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“CAT TIEN SANCTUARY” IN THE SYSTEM OF HINDU RELICS IN
VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study

Vietnam is one of the countries in Southeast Asia strongly influenced by Indian culture and religion. Indian culture and religion play a crucial exogenous role for the formation and development of the states of Champa and Funan, and Cat Tien architectural complex is also a product of the process of cultural exchange and acculturation according to the above trend. This study provides suggestions on the origin of the owner, cultural relationships, and conservation and embellishment solutions to promote the archaeological heritage resources of Cat Tien, thereby serving the livelihood activities of people, contributing to the sustainable socio-economic development of the locality.

METHODOLOGY

The research is based on comparisons, analysis, and synthesis of data to draw new awareness on issues related to Cat Tien sanctuary. Also, the data of the article is the result of field trips by the authors at several religious architectural sites in the field. The authors also use the research results of natural sciences to support the scientific arguments made.

Main Findings

Based on the comparison of conservation measures that have been effectively implemented at other historical sites in Vietnam and some Southeast Asian countries, this study contributes to suggest appropriate solutions for the preservation, embellishment, and promotion of cultural and historical values of Hindu monuments in Cat Tien. This study also points to the potential of Hindu monuments in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, at the same time, propose some ways to effectively exploit these potentials to improve livelihoods and bring economic benefits to local communities.

Applications of this study

The research results provide a scientific basis for cultural management agencies in making plans for conservation, embellishment, and promotion of the cultural-historical values and tourism potential of Cat Tien sanctuary.

Novelty/originality

While previous studies only provided initial perceptions about chronology, employer, cultural relationships, etc. of Cat Tien architectural complex, this study goes further in systematizing, evaluating and discussing the above issues. Simultaneously, in this paper, the authors also provide scientific evidence to prove Cat Tien is the religious center of a state born in the basalt red soil region, belonging to Dong Nai culture.

INTRODUCTION

Discovered in 1984, so far, the research on Cat Tien archaeological relics underwent three stages:

From 1984 to 1994, this is the initial stage of discovery and research.

In the period 1994-2000, many studies and systematic excavations were conducted, initially clarifying the characteristics, properties, and dates of the monument, and outlining the relationship between Cat Tien and the adjacent cultures.

Within 2001 and 2006, researches on the monument were promoted in many aspects such as religious area, residence, place of production, many debates on the nature, dating, and relationships of the monument continue to be proposed.

In the last two decades, many research achievements on Cat Tien relics were published, notably, the doctoral dissertation entitled "Cat Tien relic site in Lam Dong" (Khu di tích Cát Tiên ở Lâm Đồng) Nguyen (2002), the monograph "Cat Tien relic in Lam Dong - History and culture" (Di tích Cát Tiên Lâm Đồng – Lịch sử và văn hóa) Le (2006), or monograph "Cat Tien archaeological site - Identifying and promoting the value" (Di tích khảo cổ học Cát Tiên - Nhận diện

và phát huy giá trị) Dang (ed., 2019); three national and provincial scientific conferences on Cat Tien relics were also held in 2001, 2008 and 2016; many articles about the relics, artifacts, owners, the relationship of Cat Tien in the space of Vietnam and Southeast Asia in ancient times were published in scientific journals and specialized yearbooks.

Cat Tien relic complex located on eight mounds/hills (denoted as Mound 1 to Mound 8) along Dong Nai River, in a narrow plain along the foothills of Quang Ngai Commune, Cat Tien District, Lam Dong Province (Vietnam). In addition to the cluster of relics in the Quang Ngai basin, relics, artifacts, architecture, and vestiges of residency connected to this archaeological site were also found in Duc Pho Commune (Cat Tien District), Da Teh District (Lam Dong Province), Tan Phu District (Dong Nai Province), and Bu Dang District (Binh Phuoc Province). In Quang Ngai Commune, archaeologists have discovered and studied many types of relics such as temples, shrines, temple towers, aqueducts, ancient roads, burial tombs, longhouses, and so on; artifacts such as linga-yoni, gold leaves, lion-shaped silver box, pottery, and so on, made of various materials but all related to Hinduism. With obtained documents, Vietnamese archaeologists have identified this archaeological relic site as "Cat Tien sanctuary" (Tran, 1998), (Tran, 2001) and (Nguyen, 2002), etc.

In this study, the authors first review essential documents and perceptions, then raise the issues that need to be further discussed about Cat Tien relic, and finally discuss the conservation, promotion of cultural values, and development of Cat Tien tourism in the space of Hindu monuments in Vietnam.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Two specialized agencies host excavation and research projects on the Cat Tien relic are Vietnam Institute of Archeology (from 1994 to 2000) and Center for Archeology - Institute of Social Sciences of Southern region (from 2001 to 2006). It can be said that though the amount of material is diverse but not focused, many scientific issues have not been thoroughly resolved. Through the compilation of materials, the authors draw some fundamental insights as follows:

- a. Cat Tien archaeological relic is not only a major Brahmin religious center in Vietnam but also in ancient Southeast Asian countries. We share views with Luong (2001), who claims that the Cat Tien sanctuary is a cluster/temple complex (Kalan/prasad) built of bricks combined with the most massive stone structures in Indochina. Moreover, in order to build such a large-scale architectural complex, the owner of the relic cluster must indeed have a strong economic potential, achieve a high level of social organization, and operate as a state apparatus.

- b. Regarding the owner of Cat Tien relic cluster, there are currently the following views: (1) Cat Tien is a small state belonging to the State of Funan, or strongly influenced by Oc Eo-Funan; (2) Cat Tien is influenced by Chenla; (3) Cat Tien is influenced/belongs to Champa state; (4) Cat Tien belongs to the Ma kingdom. As for dating, results of radiocarbon analysis (C14) at the Laboratory and dating, Vietnam Institute of Archeology (4 samples), and at Ho Chi Minh City Nuclear Center (5 samples) shows that the relic dates quite early, from 4th to 8th century AD (Dao et al., 2004), (Bui, 2008). This date is equivalent to the birth and development of Oc Eo culture - Funan state in the Southern delta, and a little later than the Champa state in the Central (Vietnam) (2nd century AD).
- c. In addition to the different factors in receiving and creating culture, Cat Tien relic group also shows its rather strong cultural exchange and acculturation with contemporary cultures, such as Champa, Oc Eo, Chenla; influenced from further geographic distances are some artifacts bearing the mark of Central Asia (copper rings with knobs, cups with a high tripod, etc.); lion-shaped silver box bearing the mark of Persian culture; ceramic bottles with high necks and two or three folds on the shoulders found in ruins in Gilimanuk, Plawangan (Indonesia; or the type of decoration on the door lashes (Tower 2A) that is very similar to the ribbon on the Hindu towers in Cambodia, and so on. It can be said that "Cat Tien sanctuary" is a convergence of many cultural flows; Cat Tien ancient inhabitants distilled the quintessence to make this place convergence of various elites.
- d. Cat Tien archaeological site is considered to be a particularly important cluster of relics that need to be researched, protected, and promoted cultural and historical values. It can be said that, in terms of abundance and originality, the relics and artifacts found in Cat Tien are not inferior to other Hindu relics in Vietnam and Southeast Asia (Le, Dao, and Vo, 1995); can be compared with the ancient citadel and Hindu monuments in Sri Ksetra, Myanmar, which is considered as the most potent ancient capital in Southeast Asia before the 10th century AD or Angkor Borei relics complex (Ta Keo Province, Cambodia), which is considered the capital of Funan (Vu, 2001), (Stark, Miriam, 2003). The study of relics and artifacts here is not only to restore a complete appearance of the ancient history of Lam Dong Province but also to show the correlation between this sanctuary and other relics that have the same chronological frame in Southern Vietnam.
- e. Cat Tien relic complex is one of the unique material heritage of human civilization that plays a critical position in the treasure of Vietnamese cultural heritage (Truong, 2001). More notably, the relics and artifacts here are located in an area with the most diverse ecosystems in Vietnam, including many species of plants and animals that are in danger of extinction. Therefore, the

research, conservation, restoration, cultural promotion, and tourism development associated with the natural heritage (Cat Tien National Park) are also aimed at sustainable economic, cultural, and social development in the Dong Nai River basin.

In summary, the Cat Tien relic complex has a history of formation and continuous development. That process is the pinnacle crystallization of local cultures in the Dong Nai River basin. In other words, the Cat Tien relic complex is a separate, independent cultural area/region but has a flexible cultural exchange and acculturation. Cat Tien residents, as well as many other residents in Southeast Asia in ancient times, have received the influence of Indian culture and religion to create unique cultural values and pass on to posterity. We agree with the view that: "Cat Tien located in the middle of three cultures of Funan, Chenla - Pre-Angkor, and Champa. The owners of this relic complex exchanged and mixed all three cultures, without being pulled or attracted to any side" (Luong, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses historical and logical methods, combines with methods of synthesizing, analyzing, and comparing secondary documents to draw new awareness about issues related to Cat Tien relics. The primary data used in the study were harvested from field trips by the authors at Cat Tien and surrounding areas, museums, and other Hindu sites in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. In addition, the authors also refer to the analytical results of natural sciences to explain the perceptions, assessments, and scientific points presented in the study.

RESULTS

Cat Tien relic complex was discovered 35 years ago. Basically, architectural monuments have been exposed; characteristics of monuments and relics have been initially explained. The ruined architecture here was built on mounds/hills, which is higher than the surrounding ground; all doors turned eastward. In order to provide an overview of the structure of monuments, the authors present the following types:

The temple-tower relics include the architecture of Mound 8 (Ong Dinh Mound – Vietnamese: Gò Ông Định) (Dao et al., 2004) and Mound 4 (Nguyen, 2002). These monuments are built on high mounds; the area of the mounds is wide but relatively isolated from the surrounding ruins. The central tower architecture is built in the center of the mound and has only one entrance to the tower center. Doors of the architecture face the east; outside, each entry is four doorsteps. Inside the door is a large, lightly graded campus with steps to enter the ceremony grounds. The heart of the temple is square, in the middle of the temple tower is a statue of linga – yoni, beneath the statue, is a brick box containing holy things such as votive linga, golden leaves printed with letters or pictures of Hindu gods, etc.

Tower ruins: This type of relic is identified at Mound 1A (Monkey Hill), 2A, 2B (Nguyen, 2002), and Mound 3 (Bui and Dao, 2002). These architectural ruins were built on mounds of varying heights, in which the tower architecture Mound 1A located on the highest position, playing a central role of the entire "sanctuary," the remaining ones are all directed to tower Mound 1A. The characteristic feature of the towers is that the main doors all face the east. The prominent construction technique of building temples is bending with many jerks; the cross-section of the architecture is quadrilateral. The structure of the door is to use large-sized stone slabs as a frame. Inside the door of the tower are four steps, rising gradually towards the center of the tower. The base of the tower is square and paved with stone. Inside the towers are worship pillars which are built of bricks to place the linga – yoni statues, underneath the pillar, also buried worshipping objects as the same as in the temple towers.

Temple ruins include structures at Mound 6A and 6B (Rangers Mound), locating close to Dong Nai Riverbank, and about 10 - 12m higher than the inter-provincial road surface (Dao et al., 2004). In general, these are two small-scale temples built on natural ground. The two architectures are located in parallel, with the door facing the east. The fronts of the temples are the same; both have a semicircular platform, building of bricks, and not using large stone slabs to make door frames. According to excavators, most likely, this was an open temple at first, but later the cover was made with light materials (Dao et al., 2004), (Bui, 2008). The evidence for the above argument is that there were traces of pores around and inside the tower. Inside the temple 6A is a 3.2m high cylindrical brick pillar; below the pillar, excavators found worshiped objects related to Hinduism. For the temple 6B, there is a big hole in the center with a depth of about 1.5m. In the middle of the hole is a square terracotta altar containing three linga of different materials (copper, ivory, and iron). It is worth noting that different from other architectures, in the temple 6B, there is no stone linga - yoni statue on the altar but a linga - corsa coating layer made of bronze placed on the central platform. Temple ruins and temple objects in Cat Tien are similar to monuments of the same type in India. Although the architectures in Cat Tien are only ruins, the worship symbols are linga, yoni, or gold leaves engraved with the sun gods, Yaska, the goddess Uma, etc. still shows the concept of philosophy in Hinduism. This type of architecture and philosophical thinking is expressed throughout the process of the formation and development of Hinduism (Venkataramana, 2010).

Altar relics were found at Mound 5 (Nguyen, 2002) and Mound 7 (Dao et al., 2004). In the two architectures, the Mound 5 relic has been seriously compromised and excavated, but the architectural plan is not deformed. Both Mounds 5 and 7 have a cubic structure, the edges are almost equal, the doors facing east. The center of both architectures was built in the manner of other temples in the cluster of monuments but is no longer intact due to damage. In

Mound 7 architecture, a square aqueduct (Somatutra) that is built of bricks and runs north was discovered. Excavators believed that it was most likely the architectural function of the tomb at first because, in the center of the altar, there was a square block made of bricks. After that, perhaps to honor the dead, the function of the Mound 7 relic was changed. The upper part of the architecture, therefore, was reconstructed into a square shape, the central part is made up of ground to place the mascot; the aqueduct (Somatutra) was also created to make it an altar (Dao et al., 2004). According to the explanation, as mentioned earlier, this may be the architectural form built at the early stage of Hindu temples. At this stage, the architectures usually have only foundations, built poorly; the cult ceremony is taking place outdoors (open-air shrines); the architecture is uncovered and is not made of heavy materials (Gupta and Vijayakumar, 2010).

Longhouses ruins include architecture Mounds 2C, 2D (Bui and Dao, 2002), 8B, and 8C (Dao et al., 2004). The architecture of longhouses in Cat Tien usually has a simple structure; the foundation is built right on the natural ground, reinforced with compressed bricks. Fragments of roof tiles have been found along the sides of the walls (outside). The longhouses here are rectangular, often seamless in a brick floor with tower architecture in a whole cluster of monuments.

Ancient road relic: This architecture was discovered in 2003 and excavated in 2006 (Bui, 2008). According to the research results, the road has a length of 1.8 km, runs along the Dong Nai riverbank, from Ong Dinh Mound to the river wharf in village 6, (Quang Ngai Commune), and heads upstream. The width of the road is 7m on average; the two edges of the way are lined with stone slabs and bricks of various sizes to make the boundary. The type of brick used to make the road is the same material used to build the tower, shown that they have the same age. In the middle of the road is the compaction ground. Excavators claim that this road functions as a road/transport of materials from river wharves to towers and also dike banks to prevent flooding in the area of the relics (Bui, 2008).

Aqueduct relic flows in an east-west direction and has a rectangular shape. The average width is 1.0 - 1.2m; the width and high of the trough on average are 0.40m and 0.6m, respectively. This structure was built of bricks and has only been excavated 45m (length). Excavators suppose that it is likely that the aqueduct runs along the axis from Mound 7 to Mound 2 (Bui, 2008).

Burial tomb relics: Archaeologists have found many burial traces in the Cat Tien relic cluster, but the most typical is architecture symbolized as 03CT.H2. The tomb is square (5.6 x 5.6m), and its heart is also square (0.8 x 0.8m). Archaeologists have discovered a jar tomb containing ash, human remains, and ten burial items that are gold fragments engraved with Sancrete (Bui, 2008). Studying this relic, Dao and Bui (2003) stated that the owner of the tomb was indigenous, most likely of the Malayo-Polynesian race.

Residual traces of residence: So far, in the Cat Tien vestige cluster, scientists have found many traces of residence of ancient residents. Excavation results in the period of 2002 - 2006 showed that in the heart of the Tower 2C (2.7m depth), the concentrated area of the towers, and the locations along the Dong Nai River (in Village 6 of Quang Ngai Commune), all show traces of residence of ancient residents. In 10 exploration pits along the Dong Nai River, scientists have found numerous ceramic pieces, pots, jars with characteristics, materials, and processing techniques similar to ceramic artifacts found in the area of architectural monuments. In particular, in the heart of Mound 2C architecture, many broken ceramic artifacts and ashes have been discovered (Bui, 2008). The traces of residence at Mound 2C relic are more in-depth than the architecture of longhouses. Hence, it is possible to explain the age of the residence floor (3rd- 4th century AD) is earlier than the architecture of longhouses' one. It should be emphasized that in addition to the ceramic artifacts of the same age as those of the Cat Tien relic site, in the fieldwork conducted in 2006 and 2016 in the areas of Mound 4 and Mound 5, we also discovered ceramic fragments of the Metal Development period. This pottery is very similar to the pottery of Phu My relic in Village 3, Phu My Commune, Cat Tien District (Lam Dong Province), which is absolutely dating (C14) from 2,470 \pm 60 BP to 2,340 \pm 60 BP (Tran, 2013).

The brick kiln ruins were excavated in 2006 with four brick kilns, concentrated over a wide area of about 10 hectares (Bui, 2008). The brick production area, with brick kilns of the same structure, is located about 1km from the center of the architectural complex (Mound 1). The finished products in brick kilns are similar to those found in ruins. The absolute dating of the four specimens taken from brick kiln relics is from 1,460 \pm 60 BP to 1,330 \pm 70 BP (Bui, 2008). This result is consistent with the absolute chronological analysis of the architecture in the center of Cat Tien sanctuary.

The typical artifacts in the Cat Tien have many scientific values, which are a reliable basis for scholars to assert this is a large religious center of ethnic groups residing in the Dong Nai River basin in early history. In addition to architectural structures (bricks, tiles, stones), archaeologists also collected many unique and rare artifacts, such as metal jewelry, precious stones; statues of Ganesha, Vishnu, Shiva; stone lintels; gold leaves carved Balamon gods and Sanskrit; delicate and sophisticated lion-shaped silver box. Most impressive is the collection of linga, yoni, linga-yoni, linga- corsa with many different sizes. Undeniably, these artifacts are convincing evidence for the high technical, artistic, and religious development of the owners of Cat Tien relic.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Some issues need to be further discussed

So far, although there have eight excavations carried out in Cat Tien, those were not beyond the framework of researching the status quo. In-depth research projects have not been implemented; many issues here have not been thoroughly studied, for example, the vestiges of residence, production areas, daily activities of the owners of relics, etc. In addition to the scientific issues agreed upon by academics, the research on Cat Tien has so far been limited, and many scientific problems remain open. Some of the critical issues are:

- a. The research and publication on Cat Tien relic complexes, though diverse and were approached from many directions and aspects, but were limited in research resources. The results achieved, therefore, have not been profound. For this reason, the authors of this article believe that there should be more works to synthesize new materials to illustrate further the outstanding historical-cultural value of "Cat Tien sanctuary."
- b. The issue of origin and owner of the Cat Tien relic complex still needs further discussion. Namely, Cat Tien belongs to which cultural space? Is it an independent culture or a part of Oc Eo, Champa, Chenla ones? Regarding the above questions, there are currently the following groups of views.

First opinion: Researchers who support this group confirm that Cat Tien belongs to/is strongly influenced by Champa culture. The evidence given to protect this view is that in Cat Tien, the phenomenon of worshipping linga-yoni, in which Shiva Shiva plays a central role, is very prominent; or construction techniques have many similarities with Champa cultural relics (Ngo, 2001), (Cao, 2008), (Nguyen and Nguyen, 2008). To defend this view, several other studies go further by pointing out the similarities of relics and artifacts in Cat Tien with those of Champa heritage. Notably, the object of worship consists of 9 Hindu gods - Dikpala, sacred water aqueducts (Somasutra), burial tombs, etc.; political institutions (state form) of the Champa; or the origin of the term "Nagar Yang" (The Land of the Gods) or "Tunuh Yang" (Holy land), etc., which made (Sakaya, 2004) consider Cat Tien a "sanctuary of South-Champa." According to Sakaya, "Cat Tien sanctuary is an architectural style - Cat Tien architectural style in the system of Champa tower styles in Vietnam" (Sakaya, 2004; "Cat Tien holy land is not a place where people live or is not a "social-cultural space of the Ma and Stieng." This is the sanctuary, only to worship, and is the sacred border landmark of Champa limited by the impregnable temple towers, a place without inhabitants" (Sakaya, 2004).

It is undeniable that the custom of worshipping linga-yoni is one of the outstanding features of the Champa culture and State. In Cat Tien, the Shiraist trend (symbolizing the linga-yoni statue), or construction techniques that have similarities with Champa are very prominent. However, from our point of view,

relying only on the worship of linga or other similar factors to conclude that Cat Tien belongs to/is a component of Champa is not entirely convincing. Because even in comparison with the period of between 8th and 9th centuries, when southern Champa was considered most prosperous (Nguyen and Nguyen, 2008), (Nguyen, 2008), (Nguyen, 2002), (Dao, 2008), (Le, 2008) the type of relics and artifacts here is not more diverse and unique than those of Cat Tien relic complex. The second group of opinions identified Cat Tien as belonging to/is strongly influenced by Oc Eo - Funan, or Water Chenla. The scholars of this group are based on the similarities between the relics of Cat Tien sanctuary and the cultures, as mentioned earlier, including the type of architecture, burial tombs, residential relics, or artifacts. In particular, the burial tombs were square, built with bricks like those of Oc Eo culture; the outstanding construction technique of building temples is bending with many jerks. Types of artifacts such as Oc Eo-style water jug with spout, linga with a round cylinder part, human-shaped artifacts made of gold, statues of human-shaped gods, statues of animals (elephants, buffaloes, cows, crocodiles, turtles, etc.), botanical motifs (lotus, four-pointed flower, etc.), worship objects such as trident, vajra, wheel of reincarnation, and so on, all heavily bearing the art mark of Oc Eo - Funan (Chu, 2000), (Le, 2001), (Ngo, 2001), (Dao, 2008), (Dang ed., 2017). In general, most of the opinions assumed that Cat Tien sanctuary belonged to Oc Eo - Funan or at least a vassal state of Funan. In fact, Cat Tien has a wide distribution area, currently belongs to the territory of the South Central Highlands and a part of the Southeast where is the permanent residential area of the Ma, Stieng, and Churu ethnic groups (Dao, 2016). These ideas are very general because scholars have so far been unable to determine which ethnic group created Oc Eo - Funan, or Water Chenla cultures.

The third group of opinions includes leading representatives such as Tran (2001) and Nguyen (2002), those who believe the owner of Cat Tien relic complex is the Ma people. For further discussion of this hypothesis, we may consider the materials of other researchers, for example, Dournes (1977). A map of the South Central Highlands region provided by Dournes shows that there have long been indigenous ethnic groups (belonging to the South Asian linguistic family) residing here; for example, the Ma live in the left bank, the S'tieng live in the right bank of Dong Nai River, etc. Among the above ethnic groups, Ma people likely have a significant role in gathering neighboring ethnicities. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Maitre (1909) called the community institution of this ethnic group the "Principality of the Ma" (La Pricipaute Ma); later Boulbet (1967) called it "Nagar Ma," Nagar Yang" (Kingdom of the Ma, Kingdom of Heaven). The above records allow us to assume that the Ma people were at least conscious of a social organization that is more civilized than a tribal organization. They, therefore, must also have a particular socio-economic potential, and a wide range of influence in the Dong Nai River basin. In the same research direction, Luong (2008) hypothesized about a busy trading life of the Ma people along the Dong Nai River, to the waterfront of Can Gio (Ho Chi Minh City). Luong (2008) then

developed his hypothesis by asserting that in several centuries BC and AD, the Ma people built a strong economic potential but still depended on Funan. By the 6th and 7th centuries, when Funan weakened, the Ma people might have formed a primitive state, at least the Chiefdom form. And, Cat Tien sanctuary was also created by them Luong (2008).

Also, approach in the same research direction. However, with a broader scope, Tran (2013) pointed out that entering the development period of the Iron Age, the ancient communities in the Dong Nai River basin turned to the "threshold" of civilization. And Cat Tien sanctuary located in the distribution space of Dong Nai cultural complex. Also, according to Tran, "Dong Nai cultural residents, until the prosperous Iron Age period, united small and discrete tribes into an alliance"; "Dong Nai residents acquired and localized Indian culture to establish an Indianized state" (Tran, 2013). The authors of this article somewhat share the view that Cat Tien relic complex is a product of an Indianized country which different from Champa, Funan, Chenla. Recent studies of Dang and Nguyen (2019) and Dang ed. (2019) on architectural ruins and sun temple in the relics Cay Gao 1, Cay Gao 2 (Vinh An Commune, Vinh Cuu District, Dong Nai Province) also pointed out many similarities with Cat Tien in term of relics and artifacts. In essence, these relics are arranged in the space of Dong Nai culture. Or Lam's research on historical sites and relics in Dong Nai is also interesting Lam (2020), especially the relics of Hang Gon megalithic tombs (Xuan Loc District, Dong Nai Province) and artifacts such as bronze conchs, bronze statues, etc. The owner of these relics and artifacts may be a leader or a clan leader in the form of territorial society. These documents are remarkable because the age of Hang Gon may be of the late Iron period, even later (1st - 2nd century AD), whether this monument has a relationship with Cat Tien sanctuary or not (Pham and Nguyen, 2008), (Tran, 2013)? In other words, understanding the relationship between relics and artifacts is also an approach to decipher the owner of Cat Tien sanctuary. We agree with the view that "Cat Tien is just itself" (Tran, 2001). The owners of this monument approached Indian culture and interacted with surrounding cultures to create masterpieces of historical-cultural and artistic values given until today. Furthermore, according to Tran's diagram, this monument cluster is in an orderly system: seaport - administrative center - a sanctuary. Accordingly, the seaport from Ba Ria-Vung Tau to Can Gio (Ho Chi Minh City) plays the role of an urban port; Bien Hoa or maybe the area of Xuan Loc (Dong Nai) is the administrative center/capital; Cat Tien sanctuary is the religious center (Tran, 1998).

Anthropological data shows that the Southeast region and the South Central Highlands (Vietnam) have been a long-standing residence of ethnic groups belonging to two linguistic groups, South Asia and Malayo-Polynesian, from prehistoric times (Dao, 2008), (Nguyen, 2019). Although the interpretation of the Ma kingdom associated with Cat Tien still needs further discussion, with the above evidence, we agree with the idea that the owners of Cat Tien are

indigenous, of which the Ma people are not necessarily the most crucial group. These indigenous groups had an intrinsic potential since the development period of the Iron Age over the Dong Nai River basin. Then, in early centuries AD, a division moved down the Mekong Delta, creating Oc Eo culture - Funan state. The remaining part continued to reside in the Dong Nai River basin and then proceeded to create a civilization, absorbed Hinduism, interacted with the Cham in the Central region and Oc Eo in Southern Vietnam, and perhaps with other cultures in Southeast Asia to form a primitive state in the 3rd - 4th centuries AD, and built up a magnificent holy place left until today.

So far, scientists still do not know for sure whether the Ma, the S'tieng, or any other ethnic groups of the above-mentioned linguistic families created Cat Tien sanctuary. When conducting fieldwork, the author of this article discovered that there are several types of bricks of the same kind but slightly different in size. The question is whether or not the contribution of construction materials from multiple communities/ethnic groups. The results of the radiometric dating analyses support the perception that the centralized brick production area is the primary source of raw materials for the construction of structures in Cat Tien's flourishing period. However, it is possible that at an early stage or at certain times, material donations of surrounding communities were needed. This is also consistent with the assumption that the owners of Cat Tien relics are indigenous ethnic groups living in the Dong Nai River basin during the Prehistoric period, in a couple of centuries within BC and AD.

- c. Regarding the dating of Cat Tien relics, there are current streams of views as follows. Tran (2001) and Nguyen (2002) remarked that Cat Tien relic dates from the 8th to 10th centuries AD. Another study on physical and cultural vestiges, through comparing characteristics of door panels and two round stone pillars in Mound 2A with Sambor Prei Kuk monument (Cambodia), the author stated that the age of Cat Tien is around the 6th - 8th centuries AD (Luong, 2008). Dao et al. (2004) and Bui (2008) based on the results of the radiocarbon analysis of the C14 method (13 samples), and the characteristics of ceramics such as kendi pots, kendi nozzles, stone statues (Ganesa and Uma) determine relics dating is earlier, circa 4th - 8th centuries AD. Thus, up to now, Vietnamese archaeologists have not had an agreement on the issue of the dating of Cat Tien relic. By studying the status quo and inheriting the achievements of previous scholars, the authors agree with Le's opinion that the dating of the architectural monument of Cat Tien is around the 6th - 9th centuries AD (Le, 2006). It should be emphasized here that there are some of the older artifacts which are considered to be of/influenced by Oc Eo culture in the area of the monument (also the living space of the indigenous inhabitants). This is because, in the early centuries AD, the Dong Nai River basin was initially the land of the inhabitants those who created Oc Eo - Funan. In order to determine the age of the relics and the age of its owners, as

well as to answer precisely the questions: when did the remaining indigenous groups dwelling on the red basalt soil form their State, build their sanctuary?; what is the time to expand inter-regional cultural exchanges? etc., scholars should continue to promote research, excavation, and enhance absolute dating by the methods of natural sciences.

- d. What methods should be applied in protecting excavated remains? How should legal corridors, laws, and sub-laws be applied to the protection of monuments? What about the model of planning monuments? These are still unsolved questions. It can be said that Cat Tien contains a massive document about the nation's cultural heritage. Therefore, the relevant agencies and cultural departments must quickly complete the file, evaluate the outstanding value of the monument. The issuance of "red book," "red list," with "red planning" for monuments and artifacts will help professionals get the best conditions when conducting excavations. Cat Tien should be considered as a significant ecological-architectural complex to complete the submission to UNESCO for recognition as a "World Cultural and Natural Heritage." The distribution space of Cat Tien is located in all three provinces of Lam Dong, Dong Nai, and Binh Phuoc, so there must be the coordination of all three localities above. It is necessary to unify the expansion of the scientific boundary of the monument and turn it into an exclusive zone, both biological and cultural, into the conservation-museum system. Also, it is necessary to highlight and enhance the relationship between culture and ecology, people, and nature, to bring knowledge of this relationship to cultural values (Radughin, 2004).
- e. Procedures and methods for restoration of the monument; building landscape environment; display and promotion of monuments and sustainable tourism are also issues that need special attention:

Like many other brick architectures in Vietnam, for Cat Tien relics, underground conservation is considered the most optimal method in the present conditions. When conducting fieldwork at some architectural relics belonging to Oc Eo cultures such as the Binh Ta relics cluster (Duc Hoa, Long An) or Oc Eo-Ba The, the authors found that the ruins are being heavily abused compared to the time when newly unearthed (landslides and weathered bricks). Therefore, in order to avoid the monument being accidentally destroyed, excavation activities need to be carefully prepared for human resources and finance. In particular, it is necessary to train in-depth study staff in the future.

Measures should be taken to protect architectural heritage from immediate damage. For example, studying reports and drawings conducted in previous excavations to have plans to reinforce severely damaged structural parts, and to protect the architectural status quo as when it was just excavated, etc. The

conservation or embellishment of architectural ruins in Cat Tien is oriented as maintenance in situ (Tran, 2001). Since the Cat Tien area locates at low latitude, the rainfall here is abundant (2,200 - 2,500mm/year). Especially, 90 percent of the rainfall is concentrated in the rainy season (from May to November), creating a moisture imbalance and causing frequent floods. The level of solar radiation in this area is quite high (in the dry season, it is about 400-500 calories/cm²); the air humidity is also very high (average annual 80-85 percent) (Phan, 2008). These natural conditions are the cause of structural damage, especially for brick materials and additive binders, which are prone to expansion, cracking/breaking, and peeling. To remedy the above situation, it is strictly necessary to build water drainage and moisture-proof systems, as well as to apply techniques for preventing fungi, moss, insect, and plant from invading the architectures. More research projects are needed on the construction techniques and adhesives of the structures because all activities of restoration and embellishment of relics in a hurry and lack of scientific basis can adversely affect the original values of the architecture.

The restoration of the Bhitargaon monument (Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India) can be considered a valuable experience for Cat Tien. Namely, at Bhitargaon, the use of bricks taken from the local temple ruins to embellish makes the structure of the temple to be changed; many details are no longer the same as the original version (Alexander Cunningham, 1880); and (Laxshmi Rose Greaves, 2015). A similar case is preservation of architecture in Pawaya, a temple of the Gupta era. Pawaya temple has been changed a lot since it was first excavated; some original details were lost while new others were added (Laxshmi Rose Greaves, 2015). Or, the architectural ruins in Boxanagar are waterproof by using concrete structures to tighten the circuit (Indu Prakash, 2015). Reinforcing by using altered bricks, although the replacement bricks do not meet the technical standards of materials in the architecture, has also been implemented in some Champa monuments (Vietnam). From the experience of preserving and embellishing ancient brick relics in India and Vietnam as mentioned above, those participating in conservation in Cat Tien need to pay attention to the factors that are structural stability, embellishment must comply with the original; structures that have been damaged since they were first excavated must be reinforced or replaced. The replacement, of course, must ensure the principle of not losing the original value of the monument (Patrick and Faulkner, 1966). With the above examples, we support the refusal to continue excavating Cat Tien without knowing the techniques for making bricks, additives, and construction techniques (Hoang, 2001); only the ground and the forest can protect the relics in the present time. Moreover, Tran's study (2008) also assessed that the current conservation and restoration of Balamon architecture in Vietnam are limited; the investment capital is also inadequate. Tran (2008) emphasizes:

“Save the ruins in a state of being buried and dilapidated to bring the structure of the relics to a relatively safe state; Prioritize the maintenance, do not allow the activities of nature and human beings to deform and deviate elements of the original relics; Absolutely no restoration of components, especially styles and designs; The renovation, promotion of values, and organization of exploitation of Cat Tien archaeological site need to focus on preserving natural landscapes such as forests, mountains, streams, and vegetation.”

The authors agree with the above comment, with the scale and the current values, Cat Tien relic is an invaluable archaeological resource, along with the very diverse and potential natural resources. It is critical to protect the sanctuary before discussing tourism embellishment and exploitation until the authorities have optimal solutions in dealing with monuments. The comprehensive excavation of the monument should be continued because the potential is still great. However, as discussed, this massive workload needs not only a few decades but also a whole century with the efforts of many generations to be able to solve. The issue of chronology, owners, the process of formation, development, and destruction of monuments should continue to be studied. The proposal of appropriate and modern methods for conservation and embellishment must also be implemented according to specific steps. The research process must have the support of various academic fields such as ethnography, folklore, language, history, ancient bibliography, fine arts, the natural environment, etc. to clarify the nature of the monument. Application of modern scientific methods such as electromagnetic spectrum detection methods to determine the scale and delineate the monument; select specific subjects for long-term research projects and topics. Laboratory studies need to be paid more attention, such as research on physical and chemical composition; properties of construction materials, and clay used to make bricks (Cao, Pham, Le, Phan, Nguyen, Nguyen, Pham, Nguyen, and Vuong, 2009); or in-depth study on adhesives in construction, brick restoration for embellishment, and so on, should be done first. Notably, the study of Dang et al. (2019) on determining the shapes of architectures, redefining the location of damaged parts, or building 3D models for monuments. Although there is a need for further discussion and testing, it is clear that this is an essential research project; and this research direction should be expanded.

Cat Tien Relic Management Board needs to expand research cooperation with scholars and non-governmental organizations who are interested in the cultural heritage of humanity, especially, who have been paying attention to Cat Tien; make effective use of all funding sources for research, restoration, and promotion of cultural values; promote and call for funds from countries around the World, especially those that have paid much attention to Hindu monuments in Vietnam, such as India, the USA, Japan, Italy, Poland, Korea, etc. In fact, the issue of conservation and embellishment of architectural monuments in Vietnam is still limited, so specialists involved in the restoration of Cat Tien sanctuary must

consult techniques of restoring brick relics, as well as experts who have experience of the revival of Champa architecture (Vietnam) (Nguyen, 1995), (Tran A, 2008); preservation and embellishment of the capital Ayutthaya in Thailand (Nguyen, 2016); or restoration of Borobudur temple in Indonesia. With Borobudur temple ruins, this is an architecture based on the idea of a stepped pyramid; is the fusion between Buddhist conception and indigenous beliefs towards nirvana (Borobudur temple, 1998). Relics began to be interested in 1814 as a cultural heritage, but until the early 20th century, the ruined parts were started to be remodeled. By 1955, the Indonesian government set up a national budget fund to support the embellishment of the monument and call for international help. The monument was restored on a large scale since 1975 and fundamentally completed the main items in 1982. It is worth mentioning here that Indonesia only restored Borobudur after this country had called for and received help from the international community, especially from UNESCO. With a total investment of up to USD 50 million and the assistance of experts from 26 countries around the World, by the year 2000, the restoration of the Borobudur heritage was mainly completed (UNESCO JAKARTA OFFICE, 2000). The overall planning of monuments as a park is also executed based on the provisions of the Land Use Management Code. The process of restoration of Borobudur is conducted simultaneously with the training of experts who would be responsible for the preservation of other architectural monuments in Indonesia (Nguyen, 2002a).

The above example shows that Vietnamese conservationists can also call for cooperation and assistance from the international community in the restoration of religious architectural monuments. Also, Vietnam participated in the drafting of the "Guidelines for Archeological Field Technical Procedures" of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (1995), and the writing of the "Standard of Archeological Conservation and Restoration Procedures" (1999) Nguyen (2002b). These are documents that help Cat Tien in particular, architectural monuments in Vietnam in general in building records and procedures for preserving and embellishing relics is the legal basis for projects calling for the help of Southeast Asian countries, the international community, especially the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

- f. Regarding the funding and use of funding for research, protection, and embellishment of monuments. Although Cat Tien relic site has received particular attention from management agencies, the current funding is not enough to cover the activities here. The evaluation of the effectiveness of capital sources has not been implemented. Therefore, there is a need for coordination in management mechanisms and appropriate legal corridors for Cat Tien sanctuary to have an active financial source in the preservation and restoration of monuments (Tran and Tran, 2008). Abundant funding will help Cat Tien Monuments Management have the best manners for heritage resources here. Lessons in Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, etc. are vivid

examples. In parallel with the research, conservation, and embellishment of monuments, the construction of infrastructure such as roads, showrooms, lodging houses, parking lots, shops, natural reserve special areas, etc. are positive measures to retain visitors and scientists.

In summary, according to Vietnam's Heritage Law (Chapter 1, Article 4.2), World Cultural and Natural Heritage is "Material products of historical, cultural and scientific value, including historical-cultural relics, scenic places, artifacts, antiques, and national treasures" (Vietnam National Assembly, 2001). Alternatively, according to the UNESCO Convention (Article 1), typical World Cultural and Natural Heritage are "Complexes of buildings that stand-alone or in clusters that have particular international value in history, art or science, due to their architecture, their unity or their integration into the landscape. Attractions include human works or human works combined with pieces of nature, as well as areas of outstanding international value in terms of history, aesthetics, ethnography or anthropology (including archaeological sites)" (UNESCO, 1972). Hence, in terms of legal, Cat Tien architectural complex and Cat Tien National Park have met all international and national standards of Ecology - Humanities, Culture - History of a typical World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Therefore, the current urgent issue is that cultural management agencies at all levels must quickly evaluate and comprehensively study monuments to submit to UNESCO for recognizing Cat Tien as a world heritage site.

Cat tien sanctuary: historical, cultural values, and tourism

Vietnam is a multicultural, multi-religious country, but there is no conflict between religions. Religions and indigenous beliefs live in harmony and play an essential role in the spiritual life of Vietnamese people. The study of [Rezapour et al. \(2016\)](#) mentioned the role of religious faith in helping individuals to live true to their nature as well as to bring more satisfaction in life. Research by [Barra \(2016\)](#), [Bergan and McConathaand \(2001\)](#) and [Moch. Khoirul Anwar et al. \(2020\)](#) also highlight the impact of religion on the community. Religion meets not only physical needs but also the spiritual needs of human communities. Religion also influences the adjustment of human behavior according to the tendency of goodness. In the past, as well as today, in Vietnam, many religions such as Buddhism, Balamon, or Catholics play an essential role in society. As [Rizal and Amin \(2017\)](#) argued the higher the economic condition, the greater the demand for religious beliefs. In addition to beliefs, people come to religious facilities to learn about the cultural history and enjoy art from religious buildings. In the South of Vietnam, Champa architectural monuments, some relics of Oc Eo-Funan culture, or pagodas/towers have been bringing spiritual and material benefits to the community. For Cat Tien sanctuary, after eight excavation seasons conducted over more than 30 years, many scientific issues have been revealed. With outstanding values of architectural monuments concentrated in a closed space in

the shape of a bow surrounded by hills, it can be affirmed that this is a large religious center in Dong Nai River basin. The architecture has its own characteristics with temples, towers, altars, longhouses, etc.; artifacts are plentiful, rich in types; there are many unique artifacts such as pottery, jewelry (metal, precious stones), gold foil (printed with pictures of the gods and Sanskrit), etc. The monuments and artifacts, in addition to separate elements, also show a close relationship with Champa, Funan, Water Chenla, and India; beyond that is the relationship with Central Asia and the Mediterranean. With such a large number of relics and artifacts, the owner of Cat Tien sanctuary must have a high level of social organization, strong economic potential, and widespread cultural relations in and inter-region. Cat Tien represents the crystallization of cultural achievements of the Southeast and the South Central Highlands during the Iron Age. The historical-cultural values are also strongly reflected in architectural art, sculpture, construction techniques, brick and tile manufacturing techniques, and pottery.

In 2014, "Cat Tien sanctuary" was approved by the Vietnamese government as a "Special national relic" (Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2014), this is an important base to help Cat Tien attract resources, build conservation and restoration plans in the future. With its potentials, Cat Tien promises to be an exciting destination for researchers, devotees, and visitors. However, in order to promote the value of Cat Tien relics, researchers must place the traces in the open space of regional and inter-regional cultural and historical space of ancient times. Research and evaluate the value of monuments; select appropriate protection and restoration methods; learn from experience lessons on the management and promotion of heritage values, sustainable tourism development, serving the people in Oc Eo and Champa cultural sites (Vietnam), Angkor Wat (Cambodia), Vat Phou (Laos), Borobudur (Indonesia), Mueang Boran (Thailand), and so on, in the Cat Tien sanctuary is essential. Once done well, conservation, restoration, and service-oriented tourism will bring great benefits to the community and society. It should be noted that tourism development must lead to the use of monuments as a foundation to bring greater benefits to the community as mentioned by UNESCO/ICOMOS. If this will not be done, unwanted effects can hinder the development of the community (Meucci, Costantino, 2006), (Nagaoka, 2011).

The Cat Tien relic complex is part of a large cultural area influenced by Hinduism. Although the owner of Cat Tien is still a big issue that needs further discussion, it is clear that Cat Tien has quite close relations with cultures such as Champa, Oc Eo, Chenla, India, or other ancient countries in Southeast Asia. Cat Tien's cultural achievements are enormous. Many of the most valuable unique relics in the region influenced by Brahmin, such as the largest stone linga-yoni, the largest copper linga-corsa, or the giant precious metal and quartz lingas in Southeast Asia; gold leaves contain historical, cultural, religious and artistic values; or relics bearing cultural exchanges, etc. Therefore, this is an exciting

destination for art-loving travelers around the World, an essential link in the chain of Brahmin monuments in Vietnam in particular, Southeast Asia and the World in general. Therefore, the connection and exchange of experience in protection, restoration, promotion of cultural heritage, development of high-quality cultural tourism are possible issues. Especially, Cat Tien is located in the area of South Cat Tien National Forest, which contains countless mysteries of nature. Cat Tien is also a land of many miraculous records of human imprints through various periods that until now, we have not been able to learn them all. Such plans of preserving historical-cultural and natural values should be tied together based on the master plan. The fieldwork carried out by the authors in the vicinity of Lam Dong and adjacent districts of Binh Phuoc and Dong Nai Provinces also discovered architectural traces that are similar to the ruins found in Cat Tien. Therefore, the design of tours connecting the Cat Tien relic group with Cat Tien National Park and other places bearing the impression of Brahmin will promise to bring greater attraction to visitors and researchers.

A field study by Nguyen (2016) on the archaeological model of Ayutthaya and tourism in Thailand is well worth the reference for conservationists in Cat Tien. In this ancient capital complex, many temples and towers are belonging to Hinduism. Each group of temples and towers has its own characteristics, but the common feature is that all these architectures revolve around the "cosmic axis." In order to turn Ayutthaya into a famous tourist area, Thailand has allowed a Thai billionaire to invest in building these ruins into a cultural park. The research projects have gathered thousands of experts and workers. While the site is preserved in its original State, small models of the site were built at another location in the park. Visitors can visit the monument by various means of transport. The accompanying services are plentiful and ready to meet the needs of not only the spiritual but also the needs to visit, learn about the history-culture and art of visitors. Nguyen (2016) emphasized:

“Muang Boran is genuinely a modern cultural project, worthy of the cultural heritage it restored. A day trip here can be considered as a journey through the history of the entire kingdom of Thailand.”

In short, in addition to the valuable and rare historical and natural heritage values, Cat Tien is also a long-standing residence area of indigenous ethnic groups in the South Central Highlands region with unique cultural nuances. Therefore, this is a crucial connection point in cultural tours over the Southeast and Central Highlands. With outstanding potential in cultural geography, human ecology, Cat Tien can fully apply the model of Muang Boran (Thailand) if there is proper coordination between the State, cultural management departments, businesses, and locals where the monuments are located. In such cooperation, the research, conservation, and embellishment must be thoughtfully carried out in collaboration with many stakeholders. The type of cultural tourism and service at the points of

interest should be focused; highlights of the monuments, organization of special events and festivals should also be invested and paid attention (Raj, Griffin and Morpeth, 2013).

Similarly, Cambodia has succeeded in promoting monuments through domestic media, making documentary films that associate the religious life of residents (monuments owners) with relics, etc. to help residents and visitors understand the outstanding cultural values of their ancestors. Since then, all stakeholders have consciously joined hands to effectively exploit the culture and tourism in Angkor (Tim Winter, 2008). Associating archaeological museums with galleries, souvenir shops is also an effective way to promote heritage (Raj, Griffin and Morpeth, 2013). Building galleries associated with the activities of the ancient resident community; depicting temple and tower construction activities; display of figurines, architectures, and traditional local products (Vannsy Kuon, 2014).

In particular, to develop tourism, there must be a plan to make Cat Tien a vital tourist destination in the tours, such as Cat Tien - My Son sanctuary, Cat Tien - Oc Eo (Ba The), etc.; or Southeast Asia and beyond, for example, Cat Tien - India, Cat Tien - Angkor (Cambodia), Cat Tien - Dvaravati (Thailand), Cat Tien - Vat Phou (Laos), Cat Tien - Loro Jonggrang (Indonesia), etc. These tours will promote the monument attract domestic and foreign scholars to study and research about Cat Tien. Besides, stakeholders need to design more tours for learning about local traditional cultural values, exploratory tourism with destinations located within the Cat Tien relic complex to "Contributing to the common socio-economic development of the locality" (Truong, 2001). And, community-based tourism, providing opportunities for community participation in protection and tourism is also the most effective form of livelihood development for themselves. The lesson of the effectiveness in developing cultural tourism in Cambodia, Thailand is that managers have collaborated with businesses; associate the benefits of heritage exploitation with the local people and the tourism economy accurately; taking the cooperation among stakeholders as the basis for effective implementation of services (Brigitta Hauser-Schaublin, 2011), (Tim Winter, 2008), (Nguyen, 2016).

CONCLUSION

As presented, so far, although Vietnamese archaeologists have excavated Cat Tien relics eight times, the data has not been collected and studied thoroughly. Moreover, the overall research and excavation of the monument site have not yet been implemented. The pressing issue is that research and excavation still need to be carried out but needs to follow a well-planned strategy with legal corridors, funding, and a team of well-trained experts. As Lam (2020) suggested in the issue of protection, research, and promotion of heritage resources, the activity of "Training/Researching - Managing - Exploiting/Promoting must be given due attention." And, "Exploit tangible and intangible values also need to be concerned

with the creation of new values, based on modern science and design" [Lam \(2020\)](#). In short, the issues of protection, research, promotion, embellishment, selection of tourism product packages, etc., should be carefully considered before being applied in practice. Only in this way, the stakeholders can take full advantage of and promote all the historical-cultural values inherent in Cat Tien archaeological heritage resources.

This article aims to introduce some documents and essential awareness about Cat Tien sanctuary. Through data analysis, the issues that need further study and discussion are also raised to encourage further research. The scientific arguments in the article are hypotheses that contribute to the idea of researching and deciphering relics and relics in Cat Tien. The authors hope the viewpoints and materials presented in this article can help to narrow the gaps in knowledge regarding the hinge period, within the Metal Age and the early state formation, in the Dong Nai River basin. Also, it is possible that soon researchers can provide convincing evidence to prove Dong Nai civilization is the owner of "Cat Tien sanctuary," a masterpiece of humanity in Cat Tien.

The issue of exploiting the priceless values of the Cat Tien architectural complex needs long-term planning. In order to do that, policymakers need to have a step-by-step plan to achieve economic efficiency while not damaging archaeological heritage resources. These are necessary steps for the preservation and promotion of the values of "Cat Tien sanctuary," in particular, the Hindu monuments in Vietnam in general. In the immediate future, the issue of how to study, protect and embellish the traditional cultural values of the country to serve the education of the national/ethnic origin, especially for the younger generation, is an urgent task.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

The research results are based on analysis, comparison, and synthesis of available documents so that scientific assessments, hypotheses are still limited. To overcome the limitation as mentioned earlier, subsequent surveys and excavations in Cat Tien sanctuary and the vicinity, application of methods of natural sciences, anthropological and comparative researches are essential for future studies on Cat Tien sanctuary and Hindu monuments in Vietnam.

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Le Xuan Hung develops the research outline, analyzes data, drafts, and edits manuscripts; Dinh Nhu Hoai collects data and develops the list of references; Nguyen Van Bac cooperates with Le Xuan Hung in document analysis and revising manuscripts.

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