

Early Buddhism Perspective in Vietnam

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Abstract

The academic article was objectives to study on early Buddhism perspective in Vietnam. That is history of Buddhism in Vietnam with elements of (1) Buddhism Exhortation in Vietnam, (2) Journey of Buddhism from India to Vietnam, and (3) The Early Attributes of Buddhism in Vietnam. The interaction between Most Venerable Dam Thien and Emperor Wen of Sui (Yang Jian) about Buddhism in Giao Chau (the name given to Vietnam during the Chinese occupation) was cited by Thong Bien when he spoke with Empress Dowager Y Lan to draw the conclusion that it dates to the second century A.D. in the history of Vietnamese Buddhism. That was unique of interpretative the Buddha teaching with folk life of Vietnamese.

Keywords: Buddhism; Vietnam

1. Introduction

It is believed that Vietnam has a long history of civilization. Vietnam has endured multiple periods of foreign occupation and countless civil battles over the course of its more than 4000-year history as a sovereign state. Due to the scarcity of specific historical sources as a result of the wars, research into Vietnam's history in general and Buddhism in Vietnam in particular has been greatly hampered. As a result, there is debate among academics over the exact dates and methods used to introduce Buddhism to Vietnam.

Because of this, there is disagreement among researchers over the precise timing of the arrival of Buddhism in Vietnam. Prior to now, the majority of academics who researched the history of Vietnamese Buddhism relied on the conversation between Most Venerable Dam Thien and Emperor Wen of Sui (Yang Jian) about Buddhism in Giao Chau (the name given to Vietnam when it was ruled by the Chinese), which Thong Bien quoted when he spoke with Empress Dowager Y Lan (Nguyen Lang, 1994). They did this in order to draw the conclusion that Buddhism became well-established in Giao Chau by the second century A.D., and they However, according to Prof. Le Manh (Thich Mat The, 1968) that, he proposed that Buddhism was introduced to Vietnam in the third or second century B.C. based on the story of Nhat Da Trach in the Linh Nam Trich Quai (Strange Stories of Linh Nam), which discussed Chu Dong Tu, who learned the Buddha's teachings from Most Venerable Phat Quang (who lived on the mountain of Quynh Vien) (Le Manh That, 2003). As a result, it is still unclear when Buddhism first arrived in Vietnam. However, I believe it is extremely safe to claim that Buddhism was introduced in Vietnam around the beginning of the Christian period, and it must have reached Vietnam before it reached China in the latter first century A.D. The further research will provide a clear justification for this opinion.

2. Buddhism Exhortation in Vietnam

Some textual sources have shed information on the route taken by Buddhism as it arrived in Vietnam from India. The first historical account of Vietnamese Buddhism, the Thien Uyen Tap Anh (Anthology of the Famous Monks in Vietnamese Ch'an Park), reported Dam Thien as saying that the Jiaozhou (Giao Chau) region had long-standing communication with India. Although the Buddha-Dharma had not yet been founded in China at the time, more than twenty priceless temples, over 500 monks, and fifteen volumes of texts had all been translated in Luy Lau. There were already monks and nuns like Mo Luo Qui Yu (Ma Ha Ky Vuc), Kang Senghui (Khuong Tang Hoi), Zhi Jiang Liang (Chi Cuong Luong), and Mou Bo (Mau Bac) there because of this earlier connection (7 Nguyen Tu Cuong, 1997). Therefore, before reaching China, Buddhism may have travelled directly from India to Vietnam.

In addition, it is important to mention the sources of information that Nguyen Tai Thu and Nguyen Lang have gathered. They may be able to clarify the best ways to introduce Buddhism to Vietnamese society.

As is well known, Vietnam, one of the five nations that make up Indochina (Burma, Siam, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam), established trade relations with China and India via land and sea channels very early (G. Coedes, 1996: 50). In other words, there were land and maritime routes that linked China, Vietnam, and India. Due to its geographic location, Vietnam serves as a key hub for trade with India. Nguyen Lang, a scholar, claims that there were commercial exchanges between India and the Middle East at the beginning of the Christian era, as well as between India and the Arabs and Mediterranean nations. These nations' traders required sandalwood, gold, pearls, ivory, silk, and perfumes. And in order to have a sufficient supply of goods for trading, Indian traders had to purchase (or exchange) them from nations in Far-East Asia, including China, Japan, and nations in Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam. They used to travel by boat to Giao Chau during the South Western Monsoon season and then return home during the North Western Monsoon season the following years. They must have spent a lot of time in Giao Chau studying both Chinese and Vietnamese and exchanging commodities. It implies that Indian culture, art, and faiths (Brahmanism and Buddhism) brought by them may have some degree of effect on Vietnam. Additionally, Indian traders and sailors frequently prayed to the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and Buddha Dipankara, who were regarded as the Buddhas safeguarding seafarers, for assistance on their lengthy voyages. Therefore, they can ask several Buddhist monks to accompany them when they make their prayers. This is a method of introducing Buddhism through maritime routes to Vietnam (Nguyen Lang, 1994: 129).

3. Journey of Buddhism from India to Vietnam

The Indian traders and monks undoubtedly travelled by water to reach Vietnam. What did overland routes entail? Nguyen Tai Thu, a scholar, said that a path connected

Mae Nam with the Mekong River, passing via the countries of Sitep and Korat, and ending in the Kingdom of Cambodia. Before the advent of Christianity, Indian immigrants are likely to have created this kingdom (G. Coedes, 1996: 57). Indian monks may have entered Laos at the start of this era by travelling via the Truong Son ranges from Vietnam at the beginning of the Christian era (Nguyen Tai Thu, 1992: 10).

It follows logically from the aforementioned positions that there is a chance that Vietnam could receive direct contact with Indian Buddhism without the need for Chinese intermediaries. In other words, before making its way to China in the early centuries, Buddhism travelled directly from India and Central Asia to Vietnam by land and sea routes. However, Chinese culture was introduced to Vietnam as a result of Chinese immigration to Southeast Asia. Then there were the Chinese Monks who went to Vietnam to spread Buddhism after the Indian Monks. Because of this, some sources claimed that Buddhism had travelled from China to Vietnam.

4. The Early Attributes of Buddhism in Vietnam

They were not missionaries when they temporarily resided at Luy Lau, Giao Chau in the early centuries CE as Indian traders and Buddhist priests. They simply adhered to their Buddhist principles. They adhered to the Five Precepts, the Three Refuges, and the Three Jewels. They complied with the law of causes and effects. As the "ideal land for merit seeds," they provided priests with food, clothing, and housing. The sutras about that law and the accounts of Buddha's earlier lifetimes may have been among the Buddhist literature for which they begged (Nguyen Lang, 2003: 49-50).

Buddhism at that time appeared to the general public to be simpler as Buddha's name means "But" in English. But was a common word in folktales and mythology. But always stands for the majority. But the law of consequences would punish cruelty and aid the moral but sad individuals (Nguyen Lang, 2003: 54). In his book *Ly Hoac Luan*, Mou-Po described the Buddha as the "original wellspring of wisdom" and the "principal ancestor of behaviour and morality (Dao and Duc) (Than-Minh). Buddha denotes awakening (Giac). He

has the unusual ability to change his look or mannerisms. He could be small or enormous, visible or unseen, youthful or old. He stayed unharmed even when exposed to fire, dirty muck, or knife blade (Le Manh That, 1982: 510).

Dharma could be compared to the Buddha's ability to assist individuals in need. A case in point is the legend of Man Nuong, a pupil of Ksudra who used his supernatural abilities to provide rain for the crops of villagers. Additionally, the Three Jewels can be used to sum up Dharma: "Buddharm saranam gacchami. saramnam gacchami dharma. Gacchami sangham saranam" (Nguyen Lang, 2003: 55) The Sutra of Forty-two Chapters, the first treatise of Buddha to be translated in Giao Chau, initially emerged at that time. In addition, the anatman hypothesis was put out, according to which a person's body may be destroyed but not their spirit. Their spirits are like the seeds of the plants, while their bodies are like the stems and leaves of plants. The stems and leaves should wither after they have germinated. But the plant seeds are not destroyed as a result of that fading.

The Sangha may be pictured as a group of austere monks wearing yellow robes who survive off the donations of Buddhist adherents. The tale of Chu Dong Tu and Tien Dung can serve as an example for a local monk in Giao Chau. 32 According to the Sutra of Forty-two Chapters, monks were ordained in order to "remove their attachment and desire, find out the origin of Dharma, enter the True Self, reached the profound true of Buddha's teaching, and obtain enlightened." (Nguyen Lang, 2003: 76)

Finally, the early characteristics of Buddhism in Vietnam did not include complicated doctrines. Buddha represents compassion and mercy to the general public. Buddha constantly stood up for the people and used his magical abilities to aid the underprivileged, miserable, and abused. A cordial welcome was given to the ideas of causes and effects, transmigration, and karma. They valued the custom of giving to the priests and the needy in the hopes of prospering in the following kalpa (existence). Popular people preferred the positive to the negative. They also feared doing something wrong. These serve as the cornerstone for the populace's beliefs, national traditions, and way of

life over the course of the following twenty-one centuries. They also serve as the primary theme for both popular and academic literature, such as the Tale of Kim-Van-Kieu and Tam Cam (which is comparable to Cinderella in the West).

The Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters was translated particularly for the benefit of the ordained monks. They considered the Buddha to be the Enlightened One who demonstrates how to enter vo-vi (nirvana). The Dharma was the Buddha's teaching on transcendence and how to discipline oneself to achieve vo-vi, which was very dissimilar from Taoism. The Sangha may be distinguished by their yellow robes, abandonment of the world, pursuit of the goal, and adherence to the 250 precepts (Nguyen Lang, 2003: 55-56).

The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, the core tenets of Buddhism, were not mentioned in the two texts of the time. The spirituality of religious concord was one of Buddhism's original qualities. As was already mentioned, the basic Buddhist ideas coincided with the beliefs of the locals in Giao Chau. As a result, it spread quickly among the general public. But the Chinese authorities, who were ardent Taoists and Confucianists, fiercely opposed it. Fortunately, Buddhism at the period progressively overcame the obstacles thanks to the adaptability and non-oppressiveness of Taoism and Confucianism, as well as the Buddhists who were well-versed in the opposing beliefs. Mou Bo was the initial illustration. He was able to successfully interpret the new beliefs in his writings and talks because of his understanding of the two aforementioned theories.

5. Conclusion

As a result of the research mentioned above, we can now say that Indian or Central Asian priests helped spread Buddhism from India to Vietnam in the first century over both land and water channels. Luy Lau was the first Buddhist centre in Vietnam, and Buddhism there was directly imported from India, not primarily from China as many academics have claimed. The following information has been used to support this conclusion.

First off, only Indians or people from Scythia and Sogdiana in Central Asia were involved in the introduction of Buddhism to Vietnam. The sutras in Giao Chau were translated without the slightest hint of Chinese. A unique example was Mau Bo.

The fact that Mou Bo studied Buddhism in Giao Chau and later became a Buddhist, that he lamented the moral decline of the Sangha members in Giao Chau in his work Ly Hoac Luan, and that Kang Senghui took the precepts of a Buddhist monk there are all compelling pieces of evidence. It mentions the lengthy presence of Buddhism and the Buddhist Sangha in the prefecture. The first century or before may have seen that emergence.

Thirdly, only the northern region of China was affected by the introduction of Buddhism in 1967 A.D. It slowly grew towards the south due to the vast region and hazy means of communication and transportation. In order to lay the groundwork for Buddhism in Jiang Dong, Master Kang Senghui journeyed there in the middle of the third century. Under the Dong Ngo dynasty, Kien So was the first temple built in the area. It is currently in Nankin.

The final justification was that "But," the abbreviation for "Buddha," appears in all Vietnamese folktales and stories from early Vietnamese history. The Chinese word "Fo" is not used there. But undoubtedly came from the Indian word "Buddha."

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