



# Origin of Worshipping the Mother Goddess in Vietnam

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## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

For centuries Mother Goddess worship has been a source of strength, inspiration and spirituality in Vietnam, particularly among working-class families. Along with the worship of ancestors, the belief of worshipping the village tutelary gods, the worship of Mother Goddess has maintained an important position in the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people. Though over throughout many the years, this form of folk the religion has waxed and waned, recently there has been a resurgence following the inscription by UNESCO in 2016 of the phenomenon of Mother Goddess worship (*Dao Mau*) as intangible cultural heritage. Much as it plays an important role in contributing to the Vietnamese culture, there are many different viewpoints on the origin of this religion. This article contributes to helping readers have a more complete and comprehensive view of the origin of this important folk religion of the Vietnamese people.

*Keywords: Origin; belief; worship; Mother Goddess; Vietnamese people.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

To meet spiritual needs, everyday wishes and gain help in achieving good health and success communities in Viet Nam worship the Mother Goddesses of Three Realms: heaven, water, and mountains and forests [1]. The worship of Mother Goddess is a pure, popular, long-standing folk tradition in Vietnam [2]. Associated as it is with the natural and cosmic phenomena it is believed by the people that they have the power to create, sponsor and protect human life such as heaven, earth, water, mountains, forests, etc [3,4]. Worship of queens and princess 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 Vietnam 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 (Heaven), Nhac phu (Mountains Forests), Thoai phu (Water), Dia phu (Earth) [5,6]. The beliefs of Mother Goddess worship are close to nature, heaven and earth, tied to the fate of Vietnamese women [7,8]. 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 [9,10,11,12].

Mother Goddess 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 [13]. Judged from a divine perspective, the worship of Mother Goddess has formed a belief system holies, gods with many different functions and duties. In terms of the spirit of worship, Mother Goddess worship had typical rituals such as "hau bong", "len dong" that other folk religions do not have. There is a view that Mother Goddess worship is an early religion [8,13], but there are disagreements with the only agreement being concerning assertion that it is a folk belief [14,6,8], a controversy which has attracted much research interest by many scientists, especially those interested in the fields of belief, religion and culture.

As many researchers have identified [15,16], from the prehistoric 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. The mother has become the first symbol of survival. The 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 [17-19].

Following the development of "Mau" (mother) is the motherland, mother water we. The people who work in the field of wet rice farming are the two most important objects of land and water [20-22]. 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 honoured.

Belief comes from real life, people set out mystical forces to honour and worship by 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, "Mau" is in Chinese and Vietnamese called Ma, Mo, 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 Vietnam, 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 old people. Therefore, the Worship of Mother Goddess is worshipping mother of trees and shrines [23,6].

The arguments are remarkable about the process of formation and development of the Mother worship belief of Vietnamese people. Of course, to make those arguments, the authors have produced much relatively convincing evidence. However, for the author, the source of Vietnamese beliefs is not 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 [24-27]. 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 [28,29]. 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) was not out of these general rules. Therefore, to understand the origin of the worship of Mother Goddess, we must consider the issue from many different perspectives.

## **2. SOME ISSUES ARE STILL ARGUING ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THE WORSHIP OF THE MOTHER GODDESS OF VIETNAMESE PEOPLE**

There is a real problem raised today when studying the Mother Goddess is whether the worship of the Mother Goddess is a complete religion or just a folk religion. There is a view that worshipping the Mother Goddess is a complete religion [8,30]. However, many researchers are claiming that the worship of Goddess Mother is only a folk belief of Vietnamese people [31,23,32,6]. With different research perspectives, researchers will trace the source of the worship of the Mother Goddess in many different angles.

Ngo Duc Thinh (1996) in *Worship of Mother Goddess in Vietnam* and (2004) in *Worship of Mother Goddess and Shamanism among Ethnic Groups in Vietnam and Asia* pointed out that, the worship of the Mother Goddess is rooted in the worship of the Goddess. Ngo Duc Thinh said that this worship has existed for a long time and is popular in many ethnic groups, in plains as well as in mountainous areas, and is now observed in both rural and urban areas. To prove his argument, Ngo Duc Thinh took evidence from an ancient Vietnamese book called "Hoi Chan Bien", "Vietnamese Goddess" book and "Cultural and historical relics of Vietnam" book as evidence. In the book "Hoi Chan Bien", published in 1847 by Emperor Thieu Tri, collected by Thanh Hoa Tu, of the 27 deities of purely Vietnamese origin, 17 were fairies. In the book "Vietnamese Goddess" written in this life, it has gathered and introduced initially 75 typical Goddess of our country [33,34]. In the book: "Cultural and historical relics of Vietnam", of the 1000 introduced relics, 250

relics are worshipping female Goddess and celebrities. Particularly around Phu Mon relics complex worshipping Lieu Hanh, more than 20 temples and shrines were found.

Nguyen Dang Duy (2004) in *Vietnamese culture, the peak of Dai Viet* pointed out that: from the primitive times, people were conscious of this proliferation. The mother who carries heavy pain nurtures and protects her children overcome natural disasters and wild animals. In that sense, the first mother to feed and protect that person is the mother trees, mother water, and mother earth and mother sky. Since then, the worship of natural phenomena into beliefs about spiritual mothers has the power to protect their children.

In *Vietnamese Spirituality* [35] pointed out that: the belief in the power of the mother is not only deeply rooted in the matriarchy but is also a protest against the harsh rule of feudal dynasties. The patriarchal system has reduced the role of women, which is contrary to the traditional views of Vietnam. Moreover, the real-life of the people is extremely miserable, they do not know where to expect help, and they only have to rely on the Mother Goddess. That flow of folk has gradually formed a belief in the Mother Goddess that can free people from the hardships of life, thereby forming the worship of the Mother Goddess of Vietnamese people.

In addition to the above views, the perspectives of Phan Ngoc (2002), Le Van Chuong (2004) and Tran Lam Bien (2014), etc. also discussed origin the worship of the Mother Goddess, but it was incomplete. Researchers only trace the origin of the worship of the Mother Goddess at different angles. This leads to an inadequate and comprehensive way to view the origin of the worship of the Mother Goddess. Based on the inheritance of previous researchers, researching ancient documents, the author makes judgments about the origin of the worship of the Mother Goddess in many different angles.

From the author's point of view and the widely accepted and popular notion, worship of the Mother Goddess of is still considered a folk belief for the following basic reasons: Firstly, worship of the Mother Goddess of was formed in matriarchy, it originates from the worship of the goddess; Secondly, worship of the Mother Goddess of lacks the basic criteria to constitute a religion such as creationism, canon law, doctrine, church, organizational system... in its full sense; Thirdly, in worship of the Mother Goddess of, the

belief factor is still based on the perception of the subject, not systematic; Fourthly, in the legal documents of the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam that have recognized and granted operation registration to 38 organizations, religious sects and 01 religious practice of 13 religions, in There are 06 major religions: Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao. Of the four reasons above, the third reason and fourth reason are the reasons supporting the author in making his views.

For the above reasons, in this article, the author will use the term "worship of the Mother Goddess" in the arguments as well as give his proofs.

### **3. ORIGIN OF THE WORSHIP OF MOTHER GODDESS 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 Goddess 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.

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 [36].

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. The Dai Viet Complete History 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" [37]. When removing the feudal layers of these legends, it is not difficult to see that before 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..." [37]. 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) [37].

Today, it is all known that the owners 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.

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 Sisters (40 - 43), Lady Trieu (246) against the invaders from the North. 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 they get 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 centre of material life but also the centre of spiritual life. This led to the sense of respect for women - mothers - not only within the family but also within the clan.

Also, mothers were divinized and honoured in the spiritual life. This phenomenon was not 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, and so on.

#### **4. ORIGIN OF THE WORSHIP OF MOTHER GODDESS 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 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 worshipped 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. 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. 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 (Giarai) like mothers. It was the only plant to be considered as having Soul (Vietnamese) = Soan (Coho), etc.

For wet-rice farmers, soil and water were extremely important factors. Vietnam was a country located in Southeast Asia, which had hills, mountains, deltas, rivers, sea, and a tropical monsoon climate. Therefore, it had favourable 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 tree, 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 honoured. 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. 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 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 [38,39].

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 neighbours, 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 honoured. 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 honoured as Mothers divinely.

## **5. ORIGIN OF THE WORSHIP OF MOTHER GODDESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THOUGHT**

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, scepticism (reflection), and humans’ failure in those efforts.

Like other nations in the world, ancient Vietnamese people had their conceptions of the universe and human life. Based on the legends and archaeological 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.” [37].

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). 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 produces 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.

## **6. ORIGIN OF THE WORSHIP OF MOTHER GODDESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORY**

### **6.1 Period of Chinese Domination**

After the defeat of 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 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 honoured by common people in this period, half-goddess mothers and goddess mothers began to appear, namely, Au Co (later honoured as Mother of the country), Trung sisters, Lady Le Chan, Tu Vi Hong Nuong, Nhan Nuong, etc.

### **6.2 Period of Independence and Self-control**

When Ngo Quyen expelled the Southern Han army out of the country in 938, 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 worshipped 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 role 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 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), 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 honoured Mother Goddess (including both Goddess and half-Goddess), all of the powerful women who appeared in this period were deified and worshipped 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):

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 [14,6].

Apart from the above-mentioned Goddess that was honoured as Mother Goddess, there were also many women with the 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), and so on. These historical figures were worshipped 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.

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. 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 worshipped 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.

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. She could be both Angel (Fairy) and Human Goddess for the world, for parents, for husband and children and travelled 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, 217), 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 travelling 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 Three Palaces and Four Palaces.

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, conflicted the two South-Northth regions?

It can be said the birth of Princess Lieu Hanh completed the worshipping system of Three Palaces and Four Palaces and fully expressed the philosophy of Mother Goddess Worship according to the Eastern worldview. From the worship of Goddess, the worship of Three Palaces and Four Palaces 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 "Palaces", 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.

## 7. SOME COMMENTS

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. 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. 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. 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 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.

## 8. 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.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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