

## The penetration of Buddhism in Dak Lak Province (Central Highlands - Vietnam)

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### Article History

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**Abstract:** Located in Southeast Asia, surrounded by neighboring countries, most of them are Buddhist very early, while Dak Lak, the center of the Central Highlands (Vietnam), has only been identified as recently emerging. nineteenth century. Using historical evidence and personal fieldwork documents for many years, the article identifies the time when Buddhism was introduced to Dak Lak (Central Highlands, Vietnam) at least from the 13th century.

**Keywords:** *Buddhism, imported, Dak Lak province, Central Highlands, Buddhism in Dak Lak province.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Documents from past to present all refer to the immaturity of Buddhism in Dak Lak. Most believe that Buddhism is present here since the Khai Doan pagoda in 1951; Some other opinions from the time of 1905 on the temple trail on the map of Buon Ma Thuot of the French. Most recently, scientists have proven that Buddhism was present in Dak Lak at least in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the area where Ban Don was before. Buddhism follows the Theravada tradition (Theravada), existed in the Lao Lo ethnic community (lowland Laos), passed down by monks from the kingdom of Laos and dated Buddhism introduced into Dak Lak province around 1900.

It can be said that from the second half of the nineteenth century, Laotian monks officially came to evangelize in Don village and most of them a part of Lao became Buddhists, a vestige of a pagoda was kept by the French. The map of Buon Ma Thuot from 1905, 1918 was probably created by rich people who settled down. Only in 1928, the Kinh settled on the Dak Lak plateau, bringing their beliefs to today's Dak Lak province, including Buddhism, that marked the organized activity of the Buddha. education in Dak Lak. Since then, the pagodas in the whole province of Dak Lak have been formed one by one. Our studies show that the Buddhists of countries such as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, India, China ... were present in Dak Lak at least since the thirteenth century, through the road, barter in Ban Don area. Buddhism follows the Tantric tradition, already in the Cham community, transmitted by the Cham people

from the Central Coast. Although coming from quite early, but the reception of residents here is limited, due to many different reasons, possibly due to the difficult geographical location, the harsh climate, and isolated residents. The clan's and tribal modes do not have state organizations, so the uptake of Buddhism is not satisfactory.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

In this article, we adopt an interdisciplinary approach, which is a combination of psychology, culture and philosophy. In addition, we also apply the following research methods: In-depth interviews, group discussions, and observation - attendance

## **3. RESULT**

### **3.1. The Central Highlands in Southeast Asia as a whole**

Southeast Asia is an area located in Southeast Asia, consisting of countries located in southern China, eastern India and north of Australia, west of Papua New Guinea. Southeast Asia has seas and bays deeply embedded in the mainland, facilitating migration flows between the mainland and islands, for cultural exchange between nations and peoples. Southeast Asians have many similarities in daily life and production, such as growing wet rice, using buffaloes and cows as a pull force, using rice as the main food source ... However, each country still has customs and practices. own shops and beliefs create the cultural diversity of the region. While the majority of Malaysians and Indonesians are Muslim, Burmese, Thai, Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese are Buddhist; In the Philippines, Christianity and Islam have the largest number of followers.

In Vietnam, along with Buddhism and Christianity, people also have local beliefs. The Central Highlands, located in the west of Vietnam, is very close to cultural exchanges and acculturation with countries with the majority of people following Buddhism such as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and India.

### **3.2. People in the Central Highlands in prehistoric times**

An Khe relic site (Gia Lai province), archeologists Vietnam and Russia announced the discovery of the presence of humans 800,000 years ago through more than 1,000 rock artifacts discovered in the dug holes. At the same time, there are over 600 meteorite fragments discovered simultaneously with rock artifacts in the cultural layer. The rock artifacts with the 2-sided embankment industry represent the whole system of archaeological sites that have just been discovered here. With artifacts and through research TS. Nguyen Gia Doi (Vietnam Archeology Institute) said: "The instrumentation and chronology of An Khe relic is equivalent to the period of the upright man (*Homo erectus*) and is one of the direct ancestors of *Homo sapiens* of the world " or as. Anatomy Derevianko (Russian Academy of Sciences), affirms: "An Khe is one of the oldest cradles in the history of human development in the world"<sup>3</sup>.

Lung Leng relic site (Sa Binh commune, Sa Thay district, Kon Tum province) discovered in 1999 and excavated in 2001 has obtained a huge amount of relics. With nearly a thousand stone tools, tens of thousands of pieces of pottery, a series of jars, stoves, ... Collection of artifacts at Lung Leng are proof of the panorama of pre-pre-history of Kon Tum in particular. and the Central Highlands in general, is identified as cultural traces from the old stone age (20,000-30,000 years ago) to the post-Neolithic and early metal period (3,000 - 4,000 years). Associate Professor - Dr. Nguyen Khac Su said: "For the Central

Highlands, Lung Leng is the only relic where old stone age tools and bronze metallurgical traces have been found. Lung Leng is the only place in the Central Highlands to find many brass tools reminiscent of Dong Son culture (Thanh Hoa), Doc Chua culture (Song Be), North Laos brass culture, and Northeast Thailand... With this discovery, it is time for us to change our view of the trendy Central Highlands in the past. This is a land that early human exploration and in the process of cultural development, this is a land full of dynamic, creative and open exchanges ... "4.

The relics of human activities in volcanic caves Krong No (Dak Nong province) show that this is the residence and burial place of prehistoric residents, taking place continuously from 7,000 years to 4,500 years BP. reflect two early and late cultural stages: the early stage brought the cultural, technical, and traditional characteristics after Hoa Binh, and was classified into the Neolithic Middle; the late stage of the Neolithic - Early Metal Age, through studies with in-depth analysis on stratigraphy, chronology, black hole relics, relic conservation, anthropology, and animal teeth...

"The presence of the Krong No volcanic cave archaeological site in the Central Highlands is truly an intact, outstanding chronicle of the environmental change and human adaptation in the past"<sup>5</sup>

Cat Tien archaeological site, also known as "Cat Tien Holy Land" (Cat Tien district, Lam Dong province) discovered in 1985, is known as a My Son in the Central Highlands and Southeast. Ministry, is a Holy Land of Brahminism. Here, store more than 1000 artifacts, including many materials such as gold, silver, copper, iron, gemstones, pottery, stone, many Linga-Yoni idols, Sanesa, Uma statues, gold foil embossed with shape gods, mascots of Brahmanism... evidence of a unique culture more than 1000 years ago "it is certain that in addition to the cultural and commercial exchanges, the original relationship is also one of the highlights in the history of the land thousands of years from prehistoric to historical "<sup>6</sup>.

According to documents of Associate Professor. Dr. Nguyen Khac Su<sup>7</sup>, Institute of Archeology of Vietnam, said that humans were present on the Dak Lak Plateau about 3-4 thousand years ago. They live

<sup>3</sup> Nguyen Giac (2019), Archaeological discoveries in An Khe (Gia Lai): An ancient cradle of mankind in the world. Access: <http://baovanhoa.vn/van-hoa/di-san/artmid/488/articleid/17129/nhung-phat-hien-khao-co-tai-an-khe-gia-lai-mot-cai-noi-co-xua-nhat-cua-loai-nguoi-tren-the-gioi>.

<sup>4</sup> Thanh Hung (2017), Lung Leng - The hallmark of the predecessor. Access: <http://baokontum.com.vn/dat-nguoi-kontum/lung-leng-dau-an-cua-tien-nhan-5275.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Nguyen Khac Su (2020), The cultural imprint of prehistoric times in volcanic caves in the Central Highlands, Xua and Nay Magazine, No. 517, March, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Bui Chi Hoang, Pham Huu Tho, Nguyen Khanh Trung Kien (2013), Lam Dong Prehistoric Archeology, Social Science Publishing House, pg. 274.

<sup>7</sup> Nguyen Khac Su (Editor) (2004) Dak Lak Prehistoric Archeology "Publishing House. Social Science, Hanoi.

in villages, cultivating on the slash-and-burn fields. They know how to make working tools, housewares, musical instruments (made of bamboo, wood, stone, ceramic, copper, iron). Their life at that time was relatively civilized. They know to exchange and exchange goods with other ethnic groups in our country and neighboring countries, to develop their economy, build strong villages and clans. Some archaeological sites in Krong Nang, Ea Kar, Krong Pak districts found Dong Son bronze drums have proved that. The earliest inhabitants here are the ancestors of ethnic groups living for a long time in Truong Son - Tay Nguyen today, including residents in Dak Lak. Evidence of this shows that the prehistoric cultural sites do not separate the Central Highlands and the region, it has relationships with other provinces in the Central Highlands "with cultures in the Southeast, the coast. Central Vietnam, with North Vietnam and with the prehistory of Laos and Cambodia, has an important position in the prehistory of Vietnam and the region"<sup>8</sup>.

### 3.2. Residents of Dak Lak (Central Highlands) today

Previously, the Central Highlands was considered a sparsely populated "sacred forest of poisonous water", Dak Lak, the center of the Central Highlands, was mainly Ede, M'ng, Gia Rai, ... and a few Kinh (Vietnamese) people. . After 1954, a large number of people in the North migrated in and people from the central coastal provinces moved to Dak Lak. After 1975, the State of Vietnam considered the Central Highlands to be a strategic area in terms of economy and defense, so there was a policy of redistributing the population and labor across the country and bringing people from provinces to Dak Lak. And the Central Highlands will be built into new economic zones. In the years 1990-1995, the wave of free migrants to Dak Lak massively. The results published after the 2019 Population and Housing Census, the population size of Dak Lak is 1,869,322 people, ranking the Central Highlands region and ranked 10th in the country.<sup>9</sup> During the past 10 years, 2009-2019, the average annual population growth rate of the province was 0.75%. The above population growth process has, first of all, made the ethnic and population structure of Dak Lak develop in a very diverse range. Currently, the province has 49 ethnic groups living in the country together, which can be divided into 3 main population blocks: Ethnic groups in the Truong Son - Central Highlands such as Ede, M'ng , Gia Rai, Xo Dang, Bru - Van Kieu; The ethnic minorities in the North such as: Muong, Thai, Tay, Nung, Mong, Dao...; The Kinh (Vietnamese) people, with all the nuances of the North - Central - South regions, are a group of people with a long history of receiving Buddhism from the early years of AD present in Dak Lak quite early. In 1905 and 1918 on the map the French painted the center of Buon Ma Thuot, the location of a pagoda and other places of activities appeared in Dak Lak.<sup>10</sup>.

In order to create cultural diversity, in addition to factors of the natural environment in which the community lives and historical circumstances of each part of the population of the ethnic group, there is also an exchange factor that influences. between ethnic groups and other ethnic groups such as Kinh (Viet), Ede, M'ng, Gia rai, Bana Thai, Tay, Muong, Cham, Khome, ... The difference and richness of cultural nuances of the local groups of the ethnic group have not diminished the unity of ethnic culture and ethnic

<sup>8</sup> Nguyen Khac Su, Editor (2004), Dak Lak Prehistoric Archeology, Social Science Publishing House, pg. 370.

<sup>9</sup> <https://daklak.gov.vn/-/quy-mo-dan-so-ak-lak-ung-au-khu-vuc-tay-nguyen>

<sup>10</sup> Gerald Camnon Hickey (1982), Sons of Mountains, Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands to 1954, Yale University. Map number 7,8,9 Ban Me Thuot, 1905,1918,1930.

consciousness. It is the unity from diversity, a natural and healthy unity, forming a folklore picture with different colors, but harmoniously combined to create a unique harmony. subtle, then forming three cultural lines: cultures of ethnic groups in the Truong Son - Central Highlands; Culture of ethnic minorities in the North; Kinh culture (Vietnamese people), bringing all the nuances of the three regions: North - Central - South. All three cultural lines represent the Vietnamese culture that is present and increasingly developing, interfering, interlacing, and accreting each other, forming a rich, diverse and rich Dak Lak culture. national identity.

Along with the cultures of ethnic minorities in the North and Vietnamese culture, the cultures of ethnic groups in the Central Highlands in general and Dak Lak, in particular, have many traces of the clan and tribal period. Here, the village management according to the matriarchal system with the customary law of the community is quite strict. Each village is controlled by the owner of the land and the owner of the water station. All members must abide by the rules of customary law and live in harmony with the village community. In such a society, attached to the majestic nature, people here are rich in imagination, rich in dreams, indomitable willpower, resilient, optimistic, and open-minded. These are the indispensable premises for the culture of ethnic groups in Dak Lak to arise, exist and pass on from generation to generation into a tradition. It is a vivid picture of the ethnic society here through historical periods. In the process of cultural exchange, acculturation, and interchange, indigenous peoples of Dak Lak, the ethnic minorities of the North, and the Vietnamese still retain their own cultural characteristics in the common culture. Dak Lak gives this land a rich, diverse and rich culture.

It can be said that, from afar to this day, Dak Lak (Central Highlands) is always a dynamic land with wide exchanges with many countries in the region.

### **3.3. Buddhist imprints in the Central Highlands and vicinity in the past**

#### **3.3.1. Legend of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands about Buddha**

A legend <sup>11</sup> The Radé people explain why Moi do not have a writing and have the custom of the Buddha's teeth. That legend is as follows:

"When Buddha<sup>12</sup> to your land Moi - Lao people call Muong Pa Cha Mit (land without religion) - to preach, all the surrounding ethnic groups such as Laos, Cambodia (Cambodge), Siam come to ask to learn writing. People Moi I also applied for study but while the others carefully searched for palm leaves to write the word to be taught, the Everyman would always be lazy to bring nothing. They then killed a buffalo to mark the words, but they were always lazy, they forgot the skin and was lost in the night. That is why Moi people don't have words.

"On that same day, in gratitude to the Buddha, all peoples wanted to invite him a feast of honor, but the Moi, ignorant and lazy, instead of pounding rice in a mortar, more tired, wanted make rice by chewing. The Buddha, angry at that filth, in order to punish the people, had prescribes that from now on they had to serrated, and moreover, to show their inferiority, they must wear the neck, the wrists and the

<sup>11</sup> Henri Maitre (2008) Montagnard forest, Central highland mountainous region of Vietnam, Tri Thuc Publishing House, Hanoi, pg. 166.

<sup>12</sup> "Buddha to the Laotian people but the Radé called Po-The" (*Caption of Henri Maitre*).

neck. brass bracelets legs. Legend, somewhat contemptuous people Moi this, seems to have originated from Laos, but is known to everyone and is willing to talk and laugh at the same time"<sup>13</sup>.

The Cambodians also have a similar legend. They say that in the old days Preas, or Buddha, lived in the world; One day, the Buddha told the Pnongs to prepare food for themselves and the Pnongs to obey; the next day, Preas talks to the Cambodians and gets them offered a much better meal, because the Pnongs have chewed the food before cooking. Angry at the filth, Preas orders the Pnongs to file their teeth and use chopsticks used to cook meat and fish through their buns; Since then the Pnong have carried in their bun a long copper wire pair, representing those cooking chopsticks. Finally, to punish the forgetfulness of the Pnong, Preas cuts their ears and wears various ornaments. Still angry, Preas drives the Pnongs out of the banks of the Mekong River where they are staying and exiles them into the mountains. Preas also punishes the Pnongs to never wear clothes and pants; men are allowed to wear only one loincloth and women can wear only skirts; They always have to endure filth and hardship in order to hunt wild animals and catch fish and eat them. In contrast, the Cambodians lived on the banks of the Big River.

After many ups and downs, the kingdom of Cambodia shone again under the reign of King Jayavarman II (802-869). According to the legend<sup>14</sup>, This king asked Prah Viçvakarman, the God of Architecture, to build a magnificent palace and pass on to his descendants a divine sword, Preah Khan, which is the guardian of Cambodge.

However, about this famous sword, the Jarai handed down a legend with historical nuances, according to which their Sadet was the holder of the divine sword. Legend has it that, after many different adventures, Po-The came down the Mekong river "to the place where the kings of all ethnic groups in the world gather: Cham, Cambodge, An Nam, Laos, Radé, Jarai, etc ... At that time, the kings were plunging into the river to search for the divine sword that had just fallen from the sky, sparkling on the bottom of the river because even though it was in its sack it was still burning.

" King Cham won the challenge, but Po-The took the sword and brought it to the Jara, while the Cambodge captured the scabbard and brought back Cambodge.

"Angry at the loss of the divine sword, the Cams waged a fierce war against the Jaraites for many years.

"Po-The, thanks to his charm, was able to resist the Cams for a long time, but the Cams also had some magic, and the war was indomitable. Po-The prayed to the divine sword: "If your house is truly coming down from heaven, show your power by choosing to stand with the Jara or the Cams, and make clear who you want to keep you ". Then he offered the magic sword a white buffalo and a black buffalo.

"After that, Po-The, holding the divine sword, pointed it straight at the Cham people. Instantly, the sword created such a great amount of fire and water that all the Cams burned or drowned. None of the

Cams escaped these two disasters because Po-The's rattan cane made the sky dark, so that the Cams could no longer find roads.

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<sup>13</sup> Besnard, *above*

<sup>14</sup> Henri Maitre (2008) Montagnard forest, Central highland mountainous region of Vietnam, Tri Thuc Publishing House, Hanoi, pg. 183-184.

"Soon after, Po-The disappeared without a trace after handing the god sword to Sadet named Lipatao (King of Fire). Po-The also advised the Jarai to live in harmony with the Cambodge who mastered the scabbard. God himself, when handing the blade to the Jarai and the scabbard to the Cambodge, indicated that they must ally with each other; But when giving the Cambodge the scabbard, which is less valuable than the sword, God also clearly determined that the tribute to the regular exchange between the two sides, the Cambodge's tribute must be more"<sup>15</sup>.

Thus, in the legends of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands in general and Dak Lak in particular, they all mentioned the presence of Buddha in the highlands for a long time, but traces prove the presence of Buddhism in the Central Highlands, Dak Lak is very vague and fragmented. This can also explain why many historical researchers always believe that the Central Highlands is an isolated cultural region.

### 3.5. *The material imprints*

The Cham people in the Central Coast region, they are the inhabitants of the ancient Champa Kingdom, Mahayana Buddhism, which was introduced by Indian merchants to Champa since the years BC, to develop and flourish the most. ninth century. Archaeologists have found a lot of Buddha statues in the sites of Indrapura (Dong Duong, Thang Binh, Quang Nam province today), Vijaya (Nhon Hau, Tay Son district, present-day Binh Dinh province), Kauthara (area narrow coastal plains from present-day Phu Yen, Cam Ranh), and Panturanka (present-day Phan Rang, Phan Thiet). In particular the Tantric-sectarian goddesses, the most popular of which are the Bodhisattva Prana Paramita, the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (the Bodhisattva of Avalokiteshvara) and Lokeshvara (Male Buddha) who are the Buddha Amitabha or Amitabha who incarnate to save sentient beings. In 875, King Indravarman II built-in Indrapura (Quang Nam) a Buddhist monastery named Laskmida Lokeshvara, which is the present-day Dong Duong Buddhist monastery, "Dong Duong Buddhist Institute was established by King Indravarman II in 875. This is the capital of Indrapura, a family imbued with the spirit of Buddhism, as assessed by many researchers. When it came to power, this lineage developed Buddhist monasteries throughout its kingdom"<sup>17</sup>.

A document by Nguyen Thi Kim Van<sup>18</sup>, said at the Gia Lai Provincial Museum, there are currently 2 Buddha image reliefs of the 6th-7th century found in Ayun Pa.

Documentation of another scholar<sup>19</sup> recorded traces of Buddha statues in the North Central Highlands, such as: found in Kon Klor village (4km from the city center of Kom Tum) a Buddhist inscription dating to 914: "*Both Coedès and Finot claim that the inscription on the vase dates back to 914 AD, making it the oldest Cham remains found in this land* "and the worshiped god Mahindra-

<sup>15</sup> Besnard, Works cited above, pages 82-83.

<sup>17</sup> Quang Van Son (2014), Champa Buddhism from literature to perception, Journal of Religious Studies, No. 6 (132), p.48.49. Available at <https://thuvienhoasen.org/images/file/XUBjFvUS2AgQAMVf/phant-giao-champa-quang-van-son.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Nguyen Thi Kim Van (Editor) (2019), Gia Lai History from its origins to 1975, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, page 307.

<sup>19</sup> Gerald Cannon Hickey (1982) Sons of the Mountains, Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands to 1954. Yale University, tr. 92.

*Lokesvara “ Boisselier interpret this finding as “Mahayana literature”, and remark that it appears to be the last of its kind for centuries”.*<sup>20</sup>

The document of a researcher on Champa Buddhism has the following comments: "The event that ancestor Truc Lam Yen Tu and monk Dai Viet visited the Dong Duong Buddhist Institute and the Champa landscape in 1301, was the king Buddha The talented amateurs, Jaya Simhavarman III (Che Man), warmly welcomed the importance of the Dong Duong Buddhist center to the Buddhism of the countries in the region. It is of that importance that this Buddhist Institute lasted for nearly 600 years despite many wars."<sup>21</sup>

Thus, about 10 centuries ago, the Central Highlands had not only indigenous people but also other ethnic groups. In particular, there must be the relic of Yang Prong tower (Ea Sup district, Dak Lak), built by the Cham in the 13th century, under King Sinhavarman III (Che Man), worshiping Shiva in the form of Mukhalinga, praying for the flourishing of the race and full of happiness<sup>22</sup>.

Yang Prong, the tower of the Cham people is a relic of great significance to ethnologists, historians, and architects ... This is the only intact tower in the Central Highlands of the Cham people, far from Don village. 50 km, old documents recorded by King Jaya Simhavarman III (Che Man) built in the thirteenth century, the tower is bold Champa architectural style, the Buddhist imprint around the tower is not really clear Obviously, but perhaps the Buddhist spirit in the Cham king is real. After the Cham were no longer present in this area due to historical upheavals, this tower became fallow quickly. Can the cause of this fallow be compared with the reason that the French later left the capital of Don? This is quite interesting, there are many different explanations, but it is one of the proofs to be able to explain why many Cham monuments in the Central and Central Highlands become alien to the residents themselves. had a long history of residence there such as Ede, M'ngong, Co tu, Xe Dang, Bahnar, Jarai, Ma, Stieng ...

### **3.4. Buddhist situation in neighboring countries**

#### **3.4.1. Buddhism in Laos dates back to the 6th century VIII**

Buddhism was introduced to Laos from time to time and by what route, there is still no unified answer, but it can be confirmed that Buddhism was present in Laos from very early, around the century. VII: “In addition to ancestral beliefs (including a system of Pho tam - Ancestors; Pham Ban - Imperial Citadel; Phuong - protector of muong), monks have also spread Buddhist teachings. here”<sup>23</sup>, Thus, even before the national independence and unification of Laos (XIV century) monks were present in Laos' muongs to promote Buddhism. There are two main ways Buddhism was spread to Laos, from the north down and up from the south. Theravada Buddhism is said to first arrive in Laos in the 7th - 8th centuries

<sup>20</sup> Original “Both Coedès and Finot determined that the inscription on the vase dates A.D 914, making it the oldest Cham vestige found in the Highland. "Finot reports that inscriptions relates how the shrine had been constructed by a local chief named Mahindravarman and was dedicated to Mahindra-Lokesvara. More recently, Boisselier interprets this find as a "document mahayanists", commenting that it appears to have been the last of its kind for centuries”. (Gerald Cannon Hickey (1982), tr.92)

<sup>21</sup> Quang Van Son (2014), Champa Buddhism from literature to perception, Journal of Religious Studies, No. 6 (132), p.48. Available at <https://thuvienhoasen.org/images/file/XUBjFxUS2AgQAMVf/phat-giao-champa-quang-van-son.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Luong Thanh Son (1991), Thap Cham in Dak Lak, Journal of Ethnology, No. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Southeast Asian Research Institute (1998), Laos History, Culture - Information Publishing House, H, p.81.

through the kingdom of Dvaravati.<sup>24</sup> but Dvaravati's sphere of influence extends to the tributaries of the Mekong River in northeastern Thailand. Archaeological sites related to Buddhism allow researchers to conclude that the religion in Dvaravati is Venerable Buddhism. Also in the 7th century, Tantric Buddhism was also introduced to Laos from Yunnan, China.<sup>25</sup>

According to many remaining historical sources, it is about the 6th century VIII, The first Mon people who migrated to Western Laos spread Buddhism to the inhabitants here. These Monks brought many Buddhist scriptures, Buddha images, and knowledgeable Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka to spread the Dharma. From there they propagated and developed widely to the western regions of Laos.

By century XIII, When the Lao Thay ethnic group finished conquering the entire northern part of Laos, they adopted Buddhism according to the Theravada sect and developed widely in North and Central Laos. During this time, Lao Buddhism had close relations with Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Meanwhile, from the south, Lao Buddhism was also influenced by Khmer Buddhism. Under the Angkor empire, dominated from the fifth century VIII to the century XIII, Mahayana Buddhism was introduced into Laos. In the fourteenth century, when King Pha Ngom (1316-1373) unified the entire territory of Laos, he adopted Theravada Buddhism from Campuhia and developed it throughout Laos.

Until 1637, King Soulina Vongxa ascended the throne, rectifying the nation. The king with political stability and respect for religion opened important Buddhist research centers, and Laos became the center of Buddhism in Southeast Asia at that time. Many monks and nuns in Thailand and Cambodia went to Vientiane to study Buddhism.

Into the century XIX, Laos was invaded by Burma to capture Luang Prabang, plundering gold, silver, and jewels, including Buddha statues and Buddha books. Laos had to ally with Thailand to fight back, but then it was turned over by Thailand. The Thai army invaded Vientiane in 1828, destroyed 6,000 houses, and destroyed the pagodas and temples. This invasion lasted until 1893, when the French attacked, set the yoke of domination in all 3 Indochina countries. Due to the chaos of the war, it was inevitable for the monks to take refuge.

Thus, the country of Laos, a neighboring country that has a border with the Central Highlands (Vietnam), has Buddhism recognized as imported in the fifth century VIII, Mahayana Buddhism dates back to the century XIII and Laos has been the center of Buddhism in Southeast Asia since the century XVII.

### ***3.4.2. Buddhism in Cambodia from the century IX***

In Cambodia, Buddhism (Theravada) accounts for 95%, is considered the state religion, Islam and Christianity make up 5%.

The period of Angkor was the period of the most powerful development of the Kingdom of Cambodia. King Jayavarman II was the founder of this dynasty and successive kings built Angkor with massive temples, but most of these works bear the vestiges and spirit of Brahmanism. It was not until King Yasovarman (889-900) took the throne before starting to develop a religion. Buddhism has flourished since then. Many Buddhist monks were built in Angkor and other localities throughout the country. "On an epitaph excavated in 1821 shows: "By the end of the thirteenth century, many high rise from Luc Khone to the mission at Angkor. Luc Khone was under the rule of King Malaysia ". But then

this situation changed dramatically in the fourteenth century. Biographs found in Kapilapura said: "During this period (1330), Brahminism and Mahayana Buddhism of the Angkorian dynasty gradually declined. Meanwhile, Venerable Venerable Buddhism was imported from Ceylon"<sup>26</sup>. In the "History of World Buddhism" of Tinh Hai, he emphasized: Buddhism of the Venerable Bo (Hinayana) was transmitted to Cambodia starting from the period of King Jayavarman VIII, 1243-1295 of the Kingdom of Angkor. Because when Chu Dat Quan's delegation came to Cambodia in 1296-1297 saw the situation that Cambodia was a Venerable Buddhist from Sri Lanka.

The cult of Buddhism at this time must include the fact that King Srijayvarman gave up the throne to give to his brother, ordained to practice Buddhism. The excavation evidence and inscriptions show: Buddhism in this period was very wide open to the masses, And Brahmanism is only allowed to save evidence at the royal court. The history of Laos is also recorded: In 1345, King Pha Ngom of Lao Quoc invited 22 Buddhist monks from Angkor to Laos to celebrate Buddhism. The relocation of the capital from Angkor to Phnom Penh was carried out in 1434, performed by King Bang Cap Da Dac. The main purpose is to avoid the risk of a Thai invasion.

During the period 1516 - 1566, King Ang Chan of Cambodia repeatedly defeated the Thai invasion, conquering previously lost lands. In Cambodian history, the king was considered a great figure after the Angkor period. "King Ang Chan is also a Buddhist; The king built many Buddhist temples and towers in the capital and surrounding areas "

Thus, neighboring Cambodia, which borders the Central Highlands (Vietnam), has Buddhism as the state religion, which developed quite early in the ninth century.

### **3.4.3. Buddhism in the vicinity of the Central Highlands**

The Central Coastal Plain is a strip of coastal plains in central Vietnam, stretching from Thanh Hoa to Binh Thuan, trading with the Central Highlands, but there are many ways to get to Dak Lak. especially from the South Central Coast and Central Central Coast.

### **3.4.4. Middle South coastal**

Including 3 provinces: Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan is the gateway of the Central Highlands to the sea, especially Khanh Hoa, the province directly adjacent to Dak Lak.

In Hien Luong village, Van Luong commune, Van Ninh district (Van Gia town), Khanh Hoa province has a pagoda present quite early in the history of Buddhism in Vietnam in general and Khanh Hoa Buddhism in particular. Linh Son pagoda, also known as the Linh Son family, was established in the year of Tan Ty - Solar 1761, 22nd Canh Hung era of Emperor Hien Tong dynasty of Hau Le dynasty. The ancestor of the mountain was Mr. Dai Buu - Kim Cang, attained under the great tree (Coc trees over 300 years old still exist in the temple grounds). At the time of its establishment, the pagoda was called Sa Long Tu, and Tu Duc Dynasty 21 (1867) lost its fire. After rebuilding, it was renamed Linh Son Tu. According to the chronicles of the temple, Venerable Thich Quang Duc used to abide by this temple from 1940 to 1944.

It can be said that the South Central Coast region was not separated from the relationship with the Central Highlands in the process of formation and development. Moreover, in the south, it is bordered by the Southeast, which is very convenient for economic development exchange and also has strong

interactions with the Southeast in the development process, and is a gateway to the sea of the Central Highlands. Cambodia, Thailand, it can be said, the Central Highlands has a prime location favorable for economic development exchange and formation of an open economy for the whole region.

If the Central Highlands region with rich potential opens up many opportunities for development, the South Central region is the gateway, welcoming interaction and coordination as an inevitable thing to make its vitality. . Therefore, the formation and development of Buddhism in this region has had a rather profound influence on the history of formation and development of Buddhism in the Central Highlands in general and Dak Lak in particular.

#### **3.4.5. Central Coast Region**

The Central Coast region, including the provinces of Quang Nam - Da Nang, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, and Phu Yen, can be said to be a cultural exchange in general and Buddhism in particular with the North and the South of Vietnam. South, is also the gateway to the sea. To be able to penetrate the highlands, people go by the road from Quy Nhon (Binh Dinh) up.

Buddhism was introduced to Vietnam very early, around the 3rd century BC by sea. The first vestiges are recorded with the fairy tale Chu Dong Tu learned the religion of an Indian monk. At the beginning of AD, Luy Lau (Bac Ninh) was the capital of the Giao Chi district and soon became an important center of Buddhism. The traces of Buddhism in Vietnam are recorded through legends such as Thach Quang Phat and the Man Nuong Buddhist Mother that appeared with the teachings of Khau Da La (Ksudra) in the years 168-189, Buddhism still forming the system of beliefs to worship the Four Dhamma. Due to the direct acquisition of Buddhism from India, the word Buddha (the enlightened one) is directly transcribed to "Buddha", from which the word "Buddha" is widely used in folk tales. Vietnamese Buddhism at that time had the color of Southern Buddhism which was localized, and the Buddha was folkized as a god to help good people. Later, in the 4th - 5th centuries, due to the influence of Buddhism in Han Dynasty, China, the word "Buddha" was gradually replaced by the word "Buddha".

Buddhism was deeply rooted in Vietnam very early. During the Dinh - Tien Le, Ly, and Tran dynasties, Buddhism flourished. It was considered the state religion, affecting all problems in life. Until the reign of the Hau Le Dynasty, Confucianism was considered the state religion and Buddhism entered a period of decline. By the end of century XVIII, King Quang Trung tried to revive Buddhism, rectify the construction of the pagoda, but because of the early death, this did not yield many results.

By century 20, Despite the strong influence of the Buddhist revival movement of other countries, Vietnamese Buddhism developed strongly starting from urban areas in the South.

#### **3.4.6. Buddhism was introduced to Dak Lak**

Back in the old days, the land of Dak Lak today is the settlement of three main ethnic groups: Ede in Dak Lak, M'Nong in Quang Duc (Dak Nong) and Gia Rai in Cheo Reo (Phu Bon). All three ethnic groups have their own languages and all share the same beliefs "Spiritual Creatures", they worship a lot of Gods, collectively called "Yang".

The habitats of these ethnic groups are the territories covering many residential units, subject to the cohesion and management of a central point, created by the power of an individual or group of people in the face of life spiritual, material and spiritual such as Thuy Xa, Hoa Xa ... At the same time, there

exist forms of alliance between resident units or ethnic groups such as K'ring, T'ring ... to increase strength. community in the struggle for survival; and does not exclude ethnic groups or villages, merchants, plei, ... who reside independently, far away and outside of all radiant circles.

The economic-cultural bridge in the Central Highlands since ancient times is not only framed with the central coast of Vietnam but also much wider, involving markets located in the territory of many other countries such as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, India, China ... This relationship and trade were not only established and implicitly existed for a long time, but they were also manifested in many different forms such as: conquer, dominate, compete, conflict in exchange activities between nations, ethnic groups... In those forms, the most important is the activities of the merchant classes, the business class exchanging with the people here, those who live by farming, hunting, gathering, exchanging, ...

Among traders who come to exchange and trade in the inland area of Dak Lak, there are certainly quite a lot of people who have settled down, get married, get married to have children ... the results of the exchange activities, trading in business. The practice is cultural exchanges and acculturation, in which the case of Ban Don / Buon Don is the most typical example.

Ban Don In Krong Ana commune, Buon Don district, Dak Lak province, according to the elderly, the old Don village was a large area along the Sre Pok river, next to the 7-branch waterfall: in the rainy season, the water was immense; In the dry season, the islands are raised, with maple trees, fig-trees and other herbaceous species scattered about a few houses on the shore. The generations raised from these houses, their descendants have now settled in Don village now. Old Don village has a famous profession of hunting and taming elephants, compared to the neighboring Laos tribe, known as the "Million Elephant country", there are many elephants as a very special means of transporting goods. But why do traders only gather in Don village to form this special "market"? In terms of geographical location, it can be said that Don village is the gateway to the sea of the inland countries of Southeast Asia. The paths of Cambodian traders - (Thuan An, Dak Min) - Don village - Cheo Reo - Tuy Hoa (Phu Yen); Traders of Laos - Southern Laos - Kon Tum - Don village ...

Because of this "market", it can be explained why, Don village needs many elephants, in order to have a job of hunting and taming elephants. Elephants hunting for families here need to tame it to do housework and most importantly, it will be a very convenient means of transporting people and goods. Ede, M'ngong, Gia Rai, Laos, Khơ Me, and Cham people... focused on trading here quite early. They regularly gather to exchange goods with each other and, more generally, to exchange with traders from many countries in the old Southeast Asian region.

In the past, Ban Don was a center of trade exchange with all over Southeast Asia, and Ban Don market together with the market Sambor of the Khmer and the Chinese in the Mekong basin is quite crowded. Many traders have gone back and forth to trade like the Vietnamese, the Cham in the central region of Tuy Hoa, Song Ca ... They traveled through the land of the Ede people to Don village, even upstream of the Sre Pok to exchange goods. The Chinese and the Khmer were from the Mekong River basin (Sambor) to trade with the Ede, M'ngong, Gia Rai, Xieng ... The relationship between these people and the Khmer was written by H. Maitre as follows. : "... All of the hinterland in the Sé Khong, Sé San and Srépok river basins as well as the area behind Kratié province, having trade relations with the Khmer kingdom as described below by Van Washof:" Sombock is a town. The town is quite large, dominated

by the Cambodge, and especially the Chinese. The Chinese trade in deer skin, beeswax, and royal jelly. They go looking to buy these things in the hinterland because Aboriginal people never bring their products to the market. Thus, the Chinese have to take a canoe or rickshaw all the way to Nam-Noy, or inland, to Phonough. Going by car, both going and coming back, took three months. In those countries, they used salt, Chinese porcelain, iron, and a few things of little value in exchange for slaves, gold, rhino horn, and ivory. In particular, salt was exchanged equal to gold in weight; but the Chinese have paid a heavy price for the benefits gained by the diseases caused by harmful climate and water in this region. Phonough country partly depends on Cambodge, the other part stretching towards Champa is the kingdom at war with Cambodge."

Through the above remarkable passage, we see that Cambodge, in the 17th century, and long before that, maintained relations with the Ede and M'ngong tribes ... not only in its rulership but also goes as deep as Dak Lak.

In Don village there are also Laotians, Indians, Siamese (Thailand), Burmese, Chinese ... they are all present here to exchange elephants, horses, ivory, wax ant wings, litchi, salt and slavery ... is known, before 1945, because Don village is famous for hunting and taming wild elephants, people here have bought and sold many elephants with neighboring countries, including The white elephants have black tusks and red tusks, symbols of holiness and good fortune. In particular, the Cham traders doing business in Don village also built a tower in the name of the Cham king donated to worship whenever there was a chance to exchange items and goods with residents in Don and Yang villages. Prong has similarities with the remaining towers on the Central Coast that the French took in the early years of century XX.

In Krong Na commune, Buon Don district, Laotian monks also followed in the footsteps of their compatriots on the path of culture. The monks brought Bodhi trees from Laos to plant in Jang Lanh village (Krong Na commune), and built a small workshop to worship Buddha, although the temple and images with the same name of the monks were not evangelized still more, but still clearly imprinted in the memories of the people in this place. People often tell each other about a Lao man named Luong Sy from the south of Laos who came here to do business in the last decades of the 19th century. village owner first. Sometime later, a Laotian monk in yellow robes, coming here to evangelize, this monk set up a small house and lived with villagers. Every year, the monk usually returns to Laos for a few months and then again. The shrine is made of wood, stilted houses, Lao architectural roofs, about 2m wide by 3m wide, 3m high, and the floor is 1.5m high and built by Yang Lanh traders. People in the village frequented the incense smoke, prayed, in the shrine there were many terracotta Buddha statues. Until about 1960, due to the chaos of the war, monks did not come back here to evangelize. The workshop was abandoned, but the Bumpimay Festival with Buddhist nuances has entered the cultural beliefs - the festival of the community and is still respected and maintained annually by the State and local people. Later, when the French intended to invade Indochina, they carried out many expeditions to reshape the borders of countries in the region. The explorers, most notably H.Maitre, traveled through the Ea Sup plains to the Don village. After the border planning by H. Maitre, in 1899, the French set up an administrative garrison - called the Administrative Agent, a form that marked the presence of the French in the highlands at that time. Thus, Don village became the administrative agent named on the map, showing how the French clearly recognized Don village as a special position in the whole Indochina region. Moreover, because it is such a center for trade exchanges, the French chose to be the capital of the plateau as soon

as they arrived in this area. Ban Don was placed as an administrative agent and became a place on the map in 1890, but after only 5 years the French had to relocate to move to a new location, Buon Ma Thuot. Is it because the climate is harsh here? Or because robbery raging here, conflicts happen often as some people have commented? What was the reason for the French to move? This is always a question for those who want to learn the history of this land, especially with research on the introduction of Buddhism into Dak Lak, it is even more impossible to ignore the Don village/village.

Once prosperous, it can be said that Don village, as well as the port of Hoi An in the central coast or Hien Street in the Northern Delta ... played an important role in economic, cultural, and communal development. Association of Southeast Asia. Once a vibrant center of trade and exchange, the undeniable evidence is the cultural nuances of the ethnic groups in this place that have made Don village one of the major tourist attractions in Dak. Lak, Central Highlands. Ban Don is now located right next to the iron bridge, on the other side is Tri village, where there is an old house with the architectural style of Lao people over a hundred years old. Further to the west is the village's graveyard, where the tomb of the once-famous elephant hunter Y Thu Knul, which is often treasured as Khundjunôb. He was a clever and talented chief, conquered the regional chiefs, resolved disagreements, gradually linked the chiefs together, creating peace among the villages. His village became rich because he had a good job of hunting elephants. His wealth was increasing. Legend has it that his family had nearly 100 elephants, large and small, cattle, pigs, and chickens full of cages; The dollar, gong, drum, and tea are precious many. What's so special about this chief? In his lifetime, he certainly had exchanged goods with traders from Laos, Cambodia, India, Thailand, Burma, China ... among the merchants, it was impossible not to have followers of Buddhism. After his death, the most special thing is, around his tomb next to the image of elephants is the image of a lotus bud, one of the symbols of Buddhism? Is this association a coincidence or a resemblance? Affordable, Y Thu was also a Buddhist? The only thing that, until Y Thu's time (century XIX) New refuge or Y Thu's ancestor, a close neighbor to the owner of Yang Prong (the stupa of the Cham) had any relationship?

According to research by author Ngo Van Doanh Then, aspects of Champa religion are more or less mentioned in different studies by L. Finot (1901), Boisselier (1963), according to these two authors, Champa highlights two main religious lineages that coexist. and intertwined are Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism. Also according to Ngo Van Doanh, in the list of Da Nang Cham Museum ('Le catalog du muse Cam de Tourane') by H. Parmentier (1919) also showed that in Champa there exists both Hinduism and exists Mahayana Buddhism. In addition to H. Parmentier, this idea is also confirmed by other scholars such as the works of V. Rougier (1911), by P. Dupont (1954 and 1959), and L. Finot (1925 with famous works). : *Lokecvara en Indochine*...

We believe that the Cham Tower of Yang Prong is a divine "gift of thanksgiving" of Cham merchants. They build up from the interests in exchanging and trading products (salt sauce <--> forest products) in the Don village area. This temple tower was set up to maintain their religious activities. During the process of living together in Don village, the Cham people and owners in the old Don village area certainly had a cultural exchange and reception.

With the above material evidence, it can be seen that Buddhism was present in the Don village area (Dak Lak) as early as the thirteenth century, or even earlier. The documents about the traces of the temple am and the Bodhi tree in Yang Lanh village (Buon Don district) only confirmed the presence of

Buddhism in recent times (XIX century). So why was present in the thirteenth century like other neighboring countries that Buddhism did not expand widely throughout Dak Lak province, but now it is only in a part of the Lao ethnic group, M'ngong? This we roughly explain as follows:

In 875, King Indravarman II built a new dynasty in Indrapura (Dong Duong citadel, in present-day Thang Binh district, Quang Nam). King Indravarman was the first Cham king to follow Mahayana Buddhism and considered this the official religion for his kingdom. In the center of Indrapura, he built a Buddhist monastery (vihara) to worship the bodhisattva Lokeshvara (Avalokiteshvara). The reign of Mahayana Buddhism in Champa gradually faded in 925 with the revival of Shiva worship. There will be two cases that happen, One is, the merchants of the Kingdom of Champa while going to trade deeply inland with other merchants they have built a temple of thanksgiving to God Shiva in their place. businesses such as Don village and Sambor village; Second, with the change of religion from Buddhism to Shiva religion around the tenth century, the centuries after that were constant wars between Champa and Dai Co Viet, Khmer, and Nguyen Mong. . In 1283, the Nguyen army invaded Champa and occupied the capital Vijaya, and the Cham king withdrew to the Central Highlands. In the thirteenth century, Yang Prong was built in the Central Highlands (Ea Sup district, Dak Lak today). The Cham religion at this time was probably mixed between Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism.

Yang Prong Tower worships the god Mukha - Linga This is a worship symbol that is revered in the Cham temples, the exchange and acculturation of culture, religion, beliefs, and customs with residents living in the area is inevitable.

Century XV, King Le Thanh Tong enthroned the emir of Kauthara (the Book of Complete Book called Hoa Anh, which means the land of today's Phu Yen and Khanh Hoa provinces) and Nam Ban (later the two countries Thuy Xa and Hoa Xa, now belong to areas of Gia Lai and Dak Lak provinces). After a period of peaceful living with the residents here, perhaps there have been ethnic conflicts or due to the harsh climate, not suitable for feng shui, so the Cham left to leave the tower<sup>33</sup> and its religious imprint in Dak Lak today. Moreover, to the century XVII, In Champa, there are divisions and conflicts between Hindu and Muslim groups, so the promotion of Buddhism will face many difficulties.

On the side of the Vietnamese feudal court, because it was only a sub-state, moreover because the wars took place incessantly, the court did not pay much attention to this plateau, so there was no chance here. administrative structure. The social life of the ethnic groups here is operated by the customary law of the village, all of them still follow the polytheistic beliefs "all living beings", so the reception of monotheism will not be easy. In 1893, the French invaded Dak Lak and there were conflicts with ethnic groups who did not surrender here such as Ede, Gia Rai, M'ngong ... By 1923, the French put Dak Lak province under their rule. At this time, Kinh people are not allowed to travel and reside here. In addition, with the notice No. 3614 dated November 15, 1930, of the Central Kham envoy banning the evangelization of Montagnards in Dak Lak province until there was a new directive and Notice No. 187-CA on March 15, 1934, of the Court of Kham. The Trung Ky (French) envoy in Hue suspended all the allocation of city land to any individual or organization and had to wait for new instructions from the Governor-General of Indochina. That's why, although there is already a temple in Buon Ma Thuot<sup>34</sup> marked by the French on two maps drawing of the central area of Buon Ma Thuot in 1904 and 1918, but it was difficult for Buddhism to expand its influence.

#### 4. CONCLUDE

It can be said that the Buddhists of countries such as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, India, China ... through the goods exchange route arrived in Dak Lak in the thirteenth century: “Boisselier it is said that, in a remote place in the Central Highlands, there is a temple-like Yang Prong, it could be: due to the resistance war against Mongolia in the late 13th century, the Cham kings clearly saw the important role stay in the highlands and seek to draw them more closely into their kingdoms”, However, that wish is only implemented in Don village and neighboring areas such as Ayun Pa (Gia Lai), because perhaps Buddhism only develops in a part of the Lao, M'ngong, Gia Rai ethnic groups. but also vestiges such as temples and Buddha statues as mentioned above.

Although coming from quite early, but the reception of residents here is limited, due to many different reasons, possibly due to the difficult geographical location, the harsh climate, and isolated residents. There is no state organization for the clan or tribe yet, so the hallmarks of Buddhism have been introduced to Dak Lak since the century XIII Not really clear, can only base on the Tower of Yang Prong northwest Dak Lak to explain this only.

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