



Đức Hoàng Temple (Nghệ An): From Historical Memory to Heritagization and a Resource for Cultural Industry Development

Pham Minh Phuong

Institute of Anthropology and Religious Studies - Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Hanoi, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the transformation of historical memory into cultural heritage at Đức Hoàng Temple, Đô Lương, Nghệ An, Vietnam, a historical-cultural relic associated with King Lê Trang Tông and the restoration of the Later Lê dynasty in the sixteenth century. The study adopts a qualitative case-study design and an interdisciplinary approach combining history, ethnology, religious studies, cultural studies, and heritage studies. The research draws on official historical chronicles, Hán-Nôm texts, hagiographies, scholarly studies, relic dossiers, management documents, official local materials, and mainstream media sources, which are comparatively analyzed and cross-checked to clarify the relationship between official history, local memory, community practices, and the heritagization process. The findings show that the transformation of historical memory into living heritage is sustained through three interrelated mechanisms: the sacralization of King Lê Trang Tông as a locally worshipped historical figure, the ritualization of memory through worship, festivals and community practices, and the institutionalization of conservation and heritage-value promotion. The study further indicates that digital transformation is expanding the modes through which the heritage is preserved, communicated, and accessed, while the physical sacred space and the local community remain central to its authenticity and vitality. On that basis, the article proposes a community-centered approach to conserving and promoting Đức Hoàng Temple, in which historical memory, sacred values, digital communication, education, cultural tourism, and cultural-industry development are integrated while maintaining historical authenticity and respecting the community's role as the principal subject of heritage preservation and transmission.

Corresponding Author

Pham Minh Phuong

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, heritage research worldwide has shifted from an approach that treats relics as objects to be conserved towards viewing heritage as a cultural process that is constructed and re-created through the participation of the community (Smith, 2006). According to this approach, the value of heritage is not an inherent property of a monument or an artefact but is formed in the process by which the community selects, interprets and confers meaning on the past under the impact of different historical and social contexts. Therefore, the central problem of heritage research is no longer limited to determining the authenticity of a historical event or the dating of a relic, but shifts towards explaining how historical memory is received, practised and sustained by the community as part of contemporary cultural life.

This trend opens up new approaches to historical relics in Vietnam. In many cases, the value of a relic is created not only by the figure or event recorded in official history but also by the process through which the local community interprets, sacralizes and transforms historical memory into practices of belief, festival and cultural institutions. However, most current studies still focus on

the history of a relic's formation, its architecture, its festival, or the work of management and conservation, whereas the mechanism of heritagizing historical memory and the role of the community in that process have not been analysed systematically. In addition, the impacts of digital transformation on the presence and promotion of heritage value have so far been addressed only in isolated aspects.

Đức Hoàng Temple (Đô Lương, Nghệ An) is an appropriate case for approaching this problem. The relic is associated with King Lê Trang Tông, the monarch who initiated the restoration of the Later Lê dynasty in the sixteenth century. Yet the meaning of the temple does not derive solely from records in official history. Over many centuries, the memory of the king has not survived intact as in official history but has been received, supplemented and interpreted by the local community through legend, belief, festival and cultural practices. That process gradually transformed the memory of a historical figure into the cultural memory of the community and, at the same time, laid the foundation for the formation and development of heritage. Đức Hoàng Temple is therefore not only a place that preserves the traces of the past but also reflects the way the community ceaselessly re-creates history in order to meet the need for identity recognition and to sustain cultural life in different social contexts.

On the basis of an interdisciplinary approach combining history, ethnology, religious studies and cultural studies, the article treats Đức Hoàng Temple as a case study in order to clarify three issues: (1) the process of localizing the memory of King Lê Trang Tông; (2) the cultural mechanisms by which historical memory is transformed into a living heritage; and (3) the potential to expand the value of the heritage in the context of digital transformation and the development of the cultural industry. On this basis, the article proposes approaching heritage from the perspective of cultural memory, emphasizing the role of the community as the subject of the heritagization process, and thereby contributing to the theoretical foundations for the study of historical-cultural relics in Vietnam in the context of digital transformation and as a resource for the development of the cultural industry.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Research design and analytical framework

The article approaches Đức Hoàng Temple (Đô Lương, Nghệ An) as a case study in order to analyse the process of transformation from historical memory into cultural heritage. The study is conducted on the basis of an interdisciplinary approach combining history, cultural studies, ethnology and religious studies, together with Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory (Assmann, 2011) and Laurajane Smith's conception of heritage as a cultural process (Smith, 2006), in order to explain the relationship among history, memory, the cultural mechanisms (sacralization – ritualization – institutionalization), the digitalized sacred space, the community, the heritage and the resources of the cultural industry.

2.2. Research materials and analytical procedures

The source materials comprise three main groups: (1) official histories, Hán-Nôm texts, hagiographies and research works on King Lê Trang Tông, the Later Lê dynasty and Đức Hoàng Temple; (2) relic-ranking documents, management documents and materials of the competent professional agencies; and (3) mainstream media sources reflecting conservation activities, festivals and the promotion of the relic's value in recent years. These groups of materials are cross-checked in order to identify the interaction between historical memory and community memory in the heritagization process.

On the basis of an analytical framework comprising history - memory - sacralization - heritagization - value promotion, the article examines the shift of Đức Hoàng Temple from a site associated with dynastic memory into a living heritage that is sustained by the community and continues to be re-created in the context of digital transformation.

3. RESULTS

3.1. From dynastic history to local memory

The heritagization process at Đức Hoàng Temple must first be situated within the historical context of the sixteenth century, a turbulent period in which the Southern–Northern Court (Lê and Mạc) configuration gradually took shape. Within that process, Lê Trang Tông is recorded as the king who initiated the restoration of the Lê dynasty after the 1527 upheaval. The *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* (Complete Annals of Đại Việt) records the legitimacy of King Lê Trang Tông: “In the year of the Water Snake, the first year of Nguyên Hòa (1533). In spring, in the first month, the king ascended the throne in Ai Lao and proclaimed the reign title Nguyên Hòa” (Institute of Social Sciences of Vietnam, 1998). The *Khâm định Việt sử thông giám cương mục* (Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting the History of Việt) likewise identifies the enthronement of Lê Duy Ninh as the event marking the restoration of the Lê, which history calls the Later Lê (National History Office of the Nguyễn Dynasty, 1998).

In official history, Lê Trang Tông is recorded first and foremost as a legitimate king, associated with the restoration of the Lê dynasty. However, when it enters the memory of the local community, the image of the king is restructured according to a different logic. Local inhabitants remember him not only through dates, genealogy and political career but also through stories about his origin, his mother, his period of refuge, the protection given by the populace, and his connection with specific places in Nghệ An, particularly in Đô Lương. This shift reflects the process by which a layer of memory belonging to dynastic history was localized and gradually became the cultural memory of the community.

Official history, hagiography and folk legend have different purposes, modes of transmission and social functions. Official history aims to establish dates, events, blood relationships and the legitimacy of power. Hagiography, legend and folk memory, by contrast, explain why a historical figure is venerated and worshipped by the community and linked to a specific space of residence. Therefore, the difference among these sources should not be understood simply as a matter of right or wrong. From the perspective of memory and heritage research, what matters is to identify how the community selects, arranges and confers meaning on the elements of the past.

The difference between the two layers of sources is clearly expressed through the parentage of Lê Trang Tông. The national histories identify him as the son of King Lê Chiêu Tông and a queen of the Phạm family, sought out and enthroned by Nguyễn Kim in Ai Lao; by contrast, the local memory of the Đô Lương area holds that the king's mother was Lady Bùi Thị Ngọc Thụy. Mother and son once took refuge in the Diêm Tràng area, associated with Vĩnh Long village and Lường market, and received the protection of local inhabitants. The anecdote of “Chúa Chôm” (Lord Chôm) is also used by the folk tradition to portray the period of hardship, poverty and the close relationship between the king and the populace before his enthronement.

Table 1. Some representative differences between official history and folk memory

Aspect	Official history and historical sources	Folk memory
Parentage	Lê Trang Tông (Lê Duy Ninh / Lê Ninh) was the son of King Lê Chiêu Tông and a queen of the Phạm family, named Phạm Thị Ngọc Quỳnh (posthumous title Gia Khánh Thân Queen), from Cao Trĩ, Thụy Nguyên district (Thanh Hóa). Recent studies also state that King Lê Chiêu Tông's real name was Lê Ý, enthroned in 1516 with the reign title Quang Thiệu; Lê Trang Tông, his son by Lady Ái Ngọc, whose real name was Lê Duy Ninh, was enthroned in 1533, died in 1548, reign title Nguyên Hòa.	In the Đô Lương area (Nghệ An), the hagiography and community memory affirm that the king's mother was Lady Bùi Thị Ngọc Thụy, daughter of a local prison official. She brought her son to take refuge in Diêm Tràng village and earned a living selling sweets and steamed rolls at Lường market. This change is regarded as a memory reflecting the localization of history so that the community can affirm the king as a native son.
Period of refuge	The histories focus only on Lê Ninh being carried in flight to Ai Lao by senior officials, then found by Nguyễn Kim and enthroned to restore the Lê.	Associated with the protection of the inhabitants of Diêm Tràng, Vĩnh Long village and Lường market.
The “Chúa Chôm” anecdote	No record of the king's debts or of the nickname “Chúa Chôm.”	Emphasizes poverty, indebtedness and the protection of the villagers before enthronement; the folk tradition links him to the saying “In debt like Chúa Chôm.”
Birthplace and concealment	General records of the king taking refuge and being enthroned in Ai Lao (the Sầm Nưa area, Thủy Thuận register). Đô Lương is not specified.	In Nghệ An, folk belief holds that the king was born in Vĩnh Long village (Long Thái village, Thái Sơn commune, Đô Lương) and was protected by local people, who built Long Thái communal house and Đức Hoàng Temple to worship him as a tutelary deity.
Memory function	Affirms the legitimacy of the restored Lê dynasty.	Establishes the relationship between the king and the community and the local space.

Source: Compiled by the author from the historical, hagiographic and local-memory sources cited in the article.

The above variants concentrate mainly on three issues: the king's origin, his period of refuge, and his attachment to places in Nghệ An and Thanh Hóa. These are elements capable of generating empathy, recounted in connection with the community's living space. Stories about his mother, about Diêm Tràng, Lường market or Vĩnh Long village are therefore not merely biographical supplements for a king. They function as symbolic codes that help the inhabitants explain the presence of Đức Hoàng Temple and, at the same time, affirm that their land is part of the history of the Lê restoration.

From this angle, the central question is not whether legend can replace official history, but why the community chooses certain details to remember. Collective memory is always selective; in each period, the community tends to select the elements suited to the need for identity recognition, and those that reinforce the legitimacy of its space of existence are usually retained, symbolized and transmitted across generations. In the case of Đô Lương, that process is clearly expressed in the relationship between Long Thái communal house and Đức Hoàng Temple. Long Thái communal house is associated with the place of birth, while Đức Hoàng Temple is regarded as the residence and the centre of worship of the king. The early-spring palanquin procession connects the two sites into a single cultural whole, in which memory is organized through space, ritual and community participation.

Accurately identifying the relic and its principal deity is important. Đức Hoàng Temple in Đô Lương, which worships King Lê Trang Tông, is different from Đức Hoàng Temple (also called Hoàng Long shrine) in Yên Thành, which worships the Great King of the Killing Sea, Hoàng Tá Thôn. This identity of names can easily lead to confusion in research, management and heritage

communication. Therefore, clearly distinguishing the principal deity, the history and the space of worship is a necessary condition for ensuring the authenticity of the interpretations of the relic (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of the relics related to “Đức Hoàng Temple” mentioned in the article

Relic	Location	Principal deity	Co-worshipped	Festival
Long Thái communal house / Vĩnh Long / Lim communal house (provincial historical-cultural relic, 2006)	Vĩnh Long (Long Thái) village, Thái Sơn commune, former Đô Lương district, Nghệ An.	King Lê Trang Tông.	The village tutelary god and figures who reclaimed the land and protected the inhabitants.	12–13 of the first lunar month.
Đức Hoàng Temple (national historical – artistic-architectural relic, 1996)	Yên Sơn commune, former Đô Lương district; now Đô Lương commune, Nghệ An.	King Lê Trang Tông (personal name Lê Ninh / Lê Duy Ninh, also called Chúa Chôm).	Other deities, including the king's ancestors and kin: his paternal and maternal grandfathers, his father (King Lê Chiêu Tông / Lê Ý) and his mother (Bùi Thị Ngọc Thụy).	15–16 of the first lunar month; with a palanquin procession from Long Thái communal house to Đức Hoàng Temple.
Đức Hoàng Temple (Hoàng Long shrine) (national historical-cultural relic, 1998)	Giai Lạc commune, Nghệ An (former Phúc Thành commune, Yên Thành district).	Great King of the Killing Sea, Hoàng Tá Thôn, a Trần-dynasty general of the thirteenth century.	Deities who “protect the nation and shelter the people”: Princess Liễu Hạnh, Princess Bạch Y, Saint Trần and associated deities; also the Buddha Śākyamuni and the Snake deity.	28 of the first lunar month and the 1st of the second month.

Source: Compiled by the author from relic dossiers, local records and the sources cited in the article.

According to Jan Assmann, cultural memory is organized and transmitted through text, architecture, ritual and symbol (Assmann, 2011). The case of Đức Hoàng Temple shows that the memory of Lê Trang Tông is sustained through a combination of several media: official history establishes the historical foundation; hagiography and local legend create the connection with the community; architecture and the space of worship materialize memory; and festival and ritual bring memory into social life. Through this process, the king is transformed from a political figure into a tutelary god associated with history, the ethics of gratitude and local pride. Heritagization here therefore does not begin at the moment the relic is ranked, but from the time the memory of dynastic history was received, localized and brought into the life of belief by the community. The later ranking, restoration and management constitute an institutional continuation and recognition of a cultural process that had already formed. It is precisely this layer of local memory that provides the foundation for the sacralization, ritualization and institutionalization of the heritage analysed in the following sections.

3.2. From historical memory to heritagization in community practice

Historical memory truly becomes heritage only when it is received, practised and transmitted by the community across generations. The case of Đức Hoàng Temple shows that the memory of King Lê Trang Tông does not stop at the records of official history or local legend but is transformed into a system of cultural practice through worship, ritual and festival. It is precisely this process that keeps the past present in social life and, at the same time, creates the enduring vitality of the relic.

From the perspective of heritage research, heritagization is not synonymous with the construction of an architectural work or with being ranked and protected by the state. It is the process by which history is selected, interpreted and symbolized by the community so as to become part of contemporary cultural life. Therefore, what deserves attention is not only the existence of the material relic but also the mechanisms that help historical memory continue to be sustained and re-created. Đức Hoàng Temple is a case study showing that this process operates through three closely linked mechanisms: sacralization, ritualization and institutionalization.

Sacralization is the first step of the heritagization process. In official history, Lê Trang Tông is recorded as the king who initiated the restoration of the Later Lê dynasty. In the memory of the Đô Lương community, that image is transformed into a tutelary god associated with the land of origin and local memory. This process does not aim to fully reproduce the king's biography but selects only those qualities the community values, such as legitimacy, loyalty, the will to restore the country and protection for the local inhabitants. According to Trần Quốc Vượng, the deification of a historical figure reflects the community's need to preserve memory and to affirm the values honoured by society (Trần Quốc Vượng, 2000). Sacralization therefore does not erase the historical value of the figure but adds to history a cultural and spiritual dimension, enabling memory to continue to be sustained in community life. If sacralization establishes the object of belief, then ritualization is the mechanism that transforms that belief into social practice. Unlike legend, which preserves memory through narration, ritual brings memory into life through collective action. Rites such as palanquin processions, incense offerings, sacrificial ceremonies, the reading of invocatory texts and the cultural activities of the

festival are all forms of re-enacting history through symbolic language. According to Victor Turner, ritual does not merely re-enact the past but also creates a space in which the community reinforces its identity and reaffirms shared values (Turner, 1969). Ngô Đức Thịnh argues that the festival is a form of “performing memory,” in which the community reaffirms its connection with the past and reinforces its cultural identity (Ngô Đức Thịnh, 2018). Seen from this angle, the Đức Hoàng Temple festival is a space for the community to live with historical memory rather than simply to re-enact a past event.

Notably, ritual practices are always tied to specific spaces, identified through a network of places bearing symbolic meaning. Long Thái communal house is associated with the memory of the deity's birthplace, while Đức Hoàng Temple is the centre of worship. The early-spring palanquin procession is a detail evidencing the connection between the places related in the legend and the different layers of memory of the figure/deity worshipped at the relic. This shows that cultural memory is always tied to place, ritual and the practising subject, rather than existing as a layer of historical information separate from social life.

The practice of organizing the festival at Đức Hoàng Temple over many years shows the central role of the community in the heritagization process. The local authorities, the relic management board, the lineages, the elderly and the populace together organize, practise and transmit the traditional rites. As a result, the memory of Lê Trang Tông is preserved not only through historical documents but also re-created through the cultural experience of many generations. The continuous participation of the community is the condition for historical memory to be transformed into cultural memory and to lay the foundation for the existence of a living heritage.

In this process, institutionalization is the mechanism that ensures the stability and long-term maintenance of the heritage. As early as the feudal period, worship at the temple was placed under the patronage of the state institution. The *Bách thần lục* (Records of the Hundred Deities) notes: “...The court permitted the villagers to form a corvée group specializing in cultivating the sacrificial fields to take charge of the offerings. After his death, the commune worshipped him according to the old custom, and prayers were clearly efficacious” (Nguyễn Văn Tuấn, 2018). This information reflects the combination of state power and the role of the community in sustaining historical memory. Nonetheless, the direct subject conserving the heritage remains the local community through its everyday practices of belief and ritual.

In the present context, the process of institutionalization continues to be reinforced by the legal system on cultural heritage and by local management policies, through the ranking of Đức Hoàng Temple as a national historical relic in 1996. However, practice shows that the management institution only creates a framework of protection, while the vitality of the heritage still depends first and foremost on the participation of the practising community. As long as the festival is still held, the rites are still maintained, and historical memory continues to be nurtured and transmitted, the heritage will continue to exist as a living cultural entity.

From the case of Đức Hoàng Temple, the three mechanisms of sacralization, ritualization and institutionalization do not occur separately but form a continuous process. Historical memory is first sacralized so as to form the object of worship (the sacred object / the sacred); on that foundation, ritual transforms memory into collective experience, while institutionalization ensures the stability and continuity of this process. This is also the foundation for the heritage to adapt to new modes of presence in the context of digital transformation, and it opens up the possibility of promoting heritage value as a cultural resource.

3.3. Đức Hoàng Temple in contemporary cultural life

After the process of heritagization, Đức Hoàng Temple continues to be present as a living cultural space in contemporary life. The value of the relic is established not only by its history of formation or its surviving architecture but also by its capacity to sustain cultural practices and to meet the spiritual needs of the community. According to Laurajane Smith, heritage truly exists only when it is continuously used and given meaning by the community in ever-changing social contexts (Smith, 2006). The case of Đức Hoàng Temple clearly reflects this characteristic. Its clearest manifestation is the relic's role in binding the community together. The festival is held annually in early spring; the sacrificial rites, incense offerings, palanquin processions and many traditional cultural activities create conditions for local inhabitants, lineages, villages and visitors from afar to take part in shared cultural practices (Doãn Hòa, 2012; Hữu Hoàn, 2025; Hiền Mai, 2024). This is not only an occasion to commemorate King Lê Trang Tông but also contributes to reinforcing social bonds, nurturing a sense of origin and local identity. In addition, the relic is a cultural symbol of the locality. The connection among Đức Hoàng Temple, Long Thái communal house, the system of legends and the traditional festival has created a unified cultural space that helps sustain cultural identity and strengthen the community's attachment to its place of residence.

Đức Hoàng Temple was ranked as a national historical relic in 1996, creating a legal basis for the conservation and promotion of the relic's value (Nguyễn Sách, 2023; Huy Hoàng, 2023). However, in the context of urbanization and digital transformation, the media have contributed to spreading information about the relic and expanding public access. Therefore, the value of Đức Hoàng Temple lies not only in its material existence as an architectural work or in state protection, but first and foremost in its capacity to sustain the connection between the community and history through cultural practice and the transmission of memory.

3.4. Expanding the presence of heritage in the digital environment

The recent development of digital technology is creating new modes that contribute to significant changes in the way people access, preserve and share heritage value. For Đức Hoàng Temple, the digital environment does not change the nature of the space of

worship or replace traditional practices of belief. Instead, it expands the possibility of accessing and diffusing the relic's value beyond the local scope. Information about the history, festival, conservation activities and religious life of the relic is regularly reflected in the press, on the electronic portals of Nghệ An province and Đô Lương district, and on digital media platforms, helping to bring the heritage to more audiences (Nghệ An Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2026).

In the digital environment, alongside oral transmission, ritual and direct experience, historical memory today is also conveyed through media products such as images, videos, digital materials and posts by residents and visitors on platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and TikTok, which have become important supplementary means; thanks to these, the early-spring festival, the palanquin procession, the space of worship and the cultural events at the relic reach the public in many different spaces while still maintaining the connection with the original site and the practising community. Recent studies on digital preservation and heritage communication in Vietnam likewise emphasize both the opportunities and the limitations of these new modes (Nguyen, 2026; Nguyen & Lam, 2025; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2026).

On the basis of this reality, the article approaches Đức Hoàng Temple from the perspective of the digitalized sacred space. This is not a replacement of the traditional sacred space by the digital environment, but an expansion of the heritage's possibility of presence through new modes of communication and interaction. The digital space contributes to preserving, connecting and diffusing historical memory, while the heritage value is still established by the space of worship and the cultural practices of the community. However, digital transformation is effective only when it rests on a foundation that ensures the authenticity of the heritage. Resolution No. 57-NQ/TW emphasizes that digital transformation is an important driver for promoting the development of science, technology and innovation, and creates conditions for cultural values to be conserved and promoted through new modes (Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, 2024). In the case of Đức Hoàng Temple, the application of digital technology in conserving and promoting heritage value should aim at several objectives: (1) standardizing and digitizing historical materials, hagiographies, ordination decrees, relic dossiers and image materials for long-term archiving and scientific research; (2) strengthening digital communication through scientifically grounded multimedia products in order to introduce the relic's value to the public; and (3) linking conservation with education and cultural tourism through digital platforms, while still ensuring the authenticity of the materials and the central role of the local community.

According to this approach, technology does not replace heritage but contributes to expanding the modes of its presence in contemporary society. If appropriately oriented, this will be an important condition for Đức Hoàng Temple to strengthen public access and, at the same time, to create the foundation for promoting heritage value in cultural development and the cultural industry.

3.5. From heritagization to a resource for the development of the cultural industry

In the current context of development, cultural heritage is increasingly regarded as a resource for sustainable development. Resolution No. 80-NQ/TW identifies culture as both the spiritual foundation of society and an endogenous resource and driver of national development (Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, 2026). Accordingly, beyond the goal of conserving the past, the promotion of heritage value also aims to enable heritage to participate directly in economic, tourism, educational development and the cultural industries, on the basis of respecting historical value and local identity (Nguyen, 2025; Vu & Nguyen, 2026). For Đức Hoàng Temple, the most important resource lies not in the scale of the architecture or in the status of a national relic, but in the system of historical memory, cultural symbols and indigenous knowledge accumulated across generations. The story of King Lê Trang Tông and the restoration of the Later Lê dynasty, the memory of Diêm Trảng, the connection between Long Thái communal house and Đức Hoàng Temple, the early-spring festival, the palanquin procession, the worship architecture, the local legends and other cultural practices are all cultural resources capable of being transformed into products serving historical education, cultural communication, tourism and the cultural industry.

However, the exploitation of heritage resources must rest on certain principles: (1) respecting the authenticity of history and the cultural value of the relic; (2) ensuring the subject role of the local community in the process of conservation and value promotion; and (3) distinguishing between promoting heritage value and commercializing the sacred element. The goal of the cultural industry is not to exploit belief for purely economic benefit but to transform historical and cultural values into products of social and educational value (Ha et al., 2026). Thus, heritage truly becomes a resource for the cultural industry only when historical value is conserved, community memory is sustained, and the modes of promotion place the local community at the centre. This is also an approach that may be consulted in the conservation and value-promotion of historical-cultural relics today.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings support the view that heritagization at Đức Hoàng Temple is best understood as a community-centered cultural process rather than as an administrative act beginning with formal relic recognition. The historical figure recorded in dynastic historiography was first localized through community memory, subsequently sacralized through worship, reproduced through ritual, and later stabilized through institutional conservation. This sequence helps explain why the vitality of the relic cannot be reduced to its architectural fabric or legal status alone.

A central analytical issue is the difference between official historiography and local memory. The two source groups should not be treated as interchangeable forms of evidence. Official histories are indispensable for reconstructing political chronology, dynastic

legitimacy and biographical information, whereas hagiographies, legends and community narratives reveal how the historical figure has been culturally appropriated and connected with local space. For heritage interpretation, methodological transparency therefore requires clearly distinguishing historically verified information from narratives belonging to the domain of cultural memory.

The interaction among sacralization, ritualization and institutionalization also shows that the material and intangible dimensions of heritage are inseparable in practice. Architecture materializes memory in space; festivals and processions reactivate that memory through collective action; and institutional arrangements provide continuity. The annual relationship between Long Thái communal house and Đức Hoàng Temple is especially important because it converts a network of places into a ritualized cultural landscape in which memory is repeatedly performed.

Digital transformation adds a new layer to this process. Digital platforms can extend access to historical documents, festival images, ritual practices and heritage narratives, but they do not replace the original sacred space or the practising community. The most appropriate role of digital technology is therefore complementary: documentation, preservation, interpretation, education and communication. Digitized content should retain provenance information and should clearly indicate whether a narrative derives from official history, local tradition or contemporary interpretation.

The cultural-industry potential of Đức Hoàng Temple should likewise be approached through value transformation rather than direct commercialization of the sacred. The strongest resource is the integrated narrative system formed by dynastic history, local legends, sacred geography, ritual, festival, architecture and community knowledge. These resources can support heritage education, cultural storytelling, digital interpretation and carefully designed tourism experiences, provided that historical authenticity, sacred values and community participation remain primary constraints on product development.

The study is qualitative and document-based, and its conclusions are therefore interpretive rather than statistically generalizable. Future research should supplement documentary analysis with field observation, interviews with ritual practitioners and local residents, visitor surveys and comparative case studies. Such evidence would allow more precise assessment of how different stakeholder groups understand heritage authenticity, digital representation, community participation and cultural-industry development.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusions

Đức Hoàng Temple is a representative case of the process of transformation from historical memory into cultural heritage through the interaction among history, belief and community. From the image of King Lê Trang Tông in official history, the local community received, interpreted and localized the memory through a system of legend, ritual, festival and space of worship, thereby forming a living heritage that has been sustained continuously across generations.

The findings show that heritagization at Đức Hoàng Temple did not begin at the moment the relic was ranked or conserved through management institutions, but is a long-lasting cultural process operating through three organically related mechanisms: the sacralization of a historical figure, the ritualization of memory in community life, and the institutionalization of conservation and value-promotion activities. It is precisely the interaction among these three mechanisms that has helped historical memory remain present in contemporary life while sustaining the functions of community cohesion, traditional education and the cultivation of local cultural identity.

From the case of Đức Hoàng Temple, the article suggests an approach that views heritage as a process moving from history and memory to heritagization and value promotion, in which the community plays the role of the subject that constructs and re-creates the heritage. This analytical framework may be consulted in the study of historical relics associated with historical figures in Vietnam and, at the same time, contributes to explaining the adaptive capacity of heritage in the context of digital transformation and the development of the cultural industry, on the basis of ensuring historical authenticity, respecting the value of the sacred object and promoting the subject role of the community.

5.2. Recommendations

First, a standardized heritage documentation system should be developed for Đức Hoàng Temple. Official historical sources, Hán-Nôm materials, hagiographies, relic dossiers, restoration records, photographs, festival records and relevant community narratives should be classified by source type and digitized systematically for long-term preservation and research access.

Second, public interpretation should distinguish verified historical information from hagiographic and folk-memory narratives. Presenting both forms of knowledge is valuable, but their evidentiary status should be made explicit, particularly for narratives concerning the king's parentage, birthplace, period of refuge and the 'Chúa Chổm' tradition.

Third, digital communication should be organized around scientifically verified content. A digital heritage map, historical timeline, multimedia interpretation, documentation of the Long Thái–Đức Hoàng ritual route, and educational resources could broaden access while maintaining clear links to the original heritage context.

Fourth, the relic should be more systematically used as a resource for historical and cultural education. Learning activities can connect national history with local memory, architecture, ritual and cultural identity while encouraging learners to distinguish documentary evidence from legend and to understand the cultural function of both.

Fifth, cultural-tourism and cultural-industry initiatives should follow a community-centered model. Local knowledge holders, ritual practitioners, heritage managers and community representatives should participate in the interpretation and design of products so that heritage promotion strengthens rather than displaces living cultural practices.

Finally, heritage management should establish a continuous content-verification mechanism for both on-site and digital communication. This is especially important because similarly named relics can easily be confused and because inaccurate digital information can circulate rapidly. Regular review of interpretive content will help protect historical authenticity and the integrity of the sacred heritage space.

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