

# Cultural-Artistic Value in Epic and Festival of the Muong Thanh Hoa People

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Received: 01 Sep 2022; Received in revised form: 23 Sep 2022; Accepted: 30 Sep 2022  
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## Abstract

*The epic The Land of the Earth is a system of mythical stories about the formation of heaven and earth of the Muong. It is also considered history and an encyclopedia of the customs of the Muong people. This epic is both pride and respect in the cultural life of the Muong community. This article studies several outstanding cultural symbols of the epic "Land for the Land" which have been preserved and remained quite intact in the Poon Poong festival - one of the most important festivals of the Muong people in Thanh Hoa.*

**Keywords— culture, art, epic, festival, Muong people.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Studying the traditional culture of the Muong people in Vietnam is no longer a new issue. However, with a special ethnic group, it is said to be the closest source to the ancient Vietnamese in Vietnam. Therefore, studying the unique spiritual values of this ethnic group is also a way to identify the cultural "fossils" of their ancestor's thousands of years ago. Epics and festivals are two of the intangible cultural values considered unique by the Muong. Based on documentary research, combined with fieldwork, we wish to clarify more basic spiritual values in the Muong cultural treasures of Thanh, which are expressed through epics and festivals, contributing to protecting and properly promoting the positive values of Muong culture in Thanh Hoa province in contemporary life.

## II. OVERVIEW OF THE EPIC OF THE MUONG PEOPLE

Giving birth to land is a song of the Muong ethnic group. There are many versions, 10 copies have been collected, the average version is 8 thousand sentences, and the longest version is 16 thousand sentences. The collection in Thanh Hoa is 8503 verses long. The story is summarized as follows: At that time, when the earth and sky were still in chaos, suddenly "rained and drizzled" the vast flooded water, 50 days later, it all receded. Naturally, a green tree with 90 branches sprouted, one of which was sky-high, turning into Mr. Thu Tha and Mrs. Thu Thien.

Two Gods commanded us to make Earth, Heaven, and Everything. After that, the sun was fierce for 12 consecutive years, and the ground was parched. God Pong Peo wishes for heavy rain. Immediately heavy rain and strong winds for nine, ten days and nights; the water flooded again. Seven months later, when the water receded, a giant sycamore tree grew. God sent the Gang-worm to hollow out the intestines of the si tree. The tree fell, and each branch turned into a Muong village... Humans are from there. The Muong tribe is from there. Then Mr. Thu Tha and Mrs. Thu Thien made the year, month, day, night, and four seasons for the people who followed them to make a living. It can be said that "*Father of the Land for the Fatherland*" is a massive folk poem in the treasure of ancient Vietnamese literature, with a tight structure, historical and mythological elements with bold symbolic colors, representing six events the great event of the Muong ethnic group: the formation of the country and people; building material and cultural foundations; arrange household chores; take care of country affairs, conflicts, victories; defend the territory and complete the rule. Laying the land to give birth to the country thus depicts the initial development of the Muong ethnic group.

## III. POON POONG FESTIVAL OF THE MUONG XU THANH PEOPLE

In Thanh Hoa, where there are Muong people, there is the Poon Poong festival. The festival can take place from evening to morning, from morning to evening,

sometimes lasting up to two days and three nights. Only the "Muong Trong" people of the mountainous districts of Thanh Hoa such as Ngoc Lac, Cam Thuy, Ba Thuoc, and Thach Thanh... have the Poon Poong festival. This is a festival that has existed since ancient times imbued with Muong's cultural identity.

Poon Poong festival according to the concept of the Muong people is a ceremony to wish for the faithful love of Nang Nga - Hai Mot, Nang Um - Bong Huong, and Ut Lot - Ho Lien, so that they have the opportunity to return to Muong to have fun with the villagers. These are the characters in four famous Muong love stories. Poon Poong in the Muong language means "playing with flowers" which comes from Muong's epic "Landing the land to give birth to the country". Poon Poong is a kind of ceremonial folk song about the deity that has both the nature of intermarriage with thorns and the blessing of luck... Associated with the Poon Poong festival is the Poong tree.

The festival is held annually on the full moon of January, the full moon of March, and the full moon of July, or the harvest season called the New Rice Festival. The owner of the ceremony is "Au may" and the machines participate in the performance. The character "Au may" must be a reputable person in the village and must be passed on from a previous "Au may". "Au may" is both a shaman and a healer in the village. Poon Poong festival has two parts, the ceremony part, and the performance part. The performances revolved around the cotton tree, simulating all the customs and habits, reflecting the spiritual life, cultural and spiritual life of the Muong people. The cotton tree is the central object in the festival because it is a symbol of the vast universe, converging all things that the Creator has bestowed on man. On a 3-meter-high bamboo cotton tree, hang 5 or 7 floors of wooden flower clusters dyed in blue, red, purple, and yellow and models of animals, farming tools, creative achievements of people... symbolizes prosperity. This cotton plant can only be made by "Au may" and passed on to descendants or a few skillful people in Muong village. Depending on the talent and seniority of "Au may", the cotton tree has many or fewer floors, the highest is 12 floors. Next to the cotton tree is a table for wine and a ceremony tray with traditional dishes of the Muong during the holidays such as soup, bitter soup, etc. Under the cotton tree, the characters "Brother" and "Chung" long"... sitting symmetrically across a cotton tree, wearing a red scarf and a blue scarf, sometimes dancing and singing, sometimes looking in the mirror, combing their hair, sometimes playing the flute. Gong music, "Madame May" walked and danced while singing "Dang".

The festival includes 48 special games such as: dividing land, dividing water, building houses, chasing wild animals, planting crops, fighting buffaloes, fighting cocks, making rice to invite Muong... The characters participating in the festival dance model dances. simulate the movements in the process of daily work and play.

After the ceremony of "Au may", everyone danced and sang the love song, they sang the song of promise, and advice and then confessed their feelings. Through heartwarming songs, and giving flowers, a couple fell in love and swore gold and stone, many couples became husband and wife after the festival.

#### IV. UNIQUE CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC VALUES NEED TO BE EFFECTIVELY PROTECTED AND PROMOTED IN THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

Like many other epics, Laying the Land of the Muong ethnic group is constituted by a system of images. These icons are almost all symbolic. The symbols are composed of a system of codes that later generations must strive to understand to be able to decipher. You can see the stagnation of the epic "Landing the land to give birth to the country" in the Poon Poong festival of the Muong people through some of the following images:

- Cotton tree image:

In the Pon Pong festival in general and the Pon Pong dance in particular, besides the gongs, drums, etc., the most important props are the Cotton Tree. Because it is a symbol of the vast universe, fully converging all things that the Creator has given to humans, is a "sacred object" for the Muong to communicate with the gods. The performances of the festival, therefore, revolve around the cotton tree, simulating all the customs and habits, reflecting the spiritual life, cultural and spiritual life of the Muong people, which evokes a return to the wild days. of history. Cotton plants have different hierarchies. Cotton tree is the first cotton plant of "Au may", new to the practice. Divided into 3 steps, each step has 3 branches, each branch has 3 bunches and each bunch has 3 flowers. After 3 years of using the machine to build a cotton tree 5: the cotton plant is divided into 5 steps, each step has 3 holes, each hole has 5 branches with 5 clusters, each bunch has 5 flowers...and so on after 3 years "Au may ", again erected cotton trees 7, 9... finally cotton trees 12. Cotton trees have 12 steps, each step has 3 holes, each hole has 12 branches, each branch has 12 bunches, and each bunch has 12 flowers... Cotton plants of this type are often found in Ngoc Lac, Thach Thanh, some forest areas in Ba Thuoc, Cam Thuy... Inflorescences of wicker wood dyed blue, red, purple, and yellow. On the flower, and tree are hung

pictures of chickens, birds, storks, deer, pigs, and chickens hewn out of wood; pictures of rice, corn, potatoes, gourds, forest trees, and models of agricultural production tools such as plowshares, hoes, shovels, knives, sickles, arrows, hats... Depending on her talent and seniority The machine (the organizer of the show, who is also the person who has the talent to take medicine) in saving humanity, but the cotton tree has many or few floors, the highest is 12 floors. All of these images evoke the original image of the epic "Landing to give birth to the country" about the scene of the primordial birth of land, water, and Muong. The image of the cotton tree in the Poon Poong festival reminds us of the image of "the stone tree with chu Dong leaves" in the epic Laying the land for water.

There are many artistic images in the epic of Laying the Land, but the image of "Zhu stone Chu Dong" is rich in symbolism and epic in nature. This image also occupies a considerable amount of space in the work. It consists of 5 chapters that the Mo teachers call 5 "that". That is:

*"Tìm cây chu/ Chặt cây chu/ Kéo cây chu/ Làm nhà chu/ Đốt nhà chu"*

With the imagination of the ancients, the sycamore tree is like a sacred miracle tree at the end of the earth. It is like a place of birth and keeping copper - a sacred object with the magical power of the ancients. Searching for the Chu tree, chopping down the Chu, and pulling Chu home to build a house is the aspiration to find wealth, the aspiration towards the sublime and beautiful of the ancient Muong. The "Lang Cun Khuong" brothers not only wanted to see the chu tree, to harvest the leaves and fruits to get rich, but they also wanted to go to the source and dig up the branches to get richer than anyone else. So they sent the Muong soldiers to cut down the sycamore tree. Overcoming dangerous difficulties, the "Lang Cun Khuong" brothers were able to cut the chu tree and drag it across many Muongs from Lai Li Lai Lang hill where the tree is located to Thien Quan, Ke Cho. Then he used the wood of the pine tree to build a castle for the Zhou Dynasty.

Thus, the image of "the tree with leaves and leaves" in the work Laying the land for the country has shown the great problems of the ancient Viet-Mong people. It speaks of the magnanimity and great height when people discover new tools, creating a profound change in human life from ignorance to civilization. The image represents people's burning desire for eternal wealth. This connection shows that if the "trees of stone and leaves" in the work Laying the land for the country are the ultimate desire for abundance, then the image of the cotton tree in the Poon Poong festival is an extension of

the aspiration for life wealth, about the dream of a bountiful harvest, a prosperous Muong village. That unique feature remains to this day through the image of a cotton tree in the Poon Poong festival of the Muong Thanh Hoa people.

- About the song *Mo Muong*:

Mo "Land to give birth to the country" is one of the important and popular mo songs that the Muong often uses in folk songs on festivals or daily activities. That shows the enduring vitality of the epic The Birth of the Land and the Country and the special significance of this epic to the life of the Muong. The Mo De land of the Muong people consists of three parts. The first part is the shortest part, officially titled "Tac tet tet". The two later parts are longer: "Con chu Candy wading" (Cutting down the tree, pulling the wading tree) and "Tooc moong" (Hunting animals). From part to part, the story unfolds in chronological order and all three come together into a unified product. In the Poon Poong festival, Mo and Dang (Rang), talking and dancing are two important parts. When it comes to anecdotes, young men and women perform simulations of that activity, such as scenes of villagers chasing fierce tigers, catching fish, cock fighting, buffalo fighting, boys and girls entering a fortune-telling festival... The anecdotes in the epic "Landing the land to give birth to the country" are told in turn by Au May, fully not only to commemorate the origins of the Muong ethnic group but also to express the aspiration for reproduction, the harmony between heaven and earth. with human life. In addition, the Mo monks also read Lay the land to give birth to the country at funerals. A special thing is that the Mo De Land, the land of the country, is performed only by the magician or Au May - who is trusted and respected by the villagers, proving that the Muong people attach great importance to this epic and worship it as a "biblical". They consider this to be a living epic with special significance in their spiritual life.

- About the shows and dances:

Each performance of the Poong dance is associated with the life of the Muong people in Thanh. According to the concept of the Muong, this show describes the period when the process of land-laying, water-laying, and human habitation began. The Pon Poong show has two parts, the ceremony part and the dancing and singing part around the flower tree. To start the Pong Poong dance, the matron also has to perform a ceremony to pray for an explosive ghost, process an explosive ghost, and process the king, gods, and ancestors to play with flowers. After the offerings and cotton plants were prepared, the Muong invited people from heaven to come down to inspect the offerings.

Poong dance attracts the audience right from the first performance...the singing of Xuong, and the singing of Dang are resounding as an invitation to the villagers to come to join in the fun, dance, and sing together. The performances in the Poon Poong festival all simulate the activities of clearing the fields, making doors, building houses, planting cotton, weaving, hunting wild animals, casting nets, chasing wild tigers, catching fish... of the early days of land, water, and Muong laying; of the battles between the Muong village with the enemy, with the wild animals to unify the Muong village in the Mo Lay land to give birth to the country, etc.

The climax of a Pong Pong is when the boys and girls are drunk, then they borrow the story of her two matches to express their love for the couple, and exchange words of love and attachment. At this time, they are no longer the boys and girls of the Muong village, but they are the symbol of love, of the love affair of Nang Nga and the man Two Matches, Nang Um - Bong Huong, Ut Lot - Ho Lien immortal of the Muong. And this is also the attraction of Poong Poong dance to generations in Muong village, especially to young people, expressing love for the motherland of Muong village.

The fact that the performances and dances imitate the legends of the epic "Land to give birth" in the Poong festival also has a special meaning. The origin of the festival comes from an anecdote about the faithful love affairs of the Muong people. But most of all, the festival is still the restoration of the scene of land-laying, water-laying, and Muong-laying in the epic that brings people back to the wild days of history from offerings, music, lyrics to performances and dances. . And it seems that the story of the faithful love affairs of Muong boys and girls is just an excuse for the Muong to show pride in their unique epic. Mo De is the birthplace of the country, so it is like a red thread throughout time and space in the life of the Muong ethnic people from the early days to modern society, creating a unique feature not only for the Poong festival but also for the festival. and with the culture of the Muong ethnic people in Thanh Hoa.

## V. CONCLUSION

Through some initial studies, it has been shown that, in terms of linguistics, the Muong epics have similarities with folk languages and dialects in the North Central region (including Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, and Ha Tinh provinces). ), which are historical linguistic data as well as cultural values of the Muong epics because language is an important element of culture. These similarities also contribute to affirming that the close relationship between the ancient Vietnamese and the

Muong is not high in terms of the ancient linguistic origins. Meanwhile, the Poong festival can be seen as an overall picture that reflects and reflects the language and epics of Muong. Although the two are essentially one, the epic is a treasure of languages and legends, and the festival is a living cultural practice to preserve the Muong cultural tradition. Through the festival, unique cultural values from traditional costumes, ethnic cultural space, culinary culture, communication and behavior, weddings, funerals, customs, customs... cockroaches continue to be preserved and promoted.

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