

# SNAKE WORSHIP: SYMBOLIZATION OF HOLY IN INDOCHINA

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## ABSTRACT

Snake is an important animal that poses mysterious story in several local ancient cultures. The worship of snake can be seen around the world. In Indochina, the worship of snake can be seen at present and is considered an important rooted culture. In this short articles, the author discusses on the existence of snake worship as an important symbolization seen in several temples in Indochina.

**KEYWORDS:** Snake, Worship, Indochina, Temple.

## INTRODUCTION

Snake is an important animal that poses mysterious story in several local ancient cultures. The worship of snake can be seen around the world. In Indochina, the worship of snake can be seen at present and is considered an important rooted culture. As noted by Okuda and Kiyokawa, *"Snakes have been used for worship, magic potions and, medicine, and they have been the symbol of love, health, disease, medicine, pharmacy, immortality, death and even wisdom [1]."* Antoniou et al. noted that *"The snake was impressed in the Old and the New Testament as well as in the Christian tradition as a symbol of sin, rejuvenation, death, resurrection, asthenia, and therapy [2]."* However, in Asia culture, it is totally different, snake is usually considered holy symbol. In this short articles, the author discusses on the existence of snake worship as an important symbolization seen in several temples in Indochina.

## CASES OF CAMBODIA

The snake has been long believed in Cambodia. The naga or holy god is usually the composition of an ancient and present architecture of

Cambodia and the local people called Neak Raj. The holy snake temple is the reflection of believed of hindu god as well as Buddhism. The most important temple that greatly reflected the feature of god snake is the Neak Pan temple site in Ankor. In present culture, the local Cambodia usually worship Neak Raj and Neak Raj still exists in festival and community activity.

## CASES OF MYANMAR

The case of snake worship in Myanmar is similar to the Cambodia. But the main reflection is the symbol of the Buddhist practice. There are some specific Buddhist temples or pagodas in Myanmar that specifically worship to Buddha image and snake. The places are called "Hwe Pya". At the temple, pythons can be seen and live at the Buddha image waiting for people to worship.

## CASES OF THAILAND

In Thailand, due to rooted belief in Buddhism, the worship to snake as a composition of Buddhist practice can be seen. Snake and Buddha is usually combined and is the specific characteristic for ones who born on Saturday.

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In Thailand, Naga is the holy god, which is the same as India. Naga is usually seen in the architecture in the Buddhist temple. Also, the existence of Naga in some holy shrine can be seen and become integrated in the way of life of local people. The famous naga site is the Kamchanode in Udonthani province in the northeast region where people usually come to worship Naga and also have the new fashion linked to the gambling behavior.

### **CASES OF MALAYSIA**

In Malaysia, the traditional practice of Chinese Buddhism is observable despite Muslim is the main practice of the country. In Penang, where the Chinese Malaysian live, the dragon can be seen. But there is also an interesting place of snake worship. The snake temple or "Chor Soo Kong - 望脚蘭福興宮蛇廟" in Penang is a very famous Buddhist-taoist shrine. At the temple,

several vipers are kept and freely lived. People usually goes to worship the shrine and praying.

### **CONCLUSION**

The holy snake is usually rooted believed in Indochina. The existence of the real snake in the local temple, as seen in Myanmar and Malaysia, is very interesting and cannot be seen elsewhere in the world.

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