

# First-ever religious ceremony held following the suppression of Ubon's Holy Man rebels 121 years ago.

written by กองบรรณาธิการ | April 12, 2022

*The first-ever religious ceremony dedicated to the Holy Man Rebellion of 121 years ago received a throng of attendees in Ubon Ratchathani last week. Community leaders discussed building a monument to commemorate the event as a way to make Saphue's local history more widespread.*











The Isaan Record, in collaboration with artists and residents of Ban Saphue, Ubon Ratchathani province, held a merit-making ceremony on April 4 for those who passed away following clashes between the Holy Man rebels and Siamese soldiers at Non Pho, a rice field in Ban Saphue, on April 3-4, 1901. It was the first religious ceremony in 121 years dedicated to the over 300 souls who perished in the battle.







As night fell on April 3, a group of artists and scholars led by art critic Thanom Chapakdee invited 12 monks to perform the ceremony. Several local residents and enthusiasts from across the country also attended the event.







The artists at the event also displayed a bamboo pillory, one of the tools used to restrain the rebellions captured after the crackdown, before sending them to be executed in Ubon Ratchathani City.







The artists and members of artist activist movement “Ratsadrum” held a drum performance for a dramatic performance at the monument of Prince Sapphasitthiprasong in Thung Sri Muang, Ubon Ratchathani province. The prince was a Bangkok-appointed royal commissioner who commanded the campaign against the rebels in 1901.



The artists also performed a play by the side of Mun River in Ubon Ratchathani. The area was allegedly the site where corpses were dumped after the rebels were executed at Thung Sri Muang.

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After the ceremony, the community leaders and local history enthusiasts discussed the future of Ban Saphue. Anan Chaweerak, the kamnan of Saphue Sub-district Office, said the stories of *phi bun* and the Battle of Non Pho have been told for a very long time, but there were no initiatives to research these stories properly. Anecdotes about the event have been passed down from elders who said there was a battle in the area, and at the time people went into hiding, sometimes digging holes to hide in in many different places.

"This [commemorative event] is a pivotal moment marking the beginning of research on Ban Saphue's history. At least we will get to learn how this event happened so that our children will have a chance to know the history and origin of their hometown. There still needs to be more discussion about building a monument in the future,," he said.

Lamphun Chaweerak, who's studied the history of the rebellion, said the battleground of Non Pho is not all there is about Ban Saphue as the community is also an ancient town with an important history. After this event, the residents of Saphue must have a discussion and reach an agreement on a development plan. If a monument to the Battle of Non Pho is to be built, but only focuses on the Holy Man Rebellion, parts of Ban Saphue's history might be lost. Therefore, these things need to be connected.

A rai of land near Non Pho was recently donated as a site for a monument to the battle, and the local administration has repaired the road to the site to make it easier to travel to the scene. The residents believe there are still many pieces of the skeleton of the dead buried there.

The artists and the community leaders agreed to organize an annual religious ceremony for those whose lives were lost.