



Buddhist Ethical Values and Transformations in the Practice of Mother Goddess Worship of the Three Palaces in Contemporary Hanoi

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the role of Buddhist ethical values, including compassion, karma, merit-making, moral self-cultivation, right faith, and moderation, in orienting the contemporary transformations of Mother Goddess Worship of the Three Palaces in Hanoi. Drawing on an interdisciplinary approach that combines religious studies, cultural studies, and ethics, the article uses document analysis, qualitative synthesis of recent field-based studies, and comparative interpretation of ritual spaces, ritual performances, and practitioners' perceptions. The findings show that Buddhism influences Mother Goddess Worship not only at the doctrinal level but also as an ethical and legitimizing framework that helps practitioners regulate behavior, solemnize ritual practice, restrain commercialization, and strengthen humanistic and communal values. The Buddhist-Mother Goddess convergence in Hanoi should therefore not be understood as a one-way process of Buddhistization. Rather, it is a dynamic process of reception, selection, and reinterpretation by practitioner communities amid urbanization, heritage revival, and changes in contemporary spiritual life.

KEYWORDS: Buddhist ethics, Mother Goddess Worship, Three Palaces, religious syncretism, Hanoi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Buddhism and Mother Goddess Worship of the Three Palaces are two important components of Vietnamese spiritual life. Buddhism provides a philosophical and ethical orientation toward liberation, compassion, karma, self-cultivation, and right faith, whereas Mother Goddess Worship expresses very this-worldly aspirations for protection, fortune, health, peace, and harmony between humans and nature. In Vietnamese cultural history, these two traditions have not existed as absolutely separate systems. Instead, they have frequently intersected in sacred spaces, rituals, and popular explanations of spiritual life. Models such as “Buddha in front, Mother Goddess behind,” “Buddha and Mother Goddess co-residing,” and the co-worship of Buddhas, Avalokitesvara, Mother Goddesses, and local saints in the same space reveal the multilayered and flexible character of Vietnamese folk religiosity.

In the context of globalization, urbanization, and heritage revival, Mother Goddess Worship has become increasingly prominent. Tran Thi Thuy Binh and Do Duy Hung argue that from the late twentieth century onward, especially after the Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam and after UNESCO inscribed the practices related to the Viet beliefs in the Mother Goddesses of Three Realms in 2016, this belief has developed strongly in both the number of temples and the number of practitioners [1], [2]. This development reflects not only the need to affirm national cultural identity but also the modern search for spiritual support in the face of social uncertainty, market pressure, and the negative effects of globalization.

Hanoi is a particularly significant setting for examining the relationship between Buddhism and Mother Goddess Worship. The city is both a major Buddhist center and a dense network of pagodas, temples, palaces, private shrines, and spirit possession spaces. Recent research on Buddhist influence in Hanoi ritual spaces shows that Buddhism affects Mother Goddess Worship not only through doctrine but also through ritual forms, symbols, institutions, and the capacity to create social legitimacy for the practice [3]. The worship of Buddhas at private Mother Goddess shrines in Hanoi has also become increasingly common, as shown through in-depth interviews with mediums and field observations [4]. Nevertheless, the strong revival of Mother Goddess Worship has also generated ethical concerns. As len dong rituals become more publicly visible and demand for ritual participation increases, certain deviations appear, including conspicuous offerings, excessive burning of votive paper, ritual service commercialization, competition for status within ritual associations, and the exploitation of belief for private gain. Vu Thi Tu Anh notes that Dao Mau has constantly transformed in response to political, technological, and social contexts, while also being shaped by commercialism and competing political-cultural discourses [5]. This raises the central question of how Buddhist ethical values can help orient, regulate, and humanize the transformation of Mother Goddess Worship in contemporary Hanoi.



The objective of this article is to analyze the role of Buddhist ethics in the current transformation of Mother Goddess Worship of the Three Palaces in Hanoi. The article has four tasks: first, to clarify the Buddhist ethical foundations relevant to folk religious practice; second, to identify the internal humanistic values of Mother Goddess Worship; third, to analyze expressions of Buddhist-Mother Goddess convergence in space, ritual, and community perception; and fourth, to evaluate both positive effects and emerging ethical problems. The central argument is that Buddhist ethics does not replace the identity of Mother Goddess Worship. Rather, it operates as a soft resource that helps practitioner communities regulate themselves toward right faith, moderation, humanism, and sustainable adaptation in contemporary society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Literature Review

Research on Mother Goddess Worship of the Three Palaces can be divided into several major groups. The first group focuses on history, pantheon, ritual, music, gender, and the social role of Dao Mau. These studies generally consider Mother Goddess Worship as an indigenous folk belief associated with wet-rice agriculture, the veneration of feminine power, historical memory, and communal needs for peace, fortune, and health. Ngo Duc Thinh, a foundational scholar of Dao Mau studies in Vietnam, systematized the history, pantheon, ritual, and cultural values of this belief on a national scale [6]. He also analyzed len dong as a psycho-cultural practice related to women's life conditions and aspirations for liberation in both traditional and modern society [7]. Le Xuan Son emphasizes that Mother Goddess Worship is a distinctive intangible cultural heritage that reflects a spiritual life closely connected with nature and national identity. However, in modern society, it also faces challenges arising from urbanization, tourism, and commercialization if management is inadequate [8].

The second group approaches Mother Goddess Worship through language, symbols, and cultural schemas. Ly Thi Phuong Tran and colleagues use the concept of "cultural schemas" to analyze how the belief shapes the cognition, behavior, roles, and expectations of ritual participants [9]. From this perspective, Mother Goddess Worship is not merely a ritual system but also a cognitive-cultural structure in which chau van songs, sacred dances, costumes, ritual objects, and forms of address all participate in meaning-making. This approach is useful for the present article because it allows analysis of transformation not only at the level of belief content but also at the levels of behavior, language, and ethical norms.

The third group examines the interaction between Buddhism and Mother Goddess Worship. Nguyen Duc Hien and Pham Thi Thu Huyen, in a study of ritual spaces in Hanoi, show that Buddhism influences Mother Goddess Worship through cosmology, ethical teachings, chanting, Avalokitesvara symbolism, vegetarian offerings, and the participation of Buddhist actors in some ritual spaces [3]. Nguyen Thu Huu and Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh examine the phenomenon of worshipping Buddha(s) at private Mother Goddess shrines and confirm that it is a remarkable and increasingly common phenomenon, reflecting the adaptability of Mother Goddess Worship in modern life [4]. Truong Thu Trang and Kanwal approach this relationship through the image of Nam Hai Bodhisattva, showing that in popular consciousness a Buddhist bodhisattva can be received as a maternal figure who listens, protects, and rescues [10].

The fourth group provides theoretical frameworks on religious syncretism, cultural additivity, and Buddhist ethics in Vietnamese society. Vuong Quan-Hoang and colleagues propose the concept of "cultural additivity" to explain the Vietnamese tendency to select, add, and combine Confucian, Buddhist, Taoist, and folk-religious elements within a single cultural system without necessarily eliminating contradictions [11]. Meanwhile, Mai Chi Vu and Trang Tran's study on engaged Buddhism shows that Buddhist principles can operate as informal institutions that foster morality, trust, and reflexive behavior in contemporary Vietnam [12].

The research gap addressed by this article lies in directly connecting Buddhist ethics with concrete transformations in the practice of Mother Goddess Worship in Hanoi. Many works have discussed the history of Dao Mau, sacred space, the co-worship of Buddhas and Mother Goddesses, or the syncretic character of Vietnamese religion. However, fewer studies focus on how values such as compassion, karma, self-cultivation, merit-making, right faith, and moderation contribute to regulating behavior, ritual performance, offerings, and community norms in present-day Mother Goddess Worship.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This article uses three main concepts. First, "Buddhist ethics" is understood as a value system that directs people toward the reduction of suffering, the cultivation of compassion, the avoidance of harmful karma, the practice of right faith, the cultivation of



body-speech-mind, and responsible living in the community. This ethical framework has been systematized in foundational studies of Buddhist ethics [13]. In Vietnamese Buddhism, these values do not remain confined to monasteries; they penetrate lay life through pagoda worship, merit-making, vegetarian practice, chanting, rituals for peace, life release, filial piety, and ideas of karma. Research on engaged Buddhism also shows that Buddhist principles can be applied flexibly to modern social problems in a non-extreme, reflexive, and wholesome spirit [12].

Second, “transformation of religious practice” refers to changes in perception, ritual, space, performance, community organization, and practitioners' behavioral norms. Transformation does not necessarily mean loss of identity; it may be the adaptive process through which a tradition continues to live in a new environment. In Mother Goddess Worship in Hanoi, transformation is expressed through the development of private shrines, the expansion of networks of mediums and disciples, the growth of len dong rituals, the involvement of digital media, and especially the increasingly visible presence of Buddhist elements in ritual spaces and ritual language.

Third, “religious syncretism and cultural additivity” requires clarification. Syncretism emphasizes interaction among religious and belief traditions, whereas cultural additivity helps explain how Vietnamese people add symbols, values, and practices to an existing belief system. According to Vuong Quan-Hoang and colleagues, cultural additivity is a behavioral pattern in which different elements may coexist and be used flexibly [11]. This framework helps avoid the simplistic view that Buddhism “overwhelms” Dao Mau. Instead, this article treats the entry of Buddhist ethics as a selective process of reception depending on context, subject, and ritual space.

3. METHOD AND DATA SOURCES

The article adopts an interdisciplinary approach combining religious studies, cultural studies, and ethics. Methodologically, it primarily uses document analysis, qualitative synthesis, and comparative interpretation. Recent academic works on Mother Goddess Worship, the Buddhism-Mother Goddess relationship, cultural schemas, and Buddhist ethics are used as secondary data. This approach is suitable for the article's aim of constructing a scholarly interpretation of the role of Buddhist ethics in the transformation of Mother Goddess Worship in Hanoi rather than testing a quantitative model.

The main data sources consist of four groups. First are field-based studies conducted in Hanoi on the interaction between Buddhism and Mother Goddess Worship, especially Nguyen Duc Hien and Pham Thi Thu Huyen's study of ritual spaces [3], and Nguyen Thu Huu and Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh's study of Buddha worship at private Mother Goddess shrines [4]. Second are studies of Mother Goddess Worship as cultural heritage and of the modernization and revival of the belief in the contexts of renovation, globalization, and marketization [1], [5], [8]. Third are theoretical studies on cultural schemas, cultural additivity, and Vietnamese folk beliefs [9], [11]. Fourth are studies on Buddhist ethics, engaged Buddhism, compassion, mindfulness, social responsibility, and forms of modern Buddhist humanism [12], [14]. To situate the Hanoi case in a broader scholarly context, the article also draws on foundational works on Dao Mau and len dong by Ngo Duc Thinh [6], [7], Peter Harvey's theoretical work on Buddhist ethics [13], and comparative ethnographic studies of Vietnamese folk religion by Philip Taylor and Barley Norton [15], [16].

Analytically, the article compares Buddhist ethical values with three dimensions of Mother Goddess Worship: practitioners' perceptions, ritual performance, and sacred space. It then identifies representative transformations, such as the shift from pure supplication to self-cultivation and merit-making, from conspicuous offerings to moderation and solemnity, from a single-line Mother Goddess sacred space to a Buddhist-Mother Goddess hybrid space, and from service-like ritual relations to community ethical norms.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Core Buddhist Ethical Values in Lay Life

Buddhist ethics is first identified through the spirit of compassion. “Loving-kindness” seeks to bring joy, while “compassion” seeks to relieve suffering. Together, these values orient people toward empathy with others' suffering, reduced egoism, and healthy social relations. When entering lay life, compassion is not only a religious ideal but also a behavioral norm: one should not exploit others' beliefs, cause harm, stimulate excessive craving, or neglect the vulnerable. In Mother Goddess practice, compassion can reorient practitioners from an individualistic “asking and receiving” mentality toward community consciousness, gratitude, and responsibility toward ritual participants.



The doctrine of karma and karmic retribution has wide influence. When a spiritual practice is interpreted through karma, practitioners no longer understand efficacy simply as arbitrary divine intervention. Instead, they relate life outcomes to their own ethical conduct. Research in Hanoi ritual spaces shows that many Mother Goddess practitioners interpret the Three Palaces through Buddhist cosmological and ethical structures, in which karmic retribution governs human behavior and relations with the sacred world [3]. This creates an important shift: visiting sacred sites is not only about seeking wealth, fortune, and peace, but also about reminding oneself to do good, avoid evil, practice filial piety, and accumulate merit.

The values of self-cultivation, merit-making, and right faith also have direct regulatory significance. Self-cultivation emphasizes inner transformation, merit-making is associated with good deeds and responsible behavior, and right faith helps distinguish healthy religious belief from superstition, exploitation, and ostentatious display. In the marketization of spiritual life, these values can become “soft norms” that help mediums, shrine keepers, ritual musicians, and disciples regulate themselves. Research on engaged Buddhism in Vietnam indicates that Buddhist principles can encourage non-extreme, reflexive behavior and moral responsibility in a society facing many trust problems [12].

A modern Buddhist humanistic perspective may be added through Thich Nhat Hanh. Thasih's study of “ecological humanism” in Thich Nhat Hanh's thought shows that Buddhism can open a way of life closely connected with nature, community, and the healing of suffering [14]. This resonates with a deep dimension of Mother Goddess Worship: it does not only seek supernatural power but also expresses a harmonious relationship among humans, heaven, earth, water, mountains, forests, and community. When placed in dialogue with Buddhist ethics, this relationship can be interpreted in terms of reduced craving, increased responsibility, and spiritual dwelling in peace.

4.2 Internal Ethical Values of Mother Goddess Worship of the Three Palaces

It is necessary to emphasize that Mother Goddess Worship is not a practice lacking ethical foundations and needing to be “moralized” by Buddhism. The belief itself contains distinctive humanistic values. It venerates the image of the Mother as the source of birth, protection, nourishment, and support for life. The Three Palaces system associates Mother Goddesses with cosmic and natural domains such as heaven, water, earth, and mountains/forests. It therefore expresses a worldview in which humans live within the protection of nature and should be grateful to the forces that sustain life.

Studies of the cultural schemas of Mother Goddess Worship show that the belief is not only religious but also a rich cultural treasury combining festivals, chau van singing, sacred dances, costumes, visual arts, ritual objects, and communal memory [9]. These elements create a space in which participants express faith, emotion, social roles, and life aspirations. Len dong is therefore not merely possession or aesthetic performance. It is a “sacred stage” where the community reenacts history, honors the merits of saints, shares blessings, and reinforces solidarity.

Dao Mau also contains the ethic of “remembering the source when drinking water.” Many saints in the pantheon are connected with histories of resistance to foreign invasion, land reclamation, community protection, or assistance to the people. When practitioners perform len dong, offer incense, sing chau van, or join festivals, they are not only seeking personal benefits but also reaffirming communal memory of ancestors, heroes, and sacred protectors of the nation. This value layer enables Mother Goddess Worship to be repositioned as intangible cultural heritage in modern contexts [1], [8].

Therefore, the encounter between Buddhist ethics and Mother Goddess Worship is not a one-way relationship between “standard” and “object to be corrected.” Rather, it is a dialogue between two sources of value: one emphasizes compassion, karma, self-cultivation, and right faith; the other emphasizes Mother, blessings, protection, gratitude, community, and intimacy with nature. When these two sources resonate, Mother Goddess Worship gains greater capacity for self-regulation under commercial pressure while maintaining its aesthetic, emotional, and folk-belief identity.

4.3 The Entry of Buddhist Ethics into Sacred Spaces and Private Shrines

One of the clearest expressions of Buddhist-Mother Goddess interaction in Hanoi is the transformation of sacred space. In many pagodas, temples, palaces, and private shrines, Buddhist symbols such as Amitabha Buddha, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, Buddhist scriptures, bells, wooden fish, lotus flowers, vegetarian offerings, and chanting coexist with altars for Mother Goddesses and saints in the Three Palaces system. Research on Hanoi ritual spaces shows that Buddhism participates in Mother Goddess Worship through cosmology, symbols, rituals, and aesthetic forms, while also increasing the social legitimacy of the practice [3].



The worship of Buddhas at private Mother Goddess shrines is a particularly important example. Nguyen Thu Huu and Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh state that their research is based on in-depth interviews, follow-up conversations with sixteen mediums in Hanoi, and field notes. Their findings show that worshipping Buddha(s) at private Mother Goddess shrines is a remarkable phenomenon and is becoming common [4]. They also indicate that the degree of Buddha worship is not uniform: some shrines have a separate Buddha altar, some hang images or place statues of Buddhas, and some do not yet worship Buddhas because of spatial limitations or spiritual conflicts. This shows that Buddhist penetration occurs flexibly, depending on space, spiritual affinity, a medium's views, and community needs.

From an ethical perspective, bringing Buddhas into Mother Goddess shrines is not merely adding decorative symbols. It can restructure the meaning of sacred space. A Buddha altar, an image of Avalokitesvara, or a chanting practice creates a stronger sense of solemnity, purity, and legitimacy for the shrine. Such presence encourages practitioners to interpret serving the saints through the frames of karma, compassion, relief of suffering, and self-cultivation. Sacred space can thus shift from a place for seeking blessings to a place for moral education, reminding devotees of wholesome and moderate living.

However, the co-worship of Buddhas and Mother Goddesses should not be understood as replacing Dao Mau with Buddhism. From the perspective of cultural additivity, Vietnamese people may add symbols and values from multiple traditions to construct a practical system suited to contemporary needs [11]. In Hanoi, the presence of Buddhas in Mother Goddess shrines shows that communities do not abandon faith in the Mother. Rather, they expand the sacred space to strengthen protection, moral reassurance, and social legitimacy. This phenomenon is not unique to Hanoi. Ethnographic research on goddess worship centers in southern Vietnam also records the frequent interweaving of Buddhist images, Avalokitesvara, and folk goddesses in the same ritual space, suggesting that Buddhist-goddess convergence is a broader religious pattern in Vietnamese culture, not only a feature of northern Mother Goddess Worship [15].

4.4 Transformation in Ritual Performance and Chau Van Singing

Ritual performance is an important dimension for identifying transformation. In Mother Goddess Worship, chau van singing functions as ritual music and as sacred language that enables spirit descent while narrating the merits and qualities of the saints. Ly Thi Phuong Tran and colleagues show that chau van songs and len dong rituals can be analyzed as systems of cultural schemas in which roles, events, images, and communal emotions are encoded through language and performance [9].

When Buddhist values enter ritual performance, chau van content and prayers tend to be interpreted through ethical motifs such as rescuing from suffering and danger, cultivating virtue, making merit, practicing filial piety, and doing good while avoiding evil. These elements do not eliminate the aesthetic character of chau van; rather, they expand the ethical layers of ritual meaning. Len dong is no longer only a site for displaying saintly power; it also becomes a space of moral exhortation, encouragement of good conduct, and communal behavioral reorientation. Musicological research on chau van and len dong also shows that lyrics, melodies, and ritual sequences are continuously recreated, staged, and heritagized for public audiences inside and outside Vietnam. This process enriches the ethical-aesthetic layers of ritual but also creates new commercial pressure on practitioner communities [16].

The figure of Avalokitesvara/Nam Hai Bodhisattva is a typical case of symbolic transformation between Buddhism and folk belief. Truong Thu Trang and Kanwal argue that in Vietnamese popular consciousness Nam Hai Bodhisattva is both a Buddhist bodhisattva rich in compassion and a gentle Mother who listens, protects, and helps people [10]. This reception is very close to the emotional structure of Mother Goddess Worship, where sacred power is often imagined through maternal protection. Avalokitesvara therefore creates an ethical bridge between Buddhist compassion and the Mother principle in Dao Mau.

Transformation in performance also appears in the use of chanting, Buddhist recitation, peace-praying, prayers for the dead, or repentance formulas before, during, or after Mother Goddess rituals. Studies of Hanoi ritual spaces record that Buddhist chanting can become an opening component that purifies space, establishes an ethical context for len dong, and makes the ritual intelligible within an order of karma, merit, and salvation [3]. This shows that Buddhism affects not only the content of belief but also ritual sequence and the aesthetic perception of participants.

4.5 Transformation in the Ethical Behavior of Practitioners

The most important transformation lies in practitioners' ethical awareness and behavior. Traditionally, many people come to Mother Goddess Worship to seek wealth, fortune, health, peace, or solutions to personal difficulties. These secular needs are not negative in themselves; they are an important part of folk religion. However, if material supplication is overemphasized, the practice



can slide into an exchange mentality, in which large offerings are expected to generate large blessings. Buddhist ethics helps regulate this mentality by placing blessings within the relationships of karma, wholesome action, and self-cultivation.

This change may be described as a shift from “purely seeking benefits” to “seeking peace through moral cultivation.” When practitioners believe that blessings do not come only from offerings but also from merit, good intentions, and ethical behavior, they have a basis for moderating ritual expenditure and reducing dependence on display. Values such as compassion, non-harming, non-greed, and right faith can orient offerings toward simplicity, purity, and sincerity. In Hanoi ritual spaces, elements such as vegetarian offerings, fresh flowers, chanting, exhortations to do good, and avoidance of killing show the influence of Buddhist norms on ritual organization [3].

For mediums, ritual teachers, and shrine keepers, Buddhist ethics raises the requirement of professional responsibility. If a medium is regarded as an intermediary between the saints and the community, he or she should avoid exploiting devotees' lack of knowledge, pressuring them to make large offerings, or turning rituals into pure services. Compassion and right faith in this case are not merely personal ideals but professional norms: speaking responsibly, advising others to do good, avoiding the stimulation of fear, and refusing to profit from others' insecurity. Research on Buddhism and trust in Vietnam suggests that Buddhist principles can support the formation of ethics in social relations when formal institutions cannot regulate all behavior [12].

For disciples and the broader participating community, Buddhist ethics helps shift attention from “receiving blessings” to “living with merit.” This interpretation is close to the Vietnamese folk notion of family virtue, but it is reinforced by the Buddhist doctrine of karma. A person who goes to worship should not only ask “what will the Mother give me?” but also ask whether he or she has lived wholesomely, practiced filial piety, shared with others, and avoided harmful conduct. This is crucial for the adaptation of Mother Goddess Worship to modern urban life: the practice not only responds to individual spiritual needs but also contributes to maintaining community ethics.

4.6 Two-Sided Evaluation: Humanistic Orientation and Emerging Problems

On the positive side, Buddhist ethics contributes to the humanization of Mother Goddess Worship in at least three ways. First, it provides an ethical language for interpreting blessings through karma and merit, thereby limiting the view of offerings as mechanical exchanges with deities. Second, it supports the solemnization of ritual through chanting, vegetarian offerings, purified space, moderated forms, and moral exhortation. Third, it enhances the legitimacy of Mother Goddess Worship in modern society, as a practice once associated with superstition is reinterpreted as cultural heritage and a spiritual tradition with moral educational capacity [3], [4].

The Buddhist-Mother Goddess convergence also shows the creativity of Vietnamese folk belief. Rather than being confined by rigid doctrinal boundaries, practitioner communities use Buddhist symbols and values to enrich their own belief system. This is an expression of cultural additivity: new elements are added to increase spiritual efficacy, solemnity, and social adaptability [11]. As a result, Mother Goddess Worship is not fixed in the past but can continue to live in urban, media, and heritage contexts.

Nevertheless, limitations must also be acknowledged. The entry of Buddhism does not automatically remove commercialization. In some cases, Buddhist symbols may be used as a “legitimizing cover” to increase the prestige of a shrine, a medium, or a spiritual service. Vegetarian offerings, chanting, inviting monks, or installing Buddha statues can become new forms of display if they lack understanding and ethical substance. Recent surveys and media reports on Mother Goddess Worship continue to record commercialization and ritual distortion, showing that this remains a timely problem requiring appropriate management [17]. Thus, the issue is not simply whether Buddhist elements are present, but whether communities receive Buddhist values in ways that genuinely transform behavior rather than merely decorating ritual space.

Moreover, Mother Goddess Worship should be preserved as a tradition with its own identity. If the regulatory role of Buddhism is overemphasized, the independent value of Dao Mau may unintentionally be obscured. The essence of syncretism is not homogenization. Buddhist ethics should be understood as a supporting resource that helps reduce deviations and deepen humanistic meaning, not as the only standard for judging all Mother Goddess practices. This perspective avoids two extremes: seeing Mother Goddess Worship as superstition to be “reformed” by Buddhism, or seeing every change under Buddhist influence as a loss of identity.

In the context in which young generations access heritage through schools, tourism, media, and social networks, education becomes especially important. Research on students' cognition of Mother Goddess Worship shows that young people generally hold positive attitudes toward its cultural and spiritual values, but actual participation remains limited because of a lack of experiential



opportunities and supportive environments [18]. This suggests that heritage preservation is not merely ritual management; it is also cultural and ethical education, including the ability to distinguish healthy religious practice from exploitation and superstition.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article has analyzed the role of Buddhist ethical values in the transformation of Mother Goddess Worship of the Three Palaces in contemporary Hanoi. The findings show that values such as compassion, karma, self-cultivation, merit-making, right faith, and moderation have entered Mother Goddess Worship through sacred spaces, private shrines, chanting, offerings, chau van, prayers, and practitioners' behavioral norms. This entry does not erase the identity of Mother Goddess Worship. Rather, it supplements an ethical framework that helps the practice adapt to urbanization, heritagization, and the marketization of spiritual life.

The article's central argument is that the Buddhism-Mother Goddess relationship should be understood as a selective process of syncretism and cultural additivity. Buddhism does not simply "Buddhistize" Dao Mau. Instead, Mother Goddess communities actively receive Buddhist elements to increase solemnity, legitimacy, and humanistic depth. In this process, Buddhist ethics functions as a soft resource that helps regulate deviations, especially commercialization, conspicuous offerings, ritual service-marketization, and exploitation of belief.

Based on the analysis, the article proposes several recommendations. First, community education on the ethical values of both Buddhism and Mother Goddess Worship should be strengthened, with emphasis on right faith, moderation, compassion, filial piety, and social responsibility. Second, shrine keepers, mediums, ritual musicians, and heritage site custodians should receive cultural-religious training so that rituals can be practiced appropriately and without ostentation or exploitation. Third, cultural management agencies should cooperate with researchers and practitioner communities to develop preservation guidelines that respect the living dynamism of heritage while firmly limiting superstition and commercialization. Fourth, content on Mother Goddess Worship should be included in heritage education, cultural experience programs, and digital communication for young people, helping the heritage to be understood, practiced, and promoted sustainably in modern life.

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