

The Shiva Image in Champa Iconography

Phan Anh Tú*

Abstract:

Although, ancient Cham sculptures underwent transformation under the influence of Brahmanism was presented under certain common rules — to portray gods and to reflect subjects of Brahmanism — on the other, and yet it boasts its own features and Champanization. Contrary to the Indian, the Khmer, and the Cham, the Cham sculptures reflect Shiva in the art of stone sculpture and temples. They believe in Shivaism and consider Shiva as the prime divinity of the kingdom.

Keywords: *Shiva, Champa, kingdom of confederation states, sculpture, Linga – yoni, hermits, Nandin bull, Pô Klong Garai and Pô Rôme*

Introduction

The trait of contemporary Vietnam is placed on where three kingdoms existed in the ancient time. The North of Vietnam was the territory of Đại Việt (the Great Việt), the Central Vietnam was the region of Champa kingdom and the South of Vietnam was territory of Funan kingdom. The process of Champa development history was described in the chronology with the different names of this kingdom such as Lin Yi/ Lâm Ấp (192-758), Huan Wang/Hoàn Vương (758-886) and Zhan Cheng/Chiêm Thành/Champa (886-1471).¹ The stele of King Paksadarma Vikrantavarma I (dated in the early half of VIIth century) recovered in Mỹ Sơn holy land; Duy Xuyên District (Quảng Nam

* Prof. Phan Anh Tú, Ph.D., Faculty of Culturology University of Humanities and Social Sciences - VNU-HCMC, 10-12 Đinh Tiên Hoàng Str., Dist. 1, HCM City, Vietnam; Email: phananhtu03@gmail.com; Mobile: (84)-908643197.

Province) depicted the legend of Champa establishment. According to the story, the Indian man named the Kaudinya (means the greatest Brahmin) who came to the location where he married the indigenous lady paramount, Liễu Diếp, the daughter of king Naga and set up a dynasty. This type of myth was popularized in Southeast Asia, for example the state founded myth of Funan kingdom was also a Brahmin Kaudinya/Hôn Diên who married Soma – the myth reflects indigenous tradition which deeply seized by matriarchy nature, had stricken roof in to the Southeast Asian region before being influenced by the Indian patriarchy civilization.

Political System in Champa

The Chinese ancient text remind the event of the year 192/193; the uprising of the Xiang Lin/Tuong Lâm district people under leadership of a chieftain called Khu Liên, gained their sovereignty and established an independent state. The latest researched results by inside and outside scholars shows that the kingdom of Champa basically founded on the system of *Mandala* or the kingdom included in a lot of alliances/a confederation state surrounded with tribute states which had the nearby bordering lines, correlated to ethnic cultures with their mother country.



Figure 1: The map of ancient Champa Kingdom. Source: www.thongluan.co



Figure 2: The map of current Vietnam territory. Source: www.bando.com.vn

The term “Mandala” is used by scholars, which describes a political and economic system founded out almost of ancient kingdoms in Southeast Asia. Each Châm minor state was basically built on the main rivers of each sub-region as a co-ordinated axis. According to the Châm state model, each minor state had three centres depending on the flowing direction of the rivers from mountain (the West) to the ocean (the East); the religious centre or holy land located on the upper river, the political centre or ancient citadel built on lower plain and usually

located in the South of river, the trade centre was the port city located on the estuary of river or ocean. Typically, the Amaravati minor state in Quang Nam has developed basically on three centres which were Thu Bon River, the Srisambhubhadresvara holy land (My Son), the Simhapura ancient citadel (Trà Kieu) and Faifo Port/Đại Chiêm Hải Khâu in Hội An. It is reasoned that the Amaravati was the most powerful state in Champa history which occupied the Faifo trading port and conquered the other minor states for a kingdom, established the capital Simhapura in Trà Kiệu and built the holy land Srisambhubhadresvara in My Son (Trần 2004 : 2-4). Besides the Amaravati state, in the territory of Champa kingdom, the later centres were erected in Vijaya/Bình Định, Kauthara/Phước Yên – Khánh Hòa and Panduranga/Bình Thuận – Ninh Thuận Provinces.

The Brahmanism in Champa

The religions and beliefs in kingdom of Champa were in variety. The worshipped cult of Pô Iný Naga, the Land Mother Goddess is possibly considered as the Chăm's primitive belief which has represented the long-standing matriarchy tradition belief in the Southeast Asian communities. Since accepting the Indian culture and civilization, Brahmanism became a dominated religion in Champa where only kings could present power in religious choice for the whole kingdom.

Brahmanism formed in India, worships three major divinities in the Trimurty, Brahma (God of Creator), Vishnu (God of Preserver) and Shiva (God of Destroyer). When being preached in Champa, the Brahmanism was turned in to a local religion basing on the Chăm's ideology which allowed replacing the Indian divinities' names by the native language such as Shiva called Pônintri, Vishnu is Pôpachôn and Brahma is Pôdêpadrôn (Bá 2005: 1). Among Brahmin divinities, the Chăm might be the most venerated Shiva. The Sanskrit inscriptions in My Son Valley honoured Shiva as “... *the Lord for whole species*”, “*is the roof of the Champa kingdom*”, “*more respectable than Brahma, Vishnu, Indra, Surya, Asura, more powerful than Brahmin, Sri and kings.*” Another inscription described that “*the king, after making a Kosa Isanesvara, made a Mukuta for the Bhadresvara and the couple of Kosa – Mukuta which possibly compared with two victory pillars stably existed in the world as the moon and the sun*” (Ngô 1994: 120, Pham 1995: 53).



Figure 3: Truong Dinh, the superior priest of Cham Brahmanism in Phuóc Thái Hamlet, Ninh Phuóc District, Ninh Thuân Province. Photo: Phan Anh Tú



Figure 4: A Cham woman standing in the front side of her house, Phuóc Thái Hamlet, Ninh Phuóc District, Ninh Thuân Province. Photo: Phan Anh Tú

Among 128 Champa's known inscriptions, 92 ones honouring Shiva, 5 are of about Brahma, 7 about Buddha, 3 about Vishnu and 21 unknown contents (Phan 2011:20). Up to now, the well – information quarter knew that two golden made Shiva heads were recovered in Quốang Nam Province but the Vietnam archaeologists haven't recovered any other divinity statues made from this rare material. Besides the inscriptions, the respecting to Shiva is also reflected in the Champa sculptural aspect.

On the hand, the ancient Cham also followed the Buddhism which flourished to the top apex in IXth – Xth century, Đông Duong Buddhist Center in Quang Nam Province is wonderful testimony of the Buddhist civilization existing in the Champa kingdom. Paralleling with the Indian religion, the ancient Cham learnt the government model impacted from Indian style which scholars pointed out its major feature was combination of royalty and theocracy on which the Cham kings were sanctified as the Shiva.

The Sculptural Themes of Shiva in Champa **Shiva presented on statues**

Difference with the Khmer culture venerating Shiva deity in the early stage, Champa was an important destination for the Shiva cult in

Southeast Asian region during her historical process. Sculpture has clearly reflected cultural and belief characteristics of the Champa residents in which Shiva is respected and considered as the Father divinity.² In the iconographical aspect, Shiva is often represented under an image of strong man, the third eye on his forehead, he wears a multi-story Kirita – Mukuta³ in complicated carvings. These features possibly reflect on the two Shiva heads discovered in Trà Kiêu ruined site and currently displayed in Museum of Vietnamese History in Hochiminh City (Fig.7). In some sculptural cases, the Shiva has been presented with a bun on his head, a crescent moon symbolizing for austerity decorated on. The distinguishing characteristic among Shiva and other gods is Shiva who always has three eyes, the legend says that his left and right eyes have symbolized the Sun (daytime), Moon (night) and the third eye on his forehead implying to the world. The serpentine images, Nagas are used as earrings and a sacred string crossing on the chest is also Shiva's features in Champa sculpture.



Figure 5: Standing Shiva, Champa art, Đông Duong style, Ca. IX-X centuries.
Source: Museum of Chăm Sculpture



Figure 6: Seated Shiva, holding Linga in his hand, Champa art, Đông Duong style, Ca. IX-X century.
Source: Museum of Chăm Sculpture

Besides the sculptural work, the themes related to Shiva was gathered to present on the Chăm temples, for example the temple peak imitated the Linga figure symbolising the universal axis or mount Kailasha where the Shiva has immortally dominated. The main divinity, the Chăm worshipped inside the temple was Shiva as well as the themes

related to Shivaism decorated in detail on wall surface or on the temple storeys. Brahma was dimly presented in both of the Châm sculpture and her religion. Vishnu was considered as temple guarding divinity (Drarapala). Even the Goddess, Pô Inu Naga was worshipped as the Shiva's female power (Shakti). Thus it is sure that the Shivaism which deeply influenced the Cham culture, controlled the Châm's spiritual life. When talking about the Châm sculpture, people mainly mention to the Shivaism as a deciding factor. The themes relating to Shiva is always presented decisively in every creative aspect of the Châm culture, for example: Shiva in the sculptural art, in the incriptions, in the legend, in traditional dance and Shiva presented through the Châm's fire shaped sword (Kris). The Châm kings personally recognized as another form of Shiva (avatars) in the world.



Figure 7: Shiva head, late Tra Kiêu style, Ca. Xth century. Photo: Phan Anh Tui



Figure 8: Shiva statue, Khuong My style, Ca. VIIIth century. Source: Guimet Museum

My field research resolves that in the area of Bình Định province and Mun Yang temple in Gia Lai province, appearing in a type of Shiva statue on meditation position, his third eye on forehead, a sacred string attached on his chest, both hands holding an elephant controlled stick and a trident. The statue recovered in Bình Định depicts Shiva as a young hermit on meditation but the Yang Mun statue reflects Shiva in the form of a middle-aged hermit, austere expression on his face and a forehead with full of thought. These two statues may have reflected the

most vividly about the turbulent period of Champa history in which the image of Shiva deity is mainly considered as the Châm king's embodiment.

The Shiva statue⁴ in Bình Định dating XIVth century may have reflected the king's desire to look for the virtue and ideal life, to avoid any depression of the suffered world (Fig.9, Fig.10). Possibly, the statue



Figure 9: Shiva on meditation, Champa art, tháp Mẫm style, Ca. Xth century.
Source: Guimet Museum



Figure 10: Shiva, tháp Mẫm style, Ca. Xth century.
Photo: Tyỷ Thiò Kim Hào

is evidence relating to a the warring and turmoil period on the homeland of Vijaya state (Đô Bàn in Vietnamese) where two Châm kings, Gangaraja and Pô Olove voluntarily left their throne for pursuing virtuous life in Ganga river. The Yang Mun statue dating in XVIIth century that was a decline period of Indian civilization on Champa territory. The consecutive military confusions on battles have left political disturbances in the kingdom of Champa which was reflected through a thin shape and old austere face of Shiva who was considered as a king, the kingdom leader (Fig.11).

The French scholars suggested that the Shiva statue in Yang Mun is representative for the final art style of Champa sculpture. Both the statues present the seated Shiva with his back leaning to a large

stone slab, similar looking as a stele. In the later dates, the Champa sculpture expressed Shiva in minimized form but the stone slab behind his back is made larger (Shiva statue in Yang Mun, king Pô Rôme statue in Hiu Đéc). When the kingdom of Champa no longer existed, the sculptural art had a lot of changes, the image of the god king decorated in front side as usual has been lost, only stone slab remains. This type of sculpture could be a precursor of Kut in the clan cemeteries of contemporary Brahmin Châm (Fig.12).



*Figure 11: Shiva, Yang Mun style, Ca. XVIIth century.
Photo: Phan Anh Tui*



*Figure 12: Kut in Pô Rôme temple, Hiu Đéc Hamlet, Ninh PhýŨc District, Ninh Thuận Province, Ca. XVIIth.
Photo: Phan Anh Tui*

Shiva - Hermit presented on bas – relief

Some statues describe Shiva, who appears in a helmet's shape with the long beard from his chin, holding a rosary in his hand, sitting in meditation as the statues recovered in My Son, Khuong My, Bình Định and the other places are examples but the most perfected manifestation of the Shiva in human shape is Nataraja (the Lord of Dancing) which is possibly seen on the lintel of Pô Naga (Nha Trang) or Pô Klông - Giarai temples (Phan Rang), depicting the Shiva's extraordinary soft and flexible features in the (Fig.13, Fig.14). It is the form which symbolizes the Shiva's absolute power and the most perfected manifestation.



Figure 13: Bas-relief describing dancing Shiva with Kinari and và Gaudhva, Khôông Mù style, Ca. VIIIth century. Source: Museum of Châm Sculpture



Figure 14: Lintel describing Shiva on. Champa art, Ca. XIIth century. Pô Klong Garai temple, Ninh Thuận Province. Photo: Phan Anh Tui

The hermit images had the same characteristics that were thoughtful faces, similar to the Lord Shiva's from the Tháp Mâm style displayed at the Museum of Châm Sculpture and the National Museum of Vietnam History in Hà Nội (Fig.15). Some reliefs depicting the hermits were standing for prayer or religious activities that were covered by a decorated frame with two Makara heads at its ends. The most of these artifacts have been dated between XIIth and XIIIth centuries. The statues and bas-reliefs discovered in large quantities in Bình Định showed that in addition to the military victory of Vijaya state as being acknowledged in history and inscriptions, the in Champa society in the period occurred serious fluctuations affecting to its monarchy and residents. Royal and common classes felt dissatisfied with the current circumstances of their life, they nurtured the thought back to austerities, mystical life, escaping from the suffering world.



Figure 15: Bas-relief, Brahmin hermit, Ca.XIIth. excavated in: An Nhon district, Binh Dinh Province. Photo: Phan Anh Tui



Figure 16: Bas-relief, Brahmin hermit, Ca.XIIth. excavated in: An Nhon district, Binh Dinh Province. Photo: Phan Anh Tui

Shivaism symbol - Linga

Brahmanic myths and legends have dominated the Champa residents' ideology, values, traditions, customs and beliefs that reappeared more or less through the sculpture. As the Cham's view, the Shiva ruled the aspects of creation and destruction among the three Supreme Gods. Shiva has a lot of incarnations and symbols; one of his most important symbols is Linga-Yoni⁵ symbolizing male and female sexual organs. It is instrument for maintaining the breeds, representing for Shiva's creativity nature. In Champa culture, Shiva was raised to the highest position and worshipped as a supreme God. Shiva corresponded to the Cham kings' incarnation power, reaching to the highest level in the Cham's culture and awareness. Shiva statues were made in tremendous size and sophisticated design details, set up the clusters of important temples, typically in the main shrines (Vihara) or city centres. Especially, for the royal families or noble class: *"for the princes, the gesture to offer Linga for temples often aims at target to honour their noble clans. For senior mandarins in the imperial government, this is the action which aims at showing their position and power in the society."*²



Figure 17: Linga found in Trà Kiệu, exhibiting in the Museum of Chàm Sculpture, Đà Nẵng city.
Source: www.baodanang.vn

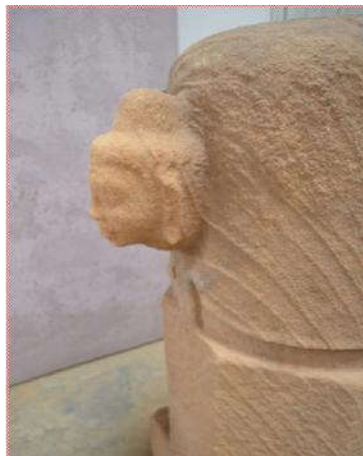


Figure 18: Mukha-Linga, sandstone, preserved in Mỹ Sơn site, Quảng Nam Province. Nguồn: [http: www.baodanang.vn](http://www.baodanang.vn)

Besides worshipping the natural divinities, the Chàm has also respected fertility cult. Being similar to other local peoples, the Cham is interested in breeding presented by fertility elements in the folk beliefs. It can be demonstrated by numerous Linga-Yoni, symbol of breed maintaining carved in the sculptural art. The Linga-Yoni sets in the Champa sculpture were focused and carved in variety forms; “*in the Hindu influenced arts, nowhere, the Linga-Yoni, symbol of fertility and respectable worship is as common as in the Champa art*” (Cao Xuân Phổ 2004, 24). Particularly, in the Vijaya period, the Yoni bases were sophisticatedly and skillfully sculptured with vitality breasts embracing pedestals expressing for fertility desire and life power.

Linga is carved in variety of shapes and beautiful types in the Chàm culture such as the cylindrical Linga on Yoni recovered in Hòa Lai, Pô Naga, the temple B1 in Mỹ Sơn, Chánh Lô, Bang An etc; the cylindrical Linga decorated in lotus petal designs around its body recovered in Thu Thiên; two section Linga with the round head and the square base erected in the Western temple of Pô Naga complex or two section Linga with round head and octagonal shaped base and three part Lingas ensemble to Óc Eo or Khmer Lingas with the round head, octagonal body and the square base which mainly recovered in Bình Định¹, Mỹ Sơn, Trà Kiệu and Linh Thái...but in Cham iconography, the Mukha -

Linga (Linga with Shiva face on its neck) is very rare, which is only seen in Pô Klông Garai (Phan Rang) and Pô Saný temples (Phan Thiêt).

Linga – Yoni is important image which is worshipped in the middle of the Cham temples. Each Linga is on one Yoni but in some cases, many Lingas are erected on one Yoni as Lingas – Yoni in Phong Lê, Lingas – Yoni in the Museum of Vietnam History recovered in Phú Yên Province. There are types of Lingas which stand in a long row on a rectangle shaped base as seven Lingas on one Yoni in the temple B1, My Son. In the worshipped cult of the Cham, there are some special cases which the regulation of Linga on Yoni was replaced by a statue of divinity on Yoni as the Goddess Pô Naga statue seat on Yoni in Pô Naga temple, a king Pô Rome statue seat on a huge Yoni in the Pô Rôme temple in Huu Đuc village - Ninh Thuận Province or divinities sitting on the coils of five headed Naga which is erected on the Yoni in the temple G1, My Son.



Figure 19: Pô Rôme king statue on Yoni, Ca. XVIIth. Origin: Pô Rôme temple, Huu Đuc hamlet, Ninh Phýôic district, Ninh Thuân Province. Photo: Phan Anh Tui

The Linga and Yoni in the kingdom of Champa have been created with special features which are more for their rich quantity, variety shapes and huge sizes than any Indianized countries in Southeast Asia.

It is evidence that strongly expresses the Indian elements which have been Champanized.

Shiva and Brahmanism Divinities

In the Champa sculpture, Shiva presented with other divinities is a relatively rare case because most of the Shiva statues are separately created. Thus, the bas-relief recovered in Ýu ĐĩÁm Mahayana Buddhism temple, Thĩa Thiên – Huĩ Province, which fully depicted main divinities in Brahmanism pantheon, participating in Shiva’s wedding ceremony is a very rare theme in Champa sculpture.

In the bas-relief, the image of Shiva and his wife ridding on the Nandin bull carved in the middle of tympana; the Shiva wearing Jata-Mukuta with his hair curls rolling to a knot on his head; jewellery on his ears and his mouth showing an easy smile; his left arm touching on his waist; the right arm holding a fire circle; his chest decorated by a jewel lozenge piece; his upper body is uncloth and the lower wearing a type of short sampot which is usually seen on the Chĩm divinities. The seated Parvati was presented behind her husband, Shiva; she wears a Jata-Mukuta on her head; cloth is a long sampot type reaching her knees; her left hand putting on Nandin’s back; her right hand puts crossing her belly with the straight pointed fingers; her legs and arms wearing a lot of jewellery; her action and face express the shy and different sensation.



Figure 20:: Bas-relief in Ýu ĐĩÁm Mahayana Buddhist temple – Huĩ City, describing the wedding ceremony of Shiva and Parvati. Photo: Phan Anh Tũ



Figure 21: Bas-relief, describing the wedding ceremony of Shiva and Parvati, Angkor Wat style, Ca. XIIth. Origin: Prasat Muang temple, Sung Noen district, Nakhon Ratchasima Province. Photo: Phan Anh Tui

Standing in front of the Nandin bull is an impressive enquery with the left arm akimbo on his leg; the right hand holding scimitar its up straight blade and long handle; his custom is sampot wearing across his body; his head wearing Jata-Mukuta with the top point; in the upper enquery is Brahma sitting on the lotus base raising from the lower position of scence; the Brahma with four heads, each one wearing three storeys Jata-Mukuta and his custom is the type of the short sampot like Shiva. On the left side of the bas-relief is image of Vishnu ridding on Garuda; the Vishnu depicting with four hands; the upper right hand holding a wheel (Chakra); upper left hand holding a shell (Sankha); two front arms bowling in front of his chest; the flying Garuda with two hands holding Vishnu's leg necks. The image of Vishnu ridding on Garuda is very popular in the Khmer sculpture. In the right lower angle of the bas-relief is the image of Skanda (the God of War), the second son of Shiva (Shiva's first one is Ganesa, God of Happiness) ridding on the peacock, his legs and hands embracing the peacock's neck and his hand holding an unknown weapon (might be a Vajra – thunderbolt weapon).

Through the content of the bas-relief, it is possibly realized that the Indian divinity images were faithfully presented with Indian classical patterns such as Shiva and Parvati ridding on Nandin bull; Brahma meditating on the lotus base which raising from Vishnu's navel; Vishnu ridding on Garuda and Skanda ridding on the peacock. The special feature is the whole divinities who are described to directly ride on the holy beasts which is similar to the sculptural themes in the Indian and Khmer arts. The reason is in the Champa tradition sculpture, the holy beasts are just presented on the base of the divinity statues as a symbol for confirming each divinity's title and duty. And the statues of Garuda catching Naga is always separated with human gods. Besides the bas-relief in U'u Diêm Mahayana Buddhism temple, it is hard to find out any sculptural themes which fully depicting a group of main divinities ridding on holy beasts as description of Brahmanism methodology in the Champa culture. It is suggested that the bas-relief is a masterpiece of the Champa sculptural art which portraying fully both of content and the form, according to the Indian mythical view.

Conclusion

Mostly, the Chams sculpted the images of Shiva on red sandstone. The carving on the redstone is a very hard and require skills. They are designed by the skilled Khmer sculptors. The Shiva statues of Champa usually have the rough shapes. The aesthetic elements are mainly reflected on the front side. The back portion is left untouched.

During historical period, the images of Shiva are depicted in different styles. However, most of the Shiva statues have the general features which are *Kirita-Mukuta* or *Jata-Mukuta* which sometime stylized on heads, Shiva's holy beast, the Nandin bull only carved in the statue base. The theme of Shiva ridding on Nandin as the bas-relief recovered in U'u Diêm Mahayana Buddhism is very rare work in the Champa sculptural art.

In short, the Shiva image plays a very crucial part in the Chams iconography. It is said that the carving works of Shiva are representative for the well-known ancient civilization in Southeast Asia which nowadays are not only value data source for study of the culture, the iconographical art of Vietnam in particular but also the historical source for approaching aspects of the Southeast Asian ancient society and civilization in general.

Books etc. cited :

- ¹. Champa comes from the term Champapura that means “the Champa City”
- ². The Mother goddess is Parvati who is Shiva’s consort, harmonized to earth mother–Po Naga worshipped cult.
- ³. The bun is plaited as a crown. Jata: bun; Mukuta: Crown wearing on divinity head.
- ⁴. Most of the Shiva statues have been excavated in Binh Đễnh Province is currently displayed at the Museum of Chăm Sculpture in Đà Nẵng City and the National Museum of Vietnam History in Hà Nội. All of them discovered in the excavations by the French archaeologist during 1930s of XXth century and have been commonly known as the Shiva statues of Tháp Mẫm style (or Mẫm Tower). Since 1975, there have not been any Shiva statues discovered in Binh Đễnh Province. It shows the difference with Champa traditional sculptures, which has mainly focused on Shiva images, the dominated deity of the kingdom.
- ⁵. Besides the human form, the Siva has been worshipped in the form of Linga or Mukha – Linga. According the Indian myth, the Siva firstly appeared in a fire pillar of Linga shape and the symbol of Linga on Yoni are erected in the Cham temples is considered as Yang and Yin nature (Sakti) because in the Cham’ view, Siva is an androgynous divinity. Linga – Yoni is symbol of the Siva’s creation in which Siva is also called “the God of Sleeping”.
- ⁶. <http://www.champaka.info>
- ⁷. The Linga, the Shiva’s fertility symbol also did not appear in Binh Đễnh Province as common as other areas of the Northern Champa. Currently, the Museum of Chăm Sculpture is exhibiting a set of Jata Linga - Yoni in Vijaya period. Linga was presented in a vertical pillar, which was divided into two parts, its head is round decorated Shiva’s hair tuft (called Jata); and its body in hexagon shape symbolizing Vishnu. Especially, scholars considered the Yoni pedestal as the typical style of Tháp Mẫm with female breasts decorated around a circular lower block. In addition, I also witnessed a round Jata Linga, which was worshipped by new inhabitants, the Viçt group at the Thiên Trúc Temple, a Mahayana Buddhist temple belonging to the late cultural layer in Binh Đễnh.

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