

ONG BON'S BELIEF AND FESTIVAL OF THE CHINESE IN BINH DU'ONG PROVINCE (STUDY CASE: PHUOC AN TEMPLE IN CHANH NGHIA WARD, THU DAU MOT CITY)

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Abstract

The Chinese in Binh Duong worship the gods in the community at the temples, palaces such as Thien Hau Thanh Mau, Quan Thanh De Quan especially Ong Bon and many other gods. However, for each dialect group, there is a specific worship for each religious object. Phuoc An temple festival is one of the typical festivals of worshipping the deity of the Chinese in Binh Duong. This festival has formed a belief system of the Chinese community with the same a traditional profession that we need to preserve from technology, heirloom experience to the rituals and cultural activities of the community with over hundred years. The Chinese in Binh Duong have a rich spiritual and cultural life, it makes the customs more meaningful and valuable before the integration trend. The article introduces the general belief and festival of Ong Bon at Phuoc An Mieu.

Keywords: *belief, Chinese, festival, Ong Bon, Phuoc An temple*

1. Introduction

The Chinese came to settle in Binh Duong through each wave of migration, influenced by many historical factors, settled down and developed in different regions. In which, the largest and earliest residences are in the areas such as: Lai Thieu, Bung, Chanh Nghia, Phu Cuong, Tan Phuoc Khanh, etc. According to each language community group: Fujian, Guangdong, Chaozhou, Hakka (Huynh Ngoc Dang, 2010). The Chinese has a common feature that is preserving the community's traditional cultural values in terms of customs, practices, folk beliefs and religions. Typical and most prominently expressed through the religious facilities and festivals still preserved to this day.

Belief and festival of Ong Bon at Phuoc An temple is one of the typical festivals of the Chinese custom of worshipping Ong Bon in Binh Duong. This festival has formed a belief system of the Chinese community with the same occupation, a traditional occupation that needs to be preserved from techniques and heirloom experiences to rituals and cultural activities of the community that have been attached over a hundred years. Through the

beliefs and festivals of the Chinese community in Binh Duong, further clarify the ethnic characteristics, cohesion and community development of the Chinese.

As the Chinese in other provinces and cities in the South of Vietnam, the Chinese in Binh Duong has a rich spiritual and cultural life. They carry, preserve and maintain the traditional rituals of their fathers attached to the professional community. It is this feature that makes the ritual more meaningful and valuable. The scope of this paper, author would like to refer to the belief and worship of Ong Bon at Phuoc An temple at Chanh Nghia ward, Thu Dau Mot city, Binh Duong.

2. Method

To achieve the research objectives, we use the theoretical research method, the data used by the author in the paper is secondary data. The paper knows how to select, collect, analyze and synthesize documents on the culture of the Chinese community in Vietnam, in the Southern and in Binh Duong. In which, we dig deeply into Ong Bon's beliefs and festivals of the Chinese community in Binh Duong and selected Phuoc An temple as a case study on the basis of ethnographic description. Depending on the basis of theoretical research and analysis of these documents and data, we withdraw some values and meanings about Ong Bon's belief and festival at Phuoc An temple - a typical tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Chinese community in Binh Duong in the context of cultural exchange and integration with ethnic groups.

3. Result

3.1. A summary of Ong Bon's belief of the Chinese in Binh Duong

The Chinese in Binh Duong mainly includes 4 dialect groups: Fujian, Guangdong, Chaozhou, Hakka. As exiles, belief becomes an important need in life as a spiritual support, helping them to stabilize and develop. The beliefs of the Chinese are very diverse and rich in many aspects. In addition to the tradition of worshipping grandparents, ancestors, the Chinese in Binh Duong worship Thien Hau Thanh Mau, Quan Cong, Ong Bon, That Phu Dai Nhan⁷⁶ who are the protectors and blessers of the clans, every profession, and each family in their native land are maintained on the new land they are living in (Huynh Ngoc Dang, 2010).

For the Chinese, Ong Bon⁷⁷ is a common noun in the region calling the gods brought by the Chinese from their native homeland to worship. “Bon” means “root”, “Ong Bon” means “ancestor”. Actually, “Ong Bon” is just a symbol, similar to a “Phuoc Duc Chanh

⁷⁶ is the ancestor of the clans (families): Luc, Chu, Quach, Tieu, Trieu, Ly and Chau. This is also the main symbol of Ong Bon of the Chinese community – the Ly clan from Fujian in the area of Phuoc An temple (Chinh Nghia, Thu Dau Mot). The Ly clan of the Chinese in Binh Duong is also known as That Phu Dai Nhan.

⁷⁷ *The customs of festival of Ong Bon pagoda*, updated at:

<https://hoangnguyen1608.wordpress.com/2014/03/02/phong-tuc-le-hoi-chua-ong-bon/>.

Than” of the Chinese, although each dialect group has its own conceptions and beliefs about this god.

The Chinese Fujian in Cholon has concretized Ong Bon as Chau Dat Quan – a mandarin of the Nguyen Dynasty. The Chinese Chaozhou and Haina in the Southwest region are concretized as Tam Bao Thai Giam Trinh Hoa - a man of the Ming Dynasty. The Chaozhou people in Hoi An are concretized as Phuc Ba Tuong Quan (Ma Vien). The Guangdong people in Cholon believe that their Ong Bon is the God of Earth, but the Chinese with the Vuong clan of Fujian origin in Binh Duong believe that their Ong Bon is Huyen Thien Thuong De and the surname Ly of Chaozhou origin for their Ong Bon is Ly's ancestors.

As presented above, unlike the Chinese communities in other areas, the Ly community from Fujian in the area of Phuoc An temple (Chinh Nghia ward, Thu Dau Mot city) worships Ong Bon as their ancestors: Luc, Chu, Quach, Tieu, Trieu, Ly and Chau. This is also the main symbol of Ong Bon here. They also worship Phuoc Duc Chanh Than that they call ong Dia, which is the local god of the land, and the Phuoc An temple festival in Chanh Nghia ward, Thu Dau Mot city. One of the typical festivals of Ong Bon’s custom of the Chinese in Binh Duong.

In Binh Duong, currently there are five temples to worship Ong Bon. These include the palace worshipping their obligation of the Vuong clan in Binh Duong Vuong such as: Phuoc Vo Dien (Chinh Nghia, Thu Dau Mot), built in 1885; Ngoc Hu Cung (Lai Thieu, Thuan An), built around 1971; Phuoc Tho Duong (Hung Dinh, Thuan An), built around 1934; Phuoc Nghia Duong (Tan Phuoc Khanh, Tan Uyen), built around 1936. The Ly clan has a temple to worship Ong Bon called Phuoc An Mieu (Chinh Nghia, Thu Dau Mot), built in 1980. This temple was built by the Ly clan, in addition to worshipping the ancestors of the seven families as above, it was also worship hall of Ly clan, so it was also called Ly Thi Gia Mieu (Nguyen Viet, 2014).

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Like the temples and shrines of the Vietnamese, the temples of Ong Bon are integrated with many gods such as: Truong Thien Su (Truong Dao Lang - Han Dynasty), Bao

Cong (Song Dynasty), Canh Chu Ton Vuong, Linh Tu Ton Vuong, Cuu Thien Huyen Nu (Ha Truc, 2012).

According to Mr. Ly Hiep Son, 70 years old (in 2019), the head of the Ly clan in Chanh Nghia said that his Ly clan originated from Tuyen Chau, An Khe district, Fujian through Vietnam up to his generation is 4th generations. Phuoc An temple probably appeared from that time. Right next to the temple of Ong Bon is worship of his Ly clan. Every year, the temple organizes three days of worshipping Ong Bon in the year (lunar calendar): (1) on the 16th of January is the tour, (2) on the 12th of August is anniversary of the birth, on the 12th of October is anniversary of the death. In particular, every year, on the day of birth, Phuoc An Temple holds worshipping ceremonies, but once every three years, the festival is held for three days and three nights. The wooden stelae are solemnly placed in the street engraved with the names of the deceased to 7 generations (of which 3 generations are people who originally lived in China, 4 generations are people who have moved to Vietnam to settle down. According to the elders, Chanh Nghia is the place with the earliest ceramic craft in Binh Duong. This is a hereditary profession, maintained when they migrated to Chanh Nghia, Binh Duong. From this cradle, ceramics continued to develop in the other areas in Binh Duong (Source: Author's in-depth interview in 2019)

3.2. Ong Bon's festival of the Chinese at Phuoc An temple through ethnographic description

As described in part 1, every year, Phuoc An temple holds a ceremony to worship Ong Bon in 3 days. In which, August 12th is the most important, the festival is held once every three years, so the author only presents this festival in this paper.

Overview of Ong Bon's festival at Phuoc An temple

Although not as crowded as Thien Hau Thanh Mau's festival, but Ong Bon's festival also shows typical beliefs, associated with the main occupations of the Chinese. This is also considered as one of the important festivals of their year.

Ong Bon's festival in Phuoc An temple takes place from 11th to dawn on the 14th day of August (lunar calendar). There is a big ceremony every three-year, with a performing and singing troupe. In the remaining years, the worshipping ceremony only takes place without inviting the singing group and the worshipping ceremony takes place only in one day, the main ceremony is August 12th (Huynh Ngoc Dang, 2010).

Not only the structure and object of worship, but also the calendar and worshipping rituals of Phuoc An temple in Chanh Nghia are similar to Phuoc An temple in An Khe, China. This shows that the Chinese migrants to Thu Dau Mot to preserve and maintain the festival tradition in their native homeland. Many Chinese in Chanh Nghia said that sometimes there are still people with the Ly clan here come to An Khe, China to visit

relatives, old hometown, and sometimes they even try to arrange to go on the right occasion to worship Phuoc An temple. In An Khe to give thanks, to show gratitude towards the source, etc. As for the Chinese in Chanh Nghia, whether they move to Cholon to trade or to Thuan An, Tan Uyen, etc. continue to make ceramics, on the occasion of worship Phuoc An temple ceremony also returned to Chanh Nghia to attend the ceremony. It makes Phuoc An temple festival become a gathering day for not only the Ly clan, the Chinese who make ceramics at all over Binh Duong, but also the Vietnamese.

As mentioned above, That Phu Dai Nhan⁷⁸ (Ha Truc, 2012) is the object of worship of Phuoc An temple, but in the days of worshipping ceremony, according to custom, Quan The Am Bo Tat and Hong Hai Nhi; Bao Sinh Dai De; Quan Cong, Chau Xuong and Quan Binh who were worshiped in Quan The Am pagoda not far away were also invited to Phuoc An temple to witness the ceremony (Huynh Ngoc Dang, 2010).

In the early morning of August 10th, the board of administrators sent seven men to Quan The Am pagoda make procession the statues of Quan The Am Bo Tat, Hong Hai Nhi, Quan Cong, Chu Xuong, Quan Binh and Bao Sanh Dai De to Phuoc An temple to attend the ceremony. After burning incense and praying of administrators, the statues of these gods are invited to the temple. One person asked for an incense burner, the rest held a statue in one hand and three incense sticks in the other, walking in a line to the temple. After the festival of Phuoc An temple ended, at dawn on August 14, the board of administrators did a ceremony to farewell these gods to the pagoda. Please also say more, when Quan The Am pagoda organizes worship ceremonies, the board of administrators also organizes to invite (statue) the Tieu clan (one of the That Phu Dai Nhan, supposedly the biggest role) to Quan The Am pagoda to attend the ceremony.

The positions of the statues are arranged during the festival days as follows: statue of That Phu Vuong Gia Cong (That Phu Dai Nhan) is in the top row and behind. In front of and the middle is a statue of Quan The Am Bo Tat, close to the right is Hong Hai Nhi. On

⁷⁸ on the other hand, Ong Bon of the Ly clan is also worshiped by Fujian, including 7 clans: Lich, Chu, Quach, Tieu, Trieu, Ly and Chau. According to legend, during the Eastern Han Dynasty (25 - 220), there were more than 300 soldiers who went to Truong An to be a candidate. They were romantic people, liked poetry and singing, so they often gathered together and performed in a cave, so Truong Tien Su, whose name was Truong Dao Lang, was the maker of talismans. is the magician in the palace - jealous and seeks harm. He conspired, made the king drunk and then issued a decree to kill all those soldiers. Truong Dao Lang brought the king's edict, made a spell to make the cave's door collapse, burying all 300 people. The ghosts of the soldiers constantly appeared asking the king why he killed them. The king brought the dream and asked Truong Dao Lang. Truong Dao Lang then took a bamboo tube, made a spell to trap all of their souls and then dropped them into the river to float to the sea. But that bamboo tube did not drift into the sea, but washed up on the shore. The beggars found it strange, immediately picked it up, opened the cloth covering the top of the bamboo tube, and immediately the souls of the men escaped and reappeared to ask the King. The King this time understood the situation, both regretting that he had accidentally killed people unjustly, and mourning their talent, so he issued an edict for anyone in which family to be the great person of that family and who in the region, people in that area set up shrines to worship. An Khe district, Phuoc Kien province has 7 people, so they set up a temple to worship them.

the far right is the statue of Bao Sanh Dai De. On the left is a statue of Quan Cong and two generals: on the right is Chu Xuong, on the left is Quan Binh. According to the Chinese concept, Bao Sanh Dai De is a medical god, has the function of protecting everyone's health, is it related to childbirth?

In front of and right next to the altar of the main hall, a great drum is placed; on the left is the gong. On both sides in front of this altar, there are also seven pots of clean water and seven towels, for That Phu Dai Nhan to wash. After bathing, changing clothes for the statues, the board of administrators burned incense at all the altars in the temple. Each censer lit three incense sticks.

The offerings in the ceremony are mainly vegetarian and dried foods, such as dried shiitake mushrooms, dried persimmons, dried bamboo shoots, noodles (raw, in long rolls), moon cakes and other pastries... Next accordingly, a wooden box is opened, inside contains 8 long iron trees, sharp as needles (three large trees each about 2.5m long and five small trees about 1.5m long), which the Chinese call “skewer”. These eight iron trees are mounted on the largest incense burner in the middle of the main altar of Phuoc An temple (Dinh Van Hanh, 2010).

Outside and on the left and right sides of the temple door, two palanquins are also attached with sharp swords. On the back are three upright swords, the middle one is long, the two sides are shorter, the blade is turned forward, the two handrails are also attached with two swords that turn the blade upwards. The surface of the chair and the place to place the legs are sharp iron spikes. This is a palanquin (chair) that is not meant for ordinary people to sit on.

❖ **Festival progress**

- August 11th

As soon as the new day of August 11th, the festival begins with the ceremony of opening the drum. The ceremony begins when the shaman wears a black hat, a red ao dai, beats a drum (small drum held in his hand) to the sound of gongs. The shaman used three incense sticks to draw charms on the drum surface, then clamped three incense sticks together with the drumstick to beat for a long time. Then the shaman shook the bell to the beat of the gong. The shaman just shook the bell to the beat of one beat while praying. All the board of administrators performed the worshipping ceremony together, each person holds three large incense sticks, prays, bows three times, and then burns incense. After burning incense, each person bows twice. Next is the burning of joss paper. After each ritual, people burn a lot of joss paper.

The shaman stood in front of the altar of the main hall, took out the book to read, and at the end of each passage, the worshipers made one bow. Then the shaman went to the altar

in front of the door, read the book, and after reading it, it was placed on the altar. The shaman asked for a hexagram. Hexagram as expected, the shaman continued to shake the bell, the left hand was placed on his chest and prayed.

At 9:00 am is the ceremony of building adoration and singing “Boi”. At the beginning, a large drum is placed in front of the temple yard, after worshipping including the heaven, the earth, the gods (each time, one sound is struck in front and on the left and right sides of the drum wall) there are three drum beats, the singing program begins. On the stage, after the performance of Tay Du Ky, one of member of the troupe sang, danced, and bowed three times. A god uses a mirror to project in all directions and dances to the rhythm. In the temple, the shaman still worships according to the ritual of burning incense, kneeling and praying in the sound of gongs and drums. The prayer of the shaman earnestly invites the gods to attend the ceremony, expressing gratitude, admiration and thanks for blessing a peaceful life, successful business, praying for favorable rain and wind... On stage, the music is getting busier and faster. Three men in the role of Phuc - Loc - Tho appeared to open the show.

Before the singing troupe performed, eight actors dressed up as Bat Tien, in turn entered the temple to worship, pray, and ask for his command to help and bless them. The troupe humbly invites That Phu Dai Nhan to enjoy the plays they will perform. Each actor plays a character and prays for something specific.

The worshipping ceremony takes place three times in the morning, noon and afternoon. These three ceremonies continued to be repeated in the days that followed. The board of administrators offered vegetarian food, and people offered many offerings, regardless of whether they were vegetarian or not.

At each ceremony, the main worshiper is still the shaman. He wears a red long dress, wears a black hat, always prays with his mouth, holds a bell in his right hand and shakes to the beat of the drum “tung tung khuong, tung tung khuong” creating a rushing sound.

In the evening, the day before the main ceremony, the shaman and the board of administrators went to the riverside to worship. Leading the delegation was a man holding a red flag, followed by those carrying incense burners, lanterns, and offerings. The shaman prayed for good things at the simple altar on the ground at the water's edge... The ceremony ended with the burning of joss paper. Then the group returned to the temple. Music in harmony along the way. When approaching the temple, the shaman blew a long horn, then continued to worship at the temple.

People put joss paper, mace with many sharp iron nails, and talismans on a large mat in the middle of the temple, then stand up the wrapped papyrus mat. The top of the mat is tied, covered with objects inside, and the worshipping ceremony begins. At this time, the shaman, wearing a black long-dress, performed the ceremony while blowing the horn. After

praying, the mat is opened. The charms on the mat are glued to the palanquin, wrapped on skewers, wrapped in swords on the palanquin, and glued to the tables on the palanquin, where the feet are placed. Drums, gongs as well as all other sacrifices in the temple are tagged with charms. The talismans are written on yellow and red paper, glued in pairs, in the shape of an X. The two longest skewers and the two short skeins that had previously been placed on the censer are also taken down and wrapped in charms and built it on the side of the palanquin (Dinh Van Hanh, 2010). The sound of gongs and drums was bustling, and the people attending the ceremony were bustling in and out. All join in the excitement of preparing to welcome the most important day of the festival.

- August 12th

August 12th is the main ceremony. Legend has it that this is the birthday of Dai Nhan with the Tieu clan, the “biggest” saint in the “That Phu Dai Nhan”.

From early in the morning, people on foot, by car, bring offerings to the saints. The procession of pilgrims and worshipers is getting longer and longer from early morning until midnight, etc. In the four days of the festival, the 12th is the day most people come to offer the ceremony.

People bring a lot of offerings, depending on the ability of each family. The offering can be a whole roast pig or just a piece of roasted meat of about one or two kilograms. Vegetarian foods, dry foods such as shiitake mushrooms, dried bamboo shoots, moon cakes, homemade cookies made into large ones (from glutinous rice flour, sugar, coconut filling, green beans, persimmons), sponge cakes (also self-steamed, the material is just flour, chicken seeds, sugar). Cakes are sold in the market, fruits of all kinds and lots of joss paper... that people offer to That Dai Nhan.

But perhaps the following dishes are indispensable, almost every family brings offerings. It's “Banh To”. Banh To is made with glutinous rice flour, sugar, sprinkled with sesame on the surface and then steamed. Banh To symbolizes the ancestral offering ceremony. Since it is a popular item to offer to the ancestors, the name itself implies gratitude. A second offering is noodles, known locally as hair noodles. Raw hair noodles, whole, the longer the better. This is because it symbolizes longevity. Long noodles mean only long hair and beard and only long life has long hair and beard... Therefore, hair noodles are also an offering often offered in celebration of birthdays and long life celebrations of the Chinese. A third type of offering that abounds in the offerings that locals bring is red-painted duck eggs. The Chinese believe that a raw duck egg, painted red on the outside, symbolizes good fortune, so it is a good offering to offer to That Phu Dai Nhan. The management board of the temple also offers hundreds of red painted duck eggs so that everyone who attends the ceremony can bring them home, and offer them to the ancestors as a dish and fortune, a blessing to wish for (Source: Interview by author in 2019).

People who come to make worship and offer items to That Phu Dai Nhan are considered as a answer sacred ceremony to the saints who have supported and helped their families to be lucky, peaceful and prosperous in the past time; praying for the saint's continued support in the future with the promise to return to pay in next period. The festival is full of pay meaning and blessing. This is not only reflected in the offerings, prayers and supplications but also in the rituals performed.

Food offerings will be brought home by the owner after the saint has “enjoyed” to eat with his family and relatives in his own home. The people on the management board also went home to eat, not at the temple. This is a unique feature of the festival. The organization of a party as a thank you will be held by the management board at the end of the ceremony at a local restaurant. Absolutely no eating at the temple. When people come to offer offerings, the worshipers pray in the steady beat of drums.

Around noon, the management board organizes the worshipping ceremony from 11:00 a.m to 13:00 p.m (Ngo’s worshipping), also known as That Dai Nhan ceremony. Immediately after this ceremony is Dao binh’s worshipping. The ceremony lasted about an hour. This is the biggest ceremony of the whole festival. In this ceremony, there are rituals to offer offerings to That Dai Nhan, to pay tribute to ancestors. In addition to making offerings at the temple, descendants of the Ly clan also offer offerings to their ancestors from the street with the meaning of wishing their ancestors a long life. People call it the ceremony to wish Ong Bon.

The ceremony of Dao binh is the ceremony of worshipping the soldiers of That Dai Nhan. The shaman is the person who administers the offering and the ritual. The ceremony of Dao binh begins when the shaman shakes the bell and leads the army. In the right hand the magician shakes the bell, the left hand holds the horn and a playing card. The shaman walked while praying. Next to the shaman is a man holding three incense sticks, a man holding a small drum beating to the beat, another beating a gong. Behind the four men is a young man holding a bamboo top, with a few leaves above it like a small tree, and a large chain on his shoulder. This young man is considered the officer of the army of seven teenagers that followed. These seven teenagers were all wearing knitted bamboo hats with high tops and holding red painted wooden sticks. These trees are considered as “command trees”. The shaman and the members of the management board said that these seven teenagers probably represent the seven soldiers of the That Dai Nhan. They do not confirm this because no one has explained it to them, just following the tradition.

The army lined up in the above formation, went five rounds from the temple to the road, then back to the temple. When the army arrived in front of the main altar of the main hall, the youth played the commanding officer chanted the phrase “pi hỏ”, while the seven youths playing the role of soldiers said the “pi hỏ” (pi-ỏ). The sound of gongs, drums and

bells rang throughout the movement of the army. People offer five tables of offerings from worship hall, the offerings are foods. When asked what the chanting and answering “pi hô” means, most people hardly know, only conjecture. Dao binh’s ceremony ended with a lot of joss paper (Dinh Van Hân, 2010).

August 12th is also the anniversary of the theater profession's death anniversary. Therefore, from early morning, the singing troupe has returned to serve the festival, also makes chickens and ducks, cooks delicious dishes, prepares to worship the craft ancestors. Around 9 o'clock the offerings were offered. An altar is placed in the center of the stage with many hearty offerings: roasted pig, boiled chicken, sticky rice, fruits, cakes, flowers, tea, etc. In front of the altar is a tiger mask, in front is an incensory.

According to Chinese seniors in Chanh Nghia, That Dai Nhan is a talented person who loves music and art, so this is also an opportunity for the troupe to sing to their ancestors and offer to That Dai Nhan, not only offerings but also special plays. While making offerings to the theatrical profession, the troupe's actors also made offerings in front of the altar of That Dai Nhan.

Around 4:00 p.m, when the troupe was performing the play, a elder man about 55 years old possessed by god (Dinh Van Hân, 2010). Standing in front of the shrine, facing the stage, dancing while drawing a circle in the air.

The gongs and drums rose rapidly. The possessed person to the front of the stage to watch the performance of the troupe. He danced, people helped him get off his shirt. He pulled out his long skewer, held it in his hand, and continued to dance. A member of the organizing committee wore a red skirt at the waist, a white bib with a front pocket (later many people put money in that pocket). People throw a lot of rice and salt towards him. After holding the skewer and dancing for about 20 minutes, he used the skewer to pierce one cheek, with both hands outstretched, tightly grasp the skewer and continue dancing. About 15 minutes later, she walked towards the palanquin and then quickly sat down and stepped on the sharp iron pole. He sat on a palanquin and watched singing for about 30 minutes. On the stage, the play was still performed by the actors, although those attending the ceremony were only interested in watching the old man in awe and awe. After leaving the palanquin, he slanted red flag waved as if to express a hidden meaning. At that moment, he jumped onto the altar and sat down. He signaled, suggested to light three incense sticks, then said what the gods sent, everyone bowed. He took many offerings on the altar and delivered them to everyone. The skewer through the cheek bone was pulled out and transferred to the altar of That Phu Dai Nhan. As soon as the skewer was pulled out, a piece of dried leaf was applied to the wound, but if you looked closely, you could see that there was bleeding. The board of administrators made prostrations and prayers about what he was told by the gods, while he

continued to dance. People continue to put on two palanquins two pearls with sharp iron nails.

According to the saying of possessed person, this time was entered by Na Tra Thai Tu. Na Tra is one of the four popular and powerful gods in the beliefs of the Chinese. The custom of worshipping the four gods namely Huyen Thien Thuong De, Quan Am Bo Tat, Na Tra Thai Tu, Nam Trieu Dai De and the festival of this belief in Binh Duong has many unique features that attract people's attention.

The possessed person is any person who comes to the ceremony, not selected in advance, nor does he has any martial arts. They are a random selection of gods who entered for some reason unknown to outsiders. It is often said that people who are “light-hearted” are easy to get on. Usually every three years, there is a new singing troupe to get up, but only once in a while, there is an occasional show, not often. The spirit will convey prophecies or rebuke that only the possessed person who can hear and “speak back”.

According to the people's opinion, a lot of possessing spirit is not good, it is a bad omen. Legend has it that before 1952 and the years 1965-1975, each time Phuoc An temple held a festival to increase a lot. At that time, Chanh Nghia was in turmoil and business was difficult. If they want to avoid disasters and bad things, they have to calm down the evil so that the villagers can be at peace. People exorcise evil spirits and avoid harm by pouring a long pile of charcoal, about 6 meters long, fans it to burn, then the shaman makes offerings, prays, expresses wishes, and asks for. The shaman jumps over the fire first, and then the entire village jumps over to stop the evil spirits and pray for the safety of the disaster.

- August 13th

On August 13th, the festival continues with three main ceremonies: morning, afternoon and evening. The management board offer of offerings. The shaman worshiped with the same ritual as the previous day. People continue to come to give thanksgiving and pray for good things.

During the festival, people organizes “xin keo” and “xin xãm” for those who come to make offerings. It can be said that this is an activity that attracts many people who want to be told by the gods their lucky or fortune. People who come to worship, when leaving, do not forget to ask for talismans (red paper peace amulet and yellow paper evil charm) to stick on both sides of the main door. There are also many people who ask for a lot of talismans to stick all the main and side doors in the house, as many doors as asking for so many pairs of charms. Sometimes talismans are also glued to important items.

In addition, the management board organizes to make many different large and small lanterns with different prices and is completely supportive for the festival so that people can come home both to pray for good luck but also through it to offer gifts to the gods. It is

believed that bringing these things home is a blessing and a prosperous business in the near future.

In the evening, as usual, the management board holds a meeting to evaluate three years of operation, elect the executive board for a new term and invite guests to a party. An art program imbued with the cultural identity of the Chinese really attracts visitors.

At midnight, the Ton Vuong's ceremony will take place. The shaman offers incense and worships to the sound of gongs and drums. The troupe sang offerings, each person offered a prayer to the tune of the song. Then, one by one, each actor, one by one, came to the altar of the main hall to worship. Each actor bows three times and bows three times. The leader of the group sang offerings and made vows on the altar of That Phu Dai Nhan.

At the end of Ton Vuong's ceremony, the shaman reads the book and turns it into gold and silver. The shaman prayed in Chinese language and asked for "xin xǎm". After that, the shaman just prayed according to the results of "xin xǎm" and bowed to the eight directions, one bow in each direction. The shaman blew a long horn and ended the ceremony of Ton Vuong.

- August 14th

At dawn on August 14th, at 3 o'clock, Ong Bon festival in Phuoc An temple ends with the farewell ceremony. After the worshipping ceremony, the shaman thanked the gods, the ceremony was to see off the gods invited to attend, the worshipping statues were brought back to Quan The Am's pagoda. The shaman prayed for peace and the ceremony ended.

3.3. Ong Bon's beliefs and festival at Phuoc An temple of the Chinese in Binh Duong: value and meaning

Chinese folk beliefs in Binh Duong are quite diverse in terms of types, from the temple of Thien Hau Thanh Mau to the temple of Quan Thanh De Quan, That Phu Dai Nhan, Huyen Thien Thuong De, etc. show the preservation of traditional beliefs of the Chinese when settled in the new land of the South of Vietnam.

The gods worshiped by the Chinese in Binh Duong are those who have a great influence on their real life in the process of migrating and immigrating to a new land. Those are the gods that they believe have blessed them on the way of migration, the floating road on the sea, and the folk gods they bring from their homeland so that they can always remember their roots.

Chinese worship facilities in Binh Duong annually organize sacrifices associated with festivals. In the worshipping ceremony at the temples of Ong Bon of the Chinese, including Phuoc An temple, there are often anomalous magical elements of Taoism nature such as: skewer, spirit possession, sitting on a nail chair, walking on a wooden table, etc. which they normally cannot do. These are also mysteries that can only be explained by

beliefs and magical elements in folk beliefs. Although the festival has Taoism colors, it still shows the basic cultural value, which is the cohesion of the community even if it is only a local community. In Taoism, there is a form of co-incarnation, there are shamans who practice rituals but without excessive superstition. The people who do this work also have a normal life, they have their own jobs to make a living and only participate when there is a festival.

The festival also preserves many traditional ceremony and festival elements. The festival has the participation of performances of Hat Boi, Cai Luong singing with many ancient Chinese fairy tales.

In Binh Duong, the folk beliefs of the Chinese are prominently expressed in the form of festive activities that attract a large number of attendees, both Chinese and Vietnamese. Ong Bon's festival at Phuoc An temple of the Chinese in Binh Duong is a form of religious and cultural activities that are both social and spiritual. It is both spiritually satisfying and creates a close bond belong ethnic communities (Chinese, Vietnamese, Khmer, Cham, etc.) Chinese beliefs and festivals in Binh Duong in general and Ong Bon festival in particular have become a typical local culture, contribute to embellish the traditional cultural colors of the resident communities in Binh Duong. At the same time, it also contributes to enrich the Vietnamese national cultural identity.

In summary, Ong Bon's beliefs and festivals at Phuoc An temple are typical tangible and intangible cultural heritages of the Chinese community in Binh Duong. These heritages have been contributing to the preservation and promotion of typical cultural values of the Chinese in the South in general and the Chinese in the Southeast in particular in the context of cultural exchange and integration with Vietnam. nations.

1. Conclusion

Learn about the Ong Bon's beliefs and festivals of of the Chinese in Binh Duong in general, and in the Phuoc An temple in particular, shows a common motif. It is the worshipping ceremony of a clan that makes traditional ceramics in Binh Duong. But the festival of Ong Bon at Phuoc An temple with other areas in Binh Duong have formed the belief system of the Chinese community with the same occupation, a traditional occupation that needs to be preserved from traditional techniques and experiences to the rituals and cultural activities of the community that have been associated with that profession for more than a hundred years

These beliefs and this festival contain human values, honoring careers, paying tribute to ancestors, helping exiles overcome difficulties, sharing difficulties, and believing in their spiritual support as saints that are also their ancestors, can protect their lives, bless their difficult and challenging business. Although it is a festival of a Chinese clan specializing in ceramics, but the festival of Ong Bon at Phuoc An temple has attracted a large number of

residents in Binh Duong, from the Chinese to the Vietnamese, from the ceramicists of the Ly clan and not from the Ly family to those who do not work in ceramics participated, created a vibrant and meaningful career festival. In addition to the cultural value, many rituals of the festival are very strange and attractive, capable of attracting tourists.

Ong Bon's belief and festival at Phuoc An temple is a folk belief and festival, a cultural heritage that contributes to enriching cultural characteristics of Binh Duong in particular and the Southern in Vietnam in general. Therefore, it should be recognized, preserved and promoted, to serve the goal of building an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with national identity.

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