang about their knowledge and awareness of the local festivals. 74.5% of the answers show that the students know a little of this and 8.5% of them do not know about any festival in Da Nang city.

Related to Hai Chau village communal house Festival, the results show that 56.1% of the students know nothing about the festival; 36.8% just hear its name for the first time.

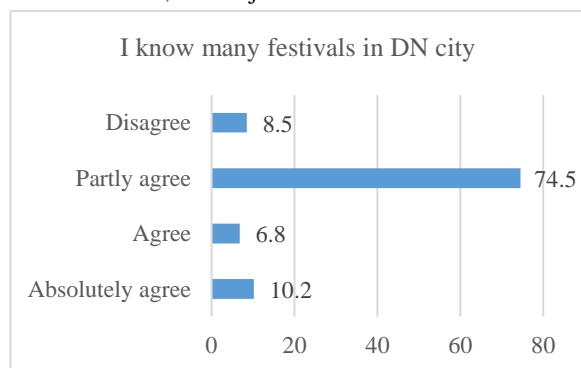


Figure 3. Students's knowledge about local festivals



Figure 4. Students's knowledge about Hai Chau village Communal Festival festivals

3.2. Solutions to the current difficulties

3.2.1. Improving the efficiency of communication for the festival

The first measure to preserve and develop the values of the festival is focusing on propaganda that make people deeply understand the cultural values and history of the festival and thereby arouse the pride and honor of the past as well as make local people remember their predecessors who came from the North to set up the village of Hai Chau. This also helps to limit misunderstandings that lead to distortions of traditional customs.

In fact, the festival is at risk of being subjected to negative change due to the adverse effects of the age, economy, social and human factors, making festivals vulnerable to change or losing the original features from the past. Therefore, officials in charge of cultural management and cultural heritage management should be the first ones to be encouraged to develop the potentials of the village communal house and the local Hai Chau village communal house festival. This is one of the necessary points to organize suitable activities and educate local people about the traditions of national identity and spiritual values through the festival.

In addition, beside the propagandizing activities for local people, communicating activities for the festival also need to be promoted on the media. An important festival, such as the Hai Chau village communal house festival, should be widely publicized on the media to attract the attention of the public and investment from organizations, companies.

Besides, the organization of a traditional festival, such as the Hai Chau village communal house festival, should tighten the management of the activities, strengthen the security of the festival, prevent all trafficking, superstition binary.

3.2.2. Focusing on the role of religious beliefs and economic tendencies

Socializing of the conservation and promotion of heritage values of the Hai Chau village communal house festival will sum up all potentials, resources of all forces and all socio-economic elements to participate in creation and develop the cultural values most effectively. The organization of Hai Chau village communal house festival should rationalized to ensure both the direction and the continuous propaganda to raise awareness and sense of responsibility of community residents to maintain and promote all traditional values of the festival.

It is right time to strengthen the leadership and management of the career of preserving and developing the heritage values of the festival of Hai Chau village communal house in particular and the intangible cultural heritages of the city in general.

In short, the preservation of this festival must satisfy the demands of the religious beliefs of the community as well as to be in accordance with the national and local economic tendencies. Accordingly, it is important to clarify the role of local residents as the main organizer of the festival as well as the necessity of encouraging them to participate in the festival by choice. Although these local residents are welcomed to the festival, they have to be asked to acquire proper awareness of the meaning and the history of the festival according to the instructions of local government. This might help them to appreciate and promote the cultural values in proper ways.

Danang government should develop policies to attract investment to expand festival scale towards tourism such as holding extended conferences, inviting investors to participate in organizing process to improve the informative interaction with the local. In addition, it is

necessary to firmly grasp the situation of organizing the festival and have relevant documents on attracting investment, bringing the investment attraction into one of the key programs.

3.2.3. Bringing knowledge of the festival into the universities's curriculum

For the suggestion of bringing knowledge of the festival to curriculum, 85% agreed with us. So that, it is necessary to adjust the curriculum in which the local festivals, such as Hai Chau village communal house's festivals, are taught and researched carefully.

Furthermore, extracurricular activities at local cultural communities such as Hai Chau village communal house, should be considered as useful linking activities for higher education in the future.

Moreover, students are one of the most important generations for cultural education, especially students who are studying in the fields of humanities and social sciences. Local universities should encourage and support lecturers and their students to carry out scientific research on the characteristics and values of cultural and historical relics and cultural communities in the city.

4. Conclusion

The festival of Hai Chau village communal house is one of the "cultural specialties" of Da Nang city. This festival not only enriches the national cultural heritages, but also reflects the way of living and the behavior of residents here. In fact, the organization of this festival is facing with many difficulties. In the context of global economic integration,

there are advantages brought along with many challenges for Vietnam in general and for Da Nang City in particular. One of the big challenges is how to both develop national economy and preserve all national cultural identities, avoiding cultural assimilation. The existing current situations of Hai Chau village communal house festival shows an urgency for the introduction of methods to preserve and promote the heritage values of the festival and national identities effectively.

Last but not least, the government, local authorities, social managers and educational managers have also played indispensable roles in confirming, preserving and promoting the festival to make it an well-preserved intangible heritage as well as a cultural tourism product not only nationwide but also worldwide.

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