

# Cultural Value in the Ba Pagoda Festival in Binh Duong

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8090234>

Received: 09 September 2024; Accepted: 13 September 2024; Published: 18 October 2024

## ABSTRACT

The Ba pagoda festival in Binh Duong is one of the largest and most prominent cultural events in the province, attracting thousands of participants every year. The unique feature of this festival is that all activities are completely free, creating a national uniqueness. One of the unique cultural values of the festival is the spirit of volunteerism, demonstrating the solidarity and kindness of the people of Binh Duong. This article will focus on highlighting the unique features of the Ba Pagoda Festival, especially analyzing the cultural values that the festival brings. At the same time, the author also emphasizes the cultural values of the people of Binh Duong, with the desire to spread and preserve these beautiful cultural features, contributing to enriching the culture of the Vietnamese people.

**Keywords:** Culture and festivals of Ba Pagoda, Ba Thien Hau, Binh Duong.

## INTRODUCTION

Ba Thien Hau Pagoda Festival, held in Binh Duong province on the full moon day of the first lunar month every year, is a cultural and religious event with far-reaching influence on the Chinese and Vietnamese communities. Male. With its origins in Chinese religious culture, this festival is not only a place to show respect to Lady Thien Hau - the Holy Mother considered the protector of fishermen and seafarers, but also a special occasion for generations of Chinese people in Binh Duong to preserve, pass on and promote traditional cultural values.

In the current context of globalization, many traditional cultural values are gradually disappearing or being mixed with foreign cultural elements. The rapid change of society along with the development of mass media has changed many traditional customs and rituals, especially in small communities. Ba Thien Hau Pagoda Festival in Binh Duong is one of the rare festivals that still retains the unique traditions of the Chinese community. However, reality shows that, under the impact of modernization and urbanization, many of the original rituals and cultural values of this festival are at risk of being lost or transformed. This raises the question: How to preserve and promote the cultural values of the Ba Pagoda festival in the modern context? Researching and analyzing cultural elements in this festival not only helps us better understand its role in the spiritual life of the Chinese community in Binh Duong but also provides valuable lessons. for the preservation of other intangible cultural heritages nationwide.

Researching the cultural values of the Ba Pagoda festival is not only meaningful for preserving the cultural heritage of the Chinese community but also contributes to maintaining and developing Vietnamese cultural identity. This festival, with the large participation of people from all over, has become an indispensable part in the cultural and spiritual life of the people of Binh Duong and surrounding areas. Through traditional rituals, folk art performances and community activities, the festival contributes to educating young generations about gratitude, solidarity and community spirit.

In addition, preserving and promoting cultural values in this festival also plays an important role in promoting cultural tourism, contributing to local economic development. The Ba Thien Hau Pagoda Festival is not only a major cultural event but also a valuable cultural asset that needs to be protected and promoted to ensure that these values will continue to be passed on to the people. future generation.

In this paper, the author delves into the analysis of the typical cultural aspects of the Ba Thien Hau Pagoda festival, from traditional rituals to cultural symbols, from community participation to festivals. special art activities. Thereby seeing the importance of preserving and promoting these cultural values in the modern

context, while also proposing specific solutions to maintain and develop the festival in the future.

## RESEARCH METHODS

To learn about the cultural value of the Ba Pagoda festival in Binh Duong, we use a combination of research methods to analyze and evaluate cultural, social, and religious factors associated with the festival. festival.

+ Participant observation method: By directly participating in festival activities to observe and record rituals, customs, as well as interactions between festival participants, from there better understand the cultural values expressed through the festival. At the same time, observe the organization, management, and environmental protection activities during the festival to evaluate the effectiveness and civilization in organizing the festival.

+ Document analysis: Research documents, books, and previous research works on the Ba Pagoda festival and similar festivals to compare and contrast cultural elements, thereby drawing conclusions. Unique and different features of Ba Pagoda festival.

+ Comparative method: Compare the Ba Pagoda festival with similar festivals in other localities to clarify the unique features of this festival, especially the elements of kindness and community spirit. , and awareness of environmental protection.

Through combining the above research methods, the paper will provide a comprehensive and in-depth view of the cultural value of the Ba Pagoda festival in Binh Duong, while also offering suggestions for conservation. and promote these values in the future.

## Research Content

### Origin, formation and development of Ba Thien Hau Pagoda

Ba Thien Hau Pagoda, also known as Ba Binh Duong Pagoda, is located in Phu Cuong ward, Thu Dau Mot city, Binh Duong province. The pagoda was built in the early twentieth century by the Chinese community who migrated from Fujian, Guangdong, Chaozhou, and Hexi provinces to Vietnam. The Chinese, in their journey across the sea to find new lands, brought with them not only customs but also the belief of worshiping Thien Hau Thanh Mau - a sacred goddess in their minds.

Thien Hau Thanh Mau, real name Lam My Chau, was born around 960 during the Song Dynasty in Bo Dien district, Fujian province, China. She is famous for her ability to prophesy, especially about the weather at sea. One of the most famous stories about her is that when her father and two brothers were in trouble at sea, she sat weaving and suddenly stopped, telling her mother that her father and brother were in danger. After that, the two older brothers returned alive, and the father unfortunately went missing. Thanks to her foresight and epiphany, she saved many fishermen, helping them overcome storms and return safely [11].

After passing away at the age of 20, Ba Thien Hau was worshiped as a saint. The Qing court later named her Thien Hau Thanh Mau, and her worship spread from China to overseas Chinese communities, including Vietnam. Upon arriving in Binh Duong, the Chinese community, with deep gratitude, decided to build Ba Thien Hau Pagoda to worship this goddess, as well as to pray for peace and prosperity [7].



Figure 1. Thien Hau Pagoda in Binh Duong

Initially, Ba Thien Hau Pagoda was built with simple materials, located next to Huong Chu Hieu canal. However, in 1923, the temple was severely damaged by a large fire. Faced with this situation, four Chinese states in Binh Duong, including Guangdong, Chaozhou, Fujian and Hakka, joined forces to rebuild the pagoda on the current ground in Phu Cuong ward, Thu Dau Mot city. The new pagoda was built in traditional Chinese architecture, with intricately carved details, curved roof tiles, and ornate statues of deities. During more than a century of existence, Ba Thien Hau Pagoda has undergone many restorations and renovations, but still retains its ancient architecture, creating a solemn and sacred space [1].

Initially, the Ba Thien Hau Pagoda festival in Binh Duong was organized to serve the religious needs of the Chinese community living here. However, over time, stories about the sacredness of Ba Thien Hau increasingly spread, attracting the attention of not only Chinese people but also local people and neighboring areas. In 2014, due to the increase in the number of pilgrims and the growing need for worship, Ba Thien Hau Pagoda expanded a worship facility in Hoa Phu ward, Thu Dau Mot city.

## **Ba Pagoda Festival**

### **Festival**

Ba Thien Hau Pagoda Festival is a major cultural and religious event, so the preparations for the festival are always done very thoughtfully and carefully. Before the Lunar New Year, the temple grounds are lavishly decorated with flags, lanterns and traditional decorative items. In particular, 12 large lanterns, symbolizing 12 months of the year, are hung right in front of the main hall. These lanterns not only beautify the temple but also have spiritual meaning, expressing wishes for a peaceful and lucky new year for everyone. In addition to decorations, offering rituals are also held very early, starting a week before the main festival. Offerings to Ba Thien Hau include roasted pig, chicken, goose, fruit and traditional cakes. The festival preparation atmosphere not only takes place at the temple but also spreads throughout the city, with the participation of both the Chinese community and local people. Everyone was happy and excited to prepare for the biggest festival of the year [13].

When the festival officially begins on the night of the 14th day of the first lunar month, the atmosphere in the temple becomes extremely solemn and sacred. The festival begins with an opening ceremony with a prayer followed by an oration in Cantonese, to praise the merits of Lady Thien Hau and express the deep gratitude of later generations. These rituals are not only an important part of Chinese beliefs but also an opportunity for people to come together to show their respect and devotion to her. The most unique part of the festival is the Ba palanquin procession taking place on January 15. The palanquin procession is organized very solemnly and majestically, with the participation of thousands of people. According to tradition, the Ba palanquin procession is led by four Haus - symbolizing the golden lion and dragon, the lord of the beasts. Followed by groups of people carrying flags, dragon swords and vibrant lion and dragon dance teams. The palanquin is placed in the middle of the procession, with smoking incense burners in front. The palanquin procession passes through the main streets of Thu Dau Mot city, attracting the participation of local people and tourists from all over, creating a bustling and colorful atmosphere [9] [13].

The festive atmosphere becomes more bustling than ever when the procession of Ba's palanquin passes through each street. People living around the route the procession passed were excitedly preparing offerings and praying for her to bestow blessings, health and fortune on their families. The palanquin procession is not only a religious ritual but also an opportunity for the community to bond together, share joy and hope for a good new year. After the palanquin procession ended, people returned to the temple to continue the worshiping rituals. On the night of January 22, the Ba bathing ceremony is held, this is an important ritual and is performed with great reverence. January 23 is the day of the Mother's Day, the second procession to receive her took place with the participation of a large number of people and tourists. The procession of the Lady statue through the streets around the pagoda, in the joyful atmosphere of lion dance teams, dragon dance teams and traditional music teams. The festival lasts until the procession returns to the temple, closing an impressive and meaningful festival season. Ba Thien Hau Pagoda Festival is not only a religious event but also an indispensable part of the cultural life of Binh Duong people. Every year, the festival not only maintains traditional values but also becomes increasingly rich and diverse, attracting the attention of many people, from local people to tourists everywhere [2].



Picture 2. Scene of the procession of her statue passing through the main streets of Thu Dau Mot city

### Outstanding features in the organization of Ba Pagoda festival in Binh Duong

The January Full Moon Festival at Ba Thien Hau Pagoda in Binh Duong, often called the "Free Festival", is not only an important cultural and religious event but also a symbol of love and compassion, gratitude and pride of local people. From organizing all free activities to serve tourists to the beautiful gestures of the people, the festival has become a unique cultural space where community spirit and hospitality are honored.

In the past, the Ba Pagoda festival had to face many negative problems such as the situation of cutting off tourists, escalating service prices, and even theft. These ugly images have made many people feel pessimistic and lose faith in the true value of the festival. However, thanks to the efforts of the government, community and local people, the festival has had a strong transformation. Security forces have been strengthened to ensure order and safety; Activities to attract tourists have almost disappeared; and instead, the people of Binh Duong came together to organize a completely free festival, showing kindness and hospitality to tourists from everywhere [5].

One of the outstanding beauties of Ba Binh Duong Pagoda Festival is the spirit of civilization and gratitude that local people show. With the criteria "Civilized festival - gratitude - environmentally friendly", the festival attracted the active participation of the whole community. The people of Binh Duong, with their sincere respect for the Holy Mother Thien Hau, spared no effort and money to organize the festival, from giving out free incense, flowers, and gold coins to providing vegetarian meals, cold towels, and even free wifi. These beautiful gestures not only create a unique festival but also spread the spirit of kindness, creating a united and civilized community.

In addition, Ba Pagoda festival also stands out with the spirit of environmental protection and common sense in cultural behavior. The government and people of Binh Duong have coordinated to ensure a clean and beautiful environment throughout the festival. Food and drink distribution points are equipped with additional trash bins, and visitors are reminded to maintain environmental hygiene. Banners carrying the message "Clean, beautiful, waste-free January Full Moon Festival" are not only a reminder but also a testament to the awareness of environmental protection, contributing to creating a civilized festival. polite [6].



Figure 3. Free activities at Thien Hau Pagoda festival

The free festival at Ba Pagoda is not only a cultural and religious event of the people of Binh Duong but also a symbol of national pride and noble behavioral culture. The name “Free Festival” reflects the community spirit, compassion and hospitality of the local people. The generous actions and willingness to contribute effort and money to serve the festival have created a meaningful festival space, where every visitor feels warm, friendly and welcoming. hospitality. Ba Pagoda Festival has resonated far and wide, welcomed by people all over Vietnam with admiration. Visitors come to the festival not only to participate in religious activities but also to enjoy the warmth, friendliness and compassionate spirit that the festival brings. It is these values that make Ba Binh Duong Pagoda Festival a special destination, where everyone can feel the spirit of solidarity and compassion spreading from local people [2].

## **Cultural value of Binh Duong Ba Pagoda festival**

### **Cultural and spiritual values**

Binh Duong Ba Pagoda Festival is one of the prominent festivals and has great significance in the spiritual life of local people as well as tourists from all over. Taking place on the full moon day of the first lunar month, the festival is not only an opportunity for people to express their respect and pray for protection from Lady Thien Hau, but also a time for them to calm down, reflect on life, and Find peace in your soul.

Ba Pagoda Festival has existed for hundreds of years, becoming an indispensable part of spiritual cultural life in Binh Duong. For many people, attending the festival is not only to participate in religious ceremonies but also to find a sense of peace, a place where they can temporarily put aside the worries of daily life. Find inner balance. In an increasingly modernized and busy world, the Ba Pagoda festival is a spiritual fulcrum, helping people connect with tradition and feel more deeply about spiritual values [4].

Besides, the Ba Pagoda festival also plays an important role in preserving and promoting traditional cultural values. Rituals such as processions, incense offerings, and prayers not only show respect for the gods but are also forms of preserving and promoting cultural values that have been passed down from generation to generation. other system. Traditional costumes, prayers, and typical customs during the festival have created a lively cultural space where traditional values are recreated and spread. The festival is not only an opportunity for adults to review cultural memories, but also an opportunity for the younger generation to learn and absorb these traditional values, helping them become an important part of their cultural heritage. their evolution [3].

### **The value of solidarity and compassion**

One of the special and valuable features of Binh Duong Ba Pagoda festival is the spirit of solidarity and kindness clearly shown in the community. The festival is not only an opportunity to honor spiritual values but also an opportunity for people to show compassion, charity and solidarity through volunteer activities. During the festival, many people volunteered to participate in charity activities such as giving free meals, giving gifts to the poor, supporting those in difficult circumstances, and contributing to funds. charity.

These volunteer activities not only bring joy and comfort to those being helped but also contribute to building a united and close-knit community. The spirit of kindness does not stop at specific actions but also spreads into a common value, accepted and transmitted by everyone in the community. In an increasingly complex and competitive society, solidarity and compassion become core values, helping the community overcome difficulties and challenges and build a harmonious and sustainable living environment. [12].

Compassion and solidarity are not only expressed through volunteer activities but also through the way the community joins hands to organize and participate in the festival. The contributions of everyone, from preparing the rituals, decorating the festival space, to welcoming guests, are all clear expressions of community spirit. Every individual, whether an organizer or an attendee, contributes to the success of the festival, making it a special occasion where the value of solidarity is reinforced and shines through.

### **Traditional and modern values**

Binh Duong Ba Pagoda Festival is a typical example of the delicate combination of traditional and modern

values. Over the years, the festival has constantly innovated to suit the development of society while still maintaining the core cultural values. Traditional rituals such as the palanquin procession, incense offering ceremony and prayers are still maintained with solemnity and reverence, but they are also held in a newer approach, to attract the participation of many people. island of residents and tourists, especially the younger generation [12].

One of the modern elements incorporated in the festival is the use of technology to promote and organize activities. Art and performance programs are not only based on traditional forms but also apply modern sound and lighting technologies, creating a festive space that is both rich in national culture and attractive. lead and attract. Thanks to that, the Ba Pagoda Festival has become an event that not only has cultural value but is also highly entertaining, suitable for the needs and interests of people in the new era.

The development and change of the festival over time also reflects the flexibility and creativity of the community in preserving and promoting cultural values. From a purely religious event, the Ba Pagoda festival has developed into a major socio-cultural event, attracting the attention of not only local people but also domestic and foreign tourists. Festivals are no longer just a traditional event but have become an important part of modern cultural life, where traditional and modern values coexist and complement each other [4].

### **Educational value and impact on community and society**

Binh Duong Ba Pagoda Festival is not only a cultural event but also an important educational means, with a profound impact on the community and society. In a context where the differentiation in values and lifestyles is increasingly evident, the festival provides a common space where people can gather, share and experience cultural and spiritual values together. sacred. The participation of a large number of people, from seniors to young people and children, not only creates a vibrant festival atmosphere but also helps connect generations in the community.

The festival is not only a place to learn about traditional culture but also an opportunity for the younger generation to absorb and inherit moral and spiritual values from previous generations. Lessons about filial piety, love, and solidarity are naturally conveyed through festive activities, helping young generations better understand their roots and be more aware of their responsibilities. in preserving and promoting these values.

In addition, the Ba Pagoda festival also plays an important role as a cultural bridge between generations. During the process of participating in festival activities, young generations are not only taught knowledge and experience about traditional culture but are also encouraged to promote creativity and innovation, so that the values This can continue to exist and develop in the modern social context. This is an important factor that helps ensure the continuation and preservation of cultural values in the future.

Binh Duong Ba Pagoda Festival also has a great influence on community cohesion. This is an opportunity for people to meet, interact and strengthen relationships with each other. The participation of a large number of people not only makes the festival richer and more diverse, but also creates a common space where people can share cultural, spiritual and ethical values. . This cohesion not only helps the community become stronger but also creates a harmonious and sustainable social environment [8].

### **The value of cultural diversity and exchange between peoples**

Binh Duong Ba Pagoda Festival is not only an event for local people but also attracts the participation of many people from different regions, even international tourists. The presence of different ethnicities and cultures at the festival not only enriches the festival content but also promotes exchange and mutual understanding between cultures.

During the festival, attendees not only have the opportunity to participate in religious rituals but also interact, learn and experience different cultural features. Booths, folk art performances, and traditional cultural activities from many different regions are introduced at the festival, creating a multicultural space where cultural values different things blend together and complement each other [3].

The cultural diversity at the festival not only creates a rich and diverse cultural environment but also encourages mutual respect and understanding between peoples. This is an important value, contributing to building a diverse but unified society, where differences are not only accepted but also celebrated and developed.

### **The value of harmony between humans and nature**

Another aspect of Binh Duong Ba Pagoda festival is the intimate connection between people and nature, shown through the way rituals and festival activities are organized. Ba Pagoda is often located in a peaceful natural space, close to natural elements such as rivers, mountains, and trees, creating an ideal environment for spiritual activities. Organizing the festival in natural spaces not only helps attendees feel peace and tranquility but also emphasizes the importance of harmony between humans and nature.

Incense offering and prayer rituals in natural spaces also contribute to raising people's awareness about protecting the environment, respecting and preserving natural values. This is especially important in the current context, when the natural environment is suffering many negative impacts from humans. Ba Pagoda Festival, with its combination of spiritual and natural elements, has contributed to conveying the message of respect and environmental protection, thereby educating the community about the importance of living in harmony with nature [8].

### **Value for local economic and tourism development**

Binh Duong Ba Pagoda Festival not only brings cultural and spiritual values but also has a positive impact on local economic and tourism development. Each year, the festival attracts tens of thousands of people to attend, creating conditions for business, trade, and service activities to develop strongly. Industries such as hotels, restaurants, transportation, and related services all benefit from increased tourism.

Besides, the festival also helps promote the image of Binh Duong, attracting the attention of domestic and foreign tourists, thereby contributing to the development of the local tourism industry. The success of the festival is not only the pride of the people of Binh Duong but also a proof that culture and economy can develop in parallel and support each other [8].

### **The value of continuity and transfer between generations**

Another important cultural value of Binh Duong Ba Pagoda festival is the continuation and transfer of values between generations. Participating in the festival, not only the elderly, but also the younger generation can participate in ritual activities, thereby learning and absorbing cultural and spiritual values from previous generations [7].

Parents often take their children to attend festivals to not only help them come into contact with traditional customs but also educate them about ethics, lifestyle and a sense of responsibility towards the community. The participation of the younger generation in the festival not only helps maintain and promote traditional values but also ensures that these values will continue to be maintained and developed in the future.

## **CONCLUSION**

Binh Duong Ba Pagoda Festival is a unique cultural and spiritual event, carrying many rich and profound cultural values. Not only has spiritual value, the festival is also an opportunity to preserve and promote traditional cultural values, promoting the spirit of solidarity and kindness in the community. The harmonious combination between tradition and modernity, between culture and economy, between people and nature, has made Ba Pagoda festival an important socio-cultural symbol, contributing to building a strong, harmonious and sustainable community. The festival is not only the pride of Binh Duong people but also a meaningful cultural heritage for the whole country, demonstrating the richness and diversity of Vietnamese culture.

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