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Buddhism in Vietnamese Cultural Life

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Abstract

Buddhism holds the most significant and extensive impact on the cultural fabric of Vietnam, making it the most prevalent religion in the country. Buddhism is embraced, assimilated, and advanced by the Vietnamese people, and its profound impact on Vietnamese cultural existence is attributable to its many attributes consistent with traditional culture. The Vietnamese are deeply influenced by

Buddhism in their customs, culture, art, thought, and way of life. Contributing to the enrichment and diversity of Vietnamese culture while preserving its distinctiveness, the impact of Buddhist culture has produced a spiritual and material cultural heritage of immense value.

Keywords: Buddhism, Religion, Cultural Life, Vietnamese Culture

1. Introduction

Vietnam was initially colonized by Buddhism during the early Common Era. Cultural activities related to moist rice agriculture are deeply ingrained in this religion, which fosters a humane, tolerant, intellectual, liberal, and nuanced society. Appreciating life, liberty, and tranquility while embodying virtues such as compassion, pleasure, forgiveness, altruism, and selflessness. Buddhism has thus been received with reverence by the Vietnamese people, who are becoming ever more developed. Buddhism is profoundly ingrained in the social fabric of Vietnam.

Throughout two millennia, Buddhism has maintained a pervasive presence across the nation and has maintained a profound association with the Vietnamese people throughout every significant event in history. By way of language and thought, Buddhist and Vietnamese cultures have fused to the point where they have become an inseparable whole, which is reflected in every aspect of social life and spiritual practice. The lifestyle perspective of the Vietnamese people, as well as their customs, literature, and arts, are all distinct manifestations of this cultural synthesis.

2. Overview and Research Method

2.1 Overview

Buddhism and Vietnamese culture research constitute a vast subject of interest to numerous scholars. Numerous research initiatives are dedicated to elucidating the attributes of Vietnamese culture, one of which examines the historical impact of Buddhism on Vietnamese cultural existence. Typical works that can be mentioned are as follows: In his work "On religion and belief in Vietnam today," published by Social Sciences Publishing House in 1996 (editor), Dang Nghiem Van provides an elucidation of the attributes of religion and belief in Vietnam. Specifically, the author sheds light on the current context of Buddhism in Vietnam. The author of Phan Ngoc (2002) ^[3], Vietnamese Cultural Identity, Literature Publishing House, proposes solutions to preserve culture in addition to highlighting the distinctive characteristics of Vietnamese culture in the book's abundant content. Vietnam is undergoing an integration and exchange process. In the National Political Publishing House's Nguyen Tai Thu (1997) ^[7], The Influence of Ideologies and Religions on Contemporary Vietnamese People, the author clarifies the impact of Buddhism and other religions and ideologies on Vietnamese culture.

2.2 Research Method

By processing documents using analysis and synthesis techniques, the article ensures the scientificity and precision of its data and information research concerning Vietnamese culture and Buddhism.

In addition to logical, comparative, and analytical techniques, the article clarifies the impact of Buddhism on Vietnamese culture.

3. Research Result

3.1 The Impact of Buddhism on the Customs and Practices of Vietnam

Customs are behavioral patterns that govern the conduct of an individual or a group of people to the society and nation as a whole. Customs are defined as recurring attitudes and behaviors that become profoundly ingrained in the subconscious and psychology, thereby establishing themselves as enduring and comparatively stable practices within an individual's or community's way of life. Inhabitants of a region, a nation. By being products of society, customs, and practices emerge from the interconnections that exist among individuals, productive labor, and one another with nature. Traditions and practices are evident in every aspect of existence, encompassing customs, ceremonies, the life cycle of every individual, and the ceremonial observances associated with the veneration of ancestral deities, tutelary deities, and the divine. An instance of Vietnamese customs and practices are enduring cultural attributes of the community that are observed and preserved by its constituents. By studying customs and traditions, individuals have the opportunity to rediscover the traditional cultural values of various ethnic groups.

Vietnamese customs and traditions are significantly impacted by Buddhism. Could say regarding: The practice of honoring ancestors and the Village God is profoundly influenced by Buddhism in traditional Vietnamese culture. Ancestral veneration is the prevailing conviction among the Vietnamese populace. It stems from the notion that the spirits of the deceased continue to reside in our world and exert influence over the lives of living individuals, particularly those who are its descendants. The deceased are prayed for at the temple and then "sent" there for Buddha's protection under the influence of Buddhism. Nevertheless, even though the souls of the deceased are transferred to the temple, the traditional notion of providing for and safeguarding offspring and descendants endures. The most compelling evidence is that families continue to maintain ancestral altars; on the anniversary of the decedent's passing, siblings and relatives continue to congregate at the residence of the clan leader to pay homage to the departed.

Vegetarianism originates from the Buddhist principle of compassion, as adherents are required to adopt and uphold precepts, the most fundamental of which prohibits the killing of sentient beings or the harming of animals must cherish every species. Buddhists are obligated to demonstrate compassion through their words, deeds, and thoughts; this was unattainable when individuals continued to consume the flesh and the blood of living creatures. To accomplish this, adherents of Buddhism must adopt a vegetarian diet. The monastic community observes a vegetarian diet, whereas ordinary Buddhists, due to numerous impediments, consume vegetarian cuisine only on occasion. A segment of the Vietnamese population, comprising both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, observes this unique practice by fasting for two consecutive days on the first and full moon of each month. While some individuals observe fasting on the first, fourteenth, fifteenth, and thirty-first of each month, others fast every month (January, July, and October, or the seventh lunar month).

- Animal release and almsgiving: Additionally originating from the benevolent essence of Buddhism, the practice of bestowing alms and relinquishing animals progressively becomes an intrinsic part of

individuals' everyday existence. It is common practice to release birds during village and pagoda festivals. Additionally, Vietnamese people frequently purchase birds, fish, and turtles on the First and Full Moons to transport them to the temple for prayer and release. Additionally, the Vietnamese enjoy donating to charity and are eager to assist those in need. On the contrary, these formal expressions are becoming more restricted in contemporary society. On the contrary, in observance of the ethnic custom that "good leaves protect torn leaves," all individuals engage in relief and philanthropic endeavors to assist those afflicted by natural calamities, adversity, and insolubility.

- Commemorating the Full Moon on the inaugural day and conducting pagoda rituals: By the customary devotion to the First Day of the Full Moon, worship is directed towards Soc Vong, the day when the sun and moon align to facilitate communication between the divine and ancestral realms. Through prayer, communication, and interpersonal interaction, one will establish rapport with other realms and attain mutual comprehension. The initial day is also a day of purification for monks, known as Bodhisattva day and contrition day. On this day, devout individuals return to the temple to partake in the repentance ceremony, where they offer prayers to abstain from evil, engage in good deeds, and make restitution. psyche and body. The notion that the Day of Hope entails fasting, repentance, and purity originates with the impact of Mahayana Buddhism. Furthermore, on the first day and during the full moon, individuals visit the pagoda to engage in repentance. While at home, they purchase lamps, incense, and blossoms to present to the Three Jewels and their ancestors as an expression of reverence, remembrance, and solidification of the deceased. the process of developing one's intellect and virtue. In addition to visiting pagodas on the first day and the full moon, Vietnamese people observe Buddha and pagodas on other significant holidays, including the full moon of July, the full moon of April (Buddha's birthday), and the full moon of January. Vu Lan celebration). This is an essential tradition in the way of life in Vietnam.

Regarding funeral rites, the traditional customs of Vietnam and China were arduous and expensive. With the assistance of the priests and under the influence of Buddhism, the funeral was conducted more straightforwardly and solemnly. In Buddhism, in the event of a family member's demise, close relatives visit the temple to extend invitations to priests to assist with the bereavement, commonly referred to as a "funeral." Typically, funeral rituals occur in the following order: 1) Ritual of entombment; 2) Funeral observance; 3) Ceremony of spirit offering (rice offering); 4) A magnificent ceremony for the soul; 5) Trieu To ceremony (forewarning of progenitors before the funeral); 6) Ceremonial descent of the sarcophagus and lowering of the grave; 7) Adorn your dwelling or temple with incense burners, dragon leaves, and spirit images. 8) Preparation ceremony; 9) Worship (once per week for seven weeks and 49 days, reciting sutras for rebirth and offering sustenance to the incense); 10) Following the soul's demise, one year later, a Tieu Tuong ceremony will be held the following year; 11) A Dai Tuong ceremony will take place two years later, akin to a communal cremation. In non-Buddhist households, funeral arrangements resemble those of Buddhists; however,

monks and nuns are invited to recite sutras and pray for the spirits of the deceased in such homes, if the deceased or the householder has a deep affection for Buddhism.

Furthermore, apart from the aforementioned Buddhist-influenced Vietnamese customs, numerous others bear a certain degree of resemblance to Buddhism within Vietnamese culture.

3.2 The Impact of Buddhism on Architecture, Literature, and Art

▪ *About literature and art:* The Buddhist influence is evident in a great number of works. Proverbs found in Vietnamese folk melodies exhibit a conspicuous Buddhist cultural inclination. Technical Buddhist nouns such as "So pitiful," "Continuous fate," "Lump but Mr. Cu saves lives," and others have been adopted into colloquial Vietnamese. Folk melodies that incorporate Buddhist principles to convey sentiments, morals, ethics, traditions, social attributes, and customs are also immensely well-liked. Folk songs commonly convey convictions regarding the philosophical concepts of good and evil karma, cause and effect, reincarnation, and the significance attributed to the Buddhist principle of dependent origination (which posits the interdependence of survival).

Even the renowned poem "The Tale of Kieu" by Nguyen Du contains an element of Buddhism. The principle known as "Cause and Effect" Karma in Buddhism forbade Kieu from drowning in the Tien Duong River; instead, she was compelled to endure until the monk Giac Duyen rescued her so that she could reunite with Kim Trong. The initial romantic encounter between Kieu and Kim Trong is considered Karma, as is Kieu's subsequent reunion with Kim Trong; the Buddhist doctrine is symbolized by the hyphen in the monastic Giac Duyen, which further supports the concept of fate.

The Buddhist principles of pleasure and compassion, as well as renunciation, have had a profound impact on works of literature and the arts. The fusion of Buddhism with Vietnamese literature and art forms produces distinctive characteristics that contribute to the cultural identity of Vietnam.

▪ *Concerning architecture:* The architectural influence of India, Burma, and China was evident in the pagodas, spires, and bell towers that were introduced to Vietnam with the advent of Buddhism. Nevertheless, as time has passed, the fusion of Vietnamese synthetic thought with Buddhist architecture has produced an architectural paradigm that is truly distinctive for Buddhism in Vietnam. Towers and pagodas in Vietnam are frequently constructed in an architectural style distinct from that of other nations. At all times, the pagoda's roof remains concealed behind a village bamboo fence, beneath a banyan tree, or in an area surrounded by a picturesque or secluded natural environment. The architectural model is in the style of the letter "Cong": the Thien Huong house connects the worshiping hall and the Buddha's temple; "Tam" style: three parallel houses; or "Noi Cong foreign country" style: the front hall and Buddha's palace are situated in front; a square yard with ornamental trees and rockery is situated behind; the rear house is situated behind; and the East house and the West house are situated on both sides. Numerous distinctive Buddhist architectural complexes,

including One Pillar Pagoda, Western Pagoda, Perfume Pagoda in the North, Thien Mu Pagoda, Tu Hieu Pagoda, and Bao Quoc Pagoda in the North, have become renowned landscapes of Vietnam. Central; Vinh Trang and Giac Lam pagodas are located in the south...

- *In terms of sculpture,* the following are notable examples: the 3.2-meter-tall thousand-eyed, thousand-armed Quan Am statue at Ha Pagoda (Vinh Phu, North Vietnam); sixteen wooden statues at Tay Phuong Pagoda (Ha Tay, North Vietnam); a collection of Eighteen Arhat statues at Phuoc Lam Pagoda (Hoi An, Quang Nam, Da Nang; a set of Thap Bat statues at Trang Pagoda (My Tho); and the bronze statue of Sakyamuni Buddha, measuring 1.07m The H.C. Minh... In addition, the area boasts historical and grand sculptures, including the 49-meter-long "Buddha Entering Nirvana" statue atop Tra Cu Mountain in Phan Thiet, which was completed in 1962; the 11-meter-tall statue of Buddha Shakyamuni seated in the lotus position in Vung Tau, which was dedicated on March 10, 1963; and the 24-meter-tall "Golden Body of Buddha" statue situated at Long Son Pagoda in the city. The film Nha Trang was completed in 1964. This not only signifies the national pride of Vietnam but also provides evidence of the Buddhist influence on Vietnamese sculpture.
- *Regarding painting:* Artisans and craftspeople are perpetually captivated by images of ancient village temple roofs, pagoda-visiting festivals on the first day of spring, and novel concepts derived from Buddhist meditation and philosophy. Vietnam [country]. Painters and artisans in Vietnam have skillfully and delicately conveyed numerous Buddhist-themed silk, watercolor, oil, and lacquer paintings in their works, including "Thanh Pagoda" by Nguyen Gia Tri, "Pagoda Ceremony" by Nguyen Sieu, "Monk Painting" by Do Quang Em, and "Going to Temple Ceremony" by Nguyen Khac Vinh. Particularly since the 1980s, Van Quan has produced "Nhat Hoa Van Phap," "Zen Quan," "Avalokitesvara Thi Show," "Bich Nhan," and "Zen Forest"; Phuong Hong has contributed "Hoi Dau Thi Ngan"; and Huynh Tuan Ba has "Hoi Dau Thi Ngan."

The profound impact of Buddhism on Vietnamese customs, literature, and art has resulted in the nation inheriting invaluable cultural legacies.

3.3 The Impact of Buddhism on Perspectives and Way of Life

The doctrinal system of Buddhism revolves around the Three Learnings: Precepts, Concentration, and Wisdom. These teachings serve as the ideological underpinnings and methods of training that enable individuals to attain liberation. The term "precepts" is an abbreviation for "precepts." "Concentration" refers to a person who engages in meditation and enlightenment to eradicate desires. In other words, "wisdom" empowers individuals to develop the capacity to comprehend and eradicate suffering. Precepts and Concentration in the Three Studies consist primarily of moral cultivation-related doctrines. The content of Buddhist moral doctrine is also present in Wisdom, which contributes to the formulation of the human way of life. Buddhism holds that the essence of human existence is suffering, and the pinnacle of human aspiration is the attainment of liberation.

To achieve the ideal, it advocates for moral and ethical principles that aim to eradicate malevolence and advance virtue.

These Buddhist concepts have long since ingrained themselves in the Vietnamese people's consciousness and have become an integral part of their way of life, as evidenced by the following:

▪ *The fusion of sentiments of joy, compassion, and forgiveness with the Vietnamese nationalistic spirit*

Vietnamese traditional morality consists of a value system centered on virtues such as diligence, compassion, heroism, innovation, and optimism; patriotism is regarded as a spiritual moral value. Occupying the top spot on the list of traditional Vietnamese values, this custom was cultivated over millennia of nation-building and defense. Buddhism, which is founded on the principles of emancipation from suffering, alleviation from suffering, and compassion, has merged with Vietnamese notions of humanity and patriotism. The incorporation of Buddhist principles has been evident throughout our nation's extensive history of nation-building and defense.

In Vietnam's feudal history, patriotic ideology and Buddhist ideology have developed a close relationship, spanning from Zen masters to numerous monarchs and national heroes. Moreover, throughout the nation's survival during the two resistance wars against the French and the Americans, numerous Buddhist temples in Vietnam served as havens and support systems for Buddhist organizations, soldiers, revolutionary cadres, monks, nuns, and soldiers. To safeguard the nation, Buddhist organizations driven by patriotism engaged in revolutionary endeavors.

Vietnamese Buddhism has made a significant contribution to the formation of Vietnamese ideology and national culture, the most prominent of which is patriotic ideology. It is both a liberating doctrine that promotes good and honest living for the Vietnamese people and a doctrine that emphasizes gratitude to the Fatherland through the spirit of the Four Graces.

▪ *The impact that Buddhist ethics have on perspectives and way of life*

When Buddhist ethics are assimilated with the ethical values of the nation, they become the Vietnamese people's traditional ethical standards. Phrases such as "compassion, joy, and renunciation," "selflessness, altruism," "save humanity," "cultivate humanity and accumulate virtue," and "live benevolently to bless the next life" have transformed their original meanings. This transformation is exclusive to Buddhism and has permeated the daily lives of the Vietnamese people. How the Vietnamese conduct themselves and communicate is also significantly shaped by Buddhist principles. Buddhist behavior and communication are characterized by the embodiment of truth and goodness in one's body, discourse, and psyche. As one of the tenets of Buddhism, maintaining correct discourse is an essential component of the eightfold path. It serves as a prerequisite for individuals to conduct themselves appropriately toward all members of society.

+ About family perspectives and conduct, Buddhism advocates for responsibility and harmony among parents, siblings, and spouses, as well as filial piety through the application of the Four Graces. This is frequently conveyed in proverbs and Vietnamese traditional songs. As a consequence, Buddhist ethics and the traditional family values of the Vietnamese are entirely congruent.

+ Regarding social conduct and discourse, Buddhism advocates for integrity, egalitarianism, affection, and tolerance.

Truthfulness is enshrined in the precept "not lying" among the five precepts of Buddhism. Food in one's "body, speech, and mind" is one of the ten virtuous deeds. The fulcrum that governs conduct by the law of cause and effect is honesty. As a consequence, deceit will incur retribution from karma. The Vietnamese have assimilated the Buddhist concepts of karma and the theory of cause and effect, which have since permeated their way of life; for instance, "goodwill meets good" and "evil will be rewarded with evil" have become widespread beliefs.

The ideology of justice and equality that Buddhism initially introduced and developed in Vietnam has since become intertwined with the Vietnamese people's ideology of justice and equality. The foundation of this all-encompassing influence appears to be the archaic egalitarian ideology that characterized village civilization. Buddhism promotes the establishment of just and impartial relationships among individuals, based on the belief that all beings are equal and possess the Buddha nature within them. It further dictates that in interpersonal connections, no one should pursue personal gain. "One person for all, and all for one" is a prevailing Vietnamese proverb that is significantly impacted by this mentality.

The benevolence, appreciation, and affection that define Vietnam were cultivated by its citizens throughout the nation's construction and defense. The kindness of the Vietnamese is characterized by altruism, reverence, affection, and respect for others. The integration of Buddhism and traditional Vietnamese thought has fostered virtues such as gratitude, respect, and kindness. That is, the affection that "loves others as it loves oneself" and "good leaves obscure torn leaves" refer to... Goodness, affection, and love are not solely manifested in present-day relationships; they are also evident in past-day relationships. For instance, remember the source of your water before consuming it, and the individual who planted the tree before you consume its produce.

Buddhism has assisted the Vietnamese in developing a generous, altruistic, and selfless disposition. Extreme tolerance is demonstrated when confronted with human error. It is evident in the Vietnamese people's conduct, as in the following proverbs: "The sea is vast; turn around to see the shore" and "Strike those who flee; no one will beat those who return." Additionally, behavior demonstrates the attitude of tolerance. Concerning the defeated adversary, in the context of humanitarian policy concerning captives of war and combatants...

In the current religious landscape of Vietnam, Buddhism continues to hold the position of the largest faith, exerting the most profound and far-reaching influence. Temple attendance the practice of reincarnation and the theory of cause and effect are becoming more prevalent. The Vietnamese populace readily embraced and harmonized Buddhist thought due to its congruence with their national sentiments, sentiments, and moral construction.

4. Conclusion

Buddhism has profoundly ingrained itself in the cultural life of Vietnamese ethnic communities since its introduction nearly two millennia ago; the nation is accompanied by a

remarkable manifestation of the tradition and spirit of incarnation within Vietnamese Buddhism.

Amidst the prevailing social circumstances of the present era, the enduring influence of Buddhism's cultural heritage persists, engendering distinctive national characteristics and augmenting the cultural identity of Vietnam. Buddhist cultural values are tangible manifestations of the aspirations of millions of adherents who strive to establish a prosperous Fatherland and contented citizens as their *raison d'être*. This further substantiates the standing and function of Buddhism during its journey alongside the nation.

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