

## The Art Style Iconography and the Cultural Adjustment to Khmer Prasadas in Champasak District, Lao PDR

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**Abstract:** This research is a qualitative research that studies the art style, iconography and cultural adjustments to Khmer Prasadas in Champasak District, Lao PDR. The tools used within this study was primary surveys, structured and non-structured interviews, participatory and non-participatory observation. The target group consists of the experts, the practitioners and related parties. The result from the study shows that, the history of Vat Phu consist of a story called Khatthanam, the legend of Phraya Kumpatha, the oral storytelling human sacrifice and the legend of Thao Bachiang and Nang Malong. According to its historical background it received the influence from Cham art style and could be found in the stone inscription, since, the Buddhist year of 998 until the 15th Buddhis era where there were renovations and additional constructions in the art form towards the end of Kriang era and the beginning of Pa Puan era. The cultural adjustments consist of stories of Shivaism and Vishnuism, the second-tier Gods and animals. The adjustments found in the Khmer Prasadas were plants, animals and people and Gods accompanying the story. The physical adjustments consist of the structural changes of the Prasadas in the blueprint of the Khmer Prasadas, the form and the architectural structure were all the changes according to the Buddhist beliefs and the cultural adjustments that include the beliefs, ceremonies and the traditions within the communities that relates to Brahmanism and spirituality as well as the ancestral ghost which goes in line with the word “villagers religion”.

**Key words:** The art style, iconography, the cultural adjustment, Brahmanism, villagers religion, ancestral ghost

### INTRODUCTION

South East Asia received its influence from Indian, China and some Western countries' civilization through boats which contain the evidence dated back to the 6-7th century. Important historical sites were found in Oc Eo City in Trans-Bassac, currently Vietnam (Sukhasvasti, 1999). Stone inscription in Sanskrit were found in Vokahn village dated back to the year 748-768 and many artifacts were found such as gold coins from Emperor Antoninus Pius dated back to the year 695 in Buddhist era, the seal of the Sassanid Empire of Persia (769-1184 of Buddhist Era) (Rotbun, 2002). From all these important evidences, it could be assumed that this land was the first establishment of the current Cambodia called the “Funan Empire” (Diskul, 1996).

Funan Empire could be found in a Chinese record during the Jin Dynasty (B.E. 808-962) (Rotbun, 2002) and also in the Chinese archive called “Nan Xi Ju” which has

a record about an empire on the South of the IndoChina Cape, since, prior to the 9th century in the Buddhist era. In addition, Liang Ju archive (B.E. 1045-1099) also talked about a capital near Ba Phnom on the South East of current Cambodia with the empire expanded from the South of Vietnam to the South of Cambodia with its influence expanded to many other empires. One of those empires include Chenla Empire which eventually became more civilized and replaced the Funan Empire in the 11th century of the Buddhist Era (Diskul, 1996). Chenla Empire covers Cambodia starting from the Phnom Dong Rak mountain range to the border of Nan Chao Empire. The Southern part covers Mekong basin and goes all the way to the ocean side (Rotbun, 2002). It was assumed that the capital of Chenla was Setthapura which is currently Champasak City, Champasak Province, Laos PDR (Diskul, 1996).

Laos PDR is situated in the Indochina cape which is mostly mountainous area. The Northern plain are also full

of high and steep mountains. The central part is lower than the Northern part. The Southern part consists of both plains and mountainous areas. Most of the plains are in Champasak Province (Rotbun, 2002) or Champasak State that had freed itself from Vientiane Empire in the year BE 2257 (Rotbun, 2002). The province shares its border with Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia (Theerasawat, 2000). The area also had traces of the Khmer Empire judging from clear evidences from the 12th century of the Buddhist Era which is during the time of King Pawa Varman I of the Chenla Empire. He ruled the land in between the North of the lake and the Mekong river basin. Evidences were mostly found in Champasak comparing to other areas. Diskul (1996) talked about the discovery of important evidences such as the lintel in Tharaboriwat style which led to the belief that this area was once Setthapura. There was also a place called "Leung Bun Phot" that was mentioned in the Chinese archive with the name "Leung Kia Po". Rotbun (2002) stated that from the translation of the inscription of Vat Phou during the time of King Esanworamun (B.E. 1159-1180) that mentioned his name as the builder of Phra Hari Hara and building a Hermitage to Phakkhawatta in Vishnuism. During the time of King Chai Varman I (B.E. 1193-1199) he provided a lot of support for Brahmanism at Vat Phou. During the time of King Chai Varman VII (B.E. 1724-1761) he support the construction of religious buildings, statues and main images. From the evidences found there were 5 main roads that was built from the capital. One of the roads was built straight from the capital to Vat Phou, Champasak. These roads clearly show the expansion of the Khmer influence and created a cultural corridor phenomenon that links all the people with different ethnicity and beliefs both on the West and East cost of the Chao Phraya river basin, Champasak Province and part of Vietnam into the traditional Khmer culture (Leksukhum, 2010). These roads were used for traveling and for pilgrimage to the religious places, healing sites with places for travelers to rest along the way. The road goes from the capitals through cities with Khmer civilizations and all the important provinces during the 14-18th century in Buddhist era. These historical evidences clearly show that expansion of the old Khmer civilization which can be seen through all the forms of arts in different eras.

Vat Phou consist of arts from different eras such as the influence from Cham Empire which is believed to be the origin of the Chenla Empire after the Funan Empire (Sakurai, 1985; Suttitham, 2002). The high influence of the Indian culture in this area had been passed down to the Khmer civilizations and adjusted to fit the ecological system, tradition and the way of life of the Khmer and

local people and had become rooted itself into the lives of the people of South East Asia for a long time cited by Diskul (1996). Cultural buildings that was built during that period were all influenced by the Indian, the building of construction of the Prasadas for the inhabitant of the Gods, the installment of the statues to be used within Hinduism ceremony and the Mahayana Vajirayana Buddhism in some eras (Diskul, 1996). The dissemination of the Khmer influence during its peak led to an inevitable social and cultural changes, especially the belief towards the North East of Thailand and towards the Southern of Laos. Kaewnod studied the settlement of the Khmer people and found out that there were two types of settlement first the new settlement and taking over another existing settlement or the mixture of the new settlement and the pre historic settlement, Thavaravadee period. After the 18th century the influence of Khmer began to fade due to the lost in power of the Cambodia Empire (Suttitham, 2002). When the situation changed, the neglected religious buildings became ruins while the other empire within Southeast Asia like Sukhothai Kingdom (B.E. 1780) Ayutthaya kingdom (B.E. 1893) and Lan Xang (B.E. 1814) declared independency from Khmer and replaced its power (Rotbun, 2002).

Lan Xang kingdom believed in spirituality, ancestral ghost and ghost in nature while also practicing Mahayana Buddhism. But Laos people still practice the 12 monthly local traditions. There were also beliefs in spirit such as Pi Fah, Pi Taen, Pi Paw Mae and Pi Mahesak Lakmuang. There were still sacrifices of elephants or buffalos. Currently, Lao people still believe in nature, spiritualism, brahmanism and buddhism that are all integrated in their daily lives. These beliefs were never gone away but were always with the Lao. These beliefs hold the heart of the Lao people together form different ceremonies and traditions. These traditions help maintain the religion and form the social traditions and culture. The traditions and culture are the result of human beliefs, passed down from generations to generations through the process of thoughts and beliefs to maintain under the regulations of society and goes along well with the way of life of the people in the society.

Today, what are the Lao people beliefs towards the Khmer Prasadas, even though the physical aspects of the Khmer Prasadas had been changed according to the new beliefs in Buddhism that was at its peak during the lan xang period and resulted in the form of religion that derived from the mixture of several religions. Currently, this belief that is still living and progressing forward have more influence that the old beliefs during the peak of the Khmer period which had already died. The changes and the cultural adjustments are related in harmony,

appropriate and sometimes in conflict. How this phenomenon affects the way of life of the people with society these are the question without clarity and to which a study to be compiled.

From the study of the primary source of documents and the field trip to Champasak it was found that many of the communities come together to do social activities, ceremonies and traditions that are all related to the Khmer ancient ruins. There were also many articles and research from many academics such as Jirawatthana (1995) who wrote about the general knowledge of Vat Phou. Kerdsiri (2004) talked about the art form of Vat Phou and Chapasak which is an important city and the original city during the Chanla period. Phanthawutthiya (2001) studied about the religious tradition by Phetnak (2012) studied the forms and beliefs of the carvings on the lintel and the pediment found at Vat Phou. Most study and research study the history forms and beliefs about the lintel in combination with the belief and religion but still lacks the study in the arts and the architectural adjustments as well as the cultural changes that contributes to the adjustment of the people in using these religious sites which result in the cultural adjustments and turned into a mixture of traditions derived from various norms and religions of the people who visited the site.

The reasons mentioned about had made the researcher became interested in studying and compiling the history and background of the Khmer Prasadas the forms the cultural adjustment in depth as well as the cultural adaptation of the communities in 2 aspects the physical adjustment which is the changes in the structure of the Prasadas and the cultural adjustment of the communities that are related to Vat Phou in Champasak Province, Laos PDR. This research can be a base of knowledge that should be beneficial to other researchers, interested parties and related parties with the hope that this research will also benefit the people of Laos in the future.

**Objectives of the study:**

- To study the history and background of the art forms of Vat Phou in Champasak Province, Laos PDR
- To study the iconography of Vat Phou in Champasak Province, Laos PDR
- To study the cultural adjustment of the communities towards Vat Phou in Champasak Province, Laos PDR

**Scope of study:**

- The scope of content is the study of the history and background of the art form, iconography and cultural adjustments of the communities towards Vat Phou in Champasak Province, Laos PDR

- The scope of the study is chosen through purposive sampling which is Vat Phou and the surrounding context of Vat Phou with the activities concerning the beliefs, ceremony and tradition that relates to Vat Phou, Champasak Province, Laos PDR

**Research tools:** The tools used within this research to compile the data were studying from existing documents, field trips, observations, interviews, questionnaires and group interviews. The data was then analyzed to meet the objectives of the research through descriptive analysis along with the pictures and sketch of the arts, the iconography and the cultural adjustment with captions.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research is a qualitative research. The data in this research was collected from the documents and field research through the use of these tools observations as a basic survey in acquiring primary information concerning the environment, the geography, the location of the Prasadas and the communities and villages. Structured interviews were used to interviews the experts about the art forms, the iconography and the cultural adjustment to the physical aspect of the Prasadas. Unstructured interviews were used to interviews the experts, the practitioners and the related parties to the history and background of the beliefs and practice on the annual ceremony and tradition carried out by the communities in depth.

The researcher took all the data gathered from the documents and field data from the surveys, observations, interviews, group interviews, photographs, graphs and sketches. The researcher analyzed the credibility of the data by comparing the art form, the iconography and the detail the of Khmer arts as well as the suggestions from the experts. The data was categorized by types of events, time of events, related parties and the environment to determine whether the information is sufficient and reliable. The result was then presented according to the objectives of the study through descriptive analysis accompanying by photographs and sketches of art forms, iconography and the cultural adjustments with captions.

**RESULTS**

The history and background of Vat Phou according to the local history is Kut Tha Nam, the legend of Phra Ya Kum Pa Tha, Muk Pa Tha and the sacrifice and the legend of Thao Baching and Nang Malong. The relationship between Hong Nang Sida Prasadas and the Muk Pa Tha and the sacrifice and the 4 stone inscriptions. The

inscription was in Sanskrit and made from sandstone which shows that the history of the Prasad as aged ever, since before the capital was established. Devhanika inscription was dated to the year BE 998 and 1015 and was renovated during the period towards the end of the capital and the art in Pa Puan form.

From the study of the 4 inscriptions, inscription No. K365 specify the year of BE 998 and 1015. The tale talks about King Devhanika from the Cham Dynasty which relates to the architectural form of the main stupa that was assumed to have been built when the Cham Dynasty was at its peak. Inscription No. K367 specify the year BE 1197-1234 talks about King Chai Varman I with the content that talks about paying respect and giving praises to the God Shiva as well as paying respect to Lingaparvata. Later on, the centralized power was moved to Phra Nakhon City. Inscription No. K1230 specify the year BE 1468 talks about respecting three kings and the offering to the God Shiva through King Isan Varman and relates to inscription No. 380 specifying the year BE 1561, 1580 and 1583 during the reign of King Suryavarman I until the time of Udayaditya-Varman talks about the relationship, the offering, the continuous support "Lingum Phura" as well as many renovation, even though the centralized power that used to be around Vat Phou was already moved to Phra Nakhon.

The main palace of Vat Phou received influence from the Cham era. However, the lintel doesn't have any pattern for the age to be determined. Only the structured of the building was left to help identify that the palace was influenced by the Cham era that dominated this area in the past (Saraya, 2009). As for the main palace made from sandstone was from the earlier period of the Pa Puan era which can be observed from these following architectural aspects, The 12 lintels that had been found can be categorized into 3 types 2 lintels inscribed with groups of people and long row of flowers 7 lintels inscribed with groups of people and the row of flowers had been clearly divided into 2 parts and 3 lintels inscribed with groups of people with 2 rows of flowers by still connected.

The overall Kiratimukha of Vat Phou that was found in the sandstone stupa have more dynamics comparing to the Thao women's palace buildings. There were only 4 fingers on each hand. The different was how the hands were hold together while the rest of the details were similar. Another different was that the tongue of the Kiratimukha for the first type are above the row of flowers while for the other type, the tongue is below the row of flowers. In the other two Kiratimukha, the lower lips and the teeth were clearly inscribed on the east side. The main carving is the carving of the God Indra on an elephant.

The Kiratimukha in the sandstone stupa is in the form of the griang arts. As for the detail due to their clear dynamic, this shows that the crafters paid a lot of attention when they were crafting the Kiratimukha comparing to the Kiratimukha at the women's palace building where there was less detail found in the sandstone palace.

There is no art form as decorative around on the door frame with the stupa. The door frame to the prayer chamber is small with no decoration except the carvings as ring shape. It could be assumed that the rings around the pillar were similar with those in the sandstone palace. The pillars at the Bannalai Building have the same decorations as the door frame of the sandstone palace with special pattern such as moulding pedestal with layers of rounded lotus flowers. The decorative pillar on the door frame of the men's palace and women's palace building is very similar except the length and patterns moulding pedestal of leaves and upside down mountain which added to the length of the pillars.

The art form that was found in the pediment of the sandstone palace. The pediment on the Southern part of Kanpaha room tells a story of Samudra Manthan, the wing of the roof near the pediment contain the story of when hanuman kidnapped Sida from Ramayana. Part of the women's palace build still contain a complete gale on all 4 sides. Men's palace building contain a story of Umamahesvara and the story of the 3 Gods of all directions. The carving will have 2 layers differentiated by the carving and patterns. There are 3 main carvings the first one is what Kiratimukha under Poom Khao Bin design, the second type is the main carving of people sitting together in an arch over Kala and the third type are people accompanying a story.

The pillars contain three sections the head of the pillar, the front part of the pillar and the lotus base of the pillar. The head and the base of the pillars of the sandstone palace have similar pattern but the head of the pillar also have moulding pedestal with conch shell pattern and a lotus flower in each corner. The head and the base of the pillar in men's palace and women's palace building contain two types, the first types are moulding pedestal of lotus flower shape which consist of budding lotus flower lotus petal conch shape and index shape starting from the top to the bottom with standard pater which consist of 2 types, the middle part of the moulding pedestal of lotus flower with a conch shape will have a pattern of big water lily. This pattern can only be found in 2 places which is in the main hall of men's palace and women's palace building.

The art form on the pillar of the sandstone palace consist of 3 types, the first pattern is the Look Fak pattern

with the difference in the decoration in the middle whether it's a carving of a Hermit in sitting in Yaga position or a normal Look Fak pattern there is also a small Naga head in between the squash a small person head or petals. The second pattern is the Kankhod-Kanpu pattern. There will be a small Naga head in the middle and the third pattern is the Kampu-Kankhod in a zigzag pattern.

The pattern of the base of the pillars and walls containing 3 patterns, the first one if the Hermit sitting in a Yago Ashana position in an arch, the second type is a person sitting in an arch and the third one is half a lion. The outside part of the pillar also consists of three types, the first one is a row of dotted line, the second one is the row of temple with 4 petals and dotted line and the last type is small leaves with dotted line without the ring shape like Kankhod.

The base of the sandstone palace consists of the lotus-flower-shaped pedestal, square base and lotus base. The lotus-flower-shaped pedestals are similar to the ones on the men's palace and women's palace the base part is similar to the base of the pillars, the middle part is square shape with the same pattern at the base. The square base is decorated with moulding pedestal decorated with lotus flower petal and budding lotus flower. The square base in a single building will have different height due to the lower entrance by one level which makes the lotus flower base on the east side to be part of the square base of the Garbhagriha. The height of the square base of the main hall of the Ring Thao and Ring Nang will keep increasing along with the pattern. There is only one set of pattern for the lotus base which is the index pattern, moulding pedestal with lotus flower petal, budding lotus flower and lotus flower base. The patterns of the main palace were index pattern, conch shape, lotus flower petal and budding lotus flower. Especially in the Garbhagriha where the lotus flower petal pattern will be added to increase the height. As for the main hall of the men's palace and women's palace, only the height will be increased but not the pattern.

The iconology found on Vat Phou through the study of the carvings and their meaning as well as the symbols that exist in the architecture are as followed: the lintel, the door frame decoration, the pediment false door wall connected pillar, the base and the architecture. The first step was the study of all the 29 lintels within Vat Phou. The result shows that there were carvings telling stories about the God guarding each direction and 20 pieces portraying second-tier Gods sitting in an arch and 9 lintels telling stories accompanying the carvings of botanic. The most important lintel in the sandstone palace portraying Shiva sitting on the Kala under an arch (currently not there anymore) lintel with the carving of Shiva sitting in a

Yoga position above the Kala under an arch. The most important lintel of the men and women's palace is the Poom Khao Bin design above the Kala. As for the other lintels, pieces have carving of Shiva, pieces of Vishnu and of Indra on an elephant.

The iconographic found on the doorframe decoration of the prayer hall were not fully carved yet. The doorframe of the library were decorated with moulding pedestals with four lotus flower petals, face-up lotus flower and budding lotus flower, both big and small. The iconographic found on the doorframe of the sandstone palace consist of moulding pedestal with dotted line and face-up lotus flower and budding lotus flower, triangle leaves both facing up and down, lotus flower petals and kanok design. Overall, the patterns are mostly the same with minor differences in the detail.

The iconographic found on the pillar of the sandstone palace consist of three types: Look Fak design with the difference in the decoration in the middle. The iconography found were a Hermit sitting in a Yoga position or a small Naga head or just patterns without the Hermit or the Naga head Kankhod-Kampu pattern; the decoration in the middle will contain a small Naga head Kankhod pattern with a lion carved at the base. There are three types of decorative for the decorative pillars and the walls a Hermit sitting in a Yoga position under an arch a person sitting under an arch and a lion. The lotus flower on the head of the pillar at the sandstone palace will have standard pattern which consist of a row of lotus flower with the Kanok Kampu pattern with dotted line moulding pedestal with conch shape pattern moulding pedestal with row of face-up lotus flower petal moulding pedestal with budding lotus flower starting from the top down. Overall the patterns were mostly botanic pattern. The lotus flower on top of the pillar are connected to the ceiling. The lotus at this level is the connecting point to the God level base but is still in the human level. The lotus flower at the base are standard patterns which consist of a row of lotus flower with lotus flower petals with the Kanok Kampu pattern with dotted line moulding pedestal shaped like conch moulding pedestal with rows of face-up lotus flowers moulding pedestal of budding lotus flower starting from top to bottom with lotus flowers at the corners. Normally, the moulding pedestal of lotus flower at the base are bigger than the ones on the head of the pillar.

The iconography found on the decorative pillar of the doorframe of the men and women's palace contain sets of carvings starting from the base to the middle part. The patterns are as follows Kra Jung front board pattern and dotted line with conch shaped pattern and small leaves, face-up lotus flower, budding lotus flower, Feung

Uba patter or triangle leaves both facing up and down and Dok Deek Dok son pattern. In iconography that patterns consist mainly of moulding pedestal, Kra Jung pattern and botanic pattern which all symbolizing auspiciousness. The parts that are found on the pillar at the men and women's palace are carving of people sitting in under an arch and can be further categorized into three types Hermit with strings tied at both knee sitting in a Yoga position hands saluting under an arch with lotus flower on the head of the pillar Hermit without strings tied at both knee sitting in a Yoga position hands saluting under an arch with lotus flower on the head of the pillar carvings of men and women. The pattern on the pillar connected to the wall of the men and women's palace are all Kampu pattern connecting from the bottom to the top with lines curving out on the side.

The iconic value of the architectural components found at the head of the pillars, the base of the pillars, the patterns on the pillars and the decorative pillars on the doorframe of Vat Phou, all the patterns of the sandstone palace, the men and women's palace are all patterns of aquatic plants sprung from the central part and spreading throughout the surface which symbolizes the meaning on the never-ending growth of beauty, the connectedness of the branch to the flowers or the branches to branches or connecting individual patterns with another set of pattern. The patterns on the pillars symbolizes the meaning of the root of life while forming a connection with the tree of life that can be found on the lintels and on the pillars. In conclusion, the patterns symbolize the meaning of auspicious and the everlasting growth of prosperity (Charemsupkul, 1998). The front of the pillars of the sandstone palace have additional carving of people such as a Hermit sitting in Yoga position and people sitting in a Mahalilasana position which is an integration between stories and detail. According to the iconography these carvings represents the monks the one with the knowledge, especially in the sandstone palace where a lintel shows the picture of Indra as a great Hermit and his followers. The laypeople in the carving represents a secondary tier of the Gods or the Gods of all directions.

In conclusion, the iconography found at the head of the pillar in the sandstone palace and the men and women's palace are all standard patterns which consist of Kanok pattern, face-up lotus flower, budding lotus flower, starting from the top to the bottom. The top part and the bottom part consist of 2 pattern the first pattern is that Kra Jung pattern and Krone Riab pattern. The pattern on the pillars of the sandstone palace are as follows Kam Pu look fak pattern which have a difference in the decoration in the middle part in between the Kam Pu patter which is

either a Hermit sitting in a Yoga position or a small Naga head and with pattern without Naga head or Hermit Kankhod Kampu pattern with decoration in between the Kampu Kan Khod pattern of Naga head and Kankhod Kampu pattern with the base carved as a lion.

The iconography that was found in the pediment of the sandstone palace depict a story of when Hanuman kidnapped Sida from Ramayana and Samudra Manthan. Out of the 9 iconographies found on the pediments of the men and women's palace 2 contain Kala alongside the botanic patterns, 6 contain the story of the Gods of all directions and one on Umamahesvara.

The iconography found at the false doors at the men and women's palace are as follows, the false doors consist of 2 panels carved to imitate wooden crafts and Oklao in the middle. Square plates protrude out on the panels of the gates. The middle of the gate is carved out like lotus flower petals similar to the ones found on the pillars. Same carvings were found on the head and the base of the pillars with a difference in size decorated with 8 petals lotus flower. The pollens are one big circle with 7 smaller circles or half circles inside. The middle of the gate to the library will have slimmer lotus flower petals. These patterns can be found all over in Indian arts as well as the places that received Indian influence both in the communities that practice Brahmanism-Hinduism or Buddhism. The iconography of these patterns symbolizes the light, the fertility, the purity as well as the symbol of wisdom. According to the Brahmanism and Hinduism belief, although, lotus flowers are aquatic plants they are still beautiful and clean from the mud similar to the birth of the purity of life. Another meaning for the 8 petals lotus flower is the boundary of that paradise.

The iconography found at the base of the pillars and the walls of the arch in the sandstone palace consist of 3 types a Hermit sitting in a Yoga position under an arch a person sitting under an arch and a lion. The front part of the pillars of the men and women's palace is Kampu pattern. Most of the base are the pattern of a Hermit sitting in a Yoga position with hand saluting and some with or without the knee tie. In iconography, a Hermit sitting in a Yoga position saluting symbolizes a servant to Shiva. Only 2 of the pillars are carving of layman person. The lotus flower base of the pillars consists of moulding pedestal in Kra Jung pattern with Dok Seek Dok Son pattern and Kam Pu pattern, Kanok pattern, face-up lotus flower, budding lotus flower. The moulding pedestal on the eastern side is the same set with additional base layer. Another set of moulding pedestal might be added in order to make it higher vertically. This layer of lotus flower is higher than other layers. There are

no patterns on the pillar itself. The pillar of the library, however, has a pattern of branches and leaves with a person holding on to the pattern of the branch at the bottom.

The sandstone palace holds the decorated pillars, the moulding pedestal with indented corners and the moulding pedestal on the Garbhagriha. These set of moulding pedestal is higher than the other 2 sets. Iconographically this symbolizes the higher statuses in society. Each of the pattern consist of Kra Jung Na pattern decorated with Dok Seek Dok Son pattern along with the Kam Pu pattern, the Kanok pattern face up lotus flower and budding lotus flower.

The base of the men and women's palace consist of 3 sets lotus-flower-shaped pedestal, square base and lotus base and the following patterns face-down lotus flower equal level lotus flower and face-down lotus flower. There are no other patterns for this set. For the square base, the base consist of moulding pedestal with budding lotus flower moulding pedestal with face-up lotus flowers. The iconography of this level symbolizes parts of the building with different level of importance. The lotus base has three levels, the first bases are the base of the front pillars as decoration to the wall. The second set at the base supporting the wall. The third base is the base supporting the library which will be higher than other levels some symbolizes a higher importance. The lotus flowers in this highest level might be enlarged in order to increase the height. The highest level of the lotus base will have one level more of importance above the level below them. The lotus flower base of the sandstone pagoda also has three levels of lotus flower, the high, the mid and the low level. The moulding pedestal of the library is placed higher than others to differentiate it from other bases. The corners of the walls were also decorated with huge corners in different sizes with different types of decorations. The moulding pedestal consist of the following patterns, lotus flower petals supporting the roof tiles, index shape of Dok Seek Dok Son, Kam Pu pattern, Kanok pattern, face-up lotus flower, budding lotus flower, Uba pattern in that respect.

The iconology of the round reliefs found in Vat Phou are lingums, Narayana, Narayana riding Garuda, Vishnu, Dvarabala and Konantin which are also considered the Pre-Phra Nakorn arts, the ending period of Kriang era and the beginning of the Pa Puan era. The iconology that are found on the wall of the Vat Phou were veticle (Cedes, 2000) that were trying to link between the mountains and the Gods. Saraya (2009) and Cedes (2000) stated that the design of the temple considered the verticle line as a great importance by building the structures on the higher ground or natural mountains

which was to add the mountain aspect there while the worshipping of Shiva is done on a sacred mountain or what is called Lingalakonda which is the place where the lingum is placed named Phatresuan. The focus on the verticle line of Vat Phou is based on the solar system. The gate is therefore placed towards the east where the sun rises. This is done, so, the temple can be linked to the rising and setting of the sun. The solar system is therefore, the core of the verticle line with the North and South as the secondary line. The importance of the building were therefore, arranged according to their importance by still considering the beauty. According to the architecture of Vat Phou and the lay-out of the temple according to the traditional Khmer tradition, the design consider the setting and the architecture that goes along with the physical of the mountains and the ideology behind them (Charemsupkul, 1998) which goes along with Adrian Snodgrass who stated that there are 2 functions to the buildings, the first function has to do with the beneficial use of the body and soul and the second purpose is to intellectually serve human.

The physical cultural changes to Vat Phou is in the following structure, the first part of the structural layout of the palace and also important location is the changes in the internal structure of the palace. The components of the palace, the form and the architectural structure of the palace is the changes according to the Buddhist beliefs. The palace contains the carvings of people in the middle of the lintels and the roofs. Buddha images were also placed in the front and in the Garbhagriha. Three big Buddha images were built in front in the meeting hall, the housing for monks and the Layman's Pagoda.

The study revealed that there are relationships between the beliefs, ceremonies and a mixture of traditions concerning Phraya Kumpatha, Luang Pu or Paw Pu Kammantha, Pu Taen Kham, Chao Noi Phu Kham, Chao Thammarangsi Chao, Phra Inta, Chao Kham Saen Ngon, Chao Mae Nang Sida who is a daughter of Phraya Kumpatha who resides at the female palace, Chao Taeng Kham, Chao Noi, Nai Dum, Nang Ake Hai and others. The second point is that the cultural changes of the communities around Vat Phou was through the beliefs in stories, myth and Muk Pa Tha. The tradition involved in this were Boon Vat Phou, Boon Ho Phou Kham, Boon Baan (Boon Liang Phi) Boon Kong Boon, Lao New Year Ceremony Candle light procession and paying respect to the spirits in 27 spots. The ceremonies were done according to a mixture of beliefs. The rituals and ceremonies were done in each community that relates to Buddhism, Brahmanism and Spiritualism which is in accordance to the word "local religion". There are 5

components for these traditions and ceremonies the head of the ceremony the practitioners of the ceremony the participants of the ceremony the location of the ceremony and the date and time of the ceremony.

## **DISCUSSION**

The background of the Khmer Prasadas according to the history related to the Muk Pa Tha story about people and the spirits, the Khuttanam story and the legend of Phraya Khampatha that is related to the women's palace and the personal relationship within the families in the Katthanam and Phraya Kampatha's. Phraya Kamatha's story is also related to the local history of that Sam Prang Prasadas in Sookkhuma City about the construction of the Prasadas with some of the detail cut out. Vat Phou also has a Muk Pa Tha story about the people of Champasak on the competition to build Vat Phou and Phra that Phanom in Thailand. The story is about how the males were designated to build Vat Phou and the female were designated to build Phra That Phanom. The Muk Pa Tha of the Him Sam Prang Prasadas is about the digging of the pond or the barai between the male and the female. The females were assigned to build Nong Sa while the male were assigned to build Nong Kaew. Towards the end of both stories the ending is the same in the fact that the males were not able to win in the competition in building both the Prasadas and the pond. Phra Ya Kampatha had to commit suicide. The Muk Pa Tha that was found and their relationship to the Prasadas was mostly about the sacrifice of the virgins to the giants.

The study on the local history shows that the local beliefs that is related to Vat Phou are Khatthanam, the legend of Phraya Kumpatha, the Muk Kha Ta storytelling human sacrifice, miracles concerning the spirits or ancestral spirits of both ordinary people and the kings, Thao Bachiang and Nang Malong, talking about the location related to the story, the legends of Muk Phat Tha that is related to Vat Phou and Hong Hin Nang Prasada. It can be noticed that the story surrounding Vat Phou are all complete with no detail being left out from the information gathered from the community. This might be due to the fact that Vat Phou is a large Prasadas with communities that had been settled around the place for a very long time when comparing to other stories related to other smaller Prasadas within or closer to the cities (Pongsapich, 2003). Stated that it is very crucial for the study of local history to be conducted due to the fact that the assimilation of culture normally start from the central area where the culture emerged to the outer parts. The detail of the culture might be distorted due to the incomplete transition of the culture. At the same time the

culture spread out from the local area also mixed in with the local culture and became "local culture". The history of Champasak evolves around the story of Thao Bachiang and Nang Malong. Khanhaphan and Sisamai Silapad said that Vat Phou is situated in Champasak Province and therefore, its history sometimes relates to the history of the ancestors living in the area due to its diverse geographical area. From the study by Sopha the story of Thao Bachiang and Nang Malong amongst the lower and highland Lao people in Champasak are similar. From the narrative of the highland Lao people the story exists both within the La Wae and Ngae ethnic group which shows the diversity of the different ethnic group within the area. Even though each group is different in terms of their ethnicity and culture but they have long and interactive relationship. This led to the integration of the story itself and the culture within each ethnic group. This goes along with the research from Yuenyaw (2012) that the story had the same importance to the people of Southern Isaan people which explain the background of the society and culture which is different in term of their ethnicity but were still able to maintain its social and cultural pluralism under the influence of both Buddhism and Bhramanism and the belief in spiritualism to which Chantamoon and Sriviengsa (2006) called them local religion. Local religion incorporated the ideology of the Buddhist principle in their everyday practice along with Brahmanism and Spiritualism. This symbolizes that the similarities to the Prasadas in the North Eastern part of Thailand which can be categorized according to the name and behavior of the characters and Vat Phou and the events that took place. This can be further categorized into 6 sets of beliefs which were the belief through the myths, name of the cities and name of the Prasadas the meanings through both the human characters the meaning through animals the meaning through the object the meaning through events and the meaning through the role and their relationship to Vat Phou and the surrounding area. Thammawat (1995) said that the local stories were a mixture of the local values. The beliefs are the base of their career as the behavior and of people within the society.

People in Champasak City today believe that there are spirits of ancestors in the palace. But the people have no clear knowledge of when the spirit moved into the palace and what are the names of the spirits. The knowledge was only passed down from the ancestors. From the information gathered by Khanhaphan and Sisamai Silapad it was found that there are many names such as Pu Taen Kham, Chao Noi Phu Kham, Chao Thammarungsichao, Phra Inta, Chao Kham Saen Ngon, Paw Pu Kham Ma Tha, Chao Mae Nang Sida, The daughter of Phraya Kampatha, Chao Tang Kham, Chao



Noi, Nai Dam, Nang Ake Hai and many more. Poyomyong (1985) and Rangsi (1999) stated that the absence of knowledge created a belief to substitute that missing knowledge. Men live by faith if men can't prove what certain things are those things will be called according to the local people which were mostly spirits, Gods or ancestor's spirit. These beliefs go along with the actions or rituals that was belief to have pleased these supernatural beings also for the feeling of relief for themselves and their friends. This goes along with what Setthoe (1989) had mentioned about fact that these practices and rituals bring about good fortune, success, happiness, safeties and on the opposite if these practices or rituals are not performed, bad things will happen such as bad lucks, enemies, sicknesses and disasters. The leaders and the people around Vat Phou really have this belief. They will perform a ceremony once a year may be before the Lao new year or before each planting season while each of the ceremony do have their own names such as Boon Haw Phu Kham or "Boon Ban" or "Boon Liang Phi", Liang Phi Haw Phu Kham ceremony which will be held on the second the 5th day of the first quarter of the Lunar calendar the day has to be either Thursday and Sunday for 2 year in a row. On the 3 year, the ceremony will be held 2 days through mediums. There are fortune-telling done using the internal organs of the water buffloes and ther will be ceremony dedicated to the deceased on the last day.

From the collection of data in brief, the local belief of the people of Champasuk relates to the natural phenomenon, the belief on good timing, the belief in using the animals to predict the future of the cities and communities, the Buddhist and Brahmanism beliefs, the belief concerning the research, the belief in the traditions related to the community, the belief in luck and how to change our luck, the belief in hell, Heaven, pas lives, researcher world, karma and lucky and unlucky numbers or days.

The background of Vat Phou based on its the history started from before the Phra Nakhon era which consist of Cham influence which can be found in the architectural form of the brick pagoda with the art form dated to the pre Phra Nakhon era. When Chanla Dynasty was at its peak, there were 4 stone inscriptions with clearly specified dates. Inscription K 365 specifies the year BE 998-1015 with its content talking about King Thevanika from Ham Dynasty which correlates with the architectural forms of the brick pagoda that was assumed to have been built in the time when Cham Dynasty was at its peak. Inscription K367, B.E. 1197-1234 talked about Chaivarnan I with the content talking about paying respects and praising Shiva and about paying respect to Lingaparvata. In the

following era when the power was shifted to Phra Nakhon. Inscription K1230 during the year 1468 talked about honoring three kings and the offering to Shiva by King Isanvarman and relates to inscription K380 dated the year B.E. 1561, 1580, 1583 during the time of King Suriyavarman I until the time of King Uthitvarman which relates to the continuous offering and the patriotism of Lingaparvata. There were also some renovations in the following eras, even though the center of power was already moved to Phra Nakhon. There were also many ruins around Champasak which the centralized power was still in Setthapura around the year BE 1185-1250. Towards the end of the Vat Phou era there were some renovation following Kriang's art towards the end of its era until the beginning of the Pa Puan era such as in the sandstone palace, the men and women's palace. Even though the power had already been moved to Isanpura, Kumphongthom, the art form was still spread to this area. The lintel contains carving of the Gods of all directions or second tier Gods which Sukhasvasti (1999) stated that the carvings were carved on the lintels and pediments at the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century of Buddhist Era. These carvings were found on 15 pieces. The most important lintel at the sandstone palace is the carving of Shiva sitting in a Yoga position which shows that this religious structure respect Shiva as the highest God. The most important lintel in the men's palace is the carving of the Gods of all directions or second tier God. The most important lintel in the women's palace is the Poom Khao Bin pattern on top of Kala's face, the lintel during Kliang era of Kala using the hand to hold on to the garland coming out of its mouth. The face of the Kala will be towards the bottom with triangle shaped leaves on top of the garland. The garland is divided in the middle by the flower and the Uba. Leksukhum (2010) called this "pattern stop". The pattern stops that were found in the lintels of Vat Phou consist of 2 types, the first type clearly divide the garland into 2 parts in the middle while the second type still shows the connection between the pattern stop and the garland. For Kala during the connecting period between the Kliang and the Pa Puan period shows the part of the arms. The Kala during this period shows the Poom Khao Bin on top and the fangs of the Kala which is the art form during the Pa Puan period. Therefore, it can be concluded that the form of Kala is the art form during the transition between different periods. The Kala found in the men and women's palace is from the Kliang's period but contain no arms which can be assumed that the art was from the transition period between the end of Kliang period to the beginning of the Pa Puan period. (Diskul, 1996) stated that there were a mixed of different types of the Kala's face in one piece. The art form during the

Kliang's period is similar to the art found on the lintel of the Eastern gate of the palace. The eyes were small and round and were placed far apart from each other. The outline of the eyes was minimal and the nose bridge wasn't carved to be high. The lips were carved to be leveled with the eyes. The upper lips were slightly decorated. The tongues were in triangle shape with carvings of flowers decorated at the tip of the tongues. The visors contain two curved lines overlapping each other. Over the lines were flower petals on top of one another. The hands of the Kala can be found holding on to the garland with four fingers on each side with very identical length. The Kala of this type can be found on six lintels in the sandstone palace. One of the lintels were different which might be due to the intention of the crafters or an unfinished job. A flower petal is found in between the eyes. The lower lips were in a form called *Kiattimuk* which is an art form during the Pa Puan period while the rest of the lips remain the same.

The lintel with the Pa Puan art that were found usually have Buddha image above Kala face with the God under the arch or a person sitting over the vehicle or a story with a short story which can be found a lot at the men and women's palace. In some places, the garland that comes out from the mouth of the Kala will go upward. This is the real Pa Puan art. The clothing consists of cloth that is used to wear as a skirt with small pleats with the front part lower than the back part. The part of the cloth with no pleat is normally on the right side which is the Pa Puan art form Diskul (1996). The art form on many of the lintels have detail and components that shows the overlapping of the eras, thus, create an integration of the art forms. In other words, the third type of the lintel consist of garland that were separated into two parts while still showing the continuity and relation. This form is an evolution before the change in the art form era which goes along with the study of Siriphat and Weraprasert (1990) that shows that the Prasadhas found on the Northeast of Thailand mostly have a mix between Kliang and Pa Puan art and can rarely be found in Phra Nakhon City. These characteristics can also be found in Vat Phou.

Diskul (1996) said that the carvings of people wearing cloths with small pleats while the front part lower than the back part. The part with no pleats is normally on the right side. The carvings found the most are carvings of people sitting on the arch. The second forms are carvings of people accompanying the story. The third type is the story of Buddha image in front of the Kala. These two types are similar. These kind of arts form is from the ending of Kliang era to the end of the Pa Puan era. These two types are similar. Kanok patterns are carved

surrounding the main image. The middle part of the pediments have face up lotus flower carved on them. The Kala with round faces facing outward with bulging round eyes. Teeth were visible along the lips with high cheek bones and two hands holding the garland which is connected to the folding leaves. The visors are in triangle shape. Siriphat and Weraprasert (1990) stated that the Kala that have triangle shape mouth with hands holding the garland is an art form of Kliang era. The pediment during the Pa Puan era has a dragon with the body decorated with the *Nak Sa Doong* pattern. The curve of the body was carved with the moulding pedestal of face-down lotus flower while the upper half of the body were decorated with the triangle leaves with the fins pointing upward on both sides. The edge of the pediments consists of a dragon head spitting out five-headed Nagas from small to large head in respective. The middle Naga hold the *Uba* in its mouth that falls down the chests. The heads of the Naga were decorated with crowns. There are also *Poon Khao Bin* pattern around the curve of the body with the pattern of small leaves from top to bottom except for the curve along the *Poon Khao Bin* pattern.

Diskul (1996) stated that the decorative pillars that contain triangle shaped leaves, *Kra Jung* patterns, budding lotus flower patterns if a specific part is small, dotted line pattern would be applied. There were also face-up and face-down lotus flower which are all the pattern that belong to the *Koh Kae* art, the contemporary art, *Ban Thai Saree* art, *Kling* art and Pa Puan art. The triangle shaped leaves separated by the moulding pedestal patterns were unique to the Kliang art form during the second half of the 15th and first half of the 16th Century in Buddhist era. Three rings were curved out and the triangle leaves are mostly of the same size along with the moulding pedestal and the lotus flower petals that can be found a lot during the Pa Puan era. Therefore, the art form of the doorframe of the sandstone palace along with the men and women's palace is in the end of Kliang's period and the beginning of the Pa Puan period. But those art form somehow disappeared during the Pa Puan period but can be found only at the gate into the royal palace which is in the transitioning period between the Kliang's period to the Pa Puan's period.

As for the main pagoda and the other pagodas, the main pagoda is the most important. It was built as a place to install all the main images of the Gods that people respect. It can also be explained from the installation which each image is from Diskul (1996). Therefore, the iconography of the sandstone pagoda of Vat Phou which is a sacred site and hold important status. The top of the wall contains the images of Shiva sitting in the *Yoga* positions which signifies that this religious site

respect Shiva and Shiva is the God of Hinduism in Shaivism. The carvings was arranged according to the priority and the most important ones are of Shiva in Brahmanism-Hinduism.

The carvings with the story was put in important locations to emphasize the importance and the utmost respects. There are three levels of importance within the Brahmanism-Hinduism: the carvings of Shiva, Narayana and Brahma or what we called Trimurti. The next level down are of the second tier Gods such as Indra, Laksami (the wife of Narayana) Uma (the wife of Shiva) and the next level down is of Apsara and the Hermits. According to the iconography, the carvings within Vat Phou were arranged according in a similar way to the carvings arrangement by Diskul (1996). The study by Siriphat and Weraprasert (1990) and Niyom Wongpongkham (2004) which categorized the carvings according to the principle of iconography into 4 groups, the story of the Hinduism in Shaivism sect which is about Shiva, Vaishnavism which talks about Narayana and Brahma, the story of the second tier Gods which is Indra and all the Gods or protectors from each direction and the story concerning the animals. The carvings of people or other Gods within Vat Phou also signifies that this ancient temple was also a religious complex for other religions. This can be seen from the carvings of Narayana in different avatars which consist of Krishna overcoming the Kaliya, Krishna killing Phaya Kong and as well as other Gods for instance, 2 pieces of Indra riding elephants, Naraya riding Garuda, the Gods of the directions or second-tier Gods and Hermits on the pillars.

The iconography for in different part of the decorative architectures consist of the stories about animals. The majority of the animal carvings found are of the Naga or what the local called “Nhu Suang” such as the Nagas on the lintels, the Naga carved into the pediments, the Naga on the staircase, the Kala on the lintels and pediments which consist of 2 types, the first types is of front portrait of people or Poom Kao Bin patterns while the second type is of the Kala spitting out five-headed Nagas which will be a sideway portrait. The face of the Kala is special for this last patterns due to the face that the face will be smaller and will be part of the decorations within the garland decorated in the sandstone pagodas, small lions, garudas and squirrels. These animals will be placed in conjunction to the botanic patterns such as the triangle leaves, curling leaves and Poom Kao Bin pattern. These three patterns are normally engraved onto the same lintels with the integration of small ubas. Other patterns which are part of the architecture are lotus flower petals, Bua Khap pattern, big and small budding lotus flower, dotted line and small leaves.

The study of the architectural components of Vat Phou reveals the contemporary art within one lintel. Siriphat and Weraprasert (1990) stated that the associations between the different kinds of arts within one art piece or the associations of the two types of architecture within one religious places can be found mostly in the 16th century of Buddhist era during the end of the Kriang era to the beginning of the Pa Puan era. This can also be found in Vat Phou as well as the Khmer ruins in the Northeast of Thailand. It can also be noted that the mixing of the 2 kinds of arts occurred due to the transitional period, during the time of Phra Nakahon, Cambodia was motherland and the center of the arts while other kinds of arts also came in and both kinds of arts became integrated. The distance from where the art travel from and the popularity of the arts and happened almost at the same point in time. Champasak is very far from Phra Nakhon, similar to the other Prasadas in the North East of Thailand which increases the possibilities in the assimilation of the art forms. However, this also makes it more difficult to determine the age of the lintels and other architectures due to the fact that the Khmer Prasadas weren't always the origin of the art forms but also taking the art forms from other areas. The arts would sometime take time before arriving to certain areas and some came after certain types of art form was no longer popular. The art form in its destined area might have already changed. The art form that are found in the Vat Phou architecture overall were influenced by the culture. After the peak of Chenla Dynasty and the decaying of Cham Dynasty while the Khmer kingdom were at the peak of its power with the centralized power at Phra Nakhon. During the 12-18 century BE Khmer culture was at its peak and had spread out in a wide area and remain for hundreds of year in the North Eastern part of Thailand and the Southern part of Lao which can be found in the ancient evidences in Champasak area, since, the time prior to the Phra Nakhon era, during the Phra Nakhon era and up until the final era in Chaivarman 7 which was the source of many art form in the following eras.

The layout of Vat Phou according to the ancient architectural point of view consist with the “Lay Out” according to the Khmer belief which considered the location of the structure that goes in accordance with the geological physics of the Phu Klao as well as the belief on Dheva Bunphot idea. The architecture itself was designed with the surround areas in mind all the way from the layout to the building designs, all the decorations on the buildings or close to the buildings themselves as well as all minor detail (Charernsupkul, 1998). This goes along with what Snodgrass (1998) mentioned that there are two functions to the structure of the buildings. The first function was to serve the need of both the physical and

mental needs. The second function was to serve human intellectual. The layout of Vat Phou was built in an axial form Ccedes (2000) by connect the mountain range to the Gods. Saraya (2009) and Ccedes (2000) stated that the layout and the layout for each of the direction are all based on the axial form building structures on the higher ground or natural hills or mountains. This came from the idea of respecting the mountains and paying respect to Shiva and the Gods on the mountain which were call Lingam Mountain which is the location of a Lingum called "Pattara Rewet". Vat Phou gives a lot of importance to the axial when laying down the directions is the Prasadas itself basing on the standard solar system. The main pagoda, therefore, faces the east which is the direction where the sun rises in the morning for it to be in order with the time and the axial of the universe with the east and the west. The solar system is therefore, the main component of the wall supported by the North and South axis. The status of the buildings were prioritized according to the their importance as well as their beauty by Diskul (1996). The layout of Vat Phou consist of axis that lead to the center which is the design for the religious buildings that will be built on the mountain called "Dheva Bunphot". There are two iconography forms the horizontal layout and the vertical layout, so, simulate the universe.

Overall on iconography that exist in the Khmer architecture contain the story of Shivaism and Vishuism, the second-tier gods and the animals. The iconography that can be found in the Khmer structure according to each era are as follows, the botanic pattern and the portrait or the Gods. The iconography of the Khmer Prasadas consist of 2 types, the vertical and horizontal axials which symbolizes the universe.

The iconography found in the architecture that focuses on each architectural component contain the patterns telling stories of the patterns and the animals. The animals found the most on the decorations are Nagas or what the local people called by the name of "Ngu Suang" such as the Naga decorated in the lintels on the stair rails, Kala face on the lintels and on the pediments. The pattern in the pediments 2. The first ones are mostly front portrait or Poom Khao Bin while the second one is of the Kala's face spitting out 5 Naga heads. The Kala's face is facing sideways. The unique thing about the Kala is that it will be decorated on the garland on the lintels at the sandstone pagoda, small lion, Garuda and squirrels. These animals were placed to connect to the botanic pattern and were the components of the carving on the main carvings and the botanic pattern such as the triangle leaves, curling leaves, Poom Khao Bin pattern. The three patterns are mostly on the same lintels with the small Uba

flower. Other patterns consist of lotus flowers pedetals, Bua Khap pattern, big and small lotus flower, dotted lines and small leaves.

The floating arts that are found in Vat Phou can be categorized in the pre Phra Nakhon era and the art form towards the Kliang era and the beginning of the Pa Puan era. The carvings that exist the most are of the Hermit on the pillars. The base of the pillars is a square base with a Hermit sitting in a yago position saluting under the arch on both sides of the pillars. On the Northern part of the building, the rectangular pillars can be found with the carving of the Hermits judging from the clothing with some sort of crown on the head, wearing beard and dress like a priest. In general, the Hermits were carved into a row above the top of the lintels, saluting and sitting in the yoga position with a string tied to each knee until the year 1500 BE such as the lintel at the Muang Khaek Prasadas in Nakhon Ratchasrima Province, Thailand. The string that is tied to the knee started to disappear after the year 1500 such as the Pa Puan art that are found at Muang Tum, Buriram Province. It can be noticed that the patterns on the door of the entrance and the patterns on the pillars are less clear than the outer part. The carvings on the pillars are mostly of Hermits.

The physical changes to Vat Phou had to do with the changes in the following layout of the Khmer Prasada, the first part of the floor plan of the Prasadas and also the main position of this ancient temple is in the library in the sandstone pagoda where three big Buddha images were installed after the fading of the Khmer civilization in the 18 century BE. The return of Buddhism and the spiritualism that was started in the past due to the fact that the people in the leading positions were from similar culture. The second part is the pediment in the sandstone pagoda where the lintel in the middle have traces of the carving that had been removed with the main image of a person sitting under an arch above the Kala. The Kala's arm contains the pattern of the horse saddle. Triangle leaves can be found above the garland pointing towards the center part. The same set of leaves also exist underneath the garland. The lintel was that of the Pa Puan era. From the information from the department of world heritage can be concluded that the person in carved on the lintel was supposedly Indra. The reason why the carving was removed were not conclusive. The first suspicion was due to the intentional damage and the second reason was due to the supernatural ceremony of some specific people with specific belief which can also be found in Phnom Rung ruin Prasadas and Pimai prasada in Thailand.

The community's cultural adjustment to Khmer Prasadas correlates to their beliefs, rites and traditions which relates to Buddhism, Brahmanism, Animism and

ancestral spirits worshipping. Such behaviors can be conveyed as 'villagers' 'religion'. By studying the components of tradition or rites it was found that the key components are the head of the ceremony practitioner of the ceremony participants of the ceremony location of the ceremony and date and time when the ceremony is to be held. The study also revealed other components of the ceremony which was found to be practiced by villagers within the Khmer Prasadas. Those components which relates to Buddhism are 'Wai a Thai (and Lao) gesture showing of respect by putting two palms together over one's chest' worshipping, appeasing the spirits, holding 'Boon Ban' or 'Boon Lieng Phi' ceremony, holding annual 'Boon Tad' triple circumambulation, 'Bun Pha Wet' 'Bun Pha Wet' takes place on different dates throughout the month of January each year. This festival is a commemoration of the Jakata, the life story of lord Buddha as Prince Vesantara. The story is performed in temples throughout Lao PDR and this is considered as an auspicious time for people to ordinate as a monk. Laos New Year and Tang Kong Bun' is a ceremony where practitioner will donate their money for religious purpose to enhance one's financial fortune or prevent one to come across financial problems. Other components relating to Brahmanism are 'Phi Tee sut ceremony dedicated to the deceased, spiritual ceremony such as making offerings to spirits and spirit invoking ceremony which shows combination of mixed ceremonies. From the study it can be concluded that people living in the community around Vat Phou practiced a lot of worshipping, since, there were over 27 different places practiced ceremonies as in the aforementioned. Their beliefs have to do lot with ancestral or sacred spiritual worship as well as ceremony involved blessings. The triple circumambulation ceremony is usually held on the 15th day of the 3rd waxing Moon. Merit making, 'Kong Bun' and 'Hor Phu Kham-giving offerings to spirits are held every year. The findings of this study on religious ceremonies and traditions practiced are inline with what Tossawut (2012) found in his studies which investigated into 'Phrang Ku'. It was found that evolvement and change that happened in the context of belief towards 'Phrang Ku' affected the communities' life styles as well as their shared life valued their history making and their net working within the community. It was also found that ceremony and belief system of the community resonates well with their life style for example, 'Bun Bang Fai' festival, 'Song Ku' ceremony and votive offerings. Evolvement and changes are also consistent with their faith and context within the area Roles and system about their belief in 'Phrang Ku' is in line with people's lifestyle in 3 different respects. I-saan way of merchandise production system, social governing

method and way of promotion to a higher social class which is an important component in belief system. And lastly in terms of living condition connected to 'Phrang Ku' belief it was found that important conditions are about passing on their belief from tis to the next generation, strictly following in accord to one's belief and creating or making room for holy sanctuary as well as partaking of people from within and outside the community. This is very similar to the way 'Ngan Bun Hoe Phou Kham' was held near 'Phou Glao' area.

Physical adjustment or change that happened in Khmer Prasadas and its floorplan was due to the reconstruction and renovation that was made to make the place more comfortable to the religious participants partaking in the ceremony that was held in accord to their belief as well as thier annual traditional practices or other practices partake by palmers. For example, making a pledge or vow to the spirits such as an offering of worship, etc. This was consistent with Sukhasvasti's (1999) saying that the changes that happened in the worship house of Brahmanism were converted to Buddhism temples. The cultural adjustment found within the community consist of belief ceremony and traditions that closely connected to Buddhism, Brahmanism and Animism. All of these can be defined as 'villagers' religion' that the community will only practice the portion that harmonize with their lifestyle and local culture. This is in line with Chantamoon and Sriviengsa's (2006) that concludes that 'villagers' 'religion' is the mix of local traditions found in Buddhist regular practices and those of Brahmanism and Animism. Thammawat (1995) also added that villager's religion is the combination of local tradition. As for Chantachon (2008) he said that 'Heed Sib Song' ceremony is an important element of culture in Laos where tradition is a foundation and of great importance in one's decision about careers and action. Tradition in Laos has been passed on from generations to generations over a long period of time that it was deeply embedded in the people's conscience, since, then till now.

All of these communitie's cultural adjustment to Khmer Prasadas were found to be changed both in the light of social and cultural spectrums. They are all related to one's analysis from the view of history of the community's change in social context, background and social network that connects people of different levels within the community. By such analysis, one is able to see how changes evolved over the course of time. It can be seen that Laotian living in the vicinity of Khmer Prasadas tend to adjust themselves to the existing culture but are still able to remain their own authentic culture. In other words what they have is the mix of different cultures with

a little trace of their own traditions. They adapted themselves to the new culture but did not altogether neglect their own traditions. This is the combination that harmonize everything together in the later phase and became what people today called 'villager's religion'. This is consistent with the statements of Rajadhon (1972) and Thomas (1967) that said the combination between different cults or religions by only selecting the portions that conform to the local lifestyles and culture creates a total unique identity/character. Though such unique identity might not be solely and correctly consistent to one certain religion it is not an ignorant belief. Basically, there are three kinds of beliefs, Animism, Brahmanism and Buddhism. These beliefs are harmonizingly mixed and became one unique tradition and culture of the locality. If look at it as a cultural combination, the two different cultures were borrowed and lend as well as exchanged over a long period of time that both parties accept the other's culture as their own. According to Wannasiri (1997) the harmonizingly mixed culture was once happened in Khmer civilization which can be found in Khmer architectural research. In the early reign, the patterns and details were influenced by 'Cham India' and Java. Later, changes developed that the patterns in architectural research were different from the original style that it later became one's own unique identity. This influence was extended to Southern Laos and the North Eastern and as well as some part of Thailand's central parts. Such trend was defined (Wannasiri, 1997) as something called 'cultural assimilation'.

When conducted a review of the past studies and literature it helps one to see the development of different beliefs. It was found that the pre-historic Laotian once believed in 'Maugn Taen', 'Hin Dao', 'Hin Tung' and 'Hai Hin' culture. At least 600 BC later before 'Lao Kod Boon' Empire who believed in Buddhism was established based on the event records of China during the reign of Sui Dynasty (589-618) it says that Khmer Empire or 'Jenla' then, invaded Laos and prospered around 11-12 Buddhist era. However, later they were evicted by ancient Khmer as written in 'Teiwa Nika' stone inscription when it mentioned about 'Sed Pura' City. Jenla Empire was originally from Funan Empire. Around 16th Buddhist era, Funan Empire which was at the time a Brahman-believing-nation, influenced Jenla in terms of politics and arts and at the same time brought in cultures from India. Khmer civilization was very much prospered within the area during 12-18th Buddhist era. Later, after Khmer King Jayavarman 7 died, the power of Khmer that used to prospered within the area became deteriorated until it was no longer influence the land in anyway

(Diskul, 1996). After that in 1.357 the king named 'Fah Ngum' was able to garnered and won over all of Laos land. People during his reign were Theravada Buddhist under Khmer court. However, before this king's reign people there used to be Animism and believed in 'Heed Sib Kong' tradition, spirits named 'Phee Fah', 'Phee Taen', ancestral spirits, 'Mahesak' spirit or spirit that look after a city and house ghosts. Such spirits can be found in both Brahmanism and Buddhism. People used to make merit in a Buddhist ways held religious house blessing ceremony invited monks to pray 'Phra Parit Mongkol' prayer, followed 5 precepts. listened to sermons, offered food to spirits and called ancestral spirits (passed away father, mother, grandfather, grandmother) to join the ceremony, selected an auspicious day based on religious belief to hold 'Tung Kong Bun' ceremony and held 'Bai Si Soo Kwan' ceremony (Chantachon, 2008). During when King 'Fah Ngum' aggregated 'Lan Cang' Empire, Theravada Buddhist was very much prospered. However, there were still some Brahmanism ceremonies that were practiced by the general people there who still believed in spirits. Since, the era of 'Sam Raat', Buddhism has been practiced as well as Brahmanism and Animism until this day. All practices were somehow still related to 'heed sib song' tradition. Again, during 'Sam raat' era, Buddhism became the main religion and the spiritual anchor of Laotian in the land despites that worshipping of spirits like 'Phee Fah' 'Phee Taen' still also practiced by the common and royal people.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the pre-historic Laotian believed in 'Phee Taen' spirit. Later in Lao Kod Bud era, people became Buddhists. In Jenla era, the land was influenced by Brahmin-Hindu through Funan Empire. When the Khmer was in power, Brahmin-Hindu belief was extensively believed by upper class people. Moreover, Devaraja or God-king believers would regard their king as God. Therefore, Brahman would usually be invited to run the ceremony to consecrate the king. It can be seen that Laotian had gone through believing many kinds of beliefs. And when one accepts several religions at the same time, there's a tendency that that person would select only the portion that suits to himself based on the other influenced factors. Cultural adjustment is therefore, the combination of different cultures. In other words, 2 parties belong to different cultures and power. The culture of the one who is less powerful will tend to be assimilated under social, economic and community change. We eventually see that Laotian in the past originally believed in tean spirit,

Buddhism and Animism before Khmer civilization which is an-outside culture was brought into the land. Khmer had brought in Brahmanism belief which was later extensively practiced within the land, since, Khmer became more powerful. In the other hand once Khmer power was deteriorated, Buddhism and Animism was again prospered. However, the trace of Brahminism belief can still be seen. This shows the fact that Laotian change their belief very much depends on the leader of the country. However, they were still able to hold on to their authentic belief from the past until today despites changes that they had gone through.

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