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THE WORSHIPPING OF THE MOTHER GODDESS BELIEF (ĐẠO MÃ U) IN
SPIRITUAL OF VIETNAMESE PEOPLE

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Abstract:

The Mother Goddess worship belief is a typical Vietnamese folk belief, together with the ancestor worship belief, The Village's Tutelary God worship belief, and some other folk beliefs have created a unique feature of the culture of Vietnam. Field surveys in some provinces and cities of Vietnam show that this belief holds a special place in the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people. Over the centuries, through many generations, this belief has always existed in spiritual life. However, not always and where, this belief activity has a positive element, and not everyone understands the origin and value of this belief. On the basis of actual surveys at some provinces and city of Vietnam, researching ancient documents, and reference to studies of colleagues, this research shows the origin, basic content, and values that this belief brings in spiritual life, at the same time pointing out the limiting factors and proposing solutions for this belief to contribute more and more to the culture of Vietnam.

1. Introduction

On December 1, 2016, the practice of “Mau Tam Phu” worship (Three Realms) in particular, the Vietnamese the worships of Mother Goddess in general which was recognized by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage showed its role and value of it, for our Vietnam but also for humanity. The history of the formation and development of the Vietnamese cult of Mother Goddess worship has

arisen, integrated and preserved many traditional cultural values of the Vietnamese nation. Over time, this tradition has followed of Vietnamese people the spread throughout the country and has recently been brought abroad.

The worship of Mother Goddess belief is a pure, popular, long-standing folk tradition of Vietnam, adapted to the changes of Vietnamese society. Mother worship is the belief, admiration, honor, and worship of Goddess associated with natural and cosmic phenomena; were believed by the people to have the power to create, sponsor and protect human life such as heaven, earth, water, mountains, forests, etc. Worship of queens and princesses were those who when living skillfully, with meritorious services to the people and the country, when die, epiphany the spirit of support people to the peaceful and prosperous. Experiencing formation and development, the cult of Mother Goddess worship in our country has developed and formed the Tam Phu (Three Realms), the Tu Phu (Four Realms) faith. Four Realms include four regions of the universe: Thien Phu (Realms Heaven), Nhat Phu (Realms Mountains Forests), Thoai Phu (Realms Water), Dia Phu (Realms Earth). The beliefs of Mother Goddess worship are close to nature, heaven and earth, tied to the fate of Vietnamese women. People come to Mother Goddess to find spiritual support, find the mother's protection, etc even though they know that in this faith people pray from the invisible (consciousness), in the hope that they can receive tangible things (material). The worship of Mother Goddess is preserved through festivals, beliefs, and spiritual life to last forever in the spiritual life of Vietnamese people.

Mother worship is relatively complex and difficult to study the social phenomenon because it integrates many beliefs and religions and is expressed in many different forms (Thin, 1996 & 2004). Judged from a divine perspective, the worship of Mother Goddess has formed a system holies, gods with many different functions and duties. In terms of the spirit of worship, the worship of Mother Goddess formed a system of worship space and had typical rituals such as "hau bong", "len dong" that other folk beliefs do not have. There is a view that Goddess worship has become an early religion (Thin, 1996 & 2004), but there are disagreements, only asserting that the worship of Mother Goddess is a folk belief (Ngoc, 2002; Duy, 2002; Sinh, 2004). This attracts much research interest of many scientists, especially those who are interested in the fields of belief, religion, and culture.

As many researchers have identified (Tocarev, 1994; Tylor, 2000), from primitive times, people had a sense of proliferation. The mother with heavy pain, nurturing and protecting her child, raising and protecting her children before the effects of externalities are all mothers. The mother has become the first symbol of the survival of the race. The mother tree is the most typical symbol of that survival. Because the plants give germs, roots, fruits for the human to live, the tree gives branches to intertwine roots so that people hang on them to avoid evil animals overnight, through danger.

Following the development of Model is the motherland, the mother country. The people who work in the field of wet rice farming are the two most

important objects of land and water. But deciding that water must be falling from the sky, the people think that rain is decided by heaven; from then on, the heavenly mother was honored.

Belief comes from real life, people set out mystical forces to honor and worship in accordance with their lives. And so, Mother Tree, Mother Earth, Mother of Water, Mother of Heaven, or Chinese language called “Mau Thuong Ngan”, “Mau Dia”, “Mau Thoai” and “Mau Thien” were born. It was the first basic model system of the worship of Mother Goddess. Thus, “Mã u” is in Chinese and Vietnamese called “Mạ”, “Mợ”, and mother. The problem is that the worship of Mother Goddess comes from the lowland and then spreads to the mountains or vice versa?

As mentioned above, the tree is the first place to ensure the survival of human beings, so the awareness of human tree mother is also first. In our country, the tree with the most roots is a banyan tree, sapling, roots of the trees are likened to the mother’s hand is woven into a hammock net, into the cradles to protect the children. Therefore, the Worship of Mother Goddess is worshiping mother of trees (Ngoc, 2002; Duy, 2002).

Above are some remarkable arguments about the process of formation and development of the Mother worship belief of Vietnamese people. Of course, in order to make those arguments, the authors have produced much relatively convincing evidence. However, for the author, the source of Vietnamese beliefs is not really that simple.

Religion is a social history phenomenon and a part of the social consciousness, therefore, it has its own rules of formation, existence, and development, arising based on the socio-economic conditions at certain historical periods and being subject to the regulation of social existence. As we all know, Neanderthals’ burial rituals for the dead appeared in the middle of the Stone Age. At this time, the seeds of religion (belief) also appeared and it only appeared when people began to observe the world around them. In this period, the sense of ancestry was a factor of the primitive social consciousness, reflecting humans’ powerlessness in the face of the power of nature. As a result, there was a variety of special forms of primitive religions, such as the cult of nature, magic, and Totemism. The emergence of belief in spiritual mothers (later the worship of Mother Goddess belief) was not out of these general rules.

2. Literature Review

2.1. What is Beliefs?

According to the Han-Vietnamese Dictionary of scholar Dao Duy Anh (1998), belief is explained: “Superstition admiration for a religion or a doctrine”. Similarly, in the Vietnamese Dictionary by Van Tan (editor), belief means: “Belief in a religion: Freedom of belief” (Tan, 1991). Thus, in the etymological of sense, religion is the religious belief in every human being.

Beliefs from the perspective of Religious Studies, Anthropology

This group of views said that beliefs are the psychological state of people towards the sacred forces, which are part of religion and cannot be separated from religion, which is the basis for forming religion. In Vietnam, a representative representative of this group of views is Dang Nghiem Van. In his work on Theory of religion and the situation of religion in Vietnam, he analyzed quite clearly the concept of belief as a religious faith, beliefs are not completely separated from religion: “If you understand beliefs are beliefs that have a part outside of religion, if understood as religious beliefs (belief, believe, in a narrow sense, croyance religieuse), beliefs are only a major part of the religion” (Van, 2005). The author also expressed his disagreement and suggested revisiting when considering religion and belief as two low and high levels are different. Because of the religious researcher had accepted that the decisive factor of religion was virtue faith or belief, it is the only measure of the inferiority of the religions in the community, and of believers with their religion. If cultural equality (including religion) is accepted, there is no appreciation of one religion over another (Van, 2005).

In particular, when referring to a concept used by many people as folk beliefs, he thought that this is a popular religion: “The term may be a way of understanding religion in the popular way, meaning customary, public opinion or engaging in rituals, not in the mainstream that comes primarily from, the study of doctrine, reflection and enlightenment. Or it can also be understood that the forms of national religion have been handed down from ancient times, close to the community such as festivals, pilgrimages, holidays with parades, dancing, even the divination form, general number, etc. There was the intellectual class, though few believed but still participated. At festivals, processions, etc., it is still responded by the majority of the popular class in rural areas, according to a tradition that has long existed in the nation” (Van, 2005).

Beliefs from a cultural perspective

In a work about religion in Vietnam, Le Nhu Hoa (2014) said that, in essence, beliefs, as well as religions, are a method of realizing and improving reality. The similarity between them and the improvement of reality. The differences between them are just historical features. There are 5 criteria for distinguishing beliefs and religions, namely: The source (beliefs only consist of spiritism, while religion in addition to spiritism also has totem or other supernatural theory); objects of worship (beliefs: All things spiritual, polytheistic, religious: Unity, only one god); methods of practice (beliefs: Magic, religion: Religious rituals); institutions (beliefs are not yet complete, religion is complete about material institutions, clergy, formal system, canon law, complete canonical, systematic scriptures, ethical beliefs, have community sentiment about belief); sphere of influence, social context (beliefs: Narrow, usually ethnic communities, in non-state societies; Religion: Wide, popular among ethnic, national, ethnic communities gender, in societies with a state).

The above assessment shows that both beliefs and religions are human creations. In the process of existence and development, people created beliefs

and religions to make spiritual support for themselves and the community. Over time, such creativity has become a traditional system of values, lifestyles on which people show their faith and values.

2.2. *What is Folk Beliefs?*

Vietnamese folk beliefs, also known as Vietnamese traditional beliefs, are indigenous beliefs of ethnic groups living on the Vietnamese territory through many generations (Giau, 1973; Binh, 2005).

Vietnamese folk beliefs believe that anything has a soul, so the ancient people worshiped a lot of gods, especially those related to agriculture such as heaven, moon, earth, forest, river, mountain, etc to be blessed (Giau, 1973). For ethnic minorities, each ethnic group has its own belief form. However, the most typical feature is that the original forms of beliefs and folk beliefs are still preserved among ethnic groups such as the Tay-Thai and Hmong-Dao groups; Hoa-San Diu-Ngai group; Cham-Ede-Gia Rai group; Mon-Khmer group.

Besides, one of the most common customs and practices of the Vietnamese and some other ethnic minorities is the ancestor worship and death anniversary of the deceased. In Vietnamese families, every family has an ancestor altar and commemoration, remembering the merits of the ancestors is very important. Besides ancestor worship in each family and clan, many villages in Vietnam have a communal house of worshiping of Village's Tutelary gods (Hinh, 2007). The custom of worshiping tutelary gods in village temples (Village's Tutelary god) is a unique feature of Vietnamese villages. The tutelary god worshiped in communal houses can be gods or outstanding figures with great merits such as the ancestors of a trade village or a national hero who had "founding the nation", opposing invaders (Hinh, 2007).

For several centuries in Vietnam, Mother Goddess worship has been a source of strength, inspiration, and spirituality, particularly among working-class families. Along with the worship of ancestors, the belief of worshiping the Village tutelary gods, the worship of Mother Goddess has kept an important position in the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people.

For many Vietnamese, they believe in the existence of a soul. This belief goes from the belief that the soul only reaches its ultimate goal after many reincarnations, to the idea that life will now determine its final destiny. Consequently, one person can feel confident that he will eventually merge with the ultimate reality after death, others will surely reach Nirvana, and others will believe that he will be rewarded in heaven. From the faith and the punishment or the blessing of the soul has led to the worship of the souls of Vietnamese People.

Also, Vietnamese people also worship gods such as the kitchen god, the earth god, the river god, the mountain god, etc. All that worship has formed a system of Vietnamese folk beliefs extremely rich and diverse as we see it today.

3. Origin of The Worship of Mother Goddess

3.1. *From an Ethnographic Perspective*

The worship of Mother Goddess was a native religion and probably one of the earliest religions of Vietnamese people before the introduction of Three Religions (Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism) in Vietnam. So far, it has been exactly unknown when the worship of Mother Goddess occurred in our country, but it is believed that these Mother Goddesses have appeared since the primitive age, or at least since Vietnamese people started to exploit the Northern midland region and delta.

In Vietnam, the results of archaeological studies showed the existence of the matriarchy in Bac Son culture in the Neolithic period dated around 6,000 BC with the remains discovered in Hoa Binh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Lang Son, Bac Can, Ninh Binh, Quang Binh, and other places (Hung et al., 2001).

The distribution sites of Bac Son culture were also the places where the most ancient ape-men and modern people appeared in our country and where there were many major cultures in the prehistoric period. Before Bac Son culture, in the Northwest, North Central, and Northeast mountains, there was Son Vi culture in the late Stone Age dated around 20,000 BC and Hoa Binh culture in the Neolithic period, dated around 8000 BC. The remains of Bac Son culture showed that its residents knew how to do farming, make pottery and live together in communes of matriarchy (Hung, et al., 2001).

The matriarchy also left vestiges in the legends of Hong Bang and Lac Long Quan about the formation of the Vietnamese nation and Van Lang state. Thedai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu wrote, "The king got married to De Lai's daughter - Au Co - and she gave birth to a hundred sons (a hundred eggs), who were the ancestors of Bach Viet" (Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu, 1697). When removing the feudal layers of these legends, it is not difficult to see that before the Hung Vuong era, Lac Viet people might still be under the matriarchy. First, the bloodline of Lac Long Quan was his mother's bloodline. Therefore, there was a story about Lac Long Quan, the grandson of King Dong Dinh Quan (i.e. Than Long or Dragon God - the governor of Dong Dinh Lake in the southern Truong Giang) telling Au Co, "I am a descendant of the Dragon; you are a descendant of the Fairy, etc"(Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu, 1697). Then, all the legendary kings of the nation founding times, from Kinh Duong Vuong - Loc Tuc to Lac Long Quan - Sung Lam and Hung Vuong, were crowned kings in their mothers' areas in the South.

The final part of the legend of Lac Long Quan and Au Co also said that when they broke up, only fifty sons following Au Co could stay and become kings. The first King Hung was her eldest son. Meanwhile, fifty sons following Lac Long Quan had to leave (go into the sea) (Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu, 1697).

Today, it is all known that the owners of the first wet-rice agriculture and the first state in Vietnam and Southeast Asia were Viet-Muong people, the common ancestors of Vietnamese people and Muong people. By combining the results of archaeology, ethnography, and legends, there was a basis to propose the hypothesis: From the early period of the wet rice agriculture (about 2,000 years BC) until the establishment of Van Lang state (about 700 years BC),

Viet- Muong was a matriarchal community. This hypothesis did not contradict what the history described the patriarchy of Au Lac people's descendants during the Northern domination. Therefore, that patriarchy might only be the result of the later exchange and acculturation of Viet-Muong culture with Tay-Thai culture and Han culture (Hung et al., 2001).

In the period of Au Lac state, with the invasion of Trieu dynasty and failure of Trung Sisters' rebellion, along with the rule of Chinese feudal dynasties, the matriarchy was gradually "assimilated" into the patriarchy of the Northern people. In the early period of the Northern domination, women still played an important role in social activities, evidenced by the revolts of Trung's Sisters (40 - 43), Lady Trieu (246) against the invaders from the North (Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu, 1697). In the following centuries, under the rule of Chinese feudal dynasties, the role of women gradually decreased. Men played an absolute role in social activities and Vietnamese society gradually shifted to the patriarchy. Since then, men led the revolts of Vietnamese people. Women only played the role of "keeping fire" in the family, especially when getting married.

Over a long period, the ancient Vietnamese society operated under the matriarchy, so mothers played a very important role not only in the family but also in daily activities of the clan and not only in the material life but also in the spiritual life. This was because even in a matriarchal or patriarchal society, women kept the functions of reproduction, maintaining the race and creating the main workforce for the society.

In terms of an economic unit, under the matriarchy, women played a key role in the farming, breeding and managing the whole economy of the family. Thus, women were not only the center of the material life but also the center of spiritual life. This led to the sense of respect for women - mothers - not only within the family but also within the clan.

In addition, mothers were also divinized and honored in the spiritual life. This phenomenon was not only unique to our nation but also appeared in many other nations and religions in the world such as Guan Yin in Buddhism, Mother in Catholicism, and Goddess in Greek mythology and ancient Rome, etc.

3.2. From a Cultural Perspective

From the old days, people have been aware of the proliferation. Mothers were people who carried their children in their wombs, brought them up and protected them from the impacts of surroundings. Mothers became the first symbol for the survival of the race.

The main livelihood of Vietnam, as well as many other nations in Southeast Asia and in the world, was farming and breeding. Thus, people had much connection with natural elements including land, water, rain, thunder, lightning, etc. Due to the limited cognitive and intellectual level at that time, humans could not explain the natural phenomena, leading to the cult of nature and the emergence of polytheism with the animism viewpoint.

Apart from natural phenomena, ancient Vietnamese people also worshiped the factors that affected their farming, breeding, and proliferation, typically the traditional fertility beliefs. For other agricultural groups that lived in shifting cultivation, the only factor that ruled their life was heaven whereas other natural elements played a secondary role. Therefore, they followed the monotheism.

For rice farmers in Vietnam, the soil was the most typical symbol of survival, followed by trees (Hinh, 2007). This was because, in ordinary eyes, soil nourished trees. Trees grew from soil. Trees gave sprouts, roots, and fruits for people to live. Trees gave branches for people to hang on to avoid dangerous animals during the night. The next element was water (Think, 1996). The water helped all things to multiply, nourished crops and nourished human life. For an agricultural country, the top priority was to “look at the soil” and “look at the rain”. Soil, trees, and water - like mothers who gave birth and brought up their children - directly decided the survival of human beings.

The worship of Mother Goddess in Vietnam also derived from the typical wet rice civilization. For agricultural residents, from gathering, mothers found rice and then became the soul of rice. Among the crop plants, rice was the only plant that was considered as being Pregnant (Vietnamese) = Bun (Coho) = Mtian (Garai) like mothers. It was the only plant to be considered as having Soul (Vietnamese) = Soan (Coho), etc. (Hung et al., 2001).

For wet-rice farmers, soil and water were extremely important factors (think, 1996 & 2004). Vietnam was a country located in Southeast Asia, which had hills, mountains, deltas, rivers, sea, and a tropical monsoon climate. Therefore, it had favorable conditions for the development of wet-rice agriculture. The concept of soil and water had a close connection with Goddess (mothers), with groups of people, and with the homeland.

From their life practice, groups of people living on farming like ancient Vietnamese people were aware that soil, water, trees, and mothers have a negative similarity. As a result, the ways of calling mother trees, mother soil and mother water were born. However, water came from the rain from heaven. Common people believed that rain was decided by heaven. Since then, mother Heaven was honored. Mother Heaven was the symbol and the source of the proliferation. From that awareness, ancient Vietnamese people deified mother Heaven and regarded her as a god.

The worship of “Mothers” originated from the matriarchal period. However, for the Vietnamese people, women had a more special position than in other places. Women are responsible for most of the work from doing housework, farming, doing small business and managing money in the family. In order to exploit the diversity of the terrain and ecological environment thoroughly, apart from their main production of agriculture, people also knew how to do other economic professions. From the very early days, there were traditional villages in the Northern Delta, and this led to the emergence of mothers who were the progenitors of these professions.

Moreover, in the interaction between humans and humans, humans and nature, Vietnamese culture bore the philosophy of yin and yang (in which, yin means “giving birth” and yang means “developing”). This was clearly shown in the agricultural culture where wet rice cultivation was typical and people appreciated the balance of yin and yang (static element), peace, respect for village and neighbors, creating solidarity to fight against natural disasters and enemies sabotage. For Vietnamese people, “When enemies come, women also fight”. Therefore, all the glory and responsibilities belonged to the role of mothers. This was reflected in some images bearing the symbol of mothers - River, Road, Country, etc.

From the above cultural habits of Vietnamese people (which were raised into the philosophy of life), mothers were especially honored. There was a religion for mothers - the worship of Mother Goddess. Hence, it can be seen that the nature of the worship of Mother Goddess was the worship of factors and subjects that produced materials and wealth to nourish human beings. All these factors were honored as Mothers in a divine way.

3.3. From the Thought Perspective

From ancient times until now, in the process of developing “intellectual” ability, humans were often “surprised” by the phenomena that took place around them. Since then, humans always “thought” about the origin of the universe, about the natural phenomena happening around them and even about the origin and existence of themselves.

There were many reasons motivating humans to come up with philosophical “thoughts”, which were then synthesized and improved into ways of explaining things and beliefs based on established perceptions. To put it simply, it meant that humans’ thoughts to perceive and explain the natural world, humans, and society started from three main sources: surprise, skepticism (reflection), and humans’ failure in those efforts.

Like other nations in the world, ancient Vietnamese people had their own conceptions of the universe and human life. Based on the legends and archeological and ethnographic materials, Chinese and Vietnamese researchers proved that, in ancient times, East Asian nations, including ancient Vietnamese people, formed the “dichotomous” thoughts. This was the premise for the formation of the later yin-yang philosophy. “When heaven and earth started to open, something was created from Qi (vital energy) called Pangu, etc.”(Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu, 1697).

The interdisciplinary scientific studies of Vietnam and China showed that “the concept of yin-yang derived from the South”. The South here consisted of southern China, from the Yangtze downwards and part of Vietnam (Northern area) (Hung et al., 2001). During its process of development, China went through two periods:

First, the “March to the East” period: This was the period when China expanded from the upstream area (in the West) to the downstream area (in the East) of the Yellow River.

Second, the “March to the South” period: This was the period when China expanded from the Yellow River valley (in the North) to the South of the Yangtze.

During the march to the South, Han people adopted the yin-yang philosophy of the Southern residents, then developed and systematized that philosophy with the analytical ability of the nomads, making the yin-yang philosophy perfect and bringing it back to influence the Southern residents.

The Southern residents lived on agriculture, so their top concern was the proliferation of farm products and humans. The reproduction of humans depended on two factors: father and mother, female and male and the proliferation of farm produces was due to earth and heaven - “earth producing, heaven nourishing”. That was why the pairs of “mother-father” and “earth-heaven” were the first generalization on the path to the yin-yang philosophy. In terms of linguistics, the term “yin-yang” is the pronunciation of the Chinese language, but the Chinese words for the concept of “yin-yang” were loanwords from the Southern languages.

This can be seen when we compare Yang with Giang (in Muong), Yang Sri (God of rice), Yang Dak (God of water), Yang Lon (God of earth) (in the languages of many ethnic groups in Central Highlands) or compare Yin with Iana (ancient Cham, for example, Thien Yana = Mother of heaven), Iana (modern Cham), Inang (Indonesian) and Na (ancient Vietnamese, e.g. Na Rong = a woman with children, or a Vietnamese proverb, “Con thi na, ca thi nuoc”).

Thus, from the concept of yin-yang with the two pairs of “mother-father” and “earth-heaven”, people have expanded into many other common dualistic opposites like water - fire, low - high, female-male, night - day, etc. In that case, for farmers growing wet rice in Vietnam, earth played a particularly important role (as explained above). Earth and mothers had the resemblance, which was the yin characteristic. Mothers were the earth and vice versa, the earth was mothers. To sum up, the worship of the God of earth and the worship of mothers of ancient Vietnamese people referred to the dualistic thinking of primitive people and the later yin-yang philosophy.

3.4. From the History Perspective

Period of Chinese Domination

After the defeat of the Trung sisters’ rebellion, the country officially entered the period of Chinese domination with nearly a thousand years of domination. Under the harsh governance of Chinese feudal dynasties, in addition to opposing the tyrannical forces, one certain thing was that Vietnamese people prayed to the divine powers, especially spiritual mothers - Mother Goddess.

This was the time when there were many legends related to spiritual mothers (especially based on available original points as discussed above). The role of

mothers in matriarchy continued to be promoted and introduced into the daily spiritual life. As a result, there were many stories or legends about mothers in this period.

However, it must be affirmed that in this period, the legends of spiritual mothers appeared independently without any connection or ties. Perhaps due to a part of social awareness or the harshness of the ruling powers, the spiritual mothers could not clearly demonstrate their powers as well as a clear sense of resistance. In this period, people relied on spiritual mothers mainly for mental comfort or for meeting the requirements of individual villages.

Based on the stories, typical historical figures and the model of thought developed from spiritual mothers honored by common people in this period, half-goddess mothers and goddess mothers began to appear, namely, Au Co (later honored as Mother of the country), Trung sisters, Lady Le Chan, Tu Vi Hong Nuong, Nhan Nuong, etc.

Period of Independence and Self-Control

When Ngo Quyen expelled the Southern Han army out of the country in 938(Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu, 1697), Vietnam officially entered the period of independence and self-control after nearly a thousand years under Chinese domination. In addition to re-establishing the independence of the country, this was also the period when Vietnamese people revived the cultural values of the nation, including folk beliefs in spiritual mothers. Apart from previously worshiped subjects, in this period, there were many related legends, even new legends, and new characters.

With the influence of the mandarin regime and the exchange of roles between men and women, the role of spiritual mothers also changed. In stories, the mystery in the legends of spiritual mothers (Mother Goddess) in this period gradually “faded” whereas the real-life was clearly developed. In this period, Mother Goddess not only appeared in the daily life of people (especially common people) but also took part in the protection of the country’s borders.

This problem is relatively easy to understand. First, in terms of awareness, humans’ theoretical level and their understanding of natural phenomena were significantly improved. There were quite a lot of educated people coming from common people. Second, with the development of awareness and the changes in realities of life and social regimes, the role of women also changed to adapt to the situation. Third (perhaps the most important thing), in order to protect and consolidate their dominant power, Vietnamese feudal dynasties not only had to fight against foreign invaders but also had to reassure the people in the country. Consequently, the ordination for the Gods who made a major contribution to the people, the country and the village was a regular and necessary task. Of those characters, the role of Mother Goddess was indispensable. Apart from previously honored Mother Goddess (including both Goddess and half-Goddess), all of the powerful women who appeared in this period were deified and worshiped in temples after their death.

It can be said that Vietnamese people have successfully conceptualized a unique belief and at the same time integrated many other beliefs according to the four requirements of the national consciousness in the mother's love. It was the Chineseization in the form of worshipping Goddess and the personification of the four natural forces that determined the livelihood of agricultural residents including heaven, water, trees, and earth. It was called the cult of the "Four Palaces" (at first there were only Three Palaces) (Ngoc, 2002):

Heaven Goddess (i.e. Mrs. Heaven governing the Heaven) ruled the clouds, rain, thunder, and lightning and was dressed in red;

Sea Goddess: Sea referred to water. Sea Goddess governed the Water Palace (water areas), ruled rivers and seas, which were important to agriculture, and was dressed in white;

Forest Goddess ruled mountains, forests, trees, and plants and was dressed in blue;

Later, the fourth Mother Goddess was the Earth Goddess (land) governed land and creatures and was dressed in yellow.

Apart from the above-mentioned Goddess that was honored as Mother Goddess, there were also many women with a contribution to the country in this period. These women included Y Lan (later conferred as Y Lan Goddess), Princess Lieu Hanh (a character becoming immortal in the mind of Vietnamese people) (Lung, 1991; Hinh, 2007), and so on. These historical figures were worshiped and conferred as Mother Goddess and played an important role in the spiritual life of Vietnamese people. This belief has become popular in the life of people in the North, and people organize very large festivals every year (Binh, 2005).

When the worship of Mother Goddess moved to the Central region, people adopted the worship Goddess of the land of Cham Po I Nu Naga people. This religion was mixed with Taoism and turned into the worship of Thien Y A Na, the mother in conformity with God's will (lung, 1991; Khanh, 1991). In Hue, there was a shrine for worshipping Mother Po I Nu Naga Po of Cham people, later adopted by Vietnamese people as the Thien Y A Na Goddess and the worship place was changed into Hon Chen shrine or Hue Nam shrine. Thien Y A Na was called Ngoc Goddess. In the South, the worship of Mother Goddess was combined with the worship of the Earth Goddess of Khmer people. As a result, people generally worshiped the Lady of the Realm in all villages in the South, typically the Lady of the Realm in Chau Doc An Giang and the Black Virgin in Black Virgin Mountains in Tay Ninh province (Phong, 2015).

The authors would like to discuss a bit more about Princess Lieu Hanh. As mentioned above, Princess Lieu Hanh held a very important position in the life of people in the Northern Delta. When Princess Lieu Hanh appeared, she became the main goddess in the worship of Four Palaces. "Palaces" in the worship of Mother Goddess had a broad and comprehensive meaning and corresponded to different regions in the universe. Despite being born later,

Princess Lieu Hanh was often placed in the most solemn position on the altar of the Four Palaces.

There were many different legends of Princess Lieu Hanh (Lung, 1991; Phong, 2015). She could be both Angel (Fairy) and Human Goddess for the world, for parents, for husband and children and traveled everywhere to eliminate evils and bless people. Princess Lieu Hanh could transform into Heaven Goddess, but sometimes could be similar to Earth Goddess and Sea Goddess.

Although there were many different legends of Princess Lieu Hanh, most of these legends said that Princess Lieu Hanh was previously Princess Quynh Hoa, who broke the gem cup of the Jade Emperor, was then punished and thrown into the world and became the daughter of Le Thai Cong and his wife in An Thai village, Van Cat commune, Thien Ban district (Vu Ban, Nam Dinh province today) (Nam Hai Di Nhan, Legends and anecdotes, Quang Cung Linh Tu Pha Ky).

When studying Princess Lieu Hanh, Nguyen Duy Hinh (2007), a researcher on Taoism, said that Princess Lieu Hanh was not Giang Tien (a fairy coming to the world from Heaven), Trich Tien (a fairy punished and thrown into the world), or Thi Tien (a fairy traveling here and there) but a Mother Goddess looking after her children. According to Taoism, “Thi Tien” and “Giang Tien” were not reincarnated as humans, so they did not belong to Taoism. Only Trich Tien had the mark of Taoism.

At present, in the Northern Delta, Lieu Hanh Mother (also called is Van Cat Goddess or Princess Lieu Hanh) is a sacred and popular character in the worship of Mother Goddess. She is sometimes ranked first and is the highest variable in the religion of the Three Realm and the Four Realm (Ngoc, 2002).

The birth of Princess Lieu Hanh was the product of Vietnamese historical society, namely the feudal period of Vietnam during the Le dynasty. The historical reality of the country when Princess Lieu Hanh was born was that in Vu Ban area, among the feudal forces of the Le dynasty (Thanh Hoa province today) and Tran dynasty (Nam Dinh province today), Princess Lieu Hanh was reincarnated into a family with the mother with Le surname and the father with Tran surname. Was this a combination of majestic powers helping Tran beat Nguyen, Le beat Minh? Why did Princess Lieu Hanh appear when the society had peace, as well as chaos and the feudal forces of Le - Mac, and Trinh - Nguyen, were in conflict for the two South-North regions?

It can be said the birth of Princess Lieu Hanh completed the worshipping system of the Three Realm and the Four Realm and fully expressed the philosophy of Mother Goddess Worship according to the Eastern worldview. From the worship of Goddess, the worship of the Three Realm and the Four Realm was influenced by Chinese Taoism. Many researchers believed that in the worship of Mother Goddess, the main places for worshipping Princess Lieu Hanh were called “Realm”, such as Day Palace (Nam Dinh province today) and Tay Ho Palace (Hanoi capital today) and might appear when there were imperial

palaces for Lords and Kings in the Trinh - Nguyen dynasty. Previously, sacred spaces for worshipping Mother Goddess were only temples and shrines.

4. The Basic Contents of Mother Goddess Worship Belief

4.1. The Divine System

According to Ngo Duc Thinh (1996 & 2004), the magical system of the “Đạ o Mã u” includes Jade Emperor, Quan Am Buddha, Tam Thanh Holy Mother, Big Quan (from 5-10 people), Chau Ba (from 4-12 people), Ong Hoang (5-10 people), Vuong Co (12 people), Vuong Cau (12 people), Ngu Ho and Ong Lot (snakes). There were differences there in the number of saints in each row (mandarins, adoration, princes, aunts, and uncles) due to the existence of differences in conception in different regions of Vietnam.

The Jade Emperor is a saint worshiped as the Father in the “Đạ o Mã u”, having its own altar in the temples and the realms. However, in rituals, folk consciousness of Vietnamese people, the role of the Jade Emperor is quite lackluster.

Guan Yin is the Bodhisattva of Buddhism, Ngo Duc Thinh (Thinh, 1996 & 2004; Van, 2019) said that according to the ancient and legendary bibliography, the Buddha rescued Princess Lieu Hanh in a battle. From that grace, Princess Lieu Hanh took refuge and opened the way for the integration between the folk religion and Buddhism. Therefore, in the worship of Mother Goddess (as in many Marian rituals), Guan Yin Buddha have always been there.

Three Realms in the worship of “Đạ o Mã u” corresponds to different regions in the universe: Thien Phu (The heaven Realm), Nhap Phu (The Mountains Forests Realm) and Thoai Phu (The Water and River Realm).

At the head of each palace is a Mother God: The Mau Thuong Thien (The First Mother Goddess) governs the sky, mastering the powers of clouds, rain, wind, thunder, etc; The Mau Thuong Ngan (The Second Mother Goddess) looks after the mountainous, forest areas, the main habitat of many ethnic minorities, and The Mau Thoai (The Third Mother Goddess) looks after the river, water areas, helping to grow wet rice and fishery.

Researcher Ngo Duc Thinh (2004) said that in The three Realms, Mau Lieu Hanh (Princess Lieu Hanh) was always homogeneous with The Mau Thuong Thien, sitting in the middle and wearing a red outfit, on the left was The Mau Thoai (outfit white) and on the right was The Mau Thuong Ngan Form (blue outfit).

As analyzed above, in origins of Mau Lieu Hanh, she was a fairy descending from the heaven, then taking refuge in Buddhism and being honored as the “Mau Nghi Thien Ha” (the mother of the world) one of the four immortal saints of the Vietnamese people. Mau Lieu Hanh and Duc Thanh Tran (Hung Dao Dai Vuong Tran Quoc Tuan) have become a symbol of the union between spirit and everyday life, between spiritual needs and aspirations towards the

true, the good, the beauty; help people healing, eliminate demons, and help those in difficult circumstances.

The Mother Goddess originated not only from the Kinh people but also from ethnic minorities such as the Tay, Nung, and Dao people (Thinh, 2004). Besides, among the 50 gods worshiped by the “Dao Mau”, many of them are characters of history, divinized like Le Chan, Tran Hung Dao (Duc Thanh Tran), Pham Ngu Lao, etc.

4.2. *Hau Dong (Hau Bong or Len Dong)*

In 2016, the practice of the worship of the Mother Goddess was recognized by UNESCO as an intangible heritage of humanity, which showed the human value of this type of belief.

“Hau Dong”, also known as the “Chau Van” ritual, is the main and most typical ritual of the worship of Mother Goddess. Through this ritual, people convey and express their desires and aspirations to the mothers (with supernatural powers) who they respect. “However, Hau Dong has been heavily banned in Vietnam for a long time due to a lack of proper understanding. The public view this ritual through the mysterious veil with a suspicious attitude (disguise to the bad mutations, in the direction of superstition arising during the practice of this belief) (Van, 2019), specifically:

Hau Dong is essentially a form of folk performance based on the combination of spiritual music (elaborate lyrics) with graceful dances and solemn rituals; from there, bring people into ecstatic;

Practitioners of this belief believe that this performance form can help people communicate with the gods. At this time, “Thanh Dong” (bronze bars” played an intermediary role between man and spirit (god);

Thanh Dong for men is called “Cậ u” (uncle), and women are called “Cô” (Miss) or call “Ba dong”. There are usually two or four “Phu dong” (people who helped Thanh Dong during the ceremony) following Thanh Dong to prepare costumes, ceremonies, etc.

Music is an indispensable component, “Cung van” also the main music composer and plays for the ceremony.

In addition, the components that sit watching the “Hau Dong” are the audience. These people are often disciples of “Đạ o Mã u”, often paying homage to the Saints when they come down to earth, harmonizing with the singing and being blessed by the Saints.

Today, “Len Dong” is still a spiritual need, a form of folk belief activities for a part of Vietnamese people. These ceremonies are often held several times a year on ceremonial occasions, usually at the festival of temples, pagodas, realms, etc. In addition to Len Dong to communicate with the spirits, the tradition of Vietnamese beliefs also believes that after death, the soul of the person remains and monitors the lives of relatives living. Therefore, when the “Len Dong”, the souls of the dead can be merged with the girl or the boy to

talk to a living relative. Through this yin-yang conversation, the living will know the requirements of the deceased to the graves, items for personal activities (clothes, money, transportation, etc.) to adjust and pray accordingly. At the same time, through this dialogue, the living also knows their future destiny.

4.3. The Phenomenon of Superstition in the Worshipping of Mother Goddess Belief

Superstition is a deluded, blind, innocent belief, an extreme phenomenon of belief (Anh, 1998). This phenomenon appears in many beliefs, religions, including worship of Mother Mother (think, 2004).

Besides the positive side is the worship of the Mother and the gods to direct to the good things, eternal values, the happiness that we need to preserve and promote in the spiritual life of human beings. Mother worship has many negative aspects, is the place that produces many superstitious and superstitious phenomena.

A fact that is happening at the Mothers' worship facilities today is that, taking advantage of the permission to restore and develop a number of traditional folk festivals, many places have “ceded” the place of worshipping Mother into a place for superstition. Superstition exists. There are many people who rely on this policy to open the Mother Temple to worship for purposes outside of common beliefs for personal gain, to illegally enrich, with all kinds of skills from fortune telling, Holy Spirit copper, government. In particular, nowadays, there is still a fairly common phenomenon in the practice of beliefs in general and Mother-worship beliefs in particular, that is the phenomenon of “making vows” in worship facilities. This activity is most clearly seen at Ba Chua Kho temple (Bac Ninh province), this army of “prayers” can provide a “full package” service from making gifts, writing notes ... when requested by people ceremony.

In addition, there are also teams of “professional” servants, “professional” ballers, to be “service” teams to different places to ask for worship at copper prices, reducing the sacredness of the inherent form of spiritual theater its polluting the cultural environment. On the other hand, these “professional” teams have arbitrary colors that are not in any way defined. Moreover, when they perform the ritual of worshipping or chanting, their voice is like a chèo or opera performer, which makes the ceremony of the maidservant of the Mau worship faith lose their solemnity and differ from traditional beliefs. From a spiritual perspective, superstition hurts the faith of the Holy Mother and deities and can also lead to the disappearance of indigenous beliefs, an expression of national cultural identity. In addition, there is a part of society that is enslaved by superstition, thereby leading to the phenomenon of deterioration, mental corruption, etc.

Today, when the society has profound changes in economy - politics, culture - society, the form of mother worshipping activities in our country still maintains, develops and shows signs of quite complicated (Thuan, 2004; Van, 2019). The

Mother Goddess Worship belief tends to move closer to superstition. However, the main and dominant trend of folk beliefs in general and Mau worship in particular is one of the forms of cultural and religious activities in the community and is manifested as a social activity. , education.

The trend of historicalization and mythization of historical figures in religious phenomena is the main trend, the law of Vietnamese folk beliefs (Thin, 2004; Van, 2005; Hinh, 2007). The Mother Goddess worship belief is also in that trend, if not associated with the history of building the country and defending the country, it cannot exist for long in the folk (Hinh, 2007).

Above are the causes of superstition and superstition. Also due to superstition often brings harmful, unpredictable consequences. However, there also appear to be phenomena that are confusing and difficult to explain. Since then increases the mystery of this phenomenon. To really thoroughly explain the phenomenon of ghosting as well as its transformation, requires researchers to concentrate time and effort.

5. Discussion

In essence, sacred manifestation worship the original form is the gods, born from the concept of agricultural inhabitants about trees, country, heaven, from the respect for the woman that has respected those phenomena to the mother (Lung, 1991; Ngoc, 2002; Hinh, 2007). In the course of their existence and development, in the process of realizing the world around them, those early concepts were raised to reflect the creative philosophy of the universe according to Eastern philosophy (Giau, 1973 & 2003). At the same time, sacred symbols are those who have succeeded in clearing the enemy, clearing the land, as well as worshipping the gods in temples also show the tradition of remembering the origin. In the process of developing the belief of folk beliefs, many sacred symbols from other religions have also been cleverly used by Vietnamese people, gradually being Vietnamese metabolism into very personal gods in Heavenly Paradise.

In the process of development of the worship of Mother Goddess, there will inevitably be borrowings, modifications to suit the Vietnamese people's consciousness. This is not purely groundless or is the original biology of the original values of religions, but it is also a relentless creation of the Vietnamese people.

The worship of Mother Goddess also clearly shows the consciousness of the Vietnamese people (Thin 1996 & 2004; Ngoc, 2002; Hinh, 2007; Van, 2019). A people always long for peace, a simple life, living under the family's home with the love of mother (Goddess), mothers who have the power of pilots but are very ordinary. Especially the immense love for children, their immortal power is only one purpose of protecting their children, and the sacred values of the nation.

To find the origin and value of the worship of the Mother Goddess is still much debate, requiring more time and effort of researchers. However, the search for

the origin of the Worship of the Mother Goddess is not to find differences among researchers, causing controversies with no results. The quest for the origin of the Mother Goddess is the ultimate goal of finding the ancient values, in the traditions of the Vietnamese nation, from which to understand more about the spiritual values that many generations of people Vietnam has made a lot of fun.

6. Some Solutions to Promote the Value of the “Đạo Mã u”

Firstly, there should be forms of propaganda and education on the Party's policy lines and the State's laws on respect for freedom of belief and freedom of belief. At the same time, we seek to make people understand and realize the boundaries between religious practice and superstitious activities.

Resolutely strictly punish those who take advantage of freedom of belief and religion to disrupt socio-political stability, disturb public order, divide the great national unity bloc, etc. The essential spiritual bridge of a part of the population, it is and will exist with the Vietnamese people in the process of building a democratic, civilized, modern, rich and beautiful Vietnam country. Freedom of belief was determined from the early years of the nation's founding and expressed in the Constitution of 1946, as well as later, the connotation of freedom of belief was expanded, continued to be recognized and developed in Constitutions.

In recent years, a number of legal documents continue to concretize our country's constitution on beliefs and religions such as: Resolution No. 25 - NQ/TW dated March 12, 2003 of the Executive Committee of China. Party Central Committee; Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly (2004), Law on Beliefs and Religions 2016, etc. In addition, we must have plans and measures to propagate legal documents, under the law, etc. down to the people so that they can understand the Party's policy and the laws of the State.

In terms of the way, we have the Party's religious and belief policy publicly announced and increasingly concretized. Such religious and belief policies are derived from scientific perception, objective rationale and based on each political task of each period, should be consistent and correct. However, the problem is that the impregnation of the content and meaning of the policy is not paid enough attention.

Second, step by step improve the people's material and spiritual life. The purpose of this measure is to raise the level of awareness of culture, science, technology, etc. from which to distinguish right, wrong, good, bad, etc. to self-consciously eliminate the the negative phenomenon and promotes positive elements in the current Mother religion.

In order to limit the negativity in the Mother's worship, we must step by step improve the people's material life, and ensure the people's needs for food, clothing, accommodation, and jobs. At the same time, it is necessary to fully exploit the strengths in the Northern Delta such as: traditional craft villages,

fertile field land, with a large team of workers who are both experienced and knowledgeable, promoting all their efforts productivity in industrial zones. Since then, people have the conditions to improve their culture, scientific understanding, and get rid of backward customs and superstitious thoughts. Not only improving the material life, but also improving the spiritual life of the people at the same time. Caring for and building the spiritual life for the people, based on preserving and promoting good traditional spiritual values, selectively absorbing the cultural quintessence of humanity, harmonious but not dissolve, etc.;

Improving the cultural and spiritual life for the people but with the leadership of the Party, ensuring the freedom and democracy of the people etc. Restoring traditional festivals to promote positive values of credit Mother worship such as: human tendencies, love for people, sincerity, altruism, etc. When the incense, the disciple enters the temple, the temple is sincere and sincere. This mind is the human heart sincerely respecting the gods. In the content of the song chau, the direction of goodness or education is highly appreciated. Man must live with love, meaning, and more importance than money, be forgiving, be gentle, etc.

In addition, it is necessary to raise the awareness level of the masses in all aspects such as: Raising the level of culture, understanding Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, and raising proper awareness on beliefs, religions and consistent lines and policies of our Party and State on the right to freedom of belief of all people. At the same time, educate the ethics of drinking water, remember the source, patriotism, cultural identity, etc. of our nation.

Third, build a healthy cultural - social environment. Specifically, building a healthy cultural environment in the works of worshipping Mother.

Building a healthy socio-cultural environment in the belief base has been set out into the national action programs undertaken by the Ministry of Culture and Information. However, this is a difficult and complicated issue, so it is necessary to finish each stage, with close coordination between relevant branches from the central to local levels.

Build a healthy socio-cultural environment and preserve a culture imbued with national identity along with our nation's traditional festivals. We must know how to combine three factors: belief, culture and ethnicity. Ceremony is the first reason that leads to the formation of festivals in festivals. Want to develop more than the festival element, but if the traditional elements and the belief or "sacred" of the ceremony are lost, it is difficult for the association to last for a long time.

We must not forget to foster scientific knowledge, foster atheism to direct religious activities to build new people, build an advanced culture imbued with national identity, and contribute to building to build the country industrialization and modernization. At temples, palaces, shrines, etc. worshipping places of “Đạ o Mã u” are places that attract many people to participate in spiritual activities, community cultural activities. In order to have

a healthy socio-cultural environment, right from these places, there must be arrangement, guidance and management plans of all levels of government.

In folk festivals, superstition always interwoven. To properly conceive of a belief and distinguish it from superstition is not a simple matter. Therefore, we must be skillful, flexible, but not lose the solemnity of the law, at the same time we must be alert and struggle with the tactics of "peaceful evolution".

Fourth, strengthen training and scientific research on beliefs, religions in general and “Đạ o Mã u” in particular.

For this solution to be implemented, we must first research and invest both knowledge and material in the current theoretical problems of the current Marianism, then we need to come up with the views clearly unify in a number of phenomena of the Marianism. It is necessary to open more short-term classes to update information and provide knowledge about beliefs for people working in beliefs and religions. It is possible to build more centers, institutes, institutes for training and researching on beliefs and religions; write references for the type of Marianism. Bring books and documents to the local basis for reference, in order to have better management measures, avoid arbitrary things that make it difficult for the implementation of the people's right to freedom of belief.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, the history showed that the worship of Mother Goddess appeared after the fifteenth century, i.e. in the Le dynasty. If this was true, the worship of Mother Goddess appeared after Confucianism replaced Buddhism and Taoism to respond to the spiritual loss that Confucianism created. With its constant arguments and its viewpoint of valuing men above women, Confucianism pushed women into a life of extreme hardship and bound them into harsh rituals. In that life, Mother Goddess were subjected to many unfortunate things of Vietnamese women, but they lived morally and loved people without undergoing a special training process.

The above-mentioned belief in Mother Goddess proved the predominance of women over men among Vietnamese people. However, since Confucianism came into Vietnam, the emphasis on the role of men pushed women out of the government and the orthodox literature. In general, the governors and upper classes of the society no longer respected women.

In fact, in the life of Vietnamese common people, women still held a special position. In common people's consciousness, mothers (Goddess) were still considered to have invincible powers. Mothers became a permanent symbol in all behaviours of Vietnamese people. Therefore, in Vietnam, mothers were honoured into a particular religion - the Worship of Mother Goddess.

Discussing a popular belief has been very popular, but searching for the origin of that belief is not an easy thing. The author has tried to analyze based on actual research results, ancient documents, as well as consult with many colleagues and in many different books to make judgments, Initial assessment

of the origin of the Mother Goddess worship of Vietnamese people. This issue is certainly much debated, looking forward to the contribution of researchers so that we can discover the values of the predecessors that have built up.

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