

*Vietnam's Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism has launched an action program to preserve and promote the practice of Mother Goddess Worship, a cultural intangible heritage of humanity.*



*Preparing outfit for a trance ritual*

Mother Goddess Worship practice includes worship rituals, trance rituals, singing, and dancing, and festivals. It reflects Vietnam's traditional fashion, music, and culture. Mother Goddess Worship is practiced in many localities all over Vietnam. But Nam Dinh province is considered the center with some 400 places that worship Mother Goddesses, a practice which have been passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years.

On December 1, last year, the 11th meeting of UNESCO Inter-governmental Committee of the Intangible Cultural Heritage recognized the practice of Vietnam's Mother Goddess Worship practice as cultural intangible heritage of humanity. After that, Vietnam launched an action program to protect and develop the heritage.

The program spells out the continued indentifying the value, studying, and materializing the Mother Goddess Worship and its associated customs, rituals, and festivals. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Chi Ben, former Director of the Vietnam Institut of Culture and Art Studies, said: "It's most important to educate practitioners of this belief, which not only encompasses trance rituals, but also festivals and literature. The boundary between belief and superstition should be

distinguished.”

Vietnamese authority has formulated rules for the organization of a trance ritual, from offerings, costumes, make-up to music and delivery of blessed offerings.

Dr. Luu Minh Tri, President of the Thang Long-Hanoi Cultural Heritage Association, said “A trance ritual should be conducted correctly and should not be commercialized. Otherwise, it will undermine Vietnam’s traditional culture. It’s necessary to boost the dissemination of information on, and management of belief, which is considered sensitive and spiritual.”

The national program of action on protecting and developing Mother Goddess Worship practice for the 2017-2022 period is divided into two stages.

From 2017 to 2019, activities will raise social awareness on trance rituals, restore several festivals, and set up a website on Mother Goddess Worship.

From 2020 to 2020, activities will include the teaching of trance singing, promoting heritage, and finalizing a national inventory on Mother Goddess Worship.

Prof. Dr. Ngo Duc Thinh, Director of the Vietnam Center for Research and Conservation of Belief, said “Proper management should make people more aware of their belief practice and change behaviors towards being more responsible for preserving this heritage. Without the people’s involvement, there will be no success.”

*Source: VOV5*