

ABOUT THE MOTHER GODDESS WORSHIPPING AND HER TEMPLE

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1. About the Mother Goddess Worshipping

Before the August Revolution (1945), most of Vietnamese are farmers. So in the past, their thinking is an agricultural type. Like farmers in the world, Vietnamese peasants respect to Yin and Yang world: earth - land, male - female, right - wrong, death - livability, dark - light, heat - cold. Two forms connect closely to change and develop.

In Vietnamese belief, rice field, land, and water belong to Yin. Agricultural Spirit always creates enriched life for farmer, thus people had imaged a Land Spirit. This spirit always is female - an original Mother Goddess. In this legend of Đông Công Mother Goddess, Âu Cơ Mother Goddess, Man Nương is an original Mother Goddess. When Buddhism developed in our country, Tứ Pháp (Cloud Spirit, Rainy Spirit, Thunder Spirit, Lightning Spirit) incarnate to Buddha and they had worshiped in Vietnam's pagoda. It is symbol of Vietnam's Buddhist and expressed the aspiration of farmer. And Mother Goddess incarnates in Platform of Shakyamuni Buddha, and appears in female person: bà Chúa Ba (The Third Mother Goddess) in Perfume temple, Quan Âm Thị Kính, Quan Âm Tống Tử... and they have common name: Guanyin. However, there is a space for Mother Goddess worshipping in the pagoda.

Mother Goddess temple creates noisily space in pagoda.

The structure of Mother Goddess includes:

Creative System of Four Realms⁽¹⁾ and Deities⁽²⁾ include:

1. The First Mother Goddess - The Mother Goddess of Heaven; The Second Mother Goddess - The Mother Goddess of the Mountains and Forests; The Third Mother Goddess - The Mother Goddess of the Water, The Fourth Mother Goddess - The Mother Goddess of Earth. The Mother Goddess of Heaven is a creative source of earth and makes an active rule of earth (cloudy, rainy, thunder, and lightning). The Mother Goddess of the Mountains and Forests creates forest and mountain, a valuable huge property in order to grant human. The Second Mother Goddess cares for living and death people and transform death person to become Princess and Prince. The Mother Goddess of Water creates water - an important role in agriculture. The Mother Goddess of Earth creates land - a major factor of property. In general, Viet's belief connects closely the Mother Goddess

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(1) Four Realms include four regions of universe: Thiên phủ (Heaven), Nhạc phủ (Mountains and Forests), Thoải phủ (Water), Địa phủ (Earth).

(2) Công đồng: Representatives of deities.

to create earth as cultural national hero⁽³⁾.

2. Ngũ Vị Tôn Ông: Five Mandarins, carry out working of the Mother Goddess in Four Realms, the Fifth Mandarin is a captain of Trần dynasty, and worships in Cửa Ông temple, Quảng Ninh province.

3. Four Realms of Lady: They are female resources, practice to create work of the Mother Goddess. One of them had incarnated to captain helping farmer. The representative of Four Realms of Lady is eleven ladies: The First Lady, The Second Lady, The Third Lady, The Fourth Lady, The Fifth Lady (worshipping in Lân valley, Lạng Sơn province), The Sixth Lady (Nùng ethnic minorities - Hữu Lũng district, Lạng Sơn province), Thất Tiên La Lady (Hưng Hà district, Thái Bình province), Bát Nàn Lady (a captain of Hai Bà Trưng), Cửu Tinh Lady (Bán Thiên princess, or Cửu Thiên Huyền Nữ worshipping in Bím Sơn town, Thanh Hóa province), The Tenth Lady (Lê Lợi dynasty, Đồng Mô town, Lạng Sơn province), The Youngest Princess of Bắc Lệ, Lạng Sơn province.

4. Four Realms of Prince: They are junior of The Five Mandarins and junior of Princess and Prince. They are captain who had fought enemy and creator of earth: The First Prince, the Second Prince (The Second Prince in Cẩm Phả city, Quảng Ninh province is Mán people - fight enemy to protect farmer; The Second Prince in Thanh Hóa province is Triệu Tường mandarin (or Nguyễn Hoàng - creator the earth), The Ba (Ba) Prince (The Third Prince) worships in Lảnh temple (Hà Nam province) - serve the

king to fight enemy or Sprit for preventing flood. The Fourth and Fifth Prince is less care; The Sixth Prince (Trần Lưu captain fight Ming invader); The Seventh Prince (Nùng Trí Cao) (Bảo Hà town, Yên Bái province) - served king. The Eighth Prince is Nùng people. The Ninth Prince (Lê Khôi - a captain of Lê Lợi dynasty) worships in Cờn temple, Nghệ An province. The Tenth Prince (Nguyễn Xí) worship in Bến Củi, Hà Tĩnh province – a captain of Lê Thái Tổ king.

5. Four Realms of the Young Princess and Four Realms of the Young Prince include eleven Princesses and eleven Princes from Oldest to Youngest - are server.

In the social development and effecting of some factors, the worshipping of the Mother Goddess has changed and added some statues. In the belief of China (from seventeenth century to present) Taoist Jade Emperor appeared in altar of the Mother Goddess, and called the King. And then it separates: King of Taoist Jade Emperor, King of Pluto, King of Eight Ocean. In some temples, they put a separate temple for three Kings and call temple of Three Realms - Thầy pagoda, Hà Nội).

⁽³⁾ On the Altar of Mother Goddess, there are three statutes called Tam Tòa Thánh Mẫu (Three Statutes of Mother Goddess) including: The Mother Goddess of Heaven, The Mother Goddess of Water, The Mother Goddess of the Earth. The Mother Goddess of the Mountains and Forests was linked to dead people and put in other altar. When worship of The Mother Goddess prevailed in cities and people pray the Mother Goddess of the Mountains and Forests for prosperity and blessed gift, the Mother Goddess includes the Mother Goddess of Heaven, the Mother Goddess of the Mountains and Forests, and the Mother Goddess of Water.

In recent years, worshipping area of the Mother Goddess has altar of Trần Hưng Đạo and his server, Quỳnh Hoa Princess and Quế Hoa Princess.

In the belief development, the Viet people worship Mother Goddess in temple such as: West Lake temple, Lộ temple (Thường Tín district, Hà Nội city), Sòng temple (Thanh Hóa province), Giày temple (Nam Định province) and the other places. Architecture of these temple are huge, especially Phủ Giày in Nam Định province - worshipping of Liễu Hạnh Mother Goddess - one of four immortals (Tản Viên Saint, Thánh Gióng Saint, Chử Đồng Tử, Liễu Hạnh Mother Goddess). She is embodiment of the Mother Goddess - a belief production of people which reveal to trade in sixteen century.

2. The Liễu Hạnh Mother Goddess and Giày Palace

According to Viet's opinion each spirit has super capacity and incarnate to character in any situation. It is easy to understand why Liễu Hạnh Mother Goddess incarnates to Mother Goddess?

Quỳnh Hoa is a princess of Taoist Jade Emperor. In the party, she broke a gem cup and expelled to earth. She incarnated to a little girl in Nam Định family. They called her: Giáng Tiên.

When Giáng Tiên was eighteen years old, she got married with Đào Lang and had a boy and a girl. She had to come back parent's house. And she missed her husband and her children. Taoist Jade Emperor allowed her to return earth and nominated Liễu Hạnh princess. In the earth, she went

everywhere and did charity works.

The worship of Liễu Hạnh Mother Goddess is pervasive in everywhere and plays an important part. She is an imagination of Mother Goddess of Mountains and Forests to converse to Phùng Khắc Khoan at Lạng Sơn. And then she incarnated to Cửu Thiên Huyền Nữ at West Lake, and some places. The worship of Liễu Hạnh Mother Goddess is the needs of people in history and it is out of court control. Her action required freedom, emancipation women in Confucian society. And the worshipping of Liễu Hạnh Mother Goddess appears in everywhere, especially in Tiên Hương Palace and Vân Cát Palace in Kim Thái commune, Vụ Bản district, Nam Định province - her home land.

It is said that these vestiges worshiped Mother Goddess, Liễu Hạnh Mother Goddess and agriculture spirit (Cloudy Deity: Vân Cát Palace, Rainy Deity: Đền Sắt temple, Thunder Deity: Công Đồng Palace, Wind Deity: Đống Cao temple).

2.1. Tiên Hương Palace

Faced to the south whose direction dignifies the Mother Goddess. On the way to the Palace, we will see first a round well - water place - attracts the happiness and virtue for this palace. There is a flagpole in the middle of the well. The gate system and three transversal houses located saliently.

The main architecture of palace has four cung (small shrine): The Fourth cung (small shrine) with the altar of Four Realms; The Third cung put bát bửu (eight values offer things), gongs shelf, drum, The Second cung (small shrine) puts altar of the Four

Ladies and three altar thrones, and The First Cung (small shrine) is the the worshiped place of Mother Goddess.

The main shrine with seven houses describes carved arts. The combination of big and small carved parts, deep and hollow carving created monumental architecture of this palace. The statues in the temple were carved skillfully and revealed belief of people. In many temples, statues of the Mother Goddess were simple and not lively.

In addition to the architecture and statues, additional architecture, offering, palanquin in Tiên Hương Palace created a perfect center of worshipping in Phủ Giày Palace.

2.2. Vân Cát Palace

Vân Cát worshiped the Mother Goddess, but Vân Palace architecture is different from Tiên Hương Palace. Small plants are growing around the palace in order to remind a land of happiness. On the way to the Palace, there is a semicircular lake and two great and old trees to lead tourists to the gate with ancient steles. There are five shrines on the gate of Vân Cát Palace and three center shrines called Tam Sơn. Parallel with five gates is an alter curtain of Lý Nam Đế temple and Tam quan (gate) is on the left of the palace.

The main shrine has three layers and are covered with red lacquer trimmed with gold and skillful carved wood: hổ phù (royal seal depicting a tiger head), the dragon shape and the phoenix. It is a symbol of praying for rain, Spirit noble, praying for prosperity. And the chrysanthemum is a symbol for strength, light, intelligence; apricot blossom

for refinement; Ivory bamboo for horrible man, Peaches for multiplication and expelling demons in order to guide people to do good work. Each shrines has: Supervisor mandarin, The Fourth Realms, The Goddess, The Fourth of the Spirit of the Ladies, and Three Great Mandarins...

The statue of Mother Goddess was not big but embedded certain values and represented perception of the Mother Goddess. Covering the statues of the Mother Goddess were Spirit Clothes and three statues were put in a same level: The Mother Goddess of Heaven sitting in the central, The Third of Mother Goddess sitting on the left, The Fourth of Mother Goddess sitting on the left, The Mother Goddess of the Mountains and Forests sitting in front.

2.3. Shrine of Liễu Goddess

The center of Shrine of Liễu Mother Goddess is an octagonal tomb. It was built on a high foundation and there are incense bowls around the tomb.

Every year, people celebrate a big festival: “Tháng tám giỗ cha, tháng ba giỗ mẹ” (August is a month of Father (Trần Hưng Đạo Saint) death anniversary, March is a month of Mother (Liễu Hạnh Goddess) death anniversary”. They wishes a well-fed-life because March is a symbol of Yang factor and Liễu Hạnh Goddess is a symbol of Yin, and death anniversaries created a pair of Yin and Yang.

There are folk games in the festival: chicken fighting, rowing boats, chầu văn singing, human chess, word arranging (an important game in the festival). Words were

arranged to express farmers' wishes: Hòa cốc phong đăng (the crop exceeds requirements), Thiên hạ thái bình (Peaceful world).

Spirit possession ritual is an important ritual of the Mother Goddess worshipping. Without spirit possession ritual, temples or palaces of the Mother Goddess are not distinct from other temples. There are many ways of spirit possession rituals in the temple of the Mother Goddess. What is spirit possession ritual in the Mother Goddess temple?

(Lên đồng) Spirit possession ritual is an aim of spirit. Long time ago, people believed that there was a super nature to control their life. It is deities who created a beautiful life for human.

Đồng means children. When people were born, they were affected and inhibited to approach the strength of nature and universe. In the procession of Lên đồng, they came back to their childhood with innocent character in order to refuse artificial tie. It was a good way to sympathize with the deity, to harmonize with nature, universe and they knew what the deity taught?

Đồng has another different meaning: together. A person used an entrance to thrust his/her soul in order to find other similar souls in the four realms. Then the deity used that person as an entrance medium to communicate to people.

Lên đồng is a ritual of folk performance. Most audience participated voluntarily and after lên đồng people felt satisfied for their spirit. However, legend and action of spirit (spirit of human) taught people of a lesson when drinking water, remember its source.

It was an oral folk historical learning.

Lên đồng is also called “thiền quán tưởng dân dã” (quán means: watching; tưởng means: thinking, dân dã: commoner – a yoga form of commoner). After lên đồng, their body and their soul would be cheery and healthy. Many female and male mediums said that after serving spirit, their sickness disappeared without taking any medicine.

In the feudal society characterized with non-equalization, lên đồng helped them feel that they changed their fate. They were assured and rescued in their mind for some moment which helped balance their life. They confirmed that Thứ nhất ngồi đồng, thứ nhì lấy chồng quan (the first is possession, the second is a marriage with a mandarin). In lên đồng, if they went beyond their belief, some cases could happen: jealousy of husband or wife, waste in offering. Some female and male mediums abused lên đồng procession. If we want to preserve the real value of the Mother Goddess worshipping, we would limit its reverse side.

Lên đồng is amusement and the way of paving deity in the festival. Hầu vui is a form of lên đồng but it appeared to pave The Mother Goddess and mandarin⁽⁴⁾.

In general, Giày temple contributed to the nation's culture and arts. And the Mother Goddess contributed to help us recognize Mother worshipping in Viet's belief.

⁽⁴⁾ Võ Hoàng Lan (2000), “Hầu đồng một hình thức sinh hoạt sân khấu dân gian” (Hầu đồng as a form of folk performance activities), *Journal of Culture and Arts*, No.9 (195). p. 85.

