

## POLICY ON TAOISM OF THE NGUYEN LORDS IN COCHINCHINA

***Abstract:** Taoism profoundly influenced and played a crucial role in the spiritual life of the local inhabitants in the southern part of Gianh River in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In fact, the Nguyễn lords had policies towards this religion in order to meet the spiritual needs, to create the spiritual life of Cochinchina's society, and to achieve the goal of national rule and security. The specific policies indicated that the development of Taoism in the spirit of "three teachings as a harmonious aggregate" and the consolidation of folk beliefs. In this article, the author explores the perception of the Nguyễn lords, as well as, the transformation of Taoism in Cochinchina by presenting the policy of developing Taoism by the Nguyen lords.*

***Keywords:** Nguyễn lords; Cochinchina; Taoism.*

### **1. Taoism in Cochinchina during the XVII and XVIII centuries**

The book *Ô Châu Cận Lục* recorded the Taoist worship facilities of Châu Hóa in the sixteenth century as follows "Tứ Vị Thánh Nương and Tùng Giang Temples at the Tur Khách sea-shore were dedicated to Nguyễn Phục,... Minh Uy Temple at U Càn commune, Đan Điền District (belonged to Quảng Điền, Thừa Thiên- Huế today), Thái Dương Temple at Kim Trà District (belonged to Hương Trà, Thừa Thiên- Huế today), Linh Dị Temple, near Thiên Mụ pagoda, Temples worship the gods such as Thiên Y

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A Na, Thủy Tộc, Thủy Lan”<sup>1</sup>. Dương Văn An confirmed the presence with the fairly density of Taoist temples and temples influenced by Taoism in Quang Binh and Quang Tri areas “Văn Tuyên Shrine faces Lỗ Xá. Thánh Nương Shrine is surrounded by flowing water; Văn Trung temple is surrounded by mountains,... The ancient shrine of Bồ village attached to the reputation of Phạm Súy; Lan Cảng Temple marked by Mai Công’s vestige,... Tùng Giang Temple has an ancient spruce tree, Nam Hải Temple has very big bamboos. Hoàng Phú Pagoda is extremely blessed, Minh Uy Temple is majestic. Kim Hoa is decorated in the temple’s sanctuary, the aquatic life (thủy tộc) is mentioned in the ceremony. Sùng Hóa Pagoda has an annual festival, Thai Duong Temple has an eternal spring festival,... La Chử Temple is an old foundation of Hà Công”<sup>2</sup>.

The center of Ái Tử has added a temple to worship Nguyễn Hoàng and a temple to worship God of Trao river (Trảo Phu Nhân) since the beginning of the seventeenth century. Following the footsteps of the Vietnamese and Minh Hương peoples (the Chinese), Taoism developed rapidly on the southern land. According to the notes of Trịnh Hoài Đức, there was a profound influence of this religion on the spiritual life of the inhabitants in Gia Định at the end of the eighteenth century. People believed in “votive dance” or “to mount the medium” (đồng bóng) and respect Goddesses such as Bà Chúa Ngọc, Bà Chúa Động Bà Hòa Tĩnh, Bà Thủy Long, Cô Hồng, Cô Hạnh, etc.. They also worshiped the Kitchen God (thần Táo quân)”<sup>3</sup>.

There were many Taoists in Cochinchina during this period. For example, Nguyễn Đăng Đàn who was an important person in the government of the Lord had knowledge of Confucianism as well as Taoism of Laozi- Zhuangzi. Nguyễn Đăng Trường, his grandson, was profound knowledge of Confucianism- Buddhism- Taoism. He was not a mandarin, he only focused on teaching and practicing on the Mount of Thanh Thủy, he had hundreds of

disciples. Many events that took place in Cochinchina during this period were related to Taoism. For example, A Ban and Ngô Lãng who helped Bà Tranh to rebel against Nguyễn Lord considered themselves as having ability to call rain and wind. Another event took place in February 1666, Nguyễn Phúc Tần Lord visited Cồ Rùa mountain near Tur Dung seashore and built Hòa Vinh pagoda, he used Taoist and Buddhist magic “The soldiers obeyed the orders to unload the tower. Everyone suddenly felt dizzy, then they fell to the bottom of the tower. Đông Triều, a guardian (thủ bạ), wore a coat and a hat like a monk, hold a rosary, a diamond staff, came to the front of the temple to kneel down and pray. After praying, he took two coins, bowed and tossed these coins. Finally, the construction the pagoda was continued”<sup>4</sup>.

Lê Quý Đôn recorded a story in the seventeenth century, Zen master Minh Châu came to preach Dharma in Quy Nhơn, he realized a profound influence of Taoism there “One night, the Mọi people were knocked at the door and said: after the monk came out about four days, there were three gods in the mountain of Tiêm-bút-la such as Cao Các Đại Vương, Phục Ba Đại Vương and Bô Bô Đại Vương did spirit possession the children in the village. They told the villagers that people should welcome a mystery-man to be the abbot there”<sup>5</sup>. Quốc Sử quán of the Nguyễn dynasty (the official agency compiled history in Vietnam from 1821 to 1945) indicated that in March 1688, Tôn Thất Tín sailed a fishing boat on the Hương River (Perfume) “when the boat arrived the front of Hai Cat mountain, where worshipping Hiếu Triết Emperor, he suddenly heard a scream like thunder. He trembled and died”<sup>6</sup>.

These specific evidences show the profound influence of Taoism in the spiritual life of Cochinchina’s inhabitants. The use of Taoism to explain things, phenomena and solve issues was quite common in this period. John Barrow wrote in his research on the religious life of Cochinchina “In every small grove near Turan Bay, there are wooden coffer for holding woven baskets either hanging or

attaching to tree branches, some contain pictures made of different materials”<sup>7</sup>. Li Tana stated that it is an expression of Buddhism<sup>8</sup>.

In my opinion, John Barrow mentioned the practices of Taoist rituals and folk beliefs such as temples, shrines, and Taoist temples. However, these places of worship might be also dedicated to Buddha. Because, on the land of Cochinchina, Taoism was absorbed in the spirit of “three teachings as a harmonious aggregate”. Thiên Tôn pagoda (Đâu Kênh village, Triệu Long commune, Triệu Phong district, Quảng Trị) is a typical example. This pagoda mainly worships the Jade Emperor. Ông pagoda (Thuận Hóa pagoda) and Thiên Mụ pagoda in Kim Long are two typical cases of Taoist presence in Cochinchina.

The acculturation between Taoism and folk beliefs is a prominent feature, especially in Ancestor worship and Mother worship. In fact, the worship of the Three Palaces (Tam Phủ) and the Four Palaces (Tứ Phủ) in Cochinchina based on combination of Taoism and worship of goddess. Goddess occupied the majority and always was in a superior position in the respectful rank of people in Cochinchina. Thiên Mụ, Tứ Vị Thánh Nương, Thiên Y A Na were canonized “superior superior Goddesses” (thượng thượng đẳng thần). The other Goddesses such as Trảo Trảo Linh Thu Phổ Trạch Tướng Hựu Phu Nhân, Thái Dương Phu Nhân, Bà Chúa Ngọc, Bà Giàng, Bà Om, Bà Đen, Bà Chúa Xứ núi Sam were in a superior position (thượng đẳng thần). It can be said that Taoism deeply influenced and had an important position in the spiritual life of communities. In Cochinchina, there was a blend of two Taoist sects: Witchery and Divinities (Thần tiên) with folk beliefs.

## **2. The views of Lords on Taoism**

In the early stage of his career, Nguyễn Hoàng Lord (Chúa Tiên) showed to be a devout Taoist, “Whenever there was a practice of praying and praying for blessing, He used to prefer Taoist clergymen to Buddhist monks”<sup>9</sup>. In fact, many Nguyễn Lords (successor) also believed in the Taoism, they considered this

religion as an important part of Cochinchina's religion. Taoism contributed to form the view of life and worldview of the leaders of Cochinchina.

Quốc Sử quán of the Nguyễn dynasty recorded the event in March 1687, Nguyễn Phúc Tần Lord had dreamed, he met an old man with white hair and beard, dressed in a red dress: "The old man said to the Lord: You came to the Earth (trần thế) for many years, enjoyed the ultimate wealth, don't you think about returning?"<sup>10</sup>. In the past, in the time of Lord Nguyễn Phúc Lan: "the defensive troops on the border were lack of food. The King urgently sent relief boats to them. As the result of the wind, they had to wait for orders, parked in the bay to wait for the opportunity to go. The King sent a mandarin to the temple to pray for the Mother goddess. There was immediately favourable wind so the boat sailed, it quickly arrived. Later, when the victorious army returned to the capital, the king was grateful to the Goddess, an honour bestowed on her by the king "Thái Dương Linh Ứng Đoàn Thục Nhu Thần Trinh Ý Từ Huệ Đức Cẩn Hạnh Phu Nhân Chi Thần", the shrine was restored<sup>11</sup>. The death of Nguyễn Phúc Thái Lord (1691) was also seen under the Taoist perspective: "There was a solar eclipse; there was a strange bird sitting in Phú Cam, its cried more than a week, then it flew away"<sup>12</sup>.

Previously, in the land tax exemption for the people (1687), Nguyễn Phúc Tần Lord clearly showed his Taoist worldview: "Religion of Heaven (Đạo trời) makes favourable winds so everything could be delightful... Our country is opened with glorious fortunes, the inhabitants are taken care"<sup>13</sup>.

In 1774, Trịnh Lord's army attacked Cochinchina and Nguyễn Phúc Khoát Lord brought the marine troops to resist "when crossing the sea to Gia Định, there was unfavourable wind so the troops could not depart. Lord sent Trường to the land to pray. The Lord's boat could go at night by favourable wind"<sup>14</sup>. Historical data did not mention the location where organized the ceremony (at the

temple, Taoist temple or pagoda) but it can be predicted that the worship object (that Võ Vương believed in) was the Taoist deities, because Taoist Witchery used to be very popular in praying for blessings, fighting natural disasters, curing diseases in Cochinchina during this period. For example, in 1658: “in October, rice worms were widespread, people were nervous. Hiền Vương set up a Mandala to pray, rice worms disaster immediately ceased and crops were abundant<sup>15</sup>. Two years later (1660), “Hương Chiếu mountain suddenly slid. Hiền Vương set up a Mandala to pray”<sup>16</sup>. “In 1675, Prince Hiệp Đức suffered from smallpox. Hiền Vương also established a Mandala, prayed at the Buddha temple and worshiped at shrine for the kings”<sup>17</sup>.

During the reign of Nghĩa Vương Nguyễn Phúc Thái, “in November 1689: it was drought, praying at deities temples for more than a week, it did not rain. The Lord stood in the middle of a small boat to pray. The day after, it had a heavy rain. The Lord stood in the rain, looked at the sky, prayed. Then, the Lord sent the officials to make offerings to the sacred temples”<sup>18</sup>. In January 1695, from the 1st to the 11th, it did not rain, Nguyễn Phúc Chú “prayed, after 2 days it rained”<sup>19</sup>. The records of Quốc Sử quán of the Nguyễn Dynasty showed that the influence of Taoism on the view of the Nguyễn Lords about human life, the world was profound. The Nguyễn Lords used to base on Taoism to solve the problems and phenomena.

In addition to Taoist worship centers such as the temple system, these religious symbols were also present in the daily cultural objects of the Lord. The book *Đại Nam Thực Lục* recorded the event that took place in 1754, Nguyễn Phúc Khoát ordered the academician Nguyễn Quang Tiễn wrote a poem on the pillars of Giảng Hương temple in the palace of the Lords with the content influenced of Taoist thought: “Tổ nga treo mãi gương nghìn thuở; Vương mẫu thường dân chén vạn năm”<sup>20</sup>. In the East of Trường Lạc Palace, there were also many sentences with the spirit of Taoist

thought written by Trần Thiên Lộc. “Nghị trượng quân Vũ lâm diễu quanh chôn Bồng Lai; Một đoàn âm nhạc dưới ánh sáng mai đi tới; Ngôi vua nhìn xuống nơi nam cực; Lò hương im tỏa ra năm thứ mây; Vòng trăng in mãi gương ngàn thu; Tay tiên hứng giọt móc dâng thêm chén vạn thọ”<sup>21</sup>.

The presence of Taoism in the palace of the Lords showed that the faith of Cochinchina’s leaders in this religion was at high level. In particular, at the end of the eighteenth century, the 8th Lord also used Taoism to announce, to lead public opinion for the regime change: “In 1744, the king invited to the court a famous 80-year-old hermit who lived on a high mountain in the South. When the hermit came, the king asked him many questions, and finally questions related to the kingdom. The hermit cleverly demanded the king to tell courtiers around him to go out before answering. Then, the hermit said: “There will be eight rulers in Cochinchina. No more no less. When the high mountains become low valleys, when the rivers are filled, when our people here are extinct and new people will appear, this kingdom will be collapsed”<sup>22</sup>.

According to the Taoist theology, the year of Giáp Tý (Rat) is an important year to open a new cycle for the next 60 years. This Taoist predictability proclaimed good omen to Cochinchina: “King Võ Vương wanted to renew everything: the king himself, his reign, his dynasty, his royal capital, rule of the king and the whole kingdom”<sup>23</sup>. In fact, in 1744, the leader of Cochinchina carried out a comprehensive reform of the administration, claimed to be the king to consolidate his position as the owner of Cochinchina.

Thus, the Nguyễn Lords relied on the worldview, the human view of Taoism to explain things, phenomena and solve issues. The Taoist Witchery (Phù thủy) and Divinity (Thần tiên) Schools are absorbed and developed by the heads of the government. The Taoist Witchery mainly served to pray, while the Taoist Divinities was used by the Nguyen Lords in political purposes, building spiritual foundations, gathering people.

### **3. Focusing on developing Taoism to rule the country and the inhabitants**

Since the beginning of his career, Nguyễn Hoàng has paid attention to the development of Taoism. The fighting with the Mạc's troops showed that Taoism was Nguyễn Hoàng's priority in the policy of cohesion the inhabitants. Quốc Sử quán of the Nguyễn Dynasty recorded that the enemy was strong. The Lord sent troops to stay in Ái Tử River, at night, a voice from the river "trảo thảo", it was strange. That night, the Lord dreamed and saw a woman dressed in blue, held a fan, stood in front of him and said: "You wants to eradicate the enemy, so you should lure the enemy to the sand, I will help you"<sup>24</sup>.

After the victory of Lập Bạo's army (1572), Tiên Lord built a temple and bestowed the river deity as "Trảo Trảo Linh Thu Phủ Trạch Tướng Hựu Phu Nhân", created a new religious establishment for Thuận Hóa land. Nguyễn Hoàng's successors were also interested in acquiring and developing Taoism. Some Nguyễn Lords were also followers of Taoism. When they became the rulers, leaders of Cochinchina had many policies toward Taoism. The inscription as well as ordination to the Taoist deities, temples was specific policies for development.

In addition, by the act of confession, the heads of the government showed their piety in Taoism. The Nguyễn Lords also wanted to establish the leading position of Taoism in Cochinchina.

In order to develop Taoism in the southern lands, the Nguyễn Lords created an institution for this religion. The system of religious institution belonging to the Lord's government (palace) had departments such as Ty Huyền Pháp, Ty Đạo Sĩ Đạo Lục, Ty Tứ Quý, Ty Đạo Sĩ Lương Y and Ty Trung Tượng Cơ Lương Y. Besides, the headquarters had two departments like Ty Pháp Lục and Ty Đạo Sĩ that were responsible for managing and developing Taoism. "Linh từ" had the task of taking care of the sacrifices, worship in the Taoist temples. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Taoist Witchery had a strong development in folklore.

Therefore, Nguyễn Ánh had changed policy on Taoism, he listed Taoism into the “heresy” (tà đạo) and put a ban on all forms of witchery (with punishment). *Đại Nam Thực Lục* recorded the contents of the ban in May 1789 as follows: “Those who violate the ban on witchcraft will be whipped for 100 times and 6 months of service: the witch will be whipped for 100 times whips and pound rice for 6 months. In addition, he ordered the four headquarters to abolish the departments of Ty Pháp Lục and Ty Đạo Sĩ, its staff were added to Ty Xá Sai and Tướng Thần Lại”<sup>25</sup>.

The government of Cochinchina limited the negative effects of the Taoist Witchery. In general, during the period from the XVI to XVIII centuries, Nguyễn Lords focused on the development of Taoism. Taoism did not only to meet the spiritual needs of the inhabitants, this religion was also used by the heads of the government as a spiritual foundation to establish the national rules.

At the beginning of the governance of the land Thuận- Quảng, the inhabitants welcomed Nguyễn Hoàng with a ritual of offering 7 jars of water, as well as, honored him as the Lord- Chúa Tiên. In front of people, Nguyễn Hoàng set up a drama (based on the Taoist philosophy) in order to explain the phenomenon, and to seek consensus of the inhabitants. Nguyễn Ư Dĩ was arranged on behalf of the owner of the Southern land to explain the incident and declare: “It is a blessing of the Heaven (Trời). The Heaven’s work has images. The Lord has just come, people offered “water” (Nước), perhaps it is an omen of “obtaining the nation (Nước)”<sup>26</sup>.

This scenario evoked the images of the king of Champa who was performing sacred rites and mysteries of enthronement ritual. Obviously, Nguyễn Hoàng sanctified himself in order to assert the status of “Tiên Chúa”, to establish the prime position in the hearts of Thuận- Quảng people. The name Chúa Tiên Lord clearly showed the close relationship between the Nguyễn Lord and Taoism. The stability and rapid development of Cochinchina in the late sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century marked success of

Nguyễn Hoàng. This is the basis for the national rule guideline to promote its effects in the subsequent stages and the pattern created by the Lord- Chúa Tiên was maintained by his successors.

The Nguyễn Lords used Taoism to admit folk religions and beliefs, through this sacred ritual to declare to the people of the south of Linh Giang that the Nguyễn Lord was the one who followed “Religion” (Đạo), who had the ability to contact deities and the duty to execute “Heavenly destiny” (Thiên mệnh). Nguyễn Phúc Chu proclaimed Quốc Chúa and took the title *Thiên Túng Đạo Nhân*; Nguyễn Phúc Chú proclaimed Ninh Vương and took the title *Vân Tuyền Đạo Nhân*; Nguyễn Phúc Khoát proclaimed Võ Vương and took the title *Từ Tế Đạo Nhân* and *Khánh Hiệt Đạo Nhân*; Nguyễn Phúc Thuận proclaimed Định Vương and took the title *Khánh Phủ Đạo Nhân* and *Khánh Chân Đạo Nhân*.

Only those who believe in Taoism call themselves “Taoists” (Đạo nhân). Obviously, through the form and ritual of proclaiming the title, the heads of the government clearly expressed the goal to establish and maintain the status of Emperor- Heavenly King- Fairy, Saint- Deity (Tiên đế- Thiên Vương- Tiên, Thánh- Thần chủ- Giáo chủ) of the inhabitants in Cochinchina. Through this unification, the Nguyễn Lords could achieve the spiritual life of people. Taoism contributed to gathering people, strengthening and developing Cochinchina.

#### **4. Development of Taoism in the spirit of “three teachings as a harmonious aggregate” and the consolidation of folk beliefs**

The story Nguyễn Hoàng asked the goddess to help to defeat Lập Bạo enemy, Keith W. Taylor stated that “The anecdotes which recorded the meeting between Nguyễn Hoàng and the local deities and setting up places of worship showed the application of a special method of the Vietnamese in establishing legal power in a new place, for the first time in the new southern land”<sup>27</sup>. In fact, during the initial stage of building the career, “the land of Thuận Hóa was just pacified, ... but the inhabitants did not

consent”<sup>28</sup>. The head of the Government awared that the southern land of Linh Giang was a place where gathered many beliefs and religions. To the inhabitants of Cochinchina, co-existence and religious harmony was common behaviour. The urgent issue was achieving a consensus and cohesive community. It couldn't meet the ideological requirements in the new context if they only based on the Taoist philosophy such as “emptiness” (vô vi), “lokottara” (xuất thế). Moreover, Taoism in Cochinchina at that time merged with Confucianism, Buddhism and folk beliefs.

The Nguyễn Lords were obliged to implement the policy on harmony of the three religions with the folk beliefs (Mother worship) in order to build the spiritual foundation for the development of Cochinchina. By the specific policy, the government of Cochinchina focused on developing the Three religions. The Buddhist Temples such as Kính Thiên (in Quảng Bình), Linh Quang, Thiên Tôn and Trảo Trảo Phu Nhân Temple (in Ái Tử region) were built. They played an important role in the spiritual institutions of the châu Hóa region in the early stage of building of the Nguyễn clan.

This successful model was developed to a higher level by Nguyễn Hoàng in Hà Khê hill in the center of Phú Xuân. A complex of worshipping facilities was built in the spirit of “three teachings as a harmonious aggregate”, in which Thiên Mụ Pagoda played a crucial role. Thiên Mụ Pagoda's campus has spaces dedicated to Taoism such as Thiên Vương and Ngọc Hoàng temples. It met the need to worship the Taoist Saints/ deities which were very popular in the religious life of Cochinchina's inhabitants at that time.

In addition, Nguyễn Hoàng was also the first person who successfully acquired the great goddess Po Nagar of the Cham people to create a Taoist Fairy (Heavenly Fairy- Thiên Mụ) and he had a statement about his special role of this land's future. In fact, it became an effective measure to indigenize and legitimize the career of the Nguyễn Lords. This policy brought a great political

significance, Thiên Mụ pagoda was considered as a holy place of Cochinchina since the early seventeenth century. It was a symbol of the harmony of local religions, beliefs, as well as, the respect for the indigenous deities of the Nguyen clan. Taoism was used as a tool to acquire folk religions and beliefs by the heads of Cochinchina's government.

Hà Khê hill was placed in the centre of the Three religions as well as the whole Cochinchina's religion by the heads of the government. Quốc Sử quán of the Nguyễn Dynasty recorded the event that took place in 1606: "Local people said that this hill is very sacred. According to legend, for long time ago, people had saw an old lady in red blouse and blue pants sitting on top of the hill said that: There will be a lord who will come to build a pagoda here, to gather holy air, to strengthen the dragon vein (long mạch). After saying the old woman disappeared. Then, people called Thiên Mụ mountain. The Lord said that the mountain has sacred air and built a pagoda called Thiên Mụ"<sup>29</sup>.

In 1714, Nguyễn Phúc Chu Lord restored Thiên Mụ pagoda, officially arranged Thiên Vương and Ngọc Hoàng temples. The bell Đại hồng casted in 1710 showed the clear presence of Taoism. The bell was decorated with a ring representing of Eight trigrams (Càn, Khảm, Cấn, Chấn, Tốn, Ly, Khôn, Đoài). In addition, it was decorated with swords, lanterns, flutes, two feather pens, wine pots, fan. It clearly showed the influence of Taoism in the spiritual life of Cochinchina's inhabitants during this period, it also expressed the faith of the heads of government for philosophy of Laozi- Zhuangzi.

Thien Mu Pagoda was not the unique case to show the policy of Three religions harmony of the heads of government. Many Buddhist temples were also place for worshipping the deities of Taoism. For example, Thiên Tôn pagoda was built during the reign of Hiền Vương Nguyễn Phúc Tần, it still shows the presence of Taoism. This ancient temple mainly worshiped the Jade Emperor (Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế). The four pillars of the pagoda were inscribed

sentences clearly showing the integration of the Three religions such as “Three religions were originated from the same root”<sup>30</sup>.

In addition, Ông Pagoda (now Thuận Hóa Pagoda, located at 114 Bạch Đằng, Huế City) was built to worship Guan Yu (Quan Công). There are still 4 letters “Trung Nghĩa Chi Tắc”, written by Nguyễn Phúc Chu Lord, issued in 1715 to worship and honor the faithful heroes. The event of moving the capital in 1675 further illustrated the policy of combining the Three religions of Cochinchina’s government: “The Lord moved the palace to Kim Long, worshiped the Heaven, the Earth and the deities, held a great feast to generals and soldiers, and rewarded them, 3-year tax exemption for the people of Châu Chính and people outside the rampart.... People were also happy”<sup>31</sup>.

By the policy of tolerance, harmony of Three religions, the Nguyễn Lords wanted to put the ideology of the Taoist about “emptiness” (vô vi), “lokottara” (xuất thế) in “engagement” in order to achieve the goal of satisfying people and building a spiritual foundation for the inhabitants. In fact, the leaders of Cochinchina were active in relying on the Three religions in combination with folk beliefs to create a new religious institution on the southern land. The consequences of this policy made Taoism gradually developed and deeply affected people’s lives.

### **Conclusion**

Taoism in Cochinchina had a very close association of the Taoist Witchery (Phù thủy), Divinity (Thần tiên) with folk beliefs. This religion had a great influence on the spiritual life of the resident communities. As the head of Cochinchina, the Nguyễn Lords based on the worldview, the human view of Taoism to explain phenomena and solve issues. The Taoist Witchery mainly served praying, worshiping, while the Taoist Divinity was used by the Nguyen Lords for political purposes, building spiritual foundation, gathering people. It can be said that in the process of consolidating and developing Cochinchina, the Nguyen Lords relied on the Three Religions as the

basis of thought to establish a policy on settling the inhabitants and governing the country. In this context, the folk beliefs along with the three religions played an important role for creating the spiritual foundation of the Cochinchina's inhabitants. /.

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**NOTES:**

- 1 Dương Văn An (1997), *Ô Châu Cận Lục*, (Nguyễn Khắc Thuần dịch và hiệu đính), Nxb. Giáo dục, Hà Nội, tr. 100 – 104.
- 2 Dương Văn An (1997), *Ô Châu Cận Lục*, Sđd, tr. 74 – 82.
- 3 Trịnh Hoài Đức (2006), *Gia Định Thành Thông Chí*, Nxb. Giáo dục, Hà Nội, tr. 418.
- 4 Nguyễn Khoa Chiêm (2003) *Nam triều công nghiệp diễn chí*, Nxb. Hội nhà văn, Hà Nội, tr. 503.
- 5 Lê Quý Đôn (1977), *Kiến Văn Tiểu Lục*, Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội, tr. 404.
- 6 Quốc Sử quán triều Nguyễn (2007), *Đại Nam Thực Lục – Tiền Biên*, tập 1, (Nguyễn Ngọc Tinh dịch, Đào Duy Anh hiệu đính), Nxb. Giáo dục, Hà Nội, tr. 98.
- 7 John Borrow (1975), *A Voyage to Cochinchina*, Oxford University Press, tr. 330.
- 8 Li Ta Na (1999), *Xứ Đàng Trong, lịch sử kinh tế xã hội Việt Nam thế kỷ 17 và 18*, (Nguyễn Nghị dịch), Nxb. Trẻ, Hà Nội, tr. 195.
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