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The relationship between legends and beliefs of worshipping Nguyen Trung Truc

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ABSTRACT

In the history of Vietnam, in the second half of the 19th century, the South was the place marked the most with the patriotic movement against the French colonialists. The land of Kien Giang with a loyal son with an undying will that would rather sacrifice everything and decide not to be a slave has been remembered by history and people: National hero Nguyen Trung Truc. He was respected by the people and worshiped as a god in communal houses, temples, shrines, even at home. The purpose of the article analyzes and further clarifies the process of formation and development of the worship of Nguyen Trung Truc in Kien Giang, contributing to the explanation of why Nguyen Trung Truc became an immortal hero and a god in the history of Vietnam, the hearts of the people of Kien Giang.

Keywords: beliefs, Kien Giang, legend, Nguyen Trung Truc

1. Introduction

Referring to Nguyen Trung Truc, besides the images depicted through history, people also pay attention to the series of legends with magical elements. This is a product of the imagination, and at the same time a place to convey the feelings and attitudes of the people of Kien Giang towards the person they consider a god. Nguyen Trung Truc was deified as a phenomenon in accordance with the people's minds and wishes: deification of people with meritorious services to the country, fighting against foreign invaders, protecting the country's rivers and lands. The worship of Nguyen Trung Truc has become

a popular form of folk belief in Kien Giang: the worship of Nguyen Trung Truc.

There have been many research works on Nguyen Trung Truc from many different angles: The Journal of History - Dia won a special monograph on Nguyen Trung Truc (October, 11 and 12, 1968). The Provincial Party Committee and People's Committee of Kien Giang Province twice organized a national conference on Nguyen Trung Truc (the first time in 1986 with the topic: Nguyen Trung Truc - life and career; the second time in 2009 with the theme: Nguyen Trung Truc - life and career; the second time in 2009 with the topic: Nguyen Trung Truc - life and career): Preserving and promoting the value of cultural heritage and national hero festival Nguyen Trung Truc)... But so far, there have been no monographs to identify and analyze the relationship between legends and beliefs worshipping Nguyen Trung Truc in Kien Giang. This article can be considered as a necessary supplement to an issue that has not been thoroughly studied in the current context.

2. Theoretical basis and research methods

As is known, the land of Kien Giang in the late 19th century affiliated with the resistance war against the invading French colonialists. Nguyen Trung Truc was one of the bravest peasant leaders, and a “thorn” in the eyes of the French colonialists. During his worthy life, Nguyen Trung Truc left posterity's gratitude for virtue and talent.

Nguyen Trung Truc's life and feats have been legendary by the people with miraculous stories to praise and deify a heroic character that everyone admires.

The adjective “miracle” in the concept of “miracle element” has the basic meaning of unpredictable change. “Miracle” is close in meaning to the adjectives “fantasy”, “myth”, “fantasy”... In terms of form, “miracle element” has two main forms: tangible (human form, animal form, object form) and invisible (transformation form).

“Miracle element” plays an extremely important role in legend, it is an obligatory element to honor historical characters and events.

In Vietnamese, “legend” is a Sino-Vietnamese noun. This noun is defined in the Vietnamese Dictionary as “Oral folktales about historical figures and events, often with many magical elements” (Hoàng Phê, 1994).

Most of Vietnamese folklore textbooks have defined the concept “legend”. Among those Le Chi Que's definition can be considered as the most typical “Legend is a genre of folk narratives which reflect historical events, figures, cultural celebrities or religious figures through magical artistic fiction” (Le Chi Que, 2004).

In the legend of heroes of the feudal period, Kieu Thu Hoach simplified “legend” as “an oral story, belongs to folk narrative; its plot retells stories of historical figures or explain the origin of local artifacts from the people's point of view, its literary devices are exaggeration and use fantasy and magic elements such as fairy tales and myths...”

(Kieu Thu Hoach, 2006). For this article, the concept of legend will be identified based on Kieu Thu Hoach's definition.

For many generations, Nguyen Trung Truc has been honored by Kien Giang people as a god. People call Nguyen Trung Truc as "Mr Nguyen" or "Uncle Nguyen". When they have difficulties, they burn incense to pray for luck, safe, health, etc... At favorable time, they come and burn incense to offer thanks. Whenever they are, wherever they go, whatever they do, they always consider "Mr Nguyen" as a reliable spiritual support. Nguyen Trung Truc temple exists in many places, but many families still worship separately in their homes. No one dares to say an insult or even think something wrong in Nguyen Trung Truc temple, in front of statues or relics of Nguyen Trung Truc. Kien Giang people have honored "Mr Nguyen" as their god. God is an invisible symbol, but in their heart, he is the truest expression of thoughts, feelings and actions.

Ngo Duc Think mentioned that there is a close relationship between legend and belief: "Vietnamese villagers both have a need for a noble, dignified god who has supreme power and ultimate authority; also they have a wish to see him, close to him in their spiritual life. Through the description of fairy tales, gods are always virtuous and sociable persons, they love people and friendly, they also love the landscape of the village and always return to their homeland when they die. During their lifetime, they helped the people eliminate the invaders, reclaim the wasteland, teach, and make up the village customs and traditions. When they died, they protected and responded to people's wish. Therefore, when setting up a temple to worship a certain god, people really believe that the god is a sacred symbol who is both noble and close to them. God is the shining symbol of beautiful traditions; enriches the spiritual beauty of villages over the ages. Through the god being worshiped, they both have chance to see the essence of all values crystallized in a person, and see themselves when looking into it. And through the god symbol, on the one hand, the consciousness of returning to the source is waken up, on the other hand, their psychology also has space and conditions to release. These are two dialectical aspects in the spiritual life of people everywhere, every time and are a natural law in beliefs of all times" (Ngo Duc Think, 2001).

On the basis of legends about Nguyen Trung Truc, the following research methods are selected:

- Systematic-structural method: when studying legends about Nguyen Trung Truc, these legends are put in the contemporary legend systems to see the dominance in the concept of legend genre creation.
- Comparative method: to illustrate the inheritance as well as the unique features in the use of magical elements to portray legendary characters.
- Analytical-synthetic method: on the basis of legendary stories about Nguyen Trung Truc, they are analyzed and synthesized in order to clarify the unique features in using magical elements to present, "sanctify" Nguyen Trung Truc.

3. Result and discussion

Nguyen Trung Truc's real name is Nguyen Van Lich, customarily called “Quan Chon” or “Quan Lich”, was born in 1839 in Binh Nhat village, Cuu An district, Tan An ward, Gia Dinh province, now Hamlet 1, Binh village, Ben Luc District, Long An Province. Nguyen Trung Truc is the eldest in a family of seven children; his parents let him study both literature and martial arts. As a child, Nguyen Van Lich was an active teenager. When he grew up, he was a vivacious, highly skilled martial artist, rich in chivalry man. He hated the Western invaders who came to his country. Due to his frank character, his kindness for helping others, his teacher gave him a Chinese name “Truc” (means integrity and frankness).

Nguyen Trung Truc's life was associated with two famous events in the movements against French at that time. The first battle took place in 1861 on Nhut Tao (Tan Tru district, Long An province today). He and his peasants burned the French ship named L'Esperance. “In this battle, 17 French and Mani soldiers on board were killed. There were 2 French soldiers and Ma-ni soldiers who managed to grab a small boat and escaped. There were 3 other Ma-ni soldiers captured by the insurgents but escaped when the ship exploded. On the shore, there were 20 Vietnamese soldiers killed by Ho Quang Chieu and the insurgents” (Bui Manh Nhi, 2011). The resounding reputation of Nguyen Trung Truc made the French colonialists cautious. Nguyen Trung Truc's prestige had spread, so it was easy to gather patriots in the local Kinh - Hoa - Khmer community.

Nguyen Trung Truc's second feat was also illustrious. It was the battle to capture the Kien Giang fort. Nguyen Trung Truc and the insurgent army started from Ta Nien. At four o'clock in the morning, June 16, 1868, when it was dark and when the enemy was asleep, the insurgents launched an attack on the fort with only spears and fighting spirit. Nguyen Trung Truc ordered the killing of the French soldiers. The two French guards at the gate, were sleeping by the gun, were killed first. The insurgents rushed into the fort. They killed the French officer first, and then the head of the Soterne garrison and the owner of Rach Gia province, all of the French soldiers could not escape from this sudden and quick attack. Finally, the insurgents completely destroyed the Kien Giang fort... they killed 27 and captured 3 alive” (Bui Manh Nhi, 2011). After that, Nguyen Trung Truc moved to Hon Chong - Kien Luong and then to Phu Quoc to continue fighting. But the French army was too strong, the resistance of Nguyen Trung Truc soon ended, Nguyen Trung Truc was executed by guillotine at Rach Gia market on October 27, 1868. Although he passed away but his immortal quote in front of the enemy: “*Bao giờ người Tây nhổ hết cỏ nước Nam thì mới hết người Nam đánh Tây*” (If the Westerners pull all the weeds in the South, then there will be no Southerners fight the West) and the stories about him are still bright.

An eminent poet of the Nguyen Dynasty - Huynh Man Dat (1807-1882) summarized the feat of Nguyen Trung Truc with two memorable verses:

*“Hỏa hồng Nhứt Tảo oanh thiên địa
Kiếm bạc Kiên Giang khắp quỷ thần”*

Nguyen Trung Truc's life, in addition to political history, is also respected by the people through a series of legends. Nguyen Trung Truc series of legends belongs to the genre of character legends. According to the Textbook of Literature, Vietnam Education Publishing House in 2007 (training document for primary school teachers at college and university), the legend has three basic contents: the legend praising the feat of conquering nature, building a civilization in the early period of nation building; legends praise the career of national defense and resistance against foreign invaders and legends reflect the peasant uprising movement. Comparing the content, the series of legends about Nguyen Trung Truc belongs to the second group.

The legends about Nguyen Trung Truc all focus on the image of character building. “When creating character images, especially heroic characters against foreign invaders, folk authors often use three motifs, namely: miraculous birth, extraordinary feats, and incarnation” (Kieu Thu Hoach, 2006). The folk author uses the above three motifs to build the image of the character in legend, in that is the element of magic. Therefore, to exam the miracle elements in the series of Nguyen Trung Truc legend, three motifs “miracle birth”, “marvelous feat” and “incarnation” are carried out.

3.1 Motif “miracle birth”

The magic birth motif has two variations:

– The first form is the direct narrative: “his Nguyen Trung Truc other takes a bath and she is surrounded by dragons” (The Legend of Tran Gioi, Tran Ba - The Legend of Hung Vuong), “The rainbow falls on his mother” (Five brothers in Na village - Legend of Hung Kings)... (Kieu Thu Hoach, 2006).

– The second form tells of conception through a mother's dream. Dreams are valuable as predictions: *dreaming of swallowing the sun in the stomach* (The story of Go mountain - Quang Nam folklore), *“dreaming of the moon falling into the stomach”* (The story of Vu Thung mountain - A survey of Lieu Doi traditional culture), *“dreaming of swallowing two eggs”* (Cao Son Quy Minh - Legend of Hung Kings) (Kieu Thu Hoach, 2006).

Through surveying the legends of some heroes against the French in the 19th century in the Southwest region, such as the legend of Truong Dinh, Thien Ho Duong, and the “four masterpieces”: Nguyen Thanh Long, Tran Cong Than, Truong Van Rong, Ngo Tan Duoc, about the valedictorian Huan... the element of miraculous birth is hardly used in character legends, of course the legend of Nguyen Trung Truc is not out of this flow. Folk authors pay attention to the remaining two factors, which are “marvelous feat” and “incarnations” in praising the characters. Thereby, the heroes of resistance to the French were portrayed into sharp artistic images.

According to the author Vinh Xuyen, “Nguyen Trung Truc's parents were originally

from the Central region, from Xom Luoi, Vinh Hoi village, Phu Cat district, Binh Dinh province. Later, his parents moved to the South to settle down and live in Binh Nhut village, Binh Cach, Thuan An district, Tan An ward, Gia Dinh province. Now is hamlet 1, Nhut Chanh village, Ben Luc district, Long An province” (Vinh Xuyen, 1998). Obviously, the details above belong to history, not legend.

Through the survey, it is found that the miraculous birth motif appeared a lot in the reign of Hung Vuong (the legend of Lac Long Quan, Thanh Giong,...); the Northern colonial period (negligible); by the time of feudalism, it was no longer a common phenomenon which had to be paid much attention. Also, it was almost absent in the legends of characters in the new Southwest region. It can be understood that the miraculous birth motif that does not appear in the Mekong Delta is a feature of the legend in this Southwest region.

Thus, it can be broadly understand that the series of legends about Nguyen Trung Truc born in the feudal period (19th century), so the mythical and magical elements related to the “miracle birth” cannot be “bold”. The principle of constructing space and time is also more mundane.

3.2 Motif “marvelous feat”

The great feat of the national hero Nguyen Trung Truc has been recorded in the official history. Because of love, gratitude and reverence for Nguyen Trung Truc, there is a treasure of legends to praise wisdom, talent, morality, patriotism and noble example of sacrifice for the people in his country. Nguyen Trung Truc is one of the anti - French heroes most talked about in folklore. Through the folk author's description, with an admiring look, the power of Nguyen Trung Truc is always recreated with a “supernatural” power, but still earthly. Because of his “supernatural” strength, Nguyen Trung Truc performed quickly and excellently the feats. Here are some legends related to his extraordinary feats.

“It is said that, in Ta Nien, while teaching martial arts to the insurgents, he saw a flock of crows perched on the other side of the canal (Ta Nien creek is more than 10 meters wide), he immediately performed for the insurgents by using his whip to resist from one side of the canal to the other. When he fell to the ground, he was still standing, holding two crows in both hands, his face did not show any fatigue.

In Rach Gia, once he went to inspect an enemy post with Mrs. Do, he stood far away to watch his female scout. Mrs. Do was picked up by the chief Phen and teased and tried to play a disgraceful game, he rushed to use a martial posture to knock down the colonial, “steal” Mrs. Do, jump on top of the mast of a boat in the middle of the river, and then continue keep jumping to the other shore.

One night at the Kien Giang fort, while hiding at the attack position, suddenly a cobra as large as biceps crawled over the soldier lying near. To keep it a secret, he grabbed the

snake, cut it in half and threw it away. While fighting closely with the enemy, two soldiers Lang - Sa pointed their guns at him to shoot. But before he could pull the trigger, he jumped in, grabbed the two guys' heads and beat them together, their skulls broke.

There is a story that, in Phu Quoc, the insurgent army was surrounded by the French throughout the island, forbidding no one to help. If anyone disobeys the order, they will be imprisoned or sentenced to death. At that time, the insurgent army fell into starvation. He immediately organized a rebel army with him to go to the sea to catch fish to eat. While the boat was breaking the waves on the sea, he saw the sharks wading; he immediately jumped into the sea with a knife to kill the fish and threw it on the boat.

There is one more story that is no less lively. When the insurgent army was in a state of hunger and thirst, he was worried and tried to find a solution when a man ran to him and told him that there was a herd of wild buffalo eating grass on the hillside. He immediately ordered the insurgents to organize a siege. The herd of buffaloes passively ran up to the forest, only two fell into the creek, one of them tried to cross the shore, he quickly chased and grabbed its tail, it dragged him along. When he approached a big tree, he immediately turned its tail into the trunk, and his legs spread out to block the stump, it turned around and rammed him. Taking advantage of that opportunity, he grabbed its two horns and pulled it into the water to receive water. At that time, the insurgents came and killed both buffaloes... ” (Anh Đông, 2010).

Surveying the series of legends about Nguyen Trung Truc, we found that most of the marvelous feats were due to “self-made strength” (jumping over rivers, breaking snakes, killing sharks, ..). What miracle helps Nguyen Trung Truc do extraordinary things when he is not like Lac Long Quan (Son of the god Long Nu; dragon body, often in the water, invincible health, has many miracles). Nguyen Trung Truc is also not like Thach Sanh (Prince Ngoc Hoang reincarnated. Later, Ngoc Hoang sent a fairy of the best kind in heaven to teach martial arts and all kinds of miracles). In his short life, Nguyen Trung Truc did not receive help and support from the gods. But he lived in a land full of dangers and trials. The land of Kien Giang during the French period was rich, fertile, moorland, dense trees but also many “sacred forest, poisonous water”, “under the river there is crocodile wading, in the forest, there is tiger”. He reclaimed the land to gain a place to live from snakes and tigers... If they can't be tamed, people have to fight one-on-one. Many people died. But thousands of thousands of people stood firm to assert their status as owners in the new land. Thus, it was the extreme circumstances that created an extraordinary Nguyen Trung Truc.

However, we also see the shadow of the divine help creating the extraordinary feat of Nguyen Trung Truc. That is “*after the disbandment of the insurgent army, one night, Nguyen Trung Truc alone broke into the Kien Giang fortress and killed seven or eight dozen enemies. The French survivors woke up, chased, reached the beach, and saw him sitting on a horse, surfing like flying towards Hon Tre. They shot after them, but*

strangely enough, as soon as the bullets flew out of the barrel, they turned back and went straight into their chests. On the coast of Rach Gia, the enemy's corpses were scattered. The enemy was terrified and shrunk for a while. Mr. Nguyen went to Hon Tre to rebuild his forces” (Anh Động, 2010).

The image of a flying horse that took Mr. Nguyen to Hon Tre was a “magic horse”, the bullets fired by the French and then returned to shoot at them were “divinely controlled”, maybe this is the rare detail among the motifs of extraordinary feats in the legends of the Southwest region.

3.3 Motif “incarnation”

One thing that is easy to see in the legend of the heroic characters of the Southwest region in general and the legend of Nguyen Trung Truc in particular is that the character's death is mentioned in a specific, direct. It is different from the image “*An Duong Vuong holds a rhinoceros horn with seven inches long, a golden turtle makes a road to welcome the king*” (the legend of An Duong Vuong and Trong Thuy - My Chau) or “*Giong turned looks around, looks back at his hometown Ke Dong, then in that moment, both man and horse flew straight to the blue sky*” (the legend of Saint Giong)... In the final moments, when Nguyen Trung Truc was taken to the execution ground to be executed, he showed the mettle of a brave general who made the enemy scared. He also told the executioner: “*If you cut off my head, cut it sweetly, otherwise, I will kill you*” (Department of Literature, Can Tho University, 1999).

Describing in detail his execution, the legend has many different versions, we introduce 03 versions collected:

Version 1: “*Then, the executioner's blade slashed down. His head fell, but his hands reached up to catch it, and put it in the same place. His eyes were still glaring, making everyone in awe and admiration*”.

Version 2: “*As soon as the head left the neck, Mr. Nguyen immediately raised his hands to hold his head, preventing it from falling. Blood gushed from his neck like a bright rainbow. Moments later, his head was lying on the ground, but his eyes were still wide, and his eyes were constantly moving back and forth. His irises pointed directly at the name Bon Tua, he cried out loudly, vomited blood and died on the spot. Turning to the side, a series of enemies fell. Turn to the left, a series of other names roll*”.

Version 3: “*Traditionally, Mr. Nguyen was slashed, but he did not let his head fall to the ground. His hands lifted his head. His eyes rolled back, his irises darting back and forth, directed at the executioner. He panicked, howled loudly and vomited blood and died on the spot. French soldiers with guns stood in line at the terrifying execution ground, looking away*” (Anh Động, 2010).

Surveying the three versions above, we found that although there are differences in the narrative and a few small details, these three versions have two quite basic commonalities:

First, before death, Nguyen Trung Truc was brave, calm and confident (he did not let his head fall to the ground, his hands still actively lifted or supported his head).

Second, even if he is already dead, he still has enough power to threaten or destroy the enemy (his eyes are focused on the enemy, causing them to vomit blood and die on the spot).

Describing the death of Nguyen Trung Truc with such legendary color, folk legends have shown the people's love and admiration for the hero: Living bravely, dying bravely. The love and affection of the people have built the image of the hero Nguyen Trung Truc becoming a god at the moment of his sacrifice. With his death at the execution ground, Nguyen Trung Truc sublimated and burned himself into an undying flame that illuminated the nation's history. Stepping onto the stage is the time when Nguyen Trung Truc transformed into an immortal flame that brightened up Vietnamese qualities. The truth cannot be dug up, but folk legends can cast a magical fog on the truth. It is not possible to help Nguyen Trung Truc escape from the execution ground, but the miraculous factor raises Nguyen Trung Truc beyond the threshold of everyday life, becoming sacred and immortal. People saw the moment of his head falling as the miraculous incarnation of the national hero Nguyen Trung Truc. In the legend of Nguyen Trung Truc, the details of his death are specific expressions of the belief and admiration that people have for those who “was born to be general and death as a god”.

One of the important contents of the legend is to “immortalize” the hero character. To do so, folk authors often build character images in two main directions: “Death means opening a new life with a higher spiritual level”(Thanh Giong, An Duong Vuong, Hai Ba Trung ,...) and death is “grow a new life”(Mr Than Do, Lady Hundred Sac,...) (Kieu Thu Hoach, 2006). Describing death as it is in reality can hardly meet the need to “immortalize” the hero character. In the case of Nguyen Trung Truc's death, how is the folk author handled? “*At the place where Nguyen Trung Truc died, at night, the army trumpet sounded, the sound of swords and spears rang, the sound of soldiers cheering. The French around there never get a good night's sleep*” (Can Tho University, 1999). People describe Nguyen Trung Truc's “beautiful” death in two ways: he lived forever in the people's consciousness and his death was not the end, but continued to fight the invaders in a different form of consciousness.

Talking about Nguyen Trung Truc, where the official history is not fully recorded, folk legends “reinforced” more; Where history itself has left its mark, folk legends are once more exaggerated, by their own means, so that the character has both “the core of historical truth” and “the essence of poetry and dreams” in order to reflect the feelings and aesthetic ideals of the people. Compared to the official history, Nguyen Trung Truc in folk legends is much more vivid and attractive, and the fantasy element contributes a significant part to the intense vitality of the series of legends about the national hero of Nguyen Trung Truc. Thanks to the magical elements in the series of

legends that have contributed to the sanctification and formation of the worship of Nguyen Trung Truc in Kien Giang.

3.4 Belief in worshipping Nguyen Trung Truc in Kien Giang

Currently, the tomb of Nguyen Trung Truc is in Rach Gia, Kien Giang province. To commemorate the person who was consecrated as “was born to be general and death as a god” in this folk mind and belief, the people of Kien Giang hold a memorial ceremony for Nguyen Trung Truc on the 27th, 28th and 29th of the 8th lunar month every year at the historical and cultural relic of Nguyen Trung Truc temple (Rach Gia city, Kien Giang province). This is a traditional cultural beauty with deep meaning, expressing the principle of “When you eat a fruit, think of the man who planted the tree” of the nation. Remembering and grateful for the merits of the national heroes, who sacrificed for the country and built a land for posterity is a beauty in Vietnamese culture. One of the popular ways to remember the merits of the deceased is to organize festivals on special days, creating events honoring people with meritorious services.

The three days of the festival have many activities to recreate the history and feats of Nguyen Trung Truc. The festival is divided into two parts: the ceremony part and the festival part. The ceremony includes the procession of the gods, the incense offering ceremony, and the sacrifice ceremony at the temple. The festival includes cultural - art activities, folk games, commercial activities, cuisine... The unique and special feature of the festival is that those who come to worship, visit and worship not only get to eat and drink, enjoy music for free, but also they can sleep, get medical check-ups, and get free medicine.

For a long time, Nguyen Trung Truc's death anniversary has become a traditional festival to educate the young generation about patriotic traditions and the spirit of resilience against foreign invaders, protect the country, preserve and promote the national cultural identity in the new era. On these days, the area around the historic and cultural relic of Nguyen Trung Truc temple, Rach Gia city becomes bustling and boisterous. Visitors from all over the world followed each other to the communal house and Nguyen Trung Truc Monument Park to burn incense, remember and pay tribute to Mr. Nguyen.

Although during the French colonial period, worshipping and visiting Nguyen Trung Truc was strictly prohibited, but the people of Long An, An Giang, Can Tho, Kien Giang, Ca Mau... still secretly worshiped and celebrated Nguyen's death anniversary. Later on, the anniversary of Nguyen Trung Truc's death became a traditional and widespread cultural activity, attracting millions of people throughout the southwestern provinces and other localities attending. In many ways, festival goers from all over the world bring home what they can to show their hearts to Mr. Nguyen, such as money, vegetables, fruits, rice, sugar... And on the Nguyen Trung Truc death anniversary, whatever day or night, thousands of people from different localities volunteered to clean the temple and provide free vegetarian meals and drinks. They work with enthusiasm,

responsibility, self-discipline, and voluntariness just to show some sincerity to Nguyen Trung Truc. Funding for the organization is mainly voluntary contributions from people and businesses. This is a unique festival model of the area with very high community character, people who go to the festival eat together, stay together, work together, and enjoy the fruits of their labor that they have contributed to, creating friendship between the participants in the festival. People come to worship with their hearts, proud of the tradition of a hero.

Coming to Nguyen Trung Truc festival, everyone has the opportunity to nostalgic about the past. The ceremony is always held solemnly and respectfully on the basis of traditional rituals, while bringing practical educational and emotional meanings; is an opportunity for posterity to remember and be grateful; proud of Nguyen Trung Truc's glorious sacrifice.

It can be said that Nguyen Trung Truc passed away but he is as a historical figure. For the people, Nguyen Trung Truc never died: born as a general to help the people, to help the country, to die as a god to help the country and help the people. This is a form of expressing the people's faith and beliefs. The fact that the Nguyen Trung Truc is "sanctified" is a phenomenon in accordance with the people's minds and wishes: deification of people who have made meritorious services to the people and the country, fighting against foreign invaders, protecting the countryside, and being praised forever because of his unyielding mettle, military talent... The worship of Nguyen Trung Truc has now become a popular form of folk belief in Kien Giang - the belief of Nguyen Trung Truc worship.

"Like all other religious beliefs, Nguyen Trung Truc worship helps satisfy the cultural and spiritual needs of local people. People who come to spirituality are directed to the supernatural realm, towards those who have sacrificed themselves for the Fatherland, "living wisely, falling spiritually". Participating in the death anniversary ceremony, people put aside worries, hustles and calculations of daily life. They come to the death anniversary with the mind of "normal person" people who want to be blessed by "god" and "testify" to their sincere hearts; This is a place where they can pour their thoughts and get lucky for their family and themselves, because they believe that they will be supported by Mr. Nguyen, helping them with their lives and family, helping them to have faith and strength to overcome difficulties in production and life" (Truong Quang Dat, 2018).

Nguyen Trung Truc, before moving from history to the consciousness of folk beliefs, left not only a feat in the resistance war against the French colonialists, but also a flame of patriotism. The statement before the Vietnamese crook Huynh Cong Tan when he tried to advise the Nguyen Trung Truc to follow the French (after catching him) to enjoy the glory, wealth, title, and benefit "*I want to do only a job which has the right behead all Western invaders*" has value beyond all historical eras, transcending space and time. That sentence is like the source of patriotism, sublimate the strength of

Vietnamese people.

Perhaps there is no king or leader who has contributed to the country after death to build as many temples as Nguyen Trung Truc. Most of the southwestern provinces have Nguyen Trung Truc temples such as: Kien Giang, Long An, An Giang, Can Tho, Soc Trang, Bac Lieu, etc. Of the total of nearly 20 Nguyen Trung Truc temples in the Southwest, Kien Giang has 09 temples (Rach Gia, Hon Dat, Phu Quoc, ...). In addition to the main temple, there are many combined temples, worshipping with communal houses, pagodas and temples. Specially, a part of residents in some localities (Kien Giang, Can Tho, Dong Thap...) also hang their own worship pictures like their ancestors.

As a form of folk belief, an important basis for the formation of Nguyen Trung Truc worship is also the cultural tradition of Vietnamese people. On that basis, the fact that Nguyen Trung Truc - a person with full qualities and talents - is the role model that people have always dreamed of. Nguyen Trung Truc is the immortal symbol of the epic about patriotism and nationalism; model of sacrifice.

4. Conclusion

Nguyen Trung Truc's career for national salvation is a brilliant epic in the struggle for national liberation in the nineteenth century. Referring to him, in the minds of the people of Kien Giang, there are stories revolving around the element of fantasy and myth that only he has. Most of the magical elements are associated with actions that are “beneficial to the country and the people”. The miracle factor is considered an “effective assistant” to help Nguyen Trung Truc achieve their aspirations. Not only that, it is an artistic measure to “energize” the character, and at the same time express the people's admiration for Nguyen Trung Truc and the aspiration and belief that they will inevitably win the invaders. Going into the legend, the character Nguyen Trung Truc was immortalized once more. Through legend, people show their admiration and pride for Nguyen Trung Truc in terms of talent, temperament, strength...

Nguyen Trung Truc is the symbol of the epic poem about patriotism and nationalism; is a model of sacrifice and dedication for the people, for the country. Belief in worshipping Nguyen Trung Truc has great value in character education, human morality; educate, cultivate love for the motherland, love the breed; lessons on the sense of national self-reliance, on building the great unity the people in the whole country.

Belief in worshipping Nguyen Trung Truc has a close relationship with the chain of legends about Nguyen Trung Truc. There must be legends with feats, landmarks, etc., specifically, to have rituals, sacred beliefs, and to have festive activities to revive the image of Nguyen Trung Truc. On the contrary, the belief of worshipping Nguyen Trung Truc is the place to keep for a long time the miraculous elements in the series of legends about Nguyen Trung Truc. The belief of worshipping Nguyen Trung Truc has become a

traditional custom, holding a very special position in the spiritual life of the people in Kien Giang. From the legend of Nguyen Trung Truc to the belief of Nguyen Trung Truc worship is a long and continuous development process in the people's mind.

It can be seen that the magical elements in the series of legends about Nguyen Trung Truc have a close relationship with the Nguyen Trung Truc festival that takes place every year in Rach Gia city (Kien Giang province). The Nguyen Trung Truc legend is the core of the Nguyen Trung Truc festival, making the Nguyen Trung Truc festival sacred, while the Nguyen Trung Truc festival makes the legend performance lively, attracting the cohesion and sympathy of the group. For Kien Giang people, the Nguyen Trung Truc festival is a form of storytelling, the preservation of plots. Nguyen Trung Truc in the legend, his life and belongings will directly and visually affect a large number of people thanks to the Nguyen Trung Truc festival environment. There, the people are not as passive spectators but they actively play some roles when participating in re-enacting the events of the Nguyen Trung Truc legend. This has contributed to fostering national pride and community sentiment. The Nguyen Trung Truc festival is associated with rituals, so the solemnity (sacred space and time) shows the essence of the legend to honor Nguyen Trung Truc. Nguyen Trung Truc festival makes the enduring vitality of the Nguyen Trung Truc legend. The legend of Nguyen Trung Truc plays the role of the backbone, the plot leading the process of the festival, the explanation for the questions about festival: when the festival is celebrated, why it lasts so many days, where the procession comes from, and the offerings, what to offer, what to abstain from...

The reason why Nguyen Trung Truc worship has vitality in the hearts of the people of Kien Giang is partly because there are legendary stories that have covered Nguyen Trung Truc with a halo of sacred legends. The legend of Nguyen Trung Truc as a pedestal, a support for the belief in worshipping Nguyen Trung Truc; beliefs and memorial ceremonies and festivals liven up and richer the content of legends about Nguyen Trung Truc. The relationship between Nguyen Trung Truc worship beliefs and Nguyen Trung Truc legends coexists, closely blends, and permeates each other in community activities of Kien Giang residents as an inseparable whole. Belief in worshipping Nguyen Trung Truc is expressed through worshipping Nguyen Trung Truc. Rituals express gratitude. Therefore, the festival should not be understood as just for fun and entertainment. In the belief of Nguyen Trung Truc worship, for the Kien Giang people, the anniversary of Nguyen Trung Truc's death has always been respected, it is a remembrance. In the minds of the people of Kien Giang, Nguyen Trung Truc is the one who has the merit of repelling foreign invaders. The people of Kien Giang remember and honor the merits of Nguyen Trung Truc as a cultural act, moral sense and duty of each person. People worship Nguyen Trung Truc as God. In the minds of the people of Kien Giang, Nguyen Trung Truc beliefs are always interwoven with sacred and magical elements from the legend of Nguyen Trung Truc. This creates faith, sacred faith in the worship of Nguyen Trung Truc. Nguyen Trung Truc from legend to belief has become a sacred belief of the

people of Kien Giang that endures with history, in the people's mind. In the process of formation and existence, the people of Kien Giang have contributed to the creation of traditional moral values: community, patriotism, and national pride. Therefore, Nguyen Trung Truc worship can be said to last forever with history.

In modern social life, the belief of Nguyen Trung Truc worship plays an important role in the spiritual life of each people, is one of the important contributing factors to preserving and maintaining traditional culture. Belief in worshiping Nguyen Trung Truc is a practice imbued with sacred culture of the people of Kien Giang.

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