

RESEARCH ON THE WORSHIP OF BÀ ĐEN IN TÂY NINH, VIETNAM

Abstract: *The article explores the belief of Bà Đen worship in Tây Ninh: the role of Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism in creating a complex story of Ms. Đênh or Lý Thị Thiên Hương. This research shows the process of exchange and acculturation the religions and beliefs of the ethnic groups in the South Vietnam (Nam Bộ) through the image of a goddess.*

Keywords: *Bà Đen worship; belief; Tây Ninh.*

1. Introduction the site of Bà Đen

Bà Đen Mountain is 986 metres high, the highest mountain in the South. It looks like a big leaf in the middle of a vast green field. The mountain range is 6 kilometers long and 4 kilometers wide, in which the Heo Mountain is in the West with 335 meters high, Phụng Mountain (Cậu Mountain) is in the South belonged to the territory of Dầu Tiếng district, Bình Dương province with 600 meters high. It has Thái Sơn Buddhist temple, two shrines such as Cậu and Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu¹. Along with the other mountains such as Thị Vải, Bà Rịa, Thùỵ Vân, Bà Kéc, Bà Rá, Sam, Thoại Sơn, etc. They have formed the sacred mountains in the South associated with the consciousness of the residents of this land.

The work *Gia Định Thành Thông Chí* (1820) wrote about this mountain as follows: “All people of the town respect admire a mountain (it is 261 miles to the West). In this high mountain, there are green trees, fresh water streams, fertile soil, Vân Sơn pagoda. On the bottom of the mountain, there is a lake, the beautiful landscape, forest, deep caves and villages of the Thổ and the Vietnamese who depend on the benefits of the mountain, forest. People often dig and find the ancient

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objects of gold and jade, they sometimes see the golden gongs in the lake, however, when they come the gongs disappeared. On cloudless nights, without rain, there is a dragon boat floating, singing and dancing, or sometimes a golden turtle appears, then disappears, it may be lead by the gathering of holy air, it is not a strange thing”².

Then, the book *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* had a similar record of Bà Đen Mountain; it added that “This Mountain has another name Điện Bà Sơn. In the third year of Tự Đức King, it was renamed Linh Sơn, this event was written in the dictionary”³.

Records in the bibliography about the “gathering of holy air” of this mountain in the Southeast region show the cultural exchanges of ethnic groups residing there through their religious forms.

Trương Vĩnh called this mountain “Bà Đen (Chiêng Bà Đen)”, “Bà Đình”, “Điện Bà” or “Chơn Bà Đen”. Its name in Chinese language is “Bà Đình Sơn”⁴.

Lê Trung Hoa gave some explanations of the place’s name related to Bà Đen mountain in Tây Ninh as follows: first, he stated that “Bà Đen was translated from “Chok Juk” (Đen mountain - Black mountain); it was an original place’s name of the Chams - the name of the land’s mother with a royal title of Po Inur Nagar”.

“The mountain is 15 kilometers from Tây Ninh town, 986 meters high, and a famous tourist destination. It is called Bà Mountain”⁵.

Then, Lê Trung Hoa indicated 5 hypotheses to explain about this place.

1. “Ms. *Đênh* determined to become a monk and lived on the mountain; parents forced to get married; she fled; the mountain was named Bà Đênh or called differently Bà Đen”⁶.

2. “Ms. Lý Thị Thiên Hương had fall in love an intellectual named Lê Sĩ Triệt, then she was kidnapped by a dude; she committed suicide; the king bestowed her Linh Sơn Thánh mẫu”

3. “Ms. *Rê Deng*⁷ had competed in building mountain with a guy; in the end, she won, and the mountain that she built was called by her name”.

4. “Nữ Oa and Tứ Tượng had competed in building mountain; if Tứ Tượng won they would be a couple; Finally, she won; the mountain that she built was called Bà Đen”.

5. “A goddess of Khmer people called “Mẹ Đen” (Néang Khmau), the mountain is her foot, so it used to be called *Phnom Chon Bà Đen*; there are also footprints on this mountain now”⁸.

And Lê Trung Hoa chose the fifth hypotheses because he thought it was “the most logical” (?) when he came to this mountain, he saw footprints printed on the stone.

There are many legends to explain the place of Bà Đen, in general, there are several sources: the Vietnamese (*núi Bà, núi Bà Đen, Điện Bà Đen*), the Chinese (*Linh Sơn, Vân Sơn*), Khmer people (*Bà Đénh / Đinh, Chon Bà Đen, Chiêng Bà Đen, Phnom⁹ Chon Bà Đen*), the Chams (*Chok Juk*). All of those legends have elements “*đen*” or “*thâm*” to identify the nature and origin of the goddess worshiped on this mountain.

2. The legends about Bà Đen

There are many legends surrounding the story of Bà Đen (Black Lady), which come from different beliefs of ethnic groups in order to explain the place as well as the origin of worship of the goddess there.

In the treasure of ancient Khmer stories in the South, there is a story explaining the place of Bà Đen as follows: There were two teams of men and women who kept arguing with each other, neither team would marry the other. Thus, Ms. Rê Đeng invited the strongest guy in the region to compete with her, each person built a mountain during one night, who ever completed it, lighted a lamp on the top of the mountain to signal the victory and the loser must get married the winner. The young man thought he was strong so he spent time on singing, eating. Ms. Rê Đeng started her work immediately since the end of the day. By midnight, she finished her work and lighted the lamp on the top of the mountain. The mountain was called Bà Đen, originated from Rê Đeng¹⁰.

The Chams who lived in Đông Tác commune (Tây Ninh) had a legend about Bà Đen (Ms. Black). After the war between the two

countries, the Champa emperor married a Vietnamese. The queen who wanted to help the country, advised the Chams' King to cut down the magic tree that grew in front of the palace. The king cut down the magic tree and used wood to make a warship. Since the Chams' army always defeated the Vietnamese army, the ship was still protected by the goddess. The Vietnamese had to find a way to build a pole in the middle of the river, capture the ship, and then they won the Champa¹¹.

There is a legend about Điện Bà (Bà Palace). When Bà Đen became a Goddess, there was no place to worship. A monk named Đạo Trung went to shelter on Bà Mountain, to reclaim the land. He recited Buddhist scriptures (sutra) for 31 years, one day he suddenly saw Bà on the top of the mountain and then the monk found her portrait of stone, brought it to worship. Since Điện Bà has established¹².

A legend told that the governor of this land created a gentle, feminine girl named Đênh, when she was 13 years old she started to study Buddhism with a Chinese monk. Because of the intention to become a nun, when the son of the leader of Trảng Bàng district asked to marry her, she fled to the mountain, she was eaten by a tiger, people only found her foot in a cave. Then she became goddess¹³.

Another story told that Nguyễn Ánh Lord was chased by soldiers of the Tây Sơn dynasty on the way from Tây Ninh to Laos, to Siam demand for help. When Nguyễn Ánh was passing Măng Chà, Bùng Binh area, the Lord ordered Lê Văn Duyệt who came to Bà Mountain to pray for her help. She showed them the way around the mountain and they escaped. After taking the throne, Gia Long King casted a black bronze statue of Bà Đênh and gave it to the governor to put at the cave of the mountain to worship. The king also ordained a royal decree "Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu". The inhabitants called the cave as *Linh Sơn Tiên Thạch Động*. They called the mountain *Tây Ninh* or *Chân Bà Đênh*, and then called it *Bà Đen*¹⁴.

Another story told that a girl named Lý Thị Thiên Hương was good at literature, martial arts; she used to come to the mountain to worship Buddha. She has a black appearance but charming. A young man who

was good at martial arts named Lê Sĩ Triệt loved her. However, the son of a mandarin kidnapped her but she was rescued by Lê Sĩ Triệt. Then, the young man joined in the army and the servants of the mandarin came back to arrest her. Thiên Hương jumped down the mountain. She incarnated to be a black-faced girl, announced the monk through a dream. The story was heard by Lê Văn Duyệt and she also appeared in front of him. Thiên Hương helped Nguyễn Ánh's troops to escape Tây Sơn when they were chasing near Bà Đen Mountain¹⁵.

3. Places of worship

Linh Sơn Buddhist temple on Bà Đen Mountain was established in the end of the XVIII century, Điện Bà temple was built in 1872. By the 50s of the twentieth century, this place became diversity with many different religious facilities.

Linh Sơn Phước Trung Tự Buddhist temple on the bottom of the mountain worships Buddha, Bodhisattva, Guan Yu, Tian Hau, and the Goddesses.

Linh Sơn Tiên Thạch Tự Buddhist temple in the middle of the mountain is dedicated to Buddha, Bodhisattva, Arhat, and Bodhidharma.

Điện Bà (Bà Palace) is next to Linh Sơn Tiên Thạch Tự Buddhist temple. Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu is worshiped in the centre of the Palace with a black face statue (Bà Đen); on the right, there is place for worshipping Bà Chúa Xứ Nương Nương, the god of the land, the god of the mountain. Besides, the Mother (goddess) of the Earth and Guan Yin Buddha are worshiped. In front of the Palace, there is a statue of a male god with a long white beard and a stick in his hand. In my opinion, this may be the image of Néak Tà as the case in Bà Om pond (Trà Vinh).

There are two temples to worship Linga called Ông Tà. They are located between Điện Bà and the Buddhist temple. One temple has two horses' two sides and the other one also has Linga but no horses, people often come to pray for having children. Ông Tà (Neakta Phnom) can be found on the top of Ba Phnum mountain in Cher Kach commune, Ba

Phnum district, Pray Veng province of Cambodia with at least 3 Ông Tà temples; it is a familiar image of the Khmer's culture.

Long Châu Buddhist temple (Hang pagoda, Ông Chàm cave) is located in a cave above Điện Bà, dedicated to Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and goddess. The pagoda is dedicated Bà Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu (black face) and Bà Chúa Xứ (white face).

The objects of worship are belonged to Buddhism, goddesses and gods of the folk religion. The death anniversary of the Goddess (Vía Bà) is held on 5th or 6th of the fifth month of the lunar calendar. In the 10th year of Bảo Đại King (1935), Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu Goddess was granted the royal decree with the title *Dực Bảo Trung Hưng Linh Phù Chi Thần*. The Goddess Bà Đen is included in the official gods as the deity with merits and the deity of the village's communal temple. The ritual is a mix of Buddhism and folk religion¹⁶.

There is a Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu temple at Lộc An street, Trảng Bàng town, Tây Ninh. It was built in 1932, restored in 1999, near a well named Giếng Mạch which flows down from Bà Đen Mountain. There is an annual death anniversary ceremony at the temple on the 5th of the fifth month (according to the lunar calendar)¹⁷. The ancient Buddhist temple named Phước Lưu (Trảng Bàng town, Tây Ninh) mentioned Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu in its ritual¹⁸.

Mariamman temple (45 Trương Định Street, 1 District, Hồ Chí Minh City) is called Bà Đen temple, it is a Hindu temple built by the Indian community in Saigon in the early twentieth century. The temple was built on the base of a small shrine of Vietnamese people to worship Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu¹⁹.

According to Phan Anh Tú, Mariamman's goddess statue (Uma, Parvati) also has traditional black colour of the southern India. The Linga and Yoni with southern Indian style are placed in the altar of the Goddess; it reminds us the relationship between this Goddess and the linga of Shiva "the characteristics of India, which is easy to integrate into the cult of genitals of the Southeast Asian residents. It is also found in the Chao Mae Tuptim temple of Thailand and Niềng Khmau temple (Cambodia)²⁰.

The Indian community had worshiped at Điện Bà on Bà Đen mountain (Tây Ninh). It showed that the “historical relationship” between the worship of Mariamman and Bà Đen was not coincidental.

4. Bà Đen in the Belief of Hinduism

The ancient religions of India based on the worship of fertility and the mother goddess; the worship of femininity was a central element of Hinduism's rituals. Thousands of local deities in the Indian countryside were mostly women. The highest among them was the goddess Kali, the goddess of destruction and no mercy. She brought life to the universe, stimulated the potential of the gods and chased the demons which were seeking to plunge the harmonious order of the universe; the universe will be into chaos.

There was a stone statue of Kali worshiped in the form of Mahâvidyâ-Kâli in the forest of Bihar (Northeastern India) since the 15th century. In Kerala (India), male believers dressed as Kali during the Bhagavati temple parade²¹.

Kali is a “black goddess” and the Shakti of Shiva. She was the embodiment of death and destruction, believed to be born from the forehead of the Durga goddess when the goddess was angry. Kali often has blood-red eyes, four arms and a long tongue to look for blood. She was naked, wearing only a belt of human heads and hands, a chain of skulls and a tiger skin.

It is similar to Shiva, Kali has a third eye in front of her forehead, one hand holding a weapon, the other one holding a head of a giant, the other two hands are raising to show the sign of blessing. She is considered as a loving mother goddess, be able to destroy the god of death as well as the demons.

An Indian mythology reports how Raktabija destroyed the world. Each time it was injured, one drop of its blood would produce 1,000 demons. The gods asked Kali to destroy this demon and she immediately drunk their blood, so they could not reproduce any more and only when there was a demon lord, she opened her mouth and grabbed it.

To celebrate her victory, Kali danced joyfully made the whole world to be trembled and the whole of life to be threatened with destruction. The gods asked the god Shiva to stop Kali's dance but it didn't work either. Shiva must lie on the ground in front of the goddess, she danced on his body. Finally, Kali suddenly realized and stopped dancing.

Calcutta city of India was named of this goddess; it means "the steps of Kali". Every day, animals were killed for sacrifices; there were previously sacrifices of human beings²².

The belief of the goddess Kali related to agriculture and sea which was prevailed in Cambodia through a temple to her in Sihanouville port, people used to call Bà Đen temple (Niềng Khmau). In the belief of agricultural residents, the ceremony honors the goddess Kali to mark the death of crops; it means the end of a cycle of rice cultivation. This rite usually takes place after the harvest²³.

In Takeo province (Cambodia), there is a pre-Angkorian brick temple (VII-IX century), local people call it Niềng Khmau temple (Bà Đen temple). The name of this temple was appeared late, when Shiva religion was integrated into folk belief because according to Brahmanism, the name of a temple is often given very long, rather than using such folk name. And the name was also derived from an ancient statue worshiped by people in the temple, the French brought to the National Museum of Phnom Penh. The statue of the goddess is no longer intact, without the head and hands. In this temple, there is a statue of a Kalkin (Kalki); it is the last incarnation of Vishnu. The temple of Phnom Chisor was built during the reign of Suryavarman I, there is also a statue of Buddha with crown, and local people call it Niềng Khmau²⁴.

The belief of Niềng Khmau (Bà Đen) spreads from the South of Vietnam to Cambodia and Thailand. The goddess Chao Mae Tuptim in Bangkok may be also a modified form of the worship of the goddess Uma. The legend of Me Khmau, who is worshiped in the temple of Pich Nil located near the port of Sihanoukville (Cambodia), was similar to the legend of Lý Thị Thiên Hương of Vietnam. The story told that Niềng Khmau was a Khmer woman, her husband was

Tà Kry (Mr. Kry), a Cambodian general who was fighting far away from home against Siamese invaders. Missing her husband, she took the boat to find him. When nearly arriving at the capital, a strong storm occurred, people on the boat thought that Niềng Khmau made the spirit angry because she was pregnant; she had committed a taboo when boarding the boat. She apologized to everyone and then plunged into the sea, the storm immediately disappeared. She became holy, was worshiped by people, and fishermen as a sea goddess. This is an ancient belief related to Uma incarnations such as Kali and Durga. The worship of Niềng Khmau of Cambodian fishermen was formed from the image of Uma and Kali that was folkized by the legend related to the sea.

Fishermen of Bali (Indonesia) also worshiped the goddess Kali as a form of Bà Đen, this belief has prevailed on Java island of Java²⁵.

5. Belief of Bà Đen

It can be said that there is a mix of many cultural and religious layers around the worship of Bà Đen on Bà Mountain (Tây Ninh).

Firstly, it is Hindu culture's layer through the Khmer culture. The story of Ms. Đênh indicates the name originated from the Khmer sound, as well as, it also shows the influence of Deay Khmau (Bà Đen) belief derived from the worship of Arăc- the ancient guardian gods such as Mê So/ Nàng Trắng, Cahom/ Đổ²⁶.

Among the Néak Ta deities of Brahmanism such as Néak Ta Noreay (Vishu), Néak Ta Proum (Brahma) and Néak Ta Néang Khmau (Bà Khmau, Bà Đen) which was the most revered the goddess *Kali*. She was a goddess who took care for an area and was worshiped as Ông Tà, the Vietnamese called *Ms. Chao*. These two goddesses often help people by announcing through a dream²⁷.

The worship of Bà Đen (Néang Khmau) is often associated with the belief of Bà Trắng (Mé Sar)²⁸. This image is also seen on the painting at the Néak Tà temple at Bà Om pond (Nguyệt Hóa commune, Châu Thành District, Trà Vinh): Néak Tà Tà Xây statue is

between Bà Đen and Bà Trắng, one hand holding a fan, the other hand holding a snake-head stick²⁹.

There is a temple named NeakTa Me-Sar at Cher Kach commune, Ba Phnum District, Pray Veng province, Cambodia which called Phật Trắng Buddhist temple, to worship Bà Trắng. It is located on a rock mound. There is also a small shrine to worship Ông Tà on the bottom the mound.

Câu Mountain is located symmetrically with Bà Đen Mountain across Dầu Tiếng Lake (Bình Dương), it is related to the legend of a contest of digging a pond between a man and a woman on Bà Đen Mountain as mentioned above. Its name shows a pair of duality: Cô (yoni, yin) - Cậu (linga, yang) of Brahmanism's culture. The role of Bà Om pond in Trà Vinh is the same. The motif of digging a pond in these two places has similarity and it aims to explain the origin of the places, and also reflects the belief related to Bà Trắng and Bà Đen of Khmer people.

Câu mountain complex has a total area of over 1,600 ha, including 21 large and small mountains. The highest mountain named Cửa Ông, 295m high; Ông Mountain is 285m high; Tha La Mountain is 198m high and the lowest mountain is Chúa, 63m high. Câu Mountain is a small mountain is located in Tha La hamlet, Định Thành commune, Dầu Tiếng district, Bình Dương.

Tha La Mountain and Tha La hamlet are a sign of a Khmer temple that was existed in this area. Thới Sơn Núi Câu temple is located on this mountain to worship Cậu Bảy who was a general of Mr. Lê Văn Duyệt, conquered and protected Chân Lạp area during the Nguyễn Dynasty, related to the legend of Bà Đen as mentioned above. On the mountain, there is a temple to worship Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu. The relationship between Bà Đen Mountain and Câu Mountain related to the worship of Ms. Đênh /Bà Đen.

Bà Rá temple in Bình Phước dedicated to Bà Rá and Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu because according to the concept of the local people Bà Rá and Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu Bà Đen in Tây Ninh are sisters³⁰.

The book *Đất Việt trời Nam* of Thái Văn Kiểm indicated that there is a temple to worship *Bà Đen* on the slope of *Bà Đen* mount, it may be *Uma*, a form of Shiva. This mountain is often cloudy so it is called *Vân Sơn*³¹.

In Khmer culture, the Shiva deity is assimilated to the indigenous belief of *Neakta*, so people often call Shiva is *Neakta Preak Eisey*³². *Uma* is called *Niềng Khmau* (*Bà Đen*); *Durga* is called *Niềng Me Sar* (*Bà Trắng*). Statue of the goddess *Uma* sitting on the lap of *Shiva* is called *Neakta Por Kon* by the Cambodian, it means “*Neakta* hugs a child”, the statue of *Uma* is usually smaller than *Shiva* statue and she is believed to be a child of *Shiva*³³.

When searching for the origin of the worship of *Bà Đen* in *Tây Ninh*, *Ngô Đức Thịnh* said that “despite linking *Bà Đen* with *Sakti* of *Shiva* or *Visnu*, one thing cannot be denied that *Bà Đen* (*Uma* in the Chams’ culture or *Kali* in the Khmer’s culture) is a combination of exogenous elements of Indian Brahmanism with endogenous elements of worshipping goddess”³⁴.

The aforementioned evidences showed that the influence of Brahmanism through the Khmer’s element is stronger than the one of the Chams’ element in the belief on *Bà Đen* Mountain.

Secondly, it is the Buddhist culture’s layers in the worship of *Bà Đen*. The uniformity of *Bà Đen* and *Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu* is an imprint of the integration of Buddhism’s doctrines. *Linh Sơn / Linh Thử Sơn* is a mountain near the *Rajagriha* city, India, where *Buddha* preached the *Lotus Sūtra*. *Linh Sơn* is also called *Kênh Kênh* Mountain or *Kỳ Quật Xà* (*Garudhakuta*). According to Indian Buddhists, this is the place where the angels descended, so it is called *Linh Sơn* (sacred mountain).

Through the legend about the mountain construction contest of Khmer people and stories filled with legendary and fairy elements, *Bà Đen* Mountain is considered as a sacred mountain: *Linh Sơn*.

The story of *Trảng Bàng* district governor’s daughter (who was a monk and was eaten by a tiger) was similar to the story of *Quan Âm Diệu Thiện* (*Bà Chúa Ba*) in *Hương Tích* (*Hà Tĩnh*).

Thirdly, it is the Confucian culture's layer. The story of Lý Thị Thiên Hương (who was faithful to her lover named Lê Sĩ Triệt) was created according to the Confucian concept. The legend of Lý Thị Thiên Hương was closer to the female martyrs bestowed by the Nguyễn Dynasty "Tiết hạnh khả phong" means "fidelity is a precious virtue". It is similar to the story of a girl; her surname is Lê, a Buddhist nun in Thị Vải Mountain, Bà Rịa. Moreover, it is the figure of Lục Vân Tiên who rescued Kiều Nguyệt Nga in the poem composed in the late nineteenth century by Nguyễn Đình Chiểu³⁵.

Because of the acculturation among cultures in the Southern region, it is not easy to dissect cultural layers of Bà Đen worship in Tây Ninh. As mentioned above, three layers of religion such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism have created the complex story about Ms. Đênh/ Lý Thị Thiên Hương. It reflects a process of exchanges and acculturation of religions and beliefs of ethnic groups in the South. The study of this belief requires the interdisciplinary and places it in the context of Southeast Asian culture. /.

NOTES:

- 1 Ban Tổng kết chiến tranh (1990), *Tây Ninh 30 năm trung dũng kiên cường*, (Tây Ninh 30 years of courage and resilience), Ban Tuyên giáo Tỉnh ủy Tây Ninh, p. 6; Nguyễn Minh San (1994), *Tiếp cận tín ngưỡng dân dã Việt Nam*, (Study of Vietnamese folk beliefs), Publishing house: Văn hóa dân tộc, Hà Nội, p.286;
- 2 Trịnh Hoài Đức (2005), *Gia Định Thành Thông Chí*, (Geography of Gia Định City), Lý Việt Dũng translated and interpreted, Publishing house: Đồng Nai, p.41.
- 3 Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (1973), *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí, Lục tỉnh Nam Việt*, (History of Vietnam, Six provinces of the South) tập thượng, Tu Trai Nguyễn Tạo dịch, Nhà Văn hóa Phủ Quốc vụ khanh đặc trách văn hóa, Sài Gòn, p.71.
- 4 Trương Vĩnh Ký (1997), *Tiểu giáo trình địa lý Nam Kỳ*, (Geography curriculum of Cochinchina), Nguyễn Đình Đầu dịch và chú thích, Publishing house: Trẻ, Hồ Chí Minh City, pp. 8, 23, 38.
- 5 Lê Trung Hoa (2013), *Từ điển từ nguyên địa danh Việt Nam*, (Dictionary of Vietnamese landmarks), p. 77.
- 6 Lê Trung Hoa (2013), *Từ điển từ nguyên địa danh Việt Nam*, (Dictionary of Vietnamese Landmarks), p. 77-78.
- 7 It is *Mê Đen*, Huỳnh Ngọc Trảng (2002), *Truyện dân gian Khơme*, (Folktales of the Khmer), Volume 1, Publishing house: Đồng Nai, p. 7. The author indicated *Sự tích núi Mê Đen* in the Introduction. Nguyễn Phương Thảo (2007), *Văn hóa dân gian Nam Bộ - Những phác thảo*, (Folk culture of the

- South), Publishing house: Văn hóa Thông tin, Hà Nội, Ms. *Mê Đen* was written *Rê Deng* (p. 294).
- 8 Lê Trung Hoa (2013), *Từ điển từ nguyên địa danh Việt Nam*, (Dictionary of Vietnamese landmarks), tr. 78.
 - 9 *Phnom* in Khmer language means: a hill, a mound, a mountain.
 - 10 Nguyễn Hữu Hiếu (1997), *Nam Kỳ cổ sự (Chuyện kể Nam Bộ)*, (Story about the South), Publishing house: Đồng Tháp, pp. 105-106.
 - 11 Toàn Ánh (1969), *Nếp cũ hội hè đình đám*, (The ancient customs on festivals), Nam Chi tùng thư, Sài Gòn, pp. 199-200.
 - 12 Toàn Ánh (1969), *Nếp cũ hội hè đình đám*, (The ancient customs on festivals), ibid, p. 199.
 - 13 Toàn Ánh (1969), *Nếp cũ hội hè đình đám*, (The ancient customs on festivals), ibid, pp. 195-197.
 - 14 Toàn Ánh (1969), *Nếp cũ hội hè đình đám*, (The ancient customs on festivals), ibid, pp. 197-199.
 - 15 Huỳnh Minh (1972), *Tây Ninh xưa và nay*, (Tây Ninh in the past and at present), Sài Gòn, pp. 40-43. *Sự tích Bà Đen* in the book *Nghìn năm bia miệng* (Volume 1) Huỳnh Ngọc Trảng.
 - 16 Huỳnh Ngọc Trảng (2002), *Sổ tay hành hương đất phương Nam*, (Manual pilgrims in the Southern land), Publishing house: Hồ Chí Minh City, pp. 272-273; Ngô Đức Thịnh (2012), *Đạo Mẫu Việt Nam*, (The worship of mother goddesses in Vietnam), Publishing house: Thế giới, Hà Nội, pp. 344-346.
 - 17 Vương Công Đức (2016), *Tràng Bàng phương chí*, (Geography of Tràng Bàng), Publishing house: Tri thức, Hà Nội, pp. 623-625.
 - 18 Information was provided by Phí Thành Phát (Tràng Bàng District).
 - 19 Many author (2017), *Tín ngưỡng dân gian*, (Folk belief), Publishing house: Văn hóa Văn nghệ, Hồ Chí Minh City, pp. 101-103. Linh Sơn Pagoda (District 1, Hồ Chí Minh City) was built on the ground of Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu Shrine. Many shrines of Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu in Hồ Chí Minh City were destroyed, so the Goddess was worshiped in the other shrine (Võ Thanh Bằng, 2008, *Tín ngưỡng dân gian ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh*, (Folk belief in Hồ Chí Minh City), Publishing house: Đại học Quốc gia, Hồ Chí Minh City, p. 81).
 - 20 Phan Anh Tú (2016), *Điều khắc thần Visnu và Shiva trong văn hóa Đông Nam Á*, (Vishnu and Shiva in Southeast Asian culture through sculpture), Publishing house: Đại học Quốc gia Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, p. 302-303.
 - 21 C. Scott Littleton (General Editor, 2006), *Huyền thoại thế giới*, Chương Ngọc Translated, Publishing house: Mỹ thuật, Hà Nội, p. 370.
 - 22 Rachel Storm (2003), *Huyền thoại phương Đông*, Chương Ngọc Translated, Publishing house: Mỹ thuật, Hà Nội, p. 163.
 - 23 Phan Anh Tú (2016), ibid, p. 277.
 - 24 Phan Anh Tú (2016), ibid, p. 297.
 - 25 Phan Anh Tú (2016), ibid, pp. 300-302.
 - 26 Huỳnh Ngọc Trảng (chủ biên, 2002), ibid, p. 271.
 - 27 Lê Hương (1969), *Người Việt gốc Miên*, Sài Gòn, pp. 70, 36.

- 28 Mỹ Tho was the name of *Me Sa*, it means Bà Trắng according to Thái Văn Kiểm (1960), *Đất Việt trời Nam*, (The Southern Land of the Vietnamse), *ibid*, p. 33.
- 29 Nguyễn Phương Thảo (1997), *ibid*, p. 192.
- 30 Ngô Đức Thịnh (2012), *Đạo Mẫu Việt Nam*, (The Worship of Mother Goddesses in Vietnam), Publishing house: Thế giới, *ibid*, p. 349.
- 31 Thái Văn Kiểm (1960), *Đất Việt trời Nam*, (The Southern Land of the Vietnamse), Nguồn Sáng, Sài Gòn, p. 32.
- 32 The worship of Bà is called *Dây* in Khmer language, such as Dây Tép, Dây Di (Lê Hương (1969), *Người Việt gốc Miên*, Tác giả xuất bản, Sài Gòn, p. 69).
- 33 Phan Anh Tú (2016), *Điều khắc thần Visnu và Shiva trong văn hóa Đông Nam Á*, (Vishnu and Shiva in Southeast Asian culture through sculpture), *ibid*, p. 296.
- 34 Ngô Đức Thịnh (2012), *Đạo Mẫu Việt Nam*, (The worship of mother goddesses in Vietnam), *ibid*, p. 348-349.
- 35 Huỳnh Ngọc Trảng (chủ biên, 2002), *Sổ tay hành hương đất phương Nam*, (Manual pilgrims in the Southern land), *ibid*, p. 271.

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