

# opción

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## **Buddhist sculpture by stone and wood material in south vietnam from the first to 7th century: Through some cases**

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### **Abstract**

The Article investigated, studied the items related to sculpture of Phu Nan, which existed from the 1st to 7th century Anno Domini of Christian era. Through Buddha statues in wood and stone materials, they clearly show the artistic style influenced by 3rd century AD Gandhara, and India's classic Gupta style. These are two artistic styles which formed very early in India. Excavated and Found typical Buddha statues in some archaeological sites currently display at the Ho Chi Minh City Museum of Fine Arts history. From these statues we can see the interference of Buddhist influence in India in South Vietnam.

**Keywords:** Phu Nan sculpture, Stone buddhist statue, Wooden buddhist statue, The south of Viet Nam.

## **Escultura budista de piedra y material de madera en Vietnam del Sur desde el siglo primero hasta el séptimo: a través de algunos casos**

### **Resumen**

El artículo investigado, estudió los artículos relacionados con la escultura de Phu Nan, que existió desde el siglo I hasta el siglo VII de la era cristiana. A través de estatuas de Buda en madera y materiales de piedra, muestran claramente el estilo artístico influenciado por Gandhara del siglo III d. C. y el estilo clásico Gupta de India. Estos son dos estilos artísticos que se formaron muy temprano en la India. Las estatuas típicas de Buda excavadas y encontradas en algunos sitios arqueológicos se exhiben actualmente en la historia del Museo de Bellas Artes de la ciudad de Ho Chi Minh. A partir de estas estatuas podemos ver la interferencia de la influencia budista en la India en Vietnam del Sur.

**Palabras clave:** Escultura de Phu Nan, Estatua budista de piedra, Estatua budista de Madera, El sur de Vietnam.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Phu Nan existed from 1st to 7th Century. Through 17 Kings, in which, notably there are some kings from India. The first king, who was seen as the founder of the Phu Nan State, was a nation of many different social communities, according to the monarchy regime, which was Kaundinya. Through the development process, Phu Nan Empire has built more than 10 countries: Don Ton (or Dien Ton), Khuat Do Con, Cuu Tri (perhaps also Cau Loi or Cau Loi Tuc Takola / Takkola), Dien Ton, Kim Lan.

Besides, Xich Tho and Chan Lap also became colonies of Phu Nam Empire<sup>2</sup>. However, this was just a collection of states and not a unified state, the states must dedicated to Phu Nan State to maintaining and developing the governance apparatus. The Phu Nan Empire proved weak at the end of the VI century and created a conflict with the nations. King Jayavarman - the most powerful king of Fu Nan died in 514 AD. Rudravarman's successor was also killed. Taking this opportunity, Chan Lap<sup>3</sup> was a colony of Phu Nan who rebelled and overthrew the Phu Nan Empire in 550 AD, and Phu Nan became a vassal of Chan Lap, Phu Nan was completely annexed. All in 627 AD.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Phu Nan has established a wide range of places that affect the South Indochina peninsula. According to Bernard Philippe Groslier (BERNARD PHILIPPE GROSLIER. (1960), the center of Phu Nan were

Bassac Area and Thailand Bay and may include Southern Cambodia, and expanded its influence after that, established dominance across the entire Thai coastal region, maybe even southern Burma. And this was quite a special land in Southeast Asia and Asia. The south land of the Indochinese peninsula was a place that soon embraced great disasters, of many ethnic groups in different regions in Asia and South Asia from BC. ” Turning this place to the economic - religious, an urban - city state an important port city of Phu Nan culture” (DAO LINH CON. (2004). the spread of religion and beliefs from the great countries was present here from this region itself, as evidenced by the archaeologists who discovered the coins and statues of the Greek period.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The Vestige Detection Phu Nan State - Oc Eo: According to Trinh Hoai Duc, 1816, at Go Cay Mai Pagoda (Cho Lon, now belongs to District 11, Ho Chi Minh City) Vietnam, people have discovered many ancient brick and gold plates. From 1878-1879, people found a civilization of Sanskrit words at Prasat Pram Loven temple (Go Thap, Dong Thap) and was announced by G. Coedès in 1931. Besides, there were four civilization which has been discovered that these date from the V century to the VIII century AD8. On dated 10th February, 1944, the French archaeologist L.Malleret began excavating Oc Eo Archaeological site<sup>9</sup> and found large foundations signals of architectural works and many original and overseas native origin items.

One researcher, Oc Eo is a city port, which became the living and business doing place of many peoples who came from every places, where many citizens and foreign residents came and some settle permanently, contributed to building local social and cultural life. This can be clearly seen through widgets, drawings, and engraving on objects. Besides, many Vestiges were found traces of Phu Nan State from Central Vietnam to the plateau, and the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. Especially through several excavations of some relics at Oc Eo, Go Thap, Temple Pagoda ... And many artifacts related to Buddhism and Hinduism were found.



Figure 1: Excavation of Go Cay Thi temple, Oc Eo, Thoai Son district, An Giang province, southern Viet Nam, Photograph: the author

### *3.1. The Buddhism traces appeared in Phu Nan*

Indian culture deeply affected to society at the stage of Phu Nan, from cultural organizations to religion and art. In it, the Phu Nan kings chosen Balomonism and Buddhism as the state religion for the country. According to some documents Hinduism and Buddhism entered the Mekong Delta in the early centuries AD. According to the

Monk Nghia Tinh who came to Phu Nan at 671-695 recored that The people of that country worshiped the angels, but the Dharma also prevailed. Thereby we can see that the religions from India have officially existed on the territory of Phu Nan very early.



Figure 2: Muddha in Meditation, 6-7th century, sandstone, stored at Ho Chi Minh City History Museum – Viet Nam, Photograph: the author

However, Buddhism only existed and grew up in poor people under Phu Nan society. Meanwhile, Hinduism was revered by the Kings and Aristocrats and mentally dominated. According to Chinese history records King Fu Nan Jayavarman by the invitation of Chinese officials, sent two monks of the PhuNan who were proficient in Sanskrit to Chinese translating Buddhist scriptures. But more and more, Buddhism and Hinduism became interplay, evidence through some Buddha statues bearing the characteristics of Hindu gods. And all these gods were found in vestiges in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. With traces left through statues and belongings of monks, we knew that Buddhism has deeply existed in the spirit of belief and spirituality of Phu Nam residents.

-Stone Buddhism Statues: through some case: Over 75 years of excavation began in 1944 to find traces of Oc Eo culture. Archaeologists have found about 22 statues and pieces of Buddha statues. In particular, wood and stone materials are popular. Currently, these statues are displayed at the Ho Chi Minh City History Museum, Vietnam, Vietnam National Museum of History, Ho Chi Minh City Fine Arts Museum, and several museums in Mekong Delta region.

In the process of exploration, archaeologists have found some Buddhist statues in the posture of stone nirvana. The statue "Muddha in Meditation" [Fig. 2], sandstone material, existed time 6th to 7th century (BTLS.5516 museum symbol). The statue is found in Linh Quan village, Phuoc My Trung commune, Mo Cay district, Ben Tre Province, Vietnam. The statue has shown a calm, calm posture: the whole buddha body sits on the lotus pedestal.



Figure 3: “Muddha in Meditation”, 7-8 the century, sandstone, stored at Ho Chi Minh City History Museum – Viet Nam, Photograph: the author

There was curly hair pattern, unisa peak, ears long down to the shoulders. Two arms perform Buddha meditation under the Bodhi tree before enlightenment. It stated to the perfect balance between thinking, discharge the senses and restful status ... The legs represent the "Kichijo-za-zo" position, the two feet were covered by the shirt, and this indicates the secret nature (hidden). (Louis Frédéric.2005). The statue has shown a stable sitting posture structure. The Buddhist robe covered whole the body. Full shape, smooth surface. The statue above showed the structure, proportions, posture, etc. influencing the artistic style of Gandhara, existing from the 3rd century AD. That affirms that, in the Buddhist mission, and the construction of temples and Buddhist statues in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam has paid great attention to the standard principles and proportions of statues from India. the teacher when carving Buddha image. The statue "Muddha in Meditation" has shown a great influence which found in Thailand, through "Muddha in Meditation", existed time the 6th-7th century, found at Wat Phra Borommathat, Chaiya district, Surat Thani province, stone material, currently stored at National Museum, Chaiya, Thailand.

The statue "Muddha in Meditation" [Fig. 3], existed time the 7th-8th century, the sandstone material, was found in 1920-1921, at Son Tho village, Tra Vinh province, Vietnam. This was a similar statue to the Buddha statue in style, a posture [Fig. 1], however, there are other points about the structure of the Buddha statue "Muddha in Meditation" which has a longer body, the overall rate of high form, larger, with the way of carving delicate petals lotus.



Figure 4: “Enthroned Buddha”, 6-7 th century, sandstone, stored at Ho Chi Minh City History Museum – Viet Nam, Photograph: the author

Historically, the period from the 7th century to the 8th century, Phu Nan was taken over by Chan Lap (Cambodia today). Therefore, at this time the Mekong Delta of Vietnam was the affected Land by Chan Lap culture. So, the style and proportion of Buddha statues [Fig. 2] may be the influence of the Buddhist statue of Chan Lap. It is no longer purely a direct influence from India. Through studying some statues of Chan Lap period, some details show similarities (?).

The statue of "Enthroned Buddha" [Fig. 4], from the 6th to 7th century, stone material, was found at Nhi Tuong, Tra Vinh Province, Vietnam, stored at the Ho Chi Minh City National Museum of History (BTLS. 5519). The statue stated the sitting posture of "Bhadrasana" which was a type of blessing. This posture was a Buddha posture that can be found in many Buddhist countries. This posture represents the royal power in India. Especially the statue has shown Gandhara art style. Posture was found very early in India, in the 4-5th century. The statue depicted the

one-handed put on the knee of the leg, one hand raised to the breast. However, this arm of the statue has been lost. The statue stated the restfull with the characteristic of small shape, delicate face.



Figure 5: “Head of Buddha”, 7-8 th century, sandstone, stored at Ho Chi Minh City History Museum – Viet Nam, Photograph: the author

Long ears, twisted hair, with unisa peak. The statue has different subtleties with delicate shapes, carved with delicate shapes. In the process of studying the "Enthoroned Buddha" statues found in Central Thailand, these were the same statues at the National Museum of Thailand, which were different from the "Enthoroned Buddha" which found in Vietnam. In terms of facial features, creating shapes method, the statue structure found in Vietnam is more generalized.

The composition "Head of Buddha" [Fig. 5], a stone material, existed time the 7th and 8th centuries, was found in Southern Vietnam. This statue stated the combination of the Buddha face and Naga king snakes. The Buddha face with contemplation, restfull. The statue has a

delicate appearance created by a strong, clear shape. The background behind was Naga King snakes, Naga was a Hindu god-like mascot with a snake-shaped face, human body, with the cervical neck of the cobra, the Naga king snake was imaged to the buddha image, symbolizing protection and enveloping the Buddha. Naga becomed to mascots/spirits that contain many traits and features, Naga heads or fabrication heads such as protection, mouths open, tongue and sharp teeth rows. This statue stated the interference, influence of Indian Buddhism and the interference with Southeast Asian countries.



Figure 6: “Buddha protected by the nàga” 7-8 th century, stored at Ho Chi Minh City History Museum – Viet Nam, sandstone, Photograph: the author

Also in this style, the statue "Buddha protected by the nàga" [Fig. 6], stone material, existed time the 11th century, is currently on display at the Ho Chi Minh City History Museum. This was an image of Amitabha Buddha which representated to the Sakyamuni historical Buddha. He has the splendor is immeasurable. This was a symbolic Buddha image of the afterlife, the opposition world. He also symbolizes the sun when it is down, the heavenly realm in which, like the gods, all human beings are reborn regardless of gender.

It was the place where the souls escape from the physical constraints. It became pure with desiring needs, follow the calling of Buddha. In the western world he led and comforted, for compassion and liberation of all living beings from all suffering and the rings of them to the restfull Land (Louis Frédréric. 2005). It arranged with the image of Buddha in front of, the image of Nāga king snakes behinds. However, it was not intact, but still stated that it not only completely influenced India's Adida Buddha image, but also the combination of Khemer and Thailand's carved Buddha statues...



Figure 7: “Buddha”, 7 th century, sandstone, Photograph: the author

Some Buddha shapes with speech characters were discovered through stone sculptures. Through the "Buddha" statue, [Fig. 7] which stored at the Vietnamese Fine Arts History Museum (BTLS. 5503). The statue has a monk's outfit made from two pieces of cloth. The long loincloth wrapped the legs and the Buddhist robe covered on one shoulder, which could characterize the Buddha image through the gestures of preaching hands - this is a common law that appears a few ancient Indian

statue. This style usually has some "Buddha" statues which found in Southern Cambodia in the 7th century. And some "Buddha" statues in Indonesia on the 7th-8th century.



Figure 8: “Visnu transformed as the bodhisattva Maitreya”, 7 th century, sandstone, stored at Ho Chi Minh City History Museum – Viet Nam, Photograph: the author

### *3.2. The mixture of Hindu and Buddhist gods*

The Brahmanism, Hinduism, Buddhism played a dominant role in the spiritual life of Phu Nan residents. Besides, political institutions are also reformed according to the Indian model. Therefore, Phu Nan established a very clear religious system. Through that research process, we know: About culture and spirits, Phu Nan residents worship polytheism, worship worshipping stone, worshipping fire. Phu Nan residents who worship Hinduism and Buddhist together, it was beliefs clearly stated the influence of Indian culture. Both Hinduism and Buddhism were spread here. The monk Nghia Tinh who came to Phu Nan in 671–695 recorded: "The people of that country worshiped the angels, but the Dharma also prevailed"<sup>13</sup>, from all of them, we could said that the religions from India

have officially existed on Phu Nan territory very early. In particular, Hinduism dominated with very strong aristocracy, and Buddhism dominated the spiritual life of normal people.

A signal shows that people in the Mekong Delta region have harmonized the faith belief by a mixed mindset, combining Buddhist and Hindu spirit. The transformation in the religious life of residents is expressed through the signals on a statue found in the South of Vietnam. Show that the localization to create residents' belief is what determines the existence of a religion.

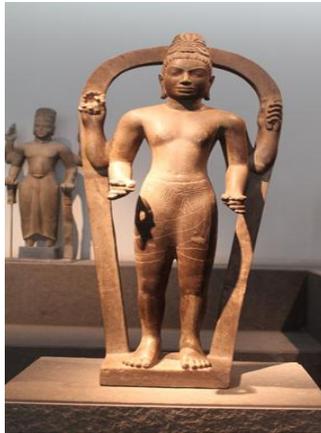


Figure 9: “Bodhisattva Lokésara”, 7-8 th century, sandstone, stored at Ho Chi Minh City History Museum – Viet Nam, Photograph: the author

Through the statue "Visnu transformed as the bodhisattva Maitreya" [Fig. 8], stone material, existed time the 7th and 8th centuries, was found in Trung Dien commune, Vinh Long, the statue is now stored at the Ho Chi Minh City History Museum (BTLS 5551). This statue, It was the Visnu in Hinduism originally, there were many change after that, signaling that the god Visnu has four hands: the right hand holding the

disc or a ring by the god Agniban often used when Vishnu defeated the god Indra. The disk was also the symbol of the mind and the sun, but the sun represented the control of the universe.

Although the left hand was lost, but that arm can hold snail - which symbolize the mysterious motivations that promoted the proliferation of the life of all species. The body tends to exaggerate; Shoulders expand, waist squeeze. Two arms holding two Sticks which symbolized for knowledge and capacity of wisdom. They were management, authority and maintenance the order. Costumes (sompot) were engraved in detail. This statue stated a detail the mixture Buddhist spirit, which was the shape of a tower - a sign of the Buddhist spirit carved on a cylinder hat. Thereby, the most clever and smoothiest combination of Buddha image Bodhisattva Maitreya and Visnu image.



Figure 10: Bodhisattva Maitreya, 7-8 th century, sandstone, Stored at Ho Chi Minh City History Museum – Viet Nam, Photograph: the author

The composition "Bodhisattva Lokésara" [Fig. 9], stone material, existed time the 7th and 8th centuries, was found at Ngai Hoa Thuong Hamlet, Tra Vinh Province, Vietnam. The statue is currently stored at the Ho Chi Minh City History Museum in Vietnam (BTLS

5531). This statue incorporated the image of Visnu with details on the head representing Amitàbha Buddha, which represents one of the most well-known figures in the Lokésvara or Avalokitesvara Mahayana Buddhism images. From the overall structure to the details of the statue is characterized by the Visna god, but the face shows compassion: with long ears, bun hair with a Unisa.

According to this spirit, the composition "Bodhisattva Maitreya" [Fig. 10], existed time the 7th and 8th centuries, stone material, found at Ngai Hoa Thuong, Tra Vinh, Vietnam. The statue is currently stored at the Ho Chi Minh City History Museum. Through the composition, showing the image of Bodhisattva Maitreya which vividly portrayed in the face and ears, hair. Therefore the characteristics of each statue were expressed through the characteristics and carving method. Although the statue is no longer intact, it stated the image of the god Visnu very clearly expressed from the hands, the symbol bearing the mark of Hinduism. Through the statues showed the Buddhist and Hindu spirit was intimately intertwined in the life of the Phu Nan residents.



Figure 11: “Budda” 7-8 th century, Banaba wood, stored at Ho Chi Minh City History Museum – Viet Nam, Photograph: the author

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Through the formation and development process, Phu Nam collected various religions to build a religious life for its country. The Buddhist statues represent the access and interference with Indian art and sculpture styles, and Southeast Asian countries were the clearest evidence. From the collected statues, the religious life is considered and widely developed in the Phu Nam resident class.

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