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## **THE PROPAGATION OF BUDDHISM AND ITS IMPACT ON POPULAR CULTURE IN VIETNAM**

**Abstract.** The article analyzes the history of Vietnamese Buddhism in different periods and its impact on national art, especially theater. The main postulates of Buddhism and their implementation in Vietnamese art are revealed. The author shows how the ideology of Buddhism has deeply influenced almost all realms of Vietnamese people's culture. It's concluded that the role of Buddhism as the base of popular culture predetermined its so-called "revival" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Vietnam.

**Key words:** Buddhism, school of Contemplation, Thien, Confucianism, theatre schools Cheo, Tuong.

### **Introduction**

Since the beginning of the Doi moi policy in Vietnam, there has been an active process of integration into the international community in all realms. Vietnamese goods enter the world markets, world technologies and brands come to Vietnam, more and more Vietnamese students study in foreign universities. Under these conditions, Vietnamese culture experiences unprecedented pressure from foreign, primarily Western, culture. The preservation of the country's spiritual and cultural heritage is becoming a top priority for Vietnamese society<sup>1</sup>. The dominant religions such as Buddhism over the centuries have affected the culture of Vietnam, and the study of this impact became a very urgent task.

Vietnam has always been a unique country in South-East Asia. It is situated in an area where maritime and land routes connecting countries and peoples of the Indian Ocean and the Far East intersect. Not unlikely other parts of South-East Asia, Vietnamese culture has throughout its history been strongly influenced by two sources of ancient and developed civilizations coming from India and China. These two civilizations gave the world several important regional religions. Buddhism even became one of a few world religions.

Vietnam did not produce any local religion of comparable level. However, due to its geographical location and cultural ties with other countries of Asia Vietnam was very early to adopt the most important religious systems of the area, such as Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Thus, the country followed the well-known "three religion" principle borrowed from China (san-jiao). Vietnam became a country with many religions which have rarely been in conflict. The character of "three religions" in Vietnam as well as their role in Vietnamese culture and forms of interaction have differed greatly from those attested in China. For many centuries, despite one or another religious system being in a dominant position in the whole or some provinces of the country, these religions have never been subject to open wars. On the contrary, the co-existence of "tree religions" contributed

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<sup>1</sup> This proposition is shared by Russian scholars, see for example: Mazyrin V.M. About the impact of Western culture on Vietnam: Vietnamese culture and arts. M.: Forum Publ., 2017. Pp.36–51.

to their constant interaction and enrichment through contacts, that led to a very peculiar kind of religious syncretism. However, the most important role in popular belief has always been played by Buddhism, and it is considered like national religion by the majority of the Vietnamese nowadays.

### **History of Vietnamese Buddhism**

Buddhism, the most important religion of Vietnam, came to the country first from India and then, in its Thien (Thiên) form, from China. The ideology of Buddhism has deeply influenced almost all aspects of Vietnamese people's culture. The particular role of Buddhism as the base of popular culture predetermined its so-called "revival" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Vietnam. Both Indian and Chinese Buddhist sources had a profound effect on the history of Buddhism in Vietnam. Therefore, Vietnamese Buddhism took shape in the course of interaction between Indian Hinayana and Chinese Mahayana.

The most important stage in the propagation of Buddhism in Vietnam related to the activities of the school of Contemplation which came to the country from China. The development of this school on the Vietnamese soil has made up the basic elements of the history of Buddhism in Vietnam. The penetration of the Thien school, or Chan Buddhism, into Vietnam was traditionally connected with the name of Vinitaruchi, an Indian preacher of 6th century AD. He came from China to Northern Vietnam in 580 and established his sect there. This tendency became later known as the "Vinitaruchi school". The story of Vinitaruchi, an Indian preacher who became a follower of Chan and the founder of the Vietnamese branch of this school represents, according E.A. Torchinov, "a sort of an ideological model used by the Vietnamese Buddhists in order to interpret their own tradition as Indian by descent and at the same time dating back to Chinese culture and Chinese Buddhism" [Torchinov 1990: 135].

It is generally agreed that the third period in the history of Buddhism in Vietnam related to the activities of one more Chan, or Thien, school founded by U Yan Tung, a Chinese monk. U Yan Tung (Vo Ngon Thong in Vietnamese tradition) came to Vietnam from China in the early 9th century. The school of Vo Ngon Thong exerted influence on Vietnamese culture until 1221. The beginning of the 13th century saw it lose its leading position, gradually giving way to another school of Vietnamese Buddhism.

Vietnamese Buddhism reached its peak in the 11th century. "The followers of this religion were not only the plain men from the people, but also the nobles at the court and even the rulers themselves. The latter wanted to create a new school. But, instead of tracing it to Bodhidharma, they chose a teacher of Dhyana (that is Chan), a Chinese named Thao Duong (Ciao Tang, in Chinese) who arrived from Champa where he had spent some time. They followed the teaching of this preacher and practiced his doctrine. The fourth period in the history of Vietnamese Buddhism was hence shaped, the period of Annamite Dhyana (namely the Vietnamese Thien version of the Buddhist school of Contemplation).

Thao Duong preached a syncretic teaching which combined the traditions of the Chan school and Amidaism. As stated by Thich Minh Hue, «the universalism of the Chan doctrine on the "momentary enlightenment", the Amidaist teaching on salvation through 'remembering Buddha' and belief in the saving force of Buddha Amitabha were responsible for the transformation of Thao Duong's teaching into an official ideology of Vietnam from the 11th to the early 13th centuries. The syncretism of this doctrine contributed to a large extent to the expansion of Buddhism's social base, as it was made intelligible to the wider strata of the population. The patriarchs of Thao Duong's school

were often drawn from the imperial family of Vietnam. The first of them was the emperor Ly Thanh Tong (1054-1072) followed by the emperors Ly Anh Tong (1138-1175) and Ly Cao Tong (1176-1210) and the prince Ngo Ich» [Thích Minh Tuệ 1993: 75]. During this period those Buddhist patriarchs who were not emperors generally received the title of the “State Teacher” which was equal to the position of prime minister.

Despite its wide expansion and popularity in Vietnam in the 11-13th centuries, the school of Contemplation founded by Thao Duong did not complete the development of the local Buddhist tradition in the country. This role was played by the Truc Lam (Trúc Lâm) school (“the Bamboo Forest”) which became an original Vietnamese trend in the Buddhist school of Contemplation.

The founder of the Truc Lam school was taken to be an emperor of the Tran dynasty which ruled in 1225-1400 AD called Tran Thanh Tong (1258-1278) when he became a monk, he changed his previous name to the name of Truc Lam Dai Su (“Ambassador from the Bamboo Forest”). His predecessor on the throne, the emperor Tran Thai Tong (1225-1258) who wrote a very important Buddhist treatise “Khoa hu luc” (“Notes on the empty”) had also contributed significantly to the formation of the new school.

Unlike the fore-running schools, the teaching of Truc Lam was not reduced to an orientation toward salvation from sufferings through the practice of contemplation. It also called for active secular work which was regarded as one of the ways of self-perfection. In the 13th and the first half of the 14th centuries the doctrine of Truc Lam's school performed the functions of an official ideology, and it is no coincidence that its patriarchs listed some emperors and other representatives of the imperial family.

The scholars who examine the social substance of Truc Lam's tradition argue that it ensured the ideological basis for the rise of national conscience and Vietnamese patriotism in the period of the war against the Mongolian invaders which started in the 13th century. This was made possible because some purely autochthonous beliefs of Vietnam were inserted in the system of the Buddhist cult, and, first of all, the practice of worshipping the national heroes of the country. Truc Lam's school thus gave Vietnamese Buddhism new forms which were best suited for its functioning as the official ideology of Tran dynasty.

By the end of the rule of the Tran dynasty in Vietnam, Buddhism began to lose its positions in the sphere of state ideology and was totally replaced by Confucianism by the early 15th century. However, combined with ancient folk beliefs, it remained the main religion of the majority of population. The system of Confucianism has in turn gradually absorbed all principal concepts of the Buddhist school of Contemplation. In this way neo-Confucianism was formed as a single official ideology. As stated by the historians<sup>2</sup> as a result, all major philosophical doctrines of the region were in some way or another absorbed by the system of neo-Confucianism.

The incidence of Buddhist elements in Vietnamese neo-Confucianism was always much higher than in its Chinese form. There were more Buddhist monks than Confucianist educated men: “In the altars of the Confucianist temples one can easily find Buddhist deities (Bodhisattva Guang Yin, etc.) as well as spirits and deities related to the cult of the mother-nature (equally close to local Shamanism, Taoism and early Hinduism), etc. Interestingly enough, folk festivals similar to the medieval carnivals organized in the countries of Western Europe seemed to be marked by the

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<sup>2</sup> Chien, Edward T. (1988). The Neo-Confucian Confrontation with Buddhism: A Structural and Historical Analysis. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, v.15, 347–348.

rejection of the basic Confucianist norms of conduct such as the principles subjecting the women to the authority of their husbands and fathers established by Confucius. The role played by women in the society was reduced to a minimum one only as the domination of neo-Confucianism increased, resulting in the fact that the Confucianist norms of women's conduct became obligatory in traditional theatre.

After a certain decay of Vietnamese Buddhism in the 15–16th centuries the process of its gradual revival started in the 17th century in the framework of a new tradition known as the Lam Te (Lâm Tế) school ("the Forest Limit"). Confucianism grew weaker when the country actually was divided into two states, and the role of the competitive examinations for a rank according to the Confucianist canon borrowed from China tended to decrease. The dynasty of Trinh in Northern Vietnam tried to strengthen the norms of Confucianism and fought against the influence of Buddhism, folk superstitions, Christianity and Chinese traditions, but such struggle could not yield any results. In the South wars were regularly waged against the Buddhist state of Champ and then of Cambodia. Under these circumstances, the Confucianist system of examinations evolved into practical learning rather than the mastering of moral norms. The development of religious syncretism in South Vietnam was also related to the activities of the Vietnamese settlers and Chinese refugees in the Ha Tien area. Both Buddhist ideas and Confucianist concepts coming from the Chinese province of Fujian spread there. The gradual assimilation and annexation of the territories south to the early medieval Vietnamese state led to an increase of the Buddhist content in Vietnamese neo-Confucianism.

The 18th century saw the strengthening of Buddhism in both North and South Vietnam. Buddhist pagodas were restored, and all classical books of Buddhism were engraved and printed. After the suppression of the Tay Son revolt and the reunification of the country under the rule of the southern Nguyen dynasty Buddhism grew even stronger. Many Confucianist dogmata were forgotten.

The Vietnamese state of the 19th century ceased to be based on Confucianist norms. Although Confucianism remained the religion of the court, Buddhism and the folk beliefs related to Taoism were also rehabilitated. The traditional "three religions" of Vietnam were at the same time joined by Christianity which has begun to play an important role in religious life since the middle of the 19th century, after the start of French colonial expansion in the region.

Buddhism continued to have a profound effect on the culture of Vietnamese people. This fact predetermined the subsequent revival of Buddhism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries which could be "strange" for a superficial observer. This revival took the shape of a most ancient and conservative form of Buddhism known as Theravada as well as several syncretic sects. These sects, such as Caodaism and Hoa Hao in South Vietnam can be described as an eclectic mixture of Christianity, Buddhism, folk cult of heroes, local cults of protecting goddesses.

### **The principal features of Thien Buddhism and their theatre traces**

The principal features of the Buddhist school of Contemplation which has spread in Vietnam (Thien, which corresponds to "Chan" in China and "Zen" in Japan) are the same for the thoroughly studied Chinese school of Contemplation as well as Japanese Zen-Buddhism. All these trends in Buddhism attach special significance to personal experience in the understanding of supreme truth. Furthermore, they have specific features which have exerted great influence upon the formation of what is often referred to as "the spirit of the East" [Trần Lê Sang, Hà Đình Thanh 1994: 205].

Those features include:

1. Neglect of form, generally typical of mysticism in its Buddhist, Christian or Islamic version. As concerns the form, nothing beautiful or appealing to one's feelings found here. However, something inner or spiritual can be felt, which is self-asserting despite the imperfection of the form and possibly due to such imperfection. The explanation is as follows: when the form is perfect, our feelings experience too much satisfaction, and the reason stops going deep inside, at least for a while. If we pay too much attention to the appearance of things, we cannot extract the inner content which is enclosed in them...

2. The inside direction of Thien (Chan, Zen) implying that it directly appeals to the human spirit. When the mediation of the form is excluded, one spirit is in immediate contact with another. The means of contact, or the symbol of self-expression, is confined to the shortest possible form. When one word or winking would suffice, why should one waste all one's life writing voluminous books and building immense cathedrals?

3. Frankness which is identified with simplicity, when all artificial forms of expressing the ideas are laid aside, one little blade of grass will replace a 16-foot great statue of Buddha Vairochana, and the circle is the best symbol of expressing an immeasurability of the depth of truth open to the reason of the follower of Thien. This simplicity is also expressed in daily life. A man of wisdom will need only a straw cabin in the mountains which is half-filled with white clouds. Potatoes baked in the ashes of a fire made from cow-dung will satisfy his hunger, and at the same time he will look with disdain at a messenger of the imperial court.

4. The school of Contemplation combines simplicity with poverty, but Thien cannot be reduced to the simplicity of being poor and modest. Thien does not mean poverty in the name of poverty. A person can be poor or rich by the switch top application standards of the laymen, but the inner side of poverty in Thien has nothing to do with the shortage of property, as with the riches which have nothing to do with the redundancy of material wealth.

5. The facts and experience (substance) are of more importance for the adherents of Thien than images, symbols and notions (form). That is why the school of Contemplation asserts that space is not something stretching in an objective way; time must not be considered a line extending from the past to the future through the present. Thien does not know of such time, and therefore, the ideas of eternity, infinity, endlessness, etc. are just a fancy from the viewpoint of Thien, as Thien lives in facts...

6. There is a certain feeling of absolute which could be called "eternal solitude". Such loneliness of an absolute being experienced by man when "the world of concrete whose motion depends on space, time and causality is left behind, and when the spirit lives high in the sky, much like a cloud.

7. A special attitude of Thien towards life as a whole need to be stressed. "When it expresses itself in art, it takes shape of what can be called the spirit of Zen Buddhist the aesthetics. It shows up in simplicity, frankness, audacity, loftiness, estrangement from the outside world, deep absorption, indifference towards the form, free movements of spirit and the mystic breath of the creative genius all around the world: in painting, calligraphy, gardening, tea ceremony, fencing, dance and poetry" [Trần Lê Sang, Hà Đình Thanh 1994: 204].

The knowledge of "Bat Tinh Dao" (Bát Tĩnh Đạo), the eight-element way to salvation, are of a vital importance to every Buddhist in Vietnam. Four theses became the basis of the Buddhist teaching, known as Four Noble Truths in Buddhism. It was on their base that the general aesthetic conception was developed for all tendencies of the Buddhist religion.



The First Truth says, that all existence, all life is suffering. The Second Truth gives us the explanation of the reasons for suffering. Its basis is formed by attraction, attachment (aversion is also a form of attachment, sort of attraction's seamy side), thirst for existence combined with ignoring the Truth on suffering. While explaining the Second Noble Truth, the Truth on the reason for suffering, Buddhism introduces the term of "karma" which is essential for the understanding of this religion. Any physical, psychic or verbal act must lead to certain results and consequences. Everything that is being done now will yield fruit later. The consequences of the acts performed in this life that had no results in its course will necessarily be realized in the next one and even predetermine its contents and the general features subsequent existence. The Third truth says, there is a certain status that is free from suffering, a status described as "not born, not become, not done, not formed. This status is named "nirvana" meaning "dying away" (that is, the dying away of all fits of passion and attraction). According to the Fourth Truth, a status free from suffering does not only exist, but it can also be achieved by anyone. It is in the Fourth Noble Truth where Buddha shows the way towards the termination of suffering. This is the so-called Noble Octonary Way. Its stages are as follows: right view, right resoluteness, right speech, right acts, right way of life, right effort, right reminiscence, right concentration.

These are the essential elements of the Buddhist conception. It is evident that they did not for the most part function in their absolute form on the level of popular world outlook. They were not even realized in full by all followers of the religion. For instance, Buddha as perceived in Vietnam has often been transformed from an "awakened wise man" into a good wizard who works wonders, saves those who got into trouble and punishes the unworthy. Such transformation is particularly evident in the works of Vietnamese folklore as well as those based on folk Buddhist legends. The latter include the drama, for example, the stories of Thi Mau and Thi Kinh or Tam and Cam and their theatrical equivalents (Cheo theatre plays "Quan Am Thi Kinh" and "Tam Cam").

As shown above, Buddhism has occupied a special position in all spheres of social life and culture of Vietnam. Buddhist monks form a necessary part of all official ceremonies and other events. Every village of the country has a Buddhist temple where a monk offers his daily prayers. If a child was born in a poor family, the parents often give him to the monk (this is called "to give the child to be brought up by Buddha"). When the child grows up, he may return to his parents or, as is often the case, become a monk ("a Buddha's child"). During the funeral Buddhist monks pray accompanied by the music (drum-beat) while the dead is carried to the burial-ground. By this means they "build the bridge" for the soul of the deceased so that he can get to paradise. The monks are not present only at weddings, because both Buddhism and Confucianism have a typically negative attitude to the sphere of feelings relating a man to a woman. The great role of Buddhism is also expressed through the numerous temples. The Buddhist pagodas have filled many generations of the Vietnamese with calm and peace.

### **Buddhism and the traditional theatre of Vietnam**

The forms of Vietnamese folk culture related to the influence of different Buddhist traditions dating back to India and China are extremely varied. There can be found pronounced distinctions in folk beliefs, types of art and architecture. E.g., in the northern part of Vietnam, the pagodas are built of wood, with modest-sized columns and fine carvings. The rising ends of their roofs are tiled with small tiling. Such temples are closely like those found in China. In South Vietnam the pagodas built

of stone or bricks are bigger and higher than those which one can see in the north of the country. Such temples more closely resemble the stupas of Thailand and Cambodia.

The role of Buddhism can be exemplified by its influence on the Vietnamese traditional theatre. As the examination of its heroes and style shows, this is really a Buddhist theatre. Buddha in the traditional art has transformed into a good wizard with the Bodhisattvas sometimes changing their meaning and even sex like e.g. Quan Am (Quan Âm, related to Guang Yin in the Chinese Buddhist tradition).

All seven postulates of Buddhism can be considered as the basis for a sort of theatre manifesto. They have strongly influenced every kind of ritual and entertainment in the ancient Vietnamese society shaping the foundation for rural festivals. The formation of such festivals did in turn predetermine the directions of development for traditional forms of scenic art which evolved into the theatres of Cheo (Chèo) and Tuong (Tuồng).

As an example of the influence exerted by the Buddhist school of Contemplation upon the traditional scenic art of Vietnam, one can advance the minor importance of the form or even indifference to the surface aspects of the Cheo and Tuong performances. Both Cheo and Tuong in their original form have no scenery. The makeup and costume play an important semantic role, but no tendency towards the perfection of form can be found there. It is no coincidence that G. Kryzhitsky who was an outstanding expert in theatre studies in Russia did not find in the traditional theatre of Vietnam any trace of the exquisiteness that attracted the representatives of the European theatrical culture in the scenic art of Japan and China. In his view, "The theatrical art spread from China to the south and east, but while the Japanese improved and refined it, the Annamite could only roughly copy it. It is interesting to see how the scholar was not able to penetrate into the substance of the traditional art in Vietnam". Considering the makeup and costume used in what he called "a folk farce" (Cheo), G. Kryzhitsky wrote: "The actors wear torn clothes, and the comics may even appear naked. The makeup of the performers is the most primitive one, and the faces are usually simply covered with black and white stripes. Emperors, magnates and mandarins have scanty beards. In fact, a torn clothing is an obligatory element of some characters such as a poor peasant in the plays of Cheo" [Kryzhicky 1927: 39–43].

The simplicity mentioned by the Russian scholar shows the attitude of the Buddhists brought up in the Thien school towards poverty and wealth. The performances illustrate the fact that genuine poverty or genuine riches are not related to material wealth. A seemingly poor person (e.g., the girl Tam or the poor old woman in "Tam Cam") are much wealthier than those who are rich and seek wealth and pleasures of this world (Cam and her mother in "Tam Cam", Thi Mau in "Quan Am Thi Kinh") [Nguyễn Đình Nghi 1971: 132-141].

Before Buddhism became widely spread in Vietnam, the ancient Viets worshipped local spirits and natural phenomena. A great role in the traditional religion of Viets was played by the cults of ancestors and the *Vuong* (traditional ruler) as well as that of mother-goddesses. Pre-Buddhist beliefs of the Viets were gradually borrowing several elements from Chinese Taoism characterized by its faith in the predetermined way. Every rural community would have a protecting spirit of its own. He could be an ancient hero, a mythical creature or an animal. The protecting spirit was offered a monthly sacrifice at the communal house *Dinh* (Đình). On his birthday, "the peasants performances after a ceremonial worship, where the most striking events in the life of the chosen spirits were reproduced, followed by a collective feast. Such performances had to satisfy the aesthetic needs of

the peasants as well as their requirements of amusing themselves; they would go on for a few days in one or more villages of an area.

These festivals can be considered a kind of a pre-theatrical show. Later, they exerted influence upon the formation of the traditional folk performances known as Cheo. However, one could not say that such pre-Buddhist influences experienced by the Cheo theatre were fundamental to its development. From the very beginning, Cheo was primarily associated with Buddhism. Its performances first took place in the evening or at night under the shed of the Dinh after a Buddhist festival. The rural Cheo theatre gradually became an important component in the life of Vietnamese peasants. Therefore, this folk theatre did not perish even when Confucianism replaced Buddhism as a dominant religion of the court, and the Vietnamese nobility started supporting the Tuong.

The influence of Buddhism upon folk culture including the traditional theatre of Vietnam generally manifests itself in an indirect way. For instance, the authors who work in the fields of literature fine arts, all forms of creative art as well as the Vietnamese in their ordinary life, often refer to the image of Buddha and Bodhisattva the Saviour (Quan Am). Under the influence of Chinese Buddhism, the male Bodhisattva of Indian origin known as Avalokiteshvara Quan Am (Guang Yin, in Chinese) was transformed in the folk environment into a female deity. The biography of Bodhisattva the Saviour (Bà Chúa Ba) has a marked folk character and is widespread among the Buddhist nuns of Vietnam in the Huong Ty pagodas from Ha Son Binh up to Nghe Tinh.

The acme of Vietnamization and adaptation of Quan Am as Bodhisattva into folk element was reached with the appearance of the legend "Quan Am Thi Kinh", or "Quan Am the Bodhisattva is looking in the mirror". Since the Ly period the folk view has referred to Y Lan, the heroine of a popular legend, as another female Bodhisattva. According to the legend, Y Lan is a good and clever wife assisting her husband in the war against the enemies. The legend of Y Lan is also widespread in a big rural area stretching from Hai Hung province up to the pagodas situated in the environs of Hanoi. The story of Y Lan formed the basis for a Cheo theatrical play of the same name. The story of Co Tam similarly to the Y Lan legend is also known in other provinces of Vietnam where the pagodas of "Lady Tam" or "Lady Cam" have survived till now.

The personage of Buddha in folk culture in general and specifically in traditional scenic art relates to the good heroes saving from sufferings and adversities who act in popular Buddhist legends; the appearance of Vietnamese folktale Buddha is very distinct from his portrayal in the temples and reminds of a good wizard emerging before the hero disguised as a grey-headed and grey-bearded old man. The simile "good like Buddha" has been passed from one generation of the Vietnamese to another. The traditional theatre of Vietnam made borrowings from many Buddhist stories. For example, the personage of Buddha in "Tam Cam", a well-known Cheo play, can be traced back to the folk legend on Tam and Cam [Nguyễn Đình Nghi 1971: 132-141].

The plot of that story can be traced everywhere in the world. The source of its Vietnamese version was a Buddhist story recorded in the Kinh Bac area (North Vietnam). In accordance with the legend, there was a girl named Tam who was poor, but well-behaved (sort of Vietnamese Cinderella). She lived together with her father, her step-mother and her step-sister. Tam had to work hard all the time, but Cam and her mother offend her. Buddha helped Tam and she became a wife of the prince. Cam and her mother killed Tam because Cam wanted the prince to marry her. They were punished by Buddha who played the role of a teacher, consoler and saviour towards Tam.

The legend on Quan Am the Bodhisattva provided the basis for a Cheo play called "Quan Am Thi Kinh". "This play became one of the best successes achieved by the traditional theatre of



Vietnam” [Đình Quang 1985: 230]. According to the legend, Thi Kinh was married to a man from a rich family. The husband prepared for an examination at night and fell asleep one day. Thi Kinh came to his place and saw an uncomely hair on his face. The wife wanted to cut the hair off, when the husband woke up and shouted out of fear. His parents thought their daughter-in-law was trying to kill the man, and they turned her out of the house. Then Thi Kinh took the monastic vows and started preaching in a temple disguised as a man. Thi Mau, a girl from a rich family regularly going to the temple, fell in love with her, as she did not know this was a woman and not a man. Thi Mau confessed her love to Thi Kinh, but Thi Kinh had to reject it. Thi Mau then had sexual intercourse with a man and gave birth to a child. As she had a grudge against Thi Kinh, Thi Mau brought her child to the temple and declared that this was the son of Thi Kinh. Thi Kinh did not reject the child and accepted it for upbringing. Having seen such a good deed, Buddha recompensed Thi Kinh who was able to bear every suffering. The lightning killed Thi Kinh turning her into a Bodhisattva.

### Conclusion

Buddhism has thus become an integral part of Vietnam's history and spiritual culture from the first centuries AD until now. The history of the country shows that the best times when the rulers were inclined to humanism and able to appreciate loyalty were also the periods when Buddhism flourished. It contributed significantly to the generation of the most prominent achievements in Vietnamese culture, being responsible for outstanding military achievements and the successful building of peaceful society. In consequence, Buddhist ideology has merged with the ideology of national patriotism. At all times, despite any progress or regress in the history of the country, Buddhism has never lost its position in the national conscience of the Vietnamese people. As an integral part of popular culture, it has never been forgotten or put aside.

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## РАСПРОСТРАНЕНИЕ БУДДИЗМА И ЕГО ВЛИЯНИЕ НА НАРОДНУЮ КУЛЬТУРУ ВЬЕТНАМА

**Аннотация.** В статье анализируются история вьетнамского буддизма в разные периоды и его влияние на национальное искусство, особенно театр. Представлены основные постулаты буддизма и их реализация во вьетнамском искусстве. В статье показано, как идеология буддизма глубоко повлияла на почти все аспекты духовной и культурной жизни вьетнамцев. Автор показывает, что особая роль буддизма как основы народной культуры предопределила его так называемое «возрождение» в конце XIX - начале XX века во Вьетнаме.

**Ключевые слова:** буддизм, школа Созерцания, Тхиен, конфуцианство, театральные школы Тео, Туонг.

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