

## THE CHANGE OF SHAMANS OF TÀY AND NÙNG PEOPLE IN VIETNAM

**Abstract:** *Tày and Nùng people in Vietnam belong to the Tày - Thái linguistic group, so they have similar characteristics of language, customs and habits. These peoples have close relations with the other races in the Tày - Thái linguistic group. The author researches the changes of shamans (wizard) who are the main characters in the spiritual life of Tày and Nùng people in comparison with Thái people in the Northwest of Vietnam and Zhuang people in Guangxi, China.*

**Keywords:** *Change, Shaman, the Tày people, the Nùng people, Vietnam.*

### 1. The ancient religion of Tày and Thái people

In the ancient society, the religious activities of humankind were equal. Everyone could practice the simple sacrifice according to personal needs. Therefore, in this period, the societies of Tày and Nùng people in particular, residents of the Tày - Thái linguistic group in general did not have any person who was in charge of worship. Along with the development of primitive religion, objects of worship gradually increased, the ritual activity was more complex, the need for knowledge and skills in the ritual also increased, etc... Therefore, the needs to have brokers who communicated between human being and God arose. A social development also led to the division of society, for example, some older people who had experience or the leaders were responsible for sacrifice operation. In particular, some people had the ability and a high degree were trusted by people, so they could communicate with the divine and helped people carry out the sacrifice activities. It is probably one of the basic characteristics that led to the formation of a team of shaman in many races. However, it is difficult to determine the time appearing the functions of the shaman in Tày and Nùng people, because

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\* Ass.Pro. PhD., Institute for Cultural Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

it was in the ancient period, the historical resources and relevant bibliographies were not much mentioned. Based on the archaeological analysis results of the mural paintings on the cliff at the Mount Hua (Hua Shan), Ning Ming areas, researchers on Zhuang people in China stated that the emergence of “vu su” (shaman) in Guangxi province about after the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period (Xuân Thu Chiến Quốc), more than two thousand years ago<sup>1</sup>. Ning Ming county, Guangxi province, China is located very near the border Vietnam - China. Concerning this period, the legend of constructing the Cổ Loa Citadel of the leader who was an ancient Tay originated in the Cao Bằng province, Vietnam, his name was Thục Phán An Dương Vương, the king of Âu Lạc state (208 - 179 BC) also mentioned to the black magic (Vu thuật) of Kim Quy God (Turtle God) and the elimination of the elfin white rooster<sup>2</sup>.

Some ancient historical works of China in the Han Dynasty also referred to the emergence of “vu su” (shaman) of Tay - Thai groups in the area named “Việt vu” with features of divining chicken “bói gà”. Researchers on Zhuang people said that the object “Việt vu” that was mentioned by the bibliographies of the Han Dynasty was the shamans in the religion of Zhuang people at the early time. There was no separation between Tay - Thai people in the North of Vietnam and in Guangxi region of China at that time. The word “Việt” in “Việt vu” probably indicated the residents of Lạc Việt who mainly lived in the areas such as Guangxi, Guangdong, Yunnan, Guizhou of China and the North of Vietnam. The historical documents as mentioned above which led to the possibility that the appearance of shaman in the residence of the Tày and Nùng in Vietnam during this period.

Currently, the shamans of Tày and Nùng people include both men and women. However, according to legend and my field trip documents, there is a hypothesis that the shamans in two ethnic groups were women in the first period. It is not only common in the inhabitants of the linguistic Tày - Thái, but it is also popular in other ethnic minorities in the country and abroad. Many Chinese researchers cited that the initial shamans among ethnic minorities in their country were women, then they were men. Tày people in Vietnam said that at first, Then (a form the black magic [Vu thuật]) belonged to women, then men also practiced this work, but they must dress like women and the fringed strip in the back of Then's hat was a symbol of women's long hair.

The hypothesis that women participated in the work of worship, then men, is basically consistent with social development, because it is associated with the matriarchal period. In that society, women dominated all the work related to production and daily life. Therefore, they hold the role of worship. In my opinion, the cult of Mẻ Va, Mẻ Bioóc (Mother Hoa) of Tày and Nùng people at present related to the worship of Mẹ Tổ (Mother Goddess) that was creator of residents of the linguistic Tày - Thái group in the ancient time.

According to the legend of the Zhuang people, Mẻ Va was the first woman who stepped out from a flower when the universe newly formed called Molojia. She was a person with boundless Theurgy, blew the air to create the sky, tossed flowers to create the clouds, created mountains, rivers, humankind and animals. She also sat astride to form cave as human dwelling. There was a legend that she managed the human childbirth; she had the right to distribute children for humankind on the Earth. The cave of Nham Sơn in Đông Lan county (China) was regarded as her reproductive organ; Zhuang people were born from there. Thus, on 15 of the 1<sup>st</sup> month and on 15 of the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the Lunar year, people around this region bring the offerings to worship the cave, along with the ritual activities. There are customs that listening the old people tell the story of the Mother Goddess and singing in a group of men and women.

Currently, there are shrines and caves dedicated to Mẻ Va in Thượng Lâm and Điện Dương districts, Guangxi province, China. The statue of Mẻ Va is placed in the cave at Điện Dương inspired by legends. The statue is about 4m tall, decorated with flowers around the hip, placed on a flower seat. On the occasion of festival in the third month of the year, people bring the offerings to worship, then they rub their hands on the flowers around the hip of the statue to pray happiness and having children.

Ngọc Thời Giới stated that the mother Molojia, incarnation of Mẻ Va, was the Goddess that created humankind; it was a religion in the matriarchy period of the Zhuang people. At that time, the role of women as a householder and they managed society and they also were in charge of sacrifice, representative of the ancestors. Due to cultural inspiration of the original inhabitants, there was not distinguished the god and people; when they died, they were deified and people worshipped them as the

goddesses<sup>3</sup>. It is probably that the cult of Mother Hoa as a creator of Zhuang people gradually became the cult of Mother Hoa as manager of the human childbirth that was very popular in Tày, Nùng, Zhuang communities. It can be said that the Cult of Mother Goddess is one of the oldest religions of Tày - Thái linguistic group's people. This cult associated with the primitive period when shamans primarily practiced in the spontaneous form of women for the choice of the divine that Tày and Nùng people still call them as Siên/Tiên (Fairy) with meaning they were incarnated of the divine. During this period, the handing down of the shaman mainly caused by family choice in the maternal ancestor.

Contributing to a better understanding this question, I briefly introduce some characteristics related to *Then* (as a career) in White Thai people (Thái Trắng), which is a typical form of worship (the black magic) of Thai people in North - West of Vietnam. In comparing to the Tày and Nùng people, Thai culture (including religion) still contains the indigenous traces because of it is not integrated by foreign religious factors. There is some specific expression of a female *Then* in White Thai people as follow:

1) They were chosen as a successor of a matriarchal family, sometimes they were daughters-in-law or grand daughters-in-law who continued career of their husband's family; before entering the profession they usually had symptom such as: sickness, dream, or desire to be a *Then*.

2) They became the *Then* without the training of a teacher; they organized a ritual to be *Then* in the presence of village leaders.

3) A *Then* had a place of Worship called Hưón Then (Then house) which was a stilt house with two chambers, was separated from the family's residence. There was an altar of Then (Hỉnh Then) in the house that was divided into compartments. The incense bowls were placed in these compartments called Hưón Mô, Hưón Sên and soldiers of the Lower world, troops served Then. The swallows, cicadas made of paper or bamboo were hung on the top of Hưón Mô. The offerings of the adoptive children who were healed by Then were placed on the right of the altar. On the left corner of the chamber where placed the instruments of Ms. Then (Bà Then). On the domain of the form and content, this temple also bore more primitive marks than the worship of Tày and Nùng people.

4) The main object of worship of Ms. Then was *Me Bầu* who created humankind, was considered as the ancestor created Thai people.

5) The main task of Ms. Then was looking for the soul of sick people and healing them or praying for people who desire to have children. The main stages in a ritual of Ms. Then including: come to Me Bầu to invoke souls, then find the names, name the sick people, accompany the souls come back home, eliminate evil spirits to heal the sick people, etc... The ritual was celebrated by sitting at the place of worship to sing and pray for leading the soldiers of the Lower world to find out the lost souls for healing sick people. The penetrative journey into the Lower world of a Ms. Then in Phong Thổ district, Lai Châu province passed the stages as followed:

The journey was started from the chamber for ancestral worship (Pu đăm - Da đăm); next, came to the Kitchen god (Pu mỗ khang, Da mỗ nững - Ông cái ninh, Bà cái chảo), the ancestral buried zone (Pá heo); then, went along the river bank into Pu Kho Luông (Cổ Rồng Mountain) of the Hoàng Liên Sơn range; finally, arrived Mường Trời (Heaven). The path for arriving Mường Trời passed over 33 floors; each of which was a place with relevant antecedent. For example, Then Xí and Ly Then Sam stages (the third and the fourth stage) were home of the bird that sang like crying where was the shelter of souls' fatalities (young men and women who could not be married) and their souls became this kind of bird.

6) The practice of the *Then* imprinted the indigenous marks. The offerings included rice, eggs, silver loop, silver coin, fangs of a tiger or a boar, a bag of clothing to collect the souls of sick people. When celebrating the ritual, the *Then* used the magic called Cắm Mẫn to dazzle or intimidate the evil spirits in order to regain the souls of sick people.

Currently, the *Then* of the White Thais has changed in comparing with the ancient time. However, this form has still preserved many indigenous factors. It was confirmed through a comparative research of Henri Maspero on the society and religions of Thais in Vietnam and some ethnic minorities in China in the ancient period. Although it was influenced by the imported factors the *Then*, *Put* cult of Tay and Nung people generally preserved the ancient mark and the mother worship like the *Then* of the White Thai. It was shown the following basic features:

1) People worked as *Then, Pút* of Tày, Nùng races basically had an unusual expression before starting this profession as the *Then* of the White Thai. Despite of male or female, they remained the traditional mode of inheritance the family's occupation.

2) In the sanctuary of the *Then, Pút, Siên*, although there were more exotic elements like worship of the generals, patriarchs, magicians, etc... it essentially remained the worship of the life guardian deity (thờ bản mệnh) of the sanctuary's owner. It was clearly shown in the sanctuary of the female *Then*. In this issue, I have mentioned through comparison of different models of *Then* shrines when researching the influences of the folk religion of the Southern China on the *Then* of Tày people in the North of Vietnam<sup>4</sup>.

3) One of the principal tasks of a *Then, Pút* was healing in the form of finding lost souls and practicing rituals for young children related to the worship of *Mẻ Va*.

4) *Mẻ Bióc, Mẻ Va* were the main objects of worship of *Then, Pút* - (mothers) supervisors giving birth and nurturing of children. In each ceremony, the astral of *Then, Pút* came *Mường Trời* (Heaven) to pray for the homeowners. Despite of male or female *Then, Mo, Pút, Siên*, the last stop of them was the residence of *Mẻ Hoa* (has been honoured as the *Hoa Vương Thánh Mẫu* - The Mother Goddess - or Guanyin). In the system *Then, Pút, Siên* has contained many indigenous traces. The evidence was not only in the place of worship, but it was also in rituals. Currently, there has been the incense bowl of *Mẻ Va* in the shrines of *Ms. Siên (Bà Siên)* in *Hạ Lang, Cao Bằng* province.

5) The ritual of *Then, Pút* has preserved the indigenous traces: the incense bowl of *Khẩu Khoăn* with the chicken egg and effigy (*hình nhân*) to find souls; the *Sửa Khoăn* bag contained souls. In addition, the ritual of *Ms. Siên* added an egg of *Nàng Sáy (Nàng Trúng)*, the fortune-teller asked the idea of *Nàng Sáy*. When seeking lost souls for sick people, *Ms. Siên sang*, hold a knife to intimidate ghosts and devils.

It can be said that the worship of mother was an ancient cult of the inhabitants of the Tày - Thái linguistic group and it was similar to the worship of *Bà Mụ* (the Twelve Midwives) of Kinh people. However, in comparing with the worship of *Bà Mụ*, the mother worship of the inhabitants of the Tày - Thái linguistic group retained deep philosophy.

Generally, these inhabitants believed that Mẻ Va or Me Bửu (Mẻ Then - Then Mother) was the mother who decided the presence and fate of each person and Mường Trời was their native land. Thus, Mẻ Va or Me Bửu officially gave birth and the mothers on the Earth who just complied with command of Mẻ Va. Therefore, Thai, Tày and Nùng people respected the name of humankind. Each Thai has two names; a name was given by parents, the other name was given by Me Bửu before coming on the Earth. When someone was sick, it means that he or she was called by Me Bửu, and desired to return the Heaven with Me Bửu, so Ms. Then organized a ritual to find out the soul of the patient. The soul of sick people entered the Ms. Then to say the name given by Me Bửu and the reason of sickness. Ms. Then claimed Me Bửu to rename the sick people and to tie the thread on the wrist of the patient, adopted him/her as her child. Ms. Then could heal sick people and communicate with Me Bửu, so Thai considered her in the same level with Me Bửu. Me Bửu was the mother gave birth; Ms. Then was the adoptive mother each person. As the giving birth mother, Me Bửu had an important role to each person during his/her life.

Similarly, for Tày and Nùng people, the name of each person was given by Then, Pút who complied with command of Mẻ Va on the full month ceremony. When they were children, Tày and Nùng people worshipped Mẻ Va as the God nurtured and took care for young children. On the adulthood or old age, people worshipped Mẻ Va as the giving birth mother/the life guardian deity. During the other rituals, people thanked their mother, prayed the mother blessed happiness, fortune and longevity. People were cured by shaman generally became their adopted children.

The ritual of Bà Mụ of Kinh people related to praying for newborn babies (until three years old), however, the worship of the mother (the protective life mother) of the inhabitants of the Tày - Thái linguistic group was a lifelong ritual. Furthermore, for Tày people, the incense bowl of Mẻ Va was placed in the same rank with family's ancestors.

It can be said that the giving birth mother was an important object of worship of the indigenous mystery men. This cult may has been originated from the worship of mother since the ancient time. The white Thai had the Then Kin Pang festival - the ritual dedicated to the craft

ancestors, in fact, it was a festival that Ms. Then and her adoptive children brought offerings to thank Mẹ Bầu. For Tày and Nùng people, Mẹ Va was not the unique object of worship, but they had to come to thank Mẹ Va in the main ritual of Then, Pút. The folk festivals like Nàng Hai dedicated to Mẹ Va as the unique mother of Tày and Nùng people. It was a shaman festival organized by the Tày community in order to pray for crops, peace. On this occasion, Mẹ Va was considered as Mẹ Trăng (Moon Mother) - a great mother of Mường Trời who always take care her children on the Earth. The organizational form of this festival was similar to the Kin Pang Then festival of the White Thai<sup>5</sup>.

In my opinion, like the White Thai, the cult of the Mother goddess, in particular, the worship of Mẹ Va was considered the ancient object of worship of the indigenous mystery men of Tày, Nùng in connection with shamanism. The names of mystery men have retained in Tày, Nùng communities such as Mẹ Siên, Mẹ Siếng (female), Mo (male), etc...

The following legend has proved the origin of the *Mo* vocation of Nùng people in the Lạng Sơn province as data of female shamans in the societies of Tày, Nùng, Zhuang. The legend as followed:

Once upon a time, when the human kind has just appeared, the longevity of the human being could not be long as nowadays, most of new born babies died. A mother gave birth for nine times, but her children went away forever, she was so sad. She thought that the God (Pò Phạ) did not love her, so she prayed day and night that “please loves people / feeds them/ let them inhabit/ everywhere on the Earth, in the Heaven/ let the Earth in peace” (“Trời hãy thương tình/ Cho ăn, cho ở/ Cùng đất, cùng trời/ Cho thiên hạ được bình an”).

In the Heaven, the God was extremely impressed by the tear of the mother. The God ordered a fairy came to the Earth to teach her to be *Mo* (a shaman) and bestowed her magic against ghost and evil spirits. Since, her children have been handsome and healthy. In addition, she used magic to help people such as prolonging the longevity, grown children, healing people.

Likewise, people everywhere came to ask for help. She was willing when someone needed her aid. However, she had to nurture and care for her children. Understanding the difficulties of the wife, the husband said that “you should hand the vocation down to me. She could stay at home



to take care babies". She thought her husband was right; she handed the magic down to her husband. Since then, someone asked to organize a ritual, her husband went. Finally, her husband handed this work down to his sons. These children became the ancestors of the current *Mo*.

Although, it is a legend, but the story has been generalized some fundamental issues related to the origin, characteristics of the Tày and Nùng's shamans. It can be interpreted as follows:

1) A fairy handed down the work of worshipping by order of the God. It was correspondence with the term *Siên or Tiên* means who was handed the magic down by a fairy (most of them were women).

2) The first person was handed down to be a shaman who was a woman.

3) The purpose of worship: health, longevity, treatment, eradication ghost and the devil.

4) The object of worship: Bà Tiên (fairy) who bestowed magic on human kind. Currently, the worship of the Fairy has still retained traces in the ritual of Then of Phén people in the border region of the Guangxi province, China, bordered by Quang Ninh province, Vietnam; or Ms. Siên (Bà Siên) of Tày in the border area of the Cao Bằng province, Vietnam, is bordered by Long Châu, China.

5) The object was served by shamans: at first, worshipping for their families, then serving the other families (the trust and the needs of the other people).

6) The first person was handed down to be a shaman who was a woman; then, the shaman was man; finally, the shaman's sons were handed this work down; hereditary of vocational training.

It is consistent with my assessment that the worshipping vocation of Tày and Nùng was eradicating ghost and the devil, looking for souls, healing; the object of worship was Mẽ Va that was the managed reproduction mother as well as the protecting life mother, the ancestral mother of the Zhuang people.

## **2. The emergence of the shaman of Zhuang people in China and the spread in the Tày and Nùng people in Vietnam**

The formation of this cult along with a team of the shaman of Tày and

Nùng people has been an inevitable consequence of the exchange, acculturation of the imported elements of Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism in Zhuang and Kinh communities.

Taoism was introduced into the area of Zhuang people and the absorption of some religious rituals formed the primitive religion without method. A group of “vu sư” (shaman) became “sư công” (shaman trainer). They were the earliest people who had the scriptures and disciples. The earliest texts were notes of religious rites<sup>6</sup>. According to Cố Hữu Thức and Lục Cự Liệt, in the beginning of the Tang dynasty, the Zhuang shamans changed from having no shaman trainer to having a shaman trainer. Thus, after a long time of introducing into Zhuang community (approximately 4 - 5 century, from the Han dynasty to the Tang dynasty), the religions were absorbed and integrated into the indigenous religion. During that time, under the influence of Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, the Zhuang shamans started having the scriptures written in Sino and Zhuang character; however, these scriptures were prayed in the native language. Major contents of the texts were the legends, the myths of Zhuang people along with the astronomical calendar, geography, history, etc... The shamans were mainly trained through a process as invocation of the trainer, learning by heart and copying the texts, practicing the magic for at least three years before the ordained ceremony. During this ceremony, a rooster was killed and it was placed on the altar along with its blood and the wine, the shaman trainer reported to the ancestors and gods. The handing down mainly transmitted the personal experience, the great importance of absorbing magic, annotation, ritual without paying attention to teach and research the theology and concepts. There were not strict conventions in the relationship between shaman trainer and disciple. Basically, their functions were not very different from the shaman of primitive religion. The most of shamans engaged in production, they went out to organize a ritual when someone invited them and they entitled to remuneration in accordance with the rule. Their activities mainly performed in their village and the neighbouring villages. Their work included fortunetelling, praying for peace, mental healing, etc... Though the influence of Taoism and the foreign religions, the shamans of the Zhuang were characterized by the Taoist clergies: “They lived a secular life with their wife. They were the real sorcerers though the hereditary; they understood some

scriptures and practiced some rituals. Each shaman had his/her own expertise such as eradicating ghost and the devil, looking for souls, healing, etc..<sup>7</sup>.

Thus, the participation of scriptures and the characters in the practice of religion was one of the basic elements that marked the shift of Zhuang shaman from without shaman trainer to be trained by a shaman trainer. Disciples of worshipping sectors were mostly males called *sur công* and *đạo công*. Besides, the group of *vu bà* (female) also switched to trend of having a shaman trainer.

Along with the mother Molojia, Zhuang people have a legend about Poloto, a wise man considered as the ancestor of the Zhuang and the ritual book was written by Poloto, so its name *Poloto scriptures*. In my opinion, the cult of the ancestral father Poloto in association with shaman scriptures followed the cult of the ancestral mother Molojia. It was associated with the period of having scriptures and shamans were transmitted by the vocational teachers. That was the patriarchal period; males had an important role in the rites in the family and society. The integration of the ancestral father role in to the wisdom teachers associated with scriptures and characters was probably a form of homage the leader like the cult of Molojia Mother.

Thus, the foreign religions have contributed to form the religious life of Zhuang people with two ritual groups: The first group included *đạo công* and *sur công* were males who practised career under the guidance of the scriptures written in Han and indigenous characters. The second group included *vu bà* were females who practised career through oral transmission, then they gradually changed to the trend of having trainers and they were influenced by the *đạo công* and *sur công*, the scriptures. The two groups had the common point like ancestral worship in the family, worship the vocational teachers and the other deities of the foreign religions. For example, beside the cult of Mẻ Va mother, the indigenous shamans also worshipped the Jade Emperor, Daode Tianzun (Thái Thượng Lão Quân), Guanyin Bodhisattva or Mercy Goddess (Phật Bà Quan Âm), etc...

The migration of Zhuang people into the residential area of Tày brought their religion and the other forms of religious activities which practiced by the shamans (both male and female shamans). According

to diachronic references and the law of cultural propagation, the shaman trainers of Tày people lately appeared. It means that they appeared in the region of Tày people after the Tang dynasty. According to some documents, Cao Bằng province is one of the regions that Nùng people originated from Zhuang people, Guangxi province, China who have immigrated early since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, the exchanges between the two races took place early because the residential areas of Tày and Zhuang have been neighbouring and convenient transport, especially, the similarity in language. Moreover, there were previously migrations of Nùng in the area of Tày and the evidence that many Nùng people have been assimilated. It allows me to predict that the emergence of shaman Nùng originated from Zhuang came to train Tày people before the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

As mentioned above, both systems of worshiping through the vocational training appeared and be accepted and acculturated in the residential area of the Tày. Simultaneously, the combination with religious elements of Kinh people has created a great change, thereby, it formed a shaman team of Tày and Nùng with their own characteristics.

To compare to Zhuang people, the presence of shamans Kinh in the Tày area was later; it took place mainly at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, along with the presence of the mandarins and troops of the Mạc dynasty in the Cao Bằng province (1594 - 1677), then the soldiers came to pacify, finally they settled there. Previously, there were scattered appearances of Kinh in the residential area of the Tày; however, the influence was weaker than Nùng people in this area.

According to the method of apprenticeship and vocational training of the shamans Tày and Nùng in the Central Highlands (Vietnam) at present, I can give a hypothesis that the penetration and influence of the shamans Nùng originated Zhuang people in the residential area of Tày as follows: Some people practiced the worship career or were born in the family that had someone worked as a shaman among Nùng people (Zhuang origin) migrated to the Tày area. To meet the needs of religious activities of the community after settlement, they continued to practice and began training practitioners. Due to the convenient transport between the two sides of the border, so many of them came back homeland to be trained, especially, in the bordering areas. In the process of co-reside, due to the

similarity in language and customs, they also gathered the disciples of Tày people and gradually expanded into the Tày areas, and then the ritual branch of the Tày established such as transformation from *Pụt Nùng* to *Pụt Tày*; *Tào Nùng* to *Tào Tày*.

The Kinh people, after penetration into the Tày areas, inherited and acquired religious activity factors of the Tày, formed the new forms of religious practice. The exchange process occurred for a long time along with the ritual successors (descendants and disciples).

Currently, there have been many branches of worshipping the job ancestor (tổ nghề) of Nùng people over the border. According to memory that passed down over many generations of branches of *Then Nùng* in Lạng Sơn province, the formation of the ritual branch was marked by the first Patriarch who did this job and passed it down, then the branches expanded over many generations. Through the time, people forgot the name of the first Patriarch; however, they have just remembered the homeland of the Patriarch. For instance, the *Then Nùng* branch of Ms. Mông Thị Sấm in Lạng Sơn city has existed for approximately 270 years (marked by the first Patriarch). Today, her children (disciples) still pray the origin of the career “Pò Vìn, An Mạ” and they explain that it is the name of the village where their ritual career has originated (in China). Similarly, the other branch of *Then Nùng* in Lạng Sơn province, they call the name “Pò Bó - Lục Cháp - Kéo Bẻ - Mường Chang” in the rite because it is the homeland of their job ancestor. In Cao Bằng and Bắc Kạn province, the shamans (Pụt) cannot remember the name of their fatherland because of migration. Thus, they usually use the name Ham Hác (the job ancestor in Nước Hác means China) to talk about the origin of Pụt.

Currently, the process of apprenticeship has taken place in the new residential area of the Tày and Nùng people in the Central Highland of Vietnam. The shamans of the two races have continued to hand down, practice their career. Many disciples have come back home to the North to look for the shaman trainers. Then, the disciples of the Tày and Nùng people in the Central Highlands will worship the Patriarch in the Cao Bằng, Lạng Sơn provinces as their ancestors used to worship the patriarchs from Nước Hác, Nước Nùng (China).

As mentioned above, basing on the ethnic characteristics and

fieldwork data, I initially mention the exchange and acculturation of the religious elements of Zhuang and Kinh people integrated into the indigenous ritual forms of the Tày community as follows:

1) There was the receptiveness and the influence of religion Nùng (originated from Zhuang) into the Tày which formed new mode of worship of Tày as Pụt Tày.

2) There was an exchange and acculturation of the Kinh's religion in the mode of worship of the Tày as Then (female) and Dàng (Then male), sorcerers.

3) In the process of co-residence and occupational transmission between shaman Tày and Nùng created new forms of worship with the exchange between the form of worship of the Tày and Nùng as Then Nùng.

To sum up, the formation and transformation of worship forms of the Tày and Nùng associated with the exchange and integration of some religious elements from many directions, especially, the Zhuang people (Guangxi, China) and the Kinh (North, Vietnam). It was one of the manifestations of cultural exchange Kinh - Tày - Nùng in the residential area of the Tày and Nùng people in the northern mountainous provinces of Vietnam./.

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**Notes:**

- 1 Ngọc Thời Giới (2004), *Văn hóa tôn giáo dân gian Choang tộc* (tiếng Trung), Nxb. Dân tộc: 78. (*Culture and Folklore Religion of Zhuang People* [the Chinese language], Publisher: Ethnology: 78).
- 2 Tham luận *Vấn đề nguồn gốc của Thục Phán và sự hình thành Nhà nước Âu Lạc*, trong Kỷ yếu hội thảo *Đóng góp của các dân tộc nhóm ngôn ngữ Tày - Thái trong tiến trình lịch sử Việt Nam*, Nxb. Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, 2006: 85. (*The Problem of the Origin Thục Phán and the Formation Âu Lạc State*, in the Workshop Proceedings *Contribution of Races Belong to the Tày - Thái Linguistic Group in the Vietnam Historical Process*, Publisher: Vietnam National University Hanoi, 2006: 85).
- 3 Ngọc Thời Giới (2004), *Văn hóa tôn giáo dân gian Choang tộc*, sdd: 82. (*Culture and Folklore Religion of Zhuang People*, Ibid: 82).
- 4 Nguyễn Thị Yên (2007), *Then Tày*, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội: 174. (*Then Tày*, Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing house: 174).
- 5 Nguyễn Thị Yên (2003), *Lễ hội Nàng Hai của người Tày Cao Bằng*, Nxb. Văn hóa Thông tin, Hà Nội. (*Nàng Hai Festival of Tày People in Cao Bằng*, Hanoi: Culture and Information Publishing House).
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