Meaning of Water Sources of Naga Icons in Southeast Asian Culture and South Khmer Culture

Abstract:

Keywords:

1. OPEN THE BEGINNING

Dictionary of world cultural symbols has noted: “The visible snake is just a fleeting embodiment of an Invisible Great Snake, causal and African - time, the owner of the living being and all both natural powers. It was the first ancient deity we met at the beginning of all legends of cosmic formation, before being deposed by the intellectual religions of human beings. It is the breath of life and the maintenance. On the human level, it is the dual symbol of the soul and sensuality (...) The snake is the most important original form of the human soul” ([Chevalier, J., & Gheebrant, A, editors 1997]). This basic pattern maintains in the world cultures the values of symbols from solid images.

As well as the Naga symbol in India; Dragons in Vietnam, China, ... the Naga symbol has traveled with the years, living forever in the culture of the Khmer people of the South with many rich meanings, in which this symbol has the meaning of the country and the meaning of nation-building is the deepest.

2. CONTENT

2.1. The Naga symbol means water

Water is the most important factor in human life. For residents of wet rice farming, water is a prerequisite to ensure the freshness of the crop. From the beginning, water was an elusive factor because of its dependence on the “God” - the weather. Lack of water, drought, flood of water. Some measures of irrigation, irrigation or dike, although most have helped people to regulate the amount of water, but in the minds of people living in the area of wet rice farming, water is always the factor that they cannot, catch up. With a zigzag shape resembling the rivers and the sneaky characteristics of snakes, residents of wet rice farming draped on the snake a magical element to transform into a Dragon / Naga - symbol statue associated with water.

Some researchers believe that the concept of Dragon / Naga is derived from the words that indicate water. From the Yangtze river basin to the south, where many rivers, streams, ponds and lakes appear ... Ta Duc in the Origin and development of Dong Son's symbolic and linguistic architecture said that the words Rong refer to regarding water: “Dragon (Vietnamese) = rong / hong (Muong, Old Khmer, Proto Mong Dao) = rmeh (Msong) = Krong / grung (Dao, Han Ancient) = hung (Khamti) = hung / luong (Thai ) = song (Dioi) = krung / rung (Ancient Han) = long (Sino-Vietnamese) = Kalong (Dayak) = Pprao (Bana) = mrai (Ede) = Na grai (Giarai) ... ”[2, p.217 ].

The concept of Dragon / Naga meaning water is the most universal concept in the East. The origin of this concept is due to the natural conditions (geography - climate) of this region. The natural environment of the residents of the East is hot and rainy, creating plains along the river basins. The constant obsession with residents is water. Water is an indispensable element in life as well as in agricultural production labor. Sufficient water will help plants, crops lush; Too much water causes devastating floods. With very vague explanations at the dawn of humankind, the inhabitants of this region used mythical and strange stories to explain those phenomena, and then sanctified and worshiped them. into the gods. According to Ernest Ingersoll: The concept in the word “dragon” dates from the beginning of recorded human thoughts about the mysteries of the thinker and his world. It is associated with the powers and actions of the first gods, and like those powers and actions, it is ambiguous, fluid and contradictory in its properties, maintained only from beginning to end a defining characteristic - associated with water and water control [3, p.2].
The concept of the Eastern inhabitants of the Dragon / Naga in the early days was: the supreme being of the air; the mysterious breath of the person pervades; control cloud; contain wet air; cool the earth. In countries of Northeast Asia and Vietnam, the Dragon / Naga has the same meaning for water. A lot of researchers have commented on the prototype of dragons, snakes, crocodiles ... The two natural animals are attached to the water environment and are also the animals that cause fear to the inhabitants of the agricultural areas mainly grown rice.

In the world no one, no nation can live without water. Human and water relations are closely connected, in a sense, we can say that the civilized history of man is represented by the relationship between man and water. Due to natural conditions, agricultural life, Vietnamese people are attached to the country. The ancient Vietnamese were famous for their excellent dive, skillful swimming, good at warships, good at sailing. Water is soft and weak, but it is a great agent, creating a brilliant civilization: wet rice agriculture civilization. Wet rice has become typical for most Asian peoples in general and Vietnam in particular, including the Southern Khmer. Making rice and planting cash crops should take care of irrigation. Water is the most important factor: "most water, second division, tam need, four varieties". Because water is essential for farmers, rainwater bridges, water dance dances, and boat racing are stirring during the festivals. If a mascot of the Vietnamese nation originated from the country, it is the image of the dragon - the source of the nation: The Dragon and the Fairy descended on the legend of "Lac Long Quan, Au Co and the hundred egg sacks", The Khmer also have a mascot, Naga, with the Dragon family meaning water. Among the laws of language formation, there is a rule that comes from river elements or activities on a river. Statistics in folk songs and folk songs of the Southern region have up to 48 natural images related to waterways, appearing 2,149 times. Water is the germ of life but also the circuit of death. It has both a rebuild function and a destructive power. For the Vietnamese and the Khmer, when ancient people had no way of coping with floods, for them the disaster was both obnoxious and scary, they dreamed from within the community that there was a talented person who could rule. Thuy, bringing peaceful life in the community. The legendary story of Son Tinh Thuy Tinh of Vietnamese people or the Choscham festival of Khmer people is a testament to that.

The concept of Dragon in the Khmer language was analyzed by the author Dang Viet Bich in the article "The Dragon - the river god": "Europeans call the dragon Draco (ancient Roman language), Drak (German language) and Dragon. (English and French). In our country in Ha Tinh province, there is a river called Gar. But Gar or Nak in Muong people or in some areas of Vietnamese in Thanh Hoa, Water in Vietnamese, Drak, Dlak, Lak, lat, in the Central Highlands (Central Highlands) also have only one common meaning: River and Water. Lac in Lac Viet also means water. Lac fields (Lac Dien) are groups of people living together cultivating water fields. From Dlak, Drac, Nah, etc. words have formed the concepts of the concept of Dragon in the Khmer language (Nagaric turned into the word Reverse (Dragon) in the Lao language [4, p.61-62]. It can be seen that the concept of dragons of the people of the East has similarities, however, depending on the origin and the historical change process, the names differ.

According to Luong Ninh: "Angko: Nagara: Water, Country", so Angko = Nagara = Water (Country)? If we trace back the etymology of the word Water (Country = Country, according to the Vietnamese alphabet system) then Country = country = (geolocation) of land + water area. Thus Naga also means Water, with the original meaning being a water object. Accordingly, when the Khmer came to the capital (Nagarapura) of Funan and they called this place Angkor Borei (this is another way of calling Nagarapura, after the sound of the Khmer) [5, p.20]. Here, it is clear that naga is closely related to water.

The legend of founding the nation of the Khmer is related to the element of water as an expression of the consciousness of water on the basis of wet rice agriculture civilization. The paintings or drawings show the image of a snake curled from the top of the mountain down to the foot of Meru clockwise, to symbolize the water that carries life that God gives to humans. Motip appears popularly in the flagpoles of the current Khmer pagoda architecture. The form of a solid motif that scrolls clockwise or vice versa, which was common in prehistoric coastal waters and mainland Southeast Asia. The ancients used them as ornaments on the roof or bow to symbolize the movement of the sun, stars, wind and oceans.

Like Vietnamese people, Khmer people are typical wet rice farmers. Because living mainly on wet rice farming, after the land is the most important factor for the Khmer. Preliminary survey of Khmer proverbs treasure shows that out of 39 proverbs about the natural world, there are 18 statements about the country. Especially, when the irrigation system and science and technology have not been developed, the crop depends on the rainfall, leading to the cult of water. This belief in Vietnamese people in the Northern Delta is mainly expressed through the worship of the four dharmas (the four gods of Cloud, Rain, Thunder, Chop), and the custom of worshiping snake - water god. Because the
water element plays a vital role, the Khmer legend said that from the very beginning, Prince Preah Thong from India to marry Princess Thuy Te, the daughter of the 9-headed snake king, that the king's father drank up the sea water to The nation of Cao Mien was founded. After that, every king of the Kingdom of Gao Mian had to marry the snake princess to repay him. The snake princess is the image of a naga snake that, according to legend, always lives inside the golden tower in the palace. Each night the serpent turned into a beautiful woman and the king had to make love to him before he could sleep with the queen and concubines. If the king does not come every night to make love to the serpent, he will meet with disaster. Conversely, if the night of the serpent does not appear, the day of the king's death has come.

The motif of a person who is associated with a snake as above is repeated many times in the treasure of Khmer folktales such as the stories: "The snake has a divine ring", "The legend of a human being" ... These stories have been created based on into the aforementioned "Prince Thong took the snake princess" motif, but changed it to suit the momentum of the patriarchal system: the snake acts as the husband. In addition, a "Savior snake - repayment" motif is quite popular as in the stories: "Chau Sanh", "Two brothers and the snake serpent" ... These motifs show the predestined karmic debt of Khmer Water element that the snake god is the symbol. Due to the influence of Brahmanism, the Khmer worshiped Shiva with the image of a snake head linga. Until Buddhism invaded the Khmer society, the cult of water worship was integrated with the legend of the story of the Naga serpent, lying on the body as a guardian for Buddha to sit on the river and rise 7 heads to spread shielding the Buddha against the Maou's attack to conspiring to break the decisive moment on his path of enlightenment. The integration of the cult of religion into Buddhism is most evident when there is a tower in the middle of the lake in the city of Antennas, in which there is a bronze statue of Buddha, at the navel of the water rising incessantly. This motif probably originated from the Brahmin legend about Vishnu sleeping on the Naga serpent, the lotus appearing from the navel of the god, and it was from here that Brahma gave birth to the bright career. create the world. If the concept of the navel is the center of life, then the image of the water coming out of the Buddha's navel assimilates the water with the vitality of the Buddha Dharma. However, water - represented by the image of the Naga serpent - also has two sides: protecting the crop (as well as the dharma protector of Buddhism) and destroying the crop, both helping people and harming people at the same time. Therefore, in the epic Ramayana, the story of Ravana's demons launching weapons is frightening snakes that spit fire and venom, with massive long fangs and Prince Rama using thousands of eagles (Garuda), to destroy snakes. In the treasure of Khmer folk tales, there is a snake kill / python / human killer such as: "Chau Sanh - Chau Thong", "The two crows and the snake", "The python story".

Due to the duality of snakes, at the temple of Ang Thom, the image of Naga snake with 7 heads is shown the most and most beautiful. At this temple, at the South gate, there are pictures of gods gripping one end of the Naga serpent, symbolically curled around Mount Meru (the sacred mountain in India that this temple is considered as a symbol), its tail looped around the North gate and was grabbed by some devils. Gods and demons take turns pulling the snake towards themselves and can turn the mountain in the middle, hitting the sea for divine food. Does this image imply: water has two beneficial sides, so in order to have a piece of food, people have to fight to scramble from it? For the ancient Khmer, Naga snake is a magical bridge to enter the land of the gods. Therefore, along both sides of the stone bridge to the old temple of Ang Co, there are pairs of idols and demons on each side, clutching snakes to Naga. Previously, at this bridge, there were 54 idols and 54 demons holding Naga serpent on each side of the bridge, but now only a few statues remain. This 108 is the sacred number in Hinduism.

Previously, a number of individual works when researching on the Naga symbol mentioned the meaning of this symbol in the temple or the meaning of water, indeed the meaning of the ethnic origin of the Khmer in the South. During Ok-om-bok festival of Khmer people in the South, having a boat racing festival (tuk-ngo) is one of the typical traditional activities. According to the Khmer concept, the boat is the symbol of the Naga serpent, the god of water that gives life to the community.

With the meaning of water, the Naga symbol of the Khmer in the South along with the dragon symbol of the Vietnamese people showed the Southeast Asian culture layer on the common layer - the cultural base of agriculture mainly cultivated wet rice. The residents of Southeast Asia came together to create the symbol of the country, the origin of the crops, the scenery ... and the naga of the Khmer in the South or the dragon of the Vietnamese people is a symbol of meaning for that desire. On the basis of that wet-rice agriculture culture, each nation has built its own unique culture and extremely unique symbol system.

The wet rice civilization has directly and strongly influenced the lifestyle, thinking, and emotions of the agricultural residents in general and the ethnic groups of Vietnam in particular. It is the life, the way of life of specific agricultural residents, that has profoundly affected their spiritual life. And it can be said that water is part of these spiritual concepts. On this level, the original meaning of the Naga symbol when received by the Khmer people is the myth of nature, countering Khmer people's desire for a good and full life. It reflects the awareness of agricultural
residents about the nature and habitat, of which water is the most important factor.

2.2. Naga means water in Southeast Asian and Khmer Southern culture

The legend of the founding of the Khmer people is related to the element of water as an expression of the consciousness of water on the basis of wet rice agriculture civilization. The paintings or drawings depict the image of a serpent curled from the top to the foot of Meru Mountain clockwise, to symbolize the flow of life-giving water that God gives to humans. Motif appears popularly in the flagpoles of the current Khmer pagoda architecture. The form of a solid motif that scrolls clockwise or vice versa, which was common in prehistoric coastal waters and mainland Southeast Asia. The ancients used them as ornaments on the roof or bow to symbolize the movement of the sun, stars, wind and oceans.

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3. CONCLUSION

Snakes - one of the representatives of the natural world that come to humans - are the original model images, tied to the source of life and imagination. Going through different spaces and times, snakes have become sacred, symbolic and meaning are continually enriched. Like many ethnic groups - other ethnic groups in the world, the Southern Khmer have inherent life and connection with nature - including snakes - can be said from the beginning in a natural and durable way. The South is a region of many rivers and lakes; the climate is hot and humid - the environment is consistent with snakes; Alluvial, rich creatures provide abundant food sources for snakes so snakes abound. In that life, the snake is both a normal object (in food, medicine) and a spiritual object (in the cult of worship, worship; painting, sculpture; ..) becoming a mascot - the Naga symbol has noble symbolic meanings: the symbol of the water source, the symbol of the origin; and at the same time with it are eternal values such as historical values, educational values, ... that accompany and interact with human life. This cohesion has become an identity - a valuable cultural capital of the Southern Khmer.

REFERENCES