

THE CULT OF GUAN GONG IN THE ENDOGENOUS RELIGIONS IN THE SOUTH OF VIETNAM

Abstract: *The endogenous religions in the South (Cochinchine) in the modern period, such as Bửu Sơn Kỳ Hương, Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa, Cao Đài, Hòa Hảo Buddhism, etc... have absorbed the cult of Quan Công (Guan Gong) in some extent. These religions considered Quan Công as a divine who blessed people. This article clarifies the characteristics of the cult of Quan Công in Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa and Caodaism. Then, it compares the cult of Quan Công of the Vietnamese Chinese at the early time, thereby indicating the specific characteristics of the cult of Quan Công in the endogenous religions in the South.*

Keywords: *Cult of Quan Công, endogenous religions, Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa, Caodaism.*

1. Introduction

Guan Gong (Guan Yu, Guan Yunchang, and Noble Military Ethics) is one of the deities that has the widest impact in the religion of the Chinese over the world. Along with Chinese immigrants, the cult of Guan Gong spread to many countries, integrated with indigenous religions which made many variations of this type of worship. However, there are similarities of the rules of formation and development in the Guan Gong cult through space and time. The nature of the worship Guan Gong created these similarities.

Guan Gong was a Chinese historical character. He was loyal to the king, generous with people, courageous when facing with enemies, so he was admired, and praised. He became a symbol of loyalty, brave in the eyes of the masses. His achievements in killing the evil, contribution of nation-building, sacrifice his life to save the king that led the admiration of people. Because of his qualities and merits, the image of Guan Gong was praised as a model of an inferior by the Chinese emperors. He was

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honoured by religions as a symbol. Thereby, he was sanctified; his image played an important position in the divine system of religions in China.

The loyalty of Guan Gong was appropriate for the consolidation of power of the kings, the purpose of restoring the morality of the king and inferiors, so he was appreciated by the Chinese emperors. In the late of the Han dynasty, Cao Cao (Tào Tháo) admired the bravery of Guan Gong so he built a temple to worship Guan Gong at his hometown. Before the Sui dynasty, the Tang dynasty, Guan Gong was worshipped in the Jingzhou citadel as a lusty general. Since the Sui dynasty, the Tang dynasty, the worship of Guan Gong has been spread more widely, people have voluntarily sacrificed, and have considered him as a martial god that eradicated the harassment of demons. To the Song dynasty, the aim of strengthening the power of feudal centralization pushed the revival of Confucianism, the loyalty of Guan Gong was praised by the power holders. He was ordained the royal decree (sắc phong). The temples were built to worship him.

Thus, the status of Guan Gong in the spiritual life of the masses was gradually improved. The title the Noble Military Ethics (Quan Thánh Đế Quân) was ordained by the kings that brought Guan Gong to the equal position as the kings and two masters of Confucianism like Confucius and Mencius. Besides, Buddhism and Taoism in China also absorbed profoundly the form of worship Guan Gong. Thereby, Guan Gong was praised by two religions as the role of encouragement the good and punishment evil. In the Ming and Qing periods, the consecutive emergence of religions combined with the synthesis of Three teachings (Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism) which brought Guan Gong to the noble status of deity with the important functions as protection the country, supporting the throne and security of all people¹.

The endogenous religions in the South of Vietnam were formed in the modern period with the fluctuation of society. These religions used the traditional rituals in practicing such as oracle, prophetic remarks, supernatural power, absorbing and tolerance of the Three religions, using magic spells to cure... These religions attracted the attention and join of many people in the society. The religions of Bửu Sơn Kỳ Hương, Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa, Caodaism, Hòa Hảo Buddhism built the Apocalypticism, which appreciated the standards of religious practices such as teaching of

morality, vegetarianism and loving animals, self-cultivation, so they quickly were received by the populace. The cult of Guan Gong clearly manifested in the endogenous religions as mentioned. It reflected comprehensively the devotion and aspiration of the southern residents to this deity.

2. The cult of Guan Gong in Vietnamese religious needs

2.1. The process of spreading the form of worship Guan Gong in Vietnam

As the adjoining of the mountains and rivers, through the Qin, Han, Sui, Tang, Song, Yuan dynasties, the Chinese immigrants arrived Vietnam in the waterway and road². Arriving the new land, the majority of the Chinese immigrants was refugees and traders. They could harmonize the challenges in order to integrate into the indigenous society. Beside the encountering the inevitable obstacles such as language, race, culture, religion and manufacturing techniques in some extent, in general, the Chinese immigrants were received and welcomed by the indigenous people³. The worship of Guan Gong along with the Chinese immigrants was propagated in Vietnam. The cult of Guan Gong gradually held a status in the spiritual life of the masses in our country. However, it was unlike the other forms of worship such as Ma Zu (Lady Matriarch) a Kubera, the worship of Guan Gong existed in Vietnam before the Ming and Qing dynasties⁴. Therefore, the image of Guan Gong in the mind of the masses was different in the scale of the object of worship, mode of worship at the periods before and after Ming, Qing dynasties.

Before the Ming and Qing dynasties, the worship of Guan Gong spread to the Vietnam's territory in the North and the Northern Center. The Kingdom of Champa and Funan in the Southern Center and the South primarily acquired the influence of Brahmanism and the Southern Buddhism. Because of receiving the scriptures in the Sino-characters from China, the Mahayana Buddhism in Vietnam honoured Guan Gong as Già Lam Dharmapala (Hộ Pháp Già Lam). The majority of Buddhist temples placed a Guan Gong statue that was considered as the Guardian deity as Vi Đà Tôn Thiên, Long Thần, etc...

Since the Song dynasty, Taoism in China has added Guan Gong in the divine system and honoured as Thiên Thần Dharmapala (Hộ Pháp Thiên Thần), even was deified Tam Giới Phục Ma Đại Đế. In addition, Taoism

used the name of Guan Gong to propagate a series of the righteous scriptures such as *Quan Công giác thế chân kinh*, *Văn Đế hiếu kinh*, *Quan Thánh Đế Quân giới dân kinh*, *Quan Thánh Đế Minh thánh kinh*, *Giới sĩ tử văn*, *Tam giới phục ma Quan Thánh Đế Quân trung hiếu tiết nghĩa chân kinh*... The majority of scriptures used the name of religion, took place the moral teachings of feudalism, encouraged people to do good things, to eradicate evil. It can be said that the cult of Guan Gong in the Three religions in China was transmitted to the North of Vietnam, where people built temples to worship this God.

After the Ming, Qing dynasties, through more than 300 years of consecutive immigration and the Chinese lived in many different areas in the Vietnam territory. In particular, the Chinese clustered in the Southern region such as Biên Hòa, Gia Định, Mỹ Tho and Mr. Trần Thượng Xuyên and Mr. Dương Ngạn Địch were their leaders, especially, the Hà Tiên area was settled by Mạc family. This phenomenon can be explained as follows: Firstly, the position of the South was quite far from China, it was enough to avoid the persecution of the Qing dynasty so the refuge was safe. Secondly, the Nguyễn Lords advocated the policy of using immigrants as one of the pioneering forces to expand the new area at that time. Thirdly, the Southern region was peaceful, rich produces, fertile plains which were favourable conditions for cultivating and trading with foreign countries.

Arriving in the new land, the Chinese immigrants brought their previous social, religious, cultural institutions to build new lives, in particular, the ancestor worship and traditional religions Ma Zu (Lady Matriarch), the Jade Emperor (Ngọc Hoàng), the Monkey King (Tề Thiên Đại Thánh), the God of the Land (Phúc Đức Chính Thần), Kubera, Zao Jun (Lord of the Stove), Matsu Goddess (Thiên Hậu) etc,... The Chinese immigrants continued to promote the social function as relief the disadvantaged people that was tradition of the previous religions.

The propagation the worship of Guan Gong in Vietnam related to the role of secret associations for fighting the Qing dynasty and reviving the Ming dynasty, which were persecuted by the Qing dynasty such as Tiandihui (Society of the Heaven and the Earth - Thiên Địa Hội), Red Flags (Quân Cờ Đỏ), Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (Thái Bình Thiên Quốc) that worshipped Guan Gong. The causes of this phenomenon as

follows: Firstly, Guan Gong had many moral qualities that people admired as loyalty, bravery, respectfulness, kindness, integrity, probity, credibility. Secondly, the Three major religions in Asia as Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism considered Guan Gong as a venerable deity: Confucianism honoured him as Văn Hoàn Thánh Đế, Taoism honoured him as Hiệp Thiên Đại Đế while Buddhism honoured him as Hộ Pháp Già Lam, so using the image of Guan Gong gathered many heroes. Thirdly, Guan Gong also patronized businessmen, because he was a trader of tofu and textiles, furthermore, he had credible qualities that the businessmen need. Fourthly, Guan Gong was honoured many titles by the Chinese emperors such as Trung Huệ Công, Nghĩa Dũng, Tráng Mâu Nghĩa Dũng Võ An Vương, Anh Tế Vương, Trung Nghĩa Chi Thần, Hiến Linh Anh Dũng Võ An Anh Tế Vương, Hán Tiền Tướng Quân Thọ Đình Hầu, Tam Giới Phục Ma Đại Đế, Thần Uy Chấn Viễn Thiên Tôn, Quan Thánh Đế Quân, Trung Nghĩa Thần Võ Quan Thánh Đại Đế, Hiệp Thiên Phục Ma Đại Đế, etc...

In the process of propagation the type of worship Guan Gong, literary compositions and artistic performances played an important role. The Chinese dignitaries brought to Vietnam many literary works at Ming and Qing periods, in which the romance of the Three Kingdoms (*Tam Quốc diễn nghĩa*) by Luo Guanzhong greatly contributed to expand the influence of the cult of Guan Gong. In the context of miserable life, the stories in the Three Kingdoms were a rare type of entertainment of inhabitants in the South. Thereby, the image of Guan Gong penetrated the minds of people. Moreover, the popularity of the worship Guan Gong by the Chinese caused the change of indigenous inhabitants from admiration into worship Guan Gong. In addition, hát bội (hát tuồng- a form of Vietnamese opera effected from Chinese) of the Chinese immigrants were received by the natives. Many stories of praising the talent, ethics of Guan Gong were popularized that led a flourished spread the image of this God.

2.2. Manifestations of the Guan Gong cult in religious life in Vietnam

Migration to the South, the Chinese built many Guan Gong temples which met the spiritual needs, expressed the nostalgic homeland and preserved the traditional culture. In the Chinese house, there was a place

to worship Guan Gong along with the other Gods like Gautama Buddha (Shakyamuni), Avalokitesvara (Avalokita- Bodhisattva), Jiutian Xuannu (Cửu Thiên Huyền Nữ), Matsu Goddess, etc... In the Chinese Buddhist temple, Guan Gong was worshipped as the role of Hộ Pháp Già Lam.

Of course, the worship of Guan Gong did not exist independently; it closely incorporated in the Three religions, animism and the ancestor cult of the Southern inhabitants. In the term of ideology, the cult of Guan Gong did not escape from the traditional religion's concept of the immortal soul, causality, encourage good, punishment evil, reincarnation. The worship Guan Gong was based on the foundation of this ideology so almost of believers of the endogenous religions in the South deeply believed that this was an inherent deity in their religions rather than a new god was integrated.

Many Vietnamese thought that Guan Gong was the deity that protected men's life, in the contrary, Jiutian Xuannu (Cửu Thiên Huyền Nữ) was the deity that protected women's life. There were many folktales involved the men's protection of Guan Gong. For instance, a man went to a restaurant for eating dog meat and drinking wine, then he was drunk and came back home, he was punished by Guan Gong God that was worshipped in his house. Finally, he vomited the whole food and was sick for many days. Or the other story of a man who stole the assets of people, when he arrived home, his house was destroyed by fire, only the image of Guan Gong was residual, etc... These stories had the purpose of encouraging good and punishing evil, praised the role of Guan Gong. They also proved this God's idol was widespread in the religious life of the people.

Latterly, some people even said that the image of Guan Gong that held the dragon sword, passed five forts and killed six generals was a metaphor for the human mind in practicing self-cultivation according to the Zen Buddhism. The dragon sword symbolizes the wisdom of Zen Buddhists, five forts symbolize the five senses of a human body, and six generals symbolize six enemies. According to that interpretation, Zen Buddhists must use the power of wisdom as a sharp weapon to cut off all the obstacles caused by the five senses of a human body, thereby eliminating the six desires of humankind such as money, fame, lucre, sexuality, eating, sleeping⁵.

The secret associations for fighting the Qing dynasty and reviving the Ming dynasty through the Qing dynasty were spread over the neighbouring countries, including Vietnam, which admired Guan Gong and considered Guan Gong cult as a daily worship. For example, the Tiandihui (Society of the Heaven and the Earth- Thiên Địa Hội) deeply received the martial spirit and seriously uphold the brotherhood of Guan Gong. Thereby, the ritual joined the association consisted two parts of worshipping, bow four times each part. The third bow of the first part dedicated to the brotherhood in the peach garden (according to the romance of the Three Kingdoms - *Tam Quốc diễn nghĩa*), the third bow of the second part dedicated to Guan Gong⁶.

In the early period, the heroes in the South considered the virtue of Guan Gong as a valuable norm. In the secret societies, the spirit of Guan Gong was a pattern to assess the relations between twinned brothers. At this stage, this god was widely praised, was arranged in the high position, even more mystical and majestic than the ancestors and the Buddhist characters⁷.

The icon of Guan Gong in the southern temples was made of many different materials such as plaster, concrete, ceramics, or drawing on paper, glass. Beside the altar, there were two rows decorative weapons that increased the solemnity of the image. The red face of Guan Gong represented for bravery, steadfastness; the long beard symbolized the glory; the royal costume symbolized nobility. On two sides of the Guan Gong statue, there were statues of his sons Quan Bình and Châu Xương.

Guan Gong became a spiritual symbol of a part of the inhabitants in the South. The Guan Gong cult venerated the human qualities as kindness, faithfulness, loyalty, consistency, etc... These qualities did not only meet the demand of migrant life from the Northern Centre, but they were also appropriate for heroism, eradication enemy, saving the country in the disturbances. Thus, the contemporary patriots based on religious idols to cluster the heroes, honourable men on the resistance to French. The images of the other religions such as Buddhism and Taoism were not very suitable for the purpose of fighting the invaders, only the image with the powerful incarnation as Guan Gong was truly appropriate. Moreover, for affordable class, the patriotic abstract philosophy was not suitable. Therefore, a familiar image as Guan Gong easily convinced people.

2.3. Some characteristics of Quan Cong cult in Vietnam

Firstly, the worship of Guan Gong was transmitted to our country in the period of the Sui and Tang dynasties; it was well received by Vietnamese. Before the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Guan Gong cult mainly affected to people in the North of Vietnam. Since the Nguyễn Lords have implemented the expansion policy in the South, the Guan Gong cult with the Northern characteristics propagated to the South along with the migrants. The late period of Ming dynasty and the early period of Qing dynasty, the former notables of the Chinese dynasty arrived Vietnam as refugees, they also carried a new style of the Guan Gong cult to the South. This cult was received by the native peoples and it was synthesized with the endogenous religions to create the Guan Gong cult with the indigenous features.

Secondly, the worship of Guan Gong did not only perform within the family scale, it but also was the typical cult of the Vietnamese community. Thus, Guan Gong was worshipped along with the indigenous deities. In some ancient Buddhists temples in the South, the image of Guan Gong in the main image played the role as the Bodhisattva Già Lam (Bồ Tát Già Lam). The reception and solemn worship expressed the admiration of Vietnamese for the dignity of Guan Gong; they also believed that this God blessed the peace of everyone, even protected men's life.

Thirdly, the image of Guan Gong was not only the general of the Han dynasty for more than ten centuries ago, but it was a symbol of loyalty in Vietnamese social context at that time. He was the spiritual basis in the resistance against the colonial invasion in the early period. So the worship of Guan Gong was Vietnamisation, it characterized the personality and the cultural identity of Vietnamese.

3. The cult of Guan Gong in the endogenous religions in the South

3.1. The cult of Guan Gong in Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa religion

Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa religion was founded in 1867 in An Phú district, An Giang province. The founder was Ngô Lợi (also known as Ngô Viện, Cao Văn Do, Đức Bồn Sư, 1831 - 1890). He was born in the Bến Tre province, he responded the decree “Cần Vương” (Aid the King) of the King Hàm Nghi, he participated in the “movement against the French”. Then, he was pursued, he fled and he lived in the Thất Sơn area, An

Giang province. Where he used amulet for disease treatment, propagated and recruited followers. In addition, he also gathered the notables to build villages and temples, especially, he founded base against French. The notables gathered, practiced according to the new doctrine and fought for the nation's independence. The French repeatedly attacked them, caught many opponents. After failure, Ngô Lợi had to flee in Cambodia. Then he returned to Thất Sơn and died there. Because of non-successor, a number of believers leaved Thất Sơn to propagate, the other people settled there for the religious activities.

Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa religion spread to Mekong Delta, but the area gathered many followers, especially the town of Ba Chúc, An Giang province today. The name Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa showed the principles of religious practice such as four great graces (ancestors, nation, Triratna - Three treasures, humankind) and completed filial piety (keeping good traditions of ancestors; establishing a career for life, family and future generations; taking care of parents, especially, when parents were elderly or sick; all human activities in relations with the right)⁸. Because of promoting the Confucian ethics, Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa chose Guan Gong as the main deity to obtain the sympathy of people and clustered national heroes to save the country⁹. These characteristics were similar to the Chinese religions for fighting the Qing dynasty and reviving the Ming dynasty. Emphasizing the spirit of incarnation, Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa asked believers must follow the twelve rules (*Thập nhị lệ sự*) in daily life: respecting for the heaven and the earth, worship gods, ancestors, filial piety of parents, compliance with laws, respecting for chief, fraternity, friendship, kinship, neighbourhood, marital harmony, education children¹⁰. These teachings affected to human behaviour, in fact, they were specification and supplements of the Confucian ethics, as well as, they were basis for self-cultivation of Buddhists.

The doctrine of Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa synthesized the thought of Three religions such as the concept of self-cultivation (*tu nhân*) of Confucianism, the combination of three thought like Zen, Pure Land and Tantra of Buddhism, elixir making and talisman of Taoism. These made the complication of Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa's doctrine that reflected the synthesis between the traditional forms of worship and two religious tendencies as entering the world (*nhập thế*) and refusal the world (*xuất thế*).

Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa's scriptures included 36 volumes, divided into two parts as *Pháp bửu trường sanh* (24 volumes) and *Kinh siêu độ* (12 volumes), along with 5 volumes of Canon law and liturgy. *Pháp bửu trường sanh* was written by Ngô Lợi and Phật Lò (19 volumes), beside 5 volumes originated from Buddhist scriptures; the content were diverse such as *Bà La Ni kinh*, *Linh Sơn hội thượng kinh*, *Phổ độ kinh*, *Siêu thắng kinh*, *Thiên địa kim cương kinh*, *Âm chất kinh*, *Hoàn sanh kinh*, *Hoàn hồn kinh*, *Phổ độ Bàn Đào kinh*, *Siêu thắng Bàn Đào kinh*, *Thiên địa kinh*, *Phật thuyết tiêu tai kinh*, *Ngũ Hồ bát nhã kinh*, *Ngũ Nhạc bát nhã kinh*, *Ngũ Công bát nhã kinh*, *Tam giáo hợp luận kinh*... While a scripture related to the worship of Guan Gong was *Đào viên kinh*. This text acquired from Chinese scripture, it mainly used in temples or believers' house in rituals as praying for salvation or praying for peace¹¹.

Temples of Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa phụng worshipped many gods, including the gods of Three religions, along with new gods as the most popular and familiar Guan Gong. The worship of deities of the believers' house based on the Canon law of this religion. For instance, there were two altars dedicated Thiên La and Thiên Đế in the yard, with there was an altar for Thổ Trạch Long Thần in the doorstep, there were an altar for Hội Đồng Thượng Phật, Đức Bồn Sư, Tam Giáo Hòa Lâu, Cửu Phẩm Liên Hoa, Cửu Huyền Thất Tổ in the house. In particular, the Hội Đồng Thượng Phật altar was placed in the middle of the house, the image of Guan Gong represented, behind Guan Gong, there were the images of his sons Quan Bình and Châu Xương. This form of worship encouraged the selflessness of believers for the country; on the other hand, the worship hid the supervision of the French spy.

In summary, Guan Gong was the most important god in the divine system of Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa. His qualities as bravery met the demand of the resistance against French at the early period of the founder of Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa. The brave forces of Guan Gong blessed insurgents to face of danger. In addition, Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa also considered Guan Gong as the God of Long Hoa Tam Hội religion which manifested desire of life saving of believers.

3.2. The Worship of Guan Gong in CaoDaism

Caodaism was founded in 1926 by some intellectuals as Ngô Văn Chiêu, Cao Quỳnh Cư, Cao Hoài Sang, Phạm Công Tắc, Lê Văn Trung,

etc... on the basis of combining the traditional religions and the Western knowledge, science. It took three religions as a basis. According to the explanation of Caodaism, three religions attributed Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism which returned to their origins (Tam giáo quy nguyên); five branches of this religion, such as Humanism, Confucianism, Buddhism Christianity and Taoism were consolidated under the rule of the God. Caodaism advocated that everything must evolve to higher positions in the general evolution of the universe. Because of synthesis of many religious doctrines, most aspects of the Caodaism showed clearly the synthesis. This religion stated that Guan Gong was one of Tam Trấn Uy Nghiêm - included Lý Đại Tiên head, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara second, Noble Military Ethics (Guan Gong or Quan Thánh Đế Quân) third - along with Thái Bạch Kim Tinh and Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara represented the patriarch of three religions as Buddha, Lao Tzu, Confucius that protected the religion in the third salvation. According to Phạm Công Tắc, one of the founders of Caodaism, the holy status of Guan Gong was not given by God, but the creatures honoured and awarded.

Caodaists believe that Guan Gong will be reborn to build religion, to establish a new Confucianism period. Thereby, firstly, Confucianism will be rebuilt, then, Taoism and Buddhism, finally, there is a unique religion. Thus, in Caodaism, the image of Guan Gong always hold the Spring and Autumn Annals (Xuân Thu scripture) with the significance that he eradicates turbulence of deviant as Confucius used this scripture to eliminate the mandarins in rebellion and looters.

In 1938, in the sermon at Caodai temple in Tây Ninh, Phạm Công Tắc explained that the origin of Guan Gong as follows: “His origin was Xích Long Tinh. Once upon a time, the inhabitants in the northern territory broke the Heaven law so they were punished by drought and famine from the Jade emperor (Ngọc Hư Cung). Villagers prayed him to rescue. Because of loving people, he could not bear people's starvation, so he made rain. Then the Jade emperor persecuted him. He fled to a Buddhist temple, a monk used a bell upside down to keep him inside. This monk advised Buddhists who did not turn the bell until his day off. Buddhists in this temple were inquisitive to open the bell to see. Consequently, he suffered the reincarnation as a martial general. His last Kalpa was Guan

Gong, after his death, he self-cultivated in the pagoda of the monk Phở Tịnh, then he canonized, he eliminated demon and ghost to save humankind. Since, he has not been reincarnated, he has brought out his divine authority to practice religion. He was canonized as a Buddha with the title *Cái Thiên Cổ Phật*¹².

Overall, the Caodaism received the image of Guan Gong in the Three Kingdoms period in China. It simultaneously absorbed the religious views of Ming and Qing dynasties. In the early period, in the rituals, the Caodaism temples often organized the Ouija, also known as a spirit board or talking board (*cầu cơ*) of Taoism to connect with the divine. Guan Gong repeatedly had many “Psychic pen” (*giáng cơ bút*) to preach, he sometimes referred to his identity.

The scripture “*Tam ngươn giác thể chân kinh*” wrote the “Psychic pen” of Guan Gong. In addition, through the “Psychic pen”, Guan Gong also gave many poems for Caodaists. The poems mentioned the loyalty of Guan Gong, along with the responsibility of this deity in reviving religion on the command of God. The dignitaries of Caodaism also said that the worship of the Noble Military Ethics (Guan Gong or Quan Thánh Đế Quân) was not only the worship of a famous general of the Han Dynasty, but he was also a crystalline mandarin in the heaven that had the responsibility to reconstruct the holy religion for humankind and executed the task that God entrusted.

Guan Gong in the conception of Caodaism as a deity that obeyed commands of God on the Earth. In the terms of Samskṛta (active being), in the third Universalism, he will be reincarnated as a human being, he will use the best effort to eradicate demons, to protect this religious. He will simultaneously lead everyone according to the spirit of Xuân Thu scripture, reconstruction new era of Confucianism. In the terms of Wu Wei (non-action), he will accomplish a Buddha in Akasamskṛta (passive void), as well as he will be a military Empire in the heaven in charge of leading the souls to God as the role of Hiệp Thiên Đại Đế¹³. This conception of Caodaism enhanced the Messianic role of Guan Gong, and it was different from the incarnation role of Guan Gong in Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa religion.

4. Conclusion

The cult of Guan Gong in Vietnam was absorbed and modified from this type of worship in China. In the early period, the worship of Guan

Gong mainly affected the northern area. Since the Ming and Qing dynasties, this type of worship has most influenced the southern region. In the early period, the role of Guan Gong was defence of the country, supporting the king and his people. In the later period, beside the roles as mentioned, Guan Gong deity took on the task of reviving Confucianism and Messianism. The spirit of Guan Gong greatly aided insurgents in the anti-French resistance for national salvation. In the belief of people, he was also the Guardian angel that led and blessed people overcome the tribulation. Thereby, the Guan Gong cult was not only the worship form of Chinese, but it also was extensively synthesised in endogenous religions./.

Notes:

- 1 Trương Hiểu Phần (2006), “Nghiên cứu nguyên nhân hình thành tín ngưỡng Quan Công” (tiếng Trung), *Nghiên cứu Đạo giáo*, số 4: 30-36. [“The causes formed the Guan Gong cult”, the Chinese language, *Review of Taoism Study*, N^o.4: 30-36].
- 2 Đàm Dực (2009), “Nghiên cứu xã hội người Hoa ở Việt Nam đương đại” (tiếng Trung), *Thế giới Dân tộc*, số 2: 57. [“Research on the contemporary Chinese society in Vietnam”, the Chinese language, *Review of Ethnology World*, N^o.2: 57]
- 3 Trần Tu Hòa (1957), “Quan hệ hữu hảo và giao lưu văn hóa giữa nhân dân hai nước Việt Trung” (tiếng Trung), Nxb. Thanh niên Trung Quốc, Bắc Kinh. [“Friendship and cultural exchanges between Vietnam and China”, the Chinese language, Publisher: Chinese Youth, Beijing]
- 4 Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ, *Tín ngưỡng Thiên Hậu ở Nam Bộ Việt Nam*, <http://khoavanhoc-ngonngu.edu.vn>. [*The cult of Mazu Goddess in the South of Vietnam*]
- 5 Lê Anh Dũng (1995), *Giải mã truyện Tây du ký*, Nxb. Văn hóa Thông tin, Hà Nội; 121- 134. [*Decoding story the Journey to the West*, Publisher: Culture - Information, Hanoi; 121-134].
- 6 Sơn Nam (1992), *Cá tính người Miền Nam*, Nxb. Văn hóa, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh: 109. [*Characteristics of the Souther*, Publisher: Culture, Hồ Chí Minh City: 109]
- 7 Sơn Nam (1992), *Người Sài Gòn*, Nxb. Trẻ, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh: 100. (*Saigonian*, Publisher: Youth, Hồ Chí Minh City)
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- 9 According to Trần Hồng Liên, the anti-French movement of Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa

led by Ngô Lợi that gathered a large number of southern residents under the banner of religion to fight for the independence. Although the adherents of this religion practiced Wu Wei religion (Non-action) with the undertakings do not worship divine idols, the temples worship the *Guan Gong* idols. The qualities of fortitude, bravery of Guan Gong became a symbol to gather mass in the struggle against invaders. See: Trần Hồng Liên (2000), *Đạo Phật trong cộng đồng người Việt ở Nam Bộ Việt Nam từ thế kỷ XVII đến 1975*, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội. [*Buddhism in the Viet Community in the South of Vietnam from the 17th Century to 1975*, Hanoi: Social Sciences]

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- 11 Đặng Văn Tuấn (2011), *Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa religion and Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa Believers' Influence in the South at present*, ibid: 36 - 38).
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