Memory of the World Asia Pacific Regional Register Nomination Form

1 Title of Documentary Heritage Item or Collection (max 10words)

Ma Nhai (Inscriptions) on the Marble Mountains, Da Nang City

2 Summary (max 200 words)

Inscriptions on the Marble Mountains, Da Nang City, is a system consisting of 78 documents in Chinese and Nom characters (Sino-Nom) carved on cliffs and caves, with variety in content and literary genres, created by the kings and mandarins of Nguyen Dynasty, venerable monks and intellectuals, dating from the first half of the 17th century to the 20th century

This is a unique and irreplaceable documentary heritage, which get the attention of Vietnamese and foreign researchers by its multi-faceted values in history, religion, geography, literature, language, culture and education.

The Inscriptions on the Marble Mountains store the "memories" of the economic, cultural, political and social contacts between Viet Nam and other countries on the maritime route across the region as well as the role of the Vietnamese women in the international marriages in the 17th century.

3 Nominator/s Contact details

3.1 Name of nominator/s (person/s or organisation/s)

Da Nang Department of Culture and Sports

3.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

Organization of state management of cultural heritage in the area of Da Nang City

3.3 Contact person/s

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4 Declaration of Authority

I certify that I/we have the authority to nominate the documentary heritage described in this document to the Asia Pacific Regional Memory of the World Register. All nominators must sign here. (A signed support letter from the nominators' National Commissions is required when the nomination is from two or more Member States. See Section J in the Process document for more details)

Name Pham Tan Xu	Position Director of Da Nang Department of Culture and Sports
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Signature/s of nominator/s _____ **Pham Tan Xu**

5 Legal Information

5.1 Owner/s of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different from the nominator/s)

Name Management Board of the Marble Mountains	Address 81 Huyen Tran Cong Chua Street, Hoa Hai Ward, Ngu Hanh Son District, Da Nang City, Viet Nam
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5.2 Custodian/s of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner/s)

Name	Address
Telephone:	

5.3 Legal status

As a heritage associated with the Special National Relic of the Marble Mountains, those inscriptions should be protected in accordance with the provisions of the law of the State of Viet Nam, typically the Law on Cultural Heritage in 2001, the Law amending and supplementing a number of articles of the Law on Cultural Heritage in 2009, and the recognition the Marble Mountains scenic spot as the special national-ranked relic by the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam in Decision No. 1820/QD-TTg dated 24 December, 2018.

5.4 Accessibility

Direct: Everyone who visits the spot can see and take photographs

Indirect:

- The entire content of the inscriptions on the Marble Mountains has been taken estampages and translated into Vietnamese and English; a database has been built for look up. The estampages are currently stored at the Vietnam Institute of Sino-Nom Studies and the Da Nang Museum. The database of the inscriptions can be searched on the Website: http://www.baotangdanang.vn and the data bank of Da Nang's cultural heritage of the Da Nang Museum.

Among them, the inscription of the Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat [普陀山靈中佛] was published in full verbatim, transliterated and translated, and became a model document for teaching Sino-Nom characters in the textbook *Foundation of Sino-Nom philology* edited by Prof. Le Tri Vien.[1]

5.5 Copyright status

Using, copying, and printing from the database must be authorized by the management agency and comply with the government's regulations on procedures for exploitation and use of documents and the right to access cultural heritage of Vietnamese Government.

[1] Le Tri Vien (Editor) (1987), Foundation of Sino-Nom philology, volume 4, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 21

6 Details of the Nominated Documentary Heritage

6.1 Exact title of the documentary heritage

Ma Nhai (Inscriptions) on the Marble Mountains, Da Nang City

6.2 Type of documentary heritage

Inscriptions by Sino - Nom on cliffs /caves.

6.3 Catalogue or registration details *(attached annex 1 – detail list of inscriptions on the Marble Moutains)*

Through surveying the current inscriptions on the Marble Mountains, we have counted 78 documents (including 76 Chinese inscriptions and 02 Nom inscriptions), as follows:

a) Inscriptions in Hoa Nghiem Cave, Thuy Son Mountain

Currently, according to our survey and statistics, on Hoa Nghiem cave of the Marble Mountains, there are about 20 inscriptions, of which 15 are readable and 05 blurred.

The dates of these inscriptions spread over many periods. The earliest is the inscription Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat [普陀山靈中佛] (carved in 1640) and the latest is the inscription of Phung Tao Quan The Am Bo Tat Ton Tuong (Respectively build the Statue of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva) (Buddhist calendar 2518 – At Mui year, 1955). Besides, some inscriptions do not have a date engraved.

Inscriptions on Hoa Nghiem cave are mainly landscape poems describing the beauty of Marble Mountains. Moreover, there are a number of inscriptions with the the dates and names of the writers, such as the one at the statue of Avalokiteśvara and the inscription on the tablet Phuoc Quang Sa Mon [the Bonze of Phuoc Quang Pagoda]).

b) Inscriptions in Huyen Khong Cave, Thuy Son Mountain

According to statistics, there are 30 inscriptions on Huyen Khong Cave; however, only 15 are readable, 09 too blur to read, and 06 plastered with cement and paint.

Most of the inscriptions on Huyen Khong cave are landscape poems; besides, there is also 01 “ngu che” (King’s writing) of Emperor Minh Mang “Huyen Khong Cave 玄 空 洞 ” and some inscriptions carved with names to record memories when visiting the Marble Mountains

c) Inscriptions in Tang Chon Cave, Thuy Son Mountain

According to our statistics, there are 20 inscriptions on the cliffs of Tang Chon Cave. Among them, the earliest date of them is the inscription Nam Bao Dai Hinh Bi 南宝臺馨碑 carved under the Nguyen Dynasty (before the 18th century; the date is not confirmed because there is no chronology on the inscription), the latest is the inscription carved the name of Mai Vien Nguyen Khoa Nghi (the 13th year of Bao Dai’s reign - 1938). Inscriptions on Tang Chon Cave are mainly landscape poems,

names and titles carvings in various styles and scripts.

There are 16 inscriptions with clear inscripts and readable contents; 04 are chiseled or plastered with cement and paint; fortunately, their contents were copied quite fully in Ngu Hanh Son Luc [五行山錄], a document compiled in Chinese by Baccalaureate Ho Thang Doanh at the beginning of Khai Dinh's reign [1916]. Therefore, almost all 20 texts of the inscriptions on Tang Chon Cave can be fully understood.

d) Inscriptions in Van Thong Cave, Thuy Son Mountain

There are 02 inscriptions in Van Thong Cave; the one is the inscription Ngu Uan Son Co Tich Phat Tich Diet Lac 伍緼山古跡佛寂滅樂, by Zen master Hue Dao Minh, engraved in the year of the Goat (1631). The other is the inscription of Van Thong Cave 云 通 洞 in fine regular script, which was the "ngu che" (King's writing) of Emperor Minh Mang in (1837).

Nowadays, the inscription Ngu Uan Son Co Tich Phat Tich Diet Lac is not intact because some people overwrote in Vietnamese language.

e) Inscriptions in Linh Nham Cave, Thuy Son Mountain

Currently, Linh Nham Cave has 03 inscriptions, in which there is the inscription of Linh Nham Cave [靈巖洞, which was the "ngu che" (King's writing) of Emperor Minh Mang in 1837, the remaining two inscriptions have been filled with cement, so the content is unknown.

f) Inscriptions at other locations

At Van Can Nguyet Quat Cave 雲根月窟, Thien Phuoc Dia Cave 洞天福地, Van Nguyet Coc Cave 雲 月 谷 still retain 03 inscriptions with the writings of Emperor Minh Mang who reigned in 1837 engraved with the name of the caves.

6.4 Images of the documentary heritage.

Estampage of the inscription *Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat* (in Hoa Nghiem Cave)
[普陀山靈中佛]

Content: Zen Master Hue Dao Minh, in Du Xuyen commune, Ngoc Son District, Tinh Gia County, restored the Buddha Pagoda on Pho Da Mountain (The Marble Mountains) and Binh An Pagoda on the foot of the mountain. Buddhist believers, including some from Japan, China and other places, gave offerings a lot.

Author: Zen Master Hue Dao Minh

Date: The Year of the Dragon (1640)

Location: Hoa Nghiem Cave

Inscription **Ngu Uan Son Co Tich Phat Tich Diet Lac**

伍緼山古跡佛寂滅樂

Content: Zen master Hue Dao Minh in Du Xuyen commune, Le Duong district, Thang Hoa county restored the pagoda on Ngu Uan mountain (the Marble Mountains), then took notes.

Date: Year of Goat [1631]

Author: Zen Master Hue Dao Minh

Location: Van Thong Cave

Inscription **Phuoc Quang Sa Mon** 福廣沙門

Content: Epitaph of the monk Phuoc Quang: 福 廣 沙 門 釋 子 制 底 之 牌

Date: The third Lunar month of the Year of Dog

Author: No name

Location: Hoa Nghiem Cave

(Including a album photos of the inscriptions)

6.5 History/Origin/Background/Provenance

a) History of the Marble Mountains and inscriptions on the Marble Mountains

The Marble Mountains (Hoa Hai ward, Ngu Hanh Son district, Da Nang city) stretch over an area of about 2 km^2 with a system of beautiful Karst limestone caves.

From the 17th to 19th centuries, the Marble Mountains became the Buddhist center in Central Viet Nam, with a system of 20 pagodas and various temples built in almost every mountain, every cave through different historical periods.

During this period, along with the development of Cochinchina's foreign trade

economy, the Marble Mountains, which was located next to Co Co river - the river connecting the main road for commercial activities from Da Nang to the trading port of Hoi An, became an ideal stop for Japanese, Chinese, Arabs...and then Western merchants and missionaries.

Until the early 19th century, the Marble Mountains received special attention from the Nguyen Dynasty, Emperors often visited many beautiful scenes here, including the famous Marble Mountains.

Especially, Emperor Minh Mang himself got there 3 times and made many contributions to the construction of the Marble Mountains.

In 1837, in his last royal visit, Emperor Minh Mang issued a decree to name this mountain cluster Ngu Hanh Son 五行山 (Mountain of Five Elements). Dai Nam Du Dia Chi Uoc Bien (Brief Geography Book on Great Viet Nam) under the Nguyen Dynasty wrote: *"In the eighteenth year of Minh Mang's reign (1837), there was an edict bestowing on the northeastern mountain (Tam Thai mountain) as Thuy Son; the three mountains to the southwest are Moc Son Mountain, Duong Hoa Mountain, and Am Hoa Mountain; two western peaks are Tho Son and Kim Son Mountains, ordered carving the Mountains' titles on the rock".*

Accompanying on royal trips and visiting the Marble Mountains with the Emperors of the Nguyen Dynasty were princes, high-rank mandarins and famous celebrities. They left many poems, carved on the cliffs inside the caves.

However, since the fall of the Nguyen Dynasty (1945), due to the influence of wars, inscriptions on the Marble Mountains appeared less and less and since the inscription "Du Ngu Hanh Son" of Thich Dieu Ngo carved in 1961, inscriptions are no longer appears.

b) History of Non Nuoc stone-handicraft village

Non Nuoc stone-handicraft village is one of the most famous villages of stone-handicraft in Viet Nam. It was told that the talented craftsmen of this stone-carving village were those who carved the inscriptions that remain on the Marble Mountains until today. Each inscription is a unique work of art in terms of visual arts, calligraphy and literary content, so the carver must be both skilled and knowledgeable in Sino-Nom.

6.6. Bibliography

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2. The National Committee for the International Symposium on the Ancient Town of Hoi An, international symposium held in Da Nang on 22-23 March 1990, Social Science Publisher, Hanoi, 1991;
3. Do Bang, *Port-cities in Thuan - Quang area (Hoi An – Thanh Ha – Nuoc Man) 17th-18th centuries*, Thuan Hoa Publishing House,1996;
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5. Le Xuan Thong, *Buddhism in Quang Nam in 17th-18th centuries*, Doctorate Dissertation in, Hue University of Sciences, 2018;
6. *Lieu Quan Magazine*, January 2017;
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10. Albert Sallet, *Les montagnes de marbre*, *Bulletin des mis du ieux Hu* (BAVH, No.1, 1924);
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13. Charles James Wheeler, *"Interests, Institutions, and Identity: Strategic Adaptation and the Ethno-evolution of Minh Hương (Central iet Nam), 16th–19th Centuries"*, European Journal of Overseas History, No.39(01), 2015;
14. Tim Doiling, *Exploring Quang Nam*, The Gioi Publishers, 2020;
15. Charles James Wheeler, "*The Ngo Thesis and Minh Huong Evolution: The View from the Sea"*, Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies, Volume 9, 2021.

6.7. Names, qualifications and contact details of experts

[redacted]	Qualifications Ph.D of Linguistics	[redacted]
[redacted]	Qualifications Ph.D of History	[redacted]
Name	Qualifications	[redacted]

[redacted]	B.A./Researcher of History	[redacted]
Name [redacted]	Qualifications Ph.D of History Yale University	[redacted]

I certify that the above named experts have given their written permission for their names and contact details to be used in connection with this nomination to the Memory of the World Asia Pacific Regional Register.

Signature **Pham Tan Xu**

Date: 05/5/2022

7 Authenticity and Integrity

7.1 Authenticity and Integrity (*attached annex 2 – the authors of inscriptions on the Marble Moutains)*

Ma Nhai (inscriptions on cliff) are the only original inscriptions on the cliffs of the Marble Mountains. Although the inscriptions were carved at different times and their content and form are different, there is no document that mentions the change, correction or renewal of the inscriptions there. The authenticity is also reflected in the fact that these documents were composed by Emperor Minh Mang, famous mandarins and monks with personal status and specific dates, most of whichs were recorded in historical and geographical documents of the Royal Bureau of History of the Nguyen Dynasty such as Chau Ban (Royal Archives) of the Nguyen Dynasty, Dai Nam Du Dia Chi Uoc Bien (Brief geography book on Great Viet Nam), Dai Nam Liet Truyen (Biographies on Great Viet Nam) as well as in the inscription collection of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO),

and in the research works of Albert Sallet and the other scholars.

Over time, a part of these inscriptions has been worn away, which can not be read. However, due to early recognition of the value of this documentary heritage, in recent years, the local government, the Department of Culture and Sports of Da Nang city have cooperated with experts to conduct a series of heritage conservation projects. Therefore, these "living evidence"are still original and unmodified documents.

8 Primary criteria: Regional Significance

8.1 Historical Significance

Inscriptions on cliffs on the Marble Mountains is a valuable historical source that provides special information from the past, as follows:

- The relationship of cultural, economic, political and social exchanges between Viet Nam and East Asian countries such as China and Japan since the 17th century.

- Viet Nam's policy of maritime orientation and open and flexible diplomacy with the countries in the region.

- The history of formation and development of the overseas Chinese community in Viet Nam.

- Confucian political ideology of the Nguyen Dynasty and traditional values of the Vietnamese, such as patriotism, studiousness, love of literature and respect for human morality.

- History of the most prosperous development period of Hoi An trading port and maritime exchanges in the Asia-Pacific region.

- History of the period when Vietnamese Buddhism was internationally integrated.

- History of the period of development of the writing system in Viet Nam: the harmonious and interwoven use of Chinese and Nom characters.

- History of the formation and development of stone handicraft village in the Marble Mountains and techniques of manual stone carving which are no longer popular.

- Indicate the appearance and original beauty of the Marble Mountains - a scenic area known as "the most beautiful landscape in the South".

- Local place names supplementing ancient documents such as *O Chau Can luc* by Duong Van An and *Phu Bien Tap Luc* (Miscellaneous Chronicles of the Pacified Frontier) by Le Quy Don as well as the geography books of the Nguyen Dynasty.

- Contributing to clarifying the views and outlooks on life of influential figures in Vietnam's feudal history such as Truong Quang Dan, Cao Xuan Duc, Bui Van Di, Dao Tan, Nguyen Trong Hop...

The greatest value of those inscriptions is that “they are an accurate source of historical evidence reflecting the cultural, economic, political and social exchanges and interactions between Viet Nam and other East Asian countries, such as China and Japan, in the 17th century”.

Located on the main route of Asia's maritime trade with the Silk Road, and the roads of ceramics and aromas on the sea, inheriting the commercial tradition of the Champa Kingdom, grasping the trend of the times, the Nguyen lords in Cochinchina considered foreign trade as a new development strategy with various steps and unique perceptions, aiming to integrate more strongly into the changes in the region. The way of choosing that development path has brought Cochinchina to reunite with the common development model of most Southeast Asian countries, leaning strongly towards the sea.

On that basis, at the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century, the Cochinchina government promoted the tradition of sea exploitation, developed trade and cultural exchange at sea, including establishing relations with many countries. Most of the economic powers at that time, both in Asia and Europe, established trade and exchange relations with Cochinchina. Hoi An port town quickly became a major commercial center in Southeast Asia and plays the role of an inter-regional center to join Goa (India), Ayutthaya (Siam), Malacca (Malaysia), Batavia (Indonesia), Luzon, Manila (Philippines) ... with Formosa (Taiwan), Macao (China), Deshima (Japan) to create a trading system with close and relatively complete linkage of Asia.

Notably, for merchant ships from the Northeast Asian market to Cochinchina, the Nguyen lords provided special privileges.

For Japanese merchants, the Nguyen lords had preferential policies in trade because Japan was a market with great purchasing power and a country that exports copper and coins mainly to Cochinchina. Through actively writing letters to the Japanese Shogunate or marrying his daughter to Japanese merchants, the Nguyen lords created a good diplomatic and commercial relationship with Japan.

In the book "The Japanese of the Shuinsen Period", to find out the number and location of Japanese merchant ships in the Shuinsen period (1592-1635), Ogura Sadao cited the statistics of Shuinjō (Red Seal Permit) from 1604 to 1634. There were 354 permits of the total number of Shuinjos he listed along with the destination address. Of which, there were 331 locations in Southeast Asia, accounting for 93.5%. And there are 6/19 places that Japanese boats were allowed to go to in the territory of Vietnam, corresponding to these 6 addresses is 130 Shuinjos, which is approximately 40% of the total number of permits issued to ships going to the Southeast Asian countries (130/331). The number of Shuinjo designated merchant ships to Hoi An is 86, accounting for 66% of the number of permits to Vietnam (86/130).

From the above analysis, it can be seen that Japanese merchant ships were mainly concentrated in Hoi An. However, these are only figures on the number of merchant ships allowed to go abroad, not including the number of merchant ships

that arrived in Cochinchina and Hoi An before 1604 and the merchant ships that were licensed to go elsewhere but stopped at Hoi An and the unlicensed sailing ships.

According to a Shogunate decree, the period of shuinsen ended in 1636. But on the inscription on Marble Mountains, "Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat - The sacred Buddhist Mountain of Putuo" inscribed in 1640, there is a line 日本國茶屋竹島川上加兵衛淺見八助供銅五百七十斤 (State of Japan - Chaya Takeshima, Kawakami Kaheie, Asami Yasuke offered a gift of 570 can of copper).

This line illicits three remarks:

- Three persons, 茶屋竹島 (Chaya Takeshima), 川上家兵衛 (Kawakami Kaheie), 淺見八箸 (Asami Yasuke), came from the State of Japan 日本國 while other people mentioned in the inscription came from the Japanese Residential 日本營 (the Japanese living in Hội An).

- One of the three was Chaya Takeshima 茶屋竹島 whom we know for the fact returned to Japan where he died.

- They donnated copper and not money or silver like other loyal Buddhists; copper was brought often by Japanese merchants to Hoi An for commercial transactions.

We suppose that, in fact, the number of Japanese merchant ships coming to Hoi An is more than the official figure that we know through export permits (Shuinjo) and the commercial picture of Japanese merchants at Hoi An in this period is much more vivid than what is recorded in history books.

It can be said that, with a vision beyond the times and a series of open-minded, seaward-oriented policies, the Nguyen Lords in Cochinchina (1558 - 1777) created a dynamic international environment for exchange and trade activities, promoting the cultural exchange and acculturation in Cochinchina in particular and Vietnam in general. For the first time in history, Vietnamese culture in both Cochinchina and Tonkin is positioned not only by traditional Chinese elements but also by the great contributions of the Japanese, Southeast Asians and the Westerners.

The inscriptions on the Marble Mountains are the solid proofs for the above statement.

At Hoa Nghiem cave, there is an inscription of the plaque of Phuoc Quang Sa Mon 福廣沙門 . The inscription is not decorated with patterns, with a line of Chinese characters, the first character of which has the largest size - the letter 明 (Minh):

明: 福廣沙門釋子制底之牌

(Meaning: The inscription of 福廣沙門釋子制底 of the State of Great Ming).

The inscription is dated on the third day of the ninth month of Lunar year of the

Dog (1622 or 1682).

On the document Lịch sử Ngũ Hành Sơn – Chùa Non Nước (History of the Marble Mountains and Non Nuoc Pagoda), Monk Thich Huong Son wrote: “In the Le Period, there was a Monk of Ming Dynasty (China) named Phuoc Quang who practiced aceticism in the Hoa Nghiem cave”.

The inscription 伍緝山古跡佛寂滅樂 (Ngu Uan Son Co Tich Phat Tich Diet Lac - The joy at Nirvana of the Buddha at Ngu Uan mountain), by Monk Huệ Đạo Minh, mentioned a paryer poem of Từ Vân Tôn Thức, a Chinsese Zen Master:

一心歸命極樂世界阿弥陀佛,願以淨光照我,慈誓攝我;我今正念,稱如來名,為菩提道求生淨土.佛昔本誓:若有衆生欲生我國,志心信樂,乃至十念,若不生者,不取正覺;以此念佛因緣,得入如來大誓海中,承佛慈力,衆罪消滅,善根增長.若臨命终,自知時至,身無病苦,心不貪戀,意不顛倒,如入禪定;佛及聖衆手執金臺,來接引我,於一念頃,生極樂國;花開見佛,即聞佛乘,頓開佛慧,廣度衆生,滿菩提願

(English transaltion: We pay homage to Amitābha Buddha/ In the pure land of bliss/ Whose halo enlightens us/ And we are saved by Your mercy/ We practice mindfulness/ And pay homage to Sakyamuni Buddha/ To attain enlightenment/ In order to be reborn in Buddha Amitābha's pure-land / Amitābha Buddha vow:/ “If, sentient beings in the lands of the ten quarters/ who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land,/ and call my Name, even ten times, should not be born there,/ may I not attain perfect Enlightenment”/ Thanks to the mercy of Sakyamuni Buddha’s vow/ the evil karma which he has committed is extinguished./ Knowing the fixed time of death,/ The body is free from sickness,/ Mind without attachment,/ Calming the thoughts like in meditation./Buddha and Arhats,/ Gold lotus sepals in the hands,/Come to receive us,/In the blink of an eye,/We will be born in the pure land of bliss,/ Just listen to the Buddha’s teachings,/ The lotus blooms and we sees the Buddha,/Quickly enlighten,/The vow is fulfilled)

It can be seen that Buddhism in Cochinchina in the 17th - 18th centuries had exchanges and contacts with Chinese Buddhism through the monks coming from China and the scriptures they brought along. However, it should also be mentioned that the peaceful, friendly and Buddhist-supported policies of the Nguyen lords in Cochinchina created very favorable conditions for Buddhism to enter and develop naturally and quickly. Buddhism became a mean for the Nguyen lords to rally the masses, strengthen the state power and the legitimacy of Cochinchina government. On the other hand, Buddhism is also a cultural similarity of Asian countries, a factor that neutralizes cultural and religious differences between ethnic commuinities.

The inscription 普陀山靈中佛 (Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat) at Hoa Nghiem cave of the Marble Mountains, dated 1640, has the beginning lines, saying:

今上皇帝萬萬歲。

大越國廣南處靖嘉府玉山縣瑜川社范文仁字惠道明禪師忽見佛跡頗有頹弊勸善知識共發家財用心功德重修開創上普陀山，新造下平安寺二景圓成鳩工　云畢。住持燒香祝聖回向三寶。上報四重恩，下濟三途願，同生極樂國，佛　跡永流傳。

(Long live the Emperor!

I, Pham Van Nhan, Dharma name Hue Dao Minh Zen master, from Du Xuyen commune, Tong Son district, Tinh Gia county [currently living in] Quang Nam province, Great Viet, thinking that the traces of Buddhism were too desolate, I encouraged the good Buddhists to kindly offer money to restore Buddhist site on the Marble Mountains and build the Binh An pagoda under the foot of the mountains. Now, the two works complete. As the head of the Pagoda, I burn incense to wish the Emperor to live a long life and dedicate to Three Refuges, report four blessings, save the three realms below, hope to be born together in the Pure Land of Bliss, the Buddha's mark will forever be handed down.)

Following are the names of 82 loyal Buddhists who donnated to build the pagoda, including:

- 10 Japanese: 平 三 郎 (Heizaburo), 宋 五 郎 (Shogoro), 峻 門 (Shunmon), 阿知 子 (Achiko), , 七 郎 兵 衛 (Shichiro Bei), 何 奇 采 (Akiu), 平 左 衛 門 (Heiza Emon), 茶 屋 竹 島 (Chaya Takeshima), 川 上 家 兵 衛 (Kawakami Kaheie), 淺 見八 箸 (Asami Yasuke).

- 03 Chinese: 葉 聖 公 (Diep Kien Cong), 呂 宗 吳 (La Tong Ngo) và 梏 吾 耳 (Cat Ngo Nhi) from 大明國.

- 69 Vietnamese (including the wife of the above-mentioned Japanese and Chinese).

The donation was so big, consisted of 1.915 quan, 65 lang of silver and 570 can of copper.

The inscription shows that, under the patronage of the Nguyen lords, Buddhism in Cochinchina attracted the attention and cult of both Vietnamese and foreign merchants.

For the Japanese and Chinese merchants, besides spiritual needs, with the aim of maintaining the cohesion of the overseas community while overcoming cultural, political, geographical obstacles, and promoting commercial interests in Cochinchina, they invested a lot of money in building pagodas and embellishing ancient Buddhist monuments, especially sacred sites worshiping Avalokitesvara (Guanyin) - the blessed god who saves all sufferings of sentient beings, especially protects those who travel on the sea.

In the paper “Environment, Social Flows, and Cultural Change: The Seaport Creation of Vietnamese Buddhism ca. 1650-1750”, Professor Charles Wheeler

examined the content of the inscription 普陀山靈中佛 (Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat) and recognised the relationship between the worship of Guanyin Buddha and Chinese merchants.

Prof. Charles Wheeler noted two interesting things about this inscription:

" First, the name “Pho Da Son” suggests a network of Quan Am temples that paralleled interstate, cross-cultural networks like those of the Fujian Chinese. After all, this Vietnamese temple was not unusual. All along the Chinese coast, one finds monasteries with strong connections to mariner and merchant communities that locals dedicated to the mercy goddess. Secondly, by appropriating the name “Pho Da Son,” the inscription’s authors imply a kind of microcosm of China’s sacred Buddhist Mountains, of which Pho Da Son/Putuoshan is a part. In this sense, Pho Da Son functioned as both a node in a far- flung network of Buddhist “sea-mountain” temples, and microcosm of Chinese sacred topography.

Within this microcosm of Buddhist sacred space, under Quan Am’s watchful eye, temples could function as a trans-cultural medium, bonding a variety of people across social, cultural, and political boundaries”.

In the conditions of the new land, the difficulties of the initial life created a connection and closeness between the communities. Buddhism becomes a special spiritual bridge that helps the harmony of the three cultures of Vietnam - China - Japan proceed smoothly. And conversely, the residents of Vietnam, the Chinese and the Japanese have all made great contributions to creating favorable conditions for Buddhism to develop its role as the spiritual support for the people of Cochinchina.

In addition, an important factor that helps the process of contact, exchange and acquisition of indigenous and immigrant cultures in Cochinchina taking place naturally and openly is the international marriage relationship. In particular, an important marriage mentioned by both Vietnamese and Japanese history is the marriage of businessman Araki Sotaro, who belongs to the Samurai lineage in Kumamoto of Japan, and the Princess Ngoc Hoa, daughter of Lord Nguyen Phuc Nguyen. This marriage is considered as a bridge of Vietnam-Japan friendship. And it is also a stimulate force leading to the other Vietnamese - Japanese, Vietnamese - Chinese marriages in Cochinchina.

The inscription 普陀山靈中佛 (Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat) provides information of the marriage between 05 indigenous women and foreign traders at the commercial port of Hoi An. Mr. Heizaburo married Mrs. Nguyen Thi Chuc, Mr. Shunmon married Ms. Do Thi Muon, Mr. Achiko married Ms. Ngo Thi Chung, Mr. Shichiro Bei married Ms. Nguyen Thi Nu, Mr. Heizaemon married Ms. Nguyen Thi No. As can be seen in the inscription "Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat", the name of Vietnamese women is written in the same line with their foreign husband’s name in the list as other Vietnamese families. This shows that since the 17th century, people in Hoi An Ancient Town have been quite familiar with the international marriage relationship.

In short, the inscriptions on the Marble Mountains are the important documents

showing the relationship of economic, cultural, political and social exchanges of Cochinchina with other countries in the region on the maritime route, as well as the seaward-oriented policy of the Cochinchina government from the end of the 16th century to the beginning of the 17th century.

8.2 Form and Style Significance

Inscriptions on the Marble Mountains are diverse in form and expression style. Depending on the conditions and techniques of the engravers, as well as the pen strokes of the calligraphers, many unique and impressive stone works are created with various large and small forms, and many styles of writing, such as *Clerical, Regular, semi-cursive* and *cursive scripts*...

The art of carving is also shown clearly in some inscriptions dating under the Nguyen lords, among which there are two most prominent inscriptions, "*Ngu Uan Son Co Tich Phat Tich Diet Lac*" and "*Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat*". Both of these inscriptions dated in the 17th century, the earliest of remaining inscriptions. Its decoration is different, bearing the imprint of the period of Nguyen Lords.

The inscription "*Ngu Uan Son Co Tich Phat Tich Diet Lac*" in Van Thong Cave, has symbolized decoration with the shape of a small pagoda with a roof and curved corners.

The inscription *Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat* in Hoa Nghiem cave has more words than the inscription *Ngu Uan Son Co Tich Phat Tich Diet Lac*, so the size of the inscription is larger. The inscription has a rectangular shape, the top is oval, the front is decorated with the sun as a fireball in the middle, and the two symmetrical corners are decorated with ¼ sunflower; below the front of the inscription carved 6 rectangular frames with relief moulding, in each square carved a big character from right to left, forming the title of the inscription *Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat* [普陀山靈中佛].

Through the survey of inscriptions on the Marble Mountains, it can be seen that they belong to the style of making inscription in the period of the Nguyen Lords in Cochinchina. According to Vietnamese researchers, *"this is the most sophisticated and unique decorative pattern system with artistic characteristics of the Later Lê Restoration period compared to all the inscription at the relics of the North and northern Central that we have ever met".*

Besides, those inscriptions provide valuable information about the art of carving of the stone handicraft village in the Marble Mountains. Currently, in order to increase productivity and diversify products, craftsmen of Non Nuoc Stone Village use machinery, scientific and technical applications in most of the productive chains; as a result, handy skills and traditional professional experiences are on the risk of perishment.

8.3 Social Community or Spiritual Significance

The Inscriptions on the Marble Mountains is currently a valuable resource to educate the young generation about Sino-Nom characters, medieval and pre-modern

Vietnamese literature, and to encourage their love of nature and the country.

In the textbook *Foundation of Sino-Nom Philology* edited by Prof. Le Tri Vien, the authors have selected a number of Sino - Nom texts with unique characteristics in terms of content and form to serve as a teaching model, including the inscription 普陀山靈中佛 (Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat - The sacred Buddhist Mountain of Putuo) inscribed on the Marble Mountains. Up to now, this is required textbook for anyone learning Sino - Nom in Viet Nam.

At the same time, the inscriptions dating from the priod of Nguyen Lords are also materials for students of Fine Arts to study the styles of ancient inscription in Viet Nam.

The inscriptions on the Marble Mountains has been associated with the development of local tourism

The Marble Mountains is a cultural symbol of Da Nang City, a famous attraction for domestic and foreign tourists. Therefore, the inscriptions on the mountains have contributed to support a sacred environment for the religious relics and for the transmission of cultural values of the region to visitors.

In fact, this documentary heritage has received much attention from tourists and researchers.

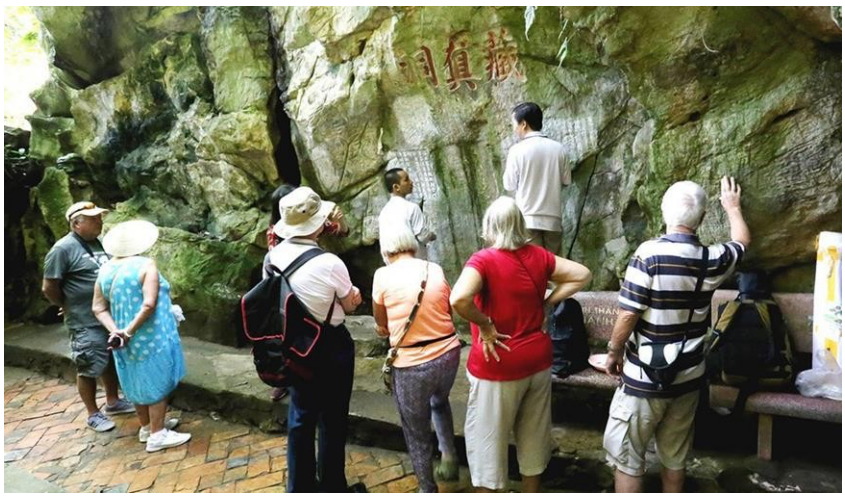

Photo: Tour guide introduces the content of an inscription to visitors

9 Regional Significance: Comparative criteria

Each inscription on the Marble Mountains is an independent and unique entity that does not repeat. The inscription is irreplaceable because it is not a mass-produced identical product as often found in ancient woodblock printing or modern publishing technology. The rarity of the inscription system on Marble Mountains is also reflected in its outstanding quantity (with 78 inscriptions), the integration of different dates, and the variety of genres. Besides, the inscriptions referred to different generations of authors who are well-known and high-status persons.

These are exceptional points compared to the distribution system of inscriptions in Viet Nam. These are also authentic evidences reflecting many aspects of Viet Nam from the 17th century to the 20th century.

Moreover, the system of inscriptions on the Marble Mountains is the only original documents which were written by Emperor Minh Mang himself and carved on cliffs and caves.

In the world, inscriptions often appear in cave systems in Asian countries, however, currently, there is only one documentary heritage belonging to the inscription type on the cliff inscribed in the List of Documentary Heritage in Asia and the Pacific. It is the Saudi Arabia - Earliest Islamic (Kufic) inscription inscribed in 2003. The inscription is located on a red sandstone block of rock, in the south of Qa'a al Muatadil, north of Sharma in al-Ula, northwest of Saudi Arabia. However, if the inscription on the heritage is in ancient Arabic script, the inscriptions on the Marble Mountains in Da Nang City are in Chinese and Nom characters.

Besides, in terms of meaning and value, the inscriptions on the Marble Mountains in Da Nang City have similarities with three ancient steles (stone steles) in the old Kōzuke province of Japan (now Takasaki City, Gunma Province, in the Kantō region), was inscribed by UNESCO in 2017. These all inscriptions represent cultural interference in East Asian countries. However, the difference is that the three ancient steles in Kōzuke Province were carved on large stone slabs with flat surfaces, while the inscriptions in Marble Mountains in Da Nang City were carved directly on cliffs and caves.

10 Gender

Inscriptions on the Marble Mountains play a part in cheering for the feminist movement in the world today

When Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616) took over the Japanese government in 1600, to consolidate the power and political position of his clan, he recreated Japanese society according to the Neo-Confucian model that separated Japan into four classes: samurai (warriors), hyakusho (farmers), shokunin (artisans) and shōnin (merchants).

Families are based on patriarchy and women have lower status and less power than men. They are framed by the idea of "three obediences, four virtues" and must submit to men.

"Outside the family, woman's activities were either rigidly limited or virtually non-existent. Indeed, beyond the circle of family life there were no place, that is to say, no recognized position for women in the Tokugawa feudal order"[2]

However in Cochinchina, at the beginning of the 17th century, the relationship between Vietnamese and Japanese couples was somewhat more open and equal. Vietnamese women played the role of effective assistants to their husbands in

[2] Takashi Koyama, *The changing social position of woman in Japan*, Unesco, 1961, p.10.

commercial activities. The fact that they still kept their Vietnamese name and stood with the same name as their husband in the inscription 普陀山靈中佛 (Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat - The sacred Buddhist Mountain of Putuo) shows that a husband and wife relationship in the family is somewhat harmonious and respectful.

In the document "Voyages et Missions", Père Alexandre de Rhodes said that in the Japanese quarter, there were some Japanese Christian merchants who married non-religious Vietnamese wives. Convincing these women to give up their beliefs to follow Christianity was not an easy job. Japanese husbands had to rely on missionaries.

There are many documents recording that Vietnamese wives in Hoi An continued to keep in touch and fulfill filial duties for their husband's family in Japan after their husband's death. Ogura Sadao in the document "The Japanese of the Shuinsen Period" had to exclaim: "what a very caring woman!"[3]

It can be seen that the inscriptions on the Marble Mountains show important data about the role of Vietnamese women in marriages with Japanese in the 17th century. Although husbands have economic and powerful positions, Vietnamese women still hold certain roles and positions in the family and community. They were not at all inferior and had a low status like the women of Tokugawa period in Japan (1600-1868).

Therefore, the research and dissemination of the "Gender" aspect in the inscription Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat will contribute to dispel the inherent perception that women in the past were victims of gender stereotypes and being treated unfairly. It would be a way to partly cheer for the feminist movement in the world today.

- Inscriptions on the Marble Mountains are the only positive copies which still remain on the cliffs. The authenticity is also reflected in the fact that those documents were written by the Nguyen Emperors, mandarins, and monks with specific dates and names, and recorded in historical books.

-Inscriptions on cliffs in the Marble Mountains are outstanding in quantity in Viet Nam, with various dates, literary genres, gathering generations of authors who are famous Vietnamese as well as foreigners.

This documentary heritage is valuable in many ways, reflecting various aspects of Viet Nam under the feudalist regime such as history, geography, literature, art, religion, language, culture and education. In particular, from the content of the inscriptions, we can learn about the cultural, economc and diplomatic relations between Vietnam - China - Japan and maritime exchanges in the Asia - Pacific region since the 17th century as well as the traditional stone carving techniques that

[3] Ogura Sadao, *The Japanese of the Shuinsen Period,* Tokyo, 1985, tr. 97

are no longer common.

- At the same time, it is a real proof of the international marriage equality and respect between Vietnamese women and foreign merchants in Hoi An in the past.

- Each inscription is different in form and content, but it is an invaluable work of art, containing valuable historical and humanistic values, the combination of the soul and talent of the poet and the experience and skill of the Non Nuoc stone sculptor.

- The writings on the Marble Mountains are mainly Chinese characters - a form of writing that is commonly used and popularized in East Asian countries such as China, Korea, Japan, and Viet Nam. Besides, there are also Nom scripts created based on Chinese characters to write Vietnamese words. They were all carved on stone, but their writing styles are fairly nice, soft and diverse.

The contents of inscriptions on the Marble Mountains are beyond the boundaries of a country, being an important documentary heritage for the Asia-Pacific region and the world. It is typical for cultural exchange, contact and acculturation among East Asian countries, representing Vietnam's vision of maritime strategy with open and flexible foreign policy from the medieval era to the present.

From the past to the present, Da Nang city has always taken an important geo-economic and geostrategic position of Vietnam. In addition, this city owns many prestigious international awards and is at the top of the rankings for tourist destinations. Therefore, if "Inscriptions on the Marble Mountains, Da Nang" is recognized by UNESCO as a documentary heritage in the Asia-Pacific region, it will attract the attention of researchers and visitors around the world and help to raise public awareness of this documentary heritage.

12.1 Condition

Over a period of nearly 400 years, from the time of Nguyen Lords to the present, due to the influence of climate, time, war and people, only 51/78 inscriptions can be readable. The rest is worn out by time, coated with layers of paint and cement, cracked by war, chiseled or added with Vietnamese language by later generations, deformed or lost some Chinese characters.

12.2 Threat/Risk

- Climate conditions

The climate of the area of Marble Mountains includes two seasons: the rainy season and the dry season. The dry season has a relatively high temperature, ranging from 36°C to 41°C. Total annual rainfall is about 2049mm. As a result, the mineral composition changes, the rock is strongly weathered, the cracks are

corroded, which can mechanically erode an entire piece of rock, leading to the abrasion of the inscriptions and, morever, would cause landslides and destruction.

- Preservation Condition

Due to unsustainable tourism activities, this place has to receive a large number of tourists every day, leading to using excessive lighting, causing the cliffs to gradually degrade, mosses invade the inscriptions; especially, many tourists who lack awareness arbitrarily write or draw on the inscriptions.

13 Preservation and Access Management Plan

Management Plan

The inscriptions on the Marble Mountains is a heritage associated with the Special National Relic of Marble Mountains, so it is directly managed by the Management Board of the Marble Mountains (under the management of the People's Committee of Ngu Hanh Son District) and professionally managed by the Department of Culture and Sports of Da Nang City.

The management of this heritage has been interested by the People's Committee of Da Nang city since the 1990s with important decisions such as banning mountain stone exploitation (1991), establishing a team to protect Marble Mountains relics (1992), establishing the Management Board of the Marble Mountains (2000), and promulgating regulations on management of monuments (in 2007 and 2020), as well as the code of conduct in tourism at monuments in images (2017).

In addition, on the basis of the Prime Minister's approval, the task of planning the preservation, restoration and restoration of the Marble Mountains, Da Nang People's Committee directed specialized units to implement planning for preservation, reparation and restoration of the Marble Mountains focusing on solutions and plans for long-term and sustainable management and conservation of the inscriptions on the Marble Mountains, including plans for heritage restoration in case of risk of weather or natural disasters. This plan is expected to be completed and submitted to the Prime Minister for approval in 2022.

The Management Board of the Marble Mountains has also developed plans to manage and protect the Marble Mountains in general and the inscriptions in particular, such as placing sightseeing instruction sign to prevent visitors from touching the inscriptions, arranging a team to remind visitors about the regulations, cleaning the areas of the inscriptions, eliminating harmful plants, and placing posters to introduce the content of the inscriptions. Especially, in 2017 and 2019, the People's Committee of Ngu Hanh Son District coordinated with the Department of Culture and Sports of Da Nang City, researchers, organizations and individuals to organize 2 scientific seminars to announce the results of new research with typical unique value on the inscriptions on the Marble Mountains with the participation of more than 150 scientists and experts on Chinese-Nom, Buddhist culture, history and planning, and cultural heritage management. At the seminars,

all experts shared the opinion that the inscriptions on the Marble Mountains are a valuable source of documents, keeping a lot of valuable information.

Regarding the promotion work, the Management Board of the Marble Mountains has edited a publication about the Marble Mountains, including inscriptions to satisfy tourists' demands; guidance team increases the activities of instruction and explanation; the project of lighting system in the relics is implemented.

The Department of Culture and Sports of Da Nang City is advising the Da Nang People's Committee to draw up a plan to preserve, repair and restore the Marble Mountains; develop regulations on management and protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritages associated with the Marble Mountains; focusing on the following tasks:

- Training and fostering human resources.

- Carrying out inspection, supervision and strict protection of historical - cultural relics, archaeological sites, antiquities and environmental landscapes.

- Carrying out inventory and classify the inscriptions according to the principles of museology and translation, publishing works in magazines and introducing them on television.

- Cleaning and handling all inscriptions coated with moss, paint or cement.

- Reinforcing and attaching cracked inscriptions; studying and determining technical standards for preserving inscriptions.

- Creating tourism products from the inscriptions.

- Gathering and collecting all documents from past to present referring to that documentary heritage.

- Focusing on the role of the community in heritage protection; heightening the awareness of people and visitors in protecting this heritage. Introducing these precious materials into schools.

- Promoting the application of digital technology to preserve the inscriptions on the Marble Mountains. Accordingly, the system of inscriptions will be collected, copied, estampaged, digitized, transcribed, and translated for long-term research. This is the optimal scientific solution to preserve precious and unique documents against the risk of damage by weather and time.

- Strengthen the propaganda and dissemination of inscription materials regularly and widely through exhibition activities and on the media; collaborating with historical and cultural experts, Chinese-Nom researchers in the field of preserving inscriptions through restoration, preservation and research. Expand and strengthen international cooperation with countries in the region and around the world to learn and exchange experiences on preserving and promoting the value of inscription documentary heritage.

- Selecting and publicizing to schools typical works in the system of

inscriptions on the Marble Mountains, thereby educating the tradition and raising awareness among the young generation and awareness of preserving and promoting the value of national cultural heritage.

- Building up the project of preserving and promoting the value of the stone handicraft village in the Marble Mountains, focusing on restoring stone carving techniques using traditional production tools.

14Consultation with Stakeholders

Related parties:

a) People's Committee of Ngu Hanh Son District

"Inscriptions on the Marble Mountains are a source of documentary heritage with great value, which are rare, unique in terms of history, culture, science, and visual arts, and also a proud feature in the map of distributing inscriptions in Vietnam".

b) Experts

- Ph.D Le Xuan Thong:

"Inscriptions on cliff mostly appeared around the Tran Dynasty and flourished under the Le dynasty, then the Nguyen Dynasty. During that process, there are various types of inscriptions in different places/localities. However, it can be said that the appearance and existence of inscriptions on the Marble Mountains in large amount as above quantity is a special phenomenon in the synchronous view of the whole country. The inscriptions on cliff there are literary works with aesthetic values, from language to ideological issues.

- Ph.D Nguyen Hoang Than:

"The Marble Mountains, the scenic spot of Quang Nam-Da Nang, are preserving many historical and cultural documentary heritages. In particular, the inscriptions there is an important part of the historical - cultural relics and the Marble Mountains; moreover, they are the link between ancestors and posterity, a bridge for exchanges and relations between Viet Nam and other countries in the region. Currently, this heritage is gradually disappearing due to objective and subjective factors. These inscriptions will disappear forever if they are not quickly inventoried, collected, estampaged, and digitized."

15Other Information to Support the Nomination

Please provide any other information that supports the inclusion of this documentary heritage collection on the Memory of the World Asia Pacific Regional Register.