

Tran Temple Festival, an atmosphere full of the “Dong A” spirit...

Written by Nava Nahi

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“August is the death anniversary of Father, March is that of Mother”.

The expression lingered in the mind of the Viet people like a reminder of finding way back to the root as August and March came to join vivid festivals in memory of Father and Holy Mother, who founded and protected the supernatural land. One of such traditional major festivals, serving as a pride of indigenous inhabitants as thinking about the kingly race of the Viet's nation: Tran Temple Festival.



The cluster monuments of Tran Temple is located in the suburb of Nam Dinh Province with many communal houses, pagodas, temples, tombs, stone shrines. Temples of Thien Truong, Co Trach and Pho Minh Pagoda - the famous cultural historical relics dedicated to Tran reign, founded on the land where the regime of Tran was generated. It is Tran Temple. In which, Thien Truong Temple worships 14 Tran Kings, set up under the later Le Dynasty. Co Trach Temple worships Tran Hung Dao, set up under the Nguyen Dynasty.

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Tran Temple Festival annually lasts from the 15th-20th of lunar August. In the odd years, the festival is launched more magnificently than in even years. Nevertheless, visitors all over the country do not wait for the very happening of the festival to join but eagerly go on pilgrimage far prior to the day. On their arrival, every people do expect the good and happy things. The large flag flutters in front of the temple - the traditional flag with striking colours standing for five basic elements, its square shape stands for earth (negative), the sickle-shaped tassels for heaven (positive). The word “Tran” is embroidered amidst the flag in Chinese characters by two combined words “Dong” and “A”.

And the activities...

Tran Temple Festival happens formally, consisting processions from neighbouring villages to Thuong Temple. The incense-offering rite involves in 14 virgins carrying 14 trays of flowers into the temple and placing them on thrones in the musical vibration. This act is the image of the former feudal courts.

The festival involves various cultural activities: cock fighting, five-generation fighting art performances, wrestling, unicorn dance, bai bong dance, sword dance, cheo singing, van singing and so on. According to historic records, under the rule of King Tran Nhan Tong, after the Mongolian invaders were defeated, the King offered feast through 03 successive days known as “Thai binh dien yen”. The Great tutor Tran Quang Khai composed the



dance for the victory namely “bai bong” and taught the imperial singers to perform. The dancers were pretty ladies dressed in the ethnic clothes, putting on their shoulders a short pole hanging

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with flower baskets or paper-made lanterns at the two ends. The dancers also held on to a fan to enrich their performance. “Bai bong” dance contained acts of “bat dat”, “luc dat” and “tu dat”. Nevertheless, it was neatly adjusted under the Nguyen Dynasty. Currently, there is still a team of skilled dancers of the kind in Phuong Bong ward on the outskirts of Nam Dinh. It is said that Hat Van is derived from Hat Chau composed under the Tran Dynasty, popularised and trimmed under the Le Mat time.

Over the last years, branches and departments, especially the culture-information sector in Nam Dinh, have paid attention to preserving and enhancing such cultural identities. Nam Dinh Province takes pride in its reference of “national root”, giving birth and nursing hearts and souls of “Mother” and “Father” of the people. On the occasion of the festival, people across the country are warmly welcome to the place by the local friendly and simple residents.

The unique cultural activities, especially the splendid and radiant atmosphere of “Dong A”, make Tran Temple Festival attractive to travellers everywhere...

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