TAM GIÁO CHỦ VỌNG
[THE ERRORS OF THE THREE RELIGIONS]

A TEXTUAL AND ANALYTICAL STUDY
OF A CHRISTIAN DOCUMENT
ON THE PRACTICES OF THE THREE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY VIETNAM

A Dissertation
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By

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ABSTRACT

Christianity has held a small but qualitatively significant presence in Vietnam since its arrival in 1533. Yet the knowledge of its early religio-cultural context has been sparse. This study intends to fill that lacuna through an annotated translation and analytical study of a 1752 missionary document entitled *Tam Giáo Chu Vọng* [The Errors of the Three Religions].

This recently discovered anonymous manuscript, written in the Romanized script, paints a rich picture of the pre-modern beliefs and religious practices of Vietnamese *tam giáo* (the three religions, i.e., Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism). It evaluates not only the main teachings of the *tam giáo*, but also their many religious practices and rituals, especially on funeral rites and ancestor worship. In addition, it provides a trove of information on the challenges and struggles that the Christian converts had to face as they adapted themselves to the Vietnamese religious scene.

*Tam Giáo Chu Vọng* complements other writings written before or during the same period such as Matteo Ricci’s *Tianzhu Shiyi* (1603), Alexandre de Rhodes's
Cathechismus in octo dies divisus (1651), Adriano di Santa Thecla’s Opusculum de sectis (1750), the anonymous Phép Giảng Đạo Thật (1758), and Hội Đồng Tứ Giáo (ca. 1800). To obtain a fuller picture of the tam giáo and of Vietnamese Christianity, a comparison between these texts and our manuscript will be carried out.

While possibly offensive and outdated to the modern ear, Tam Giáo Chư Vọng provides a critical evaluation of Vietnamese religious beliefs, rituals and customs, some of which are still practiced today. Further examined is how eighteenth-century Christians perceived the followers of other religions, particularly how a Christian writer understood and evaluated non-Christian religions.

This study of the interaction between Christianity and the tam giáo sheds light on religious pluralism, inculturation, and interreligious dialogue — an ongoing struggle in all the countries of East Asia where Christianity must dialogue with Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism.
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Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam

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Second, I would like to acknowledge the help of many individuals who have provided me access to archaic and valuable materials for my research. Dr. Antoine Tran Van Toan, emeritus professor of the Catholic University of Lille in France, introduced me to the text of Tam Giáo Chư Vọng. The curator of the archives of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (AMEP) Fr. Gérard Moussay and his assistant Mme. Brigitte Appavou helped me access the manuscript of the text and related materials. Special thanks to the director of the Woodstock Library, Fr. Leon Hooper, and his associates, who provided me with a haven for favorable condition for research and writing.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 1
  Objective of the Study ................................................................................................. 3
  Review of Literature ................................................................................................. 4
  Contribution of the Work .......................................................................................... 9
  Structure of the Study ............................................................................................... 11

**Part I: The World Behind the Text**

**Chapter I: Tonkin in the Eighteenth Century** ............................................................... 15

The Land and Its History ............................................................................................ 16
  The Formation of Tonkin ......................................................................................... 16
  The Social and Political Setting of Tonkin ............................................................ 19
  Early Western Contacts with Tonkin ...................................................................... 21

The Religions of Tonkin ............................................................................................... 25
  Cult of the Spirits, Heaven, and the Ancestors ....................................................... 27
  The Import of Chinese Traditions ......................................................................... 30
  The Triple Religion in the Eighteenth Century ....................................................... 44

Conclusion ................................................................................................................... 49

**Chapter II: Christianity in Tonkin Under the Lê--Trịnh Era (1533-1786) .............. 51**

The Development of the Vietnamese Church ............................................................ 51
  Early Jesuit Mission in Tonkin ................................................................................ 52
  French Missionaries and the Establishment of the Vicariates in Annam ............ 55
  Dominican and Augustinian Missions ................................................................... 57

Reception of Christianity in Tonkin ............................................................................ 60
  Social Impacts of Christianity ................................................................................. 60
  Relationship with the Ruling Authority .................................................................... 63
  Confucianism versus Christianity .......................................................................... 67

The Chinese Rites Controversy ................................................................................... 69
  The China Mission and Jesuit Accommodation .................................................... 70
  Caught Between Church and State Politics .......................................................... 75
  The Rites Controversy in Vietnam ......................................................................... 82
Chapter III: The Errors of The Three Religions: Its Theological Genre and Its Forerunners in East Asia ........................................ 89

Apologetics as a Theological Genre .................................................. 89
  Early Apologetics: A Struggle for Identity ....................................... 91
  Apologetics and Catechism ................................................................. 94
  Faith and Reason ............................................................................ 96
  Defending the True Faith ................................................................. 98

Catechetical and Apologetic Works in East Asia .................................. 100
  In Japan ......................................................................................... 101
  In China ......................................................................................... 104

Predecessors of The Errors of the Three Religions ................................ 108
  Matteo Ricci’s Tianzhu Shiyi .............................................................. 108
  Alexandre de Rhodes’s Cathechismus in Octo Dies Divisus .................. 116

Conclusion ......................................................................................... 122

PART II: The World of the Text

Chapter IV: The Errors of the Three Religions: Structure – History – Method ................................................................. 124

Structure .......................................................................................... 124
  The Manuscript ............................................................................... 124
  Structure and Content .................................................................. 127

History .............................................................................................. 128
  Date and authorship ...................................................................... 128
  Adriano di Santa Thecla’s Opusculum ............................................. 132
  The Complex Relationship Between ETR and Opusculum ............... 135
  A Hypothesis of Authorship .......................................................... 141

Method .............................................................................................. 143
  Genre and Intended Audience .................................................... 143
  The Use of Chinese and Vietnamese Materials ............................... 147
  Christian Sources .......................................................................... 148
  The Approach of ETR .................................................................. 151
Chapter V: The Cosmological Dimension: Interpretations on the Origins of the World

The Origin of the World According to Chinese Philosophy
- From Antiquity to the Classical Era
- The Daoist Contribution
- Neo-Confucian Cosmogony

Concepts of the Divine in Chinese Thought
- Sovereign-on-High
- Heaven

A Christian Evaluation of Confucian Cosmogony
- Chinese God, Christian God

Creation Myths in the Chinese and Vietnamese Traditions
- A Vietnamese Myth
- Chinese Myths
- A “Buddhist” Creation Account

Conclusion

Chapter VI: The Cultic Expressions of Religion: Worship in Traditional Vietnam

An Overview of Vietnamese Worship

Imperial Cults
- Sacrifices to Heaven and Earth
- Sacrifices to the Divine Farmer and Other Spirits

Other Official Sacrifices
- Cult of Confucius
- Rituals of the Military

Worship in the Villages
- The Ranking of the Spirits
- The Cult of the Tutelary Genies
Domestic Cults ................................................................. 229
  The Stove Genie ................................................................. 229
  The Household Genie ............................................................. 231
  The Primary Teacher ............................................................. 232

Religious Cults ................................................................. 233
  Liễu Hạnh and the Mother Goddess Cult .................................. 234
  Cult of Quan Âm (Avalokiteśvara) ........................................ 237
  Cult of the Jade Emperor ....................................................... 239

A Christian Evaluation of Traditional Worship .................................. 241

Conclusion ........................................................................... 242

Chapter VII: The Social Dimension of Religion:
The Cult of Ancestors in Traditional Vietnam .................................. 244

Theoretical Understanding ........................................................ 245
  Fundamental Characteristics .................................................... 245
  A Display of Confucian Filial Piety .......................................... 248
  Concepts of the Soul and the Afterlife ...................................... 251

The Ancestral Rites in Practice .................................................. 254
  Traditional Funeral Rites and Memorials .................................. 255
  Other Customs Associated with the Funeral Practices .................. 267

Popular Buddhism and the Afterlife ............................................ 273
  The Doctrine of Transmigration .............................................. 274
  Buddhist Hell ......................................................................... 276
  The Buddha’s Land .................................................................. 278

A Christian Interpretation of the Cult of the Ancestors ...................... 281
  Christian Concept of the Human Person .................................... 283
  Catholic and the Cult of the Ancestors in Practice ...................... 286

Conclusion ........................................................................... 288

PART III: The Legacy of the Text

Chapter VIII: Refutation and Dialogue:
The Reception of The Errors of the Three Religions ................................ 290
The Historical Context of Catholic Apologetics in the Nineteenth-Century .......... 291

*Treatise of the True Religions* (1758) ................................................................. 294
  Background of the text ................................................................. 294
  Refutation of False Beliefs .............................................................. 298
  The Relationship between *ETR* and *Treatise* ........................................ 306

*Conference of the Four Religions* (ca. 1780-1840) ......................................... 306
  Background of the Text ................................................................. 307
  A Defense of Christianity ............................................................... 310
  The Influence of *ETR* on Conference ................................................ 316

*Distinguishing Falsehood from Truth in Four Volumes* (1864) ......................... 318
  Structure and Content ................................................................. 319
  *ETR* and Distinguishing .............................................................. 325

Conclusion ......................................................................................... 325

Chapter IX: Christianity and the Other Religions:
An Evaluation of *The Errors of the Three Religions* ..................................... 327

Theological Message of *ETR* ................................................................... 327
  Erroneous Beliefs ............................................................................ 328
  Idolatry ......................................................................................... 331
  Superstitions .................................................................................. 334

Christianity and the Traditional Religions of Vietnam ...................................... 336
  Christianity and the Other Religions .................................................. 336
  A Christian View of the Vietnamese Religions ....................................... 339

A Contemporary Assessment of *ETR* ......................................................... 349
  Contributions .................................................................................. 350
  Limitations ...................................................................................... 353

*ETR* and Inculturation .......................................................................... 356

Conclusion ......................................................................................... 359

Epilogue ............................................................................................... 362

Part IV: An Annotated Translation of *Tam Giáo Chủ Vọng* ............................. 364
ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. The First Page of the Text *Tam Giáo Chư Vọng*................................. 14
ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMEP</td>
<td>Archives de la Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEFEO</td>
<td>Bulletin de l’École Française d’Extrême-Orient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathechismus</td>
<td><em>Cathechismus pro ijs qui volunt recipere baptismus in octo dies divisus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>The Conference of the Four Religions (Hội Đồng Tứ Giáo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cựu Mục</td>
<td>Khâm Định Việt Sử Thông Giám Cựu Mục</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETR</td>
<td>The Errors of the Three Religions (Tam Giáo Chư Vọng)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opusculum</td>
<td><em>Opusculum de sectis apud Sinenses et Tunkinenses</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toàn Thư</td>
<td>Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True Meaning</td>
<td>The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (Tianzhu Shiyi)</td>
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INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in the sixteenth century, Christianity has been a minor but significant religion in Vietnam. During the first three centuries of its presence, however, the Catholic Church in Vietnam was largely shaped by the experience of being a marginalized and persecuted community. More than the result of a concern for national security, the suppression of Christianity by various Vietnamese rulers between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries represented a clash of culture and ideology between the Vietnamese converts and their fellow citizens. A study of Vietnamese religions of this period is thus essential to understand the nature of thus cultural and religious conflict. Yet the scholarly study of Christian mission in Vietnam has generally neglected the religious and cultural context in which Vietnamese Christianity has emerged. Compared to the scholarly attention given to the Christian encounters with the religious cultures of China and Japan, little has been written on a similar encounter and interactions between Christianity and the indigenous religions of Vietnam.

For almost two millennia the dominant ideology in pre-modern Vietnam (i.e., before the twentieth century) was influenced by the three religious traditions or tam giáo — Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, collectively known as the “triple tradition.” Thus, any serious attempt to understand the history of Christian development in Vietnam must take into account this religious background. While a comparative study of Chinese
Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism can shed light on Vietnamese *tam gião*, it is insufficient to describe Vietnamese religious culture through Chinese religio-philosophical texts. Historians of traditional Vietnam have worked on the assumption that the cultural and religious heritage of the country is an extension of imperial China. Social customs, philosophy, and religion in pre-modern Vietnam were perceived as “copies” of Chinese institutions of the Han, Tang, Song, Ming and Qing dynasties. The conflation of China and North Vietnam was also carried over in ecclesiastical policies. During the nearly 100-year debates on the Chinese Rites Controversy (1645-1742), many religious practices of Tonkin (North Vietnam) were cited as examples of Chinese superstitions by those who opposed the Jesuit method of evangelization.

The observation is partially correct. After almost two millennia of Chinese influence, it is difficult to distinguish between the cultural and religious elements that are native to Vietnam and those borrowed from China. Nevertheless, not everything in China was mirrored in Vietnam. As the Vietnamese people appropriated religious teachings and practices from China, they also developed their own version of *tam gião*.

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3 This refers to the dispute within the Catholic Church between the Jesuits and their opponents on whether the traditional forms of worship in China were idolatrous. After many ambiguous rulings by the Holy See, in 1742, Pope Benedict XIV issued a final decree prohibiting performance of the rites to Confucius and to the ancestors, among others, by Chinese Catholics. Subsequently, the ruling reduced the Catholic missionary activity in China. This controversy also affected Japanese, Vietnamese, and Korean Catholics until the twentieth century, when the Holy See reversed its decision in 1939. I will discuss this further in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

4 See the footnotes attached to the 1704 and 1715 papal pronouncements regarding the Chinese Rites.
Unfortunately, studies of Vietnamese *tam giáo* are few and far between. Scholars who want to study the Vietnamese religious heritage have little material at their disposal.

**Objective of the Study**

This research intends to fill some of the gaps of scholarship in traditional Vietnamese religious heritage by translating, annotating, and evaluating a 1752 manuscript entitled *Tam Giáo Chu Vọng* [The Errors of the Three Religions]. The text is important for the study of Vietnamese traditional culture and religions because it provides a rare window into Vietnam’s past. However, *Tam Giáo Chu Vọng* is not a survey of Vietnamese religions in general, but rather a particular presentation of the interaction between Catholic Christianity\(^5\) and the three religious traditions of Vietnam in Tonkin during the eighteenth century. Readers should not rush to conclusions about the past or present religious situation of Vietnam based on the text alone, without a deeper understanding of the author’s motivation and circumstances.

A close reading of this particular Christian text in its historical and cultural contexts will present a limited but valuable case study of Vietnamese religious practices in the eighteenth century. My dissertation portrays a missionary view of the Vietnamese religions, especially their practices and rituals, and in this context, of the religious challenges that Vietnamese converts had to face as they sought to establish their Christian

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\(^5\) In this dissertation, the word Christian will be used to refer to the whole Christian tradition, whereas Catholic is restricted to the Catholic Church, its doctrines and practices. Before the twentieth century, Christianity in Vietnam was identified with Catholicism.
identity within their social interactions. To understand the history of Christian missions in Vietnam within its cultural and religious context, the descriptions of religious beliefs and rituals provided by *Tam Giáo Chư Vọng* are a valuable source to complement standard accounts of Vietnamese religious culture.

**Review of Literature**

Compared to the great textual resources on China, Japan, and Korea, the studies of Vietnam’s cultural and religious heritages are rare. Most of the standard works on the traditional customs and religions of Vietnam were products of French or Vietnamese scholarship supported by the École Française d’Extrême-Orient in the first half of the twentieth century. In particular, Léopold Cadière, Gustave Dumoutier, Maurice Durand, Tran Van Giap, and Nguyen Van Huyen, to name but a few, have contributed to the knowledge of Vietnamese cultures and religions. Among these scholars, the missionary and anthropologist Léopold Cadière (1869-1955) deserves special attention. His research on the religions and customs of Vietnam in the imperial capital Huế and its

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vicinity carried out between 1901 and 1920 was published in a series of articles reprinted in *Croyances et pratiques religieuses des Viêtnamiens* (3 vols, 1944-1956). A prolific writer, Cadière possessed an extensive knowledge of traditional Vietnam that remains unsurpassed. He was the author of more than 250 articles and monographs on Vietnamese language, customs, family, culture, philosophy, religion, history, archaeology, geography, botany, education, and arts.11

Whereas these early researchers provided valuable data on the traditional cultural and religious life of the Vietnamese, scholars of the next generation turned their attention elsewhere. From the 1950s to the 1980s, Western researchers on Vietnam focused on the political and economic affairs of contemporary Vietnam rather than on its past. The majority of Vietnamese scholars during this period followed a similar path. Few serious works on traditional religions were produced during this period. During the Vietnam War, scholars in North Vietnam were more concerned with the Marxist view of history. Traditional Vietnamese religions were judged to be “feudalistic superstitions” impeding socialist progress. In South Vietnam, nationalist sentiment prompted Vietnamese scholars to document traditional cultural and religious heritage to help combat what they saw as the cultural threat from the West’s increasing influence. Writers such as Nguyễn Đăng Thục,12 Toan Ánh13 or Kim Định,14 though not professionally trained as were the

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11 Most of his writings were published in the *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue* (1914-1944) and other leading journals in Vietnam and Europe. For a complete bibliography of Cadière, see Đỗ Trịnh Huệ, Văn hoá, Tôn giáo, Tín ngưỡng Việt Nam dưới nhận quan họa L. Cadière [Views from the scholar L. Cadière on Vietnamese culture, religion and belief] (Huế: NXB Thuận Hóa), 23-65.

12 Nguyễn Đăng Thục (1909-1999), a professor of literature at University of Saigon and Buddhist University of Văn Hạnh, was known for his multi-volume works Lịch Sử Triết Học Đông Phương [A History of Eastern Philosophical Thought] (Saigon, 1956-1964) and Lịch Sử Tư Tưởng Việt Nam [History
scholars of the colonial period, produced influential works on Vietnamese thought, culture, and religions.

Recent times have seen a renewed interest in traditional Vietnamese religions. In 1981, Joseph Nguyen Huy-Lai published *La tradition religieuse, spirituelle et sociale au Viêtnam*, the first major study of Vietnamese religions since Cadière’s. \(^\text{15}\) Nguyen Huy-Lai’s survey of Vietnamese religions, written from a theological viewpoint, aims to demonstrate that many teachings of the traditional *tam giáo* were — and even today continue to be — compatible with the Christian faith and that the religious, spiritual and social traditions of Vietnam have been fertile ground for Christian evangelization. No such work has appeared in English, however.

In the last two decades, other important studies in English have focused on particular aspects of Vietnamese religions. These include Cuong Tu Nguyen’s *Zen in Medieval Vietnam: A Study and Translation of the Thiền Uyên Tập Anh* (1997), an important textual study of medieval Vietnamese Buddhism; \(^\text{16}\) Thien Do’s *Vietnamese on Vietnamese Thought* (Saigon, 1967-1973). His writings in English include *Democracy in Traditional Vietnamese Society* (Saigon: Bộ Giáo Dục, 1962), *Asian Culture and Vietnamese Humanism* (Saigon: Hội Văn Hóa Á Châu, 1965).

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13 Toan Ánh or Nguyễn Anh Toán (1916-2009) was a Vietnamese cultural writer. Between 1958 and 1974, he published extensively in the field of traditional customs, cultures, and religions.

14 Kim Đình or Lương Kim Đình (1915-1997) was a priest and professor of Eastern philosophy at the University of Saigon. Considered by many as a prominent Vietnamese philosopher, he has also published extensively on cultural and religious traditions in Vietnam.


Fortunately, a 1750 description of traditional Vietnamese religions has recently been made available. This work, written in Latin by the Augustinian missionary Adriano

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20 Olga Dror, Cult, Culture and Authority: Princess Liễu Hạnh in Vietnamese History (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007).
di Santa Thecla titled *Opusculum de sectis apud Sinenses et Tonkinenses* [A Small 
Treatise on the Sects among the Chinese and Tonkinese] (henceforth, *Opusculum*), was 
translated and introduced by Olga Dror in 2002. The work has been praised by scholars 
of Asian studies as “important” (Keith Taylor) and “rare and remarkable” (Lionel 
Jensen). Dror meticulously translated and annotated this obscure Latin manuscript from 
the Archives of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (AMEP) to bring to light the state of 
Vietnamese religions in mid-eighteenth century Tonkin.

I encountered Dror’s annotated translation while working on a later eighteenth- or 
early nineteenth-century religious text entitled *Hội Đồng Tứ Giáo* [Conference of the 
Four Religions] (henceforth, *Conference*). As I was working through the text, I noticed 
similarities among many arguments and issues raised by *Opusculum* and *Conference*, but 
the styles of writing and the usages of classical texts are quite different. Since the former 
work was written in Latin and the latter in the demotic Vietnamese script (*chữ Nôm*), I 
suspected that the author of *Conference* might have relied on other documents in Chinese 
or Vietnamese for his information.

22 AMEP, Vol. 667.
With the help of an emeritus professor in France, Dr. Antoine Trần Văn Toàn, I had the opportunity to examine the manuscript Tam Giáo Chư Vọng [The Errors of the Three Religions] from the same archive in which Dror discovered Opusculum. Upon reading it, I suspected that it might be the Vietnamese source of Conference since the literary affinity between Tam Giáo chư Vọng and Opusculum is remarkable. Both texts identify their authors as Italian missionaries evangelizing in East Tonkin.

**Importance of The Errors of the Three Religions**

*The Errors of the Three Religions* (henceforth, *ETR*) is written in Romanized Vietnamese script (*chữ Quốc-ngữ*) describing the ―errors‖ of the traditional religious practices from a missionary view. Although the title of this text refers to the ―errors‖ of the “Three Religions,” the work as such is not a systematic evaluation of the Three Religions, nor do its treatments of Confucian, Daoist or Buddhist doctrines or practices go into any depth. Rather the author focuses only on the beliefs and practices that he considers harmful to Christian life. Viewed from this perspective, the work is limited in scope and application. Nevertheless, it helps explain the attitude of the missionaries in Vietnam toward certain religious beliefs and practices that were considered incompatible with Christianity.

As elsewhere in East Asia, the encounter of Christianity with the native culture and religions of Vietnam has not always been amicable. Christianity is often considered

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26 AMEP, Vol. 1098.
foreign to — and by extension, incompatible with — the Vietnamese culture. In *ETR*, the author strives to show that the so-called “native” religions of Vietnam are in fact Chinese imports, and thus they are no more legitimate than Christianity when it comes to the question of compatibility with the minds and hearts of the Vietnamese people.

In the absence of other comparable works, *ETR* and its companion *Opusculum* can be considered the most informative source on Vietnamese religious customs of the eighteenth century. Taken together, they are the first extant systematic treatment of the Vietnamese religious heritage. Whereas the discussion on Vietnamese beliefs, rituals, and worship in other missionary reports or travelogues are, for the most part, cursory and dismissive, *ETR* and *Opusculum* elaborate and supply the details that other descriptions of Vietnamese religions glossed over. In the aftermath of the Chinese Rites Controversy, they served as handbooks to explain to Christian converts why certain beliefs and practices of their fellow Vietnamese were incompatible with the Christian faith.

This dissertation will complement existing studies on the encounter of Vietnamese religions in Christian writings, such as Peter Phan’s *Mission and Catechesis* (1998),27 Olga Dror’s translation of Adriano di Santa Thecla’s *Opusculum de sectis* (2002), and my study on *Hội Đồng Tứ Giáo* (2006). The translation, annotation, analysis, and evaluation of an important, hitherto neglected, manuscript — *Tam Giáo Chư Vọng* — will be a valuable addition to the corpus of important texts that describe the Christian perception of Vietnamese religious traditions from first-hand observations. By making available, for the first time in English, an annotated translation of what I consider

a rare manuscript of the history of Vietnamese Christianity, I hope to encourage the reader to do further studies on similar subjects. Finally, for those interested in Vietnamese religious vocabulary and eighteenth-century romanized Vietnamese script (chữ Quốc-ngữ), my annotations on the Vietnamese language of the manuscript may prove helpful.

Structure of the Study

As the study aims to be a close reading of the text, the main methodological approach of this dissertation is to make use of the hermeneutic tools commonly used in biblical and textual studies. Through the historical critical method the text will be studied in its historical, cultural and literary context. As a study of “text in context” I rely primarily on primary sources to retrace and understand the issues. These sources can be in the form of historical annals, philosophical and religious writings, travel accounts, folk literature, ancient legal codes and ritual manuals. Particular attention will be paid to sources that pre-date the twentieth century, when the cultural and religious situation of Vietnam had not changed much from the past.

Involving both a study and a translation of the text, the dissertation is divided in several parts. The first part covers the social-historical, religious, and literary background of ETR. Chapter One focuses on the historical, political, and religious background of Tonkin in the eighteenth century including a survey of the historical development of the Three Religions. Chapter Two considers the Christian presence in
Tonkin and its interaction with traditional Vietnamese culture. The ecclesial context of the Chinese Rites Controversy and its effects in Vietnam are also discussed. Chapter Three examines the literary background of the text by situating it within the tradition of Christian apologetics and catechism. Special attention is paid to contributions of the Christian texts written for the East Asian audience, such as the works by Francis Xavier, Matteo Ricci, and Alexandre de Rhodes.

The second part investigates the text and the issues raised by it. Since many of the beliefs and rituals described belong to popular religiosity, the “errors” will not be analyzed according to the three-fold division of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Rather, after a preliminary presentation of the text, I will take three themes that appear to be basic to the text and analyze them accordingly. Chapter Four discusses the history of composition, structure, content, and approach of ETR as well as its relationship to Opusculum. The influences of Ricci’s and de Rhodes’s catechisms on ETR are also noted. Chapter Five deals with the question of the origin of the cosmos from the Neo-Confucian philosophy as well as from popular legends. A comparative concept of God in the Chinese/Vietnamese and Christian tradition is discussed. Chapter Six examines cultic practices in traditional Vietnam, including the worship of Heaven, nature, spirits, heroes and religious figures in public cults as well as private devotions. Chapter Seven deals with concerns of the afterlife and the cult of the dead according to both Confucian and Buddhist traditions. The Christian practice of ancestor veneration is also presented.

In the third part, I will evaluate the text from a contemporary perspective. Chapter Eight traces the influence of ETR on later Vietnamese Christian texts of the late
eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chapter Nine appraises the legacy of *ETR* to the understanding of the nature of Vietnamese religions. The significance and limitation of the work in light of contemporary interreligious dialogue and theology of religions is also discussed.

The final part contains an annotated translation of the text, a critical transcription of the manuscript, and finally several tables and glossaries.
Figure 1. The First Page of the Text *Tam Giáo Chư Vọng*
PART ONE: THE WORLD BEHIND THE TEXT

CHAPTER ONE

TONKIN IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

During the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, Vietnam was politically divided into two principalities. The northern part was known as Đàng Ngoài [Outer Region] or Tonkin; and the southern part was known as Đàng Trong [Inner Region] or Cochinchina. Although it is necessary to study both Tonkin and Cochinchina as a whole to understand the religious sentiments of pre-modern Vietnam, there are enough differences between the cultures, customs, and politics between the two parts of Annam (Vietnam) during the seventeenth and eighteenth century to warrant a more focused

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28 Variously spelt as Cochimchina, Chochimcina, Caucichina, and so forth, the name seems to derive from the old name of the country ―Giao Chỉ‖ or Kochi in Japanese. The land includes Central Vietnam and the Cochinchine of the French Indochina. For a recent discussion on the name, see Olga Dror and Keith Taylor, Views from the Seventeenth-Century Vietnam (Ithaca, NY: Cornell-SEAP, 2007), 15-19.

29 Vietnam, literally “the Viet of the South,” is the name given to the country by Emperor Gia Long (r. 1802-1820), and it has only been used officially since 1945. The country has been known by different names during its long history. According to Vietnamese historical accounts, the early settlers of Vietnam belonged to the Lạc tribes and formed a chiefdom called Văn Lang [land of the tattooed] in the first millennium before the Common Era. Around the third century CE, the Âu Việt from Western Ling-nan (modern Sichuan), moved southward and fused with the Lạc Việt to form the kingdom of Âu Lạc. This kingdom was annexed by the Qin general Zhao Tuo (Triệu Đà) in 208 BCE into his territory of Nan Yue, forming a kingdom that spread from Guangdong and Guangxi to North Vietnam. In the first century CE, the Han administrators named the two districts of North Vietnam: Jiaozhi (Red River Delta) and Jiuzhen (North Central Vietnam). In the third century CE, the two districts were joined together and renamed Jiaozhou. Eventually it was renamed the prefecture Annam [Pacified South] under the Tang dynasty. After the independence from China in 939 CE, Vietnamese rulers named the country Đại Cồ Việt [Great and Large Viet]. From the eleventh century to the end of eighteenth century, the name Đại Việt [Great Viet] was used internally by Vietnamese, while the name Annam [Pacified South] was frequently adopted.
treatment on the northern part of the country which is the immediate context of *The Errors of Three Religions*. This chapter, therefore, focuses on the socio-political and religious situation of Tonkin. The history of Christianity and its interaction with the Vietnamese religious culture in Tonkin will be considered in the next chapter.

### The Land and Its History

#### The Formation of Tonkin

After his victory against the Ming occupation (1407-1427), Lê Lợi founded the [Latter] Lê dynasty, which nominally lasted for 350 years (1428-1788). The Lê dynasty reached its climax in the middle of the fifteenth century under the rule of King Lê Thánh Tông. During his long reign, Đại Việt developed into a strong state and defeated its

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31 Lê Thánh Tông (1442-1497), the most prominent king of the Lê dynasty, ruled Đại Việt from 1460 to 1497. During his reign, there were a number of important achievements such as the organization of government along Confucian principles, the conquest of Champa, the drawing of a map of the country, the composition of an official historical record, and the promulgation of a set of laws called the Lê Code.

32 In this study, I will use “Đại Việt” and “Annam” interchangeably to designate the pre-modern Vietnam. Specifically, Đại Việt refers to Vietnam from the eleventh to the sixteenth century; Annam is used for the period between the seventh and tenth centuries in relations with China, and again in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in relations with the West. In terms of its people, culture and language, the term “Vietnamese” is used here to designate those elements which belong to the dominant ethnic group – the Kinh – although there has been more than one ethnic group living in the country since its founding.
southern neighbor, the kingdom Champa in 1471, annexing most of its territory. His successors, however, were weak and incompetent rulers. Consequently, power fell into the hands of General Mạc Đăng Dung, who usurped the throne in 1527 and formed the Mạc dynasty (1527-1592). Forces loyal to the Lê regrouped in Thanh Hóa, the homeland of Lê Lợi, under the leadership of General Nguyễn Kim and his son-in-law Trịnh Kiểm. In 1533 they rose up against the Mạc to restore the Lê dynasty. During the war against the Mạc, the Lê loyalists named their headquarter Tây Đô [the Western Capital] and named the capital of the Mạc kingdom Đông Đô or Đông Kinh [the Eastern Capital].

A descendant of the Lê was placed on the throne, but power was actually in the hands of the generals. After the death of Nguyễn Kim in 1548, Trịnh Kiểm assumed total control over the army. Nguyễn Kim’s younger son Nguyễn Hoàng, fearing that Trịnh Kiểm might kill him to secure power, asked to be sent to Thuận Hoá, the southernmost province of Đại Việt. While Trịnh Kiểm and his son Trịnh Tùng were busy fighting the Mạc, Nguyễn Hoàng used his administrative skills to build his own domain, which eventually became Cochinchina.34

After a series of military campaigns, the Trịnh succeeded in capturing Thăng Long in 1592 and killed the king of the Mạc. Survivors of the Mạc retreated to Cao

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Bằng, the uppermost province of North Vietnam, while the Trịnh gained control of the rest of the country. As the Trịnh grew more powerful, they set up a governing system in which the king had only a ceremonial function. Calling themselves “lord” or “prince” (officially Vương, popularly Chúa), the Trịnh assumed control over all practical matters from military to economic and political affairs. They became the de facto hereditary rulers of the country.

When the Trịnh turned their ambition toward the south, the Nguyễn refused to relinquish their control of the territory. In 1600, Nguyễn Hoàng moved his capital to Phú Xuân (Huế), declared himself “lord,” and refused to send money or soldiers to help the Trịnh. Because Nguyễn Hoàng’s son, Nguyễn Phúc Nguyên, repeatedly refused to pay tribute, Trịnh Tráng led 150,000 troops in a military campaign against him in 1627. Although the Trịnh had a much larger army and were supported by a stronger economy, they were unable to destroy the Nguyễn, who by this time had built strong defensive walls and had access to Portuguese artillery. After seven failed military expeditions against the Nguyễn between 1627 and 1672, the Trịnh gave up their drive to take control of the South. Both sides declared a ceasefire, taking the Gianh River as their borders.

The Đàng Ngoài [Outer Region] or Tonkin was governed by the Lê-Trịnh, while the Đàng Trong [Inner Region] or Cochinchina was governed by the Nguyễn with nominal recognition by the king. For the next hundred years, the Trịnh and the Nguyễn

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35 With the help of the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Mạc survived until 1667, when their territory was annexed by China.

36 While most contemporary Western sources see Tonkin and Cochinchina of the seventeenth and eighteenth century as two kingdoms, the dynastic history Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư still treats Cochinchina
maintained a peace accord and concentrated on developing their respective territories.
The country known to the outside world as Annam now existed as two political entities: Tonkin and Cochinchina.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{The Social and Political Setting of Tonkin}

In 1599, Trịnh Tùng forced the king to confer upon him the title Đô Nguyên Soái Tổng Quốc Chính [Military Chief and General Governor], which enabled him to officially run the country as a viceroy.\textsuperscript{38} He set up a parallel court and appointed his own ministers. While the king and his officials continued to be in charge of matters regarding foreign relations, rituals, and education, the lord and his ministers controlled the military, trade, taxation, and the economy. The Trịnh also had the power to “recommend” people for offices and even determine who would succeed to the throne. To secure their power, the Trịnh placed their military officials in governing positions of important prefectures, except in the capital and the Cochininese prefectures of Thuận Hóa and Quảng Nam,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item In a 1651 map by the Jesuit missionary Alexandre de Rhodes, seven “provinces” of Tonkin are recorded: Ketay (Sơn Tây), Kebac (Kinh Bác), Kedom (Hải Dương), Kenam (Son Nam), Thinhoa (Thanh Hoá), Nghean (Nghệ An) and Bochinh (Bố Chính). The territory of Cochinchina includes Quambil (Quảng Bình), Thoanoa (Thuận Hóa), Chiam (Quảng Nam), Quamghia (Quảng Ngãi), Quinhin (Qui Nhơn), Ranran (Nha Trang). See the map in Peter Phan, \textit{Mission and Catechesis}, 37.

\item Toàn Thư, bàn kí, XVII: 72b-73a (Chapter XVII, pages 72b to 73a). The citation of \textit{Toàn Thư} follows the pagination of the 1697 Chính Hoà edition, which was translated into modern Vietnamese in the 1960s and published in many different editions.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
which were still nominally under the governance of the king. This was the Tonkin that appeared in Western accounts, governed by one *Vua* [king] and one *Chúa* [lord].

In the 1660s, the Trịnh also adopted a number of economic reforms, such as creating trade networks, encouraging foreign trade, producing currency, and standardizing measurement units. The long era of peace after 1672 allowed the Trịnh to focus on advancing agricultural production and commercial activity. Sections of Thăng Long were planned for commercial purposes, earning the capital the nickname Kế Chợ [the market place]. In education, they established printing shops to reduce the import of printed materials from China, organized regular civil exams, and compiled history and geographical books.

By the first decade of the eighteenth century, however, the Trịnh began to lose the confidence of the peasants who formed the majority of the population. The Trịnh clans and their subjects were granted too many favors, especially in matters of local taxes, distribution of land and promotion of officials. The gap between landless peasants and land owners was widened. Meanwhile, between 1727 and 1730, Tonkin suffered a series of droughts and floods that resulted in the loss of crops and widespread famine. In addition, Trịnh Giang (r. 1729-40) spent all his energy building elaborate recreational palaces, which required much money and labor. Consequently, high taxation, costly

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39 The words *Vua* and *Chúa* are often left not translated in these accounts. Different spellings include: *Bova* and *Chova*, *Boua* and *Choua*, *Bua* and *Chua*, etc.

40 On 17th and 18th-century maps drawn by Westerners, the name is variously spelled as Chece, Ketcho, or Cacho.

41 Examples are *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư*, originally by Ngô Sĩ Liên, updated by Vũ Quỳnh and Lê Hy (1697), *Đại Việt Thông Sử, Phú Biên Tập Lục* (1776), and *Kiến Văn Tiểu Lục* (1777) all by Lê Quý Đôn.
public works, and corruption broke the back of the peasants. A series of rural uprisings against the Trịnh took place across Tonkin, with dissatisfaction was rampant in all sectors of the population: peasants, officers, even the aristocracy. These uprisings — which began in the 1730s, peaked in the 1740s and persisted through the 1760s — were costly for the Trịnh to subdue.⁴² Although all rebellions were brutally suppressed by Trịnh military forces, they left Tonkin in disarray. Eventually the Trịnh fell from power when the Tây Sơn army from the south attacked them in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.⁴³

Early Western Contacts with Tonkin

Portuguese explorers and traders seemed to know about Đại Việt in the early sixteenth century. Maps made by Portuguese cartographers in 1512, 1519, 1527, 1529, and 1535 show the coasts of Central Vietnam and Champa. Duarte Coelho was one of the early explorers who set foot in Pulaucambi (Cù Lao Chàm) off the coast of Central Vietnam. He allegedly left a stone cross there in 1540. By the middle of the sixteenth century, Portuguese traders in Macau had already made contact with the court of Tonkin. King Mạc Mậu Hợp made several attempts at purchasing firearms from the Portuguese to fight against the Trịnh (but the goods did not arrive on time.) By the 1600s, Phồ Hiền

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⁴² Among a dozen uprisings, several are worth mentioning: one led by Nguyễn Đình Dung lasted from 1727 to 1739; another led by Hoàng Công Chất lasted from 1727 to 1754; the third, led by Nguyễn Hữu Cầu lasted from 1735 to 1751; and Lê Duy Mật, a member of the nobility, led a rebellion that lasted from 1738 to 1770.

was a bustling port for Chinese junks and Portuguese ships. Kẻ Chợ (Thăng Long) became the second port in Tonkin. The Portuguese traded with both Tonkin and Cochinchina. In the South, they set up commercial exchanges with the Nguyễn at the ports of Faifo (Hội An) and Cửa H.port (Tourane). To avoid direct pressure from the lords from both sides, the Portuguese used local Japanese and Chinese traders to run their business, sometimes under the supervision of missionaries.44

The prohibition of Japanese trade under Tokugawa shoguns created a vacuum in international trading in Southeast Asia that soon was filled by other rising Western powers — the Dutch and the British. From their base in Java, the Dutch first came to Cochinchina before they traded with Tonkin in the early 1620s. By 1632 they moved their trading office from Phố Hiến to the capital. The Trịnh demanded their alliance in military expeditions against the South, and when the Dutch lost the 1643 naval battle against Cochinchina, the Trịnh’s confidence in them waned. Judging that their business in Tonkin was too hazardous, the Dutch began to pull out. Finally in 1699, they quit Tonkin altogether. As for the British, after much trouble they succeeded in establishing a post in Tonkin in 1616. Competition from the Dutch drove them out in 1625, but they returned in 1672-74 and again in 1683. Eventually, they left Tonkin in 1697 due to final crises and opposition from the Dutch and the Portuguese. In 1680, French merchants

44 For a summary of Western involvement in Annam during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Oscar Chapuis, *A History of Vietnam: From Hong Bang to Tu Duc* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), Chapter 7, 161-180.
opened a factory in Phố Hiến, but it was closed two years later when they lost their
territory Bantam to the Dutch.  

Missionaries, following the trade routes to Southeast Asia, had also attempted to
evangelize Tonkin. The history of Christianity in Tonkin will be discussed in the next
chapter, but suffice here to note that the missionaries to Tonkin in the seventeenth
century were pioneers in giving Europeans information about the little-known kingdom
south of China. Besides the annual reports given to their superiors in Macau and Rome
and in addition to their occasional letters, some missionaries published their traveling
accounts — often called “relations” in later collections. Works by Giuliano Baldinotti, Alexandre de Rhodes, Joseph Tissianier, and Giovanni Filippo de Marini were
influential. Although they were written from a missionary perspective and bias, these
works are considered eye-witness accounts that can provide a general picture of the


47 Alexandre de Rhodes, Histoire du Royaume du Tonkin, et des grands progres que la prédication de l’Evangile y a faits en la conversion des infidèles. Depuis l’année 1627, jusques à l’année 1646 (Lyon, 1651) [= Histoire du Royaume] and Divers Voyages et Missions du P. Alexandre de Rhodes en la Chine, & autres Royaumes de L’Orient (Paris, 1653) [= Divers Voyages]


situation in Tonkin, since their authors had spent a considerable amount of time there. The “relations” by missionaries were best-sellers in their day in Europe and were translated into many languages. The information they contained found its way into later dictionaries and encyclopedias.

Traders and merchants who visited or settled in Tonkin also composed their own accounts of what was going on. Among these we can count the work of Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Samuel Baron, William Dampier, and others. These traveling tales and reports about a fascinating kingdom of two kings (a Vua and a Chua) were collected, translated, and reprinted in later collections. They were a combination of geographical reports, notes on fauna and flora, descriptions of interesting people and customs, and any information that was deemed useful for other missionaries and traders. Until the mid-nineteenth century, these accounts were valuable sources of information on Tonkin.

De Rhodes had lived for a total of seven years in Tonkin and Cochinchina; Marini for twelve years. Tissanier came to Tonkin in 1658 and lived through a chaotic time there.

Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, “A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin” (1639-45) in A Collection of Several Relations and Treatises Singular and Curious (London, 1680). Tavernier’s account must be used with care since he never set foot in Tonkin. His information mainly came from his brother Daniel Tavernier, who worked briefly for the Dutch in Tonkin between 1639 and 1645, and the Tonkinese who traded with him. In fact, Samuel Baron wrote about his experience in Tonkin partly to refute some of Tavernier’s claims.


The Religions of Tonkin

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travelers to Tonkin, whether missionaries or traders, noted the very active religious life there. Temples and shrines were found in every village and prefecture. Various feasts were held throughout the years, and elaborate funerals and ceremonies were part of their ancestral piety. Western travelers were amazed to see that elements of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism were blended into religious practices, both in public cults and private devotions. Traditional temples in Vietnam were places of worship of buddhas and bodhisattvas, of gods and goddesses, as well as popular village or national heroes, without being exclusive. The lay-out of many Buddhist temples in Tonkin reflects the ecumenical principle of “buddhas in the front and former worthies in the back” (tiên phật hậu thánh), regardless of the deity’s religious backgrounds. On the temple grounds were multiple shrines, side chapels, and altars in honor of different deities and spirits of whom different favors are requested.54

The Vietnamese took this multi-religious identity and belonging for granted. This attitude toward religion was instrumental in helping individuals to cope with the inevitable crises of life. Life for the Tonkinese peasants was hard, with frequent natural disasters, including flood, typhoons, droughts, plagues, crop failures, and famines. Economic crises were compounded by corrupt officials, heavy taxes, forced labor, and

54 For an illustrated description of Vietnamese traditional temples, see Ann Helen Unger and Walter Unger, Pagodas, Gods, and Spirits of Vietnam (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997).
frequent riots and rebellions. This vulnerability may account for the popularity of many magical and superstitious folk practices among Tonkinese.\footnote{A Terry Rambo, “Religion and Society in Vietnam” (1977), reprint in idem, \textit{Searching for Vietnam: Selected Writings on Vietnamese Culture and Society} (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2005), 71-79.}

In addition, the traditional religious ethos was syncretistic. Endowed with a natural and practical religious sense, the Vietnamese were disposed to welcome and accept the possibility of multiple religious sentiments. Their native language did not have an equivalent word for the Latin term \textit{religio}. Instead, people refer to religion as “way” (\textit{đạo}) in common speech, or “teaching” (\textit{giáo}) in scholarly writings. Since \textit{đạo} means a way of living, it is understandable that the Vietnamese often adapted newer traditions to their existing belief systems, blending traditions together without seeing them as contradictory. They freely took values and practices from different religious traditions and incorporated them into their own religious practices and worship.

During the first millennium of the common era, Vietnamese religiosity was shaped by cultural and religious values with roots in indigenous animism as well as in the Confucianism and Daoism of China and the Buddhism of India.\footnote{For a detailed description of Vietnamese traditional religions, see Léopold Cadière, \textit{Croyances et pratiques religieuses des Viêtnamiens}, 3 vols; Joseph Nguyên Huy Lai, \textit{La tradition religieuse spirituelle sociale au Viêt-nam}. A brief synopsis of Vietnamese religions can also be found in Peter Phan, \textit{Mission and Catechism}, 13-28.} The Vietnamese assimilated these values, adapted them, and made them their cultural heritage, which has lived on until today. Vietnamese traditional religious ethos can be described as an amalgam of the imported traditions — Confucian ethics, Buddhist worldview, and Daoist naturalism — with popular religious piety. The social etiquette and moral teachings of
Confucius were blended with the Daoist notion of communion with nature and Buddhist concepts of the afterlife to form a set of complementary and coexistent religions. This “harmony” of religions was not free from competition or from threat through political maneuvering at different times in Vietnamese history. Yet a clear distinction between the religions did not exist in pre-modern Vietnam.

**Cult of the Spirits, Heaven, and the Ancestors**

Underlying these religious observances was a basic belief in the communication between the spirits and humans. Léopold Cadière, a French anthropologist, observed in the early twentieth century that the “true religion of the Viet people is the cult of spirits” and that on this religion the imported traditions were built. He went on to say that “this religion has no history, because it dates from the origins of the race.”

The Vietnamese practice of venerating elements of the natural world (e.g., sun, moon, stars, rocks, trees, mountains and streams) and the familial and communal spirits (e.g., ancestors and deified local or national heroes) have existed since prehistoric time.

August Heaven (ông Trời) is a supreme deity of the Vietnamese pantheon. He was conceived in terms of an anthropomorphic being — a creative source, supreme ruler, and moral judge — who enabled people to live according to his will, to do good and avoid evil. The August Heaven, like the king, had numerous spiritual assistants to help him govern the natural world and human affairs. The belief in Heaven was never

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58 It is not clear whether the concept of August Heaven is indigenous to Vietnam or an import of the sky god of the Zhou.
formalized into an organized religion: there were no sacred books, images, temples, formalized rituals and prayers, and no official priests or ministers. There were only believers and prayers. All worship to Heaven was done outdoors at an open altar.

Although everybody believed in Heaven, only the king could perform the solemn worship of Heaven (tế Giao), a rite borrowed from the Chinese, to legitimize the king’s ruling as the “son of Heaven.” Acting on behalf of his people, the king prayed to Heaven for good weather and protection from plagues and disasters. In addition, the king or his representative performed other official sacrifices that regulated by the Minister of the Rites who followed the customs laid down by ancient ritual manuals.

As they were not allowed to worship Heaven openly, the common people turned to lesser spirits and especially to their ancestors. The innumerable spirits were either deities or spiritual beings (thần) that were to be honored, or ghosts (ma) and demons (quỷ) that were to feared. Thần included past heroes, immortals, or people who had made great contributions to the village or nation. They also included benevolent or malicious spirits that inhabited rocks, trees, animals and the rest of the natural world. People made offerings to them to avoid disasters and obtain success. Ghosts and demons included the wandering souls (cô hồn) and wicked spirits who sought to harm people. They were appeased by making offerings or neutralized by the help of magicians and sorcerers.

At the communal level, every village had its own guardian spirits, called the tutelary genies (thành hoàng), who resided in the main altar in the community hall (đình). The cult of the tutelary genies was important for the local religious life. In exchange for the villagers’ veneration, the guardian spirits were expected to protect the village from
disasters and harm, ensure the villagers’ health and prosperity, and maintain harmony. Ceremonial feasts honoring the tutelary genies were carried out at regular intervals and were celebrations for the communal life of the village. Although some spirits were venerated locally, other spirits of deified heroes were also worshipped in different villages. The royal court devised a system that ranked the spirits to be worshipped in three grades: supreme, middle, the lower. Supreme ranked spirits were usually national heroes whose deeds were retold in well-known hagiographies (thần phả) and were worshipped in more than one locality. The other two classes of spirits were less-well-known figures and only affected the local people.

Domestically, the ancestors were (and have continued to be) the most important spirits because of their relationships with their living descendants. Whether or not one believed in the ability of the ancestors to bless their descendants and to save them from troubles, the cult of the ancestors was the public expression of the virtue of filiality. Based on the Confucian principle “to serve the dead as if they were alive” (sự tử như sự sinh), food and drink, fruits and flowers were offered and incense was burned to the ancestors at special times of the year, and especially on their death anniversaries when memorial banquets were held. Important events in the family (e.g., birth, marriage, death) were communicated to the ancestors as if they were still present. Thus, the cult of the ancestors was common to Vietnamese of all religious persuasions for it keeps the memory of the ancestors alive and strengthens the familial bonds. Many large families

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59 Although the ritual is called “ancestor” veneration, these memorial observances included any deceased member of the family across generations, even a child. The unmarried men and women in the family were particularly cherished since they had no direct descendant to remember them.
contributed to the building and maintenance of a common ancestral hall (từ đường) where the tablets or pictures of the deceased from the past five generations — from one’s great-great-grandparents down to one’s deceased parents — were placed in the family altars.

People of a particular trade or craft also worshipped the founder of their trade or craft (tổ sư) on the family altar. In Vietnamese homes, there might also be the worship of spirits that protect and bring prosperity, such as the Local God (thổ địa), the Kitchen God (táo quân), or other guardian spirits. Unlike the ancestors, these lesser spirits did not have special rites dedicated to them, nor did they require a space in the family altar. Rather only a simple offering of incense and foods was enough to appease them.

The Import of Chinese Traditions

Confucianism

Confucianism, a Chinese ethical-religious philosophy propagated by Master Kongfuzi (Confucius) came to Vietnam along with Chinese writings and customs. The impact of Confucianism on the populace, beyond a few people who worked in official capacities, before the third century of the common era was unknown. Shi Xie (Sĩ Nhiếp), the governor of Jiaozhou from 187 to 226, was remembered by later generations as the

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“originator of Confucian studies in Vietnam” (nam giao học tổ) for his efforts to propagate Confucian thought, along with Chinese writings, literature, rites and customs.61

The influence of Confucianism in Vietnam became extensive after the country gained independence from Chinese rule in the tenth century.62 During the Đinh (968-80) and Early Lê (980-1009) dynasties, Vietnamese rulers tried to balance the influence of Confucian scholars, whom they associated with China’s occupation, with that of the Daoist and Buddhist traditions. Buddhist monks, often the most learned men in the country, were appointed as court advisors and chancellors (quốc sự). However, a century later, the kings of the Lý dynasty (1009-1225), although Buddhists themselves, realized that they needed a strong socio-political system to govern the country and to resist Chinese incursion from the north. They decided to appropriate Confucian statecraft to secure loyalty, establish law and order, and bring stability to society. At the same time, they continued to use Buddhist advisors in their court.63

Civil examinations, first held in 1075, were the means to select competent mandarins to serve the expanding bureaucratic needs.64 Scholars of aristocratic families competed in a wide range of subjects, including the teachings of Confucianism,

61 On the activities of Shi Xie, see Taylor, The Birth of Vietnam, 70-80.

62 Vietnam was under direct Chinese administration for more than a thousand years (111 BCE-939 CE). During this time, there were repeated insurrections against Chinese occupation, but the efforts failed, except for a brief periods of autonomy under the Trưng sisters (40–43 CE) and Lý Bôn and his successors (562–603 CE). When China broke into small competing principalities at the end of the Tang dynasty, opportunities came for the Vietnamese people to gain their independence from Chinese control in 939 CE.


64 Toàn Thư, bản ký, III: 8a.
Buddhism and Daoism, in examinations begun under the Lý dynasty and lasting through the Trần era (1225-1400). Confucianism gradually made a come-back in 1070 with the establishment of the Temple of Culture (Văn Miếu) to honor Confucius and other Confucian worthies and the National Academy (Quốc Tử Giám), where sons of aristocratic families studied Confucian literature. The incorporation of Confucianism to the examination curriculum provided a political philosophy and a system of ethics to maintain the social order. Through its emphasis on the virtues of filial piety and loyalty and the Three Bonds (tam cương), that is, the subordination of wife to husband, children to father, and subject to ruler, Confucianism formed the relational ethics necessary in an agrarian society. It provided the Lý and Trần kings the needed institutional framework to run the country and defend it from invasions from the north (China) and the south (Champa).

During their brief occupation of Đại Việt (1407-1427), Ming officials launched a project of Sinicization, forcing the Vietnamese to adopt Chinese customs, culture, and literature. The Ming officials established a number of Confucian schools and brought over newly edited Confucian classics and works on Neo-Confucianism. This policy

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65 Before this time, most officials of the independent Đại Việt were military men or Buddhist monks. The examination based on a Three Religions curriculum was given first in 1195, and again in 1227 and 1247.


68 Toàn Thư, bản kỷ, IX: 25b.

69 Toàn Thư, bản kỷ, X: 3b, records that “[in 1419] the Ming sent officials to bring over [Annam] the Tứ Thư [Four Books], Ngũ Kinh [Five Classics], Tính Lý Đại Toàn [Compendium of Nature and Principle], Vi
altered the course of Confucianism in Đại Việt. After the liberation of the country from
Ming domination, Neo-Confucianism became the main ideology of Vietnam until the
twentieth century. However, the Lê’s government and institutions did not blindly follow
the Ming model. The Lê Code, for example, was based on the Tang Code and
Vietnamese customs.\textsuperscript{70} Chinese influence was seen mostly in education and rituals.\textsuperscript{71}
Civil examinations that began during the Lý-Trần era were expanded and revised under
the Lê dynasty on the basis of the Ming curriculum.\textsuperscript{72}

Vietnamese Confucianism of the Lê era, however, never developed the level of
scholarship as in contemporary China or Korea.\textsuperscript{73} Most Confucian learning took place
not in the court-academy or prefectural institutions but in village schools. Vietnamese
scholars devoted themselves to studying the Four Books (tứ thư) and Five Classics (ngũ
kinh) and other books in order to pass the civil examinations. They were less interested
in philosophical debates than in rules of conduct and correct rituals.\textsuperscript{74} As a result,

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Thiên Âm Chất [On Goodness], and Hiếu Thuận Sự Thức [On True Filial Service] to teach Confucianism in
all districts, counties, and prefectures.” The first three are mentioned in The Errors of the Three Religions.
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\textsuperscript{70} Nguyen Ngoc Huy, Ta Van Tai, and Tran Van Liem, The Le Code: Law in Traditional Vietnam (Athen,

\textsuperscript{71} In particular the philosophy of Cheng Hao (1032-1085) and his brother Cheng Yi (1033-1107), and
especially of Zhu Xi (1130-1200), which was first introduced into Vietnam by Chu Văn An (d. 1370)
during the Trần dynasty.

\textsuperscript{72} Beginning in 1442 until the end of the eighteenth century, civil examinations were organized every three
years at all levels from district to prefecture to recruit competent administrators for the kingdom. The
names of those who passed the highest level of examination were inscribed in stone tablets and honored at
the Temple of Culture in Thăng Long.

\textsuperscript{73} On Confucianism in the Lê dynasty see, John K. Whitmore, “From Classical Scholarship to Confucian
1430-1840,” in Beyond Binary Histories: Reimagining Eurasia to c. 1830, ed. Victor Lieberman (Ann
Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 221–43.
Vietnamese Confucian scholars did not leave behind any significant works or schools of thought, except a few collections of poetry and books of history and geography. The scholastic learning of the Vietnamese Confucian elites, except for a few great scholars like Nguyễn Bỉnh Khiêm (1491-1585) or Lê Quý Đôn (1726-1784), did not equip them to face the societal changes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although efforts were made during the Mạc (1528-1592) and later the Lê-Trịnh (1533-1786) eras to maintain Neo-Confucian dominance and a literati culture through civil examinations and bureaucratic organization, Confucianism was resisted by recalcitrant popular religions and Buddhist (and later on Christian) practices.

For centuries Confucianism was rivaled by Buddhism and Daoism until it took center stage in the fifteenth century, especially during Lê Thành Tông’s reign. Since both Buddhism and especially Daoism had no special teachings regarding family organization and statecraft, Confucianism had a primary role in these areas. Central to Vietnamese Confucianism was the emphasis on order and harmony. Confucius saw order in the universe and in human affairs, and translated it into the moral bonds and obligations among family members. This emphasis on virtues and moral obligations fit well with the practical mentality of the pre-modern Vietnamese, who did not concern themselves much with metaphysical questions. Confucianism in Vietnam was reduced to a system of family ethics and a code for conducting social interaction.75

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74 Alexander Woodside, “Classical Primordialism and Historical Agendas of Vietnamese Confucianism,” in Rethinking Confucianism, ed. John B. Duncan and Herman Ooms, 116-143.

Although Confucianism was favored exclusively by the intellectual elite and political rulers, only superficial and basic Confucian ideas — mostly in ethics and rituals — reached the masses. In terms of ritual, the vast majority of the population did not understand Confucianism as a cohesive system. Rather, they appropriated fragments of Confucian ethics and supplemented them with local customs and beliefs. Most people kept their various native cults, and continued to seek help from the local genies, in conjunction with Daoist and Buddhist practices. The ruling class adapted to this mentality by appointing a Minister of Rites to be in charge of religious affairs and to certify (sắc phong) village gods and deified heroes. In this way they could control local cults and reduce their subversive potential.

**Daoism**

Early Daoist history in Vietnam was shrouded in obscurity, except for sporadic mention of individual Daoist priests and certain court policies in dynastic records. Like Confucianism, Daoism came to Vietnam in the Han dynasty sometime between the second and third centuries. When the Yellow Turban movement, inspired by Daoist

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76 For example, a certain Daoist named Yên Kỳ Sinh who was supposed to settle in Mount Yên Tử (Quảng Ninh Province) in the fourth century. See, Nguyễn Duy Hinh, *Người Việt Nam với Đạo Giáo* [Vietnamese and Daoism] (Hanoi: NXB Khoa Học xã Hội, 2003), 353-81.

77 In the absence of a study on Daoism in Vietnam, the history of Vietnamese Daoism has to be re-constructed from the events mentioned in Toàn Thư. The story is incomplete and needs further research.

78 In the second-century CE, a Daoist named Zhang Jiao (or Zhang Jue) started a sect called *Taiping dao* [Way of Great Peace]. By using magic and spiritual healings, he attracted a great number of people from over the country. In 184, the followers of Taiping dao across eight states in China revolted against the corrupted officials of the Han dynasty. During the revolution Zhang’s army wore a yellow head cover to distinguish them from the Han’s soldiers; thus the name “Yellow Turban” army. Although they were
magic, was brutally suppressed in China, many survivors migrated to the South. Some
might even have come down to Jiaozhou (as Vietnam was called then) and settled there.

The earliest note of a Daoist presence is in *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* [Complete
History of the Great Viet], stating that Đinh Tiên Hoàng (r. 968-79) instituted a system of
hierarchical ranks for Confucian officials, Buddhist monks and Daoist priests in 971.79
Thus, by the tenth century Daoism had achieved recognized place in Vietnamese society
along with Buddhism and Confucianism.

Along with Buddhism, Daoism also enjoyed the patronage of the Lý and the Trần
kings. The Lý kings supported the construction or restoration of Daoist temples in
addition to Buddhist ones.80 A number of Daoist temples appeared during the Lý era
devoted to the worship of the Heavenly King (Thiên Đế), another name for the Jade
Emperor (Ngọc Hoàng).81 Other temples were also dedicated to the worshipped of the

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79 In *Toàn Thư*, bản ký, I: 3b, it is recorded that “the Buddhist monk Ngô Chân Lưu was
conferred the title head of monks (tăng thống), Trương Ma Ní was assigned to be the overseer of monks (tăng lục) and the
Daoist Đặng Huyễn Quang was given the office of ‘regulating the Daoist priest’ (sung chân uy nghi)”

80 In 1010, Lý Thái Tổ issued a decree calling for the restoration of old Buddhist and Daoist temples in the
villages. In 1031, the Daoist priest Trịnh Trí Không petitioned for Daoists to be registered in the temple
Thái Thanh, erected by imperial order twenty years earlier. *Toàn Thư*, bản ký, II: 3ab, 20b.

81 For example, the *Toàn Thư* mentions that in 1016, the temples Thiện Quang and Thiện Đức were built,
and four statues of Thiên Đế were erected (bản ký, II: 7b). In 1057, the temples Thiện Phúc and Thiện Thọ
were built, and the gold statues of Brahma (Phạm Thiên) and Indra (Đế Thích) were commissioned for
worship (bản ký, III: 2a). These Indian gods were first appropriated by Buddhists as their dharma
protectors, and later on by Daoists in their pantheon. In Vietnam, Đế Thích was identified with Ngọc
Hoàng [Jade Emperor] in popular belief, for the two shared the same “birthday” (viático): the ninth of the first
lunar month.
Three Venerables (Tam Tôn or Tam Thanh), the highest gods of Chinese Daoism. Prominent Daoists were also recognized by the court. For example, a Chinese Daoist named Hứa Tông Đạo, who came to Đại Việt during the reign of Trần Anh Tông, was credited for “spreading the magic.” In 1368, Trần Dụ Tông invited the Daoist priest Huyền Vân to the court to ask about Daoist practices. There was even one king, Trần Thuận Tông, who became a Daoist priest in 1399 at the suggestion of his ambitious chancellor, Hồ Quý Ly.

After the Lý-Trần era, there is little evidence of Daoist activities. The elevation of Confucianism as the orthodox school of thought relegated Daoism to a marginal place at the court. Apart from dynastic records, one can find the elusive Daoist presence only in popular legends. The cults and legends recorded in Việt Định U Linh Tập [Collected Stories of the Potent Spirits of the Viet Realm] and Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái [Strange Stories from the Southern Range] tell of the influence of Daoist concepts of immortality (e.g., the story of Chử Đồng Tử) and magic. But for the most part, their magical feats were attributed to the power of the Buddha. Unlike Buddhism, the presence of Daoism in Vietnam was significant in the late Lý and Trần periods, but it became less prominent after the rise of Confucianism.

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82 Toàn Thư, bản ký, III: 38b, mentions that in 1134, the king visited the Ngũ Nhạc temple and had it restored; the following year he came to venerate the newly cast statues of Tam Tôn (which are Nguyên Thủy Thiên Tôn, Linh Bảo Thiên Tôn, and Đạo Đức Thiên Tôn).
83 According to Toàn Thư, bản ký, VI: 17a, Hứa Tông Đạo was allowed to settle near Hanoi in 1302.
84 Toàn Thư, bản ký, VII: 28a. Both Hứa Tông Đạo and Huyền Vân are mentioned by name in ETR as evidences of Daoism in Vietnam.
85 Toàn Thư, bản ký, VIII: 32a, 33b.
later centuries cannot be documented with certainty because the common people often confused the two religions. Buddhist temples were also places where Daoist deities were honored, and the few existing Daoist temples could not be distinguished from temples dedicated to non-Daoist spirits.

Philosophical Daoism, a doctrine based on the classics *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi*, had limited impact beyond introducing the concept of *Dao*, the theory of yin and yang, and the ethics of “noncontrivance” (*vô vi*) and “spontaneity” (*tự nhiên*) (i.e., a natural approach to life). Although philosophical Daoism did not extend much outside the erudite class, it allowed one to be closer to nature and free from the constricted life regulated by Confucian rules of conduct. Daoist philosophy and meditative techniques, although popular with the literati, did not reach the common people. Instead, religious Daoism (including the Daoist cults of spirits, magic, alchemy, healing, divination, and geomancy) was welcomed by the masses because it blended in seamlessly with the native religious ethos. Daoist rites of purification and incantations to manipulate natural forces or control spirits to ward off evils and cure sickness appealed greatly to the people, even those of the upper classes.

In Vietnam, Daoism did not take an institutional form, as it did in China. Although there were Daoist priests and temples, there were no Daoist schools or lineages. Daoist temples (*đạo quán*) were places to worship the immortals and genies rather than monasteries to train monks and priests. Instead, various “masters” (*thầy*) performed rituals to respond to the immediate needs of the people: *thầy bùa* (master of the amulets), *thầy pháp* or *thầy cúng* (ritual magician or healer), *thầy bói* (diviner), *thầy bói tuy* or *thầy
phù thủy (sorcerer), thầy địa lý (geomancer), etc. Particular to Vietnamese Daoism is the use of mediums (đồng nhân) to communicate between the living and the spirit world. The use of mediums was popular even at temples of non-Daoist origins (e.g., Goddess Liễu Hạnh, General Trần Hưng Đạo). The Daoist practices blended so seamlessly with shamanist rituals that even their practitioners could not always tell the difference. Vietnamese Daoism never achieved status as a religion; it remained largely a folk religious practice with many superstitious elements.\(^{88}\)

**Buddhism**

The religion founded by the Buddha, undoubtedly the most important religion in Vietnam past and present, also arrived in Jiaozhou during the latter Han period.\(^{89}\) In the third century of the common era, Luy Lâu (Bac Ninh today) of the Jiaozhou prefecture was known as a Buddhist center in East Asia, where Indian and Central Asian monks traveling to and from China would stop. The governor Shi Xie was known to be on friendly terms with the Buddhists and to allow travelling monks to settle in Jiao Zhou. As a result, Indian, Central Asian, and Chinese monks and lay Buddhists had left their

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\(^{88}\) Nguyen Huy Lai, 268-83.

mark on the religious life of Jiaozhou. By the time of the Sui-Tang dynasties (seventh to tenth centuries), the arrival of Chinese Zen monks and the founding of various Thiền (Zen) schools solidified the Buddhist presence in Annam. The links between the Buddhists in Annam, India and China were numerous. Chinese records mention Chinese and Central Asian monks stopping by Annam on their way to India, and monks from Annam were proficient in Sanskrit, Chinese and various Central Asian languages.

From the extant Buddhist literature, it is clear that by the tenth century Buddhism had developed a close affinity with the indigenous religions of Vietnam. The integration of native deities and local cults into the development of Vietnamese Buddhism was a natural course of development. Early on, when Buddhist temples were few and far between, missionary monks often took up residence in local shrines or temples. Many local spirits and deified heroes were eventually brought within the Buddhist pantheon and transformed into protectors of the dharma (hộ pháp).

During the Đinh, Early Lê and Lý dynasties, Vietnamese rulers found in Buddhism a cultural force that could help them secure legitimacy. Past interactions with monks from other parts of Asia had contributed to the formation of a clerical class necessary for the development of a newly independent Đại Việt. Many prominent

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91 Cuong Tu Nguyen, 12-13.

92 Cuong Tu Nguyen, 14.
Buddhist monks became national advisors and exerted political influence. At the same time, these monks were hailed in folklore and tales as wonder workers who could use their magical powers to help those in need and ward off troubles. These magical tales, which later found their way into the *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* and *Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái*, reflect the popularity of Buddhism among the common people. The association of Buddhist monks with magical powers might also hint at the presence of Tantric elements in Vietnamese Buddhism.

Buddhism reached its highest development between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, becoming one of the three religious-philosophical systems of thought (*Tam Giáo*) under the Lý and Trần dynasties. The Lý and Trần kings were patrons of Buddhism, but also practiced a policy of openness and non-exclusivity. Although many supported the large-scale construction of Buddhist temples and some became monks after passing on their thrones to successors, Buddhism was never established as a national religion. Instead, the kings saw Buddhism as a major element that could help foster a national culture. Under the Lý patronage, different forms of Buddhism flourished: both the "popular" style, which included tantric, ritual and devotional elements mixed with

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94 The *Thiên Uyên Tập Anh* mentions that several Lý kings were members of Zen school Thảo Đường (*Lý Thánh Tông*, r. 1054-72, *Lý Anh Tông*, r. 1138-1175, and *Lý Cao Tông*, r. 1176-1210), but none of the kings became monks. Lý Huệ Tông (r. 1211-1224) was the first monarch who passed on the throne to become a Buddhist monk. Among the Trần monarch, Trần Nhân Tông (r. 1279-93) was the founder of the Zen school Trúc Lâm on Mount Yên Tử.
indigenous religions, and the “elite” or court-sponsored style modeled after the Chinese Zen.  

The Trần kings were also powerful patrons of Buddhism, although their costly wars with the Mongols and the Chams prevented them from building as many temples as the Lý did. These wars, however, caused a national emergency that helped the Trần kings establish themselves as leaders of the nation. In order to solidify their position, Trần rulers had to rely more and more on Confucianism for statecraft and administration while they tried to maintain the balance of power between members of the Three Religions. For the Trần aristocrats, Buddhism was a religion that provided for the spiritual needs of the individual, while Confucianism was a more effective and suitable system for dealing with worldly affairs. For this reason, after retiring many Trần kings and nobilities withdrew to the mountains to practice Zen Buddhism. Vietnamese Zen (Thiền) reached its peak under the Trần dynasty: Trần Thái Tông (r. 1226-58) composed the Khoá Hư Lục [Instruction on Emptiness] and Trần Nhân Tông (r. 1279-93) founded the Trúc Lâm Zen school after he retired from the throne. The collected biographies of famous Zen monks, Thiền Uyển Tập Anh, was also compiled during the Trần era.

In the middle of the fourteenth century, the tide began to turn against Buddhism. The Trần aristocrats who had supported Buddhism lost much of their economic and

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95 Cuong Tu Nguyen, 19-20.

96 Cuong Tu Nguyen, 20-21.

97 For a translation of this important work, see Cuong Tu Nguyen, Zen in Medieval Vietnam, Part II, 103-205. For an introduction to this work see J. C. Cleary, “Buddhism and Popular Religion in Medieval Vietnam,” Journal of American Religion, 59-1 (Spring 1991): 93-118.
political power. Mandarins from the Confucian circles, such as Trương Hán Siêu and Lê Quát, began to criticize Buddhism as a burden on society. In 1396, Hồ Quý Lý issued an order to purge the ranks of Buddhist monks and dissolve many monasteries. Furthermore, a major part of Buddhist literature and other Vietnamese writings composed during Lý and Trần eras were lost during the period of Ming occupation (1407-1427). These events disrupted the continuity of the Buddhism of the later centuries with its past.

When the Lê kings came into power, they decided to adopt Confucianism as the state ideology and began to hold civil examinations on the Confucian doctrines rather than on the Three Religions as in the Lý and Trần eras. Although it fell out of favor in the royal court, Buddhism strengthened its hold in the villages. Many village temples were built or restored under the Mạc and Lê dynasties, sometimes with the contributions from the upper class. The Trúc Lâm Zen school founded by the Trần kings was revived in Tonkin with help from Chinese monks of the Linji school.

Buddhism spread from the court to the general population, where it became a religion of salvation. The village pagoda became a place of refuge from daily sufferings for both individuals and the community. The doctrines of karma and reincarnation influenced popular piety. Belief in paradise and hell shaped the moral behavior of many people. Vietnamese Buddhists prayed to A Di Đà [Amitābha] and Quan Âm [Avalokiteśvara] for deliverance. The cult of Avalokiteśvara blended with the native cult of Mẫu (Mother Goddess), turning the bodhisattva of compassion into a goddess of

98 See, for example, their diatribes recorded in Toàn Thư, bản ký, VII: 17b, 36a-b.
99 Toàn Thư, bản ký, VIII: 28a. This is not unlike the great persecution of Buddhism that happened in China in 845 CE where tens of thousands monks were laicized.
mercy in the stories of Quan Âm Thị Kính and Nam Hải Quan Âm. By the eighteenth century, Buddhism had largely transformed into a religion of the masses. Buddhist monks and priests became specialists in funeral ceremonies and other rituals that had little to do with the dharma. Attempts to revive Buddhism in the seventeenth century did not produce any lasting results.

The Triple Religion in the Eighteenth Century

In eighteenth-century Tonkin, some Confucian scholars tried to integrate the basic teachings of the three religions, without discrimination or critical comparison. They combined Buddhist worldview, Confucian ethics, and Daoist cosmology into the practice of Tam Giáo [Three Teachings or Triple Religion] without maintaining any distinction between them. These teachings offered moral and practical guidance linking personal, family, and social levels of existence. The Confucian concepts of humanness and righteousness were seen as compatible with the Buddhist doctrine of compassion. The Daoist notions of purity and tranquility were linked to the Zen idea of emptying the mind. However, the integration of the Three Teachings in Vietnam never materialized into any single system as it did in Ming China. Even though they advocated for a common source of the Three Teachings, Vietnamese literati of this era, like Ngô Thì Sĩ (1726-1780) and Phan Huy Ích (1750-1822), appropriated elements of Buddhist and

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Daoist teachings to demonstrate the universality of Confucianism and to protect its
hegemony.⁴⁰¹

The division of religions in Vietnam into the Three Teachings existed only in the
mind of scholars who were more interested in doctrinal issues. For the common people
“all religions were good” since their concern was promoting their own well-being. This
lack of distinction, however, did not mean that there was religious indifference in the
Tonkinese culture. On the contrary, people took their religion and the spirit world for
granted, as essential parts of their lives. In traditional Vietnam, as in other parts of the
pre-modern world, the divine presence was felt everywhere. Everyone believed in some
supernatural powers that were thought to be capable of helping individuals and their
families in their times of need.

To form an idea of the popular religious practices in eighteenth-century Tonkin,
let us examine Samuel Baron’s description on the religions of Tonkin.⁴⁰² Born in Tonkin,
son of a Dutch merchant and a Vietnamese woman, Baron lived in Thăng Long until
1659, when he was sent by his father to Europe to learn the trade. Since Baron
considered himself a “native” of Tonkin, we can take his description to be an “eye-
witness account” of the religious situation there in the seventeenth century, which can be
extrapolated to the eighteenth century.

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For Baron, the Tonkinese were quite religious and there were “many sects among the people.” And yet, there were two chief religions (“sects” was the term used by Baron): that of Confucius and of the Buddha. Of Confucianism, he made the following observation:

The first is that of Confutu (Confucius)... the ancietnest [sic] of the Chinese philosophers. This man they esteem holy; and for wisdom, he is reputed not only amongst them and the Chinese, but the Japanese too, the Solomon of all mortals. Without some proficiency in whose learning, none can attain any degree in their civil government, or be anyways allow’d to know matters of importance; tho’ the truth thereof, and very quintessence of his doctrine, is nothing else but what we call moral philosophy....

But his disciples, building on his principles, have extracted therefrom many rules and precepts, which soon after became the main subject of their superstition and religion. They acknowledge one supreme deity, and that all terrestrial things are directed, governed, and preserved by him; that the world is eternal, without either beginning or creator. They reject the worship of images; they venerate and pay a kind of adoration to spirits. They expect reward for good deeds, and punishment for evil. They believe in a manner, the immortality of the soul, and pray for the deceased. Some of them also believe, that souls of the just live after separation from the body. They teach, that the air is full of malignant spirits, which is their dwelling place; and that those spirits are continually at variance with the living. They particularly recommend to their pupils, to honour their deceased friends and parents; and do much concern themselves in performing certain ceremonies thereunto belonging, as I have mentioned already [in previous chapters]; and hold several other things very rational, and, in my opinion, in many things nothing at all inferior to either the ancient Greeks or Romans. Neither must we think, that the wiser and better sort amongst them are so shallow-brained, as to believe the dead stand in need of victuals, and that therefore they are so served, as I have mentioned in its due place; no, they know better, and tell us they do it for no other reason, then to demonstrate their love and respect to the deceased parents; and withal to teach their own children and friends thereby, how to honour them when they shall be no more.

However, the vulgar sort, and those carry their judgment in their eyes, credit that as well as many other impertinent impossibilities of their superstition. In fine, tho’ this sect hath no pagodas erected nor particular place appointed to worship the king of heaven in, or priests to preach and propagate this said doctrine, nor a due form commanded or observed, but
it is left to every one’s discretion to do as he pleases in these respects, so as he give thereby no scandal, yet it has their kings, princes, grandees, and the learned men of the kingdom for its followers.\textsuperscript{103}

While he held Confucianism in high esteem, his description of Buddhism of the seventeenth-century was bleak.

The second sect is called Boot [Buddha], which signifies the worship of idols or images, and is generally followed by the ignorant, vulgar, and simple sort of people, and more especially the women and capadoes, the most constant adherents thereunto. There tenets are, to worship images devoutly, to believe in transmigration. They offer to the devil, that they may not hurt them. They believe a certain deity coming from these united gods [i.e., the buddhas of the past, present, and future]. They impose a cloister and retired life, and think their works can be meritorious, and the wicked suffered torments together; with many foolish superstitious niceties, too idle to repeat. However, they have no priest, any more than the former sect [i.e., Confucianism], to preach and propagate their doctrine; all they have, are their Sayes (sâï), or Bonzes, as M. Taverniere calls them (which, by mistake, he terms priest) which are a kind of friers [sic] or monks. They have some nuns also, who dwellings are about, and sometimes in their pagodas, who most commonly are invited to celebrate their funerals with their drums, trumpets, and other musick [sic]: they subsist for the most part by alms, and the charity of the people. In brief, this is that sect that has spread its fopperies and impertinences very far; and, in effect, with its schism and imposture, has overspread, in part or whole, most of the eastern countries, as this of Tonqueen, China, Japan, Correa [Korea], Formosa, Cambodiam, Siam, the Gentues [clans] of coast Cormandel [Corromandel, South India] and Bengal, Ceylon, Indosthan [Hindustan, North India], etc. From one of these two last places it was first brought into China on the following occasion.\textsuperscript{104}

Baron proceeded to tell the story of how Buddhism came into China in the time of Han Mingdi (r. 58-75). As with most other Western seventeenth- and eighteenth-century accounts of the origin of Buddhism in China, including our author of \textit{The Errors of the Three Religions}, there was the story of a dream of Han Mingdi in which he mistook

\textsuperscript{103} Baron, 277-78.

\textsuperscript{104} Baron, 279.
Buddhism for the true religion of the West (i.e., Christianity), and instead of receiving the light, he ended up introducing this form of “paganism and the dregs of superstition” into China.

With regard to the “sect of Lanzo (Laozi),” Baron noted:

[It is] slenderly followed, though their magicians and necromancers are the proselytes and followers thereof, as Thay-Boo (thầy bói, diviner), Thay Boo-Twe (thầy phù thủy, sorcerer), Thay-de-Lie (thầy địa lý, geomancer) and in great esteem with the princes, and respected by the vulgar, so that they are consulted by both in their most weighty occasions; and they receive their opinions and false predictions as very oracles, believing they speak by divine inspiration, and have the fore-knowledge of future events: wherefore it is not probable, that they were of this sort that were sent to the frontiers for soldiers…

Baron explained the reason for the proliferation of “conjurers and fortune-tellers”:

The Tonqueenese are really very credulous, and ready to embrace almost every new opinion they meet withal, so are they not less tenacious in retaining any notions which they are in possession of, and observe carefully times and seasons, as good and bad; in which they will not undertake any voyages or journey, nor build houses, cultivate grounds, nor bargain for any thing considerable; nor even will they attempt, on ominous days, to cure the sick, bury their dead, nor in a manner, transact any thing without the advice of their soothsayers and blind wizards, who are principally divided into three classes, that is, those who are followers of Thay-Boo, or Thay Boo-Twe, or Thay-de-Lie, and have not the least sense of their being mostly cheated and deluded by the fallacious pretensions of those impudent fellows, who live wholly by selling their directions to them, at excessive rates, as the most desirable and current merchandise.

Baron next described the “pretended conjurers [who] are much observed and venerated” by the people, in particular, the activities of Thay-Boo and Thay-Boi-Twe. He did not

105 Baron, 280.
106 Baron, 281.
have much to say about the business conducted by Thay-de-Lie and Ba-Cote (bà cót, female medium).

The anthropologist Léopold Cadière made similar observations about the religious mentality of the Vietnamese in the early twentieth century. His data, collected in the northern provinces of Central Vietnam, provide us with a window into the past. Cadière summarized the religious situation of traditional Vietnam as follows:

[The Vietnamese] have two religions: one principal, the religion of the spirits, which has a double object: its cult is addressed both to the personified forces of nature and to the souls of the dead, the latter includes the cult of heroes, the cult of abandoned souls, and the cult of ancestors. This religion also has a double mode of exercise: religious in Confucianism, and magical in Taoism. Beside this principal religion, there is a secondary religion, and that is Buddhism.\(^{107}\)

Conclusion

The social, historical and religious background of Tonkin in the mid-eighteenth century sheds light on many issues addressed in The Errors of the Three Religions, and I will discuss these at greater length in Part Two of this dissertation. Suffice to say here that the work was composed at a critical time during which Tonkinese society endured many crises. In the first half of the eighteenth century Tonkin was submerged in warfare and natural disasters, insurrections and rebellions. The moral scene was not better. With the Mạc’s and later the Trịnh’s domination over the Lê kings, the basic premise of the Confucian Three Bonds and Five Norms was shaken to the foundation: the kings were

not ruling as kings; the subjects were not behaving as subjects. Traditional Confucian discourse began to lose its moral persuasion. Disaffected people took refuge in the popular religions of Buddhism and Daoism. At the time of the encounter with Western missionaries, a Vietnamese person was able to be Confucian in his conduct, and Daoist or Buddhist, or both, in his devotion.

Descriptions by Samuel Baron and others like him of the religious life of Tonkin were not free of prejudices. However, in the absence of contrary evidence, they indicate that the people of Tonkin in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were open and welcomed any kind of religious and spiritual activity, regardless of origin, that met their daily needs. Openness and natural curiosity were factors that led to the Vietnamese people’s welcome the arrival of Christianity, which I will discuss in the next chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

CHRISTIANITY IN TONKIN UNDER THE LÊ-TRỊNH ERA (1533-1786)

Any assessment of a religion by another religion is inevitably fraught with misunderstanding and biases. To eliminate some of these difficulties the context of the assessment is crucial. Thus, a proper consideration of The Errors of the Three Religions (henceforth, ETR), a Christian evaluation of the traditional religions of Tonkin, demands not only an adequate understanding of the emergence of a foreign religion in the land but also the initial interactions among the promoters of the new religion and the defenders of the existent ones. This chapter, therefore, reviews the missionary efforts in Tonkin and the development of Catholic Christianity and its interaction with Vietnamese society from its inception until 1752, when ETR was composed. A special attention will be given to the discussion of the Rites Controversy as it played out in China and Vietnam.

The Development of the Vietnamese Church

According to Khâm Định Việt Sử Thông Giám Cương Mục [General History of Vietnam by Imperial Order], in 1533 a certain Western man named I-nê-xu (probably Ignacio) came to preach in the coastal area of Sơn Nam (today Nam Định province). 108 Also, according to Western accounts, Dominican and Franciscan missionaries from

108 Cương Mục, chính biên, XXXIII: 6. This information is given in connection with an interdiction against Christianity issued in 1663.
Malacca and Manila came to evangelize Vietnam in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Although their missionary enterprises were sporadic and not organized, they produced several conversions. It was only with the arrival of Jesuit missionaries in 1627 under the reign of Trịnh Tráng (1623-1654) that Catholic Christianity was officially introduced to Tonkin.

**Early Jesuit Mission in Tonkin**

Jesuit missionaries came to Cochinchina in 1615 at the request of Portuguese traders to provide spiritual care for them. By 1618, they had set up a mission base in

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109 For example, Gaspar de Santa Cruz, OP in Cambodia/Ha Tien (ca. 1550), Luis de Fonseca, OFM in Quang Nam (1580), Bartolome Ruiz, OFM and companions in the North (1584-86), Ordonez de Cevallos (1590), Alonso Ximenez, OP (1596).

110 The first convert might have been Đỗ Hùng Viễn, the son of a court official under King Lê Anh Tông (1556-73). Ordonez de Cevallos claimed to convert a sister of King Lê Thế Tông (1573-1599), Princess Mai Hoa (Maria Flora) and other nobles in his *Voyage of the World*, but many historians doubt his account, especially of his baptizing of Lord Nguyễn Hoàng. As early as 1631, Cristoforo Borri, SJ, questioned de Cevallos’s claim.

Hội An. Following the success of their confreres in Cochinchina, Giuliano Baldinotti¹¹² and a Japanese brother came to Tonkin in March 1626 to explore the possibility of establishing a mission there. After receiving the news that missionaries would be welcomed because the Lord of Tonkin wanted to establish trading with the Portuguese, the Jesuit superior in Macau decided to send Alexandre de Rhodes and another Jesuit to Tonkin.¹¹³ After landing in Thanh Hoá province on March 19, 1627, they were favorably received by Trịnh Tráng, who allowed them to settle in the capital to evangelize.¹¹⁴ Two more Jesuits arrived with Portuguese traders in July of 1629.

The Trịnh initially welcomed the missionaries for political and commercial reasons. Because of their language skills Jesuits could act as interpreters and intermediaries for trade with Macau. However, when trading failed, the Trịnh became indifferent towards the missionaries. In May of 1630, Trịnh Tráng ordered the four Jesuits to leave the country when the Portuguese merchants departed for Macau. Before his departure, De Rhodes organized some of his closest lay collaborators into a lay

¹¹² Giuliano Baldinotti (1591-1631): Native of Pistoia, Italy, he joined the Jesuits in 1609, and was ordained in 1621. He came to Tonkin in 1626 and left in the same year. He died in Macau, 1631. Baldinotti was the first Jesuit who wrote about Tonkin. See DHCJ, Vol. I: 328-29.

¹¹³ Alexandre de Rhodes (1593-1660): Born in Avignon, he joined the Jesuits in 1612, and was ordained in 1618. He was missioned to Cochinchina from 1624 to 1626, and again 1640 to 1645, and Tonkin from 1627 to 1630. After returning to Europe in 1649-1654, he was missioned to Isfahan, Persia in 1654 and died there in 1660. De Rhodes has been a subject of study among Vietnamese scholars, for example Nguyễn Khắc Xuyên, Đỗ Quang Chính, and Peter Phan, because of his important influence on the language and method of evangelization. See DHCJ, Vol. IV: 3242-43. The best account in English so far is Peter Phan. See Mission and Catechesis: Alexandre Rhodes and Inculturation in Seventeenth-Century Vietnam. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998).

¹¹⁴ By the end of 1627, they had baptized more than 1,200 people among whom were the Lord Trịnh’s mother and one of his sisters. Đỗ Quang Chính, 141-142.
brotherhood to continue evangelization, to baptize, to teach the faith, and to maintain the community in his absence.\footnote{The first catechists were former Buddhist monks who converted in 1627: Francis Đúc, Andrew Tri, and Ignatius Nhuận. On 27 April 1630 these three men placed their hands on the Book of Gospels and made the following vows: 1) to be celibate until the missionaries returned; 2) to keep a common purse; and 3) to obey a leader appointed by the missionaries. See Đỗ Quang Chính, 149.}

The mission of Tonkin was far from over. Other Jesuits continued to arrive with Portuguese traders whenever the political climate allowed them to do so. Gaspar D’Amaral\footnote{Gaspar d’Amaral (1594-1646): Native of Corvaceira, Portugal, he joined the Jesuits in 1608 and was ordained in 1622. He was missioned to Tonkin from 1629 to 1630, and again from 1631 to 1638. He was vice-provincial of the Orient region from 1642 to 1645, and died in a shipwreck on his way to Tonkin for the third time in 1646. D’Amaral was the composer of the first Portuguese-Annamese lexicon that was eventually incorporated into Rhodes’s dictionary. See DHCJ, Vol. I: 96-97.} came back in 1631 and continued the mission with the help of the native catechists. The number of Christians in Tonkin increased from 5,600 in 1630\footnote{De Rhodes himself in Divers Voyages et Missions, p. 95, claimed a higher number: 6,700 baptism. Other missionary sources (e.g., Cardim and Bareto, 1646) reported 5,607 baptisms. Quoted by Đỗ Quang Chính, 196-197.} to about 100,000 by 1640 and triple that number twenty years later.\footnote{In his report to Rome, the Jesuit missionary Joseph Tissonier claimed that by 1660 they had baptized about 300,000 people. See Letter of Nov 20, 1660 to Cazré (ARSI, Jap-Sin 80, f. 151) and in Joseph Tissonier, Relation du voyage du P. Joseph Tissonier, reprint in De Montézon and Estève, Mission de la Cochinchine et du Tonkin (Paris, 1868), 143, 159. This no doubt was an exaggeration; nevertheless, the Jesuit missionary work in Annam was significant enough for Rome to respond with the appointment of two apostolic vicars for Tonkin and Cochinchina in 1659. To appreciate the significance of the growth of the Vietnamese Church, one can look at a comparable effort of evangelization in China. By 1636, roughly fifty years after the Gospel was introduced to the Middle Kingdom, the number of Chinese converts was reported to be 38,000. The number of Chinese Christians peaked at 200,000 before a persecution initiated by Yang Guangxian in 1665. Not until 1659 that there was an apostolic vicar for North China. Data on China are taken from Joseph Dehergne, Répertoire des jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800 (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1973), 325-45.} A major achievement of the Jesuits of this era was the 1645 agreement on a baptismal formula in Vietnamese, the first step toward using the native language as a medium of religious instruction. Some Jesuits were thoroughly inculturated. Girolamo Majorica, for example, composed about
thirty books in Nôm-script which treated a variety of topics including prayer, catechism, liturgy, and lives of the saints.\textsuperscript{119}

\textbf{French Missionaries and the Establishment of the Vicariates in Annam}

After several more trips to Cochinchina between 1640 and 1645 before finally being deported from the country under pain of death, De Rhodes returned to Europe to find ways to support the growing missions in Annam. He also advocated the need to appoint bishops and ordain native priests if the churches in Annam were to survive and develop. Although his grand vision did not materialize until two decades later, it nevertheless altered the history of the mission in Asia.

In response to de Rhodes’ appeal, the French church established the Foreign Mission of Paris Society (Société des missions étrangères de Paris or MEP) founded by François Pallu\textsuperscript{120} and Pierre Lambert de la Motte,\textsuperscript{121} in 1664 to support missionary activities in East Asia.\textsuperscript{122} This newly established mission society was placed under the

\textsuperscript{119} Girolamo Majorica (1590-1656): A native of Italy, he joined the Jesuits in 1605 and was ordained in 1618. He was missioned to Cochinchina from 1624 to 1629 and to Tonkin in 1632. He was the superior of Tonkin in 1640s and died in Tràng Long (Hanoi) in 1656. Source: DHCJ, Vol. III: 2558.

\textsuperscript{120} François Pallu (1626-1684): A native of Tours, France, he was the founder of the MEP. Appointed apostolic vicar for Tonkin, Laos, and Southern China in 1659 but he could never come to Tonkin after many incidents. Subsequently, he was re-appointed the apostolic vicar for Fujian, China in 1680. He came to Fujian in 1684 and died there shortly after.

\textsuperscript{121} Pierre Lambert de la Motte (1624-1679): A native of St Jacques de Lisieux, France, he was the co-founder of the MEP. Appointed the apostolic vicar for Siam and Cochinchina in 1659, he arrived in Ayuthia, Siam in 1662. Due to the unstable political situation in Annam, he could only visit Tonkin on behalf of Pallu in 1669-1670, Cochinchina in 1671-1672 and 1675-1676. He died in Ayuthia in 1679. De la Motte is the founder of the Lovers of the Holy Cross, the first Vietnamese women religious institution.

\textsuperscript{122} The Société des missions étrangères de Paris (MEP) was established in 1659 with the appointments of Pallu and Lambert de la Motte to Annam. However, official recognition did not come until 1664. See Adrien Launay, \textit{Histoire générale de la Société des Missions Étrangères} (Paris, 1894), Vol. I: Chapters I-III.
control of the Congregation for Evangelization (Propaganda Fide). It was the first step toward changing the way mission work had been carried out in the Far East. Until this time, the East Asian mission was an exclusively operation from Goa and Macau under the patronage of Portuguese authorities. This system was called *padroado*, according to which all missionaries to the East Asia, regardless of their nationality, had to be approved by the Portuguese crown.

Since its foundation in 1622, Propaganda Fide sought ways to take direct charge of foreign missions. On September 9, 1659, Pope Alexandre VII appointed Pallu apostolic vicar for Tonkin, Laos and South China, and his friend, Lambert de la Motte, vicar for Cochinchina and Cambodia. With the establishment of the vicariates in Tonkin and Cochinchina, which actually took effect when these missionary bishops arrived in Siam in 1662, the Church in Annam went through a new phase. The Church no longer depended solely on the *padroado* system of the Portuguese and Spanish crowns. While they were in Siam, waiting for the opportunity to enter Tonkin and Cochinchina, Pallu and de la Motte organized a seminary to train indigenous clergy.

When circumstances


124 This privilege was confirmed by Popes Leo X (in 1514 and 1516), Paul III (1539), Gregory XIII (1575) and Paul V (1616). See Launay, *Histoire générale de la Société des Missions Étrangères*, Vol. I: 17.

125 In their lifetimes, Pallu never came to Tonkin and de la Motte went back and forth between Siam and Cochinchina. From Siam, they ran the Church in Annam by letters and occasional visits. François Deydier (1634-93) was the first French missionary who set foot in Tonkin in 1666.
prevented Pallu from entering Tonkin, Lambert de la Motte acted on Pallu’s behalf and organized the church in Tonkin. The first four Vietnamese seminarians, who formerly belonged to the Institute of Catechists, were ordained to the priesthood in 1668, followed by another seven in 1670. When the Holy See appointed these Frenchmen to be apostolic vicars of the lands that the Portuguese considered their mission fields, the authorities in Macau did not give up their control without a fight, and some Jesuits refused to recognize the authority of the apostolic vicars. The presence of other missionary orders in Tonkin — the Dominicans, MEP, and later the Discalced Augustinians — forced the Jesuits to accept the new arrangement.

Dominican and Augustinian Missions

Although the Dominicans began evangelizing Tonkin in the second half of the sixteenth century, lack of personnel and resources prevented them from establishing a stable mission in Tonkin. When MEP bishops Pallu and Lambert de la Motte were put in charge of the missions in Annam, they invited the Spanish Dominicans from Manila to


127 The “disobedience of the Jesuits” caused scandal among the faithful, and at least several of them were recalled to Macau in 1680 (e.g., Giuseppe Candone and Bartolomeo D’Acosta in Cochinchina; Dominico Fuciti and Emmanuel Ferreya in Tonkin). The matter was finally settled in the 1690s. See Đỗ Quang Chính, 351-364; Forest, 152-53, 161-67.

help with evangelization.  This invitation was meant to balance out the mission field that so far had been in the hands of the Jesuits and, more importantly, to dispel any suspicion that the MEP wanted to replace Portuguese dominance with the French presence. On July 7, 1676, two Dominican friars, Joan de Arjona and Juan de Santa Cruz, arrived in Phố Hiến. Territorial disputes with the MEP priests almost eliminated the Dominican presence in Tonkin. The Dominicans would continue to send the friars there only after they had secured a promise that they would be free to evangelize in the coastal areas. Even though only two Dominicans were present in Tonkin for the next decade, they were active and converted many peasants.

When François Deydier was appointed the apostolic vicar of East Tonkin in 1679, the friars refused to submit to his authority. The conflict ended with Deydier’s death in 1693. More Dominican friars came to Tonkin, but the Holy See was reluctant to appoint a Spaniard to lead the East Tonkin vicariate for fear of being under the control of the padroado system again. Eventually a compromise was made. In 1698 an Italian friar

129 Compared to the Jesuit and MEP, the Dominican mission in Tonkin is understudied, especially if one takes into account their continuous presence in Vietnam for more than 300 years. The eastern part of Tonkin has been under their pastoral care since the eighteenth century. More research is needed in various archives in Avila and Manila. For a standard account of the Dominicans in Vietnam, consult Marcos Gispert, Historia de las Misiones Dominicanas en el Tungkin (Avila, 1928). For a recent account, see Bùi Đức Sinh, Dòng Da Minh trên Đất Việt [Dominicans in Vietnamese] (Saigon: Chân Lý, 1972, rpt. 1993).

130 After a year the two Dominicans left the mission, but Juan de Santa Cruz returned two years later and stayed in Tonkin until he died in 1721. In 1716 he was appointed the apostolic vicar of East Tonkin. For his biography, see Marillier, Nos pères dans la foi, Vol. 2: 111-112.


132 For his biography, see Marillier, Nos pères dans la foi, Vol. 2: 73-74.
Raimondo Lezoli was appointed apostolic vicar.\textsuperscript{133} When Lezoli died in 1706, the vicariate remained vacant for ten years until it was filled by the Spaniard missionary Juan de Santa Cruz, who had been working in Tonkin for 40 years. After Cruz, another Italian, Tommaso Sextri, was appointed apostolic vicar in 1721.\textsuperscript{134} This Italian Dominican bishop was opposed by many Spanish Dominicans, who believed he granted too many favors to his compatriots, especially when he gave a mission territory that previously belonged to the Spanish Dominicans to a new group of Italian missionaries — the Discalced Augustinians.

These Italian Augustinians came to Tonkin from China in 1701 and faced opposition from the Spanish Dominicans.\textsuperscript{135} The resentment of the Dominicans escalated when a member of the Augustinians, Hilario Costa, better known by his religious name Hilario di Gesù, was consecrated by Sextri to be his successor in 1736.\textsuperscript{136} Hilario di Gesù Costa was a wise man and a capable pastor. Still, the Spanish Dominicans begrudged a non-Dominican, non-Spanish bishop and complained to Rome. The situation got worse when Hilario Costa died in March 1754 and another Italian, Adriano di Santa Thecla, took temporary charge of the vicariate of East Tonkin.\textsuperscript{137} The long struggle between the Dominicans and the Augustinians ended only with the appointment of another Spaniard

\textsuperscript{133} He was the only Italian among the six Dominican missionaries in Tonkin at the time. For his biography, see Marillier, \textit{Nos pères dans la foi}, Vol. 2: 112-113.

\textsuperscript{134} For his biography, see Marillier, \textit{Nos pères dans la foi}, Vol. 2: 113-114.

\textsuperscript{135} On the activities of the Discalced Augustinians in Tonkin, see Dror, \textit{A Study of Religion}, 22-25.

\textsuperscript{136} For his biography see Marillier, \textit{Nos pères dans la foi}, Vol. 2: 124-126.

\textsuperscript{137} For his biography see Marillier, \textit{Nos pères dans la foi}, Vol. 2: 126-127.
Dominican, Santiago Hernandez, to govern the missions in East Tonkin. In 1763, the Italian Augustinians were given a choice of submitting to Spanish authority, or leaving the country. The last Augustinian in East Tonkin was Adriano di Santa Thecla who remained in Tonkin until his death because of old age.

Reception of Christianity in Tonkin

Social Impacts of Christianity

Since its inception in Tonkin Christianity quickly became a popular movement among the masses, who were tired of warfare and chaos. Catholicism was able to fill the spiritual and moral vacuum as the traditional religions had declined and were unable to respond effectively to the needs of the suffering masses. The Jesuit missionaries found in the native culture favorable conditions for the plantation of the new faith. These conditions – the traditional worship of Heaven, strong family and communal bonds, an ethics compatible with the Ten Commandments, a spirit of religiosity and devotion, an emphasis on rituals, and a belief in the afterlife and karma (i.e., cosmic reward and punishment) – were all seen as congruent with the Gospel message. However, the traditional religions also carried elements incompatible with Christian monotheism. Early missionaries carefully distinguished between superstitious practices (e.g., geomancy for siting grave, burning paper money, divination for “auspicious” time and

date for marriage or starting a business, etc.) and legitimate cultural ceremonies (e.g.,
honoring the deceased, marriage custom, etc.).

Central to Confucian orthodoxy are the relational ethics of Three Bonds and Five
Norms (tam cương ngũ thường). These ethics were seen as foundational to social
stability. Any new school of thought or religion had to be measured against them. Since
Christian missionaries insisted on monogamy, concubinage was forbidden. This caused
resentment among the upper classes, and especially among the strict adherents of
Confucianism. Polygamy was permitted in Confucianism because it was considered a
moral duty to have a male heir in order to continue ancestor worship. If a wife failed to
produce a son, the husband was free (or morally obligated) to take a second (or third)
wife. When Christian converts were asked to let go of their wives other than the first
one, the ruling class saw it as a challenge to their Confucian norm.

The Christian emphasis on monotheism was interpreted as disruptive to
community bonds. Christian missionaries advocated devotion to a single God to the
exclusion of national and local deities. This attitude was contrary to the village norms
which expect everyone to participate in the religious activities of the village. Central to
the religious life of the village was the cult of tutelary deities (thành hoàng), the village
protectors. Just as every village had to have its leader, it also had to have its spirit-

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139 The Three Bonds (tam cương) are the social obligations between ruler and subject, father and son, and
husband and wife. The Five Norms (ngũ thường) can either refer to (1) Five Moral Relations (ngũ lương) to
be maintained, i.e., proper behaviors between ruler and subject (quân thần), father and son (phụ tử),
husband and wife (phu phụ), older and younger brothers (huynh đệ), and between friends (bằng hữu), or (2)
Five Moral Virtues (ngũ đức): humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness. The
classics contain grounds for both interpretations, although the latter is more common.

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protectors. When Christian converts refused to participate in village ceremonies and held separated liturgies and customs, they were seen as undermining social harmony.

The issues surrounding the cult of ancestors were more complicated. Everyone had to practice the way of filiality (đạo hiếu), which was considered a basic social and religious duty of all Vietnamese regardless of class and religious organizations. The elaborate funeral rituals and memorial services were seen as expressions of this filiality. Like their confreres in China, the Jesuits in both parts of Annam quickly recognized the important place of the cult of ancestors among the Vietnamese, and they were willing to modify the traditional practices of funerals and memorial services, purging them of their “superstitious elements” and replacing them with Christian practices.

With the arrival of MEP and Dominican missionaries to Vietnam after 1664, ancestor worship became a religious and theological bone of contention. These later missionaries, like their counterparts in China, considered the cult of ancestors to be acts of idolatry and superstition. The offering of food on the altar of the deceased and prostrations before this altar were prohibited by these zealous missionaries. In extreme cases, the converts were instructed to destroy ancestral tablets. The ban on expressing filial piety before the altar of the ancestors caused extreme anxiety. The failure to practice filiality was one of the ten major crimes specified in the Lê Code and could inflict a penalty from caning to execution, depending on the level of the offense.¹⁴⁰ The so-called Rites Controversy started in Annam within forty years after the Jesuit arrival to

¹⁴⁰ Lê Code, Article 2. Nguyen Ngoc Huy et al., 110.
Tonkin. The Confucian elite, eager to defend the traditional way of life, saw the absence of ancestral tablets in Christian homes as the ultimate betrayal of Vietnamese culture.

**Relationship with the Ruling Authority**

Despite the early success of Jesuit missions among the Tonkinese peasants, the new religion was viewed cautiously by the ruling authority. At first, the Confucian ruling elite approached Christianity with curiosity. Unlike the masses, they were neither attracted to nor repulsed by this new doctrine. The Jesuits were successful in converting several prominent members of the ruling households, but in far smaller proportion than the peasants and the lower-rank members of the literati. The Trịnh lords were more fascinated by the missionaries’ gifts than by their religious teaching. Unlike in Cochinchina, the missionaries in Tonkin did not win a court appointment, despite the fact that they were drawn from the same pool of highly educated Jesuit missionaries sent to East Asia, and many had served in China and elsewhere. Yet, somehow the Lê-Trịnh sovereigns did not have any use for Jesuit scientists. The presence of missionaries and their freedom to propagate the Christian religion were tolerated to suit the Trịnh’s political purpose of securing military and commercial trading with the West.

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141 While no Jesuits in Tonkin served in the Lê’s or the Trịnh’s courts, in Cochinchina at least a dozen Jesuits had served the Nguyễn between 1673-1773 as court physicians, mathematicians, and astronomers: Bartholomeu da Costa (physician, 1673-1695), Juan Antonio de Arnedo (mathematician, 1699-1712), Giambattista Sanna (physician, 1724), Sebastiao Pires (physician, 1720-?), Francisco de Lima (1720-?), Francisco da Costa (1738-1750), Johann Siebert (physician and astronomer, 1738-45), Josef Neugebauer (astronomer 1740-1749), Johann Koffler (physician and astronomer, 1741-1755), Xavier de Monteiro (mathematician, 1742-1750, 1752, 1760-76), and Joaõ de Loureiro (physician and mathematician, 1742-50, 1752-1778). Đỗ Quang Chính, 536-546.
The introduction of Christianity also aroused the concern of the ruling classes. Various economic and political concerns prompted the Trịnh of Tonkin and the Nguyễn of Cochinchina to suspect that the missionaries were working for their enemies.\footnote{De Rhodes recounts that once Trịnh Tráng recognized that the Portuguese could not abandon their long relationship with the people in Cochinchina, his early toleration waned. \textit{Histoire du royaume de Tunquin}, Chapter X: 189.}

Rumors that Vietnamese Catholics were more loyal to the missionaries than to their own king and lord aroused suspicion among the ruling class. Unable to distinguish between different countries of the West, and more importantly the difference between spiritual and political allegiances, the ruling authorities considered Catholic Christianity the “religion of the Portuguese” (đạo Hoa Lang) and the Roman Pontiff was “the king of the Portugal.”\footnote{De Rhodes himself tried to dispel any connection between the new religion and Portugal in his 1651 catechism. He wrote: “Do not say that this law (religion) is the law of the Portuguese. The holy law of the Lord of Heaven is a light greater and older than the light of the sun itself... The holy law (religion) of God, though it has appeared to others kingdom first, should not be seen as belonging to this or that kingdom, but as the holy law of God, the Lord of all things. It is a law nobler and older than any kingdom whatsoever.” \textit{Cathechismus}, First day (Phan’s translation in \textit{Mission and Catechesis}, 233).} Also, since both the Trịnh and Nguyễn needed the missionaries to be liaisons for foreign trade, and especially for firearm, the fate of missionaries depended on how successful they were in procuring trade. When the rulers did not get what they needed, they forbade the “religion of the Portuguese” and expelled its missionaries.

Motivated by factors such as religious zealosity, political rivalry, and fear of national instability and foreign influence, Tonkinese rulers repeatedly issued edicts against Christianity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.\footnote{A rare work in English on this subject is John R. Shortland, \textit{The Persecutions of Annam: A History of Christianity in CochinChina and Tonking} (London: Burns and Oates, 1875). See also Adrien Launay, \textit{Les Missionnaires Français au Tonkin} (Paris, 1900). These two works, however, focused more on the events of the nineteenth centuries than on the earlier persecutions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.} The Trịnh acted
against the missionaries as early as 1628, isolating them from the believers, then expelling them the following year. In 1650, Trịnh Tạc issued an edict prohibiting foreigners to mingle with Vietnamese. He also forbade missionary activities and ordered the destruction of Christian churches and religious books. Before the end of the seventeenth century, there were sporadic proscriptions of Christianity in Thăng Long and Phố Hiến, depending on the attitude of the Trinh toward Westerners. These persecutions were, however, not serious because the Trinh still needed the missionaries as liaisons with merchants. The first serious interdiction was an imperial edict in 1663, ordering the expulsion of all missionaries and prohibiting Christians from practicing their religion. Although this ban was reiterated in 1669, it did not take effect because Trịnh Căn did not really enforce it until 1696.

The political climate changed in the eighteenth century, however. Since most Western commercial companies had left Tonkin by the 1690s, missionaries were no longer useful as mediators for trade with the West. Their presence in Tonkin was seen as subversion to the state, especially after the Trinh found out that French missionaries were

145 De Rhodes, *Histoire du royaume de Tunkin*, 211, 213-15, 221-222. Fortunately a Portuguese ship showed up in 1629 and brought de Rhodes and Marquez back to Thang Long. However they had to leave Tonkin the following year.


147 *Cuong Muc*, chính biên, XXXIII: 6; *Toan Thu*, băn ký tục biên, XIX: 4a-4b.


149 *Cuong Muc*, chính biên, XXXIV: 35. Also see Launay, *Histoire de la mission du Tonkin*, 401-402.
involved in a plot against the king of Siam in 1685. Consequently, earlier Christian prohibitions were reiterated and enforced. At first the punishment was expelling the missionaries and caning the converts. However, after seeing that missionaries still tried to come back to Tonkin and carry out clandestine activities, the court had them and their collaborators executed. In 1712 the Trịnh began a systematic persecution of Christianity. Missionaries reported that Christian persecutions under the Lê-Trịnh rule increased in frequency and severity, especially in 1723, 1736-37, 1741, 1745, 1754, 1773, 1775, and 1778-79. During this period, missionaries and Vietnamese Christians were killed. Since many uprisings broke out across Tonkin during the same period, the Trịnh tried to eliminate any subversive element.

Despite the persecutions Christianity continued to expand in the rural areas. By 1754, the Church in Tonkin had grown to two vicariates with a combination of 21 missionaries (6 MEP, 2 Dominicans, 3 Augustinians, and 10 Jesuits), 46 indigenous clergy (32 secular priests, 7 Dominicans, 3 Augustinians, and 4 Jesuits), a handful of catechists, and a conservative estimation of 40,000 Christians. Thirty years later, a

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150 Chapuis, A History of Vietnam, 170; Dutton, The Tây Sơn Uprising, 177.

151 Seven Jesuits were martyred for their faith in the years of 1723 and 1737 (Đỗ Quang Chính, 401-416). A number of Dominicans were put on trial and executed in 1745 and 1773.

152 The 1712 imperial edict stipulated that Christians were to be tattooed on the face with four words “họa Hoa Lang đạo” [followers of the Portuguese religion]. Cuong Muc, chính biên, XXXV: 11.

153 While figures for missionaries executed are well-recorded, the number of local is less well-known. For a listing of Christians killed in both Cochinchina and Tonkin from 1630 to 1858, see De Montézon and Estève, Mission de la Cochinchine et du Tonquin, List 9, pp. 399-407.

154 André Marillier, Nos pères dans la foi, Vol. 3: 149-151.
1784 count placed the number of Christians once again at between 350,000 and 400,000.\textsuperscript{156} Christians constituted a visible minority in a population that ranged between 5.5 and 8 millions.\textsuperscript{157}

**Confucianism versus Christianity**

Although state security and public order triggered a number of Christian repressions, many more were carried out in part because Vietnamese rulers, both in Tonkin and Cochinchina, saw in the new religion a threat to the established social and moral norms derived from Confucianism. To the Confucian rulers, Christians were separatists and their doctrines and practices a threat to society, and therefore ought to be banned. The reason given in many of the edicts against Christianity was that this “religion of the Portuguese” or đạo Hoa Lang was incompatible with traditional morality. Of course, the new religion also threatened the interests of some groups — magicians, monks, concubines, mandarins — who did not hesitate to use their influence and slander to persuade the Confucian rulers to prohibit Christianity and expel missionaries. However, one of the main concerns was to preserve Confucian morality. Trịnh Tạc (r. 1657-82) was a devout Confucian and so were his successors Trịnh Căn (r. 1683-1708)

\textsuperscript{155} Meyere to Lacere, June 9, 1754 (AMEP, Vol. 700, ff 221-222). Cited by George Dutton in *The Tây Sơn Uprising*, 179 n. 25. Dutton suggests that the number reflects perhaps a century of active proscription against Christianity and a more strict definition of who could count as a Christian. Data for the eighteenth-century was notoriously unreliable because there was a considerable debate between different missionaries about the inclusion of lapsed or uncommitted Christians during the persecutions.

\textsuperscript{156} La Mothe to Deson, June 15, 1784 (AMEP, Vol. 700, f 1208). Cited by Dutton, 179 n. 26.

\textsuperscript{157} Tana Li estimates a population of 5.6 million for Tonkin in 1750 (*Nguyễn Cochinchina*, p. 171). Alain Forest, based on MEP accounts, gives a higher estimation, about 8 million in 1766 (*Histoires du Tonkin*, p. 56).
and Trịnh Cương (r. 1709-29). Consequently, they felt obligated to protect the people from being corrupted by the “barbaric” customs of the new religion.

To understand Confucian anxiety about Catholicism, it would be helpful to examine the comments of the official history Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư [Complete History of the Great Viet] on the 1663 decree against Christianity:

In the tenth month [of the year quy-mão (1663)] an edict was issued prohibiting the people of our country from following the Western religion (đạo Hoa Lang). In the past, a Westerner came to our country to establish this strange religion to deceive naïve people. Many stupid men and women followed it. In their schools [i.e., churches], people mingle together; there is no separation between men and women. We have driven out their religious teachers, but since their religious books and schools [churches] still remain, their bad customs have not changed. Now it must be prohibited.¹⁵⁸

More than a hundred years later, this official view of Christianity remained unchanged.

The 1785 edict by the Tây Sơn king Nguyễn Nhạc states similar attitudes against Christianity in Cochinchina:

The followers of this sect [Christianity] do not recognize the [authority of] their father and king… They neither respect our ordinances nor worship our tutelary spirits; they gather at night to recite books and prayers. Men and women mingle together without being [properly] separated, and they are not ashamed of such behaviors. They are lazy and do not work, doing nothing to procure the goods and inheritances. Finally, they take no shame in being punished.¹⁵⁹

Thus, besides political motives, the ban of Christianity reflected a clash between Christian morality and the Vietnamese culture. There appears to be a causal link between

¹⁵⁸ My translation. Toàn Thư, bản kỷ, XIX: 4a-4b.

preserving the interests of orthodox Confucianism and the repression of Christianity. The rise and fall of Confucianism affected how its adherents viewed other religions. In eighteenth-century Tonkin, Confucian thinkers and officials advocated the harmony of the Three Religions, and, even if they did not personally like Buddhists and Daoists, they did not persecute them. While there is some evidence for the purging of Buddhism and Taoism of what were regarded as superstitious elements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Confucian elite never viewed these religions as a threat to their own hegemony. Christian converts, on the other hand, seemed to be willing to let go of rituals and social practices that had been cherished by generations of Confucians. When Christianity, with its link to foreign powers and its defiance of Confucian social practices, became a competing voice in society, its suppression by the political authorities was inevitable.\textsuperscript{160}

\textbf{The Chinese Rites Controversy}

The events of the Chinese Rites Controversy (1645-1939)\textsuperscript{161} are well documented but there is no consensus on how to interpret them.\textsuperscript{162} In essence, the Controversy

\textsuperscript{160} Ta Van Tai, \textit{The Vietnamese Tradition of Human Rights} (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1988), 146-176.

\textsuperscript{161} While the Controversy certainly started before 1645 (and continued after 1939 in some parts of Asia), the given dates mark the official ecclesiastical responses to the Controversy.

\textsuperscript{162} Since the eighteenth century, the literature on the Chinese Rites Controversy has grown enormously. For an introduction and summary of the issues involved, see George Minamiki, \textit{The Chinese Rites Controversy from Its beginning until modern Times} (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985); D.E. Mungello, ed., \textit{The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning}, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series, 30 (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994). On official documents related to the Controversy, see 100
concerns three separate but related issues: (1) the proper names for God – the so-called “term question;” (2) the rites of veneration to Confucius and the ancestors; (3) the participation of Christians in “pagan” rites. The “term question” was not a concern for the Chinese; it remained a quarrel mainly among missionaries or European intellectuals. The other two issues, however, affected not only Chinese converts but also how Christianity was received in other parts of Asia. They affected two different groups of people. Whereas the veneration of Confucius concerned the literati class almost exclusively, the cult of ancestors had profound consequences on the relationship of Asian converts of all classes to their non-Christian relatives and fellow countrymen.

The details of the Controversy as it played out in China and Europe deserve a special treatment in the history of the development of Christianity in Asia. Here, I will give a summary only of those events and issues that shed light on the attitude of the author of *The Errors of Three Religions* regarding the traditional rites of Vietnam.

**The China Mission and Jesuit Accommodation**

When Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and his Jesuit confreres arrived in China during the later years of the Ming dynasty, they found that both a state cult of Confucius and the

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163 The “term question” started with Charles Maigrot’s Mandate of 1693 when he forbade the use of *Tian* or *Shangdi* or *Taiji* to designate God. For Maigrot, only *Tianzhu* was the legitimate Chinese expression of *Deus*; the other terms were to be rejected. His opinion was later upheld by Rome in its 1704, 1715, and 1742 decisions. Maigrot’s objection of the use of *Jing Tian* (*Veneration of Heaven*) in Christian churches incurred the wrath of emperor Kangxi in 1706.
veneration of ancestors were widely practiced in Chinese society. Knowing that they did not operate in a religious vacuum, the Jesuits could not afford to clash head-on with an institution that underlay the social fabric of China. If they were to gain access to the Chinese upper class, Ricci realized that the Jesuits would have to make accommodations to allow the continuation of these rites.

Of course, not all people agreed with Ricci. Ricci’s successor, Nicolò Longobardo (1565-1655), thought Ricci’s approach overly permissive that could lead to the dilution of Christian doctrines. Post-Tridentine Catholicism laid a great emphasis on orthodoxy. What were seen as cultural norms and practices by some Jesuits could be viewed by others as expressions of idolatry or superstition. The Jesuits held a conference in Jiading, Zhejiang province in 1628 to discuss how much accommodation could be tolerated and specifically what elements could be allowed.

The dispute about the rites was not confined to the Jesuits alone. With the arrival of the Dominican friars to Fujian in 1630, the debate escalated. Besides the rivalry among religious orders, the friars from Manila held a different view on how to deal with Chinese traditional rites. Based on their experience of working with Chinese immigrants

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164 For a discussion on Longobardo, see Paul Rule, *K’ung Tzu or Confucius?* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 77-88. It is important to note that although Longobardo disagreed with Ricci on the method of accommodation, he still saw its importance; the main question was about its limits.

165 Until this time, China mission was entrusted exclusively to the Jesuits based on the *padroado* system. Following the decision by Clement VIII in 1630 to make the China mission available to the friars, Franciscans were eager to go back to the land where they had labored three hundred years earlier. The Dominicans also wanted to enter China by any means they could. Their attempts to evangelize China were not without obstacles. As the Jesuits did not allow them access through Macao, the friars had to find other ways into China. See John Willis, Jr. “From Manila to Fuan,” in *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, 111-128; Eugenio Menegon, “Jesuits, Franciscans and Dominicans in Fujian: The Anti-Christian Incidents of 1637-1638,” in *Scholar From The West*, ed. Tizziana Lippielo and Roman Malek (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1997), 219-262.
in Manila, the friars were uncompromising in condemning the practice of the Jesuits as yielding to superstition.¹⁶⁶ The style and method of evangelization of the friars broke the fragile religious situation in Fu-an that had been set up by the Jesuit Giulio Aleni (1582-1649). Anti-Christian violence broke out in 1637-38 in Fu-an, confirming the Jesuits’ fear that the friars were troublemakers. After the incident, Juan Bautista Morales (1597-1664), a Dominican who had served in China since 1633, left the mainland and returned to Manila. Frustrated by what he saw in Fujian, Morales took his case to Rome to challenge the Jesuit missionary practices.¹⁶⁷ Based on an evaluation of seventeen questions (quaesita)¹⁶⁸ submitted by Morales in 1643, the Propaganda Fide issued a decree in 1645 forbidding the cult of Confucius and the ancestors among baptized Catholics on the grounds that these practices were religious ceremonies incompatible with the Catholic faith.

Alarmed by the news of the condemnation of the Chinese Rites, the Jesuits in China sent one of their own, Martino Martini (1614-1661), to Rome to defend their


¹⁶⁸ In February 1643 Morales submitted to Propaganda Fide a list of seventeen questions concerning: 1) fast, yearly confession and communion, and holidays; 2) sacramentals in administering baptism and extreme unction; 3-5) interest, usury and usurers; 6) contributions to pagan sacrifices and festivals; 7) cult of Chenghuang; 8) cult of Confucius; 9) ancestor worship; 10) serving and feeding the dead as if they were living; 11) ancestral tablet; 12) funerals; instruction of Catechumens concerning the illicit nature of such rites; 14) the use of the adjective sheng (holy); 15) worship and obeisance before the tablet set in honor of the emperor; 16) licitness of prayers and sacrifices for relatives who died as pagans; 17) preaching Christ crucified. See Rosso, Apostolic Legations to China, 111-112.
practices. Martini left China in 1651 but was not able to appeal to the Holy Office until four years later. He argued that Morales had misrepresented the Chinese Rites. In 1656, in response to Martini’s challenge of four of Morales’ seventeen propositions – those specifically dealing with the rites to Confucius and ancestors – the Holy Office issued another decree allowing Chinese Catholics to participate in the rites “as long as they are not doing anything superstitious.” This new decree reversed the prohibitions but did not nullify the 1645 decree. Back in China, the issue became the contention between two missionary methods: Ricci’s accommodation method and its alternative.

Rome was aware of the delicate nature of the issue. Three years later, Propaganda Fide issued an instruction to the newly appointed apostolic vicars of South China, Tonkin, and Cochinchina. The instruction asks the missionaries not to force Christian converts to abandon traditional rites and customs unless these practices were openly contrary to Catholic faith and morals. In effect, the instruction stipulated that missionaries must accommodate to the native practices, not judge or condemn them blindly, and not change what is not contrary to the faith, for “nothing causes more hatred and alienation than changing customs of a country.” Nevertheless, this guidance did not solve the Rites questions because it was up to the individual missionary’s interpretation of the nature of these rites.

169 100 Roman Documents, (Document #2), 6.

170 Translation by Peter Phan in Mission and Catechesis, 193-194. See also Minamiki, The Chinese Rites Controversy, 31-32; 100 Roman Documents, (Document #30), 6-7.
Meanwhile, in China persecutions broke out against the Christians. In 1667, in the aftermath of a local persecution, nineteen Jesuits and four friars were exiled to Canton and confined there. Taking advantage of their time together they held a conference (The Canton Conferences) on the missionary strategies to be adopted in China. After 40 days, they produced 42 articles regarding baptism, fasting, catechetical instruction, the calendar of feasts, the burning of idols, etc. Regarding the rites to Confucius and veneration of ancestors, they voted on following the 1656 instruction to have these practices be followed unconditionally (omnino).\textsuperscript{171} The Dominican who approved the articles, Domingo Fernandez Navarette (1618-1689), later changed his mind when he returned to Spain.

The head of the Dominicans in the Phillipines Juan Polanco asked Rome whether the decree of 1645 had been annulled by the decree of 1656, for the latter appeared to contradict the former. Through the Holy Office Clement XI decided that both decrees had to be observed “according to the questions, circumstances, and everything set down in them.”\textsuperscript{172} The fact that the Holy Office issued a notice in 1669 affirming both of the decrees of 1645 and 1656 showed the reluctance and ambivalence on the part of the Roman authorities to take sides on such complex interpretations of the Chinese rites. As a result, nothing was decided and the matter was by default left to the consciences of the missionaries. Meanwhile, Navarette found people supporting his ideas in Madrid, and in

\textsuperscript{171} Minamiki, 33.

\textsuperscript{172} 100 Roman Documents, (Document #4), 7.
1676, he published a tract attacking the Jesuits’ missionary methods, opening up the debate to European intellectuals.\footnote{Cummins, A Question of Rites: Friar Domingo Navarette and the Jesuits in China (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1993).}

**Caught Between Church and State Politics**

The next significant event on the question of the rites was the protest against the 1693 mandate of the MEP Bishop Charles Maigrot (1652-1730), the apostolic vicar of Fujian.\footnote{For a translation of this Mandate (March 26, 1693), see Claudia von Collani, “Charles Maigrot’s Role in the Chinese Rites Controversy,” in The Chinese Rites Controversy, 152-154. It is also incorporated as the first part of the 1704 response from Rome, see 100 Documents, (Document #6), 8-9.} Maigrot was determined to put an end to the different opinions on the rites. By requiring all missionaries in his vicariate to affirm the 1645 prohibitions of the rites of Confucius and ancestors, the matter moved from a theological dispute to the level of a juridical affair. Maigrot contended that the description of the rites given by Martini in 1656 decree “did not represent the truth in many things.”\footnote{Minamiki, 29.}

Maigrot’s unilateral decision, without any consultation with the local clergy, caused a great storm among Chinese Christians. Maigrot’s mandate challenged the status quo set up by the Holy Office’s 1669 notice. His supporters in Europe petitioned the Holy Office to reopen the case in 1697. This time, with the new ammunition from Navarette’s tract, the faculty at the Sorbonne became involved in the case and argued forcefully against the Jesuit position. In reaction, the Beijing Jesuits drew support from the emperor Kangxi (r. 1662-1722). They petitioned the emperor to issue a clarification
on the rites. In 1700 Kangxi issued an imperial edict affirming that the rites had only a civil and not religious meaning. After a prolonged investigation, Rome made up its mind. By the time Kangxi’s declaration reached Rome, it was too late to change the course of events.

In 1704, the Holy Office issued a ruling (with the approval of Pope Clement XI) reaffirming the 1645 condemnation and upholding Maigrot’s 1693 mandate. The rites should be condemned because of their essentially religious nature, being “tainted with superstition.” In a nutshell, the 1704 decree stipulated the following:

1. Christians may not “preside, serve or be present” at solemn rites for Confucius, nor may they participate in rites on full and new moons, nor when officials received titles and offices, nor when successful candidates received degrees.

2. Christians may not “perform, serve or be present” at the oblation, rites and ceremonies before spirit tablets, whether at home or grave, whether in company of non-Christians or separately, because “all these things are inseparable from superstition.”

3. However, Christians are allowed “mere material presence or participation” providing they do not give approval to the ceremonies, and where hostility an enmity to the faith may result if they fail to attend.

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176 For the full text see Rosso, 138-40; Minamiki, 40-41.

177 100 Roman Documents, (Document #6, Article 4), 21.

178 100 Roman Documents, (Document #6, Article 4), 21-22.
4. Ceremonies on behalf of the dead are not to be condemned where there is no real superstition and ceremonies are “within limits of civil and political rites.”

5. The local church authorities should determine which ceremonies are permissible and under what conditions and should strive to replace pagan practices with those of the Church.

6. The spirit tablets are permitted in the home only when nothing on them suggests that the souls of the departed reside in them and when an expression of the Christian belief regarding the dead and Christian piety toward deceased parents and ancestors are displayed.

Charles Thomas Maillard de Tournon (1668-1710) was appointed papal legate and sent to Asia to enforce the decree on all missionaries. Kangxi was eager to find out Rome’s reaction. De Tournon met with the emperor three times but was evasive on the matter. Realizing that he did not have all the facts at hand, de Tournon sent Maigrot to discuss the matter with the emperor. Kangxi summoned Maigrot and examined his knowledge of Confucius’s teaching, the rites, and the Chinese language. Maigrot failed the test and was banished from China. The emperor then decreed that beginning in 1706, any missionary who wanted to remain in China must have a “certificate” (piao) issued by the imperial court and promise to follow Ricci’s accommodating practice.

179 100 Roman Documents, (Document #6, Article 4), 22.

180 100 Roman Documents, (Document #6, Article 5), 22.
Tournon was in Nanking when he learned of the certification requirement. In January 1707, he issued his own instructions (regula) requiring missionaries to respond negatively to the questions about the sacrifices to Confucius and the ancestors, the use of tablets to honor the ancestors, and the compatibility of the Chinese rites with the Christian religion. The penalty for disobeying Tournon’s instructions was automatic excommunication. The missionaries were put in a difficult choice between being excommunicated and being banished from China.

Tournon’s mission to China was a failure. It polarized the missionary community and solidified dissension among them. Determined to put an end to all the quarrels, Clement XI upheld Tournon’s 1707 mandate and reaffirmed the 1704 ruling in a decree in 1710. The pope enforced his decision in the papal bull Ex Illa Die on March 19, 1715. This document rehearses the arguments for condemning the Chinese rites in no uncertain terms and demands complete obedience from all missionaries and clergy in China on pain of suspension, interdiction, and excommunication. All missionaries and local clergy were required to swear obedience to Clement XI’s Constitution (i.e., the 1704 decree) as a condition of their apostolate. After a long delay, the decrees of 1704, 1710, and 1715 were finally promulgated in Beijing until 1716. When the emperor found out about

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181 100 Roman Documents, (Document #8), 27-29. Furthermore, Tournon issued a decree in 1708 stipulating that no one could be a missionary to China or the Far East without his permission. Tournon was banished from China by imperial order and was confined in Macao until his death in 1710.

182 Since the texts of 1704 and 1710 were included in the 1715 bull and were not promulgated until its appearance, it is probable that most missionaries did not know about them except through the interpretation of Tournon. For these texts, see 100 Roman Documents (Document #24), 50-54.
their content, he was indignant. He sent the bishop of Beijing to Canton to collect all copies of the documents and send them back to the pope.183

Concerned that China would face mass apostasy, Clement XI sent another legation to the court of Beijing, this time led by Carlo Ambrogio Mezzabarba (1685-1741) to ask permission for missionaries to preach an “unadulterated faith” (i.e., without any accommodation). After arriving in China in 1720, Mezzabarba was given an audience with Kangxi, but he could not change the emperor’s mind. As a compromise, before leaving China Mezzabarba wrote a pastoral letter to all bishops, apostolic vicars and missionaries in China, allowing the following Eight Permissions which he felt Christians could in good conscience observe:

1. Christians may have funeral tablets inscribed with the names of the deceased, provided that the Christian view of death was made clear and all proper measures taken to avoid scandals.

2. Civil ceremonies for the dead are permitted if devoid of superstition.

3. The civil cult to Confucius and the tablet in his honor, with the burning of incense and placing foods before the tablet, is permitted if devoid of superstitious inscriptions and accompanied by a declaration of faith.

4. Candles and incense are permitted at funerals if explanations are given in writing.

5. Genuflections and prostrations are allowed before a “corrected tablet” and before the coffin.

183 Minamiki, 56.
6. Foods may be placed on the tables in front of the coffin with the corrected tablet provided there is adequate explanation that all this is done to show piety and respect for the deceased.

7. “Kowtow” is permitted before corrected tablets on the Chinese New Year as well as at other times.

8. Candles and incense may be used before tombs and corrected tablets with necessary precaution.  

This pastoral letter, written in Latin, was not to be translated or disclosed publicly. These permissions caused confusion because each local church interpreted them differently. The bishop of Beijing followed suit with his pastoral letter, allowing certain practices in the spirit of the Eight Permissions. Fearing that these practices would undermine the papal position, Clement XII revoked the Eight Permissions in 1735. His successor Benedict XIV forbade further discussions concerning the rites in the papal bull *Ex Quo Singulari*, issued on July 11, 1742. All missionaries were required to take an oath of submission to the papal decree, promising never to allow the Chinese rites and ceremonies to be practiced by the people under their care.  

Two centuries later, the Holy See reversed its position by affirming that certain aspects of the traditional rites are an integrated part of traditional cultures in the Sinic world. The decree *Plane Compertum Est*, issued on December 8, 1939, declares that rites to Confucius and by extension to the ancestors are “civil” in nature and acceptable to

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184 For the listing, see *100 Documents*, (Document #24), 55-56; Minamiki, 64-65.

185 For the text of the oath, see *100 Documents*, (Document # 24), 53.
Catholics. Catholic magistrates and students are permitted passively to attend public ceremonies honoring Confucius and national heroes. Furthermore, it is licit and unobjectionable to bow or show other manifestations of civil observance, for example, offering incense before the deceased or their images. Had the Holy See listened to the explanation given by Emperor Kangxi in 1700 that these rites are integrated into the social fabric and self-understanding of the Chinese (and by extension, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Korean) and reached some compromises — for example, allowing Mezzabarba’s Eight Permissions to continue — the growth of Christian evangelization in China and Vietnam would have reached a different magnitude.

The Controversy has been blamed on the rivalry between two great religious orders — the Jesuits and the Dominicans. In reality, at issue was not simply the rivalry between the Jesuits and their opponents (although this did harden their positions both in the missions and back in Europe), or different missionary strategies. The crucial problem was one of interpretation. A particular rite was permitted or forbidden depending on whether it was judged to be a “civic and political” duty or a “religious” act. The questions and arguments were difficult to sort out because of the various perspectives of different agents: Western theologians, Catholic missionaries, Neo-Confucian scholars, lower-gentry class, and the common people. Depending on the local practices, these views could be in harmony or at odds with one another (even within a group). This was reflected in Rome’s ambivalence which perpetuated the confusion and heightened the rivalry among missionary groups.
The Rites Controversy in Vietnam

The aftermath of the Chinese Rites Controversy forced the missionaries as well as the native clergy to rethink what was superstitious and what was acceptable practice, even in something as sacred to the Vietnamese as funeral rites. Of all the issues regarding the Chinese Rites Controversy, only three concerned Vietnam: offerings to ancestor, worship in front of ancestral tablets, and sacrifices to Confucius and tutelary deities. The absolute prohibitions on the issues of ancestor worship have had tremendous repercussions in Vietnam. It put them in direct confrontation with the laws and customs of the land, and was partly responsible for feeding the anti-Christian sentiment that resulted in the killing of thousands of believers.

The practice of filial piety is no doubt characteristic of Vietnamese religious and ethical duty. It was considered the foundational virtue for maintaining harmony within the society. If a person practiced filiality, he or she could be expected to be respectful and loyal as well. Thus, no one, from the king to his lowliest subject, wanted to be accused of being unfilial. Being filial is important when one’s parents were alive, but it was even more important to remember and serve them after death. To a Vietnamese observer, Christians appeared not to honor their parents because they failed to make offerings and sacrifices or keep external signs of mourning according to the Vietnamese customs, such as prostrating in front of the deceased and partaking in the memorial banquet given by their non-Christian relatives. When other Vietnamese saw that Christian converts did not observe traditional expressions of filial duty, especially the rituals in honor of the dead, they accused them of having abandoned the traditions.
Consequently, the new believers faced tremendous opposition from their society. Political authorities viewed Christians as betayers of their cultural heritage, or worse, as followers of a “false religion” that had to be prohibited. By Confucian standards, Christians were accused of being unfilial — a serious charge which still has repercussions today.

The Lê Code, the law that governed Đại Việt from the fifteenth to the eighteen centuries, prescribed specific filial obligations and severe punishment for failure to observe them. Among these obligations were rituals honoring the dead in funeral and memorial services. They included the duration, the garments, and manner of mourning, the offering of sacrifices to the deceased, and so on. Realizing that these customs were important for the Vietnamese, early Jesuit missionaries allowed their converts to honor the dead according to the local customs but with modifications to ensure that only God was worshipped.

As an indication of how seriously the Jesuits took this issue, Alexandre de Rhodes devoted five chapters of his Histoire du Royaume du Tonkin to describing the customs and rites in honor of the dead, including a royal funeral. While praising the seriousness and solemnity of funeral and memorial services in Tonkin, de Rhodes regarded certain customs in the memorial banquet (which he correctly called gioũ), such as the invitation to the deceased to partake in the food and wine, or the burning of paper

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186 Chapters XXII to XXVI.

187 He wrote in Histoire du Royaume: “There is perhaps no other nation on this inhabited earth that honors and venerates the souls and bodies of the dead more than the people of Tonkin.” p. 86.
money and paper goods, as nothing but “foolishness” and “superstition.”\textsuperscript{188} However, as to the rites to honor the ancestors as a whole, de Rhodes judged: “[while] truly there are some customs that Christians cannot practice without sin, for the most part they are innocent and we have judged that they can retain them without the interfering with the Holy Religion.”\textsuperscript{189}

While many Dominicans and the MEP missionaries found the Jesuits’ strategy of accommodation unacceptable in China, they thought that the situation in Tonkin warranted a different approach. As the Dominicans took over mission work in the coastal areas, they were faced with customs and rites of which the superstitious nature was ambiguous. They took note of them and sent a list of 274 questions to their headquarters in Manila to be discussed by the theologians and missionaries there. In 1680, Juan de la Paz responded to the questions in a book, later followed by two more.\textsuperscript{190} For the most part, de la Paz thought that the customs described in these questions were not of religious but rather civil and political nature, and thus acceptable even under a strict understanding.\textsuperscript{191}

\textsuperscript{188} De Rhodes, \textit{Histoire du Royaume}, 84-92.

\textsuperscript{189} De Rhodes, \textit{Divers Voyages}, 77.

\textsuperscript{190} Juan de la Paz, \textit{Opusculum in quo ducenta et septuagina quarttuor quaesita a RR.PP. Missionaris Regini Tunkini proposita totidemque Responsiones ad ipsa continentur, expeditae per Adm R.P. Fr Joannem de Paz} (Manila, 1680); idem, \textit{Respuesta à 274 questiones de los Missioneros de Tunquin} (1687); idem, \textit{Diversas cartas del estado de la Iglesia de Tunquin donde era vicarismo} (1718).

\textsuperscript{191} The MEP bishop Marin Labbé of Cochinchina (1704-1723) critically praised these works and used them to justify certain practices in Cochinchina. Launay, \textit{Histoire de la Mission de Cochinchine}, Vol. I: 608-609.
Even after 1717, when Pope Clement XI’s decree *Ex Illa Die* (1715) against the Chinese Rites was promulgated in Cochinchina, questions about whether a certain practice was permissible to Christians continued to haunt missionaries. The prohibitions of (1) sacrifices to Confucius and the ancestors on solemn days, (2) sacrifices to Confucius as thanksgiving for passing the civil examinations, (3) sacrifices to the ancestors in the ancestral temple, (4) sacrifices to the ancestors on the home altar and at burial sites, and (5) the use of ancestral tablets, did not solve problems but made the situation worse. The decree was not promulgated openly in Cochinchina for the fear of civil repression. The Eight Permissions allowed by Mezzabarba were welcomed in both parts of Annam, but not for long.  

The final decree *Ex Quo Singulari* of 1742 was meant to end all discussion and debate about the rites under pain of excommunication. The initial reaction of the faithful in Tonkin was obedience. Under the leadership of Louis Néez, the clergy of the Vicariate of West Tonkin seemed to comply with the papal bulls of 1715 and 1742. The bishop himself wrote a pastoral letter to his priests and faithful in 1755, in which he discussed the appropriateness of prostration in front of the coffin and certain practices of the funeral rites. He allowed the Christians to venerate the dead, provided there were no spirit tablets or any hint of superstition.

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192 We do not know when this papal decree was promulgated in Tonkin, but we can assume that it took affect at about the same time. Launay, *Histoire de la Mission de Cochinchine*, Vol. I: 601-609.

193 In the Archives of the MEP, there is a copy of an oath signed by Peter Triêm, priest of the West Tonkin Vicariate. AMEP, Vol. 688, f. 506.

194 See AMEP, Vol. 688, ff. 5-10.
While the decrees obliged missionaries and the local clergy to take an oath of obedience to the Holy See’s decision on the Rites, they could not stop the discussion. It appeared that each priest interpreted this decision differently, causing confusion to the faithful. In 1753, the apostolic vicar of East Tonkin asked Propaganda Fide if certain practices honoring the dead could be considered civil acts and therefore permissible in the spirit of the Eight Permissions.\textsuperscript{195} Another letter from Tonkin to the Holy Office in 1757 asked about the appropriateness of genuflection, the lighting of candles and incense-burning in front of the coffin, provided that anything suggesting superstition was avoided.\textsuperscript{196} Again, in 1773, more questions were raised from East Tonkin on whether it was appropriate to prostrate in front of the bier, provided that a crucifix was near by and there were no hint of superstition.\textsuperscript{197} The answers to these questions were negative, citing the previous decrees without further explanation. It seemed as if Rome wanted to close the case and moved on.

However, the faithful did not. Already in 1759, the faithful wrote a petition asking the bishop to forward to Rome their request for permission to prostrate in front of the deceased. They explained that prostration in front of another human being, living or dead, is a Vietnamese custom of honoring that person. They pointed out that when the clergy forbade them to venerate the deceased parents in this manner, they caused them a lot of undue hardships: non-Christians would accuse them of being unfilial; uncommitted

\textsuperscript{195} 100 Roman Documents, (Document #29), 62.

\textsuperscript{196} 100 Roman Documents, (Document #30), 62.

\textsuperscript{197} 100 Roman Documents, (Document #36), 64-65.
Christians would waver in their faith; and even faithful Christians would face hostility from their non-Christian relatives.\textsuperscript{198}

For the next hundred years until the end of the nineteenth century, questions were repeatedly sent to the Holy Office with regard to the rites in Tonkin: in 1783, 1785, 1820, 1837, 1840, 1841, 1843, 1851, 1855, 1856, 1879, 1889.\textsuperscript{199} The frequency and urgency of these questions show that the issues surrounding the rites to the ancestors (such as prostration and the offering of incense to the deceased), were still debated by the people and perhaps the native clergy far more than Rome could imagine. The funeral practices in Vietnam were not a matter of personal choice but public acts that had social and legal consequences. Thousands of Christians paid with their lives while their MEP and Dominican bishops tried to figure out how to walk the narrow line between what was and was not acceptable.\textsuperscript{200}

Although in 1939 the Holy See recognized the cult of ancestors as an honorable way of esteeming one’s relatives and therefore permitted it for Chinese Catholics, similar recognition in Vietnam did not happen until decades later. Due to the disruption of wars, Church authorities in Vietnam did not have the time or the opportunity to revisit the old issue. Only during the open atmosphere of Vatican II, which viewed non-Christian

\textsuperscript{198} AMEP, Vol. 689, ff. 261-62.

\textsuperscript{199} See the summary of these questions and responses in 100 Roman Documents, document # 41, 42, 44, 45, 60, 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 79, 82, 86, 87, 92, and 93. Together with two documents from Cochinchina (#66 and 91) and the three documents cited above, it is amazing that the MEP and Dominican bishops sent these questions to Rome 21 times after the promulgation of Ex Quo Singularis, which was supposed to stop all discussions.

\textsuperscript{200} Many MEP priests were convinced that the rites in Vietnam were more of a civil act than religious, but they could not disobey Rome. Launay, Histoire de la Mission de Cochinchine, Vol. III: 320-336.
religions in a more neutral or positive light, could the cult of ancestors in Vietnam openly be discussed. In 1965, the Conferences of Bishops of South Vietnam issued an official policy with regard to this practice, accepting the cult of ancestors as a legitimate religious expression compatible with the Catholic doctrine of the communion of saints.

**Conclusion**

The situation of Christianity in Tonkin certainly contributed to the defensive tone of *The Errors of the Three Religions*. Writing in the aftermath of the Chinese Rites Controversy and amid various persecutions of Christianity, the author intends to explain to his fellow Christians the reasons behind the Christian rejection of traditional customs and rites. As we will see, he attempts to justify the Christian stand by adopting the Confucian argument itself. If Christianity is an “alien doctrine” or “heterodox way” (*đạo dị đoan*), as Confucian scholars say, Christianity is, the author argues, as orthodox as Confucianism, if not more orthodox, since it is not corrupted by Buddhist and Daoist practices like the Confucianism of his day. The text’s defensiveness toward Confucianism and disdain for Buddhism and Daoism, as we shall see, reflects an apologetic stand that was characteristic of most Christian writings of this era. This tendency was prevalent not only in Vietnam but also in China and Japan, where Christianity existed as a marginal and persecuted religion. The apologetic tendency of the text will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE

THE ERRORS OF THE THREE RELIGIONS

ITS THEOLOGICAL GENRE AND ITS FORERUNNERS IN EAST ASIA

The Errors of the Three Religions (henceforth, ETR) is the first extant Christian work that examines the traditional religious beliefs and practices of Vietnam, in particular those of Tonkin. Its title suggests polemics: it promises to deal with what it considers errors in the three Vietnamese religions.

This chapter will consider the theological and literary backgrounds of ETR. Its aim is twofold. First, to provide a historical perspective for a better understanding of Christianity in East Asia, and particularly in Vietnam. Second, to examine how ETR inherits the philosophical and theological contents of its predecessors, especially concerning its attitude toward and evaluation of the Three Religions.

Apologetics as a Theological Genre

ETR belongs to the type of Christian literature called apologetics (from the Greek apologia, “defense”) that aims at defending the reasonableness and truth of Christian beliefs and practices, as well as at denouncing other beliefs and practices that it deems contrary or harmful to the Christian faith.201

201 The literature on Christian apologetics is extensive. For a standard survey, see Avery Dulles, A History of Apologetics (Philadelphia: Westminter, 1971). For an anthology of selected apologetic texts from the first century until the Middle Ages, see William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009).
In general, apologetic literature arises from the need of individuals or groups to carve for themselves a place in the larger culture. Its primary purpose is rebutting accusations and repelling attacks. When people, often a minority within society, are under attack they often make use of writing to defend themselves. However, the purpose of apologetics is not exclusively self-defense. It may also seek simply to harmonize one’s beliefs and practices with the broader culture. Thus, apologetics may serve to strengthen the faith convictions of the believers themselves and to convince others of their validity. Apologetics provides believers, often neophytes, with ways to explain and justify their beliefs and practices against their detractors and opponents.

There are two types of apologetics. Positive apologetics makes use of common cultural and philosophical expressions of a particular society to describe the beliefs and practices of a religion in order to persuade outsiders of their legitimacy. Negative apologetics, on the other hand, attacks the beliefs and/or practices deemed to be harmful to one’s religion by exposing their weaknesses and contradictions or by demonstrating the inadequacy of the arguments advanced against one’s religion. Since apologetic materials are driven by the social (and sometimes political) struggles of individuals and groups, they cannot be understood apart from that surrounding context.

Of course, Christianity is not the only religion that produces apologetical literature. Similar works have appeared in other religious traditions and cultural groups, ancient and modern. In Jiaozhou (North Vietnam) for example, the work Removing Doubt (Lihuo lun) was composed by Mouzi (Mou Bo) in the second century CE as a
defense of Buddhist practices against criticism by Confucian scholars. Jewish authors also produced a body of apologetic works in the Hellenistic world. Josephus’ *Against Apion* is a defense of the antiquity of Judaism over the Greek philosophy of his days.

**Early Christian Apologetics: A Struggle for Identity**

Christian apologetics may be said to be a response to the biblical command:

“Always be ready to make your defense (*apologia*) to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:1-5). The earliest apologetical works were composed to define the identity of Christianity distinct from Judaism and the Greco-Roman religions. Early Christians re-interpreted the Torah in light of their experiences of and convictions about Jesus. The disagreement over the nature of Jesus as the Messiah underscored the tensions found in New Testament writings. Although there are passages in the Gospels that portray the hypocrisy of the Pharisees or the blindness of “the Jews,” the polemic language against Jews who failed to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Messiah that appeared in the writings of the New Testament is typical of an “in house” quarrel


between rival schools and sects.\textsuperscript{205} With the possible exception of Romans (Chapters 9 to 11) and Hebrews, there is actually very little in the New Testament that can be labeled as anti-Jewish as in Christian writings of the later centuries.\textsuperscript{206}

While most the New Testament writings and other early Christian literature of the first and second centuries were concerned with establishing the rule of faith and conduct within the Christian community, a new genre of literature that could be properly label “apologetic” began to emerge from the middle of the second century onward. It has been suggested that “the shift from an intra-church literature to documents addressed to the outside world” was Christian responses to the challenges of several groups: converts, philosophers, emperors, and Jews.\textsuperscript{207}

With regard to the Jewish-Christian relationship, in the aftermath of the second Jewish revolt, the “parting of the ways” between Christians and Jews seemed irreversible.\textsuperscript{208} The birth of rabbinical Judaism and the denouncement of Christians to the civil authorities were the occasions for the appearance of a \textit{contra ioudaios} [against the Jews] literature. Works such Justin Martyr’s \textit{Dialogue with Trypho} (155) and

\textsuperscript{205} For example, Matthew 23 and John 5:10-47; 7:14-52; 8: 12-59. Modern scholars generally agree that the word \textit{ioudaioi} denotes the Jewish leaders, not the Jewish people in general.


\textsuperscript{207} Dulles, 22-23.

\textsuperscript{208} A number of important studies have addressed this issue. See James D. G. Dunn, \textit{The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity} (London: SCM, 1991); idem, ed., \textit{Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70-135} (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992). Some recent scholars have argued for a much later emergence of “Christianity” and “Judaism”; see Daniel Boyarin, \textit{Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2006); Adam H Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., \textit{The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages} (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).
Tertullian’s *Against the Jews* (ca. 200) are examples of this type of polemic apologetics. The anti-Jewish apologetics was carried on into the fourth and fifth centuries in Christian tracts whose sole purpose was to defend Christianity against Jewish objections, often at the expense of Judaism.\(^{209}\)

With regard to their environment, the emerging Christian community adopted Greek philosophical concepts into its theology. However, Christians distanced themselves from the religious and ritual practices of the Roman and Greek religions of their time. As Christianity spread among non-Jews and progressively gained influence in the Roman Empire, many people felt attracted to the new religion. Others however perceived it to be socially offensive, politically subversive, or intellectually absurd.\(^{210}\) Hostility toward Christians, which resulted in a number of local and state-sponsored persecutions from the end of the first century to the first decades of the fourth century, naturally led to the development of apologetic literature against paganism and in defense of the legitimacy of Christianity in the Greco-Roman world. Anti-pagan apologetics is already found in the New Testament, for example in Paul’s writings and speeches (cf. Romans 1, Corinthians 3, Acts 17), but it appeared in full form in the second and third century in works such as the anonymous *Epistle to Diognetus*, Justin Martyr’s *Apology*, Tatian’s *Oration to the Greeks*, Tertulian’s *Apology*, Clement of Alexandria’s

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\(^{209}\) For a listing of these works, see Hans Conzelmann, “Christians and Jews from the Beginning of Christianity Until the Time of Origen,” in idem, *Gentiles/Jews/Christians: Polemics and Apologetics in the Greco-Roman Era* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 235-342.

While Tertullian, Clement, and Origen are not normally considered to be apologists, their above-mentioned works were clearly apologetic in purpose. They were written at a time when Christianity was both attractive and repulsive to many people. Defending Christian beliefs and practices from the enmity of the Roman society was needed not only to protect Christians from popular violence and political repression but also to uphold the credibility of Christian beliefs.

**Apologetics and Catechism**

Another type of faith-related materials also existed during the early centuries of Christianity. They were called *didascalia* or doctrinal teachings for the baptized. These catechetical instructions often took the form of a homily where Christian practices were explained and the newly baptized were exhorted to adhere to the rule of faith and moral precepts. The *Didache* and *Letter of Barnabas* are early examples of this type of literature. Even the apologists often combined catechetical instructions along with exposition of Christian beliefs and refutation. Once Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the instruction on the faith was now primarily taking the form of catechesis by way of homilies and pastoral letters. Liturgy and

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212 For a survey of primary sources on various issues that arose between Christians and non-Christians in the early Church, see Ramsay MacMullen and Eugene N. Lane, eds., *Paganism and Christianity, 100-425 C.E.: A Source Book* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). For an overview of apologetics in the Roman world, see Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman, Simon Price and Christopher Rowland, eds., *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, Christians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially the Introduction and Chapters 5 (Greek apologists) and 6 (Latin apologists).
religious arts also became effective tools of catechesis, especially for illiterate people and children.  

As the Roman Empire became Christianized, apologetic writings did not diminish but transformed into new arguments for the superiority of Christian thought and way of life. Having no fear of being seriously challenged, Christian apologists continued to attack Roman paganism with increasing boldness.  

A typical exhortation is the work by the convert Julius Firmicus Maternus entitled *De errore profanarum religionum* [On the Errors of the Pagan Religions]. This polemical work was written to enlist the state support to suppress the old Roman religions. The Church Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries also engaged in debates with pagan philosophers. A great example of this era is Augustine’s *De civitate Dei* [City of God] — a critique of Roman customs and pagan philosophy (Book I-X). The work contrasts the heavenly city of God (the Christian faith) with the earthly city of man (the Roman Empire) of his days.

Missionary outreach to non-Christians in the early Middle Ages took a form of positive apologetics. Attempts were made to convince the pagans and barbarians of the ineffective power of their gods and the greatness of the Creator God who sent his Son to

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214 On the relationship between Christianity and paganism in the late antiquity, see Maijastina Kahlos *Debate and dialogue: Christian and pagan cultures c. 360-430* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).

save the human race. They were exhorted to accept the Christian message, renounce their
gods, receive baptism, and live according to the pattern set out by the missionaries.

The next serious challenge to the Christian Church was from unconverted Jews
and aggressive Muslims. Unlike the pagans and barbarians, these people had a rich
cultural heritage themselves and were unlikely to be persuaded by Christian appeals.
Hence, in their disputes with Jews and Muslims Christian theologians felt the need to
stress the uniqueness of the Christian faith. The idea of defending the Christian faith as
the only “true religion” (religio vera) was born out of these disputes. Examples of this
type of approach are seen in John Damascene’s Dialogue between a Saracen and a
Christian and Isidore of Seville’s Against the Jews: On the Catholic Faith from the Old
and New Testament.216

**Faith and Reason**

In the Middles Ages, theological treatises often took an apologetic stand, as
Christian philosophers and theologians had to prove the claims of the Christian faith on
rational grounds. To the unbeliever and the skeptic, Christian doctrines cannot be taken
on faith alone without good arguments. Anselm’s Proslogion (1077-78) launched a
method that later philosophers and theologians would employ, an approach to doctrinal
issues that blended catechesis with apologetics through the process of “faith seeking
understanding” (fides quaerens intellectum). His apologetic work Cur Deus Homo [On

216 Dulles, 72-75.
the Incarnation] takes the form of a dialogue between the author and the monk Boso, who presents objections on the part of the non-Christians. Anselm became the father of a new group of apologists such as Richard of St Victor and Raymond Lull who seek to find demonstrative reasons for the central doctrines of the Christian faith, especially the Trinity and the Incarnation, which Jews and Muslims rejected. The development of systematic theology affected religious instruction. Now it became more analytical, with objections and answers on doctrinal issues.

From the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, there was a surge of apologetic works to deal with objections from Jews and Muslims. Works such as Peter Alphonsi’s *Dialogi contra Iudaeos* [Dialogue with the Jews] and Peter the Venerable’s *Summa totius heresis Saracenorum* [The Summary of the Entire Heresy of the Saracens] and *Liber contra sectam sive heresim Saracenorum* [The Refutation of the Sect or Heresy of the Saracens] were often polemical.217 Not all Christian authors engaged in polemics however. Peter Abelard’s *Collationes* [aka *A Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian*] takes rational inquiry as the basis for the common dialogue. Perhaps, the failure of the crusades against the Muslims, the rediscovery of Aristotle through the works of Averroes and Avicenna as well as Arabic advancement in mathematics and sciences had shaken the confidence of Christian philosophers and theologians.

The challenge of Aristotelianism to Christian theology, which until the eleventh century was largely influenced by Neo-Platonism, forced Christian theologians to create a response. Albert the Great composed *On the Unity of the Intellect against Averroes* to

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217 Dulles, 81-82.
defend Christian orthodoxy. St Albert’s disciple, Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), chose to face the intellectual threat head-on by writing Christian commentaries on Aristotle. For him, Christian revelation had corrected and complemented the deficiency of Aristotelian thought. Aquinas’ *Summa contra gentiles* [Against the Gentiles] represents the effort to provide an all-embracing apologetical theology that would meet the challenges of Jewish and Muslim philosophers. Other theologians after Thomas Aquinas also engaged in apologetics against Jews and Muslims. Among them, we can name Raymond Lull (1235-1316) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464). Lull’s *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men* and *Book of the Tartar and the Christian* were typical of scholastic apologetics against non-Christians.218

**Defending the True Faith**

During the Reformation era, the need to define which Christian doctrines and practices belonged to the “true faith” propelled both Catholics and Protestants to come up with catechetical manuals that often took the tone of apologetics.219 On the Protestant side, there were Martin Luther’s catechisms (1529) and John Calvin’s *Geneva Catechism* (1541). The Catholics responded with Peter Canisius’ three catechisms (1555-1558) and

218 Dulles, 83-110.

Roberto Bellarmino’s *Dottrina cristiana breve* (1597) among others. The Council of Trent also ordered its own catechism produced, the *Roman Catechism* (1566), which became the authoritative manual for Roman Catholics for the next four hundred years.

By the time Catholic missionaries came to evangelize in Asia, there were already two types of writing concerned with explanation and defense of the Christian religion: the *catechismus* (based on natural theology) and the *doctrina christiana* (based on revelation). The former is a type of apologetic dealing with philosophical topics such as the existence, nature, and attributes of God, the creation of the world, and the problem of evil. *Doctrina christiana*, on the other hand, is a kind of handbook focusing more specifically on explaining Catholic beliefs and practices, like the Creed, the ten commandments, the seven sacraments, the basic prayers (e.g., the sign of the cross, *Pater Noster*, and *Ave Maria*), the works of mercy, the seven capital sins and their opposing virtues, laws and precepts, and the last things. The book was usually given to catechumens and the newly baptized to aid their memorization of the essential doctrines and precepts of the Catholic faith. This type of material was usually known among the

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220 In addition to the catechisms of these two Jesuits authors, similar handbooks of the faith were composed by Edmond Auger (1530-1591) in France and Jerónimo Martinez de Rimalda (1536-1618) in Spain.

221 The *catechismus* of this era was primarily a pre-evangelization work; it did not function as the modern “catechism,” which was known at that time as *doctrina christiana*.

222 “The last things” or the “four last things” are doctrines regarding death and the afterlife. This topic deals with the status of the soul after death: the particular and general judgments, heaven, hell and purgatory, and the resurrection of the body.
Chinese as *Tianzhu Jiaoyao* [Essential Teachings of the Lord of Heaven] or *Shengjiao Yaoli* [Essential doctrines of the Holy Religion] and in Vietnam by similar names.\(^{223}\)

**Catechetical and Apologetic Works in East Asia**

When European missionaries came in contact with the people of East Asia, natural theology was no longer a philosophical exercise but a practical method to gain entry into the mind and heart of the people to be evangelized. Included among the many themes treated in this genre are the distinction between true and false religions, the history of salvation, and the life of Christ, as we will see in the works by Matteo Ricci and Alexandre de Rhodes. Different audiences are targeted by the two kinds of works in this genre. The first, *catechismus*, was addressed to non-believers in order to defend the credibility of the Christian message, whereas the aim of the second, *doctrina christiana*, was to teach the neophytes about the faith of the Church. The distinction between these two types of writings is not always clear, for the needs of the audience sometimes required including or omitting certain teachings. In many cases, a missionary would first compose a *doctrina christiana* before acquiring sufficient knowledge of the local language and cultural expression to compose a *catechismus* proper. St Francis Xavier (1506-52) can serve as an example.

When Xavier arrived in Goa in 1542, he first composed a short catechism called *Doctrina Christiana*, which closely resembled the catechism published in Lisbon in 1539 by Joaõ de Barros. The work contains an exposition of the Creed, the *Pater Noster*, the *Ave Maria*, the ten commandments, the precepts of the Church, the *Salve Regina*, the *Confiteor*, the seven capital sins and their opposing virtues, the theological and cardinal virtues, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, prayers before the Eucharist and blessings at meals, and other prayers for the deliverance from sins and protection from evils.\(^{224}\) In his *Instruction for the Catechists of the Society of Jesus* given in 1545, we see a similar approach, except that it takes the form of questions and answers.\(^{225}\)

### In Japan

However, when he came to evangelize in Japan, Xavier had to change his method. In his report from Cochin dated January 29, 1552 addressed to his confreres in Europe,\(^ {226}\) Xavier described the challenges of explaining the Christian faith to the Japanese, “who have a high opinion of themselves… [and] have little esteem for all other foreign races.”\(^ {227}\) In addition, he found the teachings of the Buddhist sects in Japan, nine by his counting, inadequate. Although the Japanese were religious and kept their

\(^{224}\) For the full text, see *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, trans. and introd. M. Joseph Costello (St Louis: the Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), Document # 14, pp. 41-45.

\(^{225}\) For the full text, see *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, Document # 53, pp. 131-133.

\(^{226}\) For the full text, see *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, Document # 96, pp. 326-343.

\(^{227}\) *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, Document #96, p. 327.
commandments, Xavier thought that they did not know what they were doing, for “none of these nine sects say anything about the creation of the world or of souls. All say that there is a hell and a paradise, but no one explains what paradise is, and even less by whose order and command souls go to hell.”

To supplement this teaching, Xavier composed a kind of Christian instruction in Japanese with the help of the Japanese convert Paul Anjiro (whom he had met in Goa). As Xavier recalled in his letter:

> During the year that we dwelt in Paul’s city [Kagoshima], we kept busy teaching the Christians, learning the language, and translating many things of the law of God into Japanese, that is with respect to the creation of the world in a very summary thing, about whom they had no knowledge, and other necessary things, until we came to the Incarnation of Christ. We then took up the life of Christ, going through all the mysteries up to the Ascension and giving an explanation of the Day of Judgment... We read this to those who have become Christians, so that they may know how they must adore God and Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

Both the Christians and those who were not were greatly pleased to hear these things since it seemed to them that this was the truth, for the Japanese are highly talented and very obedient to reason. If they failed to become Christians, it was through fear of the lord of the land, and not because they failed to perceive that the law of God was true and their laws were false.

Through his debates with Japanese monks Xavier formed his own catechetical method for writing his Japanese catechism. Constructing a kind of natural theology he argues that the universe is created and ordered by a Creator; that it is not eternal; that the sun, the moon, the stars and natural objects are not living creatures; that God creates the

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228 *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, Document #96, p. 328.


human soul which survives the death of the body; and that the Buddhist teachings on the
above-mentioned points are erroneous.\(^{231}\) Next he narrates the Christian story including
the creation of the world, the fall of the angels, the creation and subsequent fall of
humanity, the flood and the confusion of tongues after Babel which gave rise to idolatry,
the history of salvation in Israel, the mysteries of the life of Jesus, and finally, the four
last things.\(^{232}\) The Christian converts were also taught the sign of the cross, the *Pater
Noster*, the *Ave Maria*, and the Creed.\(^{233}\)

Here we see the beginning of a missionary approach to the people of East Asia.
First, reason is used to refute their beliefs about the universe and the human soul, and
then persuade them to worship the one true God and his Son Jesus Christ and so attain the
eternal bliss of paradise instead of suffering the eternal torments of hell. After their
conversion and baptism they would be taught the Christian doctrines. This method would
be used again and again by later missionaries.

In a similar approach, the Jesuit head of the East Asia mission, Alessandro
Valignano (1538-1606) also produced his own catechetical handbook which stressed a
gradual approach to evangelization.\(^{234}\) Valignano believed that the most effective method
involves studying the uniqueness of the other peoples, especially their language, customs,
cultures and beliefs. He chose to approach the Japanese mind with persuasion in place of

\(^{231}\) *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, Document #96, pp. 333-335.

\(^{232}\) Schurhammer, 106-107

\(^{233}\) *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, Document #96, p. 341.

force and depth instead of superficiality. To realize this end, Valignano invited several Japanese who were well-versed in local religions to help him compose a catechism to aid his catechists in their presentation of the Christian doctrines and to refute Japanese religious errors. The catechism is divided into two parts: the first part deals with natural religious truths and revealed truths; the second part deals with the divine commandments, the sacraments, and the last things.\textsuperscript{235} This two-step catechetical method advocated by Valignano set the direction for the later Jesuit approach to catechesis.

### In China

Up to this time, no missionary was able to set foot inside China, due to both language barriers and the political situation. After spending nine months in Macau in 1577, Valignano realized the depth of the problem. If Christianity had any chance of penetrating into China, the missionaries must learn the local language and culture. Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607) and Matteo Ricci (1552-1610)\textsuperscript{236} would be the first two Jesuit missionaries to China who followed this directive.\textsuperscript{237}

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\textsuperscript{235} Valignano’s work was published in 1586 entitled \textit{Catechismus christianae fidei in quo Veritas nostrae religionis ostenditur et sectae Japonenses confutantur} (A Catechism of Christian Faith to Demonstrate the Truth of our Religion and to Refute the Japanese Sects). For the common people Valignano composed a catechism in Japanese, \textit{Dochirina Kirishitan}, which resembles a standard catechism (explanations of Christian prayers, the Creed, the Ten Commandments and the precepts of the Church, the seven mortal sins, the sacraments, etc.). Cited by Peter Phan, \textit{Mission and Catechesis}, 111-112 and p. 112, n. 23.

\textsuperscript{236} Born in 1552 at Macerata, Italy, Ricci joined the Society of Jesus in 1571, and studied humanities, mathematics and philosophy in Rome. He volunteered for the East Indies Mission in 1577 and came to Goa in 1578. Ordained as a priest in 1580, he was sent to Macau in 1582 to accompany Michele Ruggieri on the Chinese Mission. He arrived in mainland China in 1583 labored in southern China before coming to Beijing in 1601, and died there nine years later. For recent accounts of his life and his works in China, see Jonathan Spence, \textit{The Memory Place of Matteo Ricci} (New York: Penguin, 1985); R. Po-chia Hsia, \textit{A Jesuit in the Forbidden City: Matteo Ricci, 1552-1610} (New York: Oxford, 2010); Mary Laven, \textit{Mission to China: Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit Encounter with the East} (UK: Faber & Faber, 2011).
At first, the two missionaries adopted the Buddhist dress to emphasize the religious character of their mission. With Valignano’s approval, they shaved their heads and wore the Buddhist grey robes. After Ruggieri left the mission for Rome in 1588, Ricci began to question the wisdom of identifying themselves as Buddhists. Realizing that Buddhism was not held in high esteem in China, Ricci decided to break with this form of accommodation. After obtaining the permission from Valignano, from 1592 onward, the missionaries would no longer be identified as “monks from India” but as “scholars from the West” and would wear the gowns of the Confucian literati. Inculturation, however, was not only about dress code. Ricci spent more time studying the Chinese classics, made friends with the literati,238 and composed works in Chinese.239

The first book of Christian doctrine to appear in Chinese was a “catechism” by Ruggieri entitled Tianzhu Shilu or True Record of the Lord of Heaven with the collaboration of Ricci. Already in 1581 Ruggieri had written in Latin a work of apologetics which he had some of his interpreters translate into Chinese. With the help of


238 During his stay in Nanchang in 1595, he composed his first work in Chinese, the treatise On Friendship (Jiaoyu lun or De Amicitia), a collection of one hundred maxims from different sources on friendship. This book opened the door for the Jesuit method of evangelization through written works.

239 Ricci himself was a prolific author who composed and co-authored many books in Chinese in the field of humanities, religion, music, mathematics, and astronomy. For a listing, see Louis Pfister, Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les jesuites de l’ancienne mission de Chine: 1552-1773, Tome 1 (Shanghai, 1932; reprinted by Kraus, 1971), 34-41. The primary sources of Ricci’s writings are collected in anthologies such as Opere storiche del P. M. Ricci by Pietro Tacchi-Venturi (1911-1913) and Fonti Riccianni by Pasqual D’Elia (1942-1949).
a Chinese scholar from Fujian, Ricci worked on the Chinese draft to improve its literary style. After several drafts the work finally was published in Canton toward the end of 1584. As the first written presentation of the Christian faith for a Chinese audience, *Tianzhu Shilu* brought positive responses from several mandarins. Written as a dialogue between a European (Ruggieri) and a Chinese about Christian faith, it presents arguments for the order of nature which should lead a person to God. The catechism, however, did not show any adaptation to the Chinese context, save some terminology such as *Tianzhu* (lord of heaven) for God, *Sheng’en* (sacred favor) for grace, *Tiantang* (heavenly palace) for heaven, *Linghun* (spirit) for soul, etc. As mentioned above, at this time the Jesuits still presented themselves as “bonzes” (*seng*) and made frequent use of Buddhist terminology. As a result, some early Christian terms were borrowed from Buddhism.

This was Ricci’s first experience with communicating Christian doctrines in the Chinese language. Soon, he would produce his own work as he got more proficient in the language. Ricci’s first presentation of Christian teachings was the translation he made with Ruggieri of the Ten Commandments, the *Pater Noster*, the *Ave Maria*, and the

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240 It has sixteen chapters dealing with the following themes: (1) existence of a true God; (2) God’s nature and attributes; (3) human knowledge of God; (4) creation of everything by God; (5) angels and the first parents; (6) the immortality of the human soul; (7) life after death; (8) promulgation of God’s law in three phrases: natural law, the Mosaic law, and the law of the Gospel; (9) the incarnation of the Son of God; (10) the nature of the law of the Gospel; (11) the mysteries of faith; (12) the Ten Commandments in general; (13) the first three commandments; (14) the last seven commandments; (15) religious life; and (16) baptism. See Leon Wieger, “Notes sur la première catéchèse écrite en chinois 1582-1584” *AHSI* 1 (1932): 72-84; Joseph Shih, *Le Père Ruggieri et le problème de l’évangélisation en Chine* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1964).

241 Like their confreres in Japan, the Jesuit missionaries in China struggled with finding appropriate words in Chinese to express Christian ideas. At first they simply transliterated Latin words; later they attempted to create a Chinese Christian vocabulary. Gianni Criveller, *Preaching Christ in Late Ming China. The Jesuit Presentation of Christ from Matteo Ricci to Giulio Aleni* (Taipei: Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies, 1997), 95-96.
Creed some time in 1584, shortly after he arrived at Zhaoqing. At that early stage of their work in China, the two missionaries struggled with finding the proper terminology for their Christian vocabulary. The text had to be continually corrected and expanded until it was later published as *Tianzhu Jiaoyao* [Essentials of the Teachings of the Lord of Heaven] in 1605.

In 1603 a work entitled *Tianzhu Shiyi* or *De Deo verax disputatio* [*True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*] by Matteo Ricci was printed in Beijing with a preface by the Chinese scholar Feng Yingqing. This is no doubt the most famous work of the Christian faith in the Chinese language. The book quickly became a best-seller of its time. Besides going through several reprints, it was collected and published posthumously by Li Zhicao (1565-1630), a Christian friend and collaborator of Ricci’s, in a 1629 collection of early Jesuit writings in Chinese *Tianxue Chuhan* [Primary Basket of the Study of Heaven]. The *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (hereafter abbreviated as *True Meaning*) was also popular outside China. It was translated into Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, and Manchurian.

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244 Citing the *Fonti Ricciani*, George Dunne (*Generation of Giants*, p. 96) mentions a Vietnamese translation, but I do not find any evidence of a Vietnamese (Nôm) translation of the *True Meaning*. According to Louis Pfister (*Notices*, p. 35), the Japanese translation appeared in 1604 and became such a valuable tool for evangelization so that Valignano allowed a third reprint in Macau. A Korean translation appeared much later, perhaps in the early eighteenth century. A Manchurian translation was produced under the reign of Kangxi as the emperor took delight in this book.
Predecessors of *The Errors of the Three Religions*

For the purposes of our study, it would be helpful to examine two catechisms composed by Jesuit missionaries for the East Asian audience — *Tianzhu Shiyi* [True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven] by Matteo Ricci and *Phép Giảng Tám Ngày* or *Cathechimus in octo dies divisus* [Catechism divided into Eight Days] by Alexandre de Rhodes — that influenced the author of *ETR*.\(^\text{245}\) Taken together these two works set a direction for how missionaries to Vietnam were to meet the challenges presented by indigenous cultures. While a direct literary dependence of *ETR* on these two works cannot be demonstrated, the information and method of argumentation provided by them have shaped the apologetic arguments of *ETR*.

Matteo Ricci’s *Tianzhu Shiyi*

In *True Meaning* Ricci offered an original method of evangelization. He presented Christian teachings by blending Thomistic theology with the Chinese philosophical tradition, using the Socratic method of question and answer. Structured as a long dialogue between a Chinese scholar and a “Western scholar” or Christian missionary, the book is divided into eight chapters, presenting various themes of the

\(^{245}\) Of course to give a fuller account I would need to consider the works of missionaries in Japan; since many Jesuit missionaries to China, Japan, and Vietnam were trained in Macau, they had opportunities to learn from each other’s experience there. However, due to the limited scope of this dissertation, I only cite those works relevant to *ETR*.
Christian faith to a Chinese scholar. Ricci’s *catechismus* represents the culmination of an intercultural dialogue between Ricci and his Chinese friends.\(^{246}\) *True Meaning* is not simply a Western philosophical inquiry written in Chinese; it also took into account Chinese thought. To do this Ricci had to learn the Chinese philosophical language in depth during his early years in China.

In his study of the Confucian Four Books, Ricci frequently discussed their contents with his Chinese friends, and these conversations inspired him to write another presentation of the Christian doctrines which would be closer to the traditional Confucian terminology and style. Ricci’s idea was met with encouragement from Valignano. Around the year 1595 or 1596, Ricci began writing a new catechism after Ruggieri’s method, with terms and quotations taken from the Confucian texts. In 1597 a Latin translation was submitted for official approval. The text subsequently was revised as Ricci incorporated many suggestions of his growing number of friends, especially the Confucian scholars in Beijing. Upon its publication in 1603, the book was hailed to be as excellent as if it had been written by a Chinese Christian author. The Jesuit superiors decided that it would replace Ruggieri’s work as the definite *catechismus* in Chinese.\(^{247}\)

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\(^{246}\) Lancashire and Hu (pp. 16-17) note that during 1601-1603, before the final edition, Ricci incorporated much material from the dialogues with his friends which were later printed in a book entitled *Qiren Shipian [Ten Chapters by a Nonconformist]* (1608).

\(^{247}\) Ruggieri’s work was withdrawn from circulation, and now is preserved in the Roman archives of the Society of Jesus (ARSI) in *Jap-Sin* I, no. 189. It is also reprinted in *Chinese Christian Texts from the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus*, edited by Nicholas Standaert and Adrian Dudink (Roma: Procura Generaliza della Compagnia di Gesù, 2002), Vol. I: 1-80.
Ricci’s Method

*True Meaning* is substantially a refutation of what Ricci considered deviations from the true worship of Heaven found in ancient China. He regarded contemporary religious thoughts, namely Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism, as departures from the pristine truths of ancient China. Thus he set out to correct these errors by teaching people the truths and helping them avoid evil. Ricci’s agenda is well expressed in the preface to *True Meaning* written by his collaborator Li Zhicao:

In this book, he [Ricci] says that men know to serve their parents but do not know that the Lord of Heaven is the parent of all. Men know that a nation must have a rightful ruler but do not know that the Lord (Di), who alone “governs Heaven,” is the rightful ruler at all. A man who does not serve his parents cannot be a [true] son; a man who does not know the rightful ruler cannot be a [true] minister; a man who does not serve the Lord of Heaven cannot be a [true] man…. The general purpose of the book is to make men repent their transgressions and pursue righteousness, curb their passions and be benevolent toward all. It reminds men of their origin from above so as to make them fear lest they fall down into the place of punishment; it makes them consider the awful consequences and hasten to cleanse themselves of all sin. Thus they might not be guilty of any offense against the Great Heavenly Lord Above.\(^{248}\)

*True Meaning* represents the mature fruits of Ricci’s reflections and debates with the Neo-Confucians and the Buddhists of his time. Choosing natural theology as a starting point, Ricci explains his strategy:

This does not treat all the mystery of our holy faith, which need be explained only to catechumens and Christians, but only certain principles, especially such as can be proved and understood with the light of natural reason. Thus it can be of service both to Christians and to non-Christians

and cannot immediately reach, preparing the way for those other mysteries which depend upon faith and revealed wisdom. It treats of such truths as there is in the universe a God, who has created all things and continually converses them in being; that the soul of man is immortal, and will receive from God in the next life remuneration for its good and evil works; that the transmigration of souls into the bodies of other men and of animals is false, and similar things…. If it does not propose to refute directly all the errors of the sects in China, it destroys at the roots, with irrefragable arguments, the opinions of the Chinese which contradict those truths.  

**Structure and Contents of Ricci’s Catechism**

In the Latin summary attached to the first Beijing edition of 1603 of *True meaning*, Ricci presents its structure and main contents. Its order reflects its author’s aim to refute errors and a greater attention to the Chinese context. *True Meaning* is divided into eight chapters and its main arguments are as follows.

The first chapter is about God (literally, the Lord of Heaven) who is the creator of the universe and the ruler of all things in it. God is the Creator because he is the First Cause of all creation and gives order to chaos. Ricci also elaborates on the four causes of the Aristotelian-Thomistic teaching (efficient, formal, material, and final) to further explain his point.

The second chapter offers answers to some of the mistaken views concerning God as presented in contemporary Chinese thought. Ricci rejects the Daoist concept of “non-being” (*wu*), the Buddhist concept of “emptiness” (*kong*), and the Neo-Confucian concept of “Supreme Ultimate” (*taiji*) as sources of creation. God for Ricci is a personal intelligent being and not the impersonal principle behind the universe. To strengthen his

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250 See the text in Lancashire and Hu, *True Meaning*, 460-472.
case, Ricci cites the texts from the *Five Classics* to demonstrate the personal character of God.

The third chapter discusses the nature of the human soul which is shown to be greatly different from that of birds and animals. The human soul possesses two qualities that make it distinctive: immortality and intelligence. Ricci elaborates on the three grades of souls: the vegetative, the sentient, and the intellectual. He then offers arguments for the spiritual and imperishable nature of the human soul and connects them to the moral life.

The fourth chapter continues the discussion on the human soul and its spiritual nature. Ricci first distinguishes the soul from the “material energy” (*qì*) which is dispersed after death. Next, Ricci refutes the theory “organic unity of all phenomena” (*wanwu yìti*) or “unity of humanity and God” (*tianren heyì*) of contemporary Neo-Confucian idealism by making a clear distinction between the creation and its Creator.

In the fifth chapter Ricci continues to defend his view of the human soul by attacking the Buddhist teaching of transmigration of the soul. He devotes many arguments against this doctrine and its implication for the Buddhist prohibition of killing animals and practice of vegetarianism.

In the sixth chapter Ricci presents a moral theory focusing on the connection between action, motivation, and reward. He argues for the free will of man and the justice of God who rewards the good and punishes the evil. In this context Ricci discusses the doctrines of heaven and hell.
In the seventh chapter, Ricci affirms the Mencian teaching that human nature is fundamentally good and connects it with the life of virtue.

The last chapter answers objections against certain Western customs, especially clerical celibacy on the ground of filial piety. At the end, Ricci briefly talks about the saving work of God through Jesus and encourages the reader to join the Church.

From this outline, we can see that Ricci was more interested in refuting the perceived errors of Chinese religions than presenting a complete account of the Christian faith. In a way, Ricci was trying to knock down the old beliefs to make room for the new ones. This negative apologetic tendency is quite strong and can be felt throughout the text which takes a polemical tone at places. True Meaning is a dialogue between the Western tradition, which Ricci represents, and the Chinese tradition. Ricci uses Confucian classical texts, historical examples, and arguments from Western philosophy not only to explain the Christian doctrines but also to evaluate Chinese ideas under discussion.

The Reception of the Ricci’s Catechism in Tonkin

An important question of interest for our research is: Did True Meaning have any influence on the Catholics in Tonkin? The answer is affirmative.

A copy of True Meaning, or its predecessor, True Record of the Lord of Heaven, appears to have been circulated in Tonkin as early as the end of the sixteenth century. The work might have found its way to Tonkin through diplomatic channels. Since the fifteenth century, Đại Việt (Annam) had regularly sent a delegation to the court of
Beijing every three years. The delegation usually stopped in Canton and Nanjing before going to Beijing. Their meeting with the Jesuit missionaries during one of those trips was not unlikely.\footnote{In fact, on Ruggieri’s second visit to Canton in 1581, he stayed at a building reserved for the Siamese and Annamese tribute-bearing delegations en route to Beijing (Dunn, \textit{Generation of Giants}, p. 19). When Ricci and his confreres came to Beijing in 1601, they were given lodging in the “foreign compound” (buildings reserved for foreign delegations that came to China for diplomatic missions). It was possible that the ambassadors of Annam and Korea might have met the Jesuits in one of these diplomatic trips.}

In his memoir, Alexandre de Rhodes describes that possibility:

This man whose spirit was still seized by the teachings of Christian doctrine which he had heard came one Sunday morning to our church when the Christians were prepared to hear Mass. He showed them a book in Chinese letters. On the first page there was printed the holy name of Jesus written in big characters.\footnote{Perhaps it was the initial “IHS”, the abbreviation of the name of Jesus in Greek letters (\textit{iota, eta, sigma}, not the Latin alphabets as many people have mistakenly taken them to be). These initials have been used by the Jesuits as their emblem and appeared in any product associated with the Jesuits.} I took a look at it and immediately recognized that the book had been brought from China and was a work authored by one of our Fathers. I was completely flabbergasted by how this work could have fallen into the hands of a Buddhist monk.

He explained to me how his father had accompanied the ambassador who was sent, once every three years, as was the custom, to do homage and pay tribute to the king of China. His father brought this book back from the court of Beijing, considered it a treasure, and upon his death left it to his son as an heirloom. His father told him that he had received it as a gift from the Doctors of the Great West\footnote{This is how the Jesuit fathers were known in Beijing.} while accompanying the ambassador to Beijing. These doctors assured him that whoever believed and observed what was written in this book would lead a holy life and would go to heaven after leaving this world. After his father’s death, which made him an orphan at an age of only ten, he kept this book with devotion in a box for some thirty years. From time to time he would open the book, read it, but did not understand anything of it. Recently, after hearing our sermons, he began to have some understanding of it.

I asked him whether he understood the meaning of those big letters on the first page of the book and he honestly replied that he did not. Then I showed him the same letters in another one of our books which explained the holy name of Jesus. This gave our new Christians a great joy; indeed, it strongly confirmed their belief in the truths that they had been taught.
when they recognized, as I made them see, that the contents of the book that the Buddhist monk had brought was nothing other than their catechism, without any difference, neither in the order of the themes treated nor in the method of instruction.\textsuperscript{254}

Even though neither the name of the book nor the author was mentioned explicitly in the above passage, the internal evidence would point to Ricci’s \textit{True Meaning} or an earlier draft of it.\textsuperscript{255} The man in the story kept his book for some thirty years before he showed it to de Rhodes in 1628-30. Hence, it must have come to Tonkin around the end of the sixteenth century. Although the first edition of this work was published in Beijing until 1603, copies of \textit{True Meaning} were circulated among Ricci’s friends during the time Ricci was waiting for permission to publish it. This fits with the man’s description of his late father’s meeting with the “doctors of the West” in Beijing. The father of the man in question must have met a Jesuit, or even Ricci himself, during such a trip.

It is likely that more than one copy of \textit{True Meaning} circulated in Tonkin. De Rhodes reported that he had used a number of Chinese texts to aid him in evangelization. Hence, it is not surprising that de Rhodes recognized the book right away. De Rhodes himself also acknowledged having given “books written in Chinese” to the governor of Bố Chính with the hope of converting him.\textsuperscript{256} What would be a more appropriate gift


\textsuperscript{255} Some researchers, for examples Nguyễn Khắc Xuyên or Nguyễn Hồng, suggest that it was Ruggieri’s \textit{True Record of the Lord of Heaven}, which was in circulation until its printing block was destroyed after 1597. This is also possible. Due to the lack of indisputable evidence, we cannot decide whether the work in question was that of Ruggieri or of Ricci. At any rate either Ricci’s \textit{True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven} or Ruggieri’s \textit{True Record of the Lord of Heaven} was known to the Vietnamese.

\textsuperscript{256} De Rhodes, \textit{Histoire du Royaume}, 135.
than a copy of *True Meaning*, which by 1627-30 was readily available from Macau?
Later on, when de Rhodes composed his catechism during 1636-45 in Macau and Cochinchina, he seems to have incorporated many of Ricci’s teachings into his masterpiece.

Alexandre de Rhodes’s *Cathechismus in Octo Dies Divisus*

In 1651, Propaganda Fide published a bilingual catechism written by a Jesuit missionary to Annam, Alexandre de Rhodes (1592-1650).

The work was printed in two columns with the full title *Cathechismus pro ijs, qui volunt suscipere Baptismum in Octo dies divisus* in Latin and *Phép giảng tám ngày cho kẻ muốn chịu phép rửa tội, ma beào dạo thành đức Chúa bào* in Romanized Vietnamese.

This is the first extant systematic work that presents the Christian faith for a Vietnamese audience.

The significance of this work in Vietnamese Catholicism is twofold. First, it is the first published book in the Vietnamese language using a new script, later called the “national script” (*chữ Quốc-ngữ*). It is a distinctive medium for Christian missionaries to communicate with the Vietnamese, allowing the development of a Vietnamese Christian

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258 See the comparison between the *True Meaning* and *Cathechismus* in Phan, *Mission and Catechesis*, 119-121.

259 See bibliographical note on de Rhodes in Chapter 2.

literature. Second, the book represents an early attempt at inculturating the Christian message. Prior to the publication of this catechism, other treatises on the Christian faith have been circulated among the Tonkinese, for example, Thiên Chúa Thánh Giáo Khải Mông [Introduction to the Holy Teachings of the Lord of Heaven] written by Girolamo Majorica in the Nôm script around 1635-40. Majorica’s work, however, belongs to the genre of doctrina christiana; in fact, it is an annotated translation and adaptation of Robert Bellarmine’s catechism.

De Rhodes’s Procedure

In a sense, de Rhodes’s Cathechismus is a follow-up of Ricci’s True Meaning. Unlike Ricci who focuses on “pre-evangelization” through the use of natural theology, de Rhodes devotes nearly half of his work to discussing the mysteries and doctrines of Christian faith. The objective of the book is made clear by its title: It is directed “to those who want to receive baptism.” (pro ijs qui volunt suscipere baptismum). In his Divers Voyages, de Rhodes makes the following comments about his method:

They [those who are interested in the faith] were all delighted when I pointed out to them how our religion conforms to right reason, and they admired above all God’s Ten Commandments, finding that nothing more reasonable could be uttered or more worthy of being laid down by the

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261 The manuscript is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, 157 pages. It was collected and transliterated into Quốc-ngữ script by the late Thanh Lâng and Vũ Văn Kính in 2003. The book is divided into six sections: (1) Introduction; (2) On the sign of the cross; (3) On the twelve points of the Creed; (4) On the Pater Noster; (5) On the Ave Maria; (6) On the Ten Commandments. The manuscript is incomplete, missing the part on the sacraments as mentioned in the introduction.

262 I do not know whether Majorica’s work bears any resemblance to another book with the same title which appeared in China, the Tianzhu Shengjiao Qimeng by Joaõ da Rocha (1566-1623). According to Pfister (Notices, p. 69), this work is a translation of a Portuguese catechism. In any case, both belong to the genre of doctrina christiana rather than catechismus.
Supreme Ruler of the world. My favorite method was to propose to them the immortality of the soul and the afterlife. From thence I went on to prove God’s existence and providence. Advancing thus from one degree to the next, we gradually came to the more difficult mysteries. Experience has shown us that this way of instructing the pagans is very useful. I have explained it at length in my catechism, which I divide over the course of eight days, wherein I try to propound all the main truths on which the idolaters should be taught.  

In another work, *Histoire du Royaume de Tunquin*, de Rhodes spends a whole chapter on the discussion of his catechetical method. First, he takes issues with those who propose that “it is necessary first to destroy the errors of paganism and disabuse the minds of pagans of these erroneous views before establishing and teaching the doctrines and principles of the Christian religion.” For de Rhodes, this is not a wise approach, for if people’s beliefs are attacked, their hearts might be hardened and would not be open to hear the truth. Second, he also objected to the proposal to explain only certain mysteries of Christianity and not the Trinity to those who were about to receive baptism “in order to avoid troubling their minds with doubts which this most sublime and ineffable mystery might induce.”

From his own experience, de Rhodes found a “third way,” more appropriate to the teaching of the faith to the Vietnamese. This consists of a three-step program. First, he would speak about the truths that the mind can comprehend, for example, that order in the universe, God as the creator and ruler of the universe, and the obligation of the human person to know, love, and serve God to attain eternal life. Only after these truths have

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265 Ibid.
been accepted would he proceed to discuss the “errors of paganism” that turn a person away from the worship of the true God. In de Rhodes’s words:

This method requires that one not attack the errors of the Tonkinese sects before establishing the truths knowable by the light of natural reason, such as the creation of the world, the end for which the sovereign Principle of created things has made and ordered the rational creatures, the obligations incumbent upon them to know and serve God. The goal is to build in the hearers’ minds a sort of firm foundation on which the rest of their faith can be supported and not to turn them off, which often happens, by our rebutting and ridiculing their devotions, false though they are, and their superstitious observances.

I have often been more successful, as far as I can tell, in impressing upon them feelings of piety and natural love toward the Creator and the First Principle of their being. Then, by means of a narrative of the history of the universal flood and the confusion of languages, I inspire in them a sense of fear of God whom they must fear and adore. Then follows a refutation of the idolatry which, incidentally, the devil himself has not introduced into the world until after the flood.266

Here de Rhodes is in agreement with other missionaries who insist that the mysteries of the Christian faith cannot be explained without first dislodging the erroneous concepts about God and the superstitions of paganism.

In the final step, de Rhodes moves to an exposition of the mysteries of the Christian faith: the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. In his experience, the mystery of the Trinity was not a real obstacle to the Vietnamese, while the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ were. To the Vietnamese mind, these seem to contradict the spiritual, eternal, and immortal nature of God. It is not easy for them to accept that God “[who] is pure in spirit, eternal, and immortal, and who

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reigns in heaven crowned with glory, was clothed in the flesh, born in time, subject to death, and exposed to all sorts of shame and misery." To make these doctrines accessible, de Rhodes proposed to highlight the cosmic wonders associated with Christ’s death, to foster devotion of the suffering Christ, and to connect the glorious resurrection with Christ’s passion and death. More important than explaining these doctrines, de Rhodes sought to connect the Christian doctrines with devotion and moral life in order to foster the love of God and the practice of virtues. For de Rhodes, catechetical instruction is meant to lead a person from right beliefs to correct practices.

**Structure and Contents of de Rhodes’s Catechism**

De Rhodes’s catechetical method can be seen from the following outline of the *Cathechismus*:

The first day discusses the purpose of the present life, true and false worship, God as the ruler and supreme Father, right worship that is due to God, and eternal reward and punishment. The second day discusses the nature of God as the origin of all things, the attributes of God, and the call to respond to God.

The third day discusses how God creates all beings invisible and visible, the creation of angels and their fall, the biblical account of the creation of the universe and of Adam and Eve, and the fall of humanity. The fourth day continues the biblical history of humanity from Adam’s descendants to Noah. Next, de Rhodes turns to the discussion on the origins of the “false” Chinese sects (in this order: Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism).

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and their doctrines, the cult of spirits among the Vietnamese, and the “true” religion of Abraham and his descendants. There is also a discussion on the human soul.

The fifth day discusses the basic mysteries of the Christian faith: the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. The biblical narratives of the conception and the birth of Christ are presented. The veneration of Mary is also explained. The sixth day presents the life of Christ from his infancy to the public ministry. Here Christ is presented primarily as a miracle worker.

The seventh day presents the passion narratives of Christ, from his arrest to the trial, his crucifixion and death, followed by his resurrection and ascension, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. The eighth day discusses the final destiny of humanity, the Ten Commandments, and preparation for baptism.

From this outline, a structure can be discerned. The first part, consisting of the first four days, is devoted to explaining a natural theology about God. The second part, from the fifth day to the seventh day, the life of Christ is presented in detail. The third part, the last day, is given to an exposition of the moral life and instruction for baptism. In terms of method, generally de Rhodes avoids lengthy philosophical discussions and does not quote extensively from Chinese or Western sources. Mostly he uses the history of salvation as the framework for his presentation. He captures his audience with biblical stories and analogies to explain the finer points of doctrines. Furthermore, in the first two chapters he uses Vietnamese proverbs and sayings to build his case. This method is different from the common fourfold exposition of the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the sacraments, and the basic prayers common to \textit{doctrina christiana}. 
Conclusion

The purpose of this brief survey of apologetic literature from early Christianity to the beginning of Christian missions to East Asia is to show that works like ETR belong to the genre of Christian apologetics, especially in their negative attitude toward non-Christian religions. Like the early apologists who lived in a society that considered Christianity harmful and its teachings absurd, the author of ETR also lived in a time when Christianity was prohibited and Christians were persecuted. The non-conformist attitude and the refusal of Vietnamese Christians to participate in common rituals were questioned by many of their fellow citizens and the legitimacy of Christianity as a true and right religion was doubted. The author of ETR has to explain why Christians worship God exclusively, and he does it by repudiating the traditional rituals.

Since the purpose of ETR is to refute the errors of the Vietnamese traditional religions, it naturally adopts the arguments from similar apologetic works. As we will see, ETR follows both True Meaning and Cathechismus in regarding Daoism as superstitious and Buddhism as evil. With regard to Confucianism, like Ricci and de Rhodes, the author of ETR is more nuanced and careful in his criticism because he does not want to alienate the ruling class which is dominated by Confucians. The strategy of using original Confucian classics to refute Neo-Confucianism and to use the Confucian arguments against Buddhism conforms with Ricci’s principle of “complementing Confucianism to repudiate Buddhism” (buru paifo), as mentioned above.
The use of reason is also important in the above works. This is a heritage of the medieval emphasis on using reason to explain the Christian faith. Since the Confucian gentry of China and Vietnam were intellectuals, the use of reason is an important method of dialogue with which to engage their interests. Ricci, de Rhodes, and the author of *ETR* all wanted to demonstrate the harmony between reason and Christian faith and argued that the new faith they tried to introduce to the people of China and Vietnam does not contain absurd and irrational teachings.
This chapter discusses the literary history of *Tam Giáo Chữ Vọng* [The Errors of the Three Religions]. First, I will describe the text, particularly its features, structure and content. Then I will consider its history of composition, including question on dating and authorship. Finally, I will examine its apologetic method.

**Structure**

**The Manuscript**

The manuscript of *The Errors of the Three Religions* (henceforth, *ETR*) is a 10 by 15 cm undated notebook written in black ink. It has been preserved in a fairly good condition as Volume 1098 in the Archives of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (AMEP). According to the archivist, Fr. Gérard Moussay, this particular text is not the original but
one of the copies sent to the archives by Bishop Louis Néez (1650-1764),\textsuperscript{268} the vicar apostolic of West Tonkin.\textsuperscript{269}

The document has 104 sheets with writing on front and back. The first two pages are numbered in lower-case Roman numerals, and the rest of the manuscript in Arabic numerals, beginning with 1. The numeration is out of sequence between pages 66 and 77, and again from page 121 until the end.\textsuperscript{270} The last sheet is unnumbered; it may have been intended as an insert for the missing information at the end of page 74. Most of the pages are written in their entirety, except pages 70, 71, and 74.\textsuperscript{271} If one includes the blank pages and inserts in the final tally the manuscript runs to a total of 208 pages.

The manuscript is written in \textit{Quốc-ngữ} script — the Romanized script devised by Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century. When comparing this text with other eighteenth century manuscripts preserved in the AMEP, we can accurately date the style of \textit{Quốc-ngữ} to eighteenth-century orthography.\textsuperscript{272} Without going into too much technical detail, it suffices to say that the spelling and usage of the \textit{Quốc-ngữ} in this

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{268} Louis Néez came to Tonkin in 1715 and became vicar apostolic of West Tonkin in 1740. He was on friendly terms with the Dominicans, Augustinians and Jesuits. For his biography, see André Marillier, \textit{Nos pères dans la foi}, Vol. 2: 81-2.

\item \textsuperscript{269} It is possible that Néez sent a copy of \textit{ETR} as well as a copy of Adriano di Santa Thecla’s incomplete work on Chinese and Vietnamese religions.

\item \textsuperscript{270} In the manuscript the numeration is as follows: 1-66, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 67, 68, 77, 78-120, 211, 212-295, where it should be 1-66, 67-77, 78-120, and 121-205. In the transcription and translation of the text, I renumber the incorrect pages accordingly.

\item \textsuperscript{271} The last four lines of page 70 (page 69 of the manuscript) and the entire page 71 are blank, as if the copyist would fill up the information later. The second half of page 74 (page 76 in the manuscript) is also left blank.

\item \textsuperscript{272} A small collection has recently been published by Đoàn Thiện Thuật, \textit{Chữ Quốc Ngữ thế kỷ XVIII [Quốc-ngữ of the eighteenth century]} (Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục, 2008).
\end{itemize}
manuscript exhibit features of an intermediate stage between the two important
dictionaries of the Vietnamese language: the 1651 *Dictionarium annamiticum, lusitanum,
et latinum* by Alexandre de Rhodes, and the 1838 *Dictionarium Annamitico Latinum* by Jean Louis Taberd (1794-1840).273 The double consonants “bl” and “ml” are still retained. The ending “ng,” abbreviated by the tilde “~,” still appears in the combinations of “ũ” (ung), “uõ” (uông), and “oũ” (ông). But there are already alternative spellings of “ư” and “uong” and “aô” and “aong” (ong). Abbreviations are used with consistency throughout (e.g., “s.le” for “song le,” “l.hôn” for “linh hồn,” “ng`ta” for “người ta,” “n’c” for “nước,” “ph?” for “phái,” etc.) The handwriting is clear and fairly readable, although it is hard to decipher the letters in some places because of corrections. The scribe seems to be copying from another manuscript since there are occasional duplicate phrases being crossed-out and written over.

The most challenging issue for the reader is deciphering the meanings of the Sino-Vietnamese phrases embedded in the text. Since the Sino-Vietnamese words and phrases are written in their Romanized forms rather than in Chinese characters, the meanings of these phrases cannot be ascertained with accuracy. A further challenge is that many of the Sino-Vietnamese words do not seem to make sense, due to misspelling, or orthographic variation, or copyist’s errors.

273 In the late eighteenth century (1770s), the MEP Bishop of Cochinchina Pierre Pigneau de Béhaine (1741-99) prepared a Vietnamese-Latin dictionary but did not publish it. His successor, Bishop Jean Louis Taberd, made use of Pigneau de Béhaine’s work, and with the help of some Vietnamese catechists, notably Peter Phan Văn Minh, composed two dictionaries, Vietnamese-Latin and Latin-Vietnamese, that were published in Serampore, India in 1838.
Structure and Content

After a two-page introduction stating its purpose, the text is divided into three books corresponding to the “errors” of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, respectively. Each book begins on a new page with a preface and a table of contents, and is divided into articles. Each article is a series of dialogues between a Christian scholar and a Confucian scholar in the style of Matteo Ricci’s famous treatise True Meaning. The “Western Scholar” (the author himself) begins with a question on a particular problem, and the “Eastern Scholar” (his interlocutor or dialogue partner) responds to the question, and the conversation continues. This is obviously not a true dialogue but a rhetorical device for the Christian scholar to introduce, expound, and evaluate the teachings of other religions. This method is common in the Western tradition, for example, in the works of Plato, Anselm and others, as well as in the Confucian tradition of Analects and Mencius.

The treatment of the subject matter under the threefold categories of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism is rather artificial, serving the author’s apologetic interests rather than offering a comprehensive and scholarly exposition of these religions themselves. It is clear that some of the issues discussed do not fit comfortably in the book’s thematic division. A glance at its table of contents will show that author is more interested in the practices of the religions in question than in their doctrines. For instance, ten of the fifteen articles in Book One (Articles 6-15) discuss and evaluate the various cults and ceremonies to the spirits, domestic and public deities, cultural or military heroes, and the ancestors. Nine of the eleven articles in Book Two (Articles 3-11) are
devoted to exposing the “superstitious” acts, rituals, and beliefs associated with religious Daoism. Four of the twelve articles in Book Three (Articles 8-11) deal with Buddhist funeral practices and the treatment of the souls. In addition to reporting on religious practices, the author also sets out to correct those beliefs of these three religions that he judges to be false. He is particularly interested in refuting the Neo-Confucian and “Buddhist” accounts of the origin of the universe as well as correcting some of the popular myths.

History

Date and Authorship

The question of the exact date of composition of ETR and its author remains unresolved. The manuscript does not mention the date or the author on its cover page or in the preface. On the basis of the information provided in the text, the author is a man “from Italy in the Western world, [who] has come to the East to preach the holy way of the Lord of Heaven to the people of Annam.” In other words, he was an Italian missionary who had labored in Tonkin at the time of the composition.

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274 In the first five chapters of Book 1 and chapters 4-5 of Book 3, the author presents and refutes the other alternatives to God as the Creator.

275 For example the myth of Pangu as the creator of the world (Book 1, Article 2), the great flood that occurred in Emperor Yao’s time (Book 1, Article 5), or the nature of solar and lunar eclipses (Book 1, Article 12).

276 ETR, Preface, i. The page number of ETR refers to the corrected manuscript numeration (see my translation).
When attempting to date the text, we find reference to the great flood where the author notes that “the present year [is] nhâm-thân, which is the 13th year of Cảnh Hưng’s reign.” This important information allows us to date the manuscript to the year 1752. However, in the absence of the original text, we cannot be certain if 1752 is the date of composition or the date of the copy. A piece of external evidence that may help to date *ETR* is another manuscript from the same archive, titled *Opusculum de sectis apud Sinenses et Tunkinenses*. This manuscript, written in Latin by the Italian missionary Adriano di Santa Thecla in 1750, was another treatise on Tonkinese religions. After closely examining this work (which I will present in a later section) and comparing it with our present manuscript, we can conclude that the two are contemporaneous.

Using these two facts, we can begin to consider possible candidates for the identity of the author. In the eighteenth century, there was no Italian missionary in the vicariate of West Tonkin because the vicariate had been administered exclusively by the French priests of the MEP since 1683. The author must have been someone who evangelized in the vicariate of East Tonkin during the first half of the eighteenth century. He would have had to have come to Tonkin before 1750, at least a few years before 1752, in order to master the language and culture to an extent that he would have been able to produce such a work. Was the author Jesuit, Dominican or Augustinian?

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277 *ETR*, Book 1, Article 5, p. 29.

There were only two Italian Jesuits in Tonkin between 1700 and 1740, Isidoro Luci (from 1694 to 1719)\(^{279}\) and Francesco-Maria Bucharelli (from 1715 to 1723),\(^{280}\) and neither of them left any writings. Two Dominicans, Raymond Lezoli (from 1681 to 1706)\(^{281}\) and Thomas de Sextri (from 1701 to 1737) were there during the same period.\(^{282}\) Although they eventually became apostolic vicars of East Tonkin, we know little about their literary activities.

In contrast to the other two groups, the Discalced Augustinians evangelized in East Tonkin for less than sixty years (1701-1759). They were a small group totaling 13 Italian\(^{283}\) and 6 Vietnamese priests\(^{284}\) who served in Kẻ Sắt and Kẻ Vân near Hải Dương.\(^{285}\) Despite their small number, there were several prominent men among them. Giovanni di San Augustino was the first Augustinian friar to arrive in 1701. He was the only Italian Augustinian who labored in Tonkin for the next ten years. After several


\(^{281}\) Came to Tonkin in 1681, Lezoli was the first Italian Dominican to be apostolic vicar of East Tonkin from 1702 until he died in 1706. See Marillier, *Nos pères dans la foi*, Vol. 2: 112-13.

\(^{282}\) Sextri (or Sestri) also became the apostolic vicar of East Tonkin in 1716. He caused quite a controversy among the Dominicans by turning some of the mission territory over to the Italian compatriots, the Discalced Augustinians. He also chose a fellow non-Dominican Italian, Hilario Costa, to be his coadjutor. Source: Marillier, *Nos pères dans la foi*, Vol. 2: 113-14.

\(^{283}\) For the biographies of these Italian missionaries, see Marillier, *Nos pères dans la foi*, Vol. 2: 123-27.

\(^{284}\) For the biographies of these Vietnamese Augustinians, see Marillier, *Nos pères dans la foi*, Vol. 2: 63-4.

\(^{285}\) In her introduction to the translation based on Italian sources, Olga Dror reports on 12 other Italians beside Mancini who joined the mission in Tonkin as well as 8 Vietnamese converts who joined the Augustinians (*A Study of Religion*, p. 25). This is slightly different than my number, which is based on the biographies of Augustinians, both foreign and indigenous, written by Marillier. The two additional Vietnamese mentioned by Dror could have been the brothers who were not listed in Marillier’s account of the clergy in Tonkin.
years of struggle the mission of the Discalced Augustinians gained strength with the 1724
arrival of Hilario (Ilario) Costa, or Hilario di Gesù (1697-1754).

Arriving in Tonkin at the young age of 27, Hilario (or Hy, as he was known among the Vietnamese) learned
Vietnamese quickly. He became sufficiently proficient that he was able to compose a
number of important religious books. As described in the words of the contemporary
MEP priest (and later bishop) Louis Néez: “He has a wonderful talent for writing.
Because of him, the mission in Tonkin has quite a few books, which he has written not
only for the use of his religious brothers but also for the whole Christian population in his
vicariate.”

A prolific author, Hilario was known to be a competent authority on
religions in Tonkin. He published at least a dozen different works, including the Dị
Đoan Chi Giáo [Doctrine of Superstitions], Đại Học Chi Dạo [Path to Great Learning],
and Index historicus.

Another prominent Italian Augustinian was Adriano di Santa Thecla (1667-
1764). Adriano (or Tri, as he was known among the Vietnamese), the author of the
aforementioned Opusculum de sectis (1750) was a close associate of Hilario and was

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286 Hilario di Gesù came to Tonkin in 1724, became bishop of Core (or Corycus) and coadjutor of East Tonkin in 1736 and took over the administration of the vicariate the following years. He was papal visitor to settle the dispute among the clergy in Cochinchina in 1750s. During his episcopacy, he ordained a number of Vietnamese, both secular and religious, to the priesthood (6 in 1739, 3 in 1741, 2 in 1744, 3 in 1748, 4 in 1749, 4 in 1750, and 2 in 1751). Source: Marillier, Nos pères dans la foi, Vol. 2: 124-26.


288 These works were acknowledged by Adriano di Santa Thecla in his preface to the Opusculum de sectis. A list of Hilario di Gesù’s work is found in Adriano’s Life of Hilario composed after the bishop’s death. Reference is given by Dror, A Study of Religion, p. 25, n. 24.

appointed by the latter to be the vicar general of the vicariate in 1749. Another Italian, Dominico di San Martino (1703-1741) who arrived with Adriano, was known to be the author of the *Chinese Superstitions and Rites*.\(^{290}\) Since *ETR* deals with the “superstition” and errors of the three religions, it is likely that the author was either one of these three men, or was a still anonymous author who adapted their work. Two other Italians who worked in East Tonkin around 1740-1750 did not leave any significant writings. The issue of authorship will be considered again after I compare *ETR* with the *Opusculum de sectis* in the following sections.

Adriano di Santa Thecla’s *Opusculum*

The *Opusculum de sectis apud Sinenses et Tunkinenses* (hereafter abbreviated as *Opusculum*) is a 19 by 25 cm manuscript, preserved as the AMEP Volume 667. The manuscript is made up of 121 pages, eight of which are introductions numbered with Roman numerals. It also has a two-page table of contents. There are blank pages at the end of the chapters on Confucianism, Daoism, and Fortune-tellers, and after the second chapter on Buddhism, reducing the actual text to 109 pages. The treatise was written in Latin with the insertion of passages in Sino-Vietnamese and vernacular Vietnamese written in Roman script. It also included several diagrams describing the lay-out of the places in which the ceremony to Confucius, the Hội Minh ceremony, and the Buddhist rite of “breaking the prison” (*phá ngục*) occur. The style of Quốc-ngữ reflects the change

\(^{290}\) Reference is given by Dror (*A Study of Religion*, p. 25); I have not yet been able to locate this work.

132
in orthography that took place in the late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{291}

The book was a treatise on the religions of the Chinese and Tonkinese based on the observations of Adriano with additional information from the Dominican missionary Francisco Gil de Federich (1702-1745)\textsuperscript{292} and others, including the literati. Adriano wrote this treatise to explain the religions of the Chinese and Tonkinese to European readers. He included a description of both the Three Religions, as well as the development of Christianity in China and in Tonkin. Unfortunately, he never completed the work due to many interruptions – which he described as wars and other matters. As Adriano admitted, the treatise was an opportunity to expand on other missionaries’ writings about the religions of Tonkin. In the preface to \textit{Opusculum} he wrote:

> The possibility of writing this treatise was provided by the \textit{Index Historicus} of the Tonkin mission, which [the] illustrious Father Ilario [Hilario] di Gesù, bishop of Corycus, and vicar apostolic of East Tonkin, compiled for use by his brothers living in this mission, in which he discussed these three sects [Tam Giác] following the information that previous missionaries passed on in books transcribed from Chinese and Annamite script. It seemed necessary to me to reexamine and to make a new investigation of the sects and to consult the Chinese books, literati, and experts. When it was done, I discovered many contradictions and followed the most trustworthy of the suggested versions, to which I added others.\textsuperscript{293}

\textsuperscript{291} Dror (\textit{A Study of Religion}, pp. 31-32) notes that this text is a copy, not the original written by Adriano di Santa Thecla himself, for the handwriting was different. In addition, Adriano’s \textit{Quốc-ngữ} was closer to what was recorded in Alexandre de Rhodes’ Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin dictionary. See a sample of Adriano’s handwriting in AMEP, Vol. 689, f. 55.

\textsuperscript{292} Gil de Federich was a Spanish Dominican who came to Tonkin in 1735. Two years later he was imprisoned as a result of religious persecution and was decapitated in 1745. He seemed to be well-versed in the Vietnamese language and customs and had opportunities to discuss the Christian faith with an “uncle of the Lord.” For his biography see Marillier, \textit{Nos pères dans la foi}, Vol. 2: 116-17.

\textsuperscript{293} \textit{Opusculum}, vi (trans. p. 83).
While the work was still in its early stage, Adriano sent his manuscript to Gil de Federich to examine, correct and add further information. He also made inquiry about special ceremonies (for example, the Kỳ Đạo ceremony) among the court ministers and literati. In composing his work on the religions of Tonkin, Adriano acknowledges incorporating materials from Hilario’s Dị Đoan Chi Giáo and Đại Học Chi Đạo. Opusculum was highly valued among missionaries. An early version had already been sent back to Europe with an introduction by Bishop Louis Néez, the vicar apostolic of West Tonkin.

In a letter to the directors of the MEP in Paris dated Dec 15, 1749, Néez wrote:

I have our students write [= make a copy] of the Chronology of China and Tonkin and an abridged chronology of the history of the religion, which was composed by the Reverend Father Adriano di Santa Thecla, an Italian Augustinian, missionary of the Propaganda in Tonkin. It is a new book, at least concerning Tonkin, and perhaps concerning China. Since this Father sent this work to Rome, I guessed that I would do you a favor by sending a copy to your library. I wish it had been written better and more precisely. I corrected there quite a number of mistakes. Maybe there are still many more others than these. Please be so kind as to excuse an old man who is alone and overloaded with his affairs.294

As a survey of religion, the Opusculum is a systematic treatment of the Chinese and Vietnamese religions. It is divided into six chapters discussing (1) the sect of the literati (Confucianism), (2) the cult of spirits, (3) the sect of magicians (Daoism), (4) fortune tellers and diviners, (5) the sect of the Buddha, (6) and the Christian religion among the Chinese and Vietnamese. The treatise is mainly a description of Chinese and

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Vietnamese religions. Unlike the author of *ETR*, Adriano refrained from giving his opinions on what he observed, except when he discussed the merit of sacrifices.\(^{295}\)

### The Complex Relationship Between *ETR* and *Opusculum*

A comparison of the table of contents between the two works exhibits a striking parallel in the topics discussed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Tam Giáo Chư Vọng</em></th>
<th><em>Opusculum de sectis</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Errors of Three Religions]</td>
<td>apud Sinenes et Tunkineses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1752</td>
<td>1750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Preface

**Book 1: Errors of Confucianism**

- Art. 1: On how the Supreme Ultimate created Heaven and Earth
- Art. 2: On the origin of Pangu
- Art. 3: On who is the Sovereign-on-High
- Art. 4: On the origin of the Right Way
- Art. 5: On the great flood
- Art. 6: On the sacrifices to heaven, earth and the six spirits of nature
- Art. 7: On the sacrifices to the Five Emperors and the Five Spirits
- Art. 8: On the Hội Minh ceremony and the Kỳ Đạo sacrifice
- Art. 9: On Thành Hoàng [the Tutelary Genie] and other spirits
- Art. 10: On King Đông, King Trème, and King Bạch Mã
- Art. 11: On Vua Bếp [Stove Genie], Thổ Công [Household Genie], Thổ Chủ [Land Guardian], and Tiên Sư [Primary

#### Chapter 1: On the sect of the literati

- Art. 1: On Confucius, the founder of this sect
- Art. 2: On the studies, books, and doctrine of this sect
- Art. 3: On the religion of this sect
- Art. 4: On the cult of the famous Confucius
- Art. 5: On the solemn sacrifice to Confucius

#### Chapter 2: On the spirits and their cult

- Art. 1: On the spirits of heaven and earth
- Art. 2: On the kings called Thánh [Saints], and especially on those to whom sacrifices are made four times a year
- Art. 3: On the spirits whom the military worship
- Art. 4: On the ceremony of Tế Kỳ Đạo

Teacher]
Art. 12: On the cult of Confucius and the
great sages
Art. 13: On the cult of Thái Công [the
Grand Duke] and the mighty generals
Art. 14: On the rites to the ancestors
Art. 15: On geomancy

Art. 5: On the ceremony Hội Minh, or on
Taking the Oath of Loyalty
Art. 6: On the Tutelary Genies called
Thành Hoàng
Art. 7: On the ceremony Tạo Khoa Bất
Thần, that is, on the probation and
ranking of spirit
Art. 8: On Vua Đaóng and Vua Trèm and
several others
Art. 9: On Tiên Sư, Thổ Công, Vua Bęp,
and others, who have a cult among
ordinary people
Art. 10: On the spirits of the deceased
Art. 11: Important remarks on sacrifices
Art. 12: On sacrifice to living Vua and
Chúa

Book 2: The Errors of Daoism

Art. 1: On the founding of Daoism by
Laozi
Art. 2: On the propagation of Daoism by
Zhang Yi and Zhang Jue
Art. 3: On the healing works of the sorcerer
Art. 4: On the twelve yearly Governing
Genies
Art. 5: On the Nine Stars and Thunder God
Art. 6: On auspicious and inauspicious day
and hour
Art. 7: On Hà Bá, Phạm Nhan, and Liễu
Hạnh
Art. 8: On divination
Art. 9: On astrology and event-forecasting
Art. 10: On the Five Constellations
Art. 11: On physiognomy and reading the
chicken feet
Art. 12: On solar and lunar eclipses

Chapter 3: On the sect of magicians

Art. 1: On Lão Tử [Laozi], the founder of
this sect
Art. 2: On the growth of this sect
Art. 3: On the magic of this sect
Art. 4: On the religion of this sect
Art. 5: On Ngọc Hoàng [the Jade
Emperor], who are worshipped

Chapter 4: On fortune-tellers and diviners

Art. 1: On the fortune-tellers Thầy Bói and
Thầy Khoa

(manuscript ends here)
{Art. 2: On Thầy xem số [astrologist], xem
tướng [physiologist], xem giò [reader of
chicken feet], Thầy địa lý [geomancer]
Art. 3: On other diviners}
A closer examination of the materials presented in the two works reveals that both share sufficient material in common to suggest they arose from the same literary source.

The question of our interest naturally is: which depends on which? Three logical solutions can be suggested for the inter-textual dependency between the two: either (1) ETR is a Vietnamese adaptation of Opusculum, or (2) Opusculum depends on ETR, or else, (3) both works depend on a previous, though now lost, common source.

The most straight-forward solution to the question of the composition and authorship is that, because it appeared two years later, ETR is a Vietnamese adaptation of
*Opusculum*. The actual story, however, is more complicated for several reasons. First, Adriano di Santa Thecla admitted that he relied on previous works, notably those of Hilario Costa who composed some writings on the three sects in Vietnamese for the use of his confreres in the mission. In addition, he was constantly revising the text as more information was made available to him. The author of *ETR*, on the other hand, did not indicate that he relied on any previous written work on the three religions for his composition.

Second, the arrangement of the topics in *Opusculum* is more logical, moving from the general to the particular, and from the most compatible to the least compatible with Christianity, as Adriano understood it. He divided the materials on Confucianism (which were treated as one in *ETR*) into two chapters to reflect the difference between Confucianism and the native cult of spirits. He also did the same with material on Daoism, splitting it into two chapters, dealing with what would properly count as Daoist, and what seemingly were the practices of the popular religions. By doing so, Adriano acknowledged the existence of a separate category of religion from the traditional triple division of Vietnamese religions. If *ETR* was an adaptation of *Opusculum*, it would be difficult to explain why the author had abandoned this approach.

Third, the style of writing is quite different, even when treating the same material. While the *Opusculum* is a series of essay-like articles, *ETR* is written in the style of a dialogue using simple sentences. The latter is imbedded with quotations from Chinese and Vietnamese sources. Many of these quotations also appear in *Opusculum* together with Adriano’s translation. However, the Sino-Vietnamese materials in *Opusculum* were
mostly short sentences. The longer quotations were either left out or paraphrased. This shows that Adriano was familiar with both Chinese and Vietnamese, but not fluent enough to translate long quotations from Chinese, for *Opusculum* reveals quite a few misspellings in the Sino-Vietnamese. Furthermore, judging from the handwriting, the text is not written at a consistent pace and size. The *Opusculum* manuscript exhibits evidence of having been written by two scribes. A person who was familiar with Latin wrote out the main text and left ample space for the insertion of Vietnamese and Sino-Vietnamese by a second scribe. This is not the case with *ETR*.

In the determination of dependency of one text upon another, certain criteria worked out by biblical scholars during the debate between the primacy of Mark or Matthew in the synoptic gospels are applicable. By the middle of the nineteenth century, biblical scholars had long noted the similarity between the two gospels. They questioned whether Mark was a reduction of Matthew (Griesbach’s theory), or Matthew was an expansion of Mark (as in the two-source theory). The majority of biblical scholars today accept the primacy of Mark for several reasons. First, a later text would most likely improve upon an earlier text, refine its style of writing and rearrange its materials in a more coherent scheme; if we have two texts of which one is coarse (Mark) and the other is embellished (Matthew), it is more likely that the unrefined one is the earlier text. Second, a later text would expand, rather than contract, the particulars of the original text, especially as regards unfamiliar concepts or customs (e.g., Matthew gives details on Jesus’ temptations in the desert). Third, the later text would keep all the relevant materials from the original and would not omit any important information. Thus, there is
nothing important in Mark that is not included in Matthew. Finally, a later text would
“explain away” embarrassment or mistakes in the original text, rather than the other way
around (e.g., Matthew’s explanation of why Jesus needed to be baptized at all).

Applying these criteria to the comparison of ETR and Opusculum, we see a
similar situation. Of all the material in common between the two works, the tendency of
ETR is to be brief and Opusculum expansive. For example, in the sacrifices to Confucius,
the ceremonies of Kỳ Đạo and Hội Minh, the ranking of the spirit, and the Buddhist ritual
of “breaking the prison,” Opusculum gives a much longer description than ETR,
including the configuration of the place of the ceremony. The tendency toward
expansion rather contraction can also be seen in Opusculum treatment of Vietnamese
spirits. In addition to presenting the material on King Dông and King Trèm (an almost
word-for-word translation of the accounts in ETR), it also includes an account of the
genie Sơn Tinh of Mount Tản Viên. Since Sơn Tinh was one of the major spirits of
Vietnam, it is unlikely that the author of ETR omitted it, if he was adapting from
Opusculum. The conflation of the Bạch Mâ spirit with the Chinese general Ma Yuan,
appears in both texts.296 It is more likely that Opusculum copied this mistake from ETR,
rather than the author of ETR, who seemed to be more familiar with the Vietnamese
history and language, repeats this mistake of Adriano. In summary, there is more
persuasive evidence that Opusculum was dependent on ETR, or at least an earlier version
of it, rather than the other way around.

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296 See a discussion on this conflation by Dror, A Study of Religion, 42-47.
We then must consider the dating of the two manuscripts. The fact that the present version of *ETR* was circulated circa 1752, two years after Adriano di Santa Thecla purportedly finished his work, can be explained by the hypothesis that both *ETR* and *Opusculum* were dependent upon a now lost manuscript in Vietnamese (most likely, the *Dị Đoan Chí Giáo* written by Hilario Costa).

### A Hypothesis of Authorship

My hypothesis is that *ETR* went through a number of compositional stages. A Vietnamese version of *Index Historicus*, either composed by Hilario himself or translated by one of the Vietnamese priests working for him, was the first draft. After becoming a bishop in 1736, Hilario was concerned about the formation of indigenous clergy; hence he might have prepared a version of the *Index Historicus* in Vietnamese for his catechists and priests to use. After the papal bull *Ex Quo Singulari* (1742), there arose a need to stop the concessions to local customs, including the cult to Confucius, to Thánh Hoàng [tulerary genies] and other national spirits, and to the ancestors. Hilario might have composed the *Dị Đoan Chí Giáo* around this time to help his indigenous priests cope with the issues. In the meantime, as the two men worked closely together, Adriano composed his chronicle of Tonkinese religions in the early 1740s based on the information supplied by Hilario. After he obtained more information from Gil de Federich and Louis Néez, he corrected and edited the work, giving it the present title *Opusculum de sectis apud Sinenses and Tunkinenses* in 1750. In the meantime, Hilario
(or even Adriano himself with some assistance from the literati) also updated the *Dị Doan Chi Giáo*, renamed it *Tam Giáo Chứ Vọng*, and published it in 1752.

In summary then, the author was most likely Hilario di Gesù, or one of his close associates, not excluding Adriano. The fact that *ETR* is preserved in the archives of the MEP points to the esteem and friendship that Louis Néez, the bishop of West Tonkin, had for Hilario and his writings. If this work had not been written by Hilario or in his name, it probably would not have survived to make an impact on later Christian apologetic works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In addition, given the extensive knowledge of Confucian literature and Vietnamese history displayed by the composer of the text, we cannot rule out that *ETR* could also be a composite work by multiple authors, including Vietnamese priests and/or the Christian members of the literati. Given the fact that missionary works in Tonkin during the eighteenth century were clandestine activities, at times tolerated by the ruling authorities, it is unlikely that a Western missionary at this time could have sufficient time to acquire such an extensive knowledge about the Confucian literature and Vietnamese history. Even the most prominent MEP bishop of Cochinchina, Pierre Pigneau de Béhaine (1741-1799), did not exhibit such knowledge in his religious writings. In his role as a seminary professor from 1767 to 1774 to young seminarians of Chinese, Thai, and Vietnamese origins, Pigneau de Béhaine certainly had greater access to the religious literature in their native languages than the author(s) of *ETR* could ever have had. Despite the fact that Pigneau de Béhaine was proficient in Chinese and Vietnamese
(Nôm) enough to author an Annamite-Latin dictionary and a catechism entitled Thánh Giáo Yếu Lý Quốc Ngữ [Essential Christian Doctrines in Vietnamese] (Nôm ed. 1774), when one compares the writings of Béhaine with ETR, one clearly sees the depth of the classical scholarship in the latter.

Method

Genre and Intended Audience

ETR, as evidenced by the title and contents of the text, was intended as a work in the apologetic tradition. The author presented himself as a seeker of the truth who wants to “examine and discuss the doctrines (lê đạo)” of the Three Religions “in order to understand all of their errors.” But that is not the author’s only intention. He is also interested in learning from his dialogue partner what the traditional religions have taught. He is on a quest for the “truth” as he understands it. He is convinced that once his partner in dialogue is exposed to the same truth he will turn away from the errors of the traditional religions to embrace the worship of the true God.

In the preface the author clearly presents his purpose in writing the book:

297 In a letter dated June 5, 1773, Pigneau de Béhaine wrote: “With the help of God, I have been studying Chinese and Vietnamese (Nôm) writing systems in the past seven years. I am proficient enough to read and understand their books with ease.” See Launay, Histoire de la Mission de la Cochinchine: Document Historiques (Paris: 1927), Vol. 3: 7.

298 AMEP, Vol. 1060. This unpublished dictionary was incorporated into Jean Louis Taberd’s Dictionarium Annamitico-Latinum and published in 1838.

I have come from Italy of the Western world to the East to preach the holy way of the Lord of Heaven to the people of Annam — to the lowly as well as the noble, to the learned as well as the ignorant, to the old as well as the young. My goal is that they may know the true Lord, worship him and follow the true way, so that they may attain the blessing of eternal paradise after death. I am now very pleased to meet you, a learned and virtuous Eastern scholar. This is a good opportunity for me to learn more thoroughly about the three religions as well as to discuss the truth concerning them.

A learned person must not only study the books but also examine the arguments contained in them. Since books can teach errors through the use of clever words, a learned person must examine the arguments to see whether they are true or false, as stated in *Great Learning* (Đại Học): “A scholar who cannot utilize his learning cannot be called a learned person.”[^300] If a scholar cannot distinguish the right argument from the wrong one, he should not be called a scholar. Only one who can tell truth from falsehood deserves to be called a learned and wise person, as stated in *Great Learning*: “When things are examined, knowledge is reached.” Therefore, this Western scholar[^301] asks to have a conversation with the Eastern scholar to examine and discuss the arguments of those three religions to understand their errors thoroughly.[^302] Following the same order in which the kings of the past had ranked them, this discussion will be divided into three books: the first book will discuss the errors of Confucianism; the second, the errors of Daoism; and the third, the errors of Buddhism.[^303]

The fact that this work was written in *Quốc-ngữ*, not in *Nôm* or in Latin, suggests that the targeted audiences were Vietnamese converts and/or Vietnamese catechists and native priests. Until 1865, *Quốc-ngữ* was not popular outside of Christian circles.[^304] It

[^300]: This text cannot be found in the *Great Learning*.

[^301]: “Western scholar” is the form of self-reference used by Matteo Ricci in his *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (*Tianzhu Shiyi*).

[^302]: In the context of the book, “errors” refer to beliefs or practices that are judged to be contrary to the Christian faith.

[^303]: *ETR*, Preface, i-ii.

[^304]: The first newspaper in *Quốc-ngữ*, the Gia Định Báo, was published under the editorship of Trương Vĩnh Ký on April 15, 1865 in Saigon. Not until the beginning of the twentieth century did we see a similar effort
was the primary means of communication between missionaries and native Christian believers. Many learned members of the Christian communities, including catechists, seminarians, and priests, were proficient writing this script as early as 1659. They used it to write reports and letters to missionaries, and even to the Holy See. Despite these other uses, however, Quốc-ngữ was mainly for internal consumption. Written communication for a wider audience in Tonkin before the twentieth century would require Chinese characters or the demotic Vietnamese script (Nôm).

A secondary target of the book seems to be potential converts, especially from the class of the literati. In the preface of Book One, we read:

I [the Western Scholar] deeply respect and admire Confucianism because it wisely teaches the right truths about the Five Virtues and the Five Relations. However, Confucianism contains not only truths but also falsehood and errors. These errors are contrary to the holy way of the Lord of Heaven, which is the great and most righteous way that people everywhere must believe and practice to attain peace.

Therefore, I invite the Confucian scholar to discuss and analyze with me, the errors that are mixed with Confucian truths. If, during the discussion, you find that I defame Confucianism, I will take the blame; but I speak the truth, you must agree to it and follow me on to the same path. In doing so, you would follow the examples of many other Confucian scholars who have submitted to the truth and turned to the holy way of the

in Tonkin. See Huỳnh Văn Tòng, Báo chí Việt Nam: từ khởi thủy đến 1945 [History of Vietnamese journalism, from the beginning to 1945] (Hochiminh city: NXB TP HCM, 2000).

There are two letters in the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus (ARSI) under the Japanese-Chinese section. One is by Igesico Van Tin to Giovanni Filippo de Marini, dated Sept 12, 1659 (ARSI, Jap-Sin 81, f. 247). The other is by Bento Thien also addressed to Marini dated Oct 25, 1659 (ARSI, Jap-Sin 81, f246). Bento Thien also wrote a small booklet entitled History of Annam in 1659 (ARSI, Jap-Sin 81, ff254-59). See the discussion and the facsimile of the works in Đỗ Quang Chính, Lịch Sử Chữ Quốc-ngữ 1620-1659 [History of Quốc-ngữ, 1652-1659] (Saigon: 1972; reprint, Hochiminh City: Ảnh & Đức Sáng, 2007), 125-78, 183-98.

The persistent use of Nôm in religious and other writings among Catholics was continued until the early decades of the twentieth century. Between 1915 and 1930, Quốc-ngữ quickly became prominent because it was used in the newspaper, magazines, and modern literature. By 1945, it virtually replaced Nôm as the official script of Vietnam.
Lord of Heaven — the way that has brought people of this world on the right path to attain the most valuable and everlasting blessings.\textsuperscript{307}

Thus the book serves a dual purpose. For Christians it is a manual of apologetics, equipping them with arguments against the religious practices of the pagans. At the same time, the author tries to reach out to the Confucian class, attempting to reason with them regarding the “truth” that they should follow.

However, because the book was a manuscript rather than a printed text, its distribution was rather limited. Overall, it does not attempt to challenge the Three Religions \textit{per se}. It is more likely an internal document intended to aid the native clergy and catechists in evangelization. Because of the social context, in which Christianity found itself a minority religion, its members were alienated from and often misunderstood by the larger society for not participating in the “common” rituals. Thus, it is not surprising that Christians and their converts felt a need to understand why Christianity rejected certain customs and religious practices.

The need to defend themselves from the Confucian charge of being “unreasonable” and “ignorant” was a common concern for Vietnamese Christians. The purpose of this book, therefore, was to help the native believers and converts to resolve the questions concerning their attitudes toward certain traditional rituals and customs.

\textsuperscript{307} \textit{ETR}, 1-2.
The Use of Chinese and Vietnamese Materials

In his attempt to appeal to the Confucian class, the author used a lot of materials that a Confucian scholar readily recognizes: the Four Books\(^\text{308}\) and the Five Classics.\(^\text{309}\) He also quoted from or referred to other Confucian sources such as the Family Sayings (Gia Ngữ), Zhu Xi’s Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror (Thống Giám Cương Mục), Hu Guang’s Compendium of Metaphysics (Tình Lý Đại Toàn), Yuan Liaofan’s Collated Annals of the Mirror of Law (Cương Giám Hợp Biên), and the commentaries on the classics by Dong Zhongshu, Zhu Xi, Cheng Yi, and other Confucian masters. In terms of ritual prescription, he relied on Record of Rites (Lễ Ký) and Family Rituals (Gia Lễ).\(^\text{310}\)

Fond of using historical figures as examples, the author demonstrates quite an extensive knowledge of Chinese historical chronicles, referring to sử ký [record of history] a number of times in the text. The term is a generic name of a number of historical records, notably Sima Qian’s Records of the Grand Historian (Sử Ký). Other Chinese sources in use either directly or indirectly are Pan Gu’s History of the Han Dynasty (Hán Sở), Sima Guang’s Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government (Tự Trị Thông Giám), and the memorials by Fu Yi and Han Yu of the Tang dynasty. The Vietnamese sources on which the author relied included Ngô Sĩ Liên’s Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư [Complete History of the Great Viet], and to a lesser extent Lý Tế Xuyên’s

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\(^{308}\) Four Books refers to the Confucian books collated by Zhu Xi: the Analects, Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean, and Mencius.

\(^{309}\) Five Classics refers to the books that traditionally were collected and edited by Confucius: the Classic of Odes, Classic of History, Classic of Changes, Record of Rites, and Annals of Spring and Autumn.

\(^{310}\) Since there were a few ritual manuals circulated in Vietnam at the time, I am not sure which version the author had used for his text. Nevertheless, the Confucian rituals in Vietnam were modeled after Chinese rituals of the Song and Ming, notably the customs set by Zhu Xi.
Viet Định U Linh Tập [Collected Stories of the Potent Spirits of the Viet Realm] and Trần Thế Pháp’s Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái [Strange Stories from the Southern Range]. In contrast to his knowledge of the Confucian literature, the author was unfamiliar with orthodox Daoist and Buddhist sources. The only Daoist book he cited is the Daodejing. His only Buddhist source is Sutra of Forty-two Sections (Tứ Thập Nhị Chương Kinh). He seemed to rely more on the esoteric texts, such as the Daoist manual Hồng Lục Thư [Book of Hồng Lục], and the Buddhist texts Tâm Đăng [Lamp of the Mind], Bì Chi [Esoteric Branches], and Hoàng Đồ Vĩnh.  

Christian Sources

The only Christian sources used in the text are the stories of creation and the great flood from the book of Genesis. While he might incorporate previous Christian writings, the author does so indirectly. Though not attributed, the style of argument was borrowed from earlier Christian works written for Asians, particularly Matteo Ricci’s Tianzhu Shiyi [True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven] and Alexandre de Rhodes’ Cathechismus in octo dies divisus [Catechism divided in eight days].

311 The Tâm Đăng [Lamp of the Mind] seems to be the work of a Daoist and Buddhist syncretistic sect, since its content and language incorporate elements from both traditions. A survival copy is preserved at the Institute of Hán Nôm Studies in Hanoi, catalogue A2481. I will discuss more about this book in the later chapters of this dissertation.

312 This book has been lost.

313 This book Hoàng Đồ Vĩnh is unidentifiable since the title seems to be incomplete. The phrase literally means “let the fortune of the emperor be eternal,” and is often found in title pages of texts written during the Lê dynasty. Cf. Olga Dror, A Study of Religion, p. 207 n. 159.
The Influence of True Meaning

The impact of True Meaning on ETR is undeniable. Not only the style but also the contents of ETR bear the marks of True Meaning as if the author of ETR had attempted to be another Ricci. Even a casual reader will readily recognize the similarity in style between True Meaning and ETR. Both are written as a dialogue between a Western Scholar and an Eastern Scholar. Furthermore, ETR’s agenda is the same as Ricci’s, namely, to establish the truth of the Christian worship of God as the sole creator and benefactor of all things and to present a rational refutation of what its author perceived to be errors in the Vietnamese religions.

In particular, the influence of True Meaning on ETR is evident on the following points. First, in terms of method, ETR uses the Confucian classics, historical examples, and reason as proofs of his arguments. Second, like Ricci, the author is eager to refute the errors of Neo-Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Lastly, the author is polemical when discussing Buddhist doctrines. He often cites Confucian anti-Buddhist arguments to buttress his case. This is not unlike the Riccian approach of “complementing Confucianism to repudiate Buddhism.”

The main difference between the two works is their target audience and approach. True Meaning was mainly addressed to Chinese intellectuals well versed in philosophical discussions and consequently has a more theoretical nature. ETR was aimed at potential converts and neophytes who needed to examine the merits of certain common beliefs and religious practices and thus has a more practical bent. ETR’s arguments, even on themes similar to those of True Meaning, for example, the Supreme Ultimate, the Sovereign-on-
High, the goodness of human nature, the doctrine of transmigration of the soul, are short on theories and are rather filled with concrete examples and analogies.

The Influence of Cathechismus

The arguments found in the first four days of *Cathechismus* clearly have influenced those of the author of *ETR*. At times it seems that the author of *ETR* does nothing more than give fuller expositions and explanations of de Rhodes’ arguments.

Here is a list of the themes or arguments from *Cathechismus* that appear in *ETR*:

- From Day One: A) The argument from design to prove that the universe cannot come into existence by itself but only from an intelligent Designer. B) Insufficiency of the homage to Heaven without homage to the “Lord of Heaven” (God) who is the “great ruler” of all.

- From Day Two: A) Only the Lord of Heaven and nothing else is the source, the first cause of heaven, and earth and all things. B) The Lord of Heaven is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-benevolent, and all-just who rewards the good and punishes the evil. C) It is our duty to worship the Lord of Heaven above everything else.

- From Day Three: A) The Lord of Heaven creates this universe and the first human beings.

- From Day Four: A) A great flood happened in the time of Noah; afterward, his descendants migrated all over the world. B) There are two kinds of Buddhist teachings: external (public) and internal (esoteric), which propagate many errors.
C) The Buddha was a barbarian from India. China (and by extension Annam) were misled into following his teaching by the error of the Chinese emperor Han Mingdi who mistook Buddhism for the true religion of the West. D) Daoism is founded by Laozi who taught the false doctrine that “nothingness and emptiness make up the first principle called the great dao.” E) The worship of Confucius is futile for he cannot grant any favor. F) The doctrine of transmigration of the soul is contrary to reason. G) It is wasteful to make elaborate offerings to the deceased because they can no longer use the food and drink as if they were alive; burning paper money and other goods to the dead is also futile.

In addition, the author of *ETR* follows de Rhodes’s strategy of using historical narratives to prove his points. The main difference between them is that while de Rhodes mostly quotes from the Bible, the author of *ETR* uses Chinese and Vietnamese historical sources. On this point, the author of *ETR* is closer to Ricci than to de Rhodes.

**The Approach of *ETR***

Though the title of the work is the “errors” of the Three Religions, the fact is, for both the author and his interlocutor, the most important task is the search for religious truth. Since the author is convinced that his religion is “the holy way of the Lord of Heaven, which is the great and most righteous way”³¹⁴ for all people everywhere, he will judge the other’s position by the Christian perspective. To legitimate his position, the

³¹⁴ *ETR*, 1.
author employs several strategies for his arguments. First, he appeals to history, using both historical examples from China and Vietnam to show that most of the customs under discussion are of late origin, and therefore not as indispensable as one might think. Secondly, he appeals to reason as a mean to examine the issues at hand, to see whether they are true or false, rather than accepting them merely because of tradition. In order to refute the traditional beliefs and long-held customs, he uses reason to expose the internal inconsistency, especially regarding those he feels are irrational such as the doctrine of transmigration, the custom of burning joss paper, and the popular practices of divination and fortune-telling.

In the process, he quotes extensively from Confucian texts as well as books of history to support or refute a case. This extensive use of the classical texts and authors intends to show that the arguments in ETR are to be taken seriously and that the work can be a tremendous help for native priests and catechists to reach out to a wider audience. The use of arguments from the ancient authorities, especially from the classics, is common to both Western and Confucian scholasticism. Thomas Aquinas and Zhu Xi, for example, did not simply make a truth claim; they also offered interpretation of a quotation from the past, be it the writings of Aristotle or Augustine, the Analects, or Classic of Changes, or Great Learning.

For our author, the Confucian tradition has much information and wisdom to offer. As in any other source, the writings must be weighed and discerned by the light of reason. Here the author applied the exact same method of study like any Confucian scholar would do: examine texts, interpret them, and use his reason to find the truth in
them. The author of *ETR* did not hesitate to use the texts that are from the Vietnamese tradition to support the truths he wants to present. In doing so, he continued the path set down by Ricci in sixteenth-century China and de Rhodes in seventeenth-century Vietnam.

The classification of issues into three categories, the “errors” of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, may strike the reader as arbitrary because at times, the issue under discussion has nothing to do with the religion in question. For example, when discussing the funeral rites the author strives to distinguish between Confucian rites (which he sees as legitimate) and the Buddhist rites (which he sees as superstitious). He links the practice of burning paper money and paper goods to Buddhism, but this practice was of Chinese origin and was not a Buddhist custom. In another example, he classifies geomancy as a Confucian practice whereas, in reality, it belongs to popular religion. The mixture of cults and religious practices reflects a reality of eighteenth-century Vietnam in which rituals and beliefs were observed without concern for their origin.

**Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the structure, history, and method of *The Errors of the Three Religions*. The work is a “dialogue” between a Western (Christian) scholar and his Eastern (Confucian) counterpart on selected religious issues of the three traditional religions. The Western scholar usually begins the conversation with an observation
which he then invites his interlocutor, the Eastern scholar, to explain and clarify, and concludes by giving his own thoughts on the issue at hand.

In terms of composition and authorship, the author displays a comprehensive knowledge of Chinese and Vietnamese written sources. He also was well acquainted with the rituals and customs among the Tonkinese of his time, an acquaintance due most likely to direct observation. If the author did not identify himself as an Italian missionary in the preface, the work could have been written by any Tonkinese catechist or priest. The style of writing and the use of the Confucian classics and commentaries by the author demonstrate his excellent command of the sources. The author demonstrates quite a breadth of scholarship on the issue in conversation, from its history to the merit of its practice. My hypothesis of naming the bishop of Corycus, vicar apostolic of East Tonkin, Hilario di Gesù (Hilario Costa) as the author of *ETR* is not without foundation. Of all the missionaries living in the second quarter of the eighteenth century none had surpassed him in knowledge about the religions in Tonkin.

As far as the approach of *ETR* toward the religions of Vietnam, it is essentially a selective text that deals with certain religious aspects of Vietnamese traditional religions. However, one must remember that the work was composed at a time when missionary activities in Tonkin were illegal. Under these circumstances, the author of *ETR* might not have the proper time or the adequate resource to investigate the traditional religions thoroughly by studying their sacred texts and rituals or discussing with their representatives. Most information presented in the book was likely to be supplied by his Vietnamese converts, some of whom might be former Daoist or Buddhist ritualists.
Despite these weaknesses, the reader still encounters an author who is open-minded and fair enough to willingly enter into dialogue with members of another religious tradition. This deliberate choice of style, no doubt modeled more on the dialogues of the more famous work, Ricci’s *True Meaning* rather than the prose style of Adriano di St Thecla’s *Opusculum de sectis*. This imitation of style speaks of the author’s hope of reaching an audience similar to Ricci’s, an audience consisting of the learned members of the Christian community as well as potential converts.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE COSMOLOGICAL DIMENSION:

INTERPRETATIONS ON THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

The tantalizing questions of how everything begins and where everything goes always remain at the edge of the human mind – whether one utters them or not. Creation myths and legends along with divine revelations were early attempts to tackle these intractable questions. Philosophy and science later contributed their invaluable inquiries into the search for this ultimate knowledge. Religious or not, the human person never stops trying to penetrate into these mysteries. This chapter will examine the traditional cosmogonies and cosmologies presented in *The Errors of the Three Religions (ETR)*.

More than philosophical, the answers to these questions played important roles in the religious exchanges between Christianity and the Sinic cultures of China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. In the early catechisms in Asia, such as Ricci’s *True Meaning* and de Rhodes’ *Cathechismus*, the doctrine of God as the supreme Lord of the universe occupies a major portion. The Christian belief system starts out with God as the creator of the universe, goes on to show God as its sustainer and healer, and ends up with the same God as its restorer or redeemer. Missionaries to Asia realized that the best approach to a doctrine of God for non-Christians was via natural theology: the peoples of East Asia already had a basic notion of a transcendental being called August Heaven or Supreme Lord in Confucian classics and thus a doctrine of God could be built upon it. Of
course the Christian understanding and conception of God differed from, sometimes even contradicted, the native expressions. The urgent task for Christian missionaries, therefore, was to correct and amend the native beliefs so that conversion to the “true way of the Lord of heaven and earth” would be possible.

In ETR the author deals with this concern mostly in the first five articles of Part One and articles Four and Five of Part Three. In the following sections, I will examine the creation theories and myths discussed by the author in two parts: first, an account of cosmogony in Chinese philosophy, and then the creation myths in popular religions. Finally, I will present the critique of ETR toward these views.

**Origin of the World According to Chinese Philosophy**

**From Antiquity to the Classical Era**

Although we have no documents from before the age of the Confucian classics telling us what the ancient Chinese people believed about the origin of thing, the dualistic concept of yin and yang is known to have existed prior to recorded history. The simple signs of straight and broken lines representing the yang (—) and yin (—), attributed to the semi-divine emperor Fu Xi, are recorded in Classic of Changes as symbols of the cosmic forces or principles that make up the universe. These symbols do not furnish a proper cosmogony but reflect the constant change observed in the natural world: day and night, sun and moon, hot and cold, etc. All things and events are products of these two dynamics.
The concept that five primary agents make up the universe is also drawn from natural examples. According to *Classic of Documents*, Five Elements or Dynamics — water, fire, earth, metal, and wood — interact with one another to form the natural world.\(^{315}\) The doctrine emphasizes order and movement: one phenomenon succeeds another as the Five Elements take their turns. Although independently conceived, these concepts of yin-yang and Five Elements, may be regarded as early attempts to explain natural phenomena and the origins of things. They are the building blocks for later cosmogonic ideas, especially in the China of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Classical Confucianism does not have a specific view of the universe and its origin. Its main concerns are the moral world and its socio-political affairs. Confucius once said: “What does Heaven ever say? The four seasons run their course and all things are produced. What does Heaven ever say?”\(^{316}\) Except for the philosopher Xunzi, who expressed an interest in the natural world, the concepts of yin and yang and Five Elements are absent from the texts of the *Analects* and the *Mencius*.

**The Daoist Contribution**

Daoists have a deep appreciation of the mystery of the universe. In the *Daodejing* ([*Classic of the Way and its Power*], a book that is traditionally attributed to Laozi, the concept of *Dao* [Way] as the mother of all things is expressed in a literary formula:

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\(^{316}\) *Analects*, 17:19.
The Way begets One;
One begets Two;
Two beget Three;\textsuperscript{317}
Three beget the Myriad Creatures.
The Myriad Creatures carry on their backs the yin
and embrace in their arms the yang,
and are the blending of the generative forces (qi) of the two.\textsuperscript{318}

\textit{Dao} is indefinable and its essence unknowable, as affirmed in the opening sentences of the book: “the Way (\textit{Dao}) that can be spoken of is not the constant Way; the name that can be named is not the immutable name.”\textsuperscript{319} And yet \textit{Dao} is the formative principle of the universe as well as being its primordial matter. In \textit{Daodejing} Chapter 25 we read:

There was something undefined and complete,
coming into existence before Heaven and Earth
How still it was and formless,
standing alone, and undergoing no change,
reaching everywhere and not being exhausted.

It may be regarded as the Mother of all things.
I do not know its name, and I call it \textit{Dao}
If I have to give a name, I call it the Great (\textit{da}).\textsuperscript{320}

In the same vein, the philosopher Zhuangzi upheld the idea that the universe began from the Nameless or the great \textit{Dao}, but he did not have a specific creation scheme in mind:

\textit{Dao} has reality and evidence, but no action and form.

\textsuperscript{317} The Two here refers to yin and yang, or heaven and earth; the Three refers to the triad of heaven, earth, and human, which gives rise to other phenomena.

\textsuperscript{318} \textit{Daodejing}, Chapter 42.

\textsuperscript{319} \textit{Daodejing}, Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{320} My translation is based on the literary readings of James Legge (1891) and Wing-tsit Chan (1963).
It may be transmitted, but cannot be received.
It may be attained to but cannot be seen.
It exists by and through itself.
It exists prior to heaven and earth, and indeed for all eternity.\textsuperscript{321}

Because *Dao* is not a particular object, it can be spoken of as non-being (*wu*):

At the Great Beginning (*taichu*) there was Non-being (*wu*). It has neither being nor name and was that from which came the One. When the One came into existence, there was the One, but still no form. When things obtained that by which they came into existence, it was called their power. What was formless, yet divided, through the division is not clearly made, was called Fate.\textsuperscript{322}

The idea that the whole universe can be traced to a single origin is popular with the Daoists. For example, in Liu An’s *Huainanzi*, dated around the second century BCE, the Great Beginning (*taichu*) of Zhuangzi is identified with the Great Oneness (*taiyi*):

Before heaven and earth had taken form, all was vague and amorphous. Therefore it was called the Great Beginning (*taichu*). The Great Beginning produced emptiness, and emptiness produced the universe. The universe produced Material Force (*qi*) which had limits. That which was clear and light drifted up to become heaven, while that which was heavy and turbid solidified to become earth… The combined essences of heaven and earth became yin and yang, the concentrated essences of the yin and yang became the four seasons, and the scattered essence of the four seasons became the myriad creatures of the world….

When heaven and earth were joined in emptiness and all was unwrought simplicity, then without having been created, things came into being. This was the Great Oneness (*taiyi*). All things issued from this

\textsuperscript{321} *Zhuangzi*, Chapter 6.

\textsuperscript{322} *Zhuangzi*, Chapter 12.
oneness but all became different, being divided into the various species of fish, birds, and beasts.  

In the fifth century CE, the philosopher Liezi came up with a similar account of how the world began:

The sages reduced heaven and earth to a system by means of the yin and yang. But if all that has shape was born from the shapeless, from what were heaven and earth born? I answer: There was a Great Oneness (taiyi), then the Great Beginning (taichu), then the Great Origin (taishi), and the Great Material (taisu). The Great Oneness preceded the appearance of primordial breath (qi); the Great Beginning was the beginning of the primordial breath; the Great Origin was the primordial breath when it began to assume shape; the Great Material was the primordial breath when it began to assume substance. Breath, shape, and substance were complete, but things were not yet separated from each other; hence the name “confusion” (hundun). Confusion means that the myriad things were confounded and not yet separated from each other.

The speculative answers to the questions of cosmology and cosmogony by the Daoists inspired the Confucians in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Neo-Confucian Cosmogony

The Rise of Neo-Confucian Metaphysics

Through their interactions with Daoism and Buddhism, the Confucian scholars of the Song dynasty began to formulate their views on cosmogony. The so-called five

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masters of Neo-Confucianism — Zhou Dunyi (1017-13), Shao Yong (1011-77), Zhang Zai (1020-77), Cheng Hao (1032-85), and his brother Cheng Yi (1033-1107) — contributed to the inquiries into the nature of the universe, each in his own way. For these philosophers all phenomena began from a single cause. It was called Supreme Ultimate (taiji) by Zhou, Shao, and Zhang; or Principle (li) by the Cheng brothers. Zhou Dunyi adopted the Daoist diagram of Supreme Ultimate in the formulation of his world view. Shao Yong insisted that all things in the cosmos came from a single origin he identified as the heart-mind. Zhang Zai, who constructed a metaphysical system based on the doctrine of one-universe-many-manifestations, identified a cosmic energy called Material Force (qi) as the producer of myriads of things. For Cheng Hao, the universal reason known as Principle (li) resided within the human heart-mind. By extension one could come to know Heaven, form a unity with all things, and become one with the


326 Chan, A Source Book, 463-64.

327 Chan, A Source Book, 484, 489-90, 492-93.

328 Chan, A Source Book, 495, 500-07.
For Cheng Yi, Principle existed eternally and was not affected by time and space. Understanding the nature of Principle and how it operates was the first step of knowledge. Cheng Yi’s student Zhu Xi (1130-1200) integrated his predecessors’ thought to form the school of Rational Studies. Zhu Xi’s greatest contribution is a systematic integration of Zhou Dunyi’s concept of Supreme Ultimate with the Cheng brothers’ infrastructure of Principle and Material Force. In Zhu Xi’s synthesis, Supreme Ultimate is identified as the principle and source of all phenomena.

**Zhou Dunyi and the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate**

The Neo-Confucian focus on the Supreme Ultimate as the foundation of the universe can be traced back to the *Classic of Changes* in which the word “Supreme Ultimate,” together with the two primary trigrams, Qian (☰, heaven) and Kun (☷, earth) are considered the source of all:

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In the changes is the Supreme Ultimate
This produces the Two Modes
The Two Modes produce the Four Images/Forms
The Four Forms produce the Eight Trigrams
The Eight Trigrams determine fortune and misfortune.
Fortune and misfortune give rise to the great activities.
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Although “Supreme Ultimate” appears in the *Classic of Changes*, the term was not part of the regular Confucian vocabulary but was popular in Daoist circles. The idea that the Supreme Ultimate is somehow identified with the Great Beginning (*taichu*) or the “One” of the *Daodejing* is said to have influenced the first Neo-Confucian master Zhou Dunyi.332 In order to explain the orderly structure of the universe, Zhou draws the *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate* to explain the genesis and transformation of all things in several stages, represented by circles and lines.333 In his *Explanation on the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate*, Zhou explains that the cosmological order can be traced back to an entity called the Limitless or Ultimate Non-being (*wuji*). This concept, also popular among Daoists, goes beyond the duality of yin and yang to a limitless beginning of all phenomena. From the indeterminate stage of the Limitless emerges the Supreme Ultimate, and from it all phenomena appear:

The Supreme Ultimate through activity generates yang;  
When its activity reaches its limit, it becomes still.  
Through stillness the Supreme Ultimate generates yin;  
When stillness reaches its limit, activity begins again.  
So activity and stillness alternate  
Each becomes the root of the other,  
Separating into yin and yang,  
Two Modes are thus established….

By the transformation of yang and the union of yin,  
[the Supreme Ultimate] produced water, fire, wood, metal and earth;  
When five Material Forces (*qi*) spread in harmony,  
Four seasons will run their course….  
Five Elements are produced, each with its own nature.

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333 This diagram is reproduced in a number of textbooks and anthologies such as de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1: 674.
The reality of the Limitless (wuji),
Esences of the Two [ Modes] and Five [ Elements]
Come into mysterious union and integration.
The Way of Heaven becomes male,
The Way of Earth becomes female.
The two Material Forces interact,
Transforming and generating the myriad things.
The myriad things generate and regenerate, in unending transformation.\textsuperscript{334}

\textit{The Metaphysics of Principle (li) and Material Force (qi)}

The Cheng brothers did not share the cosmology of their master Zhou Dunyi;
instead they focused on the dual concept of Principle (li)\textsuperscript{335} and Material force (qi).\textsuperscript{336}
Although these concepts have a long history, the Cheng brothers were the first to build a
philosophical system on them. Of the two terms, Principle was given more attention.
Within Neo-Confucianism Shao Yong and Zhang Zai used it to describe “what makes up
all things.” The Cheng brothers continued this trend by identifying the principle/pattern
of one thing with the Principle of all things.

As conceived by the Cheng brothers, Principle is self-evident, extends everywhere
and is found in everything. All things from the smallest to the largest contain Principle,

\textsuperscript{334} I follow the translations provided by Wing-tsit Chan, \textit{A Source Book}, 463, by Joseph Adler in de Bary
and Bloom, 673-74, and by Julia Ching, 22-23.

\textsuperscript{335} Principle (li) has a range of meanings in Confucian and Daoist writings: in \textit{Mencius} it refers to the operative
law or reason; in \textit{Mencius} it denotes the harmonious cooperation of an orchestra; in \textit{Xunzi}, it indicates the
pattern or configuration and the form of a particular thing; in \textit{Doctrine of the Mean} and \textit{Guanzi} it refers to order and pattern; in \textit{Record of Rites} Principle is identified with morality as in the expression “heavenly
Principle” (tianli). For Zhuangzi (and to an extent for Xunzi as well) the heavenly/natural Principle is very
similar to the heavenly/natural Way (tiandao). See a discussion by Ching, 27-28. Refer also to the
individual writings in Chan, \textit{A Source Book}.

\textsuperscript{336} Material Force is an older term, but equally difficult to render in English. The word \textit{Qi}, originally a
pictorial depiction of vapor, has taken on various meanings as “breath,” “ether,” “energy,” “life-force,” or
“material force,” somewhat analogous to the \textit{pneuma} of the ancient Greeks and the \textit{prana} of the ancient
Hindus. It is not a material substance like \textit{materia} of Aquinas’ philosophy but a dynamic animating force.
The term is present in many texts, including the \textit{Mencius}, \textit{Zhuangzi}, \textit{Guanzi}, \textit{Xunzi}, \textit{Liezi}, and \textit{Huainanzi}.
For reference, refers to the footnotes in Ching, 28.
which cannot be augmented or diminished. In a way it is analogous to the Platonic concept of form. But more than Platonic form, Principle includes both natural principles and moral principles, both general and specific. Cheng Yi, in particular, stressed the universal nature of Principle. For him Principle is one but its manifestations are many. Furthermore, Cheng Yi distinguished the relation between Principle and Material Force by specifying that the former belongs to the incorporeal and the latter to the corporeal.  

*The Synthesis of Zhu Xi*

Principle, for Zhu Xi, is the absolute, the universal underlying structure of all. Principle is the origin of the world, the inner potential of things, the source of change, the pattern of existence, and the power that sustains the universe. Zhu identified Principle with Supreme Ultimate, saying in his commentary on Zhou Dunyi’s diagram:

> Question: Supreme Ultimate is not a thing existing in a chaotic state before the formation of Heaven-and-Earth but a general name for the principles of Heaven-and-Earth and the myriad things. Is that correct?

> Answer: Supreme Ultimate is merely the principle of Heaven-and-Earth and the myriad things. With respect to the myriad things, there is Supreme Ultimate in each and every one of them. Before Heaven-and-Earth existed, there was assuredly this principle. It is this principle that through movement generates the yang. It is also this principle that out of tranquility generates the yin…. Fundamentally, there is only Supreme Ultimate, yet each of the myriad things has been endowed with it and each in itself possesses Supreme Ultimate in its entirely….

> Supreme Ultimate is similar to the top of a house or the zenith of the sky, beyond which there is no more. It is the ultimate principle…. As soon as yin and yang produces the Five [Elements], they are confined and

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fixed by physical nature and are thus differentiated into individual things, each with its nature. But Supreme Ultimate is in all of them.\textsuperscript{338}

In the above passage, Zhu Xi reinterpreted Supreme Ultimate with his own understanding of Principle. He linked the metaphysical realm of Principle to the cosmological realm of yin and yang and Five Elements by identifying Principle (and Material Force) as the Supreme Ultimate in Zhou Dunyi’s diagram. In doing so he transformed the monistic scheme of Zhou into a dualistic dynamic of Principle and Material Force. Although Zhu Xi assigned an operative priority for Principle, both are eternally coequal and coexistent as yin and yang: there is no Principle without Material Force, and no Material Force without Principle.\textsuperscript{339}

\textbf{Concepts of the Divine in Chinese Thought}

Using the abstract concepts of Supreme Ultimate or Principle and Material Force was not the only way to describe the origin of the universe. In the Chinese religious tradition, two other terms, \textit{Shangdi} and \textit{Tian}, precede Supreme Ultimate as the Absolute. First used to describe the high God of the Chinese, they eventually were appropriated by the Neo-Confucians to explain the universe.

\textsuperscript{338}Zhuzi quanshu 49:8b-9a, 10b, 13a. Translation is from de Bary and Bloom, \textit{Sources of Chinese Tradition}, 701-02.

\textsuperscript{339}Chan, \textit{A Source Book}, 588-591. For Zhu Xi’s view on the Principle and Material Force and the Supreme Ultimate, see pp. 634-43.
Sovereign-on-High

The term “Sovereign-on-High” (Shangdi), sometimes simply “Sovereign” (Di), has a long history in Chinese religious thought. It was originally used by the ancient Chinese of the Shang dynasty to express their tribal deity.\(^{340}\) Di, the supreme deity who ruled over nature and the human, was analogous to an earthly ruler who could, and would, intervene in human affairs. He sent blessings or curses, gave protection in battle, sanctioned tasks, and approved appointment or dismissal of officials.\(^{341}\) Deceased rulers of the Shang were honored with the title “di,” and were said to become the mediators to Sovereign-on-High in the world beyond.

During the Zhou period, the terms Shangdi and Tian were used interchangeably.\(^{342}\) Tian (Heaven) became more popular in naming God as the cosmic power and ruler from above.\(^{342}\) The word Di, originally restricted to the Shang god, was increasingly appropriated by Chinese rulers to designate themselves, so it lost the transcendent

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\(^{340}\) Evidence from the oracle bones and bronzes from Shang period indicates that the world was conceived as tripartite: 1) Di, a non-human high god of the Shang royal house; 2) the lesser gods who personified the powers of nature such as sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, and other natural features; and 3) the kings. For an overview of the Shang cultural orientation and the origin of Shangdi, see Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 16-39.


\(^{342}\) An example from the Ode of Tang in the *Book of Documents*: “For the many crimes of the sovereign of Xia, Tian has given the charge to destroy him […] As I fear the Shangdi, I dare not but punish him.” In another place, “You will brightly receive gift from Shangdi. Will Tian renew its favoring appointments, and give you blessings?” Quoted by Nicholas Standaert, *The Fascinating God* (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1995), 35.
meaning and was reduced to an honorific title.\textsuperscript{343} By the time of Mencius “Sovereign-on-High” had been gradually replaced by “Heaven” and fell out of favor.\textsuperscript{344} Furthermore, because Chinese Daoists used it to describe their high gods (e.g., the Jade Emperor), Sovereign-on-High eventually lost its monotheist sense, but it has never lost its religious bearing. The term “Sovereign-on-High” appears infrequently in Neo-Confucian writings where it is used as the personification of Supreme Ultimate. Neo-Confucians retained the term in their rituals but rarely discussed it as a concept.

**Heaven**

The term “Heaven” (\textit{Tian}) has gone through a long evolution since its appearance in the classics. Its etymological origins are obscure and evoke much speculation.\textsuperscript{345} The Zhou people themselves used the word to denote their sky god thereby giving it a cosmic meaning. This transcendental meaning of Heaven persisted through the classical era, especially in the classics of \textit{Odes} and \textit{Documents}, where the term “August Heaven” was

\textsuperscript{343} The title \textit{huangdi} (simply translated as “emperor”) literally means “august god-like” and was first assumed by King Ying Zheng of the state of Qin (aka Qin Shihuang), who united China in 221 BCE. Prior to Qin Shihuang’s time, a title like “king” (\textit{wang}), “duke” (\textit{gong}) or “lord” (\textit{jun}) was used for living ruler. \textit{Di} was only bestowed posthumously for god-like rulers.

\textsuperscript{344} According to Standaert’s statistical analysis, \textit{Di} or \textit{Shangdi} was used 42 times in the \textit{Book of Documents} and 32 times in the \textit{Book of Odes}. In contrast, in the \textit{Analects} the term \textit{tian} (and its variations) is used 24 times whereas \textit{di} only appears 3 times. In the \textit{Book of Mencius}, \textit{tian} appears 80 times and \textit{shangdi} 3 times. (see Standaert, \textit{The Fascinating God}. 85, 103, 117, 123).

\textsuperscript{345} Robert Eno, \textit{The Confucian Creation of Heaven} (Buffalo, NY: SUNY, 1990), especially Appendix A, 181-89. The simplest explanation is that the character of \textit{Tian} (天) is made up of “one” (一) and “great” (大). Perhaps, when looking at the vast sky, the ancient Chinese understood Heaven as the expanse (一) above a large person (大). Robert Eno (p. 187) has argued against this interpretation and suggested that the character was associated with “an early ritual tradition of the human sacrifice.” Still, I prefer this poetic image.
frequently used in conjunction with “Sovereign-on-High.” Confucius gave Heaven a personal touch in the *Analects* while Mencius identified it as the source of morality. By the time of Xunzi the term had evolved into a sense of the natural world of the Daoists than to the heaven of Confucius and Mencius: it is non-purposive, predictable, and indifferent to human concerns, as attested in Xunzi’s *Treatise on Heaven (tianlun)*.\(^{346}\)

Xunzi’s portrait of Heaven as a natural force was an important departure from the Confucian tradition. It reflects an evolution of the term from the realm of theism (of the Zhou people and Confucius) to moralism (of Mencius) and finally to naturalism. The later development of heaven as a cosmic force was a natural consequence of this evolution. After the Han dynasty Heaven was replaced by the term “Heavenly Principle” (*tianli*), which was understood as the law of nature or the moral principle. By the time of the Neo-Confucians, “Heavenly Principle” was in turn replaced by Principle (*li*) and Human Nature (*xing*). Heaven came to be seen as part of a cosmic order in which humans and heaven influenced each other.\(^{347}\) In Neo-Confucianism Heaven is seen as a principle that can be expressed in different forms — physically as the sky, religiously as the deity who rules from above, or philosophically as the natural or moral principle.\(^{348}\)

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\(^{346}\) See the translations in Eno, Appendix C.

\(^{347}\) On the various meanings of Heaven throughout the ages, see Schwartz, pp. 46-7 (pre-Confucian); pp. 120-25 (Confucius’); pp. 288-89 (Mencius’); p. 310 (Xunzi’s); pp. 369-1 (the Han’s); and pp. 381-82 (later development).

\(^{348}\) Fung Yu-lan summarized the different senses of Heaven in Chinese thought in five categories: (1) as a material or physical sky in which heaven is often paired with earth to refer to the whole universe (as in the phrase “heaven and earth”); (2) as a ruling or presiding sovereign (as in *Shangdi*); (3) as the operational concept Fate; (4) as a natural principle (such as *dao*); and (5) as a moral principle. *History of Chinese philosophy*, Vol. 1: 31.
The cosmogony of Zhu Xi was the central point of the debate on the nature of the universe and, by extension, the nature of God between the Christian scholar and his Confucian interlocutor in ETR. The focus of the debate was whether the universe was self-generated or owed its existence to a higher Being.

In the first article of the first book on the “Errors of Confucianism,” ETR raises these issues in the Christian scholar’s question:

“I have heard from the record “The Supreme Ultimate generates the Two Modes; the Two Modes generate the Four Forms; the Four Forms transform into a myriad of things in their species and order.” So I ask you: What is the Supreme Ultimate, and how does it generate the Two Modes?”

To this question the Confucian answers: “The Supreme Ultimate is Material Force and Principle.” Quoting Zhu Xi and other Neo-Confucians, he explains further: “The Supreme Ultimate is truly the Principle of heaven, earth, and all things; within heaven and earth there exists the Supreme Ultimate; within all things there exists the Supreme Ultimate.”

In claiming Supreme Ultimate as the first cause of heaven and earth and all things, the Confucian clarifies that Supreme Ultimate is not a “thing” that generates another thing; rather it is the potentiality or essence within a thing. He explains:

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349 ETR, Book 1 Article 1, p. 4. The page number refers to the numeration of the manuscript.

350 Ibid.
Supreme Ultimate does not generate heaven and earth like parents giving birth to children, or like a worker building a house, but it generates heaven and earth like the blood of our body constituting the body, or like the lumber of a house making up the house.\textsuperscript{351}

Since Supreme Ultimate is the principle or cause of heaven and earth, it does not exist as an independent principle before heaven and earth; rather, it “comes into existence at the same time as heaven and earth… from the same source on the same order.”\textsuperscript{352} Since Supreme Ultimate is considered the “essence” or “potentiality” of the cosmos to bring it into existence, “it could not by itself exist before the formation of the heaven and earth, [which are] the two great entities that were born before anything else.”\textsuperscript{353}

If this were the case, the Christian scholar argues, Supreme Ultimate could not have been the first principle or cause because “all living things were born from existing entities.” If Supreme Ultimate was not self-generated one must posit an “all-knowing and all-powerful Being” who existed before Supreme Ultimate and who created its existence as well as all forms of life in the universe. Therefore the Neo-Confucian statement on cosmogony should be modified to make it “more complete” by adding the phrase “the Lord of Heaven creates Supreme Ultimate” before stating the rest of the traditional formula: “the Supreme Ultimate generates the Two Modes….” This

\textsuperscript{351} \textit{ETR}, 4-5.  
\textsuperscript{352} \textit{ETR}, 5.  
\textsuperscript{353} \textit{ETR}, 5-6.
modification, according to the Christian scholar, would bring Confucians and Christians together on the same path.\textsuperscript{354}

In reply, the Confucian argues that there is no concept of a pre-existing creator in their tradition. Supreme Ultimate came out of undifferentiated matter known as Ultimate Non-Being (\textit{wuji}), or Great Void (\textit{taixu}):

The Supreme Ultimate together with heaven and earth do not emerge from a pre-existing being but out of void…. Before heaven and earth exist, their root was in the void. Since their existence begins with voidness, their root is from no other pre-existing entity but voidness.\textsuperscript{355}

This cosmogonic view fits the general pattern of the Chinese creation myths, which I shall describe later: it does not describe creation \textit{ex nihilo}; the universe was created from some already-existing matter.

In his reply, the Christian equates “voidness” (\textit{xu}) with “nothingness” or “non-being” (\textit{wu}):

Those who speak like that take non-existence to be existence. If voidness is nothingness, it has no quality; it cannot be a generative power; it cannot be the ultimate good, nor can it be the origin of heaven and earth. Nothingness is on the same order with heaven, earth and all things; thus, heaven and earth truly come from nothing.\textsuperscript{356}

An auto-creation from nothingness is incomprehensible for the Christian, for whom matter cannot arise from nothingness by itself. There must be a pre-existent Being who brought the universe into existence. The Christian scholar will accept that the statement

\textsuperscript{354} \textit{ETR}, 7.
\textsuperscript{355} \textit{ETR}, 8.
\textsuperscript{356} Ibid.
“heaven and earth come out from the midst of voidness” as valid only if his dialogue partner is ready to admit that there is “an infinitely intelligent and powerful Being who creates heaven and earth from nothing to be the origin of heaven and earth.” To further persuade the Confucian, he argues that in accepting the “voidness to be the generative power, to be the origin of heaven and earth, [the Confucian] would share the same position as Buddhists and Daoists who often take “voidness” (xu) and “non-being” (wu) to be the root cause of everything.” This *ad hominem* attack is designed to dissuade the Confucian scholar from taking the side of the other two religions, whose teachings are deemed “heterodoxy” by Confucian standards.

The Christian scholar tries to convince his dialogue partner that the existence of this universe does not depend on an inanimate principle but on a powerful being called the “Lord of Heaven.” The rejection of Supreme Ultimate as the first cause stems from the ETR author’s materialistic interpretation of the concept. In giving this interpretation, he seems to misunderstand the complexity of the Daoist notion of “Great Voidness” (taixu) or “Limitless Non-Being” (wuji). By equating it to non-existence he strips “Voidness” of any reality, potential or actual, whereas in the Daoist context the term indicates the potentiality of undifferentiated matter.

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357 ETR, 9.

358 Ibid.
Chinese God, Christian God

Creation and Creator

The Christian scholar, in an attempt to further distinguish the Christian understanding of God from his contemporary’s understandings, examines the Confucian beliefs of Sovereign-on-High and Heaven. In Article Three of Book One, he asks: “In the Four Book and Five Classics, the Confucian scholars teach people to ‘worship the Sovereign-on-High and serve the Sovereign-on-High.’ So, I ask you: Who is the Sovereign-on-High?”

The answer is given in the Neo-Confucian understanding of the term: “The Sovereign-on-High is called Heaven by the Confucian scholars.” But this Heaven should not be understood in physical terms: “It does not refer to the azure sky that we see but to the power of heaven that resides within the sky that we cannot see.” The Supreme Ultimate in this case refers to the “Principle of Heaven” or the “Heart-mind of Heaven,” that is, the operative principle behind natural phenomena. Still, the relationship between the Sovereign-on-High and Heaven is ambiguous. It is not clear whether the Sovereign-on-High transcends the universe or is a part of it:

The Sovereign-on-High is Heaven, and Heaven is the Sovereign-on-High. Since the Heart-mind of heaven is the ruler of heaven and the Sovereign-on-High is also the ruler of heaven, the Heart-mind and the Sovereign-on-High are both rulers; thus both of them are seen as one.”

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359 ETR, 12.
360 Ibid.
361 Ibid.
362 ETR, 13.
By equating the Sovereign-on-High, which clearly has a religious meaning, with Heaven, which can be understood as the natural world, the Neo-Confucian position opens itself to criticism.

Since the natural world owes its origin to a prior cause, so does Sovereign-on-High. When asked about the origin of Sovereign-on-High, the Confucian answers: “The Sovereign-on-High comes to existence through himself. He does not owe his existence to another being because he is one with Heaven; he spontaneously comes out of nothingness.” This is the same answer the Confucian gives when being questioned about the origin of Supreme Ultimate. By equating Sovereign-on-High with Supreme Ultimate the term suffers from the same Christian criticism as in the case of Supreme Ultimate.

The Christian argument is straightforward: If Supreme Ultimate is identical with heaven and earth it cannot be the origin of heaven and earth because the cosmos is not self-generated. By the same token, if Sovereign-on-High is identical to heaven it cannot be the origin of heaven, for a thing cannot be the origin of itself. Thus, the Christian scholar chastises the Confucian for holding an erroneous belief:

If the Sovereign-on-High is one with heaven he must also come from another being. Consequently, whoever created heaven also created the Sovereign-on-High who is one with heaven. It is incorrect for the Confucian scholar to identify the Sovereign-on-High with heaven, because heaven cannot have the same dignity as its lord.\footnote{ETR, 15.}

\footnote{ETR, 14.}
The belief in a personal God who is the creator of the universe prompts the Christian scholar to reject the concept of Supreme Ultimate as the origin of heaven and earth. In the same manner, the Christian rejects the idea that Sovereign-on-High is the origin of life because it is identified with the physical heaven and therefore is inanimate:

If the Sovereign-on-High possesses intelligence and is a living being, he also makes the heaven alive, just as the human soul, which is living within the body, animates the body. However, I have not seen any sign that heaven is animated…. The azure heaven does not change in size, getting smaller or larger; it does not eat; nor does it produce another heaven, nor decline and die. Therefore, heaven is not a living form. For that reason, there cannot be a Sovereign who is identical with heaven and at the same time is a living being.365

The arguments against Sovereign-on-High as the first cause follow the same logic as Matteo Ricci’s arguments in True Meaning. According to Ricci, the Supreme Ultimate lacks the characteristics of a living Being that can be identified with the Christian concept of God. On this point, Ricci concludes:

If [Principle] has intelligence and consciousness then it must fall within the categories of ghosts and spirits, in which case why call it Supreme Ultimate or Principle? But if this is not the case, where did the intelligence and consciousness of the Sovereign-on-High, of spiritual beings and of mankind come from? Principle does not give what it does not possess. Because Principle does not have intelligence and consciousness it cannot produce intelligence and consciousness…. Only things with intelligence produce intelligence; and only things with consciousness produce consciousness… for a result cannot be greater than its cause.366

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365 ETR, 16.
The idea that only a living being can produce living things stands out as the most convincing argument. For the Christian scholar it is absurd to identify nature with its deity. He concludes:

There is no Sovereign-on-High who is identical with heaven but only a Sovereign-on-High who is outside heaven and different from heaven. He is one who is spiritual, “the most honored among the gods,” infinitely all-knowing, infinitely all-powerful, who creates and rules over heaven, earth, humans and things. Our religion calls him “the true Lord of heaven and earth” and not “the Sovereign-on-High,” lest others think that we take heaven to be the Sovereign-on-High as is postulated in [the Confucian] teaching.367

The Christian scholar exhorts his dialogue partner to accept and believe in the creator of heaven and earth whom he calls “Lord of Heaven.” By proposing the new term rather than “Sovereign-on-High” for God, the Christian scholar wants to clearly distinguish the creator from the creature. For the Christian the new term is a better expression for God because he believes that “when the ancient kings worshipped the Sovereign-on-High they probably did not intend to worship him as One identical with the heaven but to worship One who is different from the heaven, the One who fashioned the heaven and earth.”368

Source of Moral Principle

In Article Four, the Christian scholar moves to the origin of human nature, a subject that is also central to Confucianism. There are many theories of human nature in Chinese thought, but the one adopted by the Neo-Confucians is that of Mencius: human

367 ETR, 16-17.

368 ETR, 17.
nature is essentially good since the human has an innate capacity for virtue and moral
discernment. This is not a debate about whether human nature is good or evil or partly
good and partly evil. Both the Confucian and the Christian accept that the human person
is a moral being. Both hold that the Five Virtues are universal values. The point of
contention is the origin of moral principle, as in the question of the Christian: “From
where comes that doctrine, that natural teaching within the human heart? Who bestows
humans with the ability to know right from wrong, so that all people from past to present
have the same nature?”

The Confucian attributes the source of morality to Heaven. The innate goodness
of human nature is seen as the embodiment of the Way. Moral principles are the means
that Heaven has embedded in the human heart to help people live by the Way. Citing
tradition, the Confucian scholar explains,

Master Dong [Zhongshu] says: “The ultimate origin of the Way is from
heaven.” Also in the Great Learning, we read: “Because Heaven gives
birth to people, it must give them innate virtues of humaneness,
righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness.” Therefore,
Heaven is the source of virtue and moral principle and it bestows them on
humans.

In reply, the Christian scholar argues against considering Heaven, understood by
him as nature, to be the origin of morality. Certainly nature cannot produce a human soul
that includes a conscience and a desire to do good and avoid evil. The reason is that
“[heaven] possesses neither intelligence nor perception; since it does not think or

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369 ETR, 18.
370 Ibid.
animate, it cannot beget a human soul which thinks, lives, and possesses the quality of being ‘the most spiritual among all things.’”\textsuperscript{371}

For the Christian, only a “great Lord who is infinitely all-knowing and all-powerful” can create human beings in both body and soul, and “endow the soul with a teachable nature of Five Virtues, which is the moral principle within a person.”\textsuperscript{372} He further distinguishes among the three ways: heaven, earth, and humanity. The way of heaven is, for him, the natural law that governs the movements of heavenly objects and the seasons. The way of the earth is the natural law that produces the flora and fauna. The way of humanity is the “nature of the Five Virtues which teach people to do goodness and avoid evil.”\textsuperscript{373}

One can take issue with the Christian scholar on this point. He seems to misunderstand the metaphysical nature of Heaven and chooses to interpret Heaven in terms of nature. Thus the Confucian scholar protests:

I agree that the way of humanity within people does not come from the moving sky. However, in heaven there is the Sovereign-on-High, who is the Principle of heaven and the Heart-mind of heaven. From this Heart-mind of heaven the moral norms are infused into the human heart.\textsuperscript{374}

Using earlier arguments, the Christian scholar rejects the Sovereign-on-High as the source of moral principle on the basis that it is identified with heaven which “possesses

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{371} ETR, 19.
\item \textsuperscript{372} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{373} ETR, 20.
\item \textsuperscript{374} Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
neither intelligence nor perception.” An inanimate being cannot be the source of the way of humanity; only the great Lord, “who is the Supreme Being and creates heaven and earth,” is qualified to be the source of morality.375

While the Christian scholar’s interpretation of heaven is questionable, his agenda is not. He is convinced that the Confucians have been wrong in their views about God because they have taught people to “worship heaven and earth and all creatures in them, but forgot [to teach about] the great Lord who creates heaven, earth, and all things.”376 Because they have taught errors, they cannot be teaching the “true way” of the Lord of heaven. Thus, their teachings should be supplemented and corrected by Christian doctrine.

**Creation Myths in the Chinese and Vietnamese Traditions**

Compared with the ancient mythologies of China, Japan, and Korea, the written Vietnamese accounts were late in coming. The Vietnamese myths and legends were not collected and recorded until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Even then, the absence of cosmological myths in Vietnamese collections, such as *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* and *Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái*, is a puzzle. One can argue that the authors of these works, themselves Confucians, were more interested in building a national identity and a hero culture than in exploring the beginning of the universe. Yet creation myths are not

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375 *ETR*, 21.

376 *ETR*, 21-22.
tota\lly absent from the Vietnamese tradition. They are preserved in folklore that might have preceded any philosophical or literary account.

A Vietnamese Myth

Because creation stories belong to oral tradition, it is difficult to trace their history as one would trace textual records. Many stories began in the distant past and circulated in different versions before being collected and recorded. At least one story about the beginning of the cosmos exists in the folkloric tradition of Vietnam. It is preserved in the legend of Thần Trụ Trời [the God Who Erected the Sky]. The story is as follows:

In that time, when the world and all creatures did not exist, the heaven and the earth were only a chaotic and dark region. Suddenly, a giant god appeared. He lifted up the sky with his head. Then he took the stones and earth and built a pillar to support the sky. The longer the pillar was, the higher and broader the sky was. The giant worked diligently to lift up the sky little by little.

From that time, the heaven and the earth were separated. The earth was flat like a square plate. The sky was round like a dome. The place that heaven and the earth meet was called the horizon. When the heaven and the earth were in their places the god took down the support pillar and scattered the stones and earth in all directions. That is why we cannot see the support pillar of the sky now but its mark can still be seen in the Mount Yến Phụ of Hải Hưng region. The areas where the stones and earth piled up became hills and mountains; the areas where the giant dug to get the material became lakes and seas.

After the giant god separated the heaven from the earth, other gods continued his work to build the world. There are many of them, for example, the gods of the stars, of the rivers, of the seas, and so on.

The merits of these gods are recounted in a folk song which has passed down the generations:

One gathered the sand
Another made the seas
One made the stars
Another dug the rivers
One planted the trees
Another made the forests
One erected the heaven.\footnote{183}

This story describes the ancient Vietnamese belief about the origin of the cosmos: the world is a square area of earth, above which is the round sky, held up like a dome by support pillars. This myth differs fundamentally from the creation account of the Judeo-Christian tradition because there is no divine will or intelligence that ordains the act of creation. The idea that the world was born out of pre-existing matter was common in Asia. It was present in the Chinese cosmogonic myths and later influenced Daoist and Neo-Confucian cosmologies. In the Vietnamese tradition, only this story explains the origin of the world. The educated class simply accepted Chinese myths as their own.

\textbf{Chinese Myths}

\textit{The Primordial Man Pangu}

The story of Pangu stands out to be the most popular among the many cosmogonic myths.\footnote{378} The following two accounts of Pangu are the bases for the later tradition of him being the primordial man. According to a third-century CE account:

Heaven and earth were in chaos like a chicken’s egg. P’an-Ku [Pangu] was born in the middle of it. In eighteen thousand years Heaven and earth opened and unfolded. The limpid that was \textit{yang} became the heavens and the turbid that was \textit{yin} became the earth. P’an-Ku lived within them. In

\footnote{377 The story is a folklore tradition that seems to incorporate elements from Chinese mythology. For an overview of Vietnamese mythology, see Nguyễn Đông Chi, \textit{Lược Khảo Thần Thoại Việt Nam} [Survey of Vietnamese Mythology] (Hanoi: NXB Văn Sử Địa, 1956; reprint in different editions).

378 Anne Birrell has identified five main traditions of cosmologies based on the mythic narratives drawn from classical texts. Within these narratives there are four separate accounts of the creation of human beings, and the creation myth of Pangu became the generally accepted account in the ensuing centuries. See her \textit{Chinese Mythology: An Introduction} (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1993), 23-39.}
one day he went through nine transformations, becoming more divine than Heaven and wiser than earth. Each day the heavens rose ten feet higher, each day the earth grew ten feet thicker, and each day P’an-Ku grew ten feet taller. And so it was that in eighteen thousand years the heavens reached their fullest height, earth reached its greatest depth, and P’an-Ku became fully grown. Afterward, there were the Three Sovereign Divinities. Numbers began with one, were established with three, perfected with five, multiplied with seven, and fixed with nine. That is why Heaven is ninety thousand leagues from earth.\(^\text{379}\)

Another account also from the third century states:

When the first born, P’an-ku [Pangu], was approaching death his body was transformed. His breath became the wind and clouds; his voice became peals of thunder. His left eye became the sun; his right eye became the moon. His four limbs and five extremities became the four cardinal points and the five peaks. His blood and semen became water and rivers. His muscles and veins became the earth’s arteries; his flesh became fields and land. His hair and beard became the stars; his bodily hair became plants and trees. His teeth and bones became metal and rock; his vital marrow became pearls and jade. His sweat and bodily fluids became streaming rain. All the mites on his body were touched by the wind and were turned into the black-haired people.\(^\text{380}\)

**The Creatrix Nüwa**

Another story about the formation of the heaven and earth was the story of a “creatrix” named Nüwa. Nüwa is said to be responsible for the creation of humankind out of different types of clay. Although the Chinese tradition has no story of the fall of humanity comparable to that of Christianity, there are stories of the falling sky that require a savior to fix it and to restore the harmony at the beginning of the world. Nügua is one of these saviors. According to an account in the *Huainanzi*:


In remote antiquity the four poles collapsed. The Nine Regions [China] split up. Heaven could not cover all things uniformly and earth could not carry everything at once. Fierce fires raged and could not be extinguished. Water rose in vast floods without abating. Fierce beasts devoured the people of Chuan [Zhuan]. Violent birds seized the old and weak in their talons. Then Nü-Kua [Nüwa] smelted five colored stones to mend the blue sky. She severed the feet of the giant sea turtle to support the four poles and killed a black dragon to save the region of Chi [Qi]. And she piled up the ashes from burned reeds to dam the surging waters. The blue sky was mended. The four poles were set right. The surging waters dried up. The region of Chi was under control. Fierce beasts died and the people of Chuan lived. They bore earth’s square area on their backs and embraced the round sky.\footnote{Chapter “Lanming” in Huainanzi, trans. Birrell, 71.}

The stories about Pangu and Nüwa were so popular in Vietnam that they informed much of the literary and popular accounts on the origin of heaven and earth. Thus, these stories found their way into the accounts of creation in nine ages as presented in the Buddhist apocryphal text \textit{Lamp of the Mind}, which I will discuss later.

\textbf{Pangu and Adam}

The story of Pangu is discussed in \textit{ETR} as a part of the argument against the creative power of Supreme Ultimate. In Article Two of the first book, the author takes Pangu to be the Asian version of the first man, Adam. In the Confucian account, “Pangu was born out of chaos after the heaven and earth began to separate.”\footnote{ETR, 9.} He came into being by the power of heaven and earth, from the separation of the turbid energy of yin and the clear energy of yang. For the Christian scholar, heaven and earth can produce his body, but since they themselves are inanimate, “possessing neither intelligence nor
perception,” they cannot create Pangu’s soul and make him a living being. “Pangu must be created by the great Lord who also creates heaven and earth” and “unites his soul with his body” to bring out his existence.383

Since the Christian scholar sees Pangu as the equivalent of Adam, he asks the Confucian scholar about Pangu’s wife, who does not exist in Chinese tradition. Then he takes the opportunity to present the biblical account of the creation of Adam and Eve.

**Noah and Emperor Yao**

Another ancient story that the author appropriates to correct the “error” of Confucianism is the great deluge that was supposed to occur in the time of the legendary Emperor Yao. The story is recorded in the earliest written sources, including the *Odes and Documents*. The deluge is set in the prehistoric time of Yao when the “waters were swelling up to heaven.” Emperor Yao assigned his minister Gun the task of controlling the waters. After laboring for nine years without success, Gun was replaced by his son Yu. Yu built dikes and levees to adjust the water flow. He succeeded after nine more years of work. The legend of Yu overcoming the deluge was well-known. Because he succeeded he was appointed the first king of the Xia dynasty.

The Christian scholar takes the traditional account of the deluge and compares it with the biblical account of Noah. His conclusion is that “the great flood did not occur at the time of Emperor Yao but hundreds of years before Yao, during the time of Noah.”384

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383 *ETR*, 10-11.

384 *ETR*, 24.
He proposes changing the statement from the *Classic of Documents* to “in the time of Noah, the waters were swelling up to the sky.” Furthermore, he suggests that Emperor Yao might be one of Noah’s descendants who settled in China. I believe that the author mistakenly equated a local flood of the Yellow River with the world-wide flood of the biblical account. Thus, his arguments appear misguided and irrelevant.

Still, his approach is commendable because it demonstrates his systematic argumentation. He pays meticulous attention to details, calculating the years given in the historical account to “prove” that Yu could not be the one who could control the flood during the time mentioned, and therefore the great flood did not occur during the reign of Yao.

Why would the author try to prove such a remote historical fact? The answer is not obvious unless one considers the missionaries’ general scheme of world history. Missionaries such as Alexander de Rhodes and Adriano di Santa Thecla tried to account for the origins of the Three Religions. According to their understanding, people who lived after the deluge had fallen from the covenant into idolatry and heresy. Through the story of the great flood and Noah, the author suggests that the Asian tradition which reveres Yao as a sage-king does not have full access to the “truth.”

A “Buddhist” Creation Account

In Articles Four and Five of Book Three the author revisits the theme of cosmogony in an attempt to demonstrate the “error” of Buddhist beliefs. Here the author

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385 Ibid.

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of ETR presents a “Buddhist” account of creation that tells the story of how the universe was formed in nine aeons or ages. The narrative, based on the information from the books *Lamp of the Mind* (Tâm Đăng) and *Esoteric Branches* (Bí Chí), is dense with numerous figures taken from Daoist gods, Chinese myths, personified concepts, and unidentified figures.

The story begins as follows:

About the first aeon, it is said: Before anything existed, a drop of dew appeared from emptiness. This is Buddha nature. It divided into three parts: the first was a green and formed the heaven; the second part, yellow, formed the earth; and the third part, white, formed human beings. These parts then came together as one and it was called the Primordial Source. The three parts of the one dew condensed into something resembling a stone egg. It broke into four pieces: the first became heaven, the second became the earth, the third became the father, and the fourth became the mother. The Primordial Source flowed in four directions to create heaven and earth. The Buddha together with Tỳ lô,386 came out of the Primordial Source before heaven and earth. Then the primordial source formed another source called Mục Mũi.387 It is composed of clear and turbid essence and lacks intelligent nature. At that time, the sky was not closed and the earth was not condensed. A great power from the void energy created the Buddha and formed heaven, earth, and human beings. All things thus came out of emptiness from Qian. Heaven was formed from the one energy, called Buddha nature. And so it is said: “Conditioned by one energy, Buddha nature is transformed into heaven and earth.388

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386 Lô or Tì Lô, is defined in de Rhodes’ *Annamite-Portuguese-Latin Dictionary* (1651) as “the second stage of human life when the embryo was formed; this stage is called by idolators the second stage of human life, or as they say, kiếp (aeon).” Another possible explanation, given by Olga Dror (pp. 192-193, n. 59) suggests that Tì Lô is short for Tì Lô Giá Na or Vairocana. This cosmic Buddha is venerated in Mahayana Buddhism as an eternal being, the source and originator of all things.

387 Mục Mũi, also spelt as Mộc Mô or Mộc Mội, is mentioned by Alexandre de Rhodes in his catechism. In his dictionary de Rhodes defines it as “the created body when the rational soul is first infused as spoken by some idolatrous sect.” Tabert’s *Dictionarium Annamitico-Latinum* (1838), also has a similar definition: “organizatum corpus cum primum anima infunditur.”

388 ETR, 163-64. This story of how the world is born from a giant egg is repeated in another Vietnamese apologetic work Hội Đồng Tứ Giáo [Conference of the Four Religions].
The second aeon recounts the story of Tu La of Heaven, whose ten bones were turned into pillars, and Ma Ha of Earth, whose intestine became nine beams, together resulting in heaven and earth. And so it is said: “Ma Ha of Earth uses her body to support heaven and earth; from these two persons Qian and Kun (or yin and yang), [day and night, water and fire], the Three Powers, the Four Forms, the sun and the moon, and the Eight Trigrams are formed.” In the third aeon Five Ministers were born. They were called the Green Minister of Great Change (taiyi), the Red Minister of Great Beginning (taichu), the White Minister of Great Origin (taishi), the Black Minister of Great Element (taisu), and the Yellow Minister of Great Polarity (taiji). And so it is said: “These five ministers transformed the five colors [to make heaven and earth].”

The fourth aeon saw the creation of Pangu, a primordial man with a human body and a dragon head. Pangu harmonized heaven and earth by separating the clear energy from the turbid energy. Everything came out of his body: day and night, sun and moon. Pangu lived a thousand years during which the heaven was pushed higher and the earth became thicker to create space for the world.

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389 This phrase is omitted in this text but it is present in Lamp of the Mind and quoted in Opusculum (p. 90).
390 ETR, 164.
391 These five names are Daoist cosmological terms. Among the five, taiji is considered the Absolute and primary cosmological principle.
392 This quotation apparently was shortened. Opusculum (p. 91) gives the full quotation.
393 ETR, 165.
Heavenly August, Earthly August, and Human August.\textsuperscript{394} The first “created the twelve earthly branches and the ten heavenly stems;”\textsuperscript{395} the second “separated days and nights;” and the third “brought the mountains and streams into their forms.”\textsuperscript{396}

In the sixth aeon, “Nüwa used five cubits of stone to mend the sky.” She formed heaven to last forever. There were also three persons — Ma Ha, Đại Ngô Chân Tri, and Ban Nhưọc\textsuperscript{397} — who used gold and copper to form the sun, and silver to form the moon. Five emperors also were born during this age: Yuanshi tianzun [Celestial King of the Primordial Beginning], Xuhuang dadao [Great Way of the King of Emptiness], Yuhuang shangdi [Jade King the Supreme Emperor], Taishang laojun [Great Supreme Lord Lao], and Guyun tianshi [Cù Vân the Celestial Master].\textsuperscript{398}

The story of the seventh aeon recounts the birth of the Buddha. Immediately after birth, the Buddha “took seven steps in each of the four directions, and lotus flowers sprouted in his footprints. He pointed his left hand at the heaven and his right hand at the earth.”\textsuperscript{399} This event took place “on the eighth day of the fourth month in the giáp-dăn year. As Lady Māyādevī was in labor, nine dragons sprouted water to bathe her, and she

\textsuperscript{394}This is an oblique reference to the three major clans, or the Three August Ones (Tam Hoàng), which ruled China in antiquity.

\textsuperscript{395}The twelve earthly branches are: tí, siu, dàn, mǎo, thìn, tí, ngo, mười, thân, dâu, tuất, hợi. Ten heavenly stems are: giáp, ất, bình, dinh, mùi, ki, canh, tân, nhâm, quỷ.

\textsuperscript{396}ETR, 166.

\textsuperscript{397}According to Dror, the names are slightly different: Ma Ha Đại Ngô [Great Awakening], Chân Trí [Genuine Mind] and Ban Nhưọc or Bát Nhã [Prajna, Wisdom]. See Dror, A Study of Religion, p.198, nn. 100-101.

\textsuperscript{398}These figures are Daoist deities. ETR, 166-67.

\textsuperscript{399}ETR, 167.
gave birth to the prince, and his father named him Siddhārtha."\textsuperscript{400} The last two aeons briefly recount the magical activity of the Buddha\textsuperscript{401} and the birth of Tỳ Lô.\textsuperscript{402} These stories seem to be out of place with the rest of the narrative.

This “creation account” is an incoherent collection of references to the different creation stories, some Buddhist, others Daoist. The only meaningful creation story is the account of the first aeon which is quoted above. As for the rest, the stories are no more than the lists of names and events without a coherent or clear structure. With the exception of a reference to the birth and activity of Śākyamuni Buddha in the seventh and eighth aeons, the account is a mixture of Chinese mythology and Daoist sources, such as the creation account from the book \textit{Liezi} (the third aeon) and the stories of Pangu and Nüwa (the fourth and sixth aeons) discussed in the previous section.

\textit{Interpretation}

Although \textit{ETR} speaks of a “Buddhist” creation account, early Buddhism did not concerns itself with the origin of the universe. As evident in the so-called “fourteenth

\textsuperscript{400} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{401} \textit{ETR}, 168.

\textsuperscript{402} The story ends abruptly in the manuscript. \textit{Opusculum de sectis} (pp. 93-94) tells the complete story as follows: “Thích Ca had compassion on people who were without means to sustain a long life. Because of this, his three servants were turned into three kinds of fish, three rivers, and five species of fruit, birds, and animals. Đại Ngô Chân Trí and Ban Nhưc who led solitary lives near the stream called Bàn Cổ, saw three carps that were eating crops and shaking down grain, and Chân Trí took them and brought them to Thích Ca, who by chance was present there. Thích Ca ordered King Than Nông to cultivate the fields, to plant rice, to feed these fish, and to gather crops and winnow grain to feed people, and to pass on to subsequent generations the arts of cultivating fields, gathering harvests, and winnowing grain for their sustenance.” This account is taken from the first chapter of \textit{Lamp of the Mind}. 
Śākyamuni Buddha was not interested in speculative theories on the nature of the world. Where does the universe come from? What is its nature? And when will it end? These questions were not matters of concern for the Buddha. The Buddha refused to discuss these questions because he saw that they distract people from the more important issue of suffering and its solution. Whether the universe was self-existent or created was judged to be speculative, having no significance for enlightenment. Buddhist cosmology was a later development of Mahayana Buddhism to satisfy the curiosity of the human mind. Nevertheless, traditional Buddhism never developed a real interest in the origin of the world like the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Our author’s concern is not Buddhist cosmogony but the idea that the cosmos originates from the power of the Buddha. Since Śākyamuni was a historical figure, he could not be the one who created the universe and human beings: If “Śākyamuni was born only in the seventh or eighth aeon, and the heaven, earth, and everything else already existed in previous ages,” the Christian asks, “How could he then create the heaven, earth, and everything?” In the next article in the book, the Confucian proceeds

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403 1) Are the world and the self eternal? 2) non eternal? 3) both eternal and non eternal? 4) neither eternal nor non-eternal? 5) Are the world and the self finite? 6) infinite? 7) both finite and infinite? 8) neither finite nor infinite? 9) Does the Tathagata exist after death? 10) not exist after death? 11) both exist and not exist after death? 12) neither exist nor not exist after death? 13) Is the vital principle the same as the body? 14) different from the body?


405 For a recent discussion on the issue, see Perry Schmidt-Leukel, ed., *Buddhism, Christianity and the Question of Creation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

406 *ETR*, 169.
to give a “true meaning,” explaining the symbols in each of the nine aeons as gestational stages of the human fetus.  

Given the limited information on Buddhism available to the ETR’s author, he mistakenly presented the story of creation in nine aeons as a Buddhist cosmogony. Nevertheless, the author knew that many elements of the story were not from the Buddhist tradition; for example, “Pangu, the Three Augusts and the Five Emperors, the Three Powers, and the Eight Trigram, all belong to Confucian teachings.” According to the author, the books Lamp of the Mind and Esoteric Branches are not canonical Buddhist scriptures. They were “fabricated later by generations of priests who added many doctrines to the teachings of Śākyamuni, things that he never taught his disciples.” Together with the Sutra of the Forty-two Sections, these writings were cited by the author as Buddhist sources. He used whatever texts available to him that could have helped him validate his observations, even if the Buddhist origin of the texts was dubious.

While Esoteric Branches remains unidentified, Lamp of the Mind has several surviving copies. The book seemed to function as a liturgical calendar for temple services. It contains feast days and biographical notes on the “saints,” various buddhas and bodhisattvas, Daoist and Confucian deities, including a full biographical entry for

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407 See ETR, 170-72.
408 ETR, 268.
409 ETR, 267.
410 There are two copies at Institutes of Sino-Vietnamese studies in Hanoi: AC 417 printed in the year of āt-họ̣i (1635 or 1695), and A 2481 printed in the year of canh-tí (1660 or 1720). Olga Dror also mentions a third copy in Paris which is identical to the A2481 in Hanoi.
Confucius. As Olga Dror has pointed out, *Lamp of the Mind* clearly reflects the syncretistic nature of Tonkinse Buddhism which incorporates elements of the Three Religions,⁴¹¹ a characteristic that has been part of Buddhism in North Vietnam from the Lý dynasty until the present day.⁴¹²

**Conclusion**

*ETR’s* discussion about the creation of the world is actually an attempt to delineate a proper understanding of God as creator. For the author, the Christian God cannot be identified with the Chinese concepts of Supreme Ultimate, Sovereign-on-High, and Heaven, as used by contemporary Neo-Confucians.

While the concept of Supreme Ultimate was clearly too naturalistic for Christian taste, Sovereign-on-High and Heaven were more ambiguous. In both the classics and popular beliefs, the latter two can be understood to signify God in an analogous way. At least that was how Matteo Ricci understood the terms and thus deemed them acceptable for use as the Chinese equivalent of Deus. In the *True Meaning* he claims:

> He who is called the Lord of Heaven in my humble country is he who is called Shangdi [Sovereign-on-High] in Chinese; He is not, however, the same as the carved image of the Daoist Jade Emperor who is described as the Supreme Lord of the Black Pavilions of Heaven... Our Lord of


⁴¹² Cuong Tu Nguyen has noted that at the time of the Lý, Buddhism in North Vietnam was of a “composite nature,” blending Buddhist elements from India and China with the religious sensibilities of the local people and popular cults. This trend has continued until the modern time, as any visitor to the Buddhist temples in North Vietnam can attest. See *Zen in Medieval Vietnam*, 69-71.
Heaven is the Sovereign-on-High mentioned in the ancient [Chinese] canonical writings.413

The use of these Chinese terms was controversial in Christian circles. While “Sovereign-on-High” has a religious tone, one cannot say the same about “Heaven” which can be understood in either a natural or a supernatural sense. To clarify the meaning, the Jesuits coined the word “the true Lord of heaven and earth,” or the short form, “Lord of Heaven,” to distinguish the Creator from his creature. “Heaven,” however, was still used along with the new term in Christian writings.

While Matteo Ricci found this practice of dynamic equivalents acceptable, other missionaries disagreed. Coupled with other controversial ritual practices, the whole matter was brought to Rome’s attention by the Dominican Juan Baptista Morales in 1645, ushering in the so-called “Term Controversy.” After prolonged debate the Holy Office issued a notification in 1704, which was promulgated in the famous 1715 papal bull Ex Illa Die, forbidding Chinese Christians to use the words Shangdi [Sovereign-on-High] and Tian [Heaven] to refer to God.414 Only the Jesuit term Tianzhu or the “Lord of Heaven,” was permitted. The other two were judged inadequate for the Christian God, and thus they could confuse believers. Since the theologians in Rome did not understand Chinese they had to rely on the interpretations of missionaries in the field, Rome judged that conflicting interpretations of the exact meanings of the two terms voided their usage.

413 Ricci, True Meaning the Lord of Heaven, no. 103-104, (trans. pp., 121, 123).

414 Ironically, the term “Heaven” is used in the Gospel of Matthew to denote God, as in the phrase “Kingdom of Heaven” (basileía tōn ouranōn).
Consequently, in a post-1715 text such as *ETR*, the author’s rejection of the Confucian usage of the terms was an expected response to clarify the Christian concept of God as the creator and ruler of the universe. It is a concept that is not totally absent from the Asian tradition. But, the Christian scholar feels the need to make it explicit so that not only the “errors” of Confucianism but also those of Daoism and Buddhism can be refuted. As typical of the era’s Christian thinking, only correct beliefs lead to correct worship.

As regards the appropriated Chinese legends and myths of creation, it is important to note that prior to the twentieth century the distinction between what originated from China and what was indigenous in Vietnam was not always clear. In Confucian discourse, Chinese figures, names, and places were part of a common vocabulary of the literati throughout East Asia, including Vietnam. Not unlike the Western appropriation of Greek and Roman myths, the reader should not be surprised at seeing Chinese myths in East Asian narratives.
CHAPTER SIX

THE CULTIC EXPRESSIONS OF RELIGION: WORSHIP IN TRADITIONAL VIETNAM

This chapter is limited to the discussion of the cults practiced in Vietnam between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, as attested in *The Errors of the Three Religions* (ETR) and other contemporary accounts. Though he is not particularly systematic in his approach, the author of *ETR* devotes many pages to cultic practices. The cults can be classified in two general categories: the official and the popular cults. The latter category is further divided into the cult of Thánh Hoàng [Tutelary Genies] or the deified heroes, the home cults, and the religious cults. The division between public and private ceremonies was not clearly demarcated. Some of the public cults that began as popular devotions were later accepted by the imperial authorities. Since the cult of the ancestors is related to traditional beliefs about the after life, and much of it involves funeral practices, it will be treated as a separate subject in the next chapter.

An Overview of Vietnamese Worship

A thorough study of the cultic practice in traditional Vietnam is a nearly impossible task because of its syncretistic and eclectic character. Generations of previous scholars on the religions of Vietnam have faced this challenge. On the one hand, they
observed the high rituals performed by kings and officers; on the other hand, they also saw the same people engaging in superstitious rituals to meet their needs. Vietnamese people believed in and worshipped all visible and invisible powers. The Three Religions were recognized in the country but none gained a distinct body of adherents among the people. In traditional Vietnam people made no effort to reconcile conflicting theories and/or practices. A person worshipped indifferently at a pagoda or temple, praying to various deities at his or her convenience. It was not rare to find images of the buddhas and bodhisattvas as well as statues of other genies and sages side by side on the same altar. The rituals to these beings, specified in rites manuals, were almost the same for public and private worship of the spirits, deified heroes, and exemplary figures. The original distinctiveness of these rites, whether Confucianist, Buddhist, or Daoist, was lost in the syncretism in favor of their powers to procure material blessings and protection from harm. Efficacy triumphed over orthodoxy.  

The traditional religious expressions of Vietnam could be characterized as cults of the spirits. This form of worship permeated every level, from official state to home cults. Traditional places of worship in Vietnam were both indoor and outdoor. Indoor structures included a number of different types of building, classified as follows. The đinh was a communal house, a place of gathering for the community, in which the back chamber sometimes was reserved to worship the tutelary genie of the village. The đền was a regional or national temple erected in honor of a king, a genie or a famous person.  

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416 Not every village has its tutelary genie worshipped in its đinh, especially if there is a temple dedicated to that deity in the vicinity.
who acquired merit among the people; a đền of a female goddess was sometimes called a phủ; and a đền of a Daoist deity was called a điện. The chùa was a Buddhist pagoda or temple; it was called an am if there was no resident monk or nun. The miếu or shrine was a small temple. The văn miếu was a đền dedicated to Confucius and his disciples in the capital or at the headquarters of the provinces. At the country or district level it was called the văn chi while at the ward or village level it was called từ chi. The outdoor worship had no permanent structure but took place mostly at the đàn or temporary earthen platforms built for sacrificial purposes.

With the exception of Buddhist or Daoist ritual masters who conducted religious ceremonies, there was no separate class of clergy to celebrate most of the public rituals. In a family the head of the household led the ceremonies, sometimes with the assistance of a Confucian scholar if the person was illiterate. At the village and district levels, appointed officers conducted the ceremonies, while at the state level the king himself or his surrogate acted as the minister of the rites. The Confucian literati, although not trained as ritual specialists, gained enough knowledge in written language and classical education to be the de facto masters of ceremony in both public rituals and private devotions.

Because the Vietnamese were supposed to honor the living and the dead through rituals, they made offerings (cúng) or solemn sacrifices (té). Cúng entails presenting the dead and the spirits with materials that express the devotion of the living. These offerings might be useful to the spirits and might include food, wine, fruits, and flowers. In the act of cúng the offerings were placed on a table and incense was burned.
Sometimes, a short intercessory prayer was said (khấn) aloud or silently accompanied by gestures of honor called vái/bái (bowing) or lạy (deep bowing) in front of a spirit tablet or statue. Tế, a word borrowed from the Confucian tradition, expressed a more solemn form of cúng. It was used in conjunction with imperial cults where the rubrics of the rites were stipulated by ritual manuals. In Vietnamese tradition, cúng and tế together were the external expressions of the gratitude or honor toward those who were deemed worthy of respect. They were different only in degree and were used to remind the living of the merit of the dead or of their powers.

**Imperial Cults**

According to the *Record of Rites*, ancient kings sacrificed to the gods and spirits that governed the natural and human worlds. Rituals of imperial China and Vietnam can be systematized into a three-tiered hierarchy. The emperor presided at the solemn sacrifices to the most exalted gods in and around the capital. High-ranking ministers performed the middle sacrifices to the lesser gods and spirits. Local officials offered regular sacrifices at the county level. All sacrifices were performed according to specific rites on particular days provided by the Minister of Rites. The cultic life of the Lê-Trịnh era followed customs set by the Ming court and codified in imperial protocols such as the *Lê Triệu Hội Điển* [Collected Regulations in the Lê Dynasty],\(^{417}\) and Phan Huy Chú’s

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\(^{417}\) Institute of Hán Nôm, ms. A 52; translated by Trần Thị Kim Anh in Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh, ed., *Một Số Điển Chế và Văn Bản Pháp Luật Việt Nam: từ thế kỷ XIV đến XVIII* [An Anthology of Ancient Vietnamese Regulations and
The official rituals venerated the gods and spirits not for personal blessings for the one who made the offering, but rather, for the sake of the people within his responsibility or care. By acting on behalf of the subjects who deferred the performance of the rites to those in charge, the official who offered sacrifice exercised the governance of his domain — a world including humans, gods, and spirits. These cults acted as points of contact and methods of maintaining harmony between the human world and the world beyond. They nurtured the gods and enhanced their power while simultaneously fostering the well-being of the patron. Still, the sacrifices were not a means to appease the gods and spirits with worldly materials; the efficacy of these rites depended on the celebrant’s sincerity and reverence.

**Sacrifices to Heaven and Earth**

The annual sacrifices to Heaven and Earth that were to be performed at the beginning of the year by kings and emperors were the most solemn rites of the official religion. The rites originated in China and probably were appropriated by the Lý kings in

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418 Phan Huy Chú, *Lịch Truyền Hiền Chương Loại Chí* [Classification of Royal Statutes and Customs], trans. the Institute of Historical Studies (1960; reissued in 2 Vols, Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục, 2006). This book was a nineteenth-century encyclopedia of imperial Vietnam. It is divided into ten books which cover (1) Vietnamese geography, (2) biographies of famous people, (3) offices and officials, (4) rites and ceremonies, (5) civil examinations and their laureates, (6) economy and taxation, (7) laws and regulations, (8) the military, (9) literature, (10) international relations. Information on traditional ceremonies is found in Book 4. Henceforth, it is abbreviated as *Loại Chí*.  

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Legal Codes: from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century], 2 Vols (Hanoi: NXB Khoa Học Xã Hội, 2009), Vol. II: 12-218, on the regulation of the rites and ceremonies, see Vol. II: 151-218.
the twelfth century. According to the regulations of the *Zhou Book of Rites* (*Chu Lễ*) the sacrifice to the “August Heaven, Supreme Sovereign” (*Hào Thiên Thượng Đế*) took place on the winter solstice in an outdoor enclosure planted with trees situated in the southern suburbs of the capital. The altar of heaven, a round, three-leveled platform, was erected in the middle of this suburban enclosure (*giaọ*). It was here that the king or emperor prostrated himself and made his offerings on behalf of the people, praying for the blessings of heaven. The sacrifice to the “August Earth” (*Hoàng Địa Kỳ*), which was enacted for the sake of symbolic symmetry, took place at the summer solstice on a two-leveled square platform in the northern suburbs of the capital (*xã*). The ceremony was similar to that to Heaven but it was simpler. The shape of the platforms reflected the common belief in a round heaven and a square earth. Of the two cults, the sacrifice to Heaven was far more important and dominated the official cultic life. Still, Heaven needs the nurture of the Earth to sustain life, hence the cult of Earth. By the time of the Tang dynasty, however, the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth were sometimes performed together, while at other times they were performed separately. Eventually, the cult of Earth was absorbed into the cult of Heaven, and its sacrifice was performed at the *giaọ*.419

In Đại Việt, the kings of the Lý dynasty emulated Chinese emperors in offering sacrifices to Heaven as an instrument to legitimize the kingship in the Lý domain.420

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420 During the early period of independence, the Song dynasty only recognized Vietnamese rulers as “Prince of the Jiaozhi District” (*Giao Chỉ Quân Vương*). Later on, after several failed military incursions to Đại Việt and at the insistence of the Lý kings, Emperor Song Xiaozong finally recognized Đại Việt as a separate kingdom in 1164 by conferring on the Lý kings the title “King of the State of Annam” (*An Nam Quốc Vương*).
Kinh Lý Anh Tông built a round platform in 1153 to perform sacrifices to Heaven every three years. However, this practice was not followed by the kings of the Trần dynasty and was neglected until the time of Lê Thánh Tông. In 1462 the king decreed an annual sacrifice to heaven and earth to take place on the first day of spring. Three earthen platforms surrounded by planted trees for the purpose of imperial sacrifice were built in the southern suburb of Thăng Long. The main one was for the sacrifice to Heaven and Earth while the left and right platforms were for the sacrifice to the stars and the spirits of mountains and rivers. The sacrifice at nam giao was interrupted during the Mạc era and was restored after the Lê-Trịnh re-conquered Thăng Long in 1592. However, it underwent significant changes during the Lê-Trịnh era.

In 1600 General Trịnh Tùng also accompanied the king to sacrifice to Heaven, in effect making himself a co-ruler. This practice was maintained throughout the Lê-Trịnh era when real power was in the hands of the Trịnh. In 1663 a permanent structure with a roof and pillars was erected on the principal platform. This structure was a casualty of wars during the Tây Sơn era. When the Nguyễn dynasty established its capital in Huế, it built a new and elaborate three-level square platform with a round platform on the top in the south of the capital to sacrifice to Heaven and Earth. The

421 Cương Mục, chính biên, V: 6.
422 Cương Mục, chính biên, XIX: 18.
423 Cương Mục, chính biên, XXXI: 2.
424 This structure is what Leopold Cadière described in 1915 when he had an opportunity to witness the sacrifice of Nam Giao. For a description of the place, see Cadière, “Le Sacrifice du Nam Giao” in idem, Croyances et pratiques religieuses, Vol. I: 91-101.
sacrifice was performed here on a regular basis (though not annually from the 1880s) until 1943.  

The sacrifice to Heaven (tế giao) during the Lê-Trịnh era can be briefly described as follows. To prepare for the ceremony the king fasted for two days prior to the actual celebration, while the altars and the sacrifices were prepared. Side altars to other spirits flanked the main altar to Heaven and Earth. A medium-sized incense table (hương án) stood in front. The spirit tablets inscribed with the names of “August Heaven Supreme Sovereign” (Hạo Thiên Thương Đế) and “August Earth” (Hoàng Địa Kỳ) were placed on the main altar.

On the day of the ceremony the king wore a black robe and led the procession from his palace to the giao seated in a carriage. Upon his arrival he descended from the carriage and walked through the third-level gate to a pavilion in which he changed from his robe into a ceremonial one. The lord of Tonkin did the same in the pavilion on the right. Then the king, assisted by his attendants, washed his hands before proceeding to the first-level gate that led to the altars. The lord did the same, while the mandarins and military officers remained outside at the second-level gate.

The master of ceremonies announced each step that the king and his officers were to follow. First, the king went to his position before the altars (bái vị) where he bowed to the spirit tablets (bái). Next, the hair and blood of the sacrificial animals were buried (ế

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425 After the fall of the Nguyễn monarchy in 1945 the rite was abandoned.

mao huyệt) by an assistant. Then, the king washed (quán tạy) and dried (thuế cân) his hands. Next, the king knelt and offered incense to Heaven (thượng hương), after which a designated mandarin knelt and read a written prayer (độc chúc) aloud. After the prayer all prostrated themselves (phủ phục) in silence. Then, on their knees they bowed four times before standing up again (cúc cung bái). Music accompanied every step. At the end, the master of ceremonies announced the completion of the ceremony (lễ tất).

Afterwards, the king and lord reentered their pavilions to change clothing again, and returned to the palace.⁴²⁷

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the royal processions to and from the nam giao were impressive scenes of great pomp with elephants, horses, soldiers, mandarins, officers, and a great number of attendants.⁴²⁸ Westerners who lived in Thăng Long at the time took notice of this elaborate ceremony, although they themselves could not attend. Samuel Baron called it the “Ceremony of the King’s Blessing of the Country;”⁴²⁹ Alexander de Rhodes more accurately described it as “offering the sacrifice to the Supreme Ruler.”⁴³⁰ Interestingly, this most important religious ceremony of the imperial times was not discussed in ETR. The reason might be two fold. First,

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⁴²⁷ See also Phan Huy Chí (Vol. I: 872-73) on the general proceeding of a sacrifice. In the sacrifice of giao during the Lê dynasty, only incense was offered. The sacrifice was expanded to include meat, wine, a piece of silk, and a piece of jade in the manner of sacrifices to the spirits during the Nguyễn dynasty. For the giao ceremonies under the Nguyễn, see Cadière, Croyances et pratiques religieuses, Vol. I: 102-128.


⁴²⁹ Samuel Baron, Chapter XIV “On the Ceremony of the King’s Blessing the Country, Vulgarly Amongst them, Called Boua-dee-yaw, or According to their Characters, Can-ja,” in Dror and Taylor, Views of Seventeenth-Century Vietnam, 259-261.

⁴³⁰ We do not know if de Rhodes ever witnessed it, but he discussed it in his catechism (Day One). See Phan, Mission and Catechesis, 221-22.
because it was designated to honor heaven, and second, since it was an exclusively royal function that had little effect on the Christians, the author might feel it unnecessary to discuss it.

Sacrifices to the Divine Farmer and Other Spirits

Another important official cult was the sacrifice to the God of Grain or Thần Hậu Tắc, personalized as the Divine Farmer or Thần Nông, for a good harvest. In Vietnam, the sacrifices to the God of Soil (xã) and the God of Grain (tắc) were performed together since the Lý dynasty.\(^{431}\) In 1584 King Lê Thánh Tông dedicated a platform in Hồng Mai village, Thanh Đàm district, to sacrifice to the Divine Farmer.\(^{432}\)

As in the other solemn sacrifices the king had to fast for one day to prepare himself while the altars and sacrifices were arranged on a raised platform (đàn). On the day of the sacrifice, the king and his mandarins proceeded from his palace to the platform. He first stopped to wash himself and change into a ceremonial robe before ascending the platform to offer sacrifice. The actual celebration followed a pattern of prescribed steps for a solemn sacrifice in the ritual manual.\(^{433}\) After the sacrifice the king

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\(^{431}\) Cuồng Mục, chính biên, III: 14.

\(^{432}\) Cuồng Mục, chính biên, XXIII: 43. Nowadays, it is Bạch Mai ward in Hai Bà Trưng district of Hanoi.

\(^{433}\) It consists of the following steps: gathering and going into position (tự bái vị); bowing to the spirit tablets (bái); standing up (hưng, bình thần); burying the blood and hair of the sacrificial animals (ế mào huyệt); welcoming the spirit (nghinh thần); washing the hands (quán tay); offering incense (thư ông hương); offering a piece of silk (diện bạch); offering of a wine and meat libation (sơ hiến lễ); kneeling and prostrating (quỳ, phủ phục); proclaiming the prayer (dốc chúc); kneeling and prostrating (quỳ, phủ phục), bowing two times (bái); sometimes a second and third round of wine libation were also offered (d hiến lễ); drinking the blessed wine (ám phúc); bidding farewell to the spirit (tứ thần). After the master of
went down to a reserved field and ploughed a couple lines before handing the task to officers who one by one followed suit (lễ tịch điền). This ceremonial ploughing was meant to emphasize the importance of agricultural work that even the king could not neglect. In the Lê-Trịnh era, the sacrifice to the Divine Farmer was performed by the Lord of Tonkin rather than the king himself and the ceremonial ploughing of the field was delegated to the mayor of Thăng Long.  

According to information given in ETR, the sacrifice to the Divine Farmer also took place in villages. Offerings were made to the Divine Farmer several times annually at the Hạ Điền [Coming down to the field], Thường Điền [Going up from the field] planting ceremonies and at the Thường Tân [New Crop] ceremony during the harvest. The rite was performed to honor and remember the merit of the Divine Farmer in teaching people agriculture: “During the ceremony, there is a recitation of praise to the Divine Farmer, and petition is made for a successful harvest, prosperity, and peace.”  

Since the cult’s primary function was to honor the merit of the Divine Farmer we see a reluctant response to it in the text. The Christian Scholar wants to affirm the positive value of this rite but feels that it contradicts his belief in the exclusive devotion to God. Thus we read:

ceremonies burned the piece of silk and the prayer paper, he announced the completion of the ceremony (lễ tát). See Phan Huy Chú, Loại Chí, Vol. I: 873.

434 Phan Huy Chú complained about this, saying: “In the ancient times, the kings went to nam giao on the first day of the year to sacrifice to Heaven, and he also sacrificed to the Spirit of the Rice (thần Hậu Tác) for a good harvest… Now, since time of the restored Lê, the Lord Trịnh went to sacrifice on behalf of the king, and the ploughing of the field was delegated to the mayor of the capital. Alas, they only did it to keep the form but not the essence of the rites as the ancient kings did.” (Loại Chí, Vol. I: 874).

435 ETR, 44-45.
To remember and praise the merit of the Divine Farmer in teaching people agriculture is appropriate. However, if for the sake of honoring him, one takes him to be a holy being who has the power to help people in cultivation and to bless them with good harvests and other good things, then it is not appropriate to do so…. There is only one Lord of Heaven who endows people with all kinds of skills and gives them the five kinds of grains in the field, possessions in the house, and peace in the village. For that reason, do not put your trust in the Divine Farmer and offer sacrifices to him. \footnote{ETR, 45.}

The cult of the imperial ancestors also held exalted status among the official rituals. In essence it was not different from the general cult of ancestors, which I will discuss in the next chapter. However, the rituals were much more elaborate than what a commoner could afford. Five times a year, at the beginning of each season and on the anniversaries of the deaths of imperial ancestors, the king offered a carefully prepared feast of meat, wine, rice and other objects to his forebears who were treated like demi-gods. Being omnipresent they were expected to exert auspicious power over the throne. The sacrifice to the deceased kings took place at the Imperial Ancestral Shrine (Thái Miếu) inside the imperial palace where up to nine of the king’s ancestors were worshipped. During the Lê-Trịnh era the Trịnh lords also erected their own Ancestral Shrine and made offerings to their ancestors in a similar manner, although with slightly less solemnity than those of the king. In addition, the deceased kings and lords shared a portion of the ritual feasts offered at the altar of Heaven and at the Sacrifice to the Chief’s Banner. I will discuss these later.
Although mentioned by the author of *ETR*, the gods of nature such as the sun, the moon, the stars, the spirits of flood and drought, mountain and rivers, and others played a minor (or subsidiary) role in traditional Vietnamese cultic life.\textsuperscript{437} Although they had their own altars in the open air, they were seen as extensions of the cults of Heaven and Earth rather than possessing their own cultic status. Offerings were made to them in conjunction with other ceremonies.

**Other Official Sacrifices**

**Cult of Confucius**

Strictly speaking the cult of Confucius was not a religious cult or private devotion but a civic cult sanctioned by the state in both China and Vietnam. After his death Confucius’s disciples and descendants continued honoring his memory through annual memorial sacrifices at his tomb at Qufu in Shandong province. It is recorded that Han Gaozu visited his tomb and offered sacrifice there. But the actual cult of Confucius began during the Three Kingdom Era with the sacrifice to Confucius and his disciples in the imperial academy at the capital in 241 CE.\textsuperscript{438} This marks the first recorded official celebration of the cult outside of his hometown. The court extended a similar honor to

\textsuperscript{437} Phan Huy Chú makes brief mention of the sacrifices to the spirits of Wind, Thunder, Cloud, and Rain together “according to rites of the Ming.” *Loại Chỉ*, Vol. I: 872.

the Duke of Zhou, a towering figure in Chinese civilization, who was much admired by Confucius himself. The cults of the Duke of Zhou and of Confucius were celebrated separately until 624. When the first Tang emperor celebrated a joint ceremony in the temple at the imperial academy, he held the Duke of Zhou as the primary sage, and Confucius as the secondary teacher. Confucian ritualists worked hard to unseat this arrangement. As a result of their efforts, from the middle of the seventh century onward, the Duke of Zhou was honored in the temple reserved to Zhou kings while Confucius became the main figure of honor at the Temple of Culture (wenmiao), where his disciple Yan Hui also shared in receiving the sacrifices. In 739, Confucius was elevated to the Exalted King of Culture (Wenxuan wang). Other honorific titles were later granted to him by the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing emperors. Based on earlier ritual texts, the Tang codes for sacrifices to Confucius established much of the ritual subsequently used through imperial times.

As Confucianism regained its official status at the court, the cult centered on Confucius expanded to include his disciples and followers. When the Four Books were added to the Five Classics as canonical texts, their alleged authors were subsequently honored in Confucian temples. Together with the primary disciple Yanzi (Yan Hui), the other honored disciples were Zengzi (Zeng Seng), the author of the Great Learning; Zisi

439 In 1008, the word “Profound Sage” (xuansheng, huynh thăng) was added to the title “Exalted King of Culture”; in 1013 the title was changed to “Ultimate Sage, Exalted King of Culture” (zhisheng wenxuan wang, chi thành văn tuyên vương) to be followed by “Ultimate Sage of Great Perfection, Exalted King of Culture” (dacheng zhisheng wenxuan wang, đại thành chí thành văn tuyên vương) in 1307. In 1530, the Ming emperor Jiajing simplified it to “Ultimate Sage, Primary Sage Master Kong” (zhisheng xianshi Kongzi, chi thành tiên sư Khổng tử). In the Qing dynasty, the honorific title of Confucius was changed two more times, to “Ultimate Sage of Great Perfection, Exalted First Master of Culture” (dacheng zhisheng wenxuan xianshi, đại thành chí thành văn tuyên tiên sư) in 1645, and finally to the simpler Ultimate Sage, First Master (zhisheng xianshi, chi thành tiên sư) in 1657. Thomas A. Wilson, On Sacred Ground, 50-57.
(Kong Ji, Confucius’ grandson), the author of the *Doctrine of the Mean*; and Mencius (Meng Ke), the author of a book by the same name. These three came to be seen as the “orthodox successors” of Confucius. Together they formed the Four Correlates or Four Associates (*tứ phối*) whose statues stand to the right and left of Confucius’s figure in Confucian temples. Other Confucian scholars, 10 or 12 sages and 72 worthies, were also honored throughout the ages, though the list of their names varied from place to place.  

According to Vietnamese historical records, the Temple of Culture (*văn miếu*) was erected in Thăng Long in 1070 to honor all Confucian sages: the Duke of Zhou, Confucius, the Four Correlates, and 72 famous scholars. The temple also functioned as an imperial academy for the Lý princes. As Confucianism gained more currency at the court Confucian scholars petitioned the king to have Confucius honored in a “Confucius’s Temple” (*Khổng miếu*), similar to those of the Tang and Song dynasty. A second imperial academy (*Quốc học viện*) was built in 1135 to conduct Confucian education where the Duke of Zhou, Confucius, and Mencius, and 72 famous Confucian scholars were honored. Still, prior to the Lê dynasty, the honors accorded Confucius were more of a memorial nature; there was no evidence of a sacrificial rite to Confucius.

The National Academy (*Quốc tử giám* or *Thái học viện*) with students drawn from all ranks of society was established in 1428 after the victory over the Ming invaders.

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440 For a list of these Confucian scholars or sages, see Thomas Wilson, *Genealogy of the Way*, Appendix A.

441 *Toàn Thư*, bản kỷ, III: 4a; *Cương Mục*, chính biên, III: 29-30.

442 *Toàn Thư*, bản kỷ, IV: 12b; *Cương Mục*, chính biên, V: 9.

443 *Toàn Thư*, bản纪委, V: 19a; *Cương Mục*, chính biên, VI: 35.
It was built next to the restored Temple of Culture which was itself modeled after the Temple of Confucius in Qufu, China.\textsuperscript{444} Actual sacrifice to Confucius began in 1435 under the reign of Lê Thái Tông. The king, following the custom of the Tang dynasty, ordered the offering of wine (thích điện) to Confucius during the first weeks of the second and eighth months,\textsuperscript{445} thus beginning the semi-annual sacrifices to Confucius in the Lê dynasty. In addition, beginning in 1442, the laureates who passed the highest level of the civil examination were honored with their names inscribed on stone tablets erected at the National Academy. This gave rise to the custom that required scholars who passed the civil examinations and newly appointed mandarins to offer sacrifices to Confucius at the Temple of Culture as a gesture of thanksgiving. In addition, secondary temples and shrines of culture (văn chi, văn tú) were established in every district and in major villages. These temples and shrines functioned as places to honor both Confucius and the local laureates. They were symbols of the commitment to a Confucian education which continued until the early twentieth century.

\textit{ETR} gives a description of a solemn sacrifice to Confucius in Tonkin as follows:

\begin{quote}
In Confucius’s Temple, the sage’s tablet is placed in the middle. The tablets with the names of the Four Correlates are placed on both sides, with the name tablets of the Ten Philosophers behind them. In front of Confucius’ tablet is an incense table (hương án). When performing the ceremony, the two masters of ceremonies stand on both sides of the incense table, while several officials of rites stand at the center facing the table with assistants behind them. The night before the sacrifice, the literati gather at the Temple. One of them prays out loud: “We earnestly announce to the First Sage that the ceremony will be performed tomorrow.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{444} Archeological excavations in the areas of the present Temple of Culture and National Academy in Hanoi did not yield any artifact older than the fifteenth century.

\textsuperscript{445} \textit{Toàn Thư}, bản ký, XI: 23b; Cương Mục, chính biên, XVI: 24.
morning.” Then he examines and kills the sacrificial animals — a buffalo, a pig and a goat — and places their meat on the sacrificial table. On the following morning, the main celebrant prays out loud: “Welcome to the Sage King (nghính Thánh Vương),” and then makes offerings of food, wine, meat, and a white cloth of silk. Next, he reads a cultic oration (văn chúc) praising Confucius’ merits for editing the Six Classics that form the basic texts of education, and exalting him as the ‘Ultimate Sage of Great Perfection, Exalted King of Culture.’ He also asks that Confucius grant to the students bright minds so that they may understand his teachings thoroughly, preserve them, and teach them to the next generations, so that they too will know his teachings. The oration also praises the Four Correlates and the Ten Philosophers. After the sacrifice, the master of ceremonies calls out: “Drink the blessings (âm phúc)!” The official drinks the sacrificial wine so as to have Confucius’ blessing. At the end of the ceremony, the master of ceremonies calls out again: “Farewell to the deity (từ thần)!” Then, the official of rites and all in attendance prostrate themselves four times to thank Confucius and bid him farewell. Thereafter they feast on the sacrificial food and drink and take a portion home.  

From this description it appears that the general pattern of worship followed was the same as that of the other imperial cults. It clearly had a religious nature, which the Christian Scholar in our text could not accept. But, at the same time, it was a banquet of honor to remember the merit of the sage. For that reason we can understand the mixed reaction of the Christian Scholar when he comments:

It is right that the Confucian scholars revere Confucius, who has supreme wisdom and knowledge and who has great merits in teaching people of the world the right doctrine. However, your offering of food of this world is futile because he no longer needs it. Also, you should not pray to him for a bright mind and success in examinations, because he does not have the power to grant them. Only the Lord of Heaven, the One who has the power and authority to govern everything in heaven and earth, can grant a bright mind and fame and prosperity to anyone he wishes. Even Confucius himself was granted by the Lord of Heaven the favor of being

446 ETR, 70-71.
extraordinarily wise and knowledgeable, in order to teach the people of the world.\footnote{ETR, 71-72.}

Rituals of the Military

During the Lê-Trịnh era the Trịnh lords developed a cult of the military which was symbolized through rituals. In particular were the Oath-Taking Ceremony (Hội Minh), the Sacrifice to the Chief’s Banner (tế Kỳ Đạo), and the worship at the Military Temple. All three rites were described in \textit{ETR} and \textit{Opusculum de sectis}, which points to their significance in the Lê-Trịnh era, although they began in previous dynasties.

\textit{Oath-Taking Ceremony}

The Oath-Taking Ceremony, called Hội Minh or Minh Thế, began in 1028 during the reign of Lý Thái Tông. Before he was about to ascend the throne, the spirit of Mount Đờn Cồ is alleged to have appeared to him in a dream and warned him of a plot against his life. After he suppressed the rebellion he mandated that a temple be built in honor of the spirit at which all mandarins and nobles had to take an oath of loyalty annually, saying: “If I act against the virtues of filiality to my parents and loyalty to the king, may the spirit kill me.” They also had to drink a cup of wine mixed with blood to seal their oaths.\footnote{\textit{Cuồng Mục}, chính biên, II: 29-30. The oath-taking ceremony also took place at the royal palace from time to time when the Lý king needed to affirm their authority. Cf. \textit{Cuồng Mục}, chính biên, IV: 22, IV: 23, IV: 34. Still, the Lý lost their thrones to the Trần in 1226.} The Trần dynasty followed the same custom.\footnote{\textit{Cuồng Mục}, chính biên, VI: 5.} The oath ceremony was

\footnote{ETR, 71-72.}
suspended after an attempt on Hồ Quý Ly’s life in 1399 by forces loyal to the Trần at the
temple of Đồng Cổ. When King Lê Thái Tông ascended to the throne in 1434, he
restored the custom with a significant change. The annual ceremony no longer took
place in a temple but on a spacious plot in the capital, and in every prefecture. After
the liberation of Thăng Long from the Mạc faction, forces loyal to the Lê gathered at the
southern gate of the capital to take the oath. This again became a regular event during
the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the Trịnh used this ceremony to test the
loyalty of his subjects.

The Oath-Taking Ceremony was a requirement for every officer, civil or military,
to pledge allegiance to the ruling authority. In the ceremony the blood of a freshly killed
chicken was drained into cups of wine and placed on the altar. Then, calling the names
of Heaven and Earth to be his witness, the oath-taker knelt in front of the altar and recited
the oath formula in these words:

I bow to August Heaven and August Earth. I come from such village,
district, and prefecture. I am N. ___ and I was born in such year. I swear
my complete loyalty to King N. ___ and Lord N. __. If I do not remain
loyal after I drink from this cup of wine and blood, may Heaven and Earth
and all the spirits strike and kill me.

After professing the oath, he drank the wine mixed with blood to prove his sincerity.

In the politically volatile atmosphere of Tonkin of the Lê-Trịnh era, this ceremony
was invoked more frequently, in both the capital as well as all the prefectures, as a way
for the Trịnh to maintain their power. According to Tavernier, all nobles, civil and

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450 Cương Mục, chính biên, XVI: 3; Phan Huy Chú, Lợi Chí, Chapter XXV, Vol. II: 879-880.
451 Cương Mục, chính biên, XXX: 11.
452 ETR, 47.
military officials, and their families, had to renew their vows of loyalty to the king and the lord on the three last days of the year. They were also required to report any information they had that could be harmful to the rulers. The heads of prefectures as well as local officials also compelled their subjects to take the oath.\footnote{Jean-Baptist Tavernier, “A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin,” in \textit{A Collection of Several Relations and Treatises Singular and Curious} (London, 1680), Chapter XII “On the court of Tunquin.”} In some cases it was even required of foreigners living in Tonkin. When the Jesuit missionary Giulio Baldinotti and his companions were charged with spying for Cochinchina in 1626 the entire Portuguese crew was forced to take the oath of loyalty to the Lord of Tonkin as proof of their innocence.\footnote{Giulio Baldinotti, “La Relation sur le Tonkin du P. Baldinotti (1626),” \textit{BEFEO} III (1903): 71-78.}

\textit{Sacrifice to the Chief’s Banner}

The Sacrifice to the Chief’s Banner, or \textit{Tế Kỳ Đạo},\footnote{Manuscript has “Cờ Đạo.” \textit{Cờ} is a Nôm pronunciation of \textit{Kỳ}, which means “the flag.”} an adaptation of Song and Ming customs, began during the Lê dynasty.\footnote{For a description of the procedure see Phan Huy Chú, \textit{Loại Chí}, Vol. I: 875-77.} The sacrifices were performed on three separate platforms, the first of which was dedicated to Heaven and Earth, the second to the saints and heroes, and the third to the protecting spirits of the banners or flags of the general. Since it was a military affair conducted by the Lord Trinh’s officers to honor him, only he and not the king was present at the ceremony. The day before the ceremony, offerings were made at various shrines dedicated to the spirits of former  

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generals and shrines dedicated to weapons (e.g., bow, crossbow, cannon, musket, lance), and animals (e.g., elephant and horse) used in a battle. On the day of the sacrifice all of the officers gathered with their troops at the sites to perform the rites, while the Lord Trịnh rode an elephant from his palace to a tower near the platforms to observe it. The sacrifices followed a procedure similar to the sacrifice to the god of Agriculture. During the ceremonies the troops fired their cannons and muskets and waved their flags and weapons. After the ceremony they competed in archery, shooting, and wrestling. Overall the Tế Kỳ Dao ceremony functioned like a military parade.

The ceremony was a display of military power that impressed foreigners such as Samuel Baron who lived in Tonkin at the time. Baron interpreted this ceremony as “purging the country from all malevolent spirits.” According to him,

The Theckydaw [Tế Kỳ Đạo] is observed commonly once every year, especially if there [is to] be a great mortality amongst the men, elephants, or horses of the general’s stables, or the cattle of the country. The cause of which they attribute to the malicious spirits of such men as have been put to death for treason, rebellion, and conspiring the death of the king, generals or princes, and that in revenge of the punishment they have suffer’d, they are bent to destroy every thing, and commit horrible violence. To prevent which, their superstition has suggested to them the institution of this Theckydaw, as a proper means to drive the devil away, and purge the country of evil spirits.

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458 This is one of two ceremonies that Baron mentioned in his memoir; the other was the giao ceremony.

459 Samuel Baron, Chapter XV “A Description of the Kingdom of Tonqueen,” in Dror and Taylor, Views of Seventeenth-Century Vietnam.

460 Baron, “A Description,” in Dror and Taylor, 263.
Baron described the rite as a mock battle between the soldiers of the Trịnh and the evil spirits, complete with artillery, knights on elephants and horses, and foot soldiers who brandished weapons while running through the streets and over platforms chasing the evil spirits.

By way of contrast to Baron’s description, the author of ETR discusses the rite with such brevity that he leaves out most of the colorful details. However, it is still worthwhile to read the description given in ETR so as to have a sense of this particular ceremony.

On the day of the ceremony, the lord [Trịnh] goes to his palace nearby to watch. The military officials also bring their troops there. Then the Prefect of Rites comes to each altar, offers the sacrifice to heaven and earth, former kings and lords, the Five Emperors and Five Generals, and other spirits. He thanks them for their blessings and also to request their protection for the king and the lord, and for all people to have peace and prosperity. After the offerings are completed, cannon shots are fired; then the large flag of the chief is waved near the palace of the lord. Then the banner-carrying soldiers wave their flags and fire their guns. The regular soldiers fire their muskets three times, raising their swords and spears up and down. With these actions they intend to drive away the spirits of the rebels who had revolted against the kings and lords of the past, lest the tranquility of the country be disturbed. After the ceremony, the officials and their soldiers gather to greet the lord and compete in sports and games.461

The Temple of the Military

The rituals of the cult of the military that took place in the Temple of the Military (Võ Miếu) paralleled the civil rites to Confucius and the literary sages in the Temple of Culture (Văn Miếu). During the Tang dynasty powerful military clans based along China’s northwestern frontier overshadowed the influence of civil officials at the court.

461 ETR, 49.
These clans claimed to be the successors of a number of ancient military personages, such as Lü Wang, the military strategist who helped plan the Zhou conquest of the Shang dynasty. In an attempt to appeal to these warriors the Tang court founded a military cult centered on Lü Wang, on whom they conferred the honorific title “Accomplished King of the Military” (Wucheng wang) during the reign of Tang Zuzong (799-805). The title clearly echoed that given to Confucius. If the civil officials were to have their “exalted king of culture,” the military also had to have their own “accomplished king of the military.” According to imperial regulations, “offerings were sacrificed to them on the first week of the second and eighth months in the same manner as to Confucius.” After the Tang dynasty this cult fell into obscurity as the power of the military waned.

From the historical records, the Trịnh established a military academy for the study of martial arts and military strategy in 1721. They also organized martial arts competitions and tactical examinations that were to be held every three years. The patronage of the military by the Trịnh might have led to the establishment of a Temple of the Military in Thăng Long by 1740. According to ETR, Grand Duke Lü Wang, Two

\[ \text{ETR, 74.} \]

\[ \text{ETR, 74.} \]

\[ \text{463} \] Candidates were examined on basic knowledge of the Sunzi’s Art of War. If they passed the exam, they were required to demonstrate their fighting skills while riding a horse as well as on the ground with swords, lance, and other long weapons. If they passed this level, they would then be examined on battle tactics. Whoever passed all three levels would have an oral exam with the lord, and be appointed to a military rank. In 1731, the examination was revised to add archery competition. The first two steps of the test were reversed, that is, the practical examination took place before the theoretical part. See Cương Mụ, chính biên, XXXV: 36 and XXXVII: 21.

\[ \text{464} \] We do not know when the Temple of the Military was first erected, but according to an entry in the imperial record Cương Mụ, a decree was issued in 1740 for the worship at the Temple of the Military: “The main chamber of the temple is dedicated to the ‘Accomplished King of Military, the Grand Duke [Lü] Wang.’ Other military figures such as Sun Wuzi, Guan Zhong and 18 other generals are worshipped in the eastern and western side chambers. General Trần Hưng Đạo should also be worshipped at the Temple of
Correlates and Twelve Generals were venerated at the Temple of the Military so as to mirror Confucius, the Four Correlates and the Ten Philosophies of the Temple of Culture. Of the generals who were worshipped at the Temple of the Military in Thăng Long during the eighteenth century, all but one were famous Chinese generals from the Warring States to the Song era. The only Vietnamese figure honored there was General Trần Hưng Đạo (d. 1300), the military hero who twice defeated Mongol invasions and who already had a separate cult devoted to him.

The author of *ETR* held a more negative attitude toward the cult of the military figures than toward the cult of Confucius. He wrote:

> The military officers revere and worship the generals at the Temple of the Military with the hope that the generals will help them win in battle. However, these generals have no power to do so because the skills, intelligence, or strength that helped them win a battle or found a state do not belong to them. These things are given to them by the power of the great Lord who created all things in heaven and earth. Moreover, from the past to the present, many who worship these generals have lost battles and the generals could not help them at all. Therefore, the military cult of the Grand Duke and the mighty generals is ineffective.

The military cults floundered as the Trịnh fell from power and finally disappeared during the Tây Sơn occupation of Tonkin (1786-1802). As the center of imperial power moved

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465 See Article 13 of Book 1. This fact provides another internal datum for the dating of the manuscript. Given that the sacrifice to the military figure was established in 1740 the *ETR* could not have been written before that time.


467 *ETR*, 75.
to Hue, the Temple of the Military in Thăng Long was abandoned in the nineteenth century and the military cults were no longer maintained by the Nguyễn court.

**Worship in the Villages**

**The Ranking of the Spirits**

A visitor to pre-modern Vietnam could see shrines and temples in every conceivable corner, in the villages and on the roads, on the river bank or at the base of a hill. The spirits commonly worshipped in Tonkin may be divided into three types. The first type of spirit is made up of legendary figures whose cults were followed in their respective temples. The second type of spirit is that of nature, such as the spirit of a tree, a rock, a stream, a river or lake, a mountain, an animal, a bird, or a fish. These spirits had no regular cults or rituals attached to them. Offerings were made to them mostly to ward off evil when necessary. The third type of spirit, that of deified humans, makes up the majority of the spirits worshipped in traditional Vietnam. They are the spirits of legendary heroes and heroines, kings and queens, military figures, cultural figures, and arts-and-crafts founders, among others. The cults devoted to them followed the general pattern of ritual worship specified in ritual manuals. Most of these human spirits came to be the tutelary genies or guardian spirits of a particular village or district.

The royal court established a ranking system for the spirits as an instrument to maintain imperial control over the local cults. Depending on their merits and powers, the court issued a certificate ranking them in one of three classes: spirits of the first or
supreme class, spirits of the second or middle class, and spirits of the third or low class.
The first-class spirits were venerated at famous temples and shrines in multiple locations
while spirits of the second class were venerated in local temples or shrines. Spirits of the
third class often did not have a temple dedicated to them but were worshipped along with
other spirits and genies. This classification was not unlike the Catholic practice of
classification and canonization of saints and venerable figures.

The spirits of the supreme rank (thượng đẳng thần) were those whose names and
actions were famous. They could be the personalized spirits of important mountains and
rivers, such as the spirit of Mount Tản Viên⁴⁶⁸ or of the Tô Lịch river, or they could be
legendary figures, such as Đồng Thiên Vương,⁴⁶⁹ Chử Đồng Tử,⁴⁷⁰ and Princess Liễu
Hạnh, whose lives had supernatural elements (linh dị) and efficacious powers (thiêng).⁴⁷¹
They could also be historical heroes or heroines, such as Lý Ông Trọng, the Trưng
Sisters, Trần Hưng Đạo, Lý Thường Kiệt, and others whose virtues and deeds were
worthy of imitation. Their stories were told in the earliest collections of hagiography or
“lives of the spirits” (thần tích).

The spirits of the middle rank (trung đẳng thần) were those that had been
worshipped in local villages. Their deeds might not have been well known but they

⁴⁶⁸ See the story “Núi Tản Viên” in Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái (trans. pp. 77-78); Toản Thư, ngoại kỳ, I: 4a-5b.
⁴⁷⁰ See the story “Đầm Nhất Đất” in Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái (trans. pp. 51-54).
⁴⁷¹ The ETR discusses the stories of Đồng Thiên Vương, Lý Ông Trọng and Princess Liễu Hạnh in Article 10 of Book 1.
might have displayed magical powers or benefited the local people. The spirits of the lower rank (hạ đẳng thần) were those whose deeds had been forgotten. They were often worshipped in groups. Outside of these rankings were those spirits who were worshipped out of superstitious beliefs. They were frequently characterized by the court as false spirits (tà thần), demonic spirits (yêu thần), or base spirits (để tiện thần). These spirits were often of animals, rocks, trees, or people who died an unnatural death.

The process of ranking the spirits was called “establishing the ranks and promotions of the spirits” (tạo khoa bạt thần). Besides the obvious examination of the record of its merits, the spirit under consideration needed to display its power or work miracles. According to the ETR, the test to determine whether a spirit deserved the honor of being certified took place as follows:

When the villagers want to petition for a spirit to be their tutelary genie, they bring a buffalo with the name of the spirit written on its head. The appointed official commands the spirit to strike the designated buffalo dead if he wants to obtain his rank. If the buffalo is stricken dead in front of everyone present, the spirit receives a royal certification to be a thần (deity) and is registered in the official record of the spirits.472

The Cult of the Tutelary Genies

The cult of Thành Hoàng or the Tutelary Genie was essential for community life in traditional Vietnam.473 Every village must have its patron deity called Phúc Thần

472 ETR, 53.

473 On the cult of Thành Hoàng, the major study remains Nguyen Van Khoan, “Essai sur le ‘Dinh’ et le culte du genie tutélaire des villages au Tonkin,” BEFEO XXX (1930): 107-139. Other authors have discussed the cult in their works, Paul Giran, Magie & religion annamites; introduction à une philosophie de la civilisation du peuple d’Annam. (Paris: A. Challamel, 1912); Phan Kế Bình, Việt Nam Phong Tục [Customs of Vietnam] (1915, re-issued, Saigon: Khai Tri, 1973); Nguyen Van Huyen, “Contribution a
[Genie of Fortune] or Thành Hoàng [Genie of “Moat and Ditch”]. Originally, the name Thành Hoàng (Chinese: Chenghuang) was used to indicate the guardian spirit of a city that was surrounded by walls and ditches in ancient China. Only the capital and major cities, not the villages, had temples dedicated to Chenghuang. City officials made regular sacrifices to their Chenghuang for protection from wars and natural disasters. The cult came to Vietnam during the Tang dynasty with the spirit of Tô Lịch river that was honored as the protector of the citadel Đại La. After independence, when Lý Thái Tổ made Đại La his capital and changed its name to Thăng Long [Ascending Dragon] in 1010, he continued to honor the spirit of the Tô Lịch river as the capital’s Tutelary Genie. In 1189, King Lý Cao Tông travelled widely, and whenever he encountered a sacred place, he conferred upon the spirit of that locality a title, and allowed a temple to be built in its honor.474 However, the cult of Thành Hoàng was not under imperial control until the thirteenth century. According to information given in various stories of the Việt Điện U Linh Tập, in the years 1285, 1287, 1312, and 1313, the Trần kings created a number of Tutelary Genies at the same time that they ordered temples and shrines dedicated to the “unworthy” spirits to be destroyed.

In contrast to China, the cult of Thành Hoàng in Vietnam centered on the villages. Perhaps because cities were few and far-between in traditional Vietnam, the cult was developed in rural areas where the villages had been the main units of social

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474 Toàn Thư, bản kỷ, IV: 21a.
organization. As their number multiplied, the local cults of spirits could not be ignored by the court, and efforts were made to include them in the national hierarchy. In the Lê dynasty villages were compelled to submit the names of their local deities for court examination and registration. As the custom of ranking the spirits became popular during the Lê dynasty, every village wanted to have its deity honored as a certified Tutelary Genie. The movement toward having Thành Hoàng as the village protector was to legitimize the spirits that had already been worshipped in the village. While in the fourteenth century, only 24 spirits were certified in the whole country, according to the Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái, the number increased to hundreds in the following centuries. In the villages surrounding Thăng Long alone there were at least 110 spirits worshipped as their Tutelary Genies.475

The number and quality of these guardian spirits varied from village to village. Most of the time it was the spirit of a person who had great merit in the eyes of the villagers. Other times it was a spirit from nature that was to be worshipped to ward off plague, disaster, or a spirit that displayed strange power. There were cases in which people worshipped thieves, soil collectors, or others whose morals were questionable. Regardless of their backgrounds the spirits to be worshipped had proved themselves responsive to the prayers of the people in their time of need. Since not all the deities worshipped in a village were heroes or famous people, the villagers adopted a certified spirit to be their Tutelary Genie. Thus a village could have more than one Tutelary

475 Nguyễn Vĩnh Phúc and Nguyễn Duy Hinh, Các Thành Hoàng, Tables 1-5, 13-47.
Genie. If they could afford it, the villagers built a temple dedicated to that spirit, or they simply worshipped their Tutelary Genie in the communal house.

From the fifteenth century onward, the back chamber of the đền was reserved to worship Thành Hoàng in the construction of the communal house. In this chamber, a spirit tablet inscribed with the name and title of the deity was placed on a throne or ritual bed. The royal certificate (sắc) was kept in a special box in front of the throne. A written booklet of the spirit’s hagiography (thần tích) was also kept there. Some villages had coffers holding the costumes and head pieces “worn” by the Tutelary Genie during festivals. In front of the ritual bed was an altar for articles of worship, such as incense burners, vases, and candle stands. To the sides of this altar were other worship objects made of wood, including banners, flags, ritual weapons, carriages, and sometimes a life-size horse.

The hagiographies of the Thành Hoàng followed a legendary pattern similar to those written in the Việt Điện U Linh Tập and Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái, the two earliest collections of Vietnamese hagiography. For example, they had an unusual birth; their physical features were different; they possessed excellent virtues or unsurpassed talents; they had done great deeds that benefited the nation, the people, or the village; their deaths were also out of the ordinary; they displayed powers after death and helped the living; and they were remembered by the people and certified by the court. Of course, not all hagiographies were told in this pattern. The spirits of the lower ranks and the “unworthy” or “false” spirits had no biography.
The ritual feasts to the Tutelary Genie were communal affairs that occurred according to the seasonal celebrations. Offerings were made regularly on the first and full moon, and at special times of the year: in the ceremony of supplication for tranquility (Kỳ An), in the ceremony of offering of new crops (Thường Tân), in the ceremony of supplication for blessings (Kỳ Phúc), and other seasonal festivals. No doubt, the most celebrated ceremony of the cult was the anniversary feast of the Tutelary Genie himself. On this special occasion, the whole village was involved in preparing the ritual feasts. Solemn sacrifices were made according to ritual protocols in a manner similar to that of Thần Nông or Confucius and the celebration could last several days. It was also an opportunity for social gathering; the occasion called for a village festival (hội) replete with feasting and entertainment. ETR mentions that during this time, “each day they offer sacrifices, then sing songs throughout the day and night, and compete in games like wrestling, stick-fighting, or cricket.” Only during a mourning period for a ruler were all forms of entertainment prohibited. Sacrifices were also made to the Tutelary Genie when the village needed help to pray for rain (đảo vũ) or to dispel a plague or disaster (tống ạch).

The author of ETR recognized the importance of this cult in the social life of the Vietnamese, prompting a sympathetic comment on the rites:

It is right to venerate and trust in the guardian deity as protector of the village. However, one must choose a spirit who truly has merits and

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476 According to the descriptions given by Phan Kế Bính as well as by Nguyen Van Khoan, the rite itself was a complex ritual of many steps. See Phan Kế Bính, Việt Nam Phong Tục, 81-85; Nguyen Van Khoan, “Essai sur le Dinh,” 127-130.

477 ETR, 52-53.
virtues for veneration. One should not choose a false spirit who has no
merits and power. One must choose a being among those in heaven who
are favored by the Lord of Heaven because they are worthy of our total
reverence and trust.\textsuperscript{478}

It is interesting that he made a connection between the veneration of Thành Hoàng and
the Catholic concept of the patron saints: “The followers of our religion in all places
often choose a holy man or woman to be the patron saint of their village, for the
protection of the people who live in that area.”\textsuperscript{479} Still, he could not accept the cult of
Thành Hoàng wholesale because it had been forbidden by Rome as superstitious. His
pejorative assessment of Vietnamese deities as “rebels against the Lord of Heaven” or
“demons in disguise” should be read with care. These terms were less an actual
judgment on the merits of particular deities than the reflection of a general bias that was
characteristic of missionary thinking of this era; that is, paganism had nothing positive to
offer to the Christians.

The fact remains that, for Vietnamese Catholics, the prohibition against
participating in the local cult of Thành Hoàng, if they happened to live in a non-Catholic
village, caused tremendous social repercussions.\textsuperscript{480} More than a religious rite, the cult of
Thành Hoàng helped foster communal identity. The Tutelary Genie represented the
village’s common history, customs, morality, and rules. The social bond among the

\textsuperscript{478} ETR, 54.
\textsuperscript{479} ETR, 55.
\textsuperscript{480} As Catholic families were broken up and forced to live among non-Catholics as part of the Nguyên’s
policy of “eliminating separatists” (phân sáp) during the nineteenth century, the question of Catholic
involvement in the local cults and festivals became more acute, as evident in the repeated concerns and
questions sent to Rome by missionary bishops.
villagers was fostered and a common identity was created in his cult. A French colonial scholar best captured the essence of this cult in the following words:

The protective genie represents an appreciable amount of common memories, common aspirations. He embodies the rule, custom, morality, and at the same time, the penalty. He will punish or reward according to whether his laws were violated or observed. He is ultimately the personification of this higher authority which has its source and strength from the same society. Moreover, he forms a link among all community members, he makes a block, a sort of moral personality in which all the essential attributes are found in each individual.481

**Domestic Cults**

Among the spirits that were worshipped at home three stood out as typical in a household: Táo Quân or the Stove Genie, Thổ Công or the Household Genie, and Tiên Sư or the Primary Teacher. They were described both in Book One Article Eleven of *ETR* and mentioned by Tavernier, Baron, and Tissanier. The following is a brief description of these spirits.

**The Stove Genie**

In traditional Vietnam, Táo Quân or the “Lord of the Hearth” is in charge of both the kitchen and family affairs. He was assigned by the Jade Emperor or Heaven to help members of the household live in harmony. Every year he returned to heaven on the 23rd day of the last lunar month to report on the domestic affairs of the family during the

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previous year. He returned on New Year’s Eve with heaven’s judgment. The year’s heavenly reward or punishment depended upon the family’s moral behavior during the previous year. Therefore, the most important feast day of Táo Quân was the date of his departure to heaven, the time when solemn offerings were made.

In *ETR* the story of Táo Quân, popularly called the Stove Genie (*vua bếp*), is recounted in verse,\(^{482}\) and can be summarized as follows. Once upon a time, there was a couple named Trọng Cao and Thị Nhi. They often quarreled over domestic affairs. One day the husband Trọng Cao beat his wife Thị Nhi. She ran away from home and became homeless. Eventually she met a man named Phạm Lang and married him. In the meantime Trọng Cao lost his fortune and became a beggar. One day he came to beg at the house of Phạm Lang. The lady of the house recognized him as her former husband and gave him food and drink. While they were talking over old times Phạm Lang returned from a hunting trip. Afraid that Phạm Lang would misunderstand, Thị Nhi hid her former husband in the haystack. Phạm Lang had brought back some game meats and burned the haystack to roast them. He unwittingly burned Trọng Cao before Thị Nhi could explain the situation. Thị Nhi realized her mistake and jumped into the burning haystack to die with her former husband. Because he loved his wife Phạm Lang also leapt into the flames to be with her. Thus, all three died in the fire.

According to tradition, the Jade Emperor, upon hearing their tragic story, appointed them to be the three-in-one Stove Genie but each with a different responsibility: Phạm Lang was to be Thổ Công [Local Duke], caring for the kitchen;

\(^{482}\) *ETR*, 61-62.
Trọng Cao was to be Thổ Địa [Local Earth], caring for the home; and Thị Nhi was to be Thổ Kỳ [Local Guard], caring for the household transactions. This legend of the origin of the Hearth Spirit or Stove Genie was a mixture of different traditions. It appears that worshipping the Hearth Spirit, one of the five major household spirits stipulated in Chapter “Monthly Proceeding” of the Record of Rites, was adapted into a popular devotion. This story undoubtedly aroused the popular imagination and thus helped spread the cult of Táo Quân.

The Household Genie

Thổ Công, or the “Local Duke,” was the guardian spirit of the household. He was also called variously Thổ Địa [Local Earth] or Thổ Chủ [Local Master]. He was in charge of protecting the members of the household from harmful spirits, watching over their daily affairs, and bringing blessings to the household. Popular belief sometimes conflated the cult of the Stove Genie with the cult of the Household Genie. Since the two shared similar functions they were worshipped together at the same altar in many homes. The spirit tablets of the Thổ Công on the altar were inscribed with the three titles: Thổ địa long mạch tôn thần [the guardian spirit of the earth], Ngũ phương ngũ thổ Phúc đức chính thần [the spirit who brings blessings from all directions], and Đông trù tư mệnh Táo phủ thần quân [the lord of the hearth who guards the kitchen]. The offerings to Thổ Công were made regularly on the first and full moon. In addition, whenever offerings were made to the ancestors on familial memorial feasts (giỗ) or festivals (tết), a portion
was also offered to Thổ Công. On the feast day of Táo Quân at the end of the year a new spirit tablet for Thổ Công was made and the old one was burned.

The cult of Thổ Công seems to have evolved from the common belief that every locality had its guardian spirits, from the river, the road, and the land. There were many legendary accounts of Thổ Công or Thổ Chủ, two of which were recounted by ETR. One involved honoring the five brothers of the Lê family who were credited with killing a ferocious tiger; and the other was about a certain wood gatherer named Vương Chất who was lost in time travel. These accounts were later repeated in other Vietnamese apologetic works.

The Primary Teacher

Westerners who travelled to Tonkin in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries all agreed that the cult of Tiễn Sự or Tổ Sự was prominent in Tonkinese households.\(^{483}\) Tiễn Sự or the “Primary or Former Teacher” was the inventor or founder of a particular art or craft. Each trade guild also honors its own founder, known as Tổ Sự or “Original Teacher.”\(^{484}\) Artisans set up an altar in their household to remember those who taught them the arts. The altar dedicated to their Primary Teacher was either on the left or the

\(^{483}\) De Rhodes, *Histoire du Royaume de Tunquin*, Chapter XXIX, 106-107. According to De Rhodes’ experience, this veneration of Tiễn Sự was the most persistent cult, and it prevented people from converting to Christianity. He also held a negative view on the cult of Thành Hoàng and called it “the most foolish superstition.” (pp. 108-109). Tissanier also had a similar observation.

\(^{484}\) For example, the brothers Trần Hoà, Trần Điện, and Trần Điện of Đình Công Village in Hà Đông were credited with teaching the art and trade of the silversmith since the seventh century; Phạm Đôn of Thanh Nhàn Village in Phúc Yên was credited with the art of straw-mat weaving since the tenth century; the monk Không Lộ and his disciples were credited with the art of casting copper since the thirteenth century; the scholar Phùng Khắc Khoan, who went to China to learn the art of making silk, was considered the founder of this art in Tonkin since the sixteenth century.
right of the main altar to the ancestors. In front of the incense table was a spirit tablet and/or an image of the Teacher. On the first and full moons and at other festivals people made offerings to their Primary Teacher in the same manner as the offerings to their ancestors. On the anniversaries of the Teacher’s birth and death, members of the same line of art or trade would gather to publicly honor their patron saints. The cult of the Tiên Sư demonstrated the gratitude of later generations toward their “ancestors” in the trade for providing them a means of living. Because Thăng Long of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a gathering place for traders and artisans it was not unusual to see many households displaying the altar of their Tiên Sư.

**Religious Cults**

Within the traditional cult of spirits, goddess worship (đạo Mẫu) was also quite popular and had a long history. The cult of the goddess existed in different parts of Vietnam and found way into the ranks of Buddhist and Daoist deities. The earliest Buddhist figures venerated in Vietnam were the female personifications of the natural forces: the Ladies of Dharma Cloud (Pháp Vân), Dharma Rain (Pháp Vũ), Dharma Thunder (Pháp Lôi), and Dharma Lightning (Pháp Điện). The rulers of the four realms

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486 The tradition about the origin of these deities came from the story “Man Nương” in *Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái*. For a discussion on the story see Cuong Tu Nguyen, 70, 332-334 n. 10.
(Tứ phủ) — sky, land, forest, and water — were said to be female. Even Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, was turned into a goddess in Vietnamese devotion.

**Liễu Hạnh and the Mother Goddess Cult**

Among the spirits of supreme rank in traditional Vietnam was a woman by the name of “Princess” Liễu Hạnh. She was considered the principal deity of the goddess cult in traditional Vietnam, a cult that was connected with female mediums. Her cult was so popular in the eighteenth century that she was given the title of “princess” (công chúa) or “noble lady” (bà chúa) by the court even though she was never a member of the royal family. The listing of Liễu Hạnh as one of the four immortals bespoke the popularity of this deity. While the cult of Liễu Hạnh existed before the eighteenth century, it was not popular until this time when her hagiography was retold by Đoàn Thị Điểm (1705-

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488 One can argue that the influence of the native cult of Mother Goddess was so strong in Vietnam that it even affected the mainline religions. For example, in many Buddhist homes, the Goddess of Mercy often was the only venerated figure on the altar. One can make a similar observation about the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in many Catholic homes in Vietnam.

489 Since its development in the eighteenth century her cult has remained popular in North Vietnam up to today. For a modern study of her, see Olga Dror, Cult, Culture, and Authority: Princess Liễu Hạnh in Vietnamese History (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007).

490 According to Vietnamese tradition, the Four Immortals (Tứ Bá Tút) are: (1) Thánh Động or Phù Đổng Thiên Vương, the legendary child hero who rode his horse to heaven after driving the enemy out of the country during the legendary reign of King Hùng; (2) Sơn Tinh or Tản Viên Sơn Thần, the legendary spirit of Mount Tản Viên who married the daughter of King Hùng the Eighteenth; (3) Chù Động Tút, the pauper turned prince-consort who possessed the power of immortality at the time of King Hùng; (4) and Liễu Hạnh, the alleged daughter of Indra who lived for a short time during the Lê dynasty.

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1748) in Vân Cát Thần Nữ Truyện [The Legend of the Goddess from Vân Cát]. The author of ETR might use the same sources as those available to Đoàn Thị Điểm in telling the stories of Liễu Hạnh. The two accounts are quoted in full for the purpose of comparison:

Lady Liễu Hạnh from the Lê family was born at the An Thái commune of the Thiên Bàn district, Nghĩa Hưng county in Sơn Nam prefecture. After growing up, she traveled to many regions. When she came to Nghệ An province, she got married and had a son. She subsequently left her husband and returned to An Thái and became a courtesan (con chơi bởi).491 After her death, Liễu Hạnh often appeared in the form of a beautiful girl. The lord [Trịnh] conferred on her the title Princess Liễu Hạnh, also known as Lady Thắng, and built a temple for her. People everywhere worshipped her in their homes; thus she is also known as the “Lady” of the world. There is a temple dedicated to her at Cửa Tuấn in Kênh Sắt, Quỳnh Lưu District, Nghệ An province.492

Liễu Hạnh was the daughter of Indra (Đế Thích). The Jade Emperor sent her down to the hill of Vân Cát in Annam. She wandered around and was born into the Lê family at the An Thái commune of the Thiên Bàn district, Nghĩa Hưng county in Sơn Nam prefecture. When she died at the age of thirty-seven, her spirit took on human form and traveled throughout the country. When she came to Nghệ An region in the area of Duyên (or Lục) Quán, she opened a refreshment booth. One day a young scholar stopped by for refreshment. Attracted by her beauty, he married her, and they had a son. When the child was three years old, she told her husband: “I am the daughter of Indra, the Jade Emperor sent me down to the world to be the daughter of the Lê family, and I took the human form. Now it is time for me to return home, you stay here and raise our son.” After saying that, she disappeared and came to An Thái commune. She appeared as a beautiful girl in fine clothing, seducing the travelers with magic, and her story spread out through the whole area. The lord [Trịnh] honored her with the title Princess Liễu Hạnh, also known as Lady Thắng. A temple was built for her, with two female attendants in fine clothing standing to the left and

491 Con chơi bởi can mean a prostitute. However, since Adriano di Santa Thecla reports that “since she had sung, as they say, disgracefully and shamelessly [impudica], people being jealous, killed her and threw her into a river” (Opusculum de Sectis, p. 145), it is also possible that Liễu Hạnh was engaged in some form of entertainment, like the geisha in Japan. On this point, see Dror, A Study of Religion, 47–49.

492 ETR, 59.
right of her statue. She often appears in the form of a young girl to seduce
men and hypnotize them, saying: “I am taking your soul. If you want to
live, you must worship me.” Therefore, people worship her everywhere;
in their homes, there is a picture of her sitting with two attendants on her
sides. 493

According to ETR, the first account is from a hagiography written by Confucians,
whereas the second account came from the Daoists. The two accounts exhibit differences
in tone toward the cult of Liễu Hạnh. The Confucian account portrays her as an impure
goddess who is playful but not harmful, whereas the Daoist account portrays her as a
powerful goddess who inspires a home cult. We do not know the extent of the domestic
cult of Liễu Hạnh but it was connected to female mediumship as attested by Adriano di
Santa Thecla. 494 The cult also had a strong connection with an indigenous Vietnamese
Daoist cult known as Chư Vị [the Honored Ones], which included Liễu Hạnh in their
pantheon as well as other spirits that were worshipped by Vietnamese shamans. The
author of ETR had nothing but contempt for this cult which he dismissed as an evil cult
that should be destroyed. This was an unusual reaction toward Liễu Hạnh in comparison
to the author’s response to other spirits. He wrote as follows:


494 The account given by Adriano di Santa Thecla (pp. 46-47) is similar to the Confucian account: “A
famous woman named Bà Chúa Liễu Hạnh [Lady Liễu Hạnh] is added to [the most prominent spirits]. She
was born in Thiên Bản district of the southern province. Since she had sung, as they say, disgracefully and
impudently, people, being jealous, killed her and threw her into the river. The Devil took her shape and
name and introduced, developed, and secured her cult in many provinces. She is worshipped mainly in
Quinh Lưu district in Cúra Tuần village of Nghệ An province. Her temple, or miếu, is built there, where
two girls attend on her. When one of them leaves another is put in her place. The girls are selected from
all the girls of that district by Bà Chúa Liễu Hạnh herself or by a demon with her name. The one selected is
assigned to serve as one of the two attendants or zealous servants. She is expected to speak when
possessed by her [Liễu Hạnh] or by the demon. The girl, upon leaving the temple, is paid a considerable
amount of money, according to the way of life she chooses.” (Dror’s translation, p. 145).
Liễu Hạnh is a demon not a person from heaven. A celestial being is chaste and does not engage in seducing scholars and men as she did. She surely is a goddess of lust; her temple is a temple of lust. We must practice scholar Hồ Dĩnh’s advice that whenever one passes a temple of lust one should burn it down.  

Cult of Quan Âm (Avalokiteśvara)

The cult to Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, known in Vietnam as Quan Âm or Phật Bà [Lady Buddha] was a prominent feature of Vietnamese Buddhism at least since the Lê-Trịnh era. We do not know when this cult began in Vietnam although it was certainly not before the eleventh century. The iconography of Quan Âm in Vietnam was exclusively that of a female, sometimes dressed in a white robe while at other times depicted with multiple arms and eyes. These forms representing Quan Âm emerged in China between the tenth and eleventh centuries. Moreover, the popular story about Quan Âm as Princess Diệu Thiện or Mâu Thiền (Miaoshan in Chinese), which originated in China around the twelfth century, was the main source of the Vietnamese legends regarding her.

According to the account given in ETR, Diệu Thiền was the third daughter of King Diệu Trang (Miaozhuang). Unlike her sisters she refused to get married. For this reason she took refuge in a Buddhist monastery. After many failed attempts to force her

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495 ETR, 124.

496 The literature on the cult of Guanyin (Quan Âm) is enormous. For recent works on the subject, see John Blofeld, Bodhisattva of Compassion The Mystical Tradition of Kuan Yin (Boston: Shambala, 1988, 2009); Yu, Chun-Fang, Kuan Yin The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteshvara (Columbia, 2001).

to change her mind, the king, in his anger, burnt down the entire monastery. Because of her magical powers Diệu Thiện could escape harm. The story told by the author of the ETR is incomplete. The legend of Diệu Thiện claims that after the fire, she escaped to a cave on Perfume Mountain (Hương Sơn) and continued her monastic practice there.

When, as the result of bad karma, the king was struck with an incurable disease, Diệu Thiện returned to visit her father in disguise. She secretly offered her hands and eyes to be made into medicines for her father. Cured of the disease, the king and his family wanted to find the anonymous donor. Upon discovering that the benefactor was his daughter, the king, the queen, and the two remaining sisters converted to Buddhism.

According to the legend, the princess Diệu Thiện was a former life of Quan Âm. As in China, the bodhisattva of compassion, who originally was a male in the Indian tradition, was transformed in Vietnamese Buddhism into a goddess of mercy. The cult of Quan Âm developed out of the Pure Land tradition in seventh century China. In chapter 25 (Phổ Môn) of the Lotus Sutra, Avalokiteśvara promised that those who believed in her would be saved from evils and harm. Since the cult appeared in Vietnam, it has fit well within the indigenous tradition of goddess worship (đạo Mẫu). According to the ETR, the popularity of her cult was due to the belief that she “has more power to save people than any other buddhas.” In the popular imagination she was known as an all-knowing and all-powerful being who could save people from all kinds of trouble, and even prevent them from falling into hell.

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498 Vietnamese tradition locates this cave in Phù Lưu Village, Hà Đông province where a small Buddhist temple was erected in 1687 by the wives of the Lord Trịnh.

499 ETR, 200.
Vietnamese iconography of the Lê-Trịnh era often showed her as sitting on a lotus throne with multiple arms reaching out and blessing people. She was sometimes depicted as a lady crossing the South China Sea; other times as a lady holding a child.\textsuperscript{500}

Influenced by Tantrism, the image of Quan Âm as having a thousands eyes in a thousand hands dominated many prominent Buddhist temples in Tonkin. Because the author of \textit{ETR} was probably unfamiliar with the tantric form of Quan Âm, he thought of her as a “demon in disguise” since “no human being can have multiple heads and arms.”\textsuperscript{501}

\textbf{Cult of the Jade Emperor}

The cult of the Jade Emperor (\textit{Ngọc Hoàng}), a favorite god in the Chinese pantheon, did not seem to gain much currency in traditional Vietnam outside of the Daoist circle. Nevertheless, the cult attracted enough followers to be mentioned by Christian authors in their apologetic writings from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.

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\textsuperscript{500} This form of Quan Âm is known as Quan Âm Tồng Tử [Compassion Protector of Children]. It comes from the Vietnamese folk story of Quan Âm Thị Kính. According to the legend, on the tenth incarnation, the bodhisattva was born in Korea and was given the name Thị Kính. She later married Thiên Sĩ of the Sùng family and became a devoted wife. One day while Thiên Sĩ was sleeping Thị Kính noticed a stray hair of his beard growing in the wrong direction. She took a knife to cut it off. As the blade touched his chin Thiên Sĩ woke up and accused his wife of attempted murder. Even after she explained the situation his family insisted that he should divorce her. She was expelled from the household and returned home. Everyone, including her own family abandoned her. Wearying of this, Thị Kính sought to renounce the world. She disguised herself as a man and entered a Buddhist order under the name of Kính Tâm. Even though in man’s clothing, she was so handsome that Thi Mâu, the daughter of a local rich man, fell in love with “him.” Thi Mâu wanted to seduce Kính Tâm but failed to change “his” mind. Thi Mâu later had an affair with a servant and became pregnant. After giving birth to a boy, she took him to the temple and told everyone that Kính Tâm was the father. Kính Tâm was innocent but could not tell “his” secret, so “he” had to move out of the temple. Out of compassion Kính Tâm took the child and raised him as her own. When the child was three years old Kính Tâm developed a terminal disease. Knowing that “he” was dying, “he” left a letter to the monks of the temple revealing the truth, which was revealed after “his” death. Thị Kính’s story so moved the emperor that he elevated her to the rank of divinity with the title of Quan Âm Tồng Tử [The Compassion Protector of Children]. This story, however, did not appear in \textit{ETR}. For an English version, see Sandy Boucher, \textit{Discovering Kwan Yin, Buddhist Goddess of Compassion} (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 17-20.

\textsuperscript{501} \textit{ETR}, 201.
centuries. In the *ETR*, the author discusses the cult of the Jade Emperor by demythologizing the figure. He gave two accounts of the historical origins of this deity.

One story holds that the Jade Emperor was a man named Zhang Yi, the grandson of the famous Han general Zhang Liang. He learned Daoist magic and gained many disciples, who spread the story of his immortality after his death. When Zhang Yi appeared to Song Huizong to help him fight the rebels, the emperor thought that Zhang Yi had become a god and conferred upon him the title “Jade Emperor the Supreme Sovereign” (Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế).  

Another account mentions that he was the son of King Guang Yen of Miao Le kingdom whose wife, Queen Bao Yueguang, was barren. One night, she dreamt that the Daoist god Yuanshi brought her a boy. Upon waking, she became pregnant and gave birth to a son on the ninth day of the first moon of the following year. Since he was a precious gift from the god, she named him “Jade Emperor.” This account was repeated in Catholic works of apologetics of the nineteenth century.

The author of *ETR* finds the two accounts to be contradictory. If Jade Emperor was a real historical figure, he could not have been the son of a fictitious king from a fictitious kingdom. The apparent contradiction between the two accounts was enough for the author to dismiss the figure of the Jade Emperor as someone worthy to be worshipped.

502 *ETR*, 101.

503 *ETR*, 102.
A Christian Evaluation of Traditional Worship

The usual approach of ETR to the worship of spirits was to demythologize them. First, the author sought to provide a historical account of the spirits to demonstrate their human origin. The biographical details of Confucius, Laozi, Sakyamuni Buddha, Quan Âm, Jade Emperor, and other genies were provided in order to make the case that as human beings, these figures did not possess the power to grant blessings and protect people from harm. Second, by claiming that powers are granted from God alone, the worship of these spirits was ineffective, and therefore, a waste of resources.

The general Christian opposition to traditional Vietnamese cults is related to the Western interpretation of words and concepts such as “thờ”, “cúng”, “tế”. Thờ was translated by missionaries as adorare or worship, which, according to Catholic theology, must be reserved solely for God. In contrast, for the Vietnamese, thờ is a general word indicating honor and serve that applies to both the living and the dead, to humans and gods. Vietnamese “worship” or serve their parents (thờ cha kính mẹ), ancestors (thờ ông bà tổ tiên), their kings (thờ vua), and their heroes (thờ thánh), as well as heaven (thờ trời) or the Buddha (thờ Phật). Thờ, therefore, has only a generic sense of honoring and a devotional act, which is directed toward anyone (or anything) worthy of respect. It is the semantic equivalent of the Sino-Vietnamese words “kính” (respect/honor) or “sự” (serve) that are found in the Confucian maxims “honor the spirits as if they are present” (kính thần như thần tại) and “serve the dead as when they were alive” (sự tử như sự sinh).
Cúng [offering] and tế [sacrifice] were acts of honoring the spirits somewhat analogous to the offerings and sacrifices in ancient Israel. The sacrifice to Heaven in traditional Vietnam was different in degree but not in kind to the sacrifices to other spirits and to one’s own ancestors. In some cases, cúng and tế were meant to appease evil or troubled spirits, but for the most part they were expressions of honor, respect and gratitude that one felt toward the sages and heroes of the past — those deified beings who dominated the Vietnamese pantheon. This is a point of contention for the Christian that is repeated throughout ETR; that is, that devotion and honor should be reserved for God alone. Traditional Vietnamese thinking could not accept the reason for this exclusive worship which led to the Confucian rejection and persecution of Christianity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Conclusion

The Vietnamese cults of spirits can be mixed with superstitious practices. But, in essence, they are no different than the cults of saints in Catholicism. If one takes a survey of the spirits (thần) who were worshipped in Tonkin, the majority were of human origin rather than celestial beings, deified animals or natural objects and phenomena. They were heroes and heroines, teachers and inventors, kings and generals, scholars and nobles whose deeds were worth remembering. By “worshipping” them, later generations were able to learn of their virtues and merits. In this view, the cults of spirits were an
extension of the cult of ancestors, which was and remains at the heart of Vietnamese religious expression, our topic of discussion in the next chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN
THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF RELIGION:
THE CULT OF THE ANCESTORS IN TRADITIONAL VIETNAM

The cult of the ancestors, or ancestor veneration, is the most important religious and social expression in the Vietnamese tradition. The public display of filial virtue (hiếu) is a basic tenet of traditional Vietnamese society and the foundation of all morals and customs. Regardless of religious background or personal belief, the practice of honoring one’s ancestors is expected of everyone. The solemnity with which Vietnamese express their respect for their ancestors leaves lasting impressions on Western missionaries. Alexandre de Rhodes, a seventeenth-century Jesuit missionary to Vietnam, made a rather sweeping assessment: “There is perhaps no other nation on this inhabited earth that honors and venerates the souls and bodies of the dead more than the people of Tonkin.”

Given the importance of this cult in Vietnamese religious observance, this chapter explains and analyzes the traditional beliefs and practices of the ancestral rites as described by the author of ETR.

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504 De Rhodes, Histoire du Royaume, Chapter XXIII, 80.
Theoretical Understanding

The cult of the ancestors is based on the fundamental belief that death is not the end of a person’s existence but rather his or her transformation into a privileged place in the family hierarchy. Death is the first step of a deifying process in which the deceased are remembered and honored in the family collectively as ancestors. Their virtues are exemplified while past wrongs are forgiven. Regardless of the merits acquired or transgressions committed during their lifetimes, the ancestors take on new personas as spiritual members of the family who can influence the material world. It is believed that deceased family members retain both an interest in, and the ability to affect, their living relatives.

Fundamental Characteristics

The practice of ancestor veneration in traditional Vietnam, like elsewhere in East Asia, is based on several basic premises: a belief that the dead survive in another realm or spiritual reality; a notion of family as a corporate entity that includes the dead and the living; an understanding that the dead and the living mutually depend on and benefit each other; and using rituals as the mode of communication between the living and the dead, bonding family members within and across generations.505

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First, death is a doorway to another world called ̀âm phủ or “the palace of the dead.” In ̀âm phủ the dead continue their lives in a manner similar to the dương gian or the world of the living. They continue to engage in similar activities and still need material assistance, including shelter, clothing, food and drink, utensils and money. If they do not receive the needed support, the spirits of the dead return to disturb the living. 506

Second, traditional societies, including the Vietnamese, have an extended notion of the family that includes the dead and the living. Underlying this notion is the belief that the bond between the dead and their surviving relatives is not severed at death. The deceased continue to be present to, and take an interest in, the affairs of their living family members in some metaphysical form. There is much truth to the idea that “the dead rule the living” in traditional Vietnam, and the result can be either positive or negative. On the positive side, ancestors are credited with the ability to cure illness, ward off plagues, avert disaster, promote fertility, or promote the well-being of family members. They can also be advocates to the higher deities and powerful spirits on behalf of their families. On the negative side, ancestors can be a chastising force, causing illness or trouble when they are displeased. In either case, the ancestors are supernatural beings who are concerned for and interact with their surviving family members. They act as social controllers who reward the deserving and punish the delinquent.

506 This belief is not unique to the Vietnamese. Similar concepts existed in ancient Egypt, China, India and other cultures, hence the custom of burying goods and animals, and in extreme cases, other human beings with the dead.
Third, the relationship between the dead and the living is interdependent. All family members are mutually interdependent with reciprocal duties and obligations. Parents care and provide for their children in their infancy and youth. In turn, adult children provide for their parents in their old age. The cult of the ancestors is a ritualized extension of this moral obligation. A person making offerings to his ancestral spirits is merely acting according to the prescribed social order: the old are to be supported and treated with special reverence. Ritual sacrifices are performed to provide the ancestors with food and other means of self-sustenance. If they do not receive sacrifices, the ancestral spirits become “hungry ghosts” or “lost souls” (cô hồn) and may become malicious.

The principle of interdependence also demands that the deceased help the living. Since all family members are to contribute to the common well-being and the spirits are thought to have resources beyond those of living members, the ancestors are expected to help the family in critical times. By rectifying bad luck, providing good fortune, and giving advice, the ancestors assist the family in its struggle against shifting fortunes. The ancestors, therefore, function as a safety net in times of serious threat.

Fourth, the relationship between people is established and maintained through communication. Family members share their opinions, desires, hopes, and fears with one another. Communication between the living and the dead can be expressed through rituals such as offerings, prayers, and if needed, divination. Petitions from the living to the spirits are made through direct prayers (khấn) or written orations (văn tế). Letters to the spirits are burnt so as to send the messages to the spirit realm by way of smoke.
Communication from the dead to the living is more challenging. Dreams have been viewed as the ordinary mode of communication from the spirits. Ancestors appear to descendants in dreams to reveal their needs or intentions. However, dreams can have multiple meanings and oftentimes require interpretation, so for many people the most straightforward way to interpret the messages from an ancestor is through divination. While there are many forms of divination the simplest method to get an answer is that of casting coins. This is called *xin âm dương* in traditional custom. The person prays to the ancestors and asks for their approval on the issue in question, then takes two coins and casts them on a plate. If one coin is a head and the other a tail, this is *yang*, a sign of the ancestor’s approval; if both coins are heads or tails, this is *yin*, an unfavorable answer. The process can be repeated three times to ensure a valid response. In general this practice is sufficient for simple confirmation from the world beyond. More complicated situations demanding longer or more precise messages may require a medium or sorcerer to communicate the will of the ancestor(s).

**A Display of Confucian Filial Piety**

Although rituals honoring the dead and their spirits have existed since prehistoric times, from the Han dynasty on the Confucian tradition linked the practice with filial piety. In Confucian social ethics, filial piety (*hiếu*, Chinese: *xiao*) has been considered the most important virtue. Under this paramount virtue all other ethical qualities derive their import: humaneness (*nhân*, Chinese: *ren*) and righteousness (*nghĩa*, Chinese: *yì*),
core values of Confucianism, are seen as its extensions. Filial piety grounds all interactions in familial relationships.

In the first chapter of the *Classic of Piety (Xiao Jing)* Confucius explains:

“Filiality [filial piety] is the foundation of virtue and the root of education …. Begun in the service of our parents, continued in the service of the prince, filiality is completed in the building up of our character.”\(^{507}\) It is seen as a natural outcome of gratitude one owes to one’s parents. The *Classic of Piety* continues:

Parents give one life; no bond could be stronger. They watch over their child with utmost care; no love could be greater. Therefore, to love others without first loving one’s parents is to act against virtue. To reverence other men without first reverencing one’s parents is to act against propriety. If we model right upon such perversity, the people have no true norm to follow.\(^{508}\)

The *Classic of Filial Piety* specifies the filial practice:

In serving his parents a filial son renders utmost reverence to them while at home; he supports them with joy; he gives them tender care in sickness; he grieves at their death; he sacrifices to them with solemnity. If he has measured up to these five, then he is truly capable of serving his parents.\(^{509}\)

When parents are alive, to serve them with love and reverence; when deceased, to cherish their memory with deep grief – this is the sum total of man’s fundamental duty, the fulfillment of the mutual relations between the living and the dead, the accomplishment of the filial son’s service of his parents.\(^{510}\)


\(^{509}\) *The Hsiao Ching*, Chapter X “The Practice of Filiality,” 23.

\(^{510}\) *The Hsiao Ching*, Chapter XVIII “Mourning for Parents,” 39.
The meaning of offering “sacrifice” (té, Chinese: ji) to the deceased parents is explained in the *Record of Rites*. Offering is not about receiving blessings by manipulating the spirits, but it is performed as a means of development of the self within the context of the family and larger social network. Chapter “Principles of Sacrifice” in the *Record of Rites* explains:

By sacrificing, one continues to care for one’s parents and act with filiality. Filiality means “to care for,” and caring means according with the Way and not transgressing proper conventional behavior. Filial people serve their parents in three ways: in life, they care for them; in death, they mourn them; when mourning is over, they sacrifice. Caring for parents expresses accord; mourning express sorrow; sacrifice expresses reverence and timely attentiveness. Filial behavior lies in fulfilling these three criteria.\(^{511}\)

The concept of “serving the dead as if one serves the living”\(^{512}\) is the heart of the Confucian interpretation of the ancestral rites. One can interpret the meaning of sacrifice to the dead espoused by the *Record of Rites* as primarily a ritual of remembrance. This is primarily the position of the Confucian literati, those who have to uphold the social norms. The ancestral rites are public expressions of filial piety. When a person abandons these rites, he cannot defend his conduct as being filial.

The social function of ancestor worship, therefore, is to cultivate kinship values such as filial piety, family loyalty, and continuity of the family lineage. The key to understanding the rites to the ancestors is expressed in a teaching by Confucius: “When


\(^{512}\) Cf. *Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter XIX.
parents are alive; serve them according to ritual. When they die, bury them according to ritual and sacrifice to them according to ritual. “\textsuperscript{513} Ancestral rites were performed to express one’s sincerity and reverence toward one’s parents. They are used primarily to instruct the living on social conduct rather than to appease or request favors from the dead. The bond between the living and the dead is not severed after death.

In performing these rites, the basic lesson of gratitude is taught to the younger generations. The living pay respect and homage to the dead to “repay the debts” that they owe to the ones who brought them into the world and raised them to adulthood. They worship and honor their ancestors, and they will be worshipped and honored in turn by their descendants.

\textbf{Concepts of the Soul and the Afterlife}

Foundational to the cult of the ancestors is the doctrine of immortality of the soul. The Vietnamese concept of the human person maintains that humans are made of material and non-material substances. The material components of a body are flesh, muscle, bone, and the vital organs. But they cannot function without the immaterial driving force called \textit{khí}. \textit{Khí} (Chinese: \textit{qi}) is the Sino-Vietnamese equivalent of the Greek word \textit{pneuma}, the vital energy that indicates life. Originally a term to depict vapor or breath, \textit{khí} signifies the animating force that makes an animal or a person a living being. When \textit{khí} leaves the body at death the person becomes lifeless.

\textsuperscript{513} \textit{Analects}, 11: 5.
Another immaterial component of the human person is the pair of souls called hồn and phách (or viá). Humans are said to possess three hồn (the spiritual soul), and seven phách (the material soul) for a man but nine phách for a woman. The spiritual souls are said to originate in heaven and enter the body at birth; the material souls come from the earth and are generated during the development of the fetus. At death, the spiritual souls ascend to heaven and the material souls return to the earth.

Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism modified the basic belief in the immortality of the soul and the concept of an underworld to different degrees. Because of its focus on human affairs and conduct in this world Confucianism does not concern itself with what happens after death. It takes the existence of the world of spirits and the dead for granted but does not develop theories of the human soul or the afterlife. Neo-Confucians, who adhered to a materialist and rationalist view of a person, equated the souls (hồn and phách) with the vital force (khí), which perishes after death. When the vital energy gathers, there is life; when it disperses, there is death. The fate of humans is no different than that of animals. Confucian offerings to the dead are made not so much to sustain them as to honor them and keep their memory alive.

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514 The three hồn are the vegetative soul, the emotional soul and the rational soul. There is no explanation why there are seven phách for man and nine for woman. I think it might have some connection to different orifices of the body, traditionally seven for man (i.e., 2 eyes, 2 ears, nose, mouth, and the anus), and nine for woman (the seven plus the urinal orifice and the vagina). Alexandre de Rhodes has an interesting explanation for the number of phách or viá. He writes: “There are seven more spirits which also reside in the same body … They do not have names for each but collectively call them bảy viá [seven spirits]. When someone is suddenly frightened in an accident, they say he lost a spirit or mất viá. And since women are more easily frightened than men, they assign them nine spirits called chín viá. There is another reason to give women more viá; it is for their preservation for women often live longer than men, old ladies more than old men.” He also recounts how every year the Lord of Tonkin received another viá to replace his weary one. This event is celebrated in an elaborate ceremony. See De Rhodes, Histoire du Royaume, Chapter XXVI, 93-94.

With its concern for prolonging life Daoism has no theory about the human soul and its fate after death. Daoists seek immortality through the practice of alchemy and techniques of health preservation. Those who attain the secret of life are transformed into immortals (tiên) without ever going to another world. Although Daoists believe in a world of spirits and ghosts which one can control by amulets and magic, they have not developed a distinctive rite for the dead. Most Daoist worship derives from popular customs and in imitation of Buddhist rituals.

Buddhism also does not have a theory about the human soul. To Buddhists, the human person is made up of different aggregates that disintegrate after death, when the present life vanishes and people are reborn with new identities. Depending on their karma, or the merits of past deeds, they are reborn into one of the six paths that belong to the realm of desire (kāmadhātu): the world of the gods (deva), titans (asura), humans, animals, suffering ghosts (preta) and hell (naraka). According to Buddhist cosmology, if one practices Buddhism diligently one can be born into the higher realms of form (rūpadhātu) and formless (ārūpyadhātu).\footnote{Buddhist cosmology is quite complex. For an introduction to this subject, see Akira Sadakata, \textit{Buddhist Cosmology: Philosophy and Origin}, trans. Gaynor Sekimori (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co, 1997).} Eventually one will escape the cycle of birth and death altogether once one reaches nirvana. Strictly speaking the doctrine of transmigration does not concern itself with offerings to the dead. The dead and the living cannot influence one another; each has to live with his own karma.

Vietnamese Buddhists did not strictly follow this doctrine. Instead, they believed in the three realms of existence: paradise, earth, and hell. Paradise or “land of the
“Buddha” is the popular conception of Amida’s Pure Land where the soul enjoys a blessed afterlife with the bodhisattvas and Buddhist saints. The earth is the visible world of human beings and animals as well as invisible world of the spirits and ghosts. Hell is a place with multiple levels of imprisonment and punishment, governed by the Ten Kings of Hell. However, all three realms are only transient stages. There is no concept of a permanent heaven or hell similar to that of Christianity. When a person dies his spiritual soul (sometimes identified with the Buddha nature) can ascend to paradise with the aid of Buddhist rituals and prayers. The soul must be careful on its journey to the other world lest it get lost and fall into hell or be trapped in the world of animals or hungry ghosts. I will address this issue in more detail in a later section.

The Ancestral Rites in Practice

To the individual Vietnamese, deceased ancestors are not supernatural beings but familial spirits who continue to live and share in the joys and sorrows of the family. Through simple prayers the ancestors are informed of the happy occasions – marriage, childbirth, a new home, new business, passing a major exam, taking an office, to name a few – or of sad events – incurring a serious illness, losing property or the death of a member of the family. More solemn rituals take place at the family altar or in the ancestral hall on the eve of New Year and, in particular, on the anniversaries of the deaths of the parents and grandparents. No family member can be absent on these occasions. Such an offense may be liable to legal punishment.
On the day of the ceremony, before the assembled family, the head of the family enacts a carefully prescribed ritual. He puts on his best robes and lights the candles and lamps on the altar decorated with flowers and incense. He makes the food offering, pours the wine libations, says the prayers, and prostrates himself before the altar. The rest of the family follows suit, standing, kneeling, and bowing accordingly. Everyone present must endeavor to think that he or she is in the presence of the ancestors who have come to the altar to take part in the family banquet. Every step of the rites is performed with precision because the rites themselves embody the virtue of filial piety. Although the ancestors are invisible to their descendants they are not forgotten. They are to be remembered individually — at least back to five generations — before being honored collectively as the ancestors.

Traditional Funeral Rites and Memorials

The standard form of the ancestral rites was derived from Zhu Xi’s *Family Rituals*, or Văn Công Gia Lễ, a manual of Confucian ceremonies and etiquette, which was introduced to Vietnam in the fifteenth century. The scarcity of extant records does not permit us to examine the traditional cults of the ancestors prior to the Lê dynasty.

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518 Included in a standard 1415 textbook for the civil examination during early Ming dynasty — the *Great Compendium on Nature and Principle* (Xingli daquan) — Zhu Xi’s *Family Rituals* influenced the numerous books on family rituals in imperial China and also in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam as Neo-Confucian studies became popular there.
Imperial sources such as the Lê Codes and Lê Triều Hội Diện [Collection of Customs of the Lê Dynasty] mention the ancestor rites as they apply to the imperial household but do not contain much on the rites at the family level. The increasing need for proper ritual guidance at home prompted Vietnamese Confucians to compose their own ritual books modeled after Zhu Xi’s manual. These manuals of rites were briefer than the original and accommodated popular customs. One such manual is Thọ Mai Gia Lễ [Family Rituals by Thọ Mai] by the mandarin Hồ Sĩ Tân (1690-1738). Written for the use of his family, it nevertheless became a popular guide to the funeral practices in Tonkin up to the twentieth century. Vietnamese Buddhists also adapted Confucian rites and produced their own ritual book.

The author of ETR gives us a brief but fairly complete description of traditional Confucian funeral rites and memorials. His description is based on a number of guides, among which Gia Lễ Chính Hành [Correct Practices of the Family Rituals] and Gia Lễ Tiếp Kinh [Updated Family Rituals] are mentioned by name. The traditional funeral

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519 Hồ Sĩ Tân (ca. 1690-1738), style name Thọ Mai from Quỳnh Lưu District, passed his doctoral examination in 1721 and became a mandarin. His Family Rituals was partly based on a work by his grand uncle the mandarin Hồ Sỹ Duong (1621-1681) entitled Hồ Thượng Thự Gia Lễ [Family Rituals by the Great Official Ho]. Both Hồ Sỹ Duong and Hồ Sĩ Tân have been honored at the Temple of Culture in Hanoi.


521 This 1599 work by Peng Bin is cited by Patricia Ebrey as one of the adaptations of Zhu Xi’s Family Rituals. I do not know if the edition used by the author of the ETR is the same as this work or a Vietnamese work of the same title.

522 According to the information in Thọ Mai’s Family Rituals, the Confucian scholar Ngô Sĩ Bình of Tam Sơn commune in Đông Ngàn district composed and printed this book in 1707. An incomplete copy of the Family Rituals (catalogue number AM 572/MF 963) is preserved in the Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies in Hanoi.
rites involved a number of precise procedures performed according to the ritual manual. Every step was to be followed with utmost care. To give a reader a sense of Tonkinese eighteenth-century funeral practices, I am going to describe the traditional rituals for the dead using the information given in ETR and supplement them with data from Zhu Xi’s and Thọ Mai’s manuals wherever appropriate.523

**Before the Burial**

*The beginning of the end*: When an illness becomes acute, the dying person is moved to the main room and a three-yard long piece of white silk is placed on his chest. Everyone must be quiet awaiting his last breath, when *khí*, the vital energy, finally exits. Some Buddhists have a custom of inviting monks to recite the prayer “Protection for the Journey” (*kinh bảo đàng*) to guide the dying person on his journey to the netherworld. When death is confirmed, a piece of paper is placed on the face of the deceased. The body is “brought down to the ground” (*hạ thổ*) and laid there for a while before being brought back to the bed, as a way of saying that, coming from the earth, the body now returns to the earth.

*The rite of “calling the soul back”* (*phục hồn*): To prevent the deceased from becoming a wandering soul, “a family member [ordinarily the eldest son] climbs up on the roof of the house [facing the north] and calls out the name of the deceased [three

523 See also de Rhodes, *Histoire du Royaume de Tunquin*, Chapters XXIII and XXIV for a description of these rites in seventeenth-century Tonkin.
times] to invite him or her to return home.”<sup>524</sup> Holding an outer garment of the deceased, he shouts: “The three ṣôn and seven viá of my father (or nine viá of my mother)! Please come home.”<sup>525</sup> When finished, he rolls up the garment, comes down, and places it on the body. Then everyone may make gestures of mourning.

**Making the soul cloth:** As soon as the person is dead, the white silk cloth is removed from the chest and is knotted into a human figurine to make a “soul cloth” (ḥôn bach). A temporary home for the deceased, it is placed on a small table called the “soul seat” (linh tọa), where the soul will enjoy the oblation offered to it. From this moment on, the soul cloth is treated like the actual presence of the deceased until it is replaced after the burial by the “spirit tablet” (thân vị or thân chủ) to be worshipped in the family altar or at the ancestral hall.<sup>526</sup>

**Selecting the master of ceremonies and assistants:** The eldest son (if he does not survive, then his eldest son) is automatically established as the principal mourner (tang chủ). Several close male family members are chosen to plan and assist in the oftentimes elaborate and time-consuming funeral. The functions include those of the funeral director (hộ tang), the letter recorder (tư thư) and the gift recorder (tư hoá).

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<sup>524</sup> ETR, 77.

<sup>525</sup> Also called ṣuí viá in vernacular language, this practice is dated back to the Zhou period as recorded in the Record of Rites, Chapter “Conveyance of the Rites”: When a person dies, one of his relatives goes up on the roof and calls out his name: “So and so, come back.”

<sup>526</sup> Nowadays, both the soul cloth and the spirit tablet are replaced by a picture of the deceased.

<sup>527</sup> If the husband or father is alive at the time of the funeral of a wife or unmarried daughter, he takes the role of the presiding mourner. The wife of the deceased or the wife of the principal mourner can lead the mourning if there is no male principle mourner; otherwise she is the co-presiding mourner (phụ tang chủ).
Everyone alters his or her hair and clothes, and fasts, as signs of mourning. Death announcements are sent to relatives, colleagues and friends.

_Washing and dressing the body (mộc dực):_ The body is removed from the death bed and washed with water boiled with fragrant herbs. Finger and toe nails are cut. The hair is washed, dried, combed, and pulled up into a knot. Sons and daughters (or daughters-in-laws) should wash and enshroud the deceased themselves. In the meantime, the burial clothes are prepared and laid out on a table. These include a head wrap, ear plugs, eyes covers, face cover, hand restraints, a long garment, belt, gloves, shoes, and robe. In addition, there should be suitable undergarments, trousers and socks. “Then the body is shrouded and placed on a bed in the center of the hall.”

_Preparation of the coffin:_ The coffin should be made from good-quality wood, straight and with square angles, the head end large and the foot end small, spacious enough to hold the body. Several inches of ashes are poured into the coffin and a piece of paper placed on the ashes for padding. This is covered with a board with seven star-like holes resembling the Ursa Minor constellation (thất tinh), then a mattress, cushion, and pillow are placed inside the coffin. When everything is ready the body is transferred to the coffin. Before putting the body into the coffin, sometimes a ritual called “expelling the wood demon” (phạt mộc) is performed. Afterward, a “name banner” (minh tinh) is

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528 _ETR_, 77.

529 The ashes absorb the bodily secretions as the corpse decomposes. Rich families may substitute dry tea leaves for the ashes.

530 It is believed that since trees have live spirits inside them, when a tree is chopped down to make a coffin, an exorcism must be performed to “send the evil spirits off to their places and prevent them from harming the soul of the deceased.” After making the sacrifices to the various spirits, a monk or priest takes
made by writing the title, the family name, the posthumous name, and the social position of the deceased on a large red banner (e.g., the coffin of Mr A of such office), then hanging it on a pole to the left side of the coffin.\(^{531}\)

*The rite of “putting rice into the mouth” (phan hàm):* Before the coffin is closed a pinch of rice and three new coins are put into the mouth of the deceased. The master of ceremonies kneel in front of the body and pray: “Receive your food.” Then he stands up and put rice and money into the mouth of the deceased. “The first coin and rice goes to the left side of the mouth; the second coin and rice to the right side; and the third in the middle [on the tongue].”\(^{532}\) It is believed that “if this is done the soul will never be hungry.”\(^{533}\) Wealthy families substitute pearls and three pieces of gold for the rice and coins. The face is then covered, the shroud is placed on the body and the coffin is closed.

*Daily Rituals:* The mourners waited for three days for a return to life before declaring their loved one is gone forever. Thus, for the next three days food is ritually offered three times, in the morning, evening and mid-day (*tríeu điện, tích điện, thượng thực*). The set up is done as follows:

[In the morning] one sets out the ritual utensils [such as incense burners, incense box, cups, decanter, wash basins and towels, etc.] on the “soul seat” [the offering table] for the daily oblation. A “ritual chair” (ý) is placed at the center of the offering table. On the ritual chair are placed a knife and strikes at the coffin three times to expel the demons. See *ETR*, 189. This custom is not mentioned in the Zhu Xi’s or Thọ Mai’s rituals.

\(^{531}\) The size of the banner is specified according to the ranking of the public office that the deceased held. A high ranking officer, for example, might have his name banner of 9 thước (3.6 meters) long. Lower ranking has shorter banner. Commoner usually has a 5 thước (2 meters) banner.

\(^{532}\) *ETR*, 198.

\(^{533}\) Ibid. The author of the *ETR* sees this rite as Buddhist practice, but this is prescribed by Zhu Xi.
robe and a cap with the soul cloth inside. The oblation food is set out in front of the ritual chair. In front of the offering table is the incense table (huynh án)."

In a larger house, one may have set up a “soul bed” (linh sàng) on the east side of the coffin in addition to the “soul seat” for the daily rituals.

The rite of “putting on the mourning garments” (thành phục): The official mourning period begins on the fourth day. An oblation and a prayer are said before everyone dons their white mourning garments, which differ in quality and design according to the degree of mourning. The ritual books specify the style, material, and measurements for each type of mourning garment for male and female mourners, including head gear, long garments, trousers, shoes, and walking stick. Because these garments are public displays of the filial virtue wearing the correct garment at funeral and during the mourning period is a serious obligation.

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534 ETR, 77.

535 Every morning, the principal mourners bring water, a towel and a comb to the soul bed to “wake up” the deceased (who is supposed to reside in the soul cloth) for the morning hygiene. Then they carry the soul cloth on the ritual chair to the offering table to take the morning, mid-day and evening meals. At the end of the day, the ritual chair is carried back to the soul bed to rest. If there is no soul bed, the ritual chair stays on the soul seat, and the rituals are performed there. This custom re-enacts the daily activities of the deceased when he or she was alive.

536 There are at least five degrees of mourning and corresponding garments. The first type is called “untrimmed sackcloth” (trảm thôi), reserved for mourning the father and husband, or main-line grandson and his wife as double heirs for their grandfather; the mourners wear it for three years. The second type is “even sackcloth” (tề thôi), reserved for mourning the mother, main-line grandson and his wife as double heirs for their grandmother; the mourners also wear it for three years. A son of a single mother can wear the “untrimmed sackcloth” to mourn his mother. Other types of mourning garments are specified for mourning siblings and relatives. The “remembrance cloth” (cơ niên or mồ phục) entails one-year mourning; the “greater processed cloth” (đại công) nine-month; the “lesser processed cloth” (tiểu công) five-month; and the “fine hemp” (ty ma) a duration of three-month mourning.

537 Imperial regulations such as the Lê Codes specify the duration of mourning which is dependent on the degree of kinship with the deceased as well as the punishment for those who fail to observe the custom.
Besides wearing the customary mourning garments like those specified in the *Family Rituals*, some Buddhists cut their hair as an additional sign of mourning. The rite of “cutting hair” (*thế phát*) is performed by a monk or a priest. After saying a prayer, he takes a pair of scissors and cuts some hair of the mourners off the back, then in front to the eyes level. This practice is shunned by strict Confucians who believe that one should let the hair grow uncombed as a sign of mourning.

**The Burial**

*Opening the grave* (*khai huyệt*): According to custom the person should be buried within three months from the day of death. When a suitable burial place has been selected, the funeral director chooses a day to make offerings to the god of the earth (*hậu thổ*) before the attendants can dig the grave. On the night before the burial, an outdoor oblation is made to the spirits of the roads (*tế đạo lộ*) for a propitious funeral procession.

*Presenting to the ancestors* (*yết tổ*): “On the day of the burial, the soul cloth is first taken to the ancestral hall (*từ đường*). Because a person always informed the elders of his or her travels when alive, now the soul of the deceased must also go to the

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538 Most people were buried as soon as all the burial preparation was completed unless there was a grave reason to delay the burial (e.g., the children or close relatives were living far away; the deceased died away from home and needed to be transported back to his or her native place for burial; kings, nobilities, or famous persons who might require elaborate funerals that need longer preparation and mourning, etc.).

539 *ETR*, 80.
ancestral hall to greet them.” At the ancestral hall, the head of the clan announces to
the ancestors that the deceased will soon join them. Then the soul cloth is returned to the
soul seat again.

The rite of “moving the coffin” (chuyên cửu): At the proper time, the funeral
director summons the workers to tie the coffin on the catafalque (đại du) with its head to
the front. Then they rotate it around a turn as if the deceased is at the house one more
time before departure. A sending-away oblation (té chuyên cửu) is made before moving
the coffin out of the house. The soul cloth now is transferred to a “chariot of the soul”
(linh xa) which will precede the coffin in the funeral procession.

Purchase of a funeral house: The author of ETR mentions this custom, which
does not appear in Zhu Xi’s or Thọ Mai’s Family Rituals, as an act of filial piety. A life-
size and often decorated house made of paper is constructed and purchased to accompany
the deceased to the grave site. It is carried in front of the catafalque during the funeral
procession and burned after the burial.

Funeral procession: Before departing for the grave site oblations are made to the
spirit of the funeral carriage (dur thần) and the spirit of the road, praying for a safe
journey that will not be disturbed by demons. The order of procession is as follows: the
announcers proceed first, followed by the carriers of the incense burner, the name banner,
the soul carriage, the food carriage, the underworld furnishings, and the catafalque. The
principal mourners walk behind the coffin wailing, followed by relatives and guests. If

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540 ETR, 77. Cf. Analects, 4:19: “While father and mother are alive, a good son does not wander far afield; or if he does so, goes only when he said he was going.”

541 ETR, 78.
the coffin is carried by boat, an oblation is made to the spirit of river. An oblation is made whenever the procession rests during the journey. Another oblation is made to the spirits guarding the roads at any three-way crossroads.

At the grave site: The name banner is spread on the casket before it is lowered into the grave. When the coffin is halfway down into the grave, an offering is made to the god of the earth on the right side of the grave. Another offering is made after covering the grave with dirt.

The rite of “inscribing the tablet” (đê chú): A wooden tablet, a pen, and ink are placed on a table next to the grave. After washing his hand and offering incense, the ritualist writes the deceased’s posthumous name, title and rank in society on the front side of the tablet, and the dates of birth and death on the reverse side. Then the tablet is placed on the altar with the soul cloth behind it, and an oblation is made. During the offering, a prayer is said to the soul, asking it to leave the soul cloth and come into the spirit tablet. Then the spirit tablet is carried home.

After the burial

The rite of “pacifying the soul” (tế ngu): The first three days after burial is considered a sacred time. The mourners visit the grave site twice a day in the morning.

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542 This allowed the coffin carriers and the mourners to rest and take refreshment on the way, since the walk to the burial site was often long.

543 ETR, 79.

544 ETR, 80.

545 Ibid.
and the evening. An oblation called ngu is made each day during these three days to ensure that the deceased will be comfortable in his or her new environment. It is believed that “although the body is already resting in the ground, the soul is still wandering around trying to find its home. Thus one must plan to welcome the soul to its new residence in the spirit tablet by making the offerings called ‘pacifying the soul.’”

The author of ETR gives a fairly detailed description of the rite:

When performing the rite of “pacifying the soul,” the ritualist first calls out: “Let the spirit descend” (giáng thần). Then, as he calls out: “Pour the wine” (châm t퀴), the eldest son acting as the master of the ceremonies offers wine libation on the soul table, and takes a cup of wine and pours it on the “mat of reeds” (sa mao), then he places cups of wine on the soul table. The same procedure is repeated during the other two rounds of libations. During the second round of libation or “second offering” (á hiện lề), a person kneels in front of the incense table to recite the prayer, calling the names of the descendants who make the food offering, and then asking the soul to enjoy the food offering by calling out: “May you enjoy it!” (thượng hưởng). The third round of libation is called “final offering” (thang hiện lề). More wine is poured into the cups for the fourth round of libation called “consummation of the food” (hựu thực) to pour more wine into the cups. Next, when the ritualist shouts: “Master of ceremonies, please come forward!” (chủ nhân dĩ hạ giai xuất), the male presiding mourner comes out and stands to the east of the altar facing west [with other men behind him in rows], the female presiding mourner stands to the west facing east [with other women behind her in rows]. Then the ritualist calls out: “Close the door” (hạp môn) and they close the door of the altar. A curtain is lowered if there is no door. Then the ritualist makes a “coughing sound” (hi hâm) to signal a time for silence while the soul enjoys the food and wine offerings privately. After three more coughs, the ritualist goes to the door or the curtain and reopens it. Then he announces: “Serve the tea” (dẫn trà) to indicate that after eating the meal, the soul

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546 Léopold Cadière reports that the rite of pacifying the soul (té ngu) is performed on the hundredth day after death (‘La famille et la religion annamites” in Croyances et pratiques religieuse, Vol. 1: 37). This contradicts both Zhu Xi’s and Thọ Mai’s family rituals which specify the rite to be done in the three days after burial. Is it a possibility that there is another “pacifying the soul” after three months? Or might he have confused the rite “cessation of wailing” (tóň khóa) with té ngu?

547 ETR, 81.
now is taking tea. When everything is finished, the ritualist calls out: “The offering is completed” (lễ thành) to indicate the oblation is done. Then he calls out: “Farewell to the spirit” (từ thần) to indicate that the soul is ready to depart. At that moment, the eldest son and all those relatives who are there weep aloud and prostrate themselves twice, to thank the deceased for having accepted the offering and to bid farewell to the soul. After the rite of “pacification,” the soul cloth is buried in a clean plot of land.548

Mourning period: From that time on, food oblations are made to the spirit tablet. The “morning oblation” (triêu điện) must be offered on the new and full moon for the next three months. Buddhists make additional offerings on the seventh, thirtieth, and fiftieth days after death.549 At the end of the 100th day of mourning, there is an oblation called “cessation of wailing” (tốt khóc). From this day forward, memorial sacrifices replace the funerary sacrifices during the seasonal rituals like the New Year, the Clear and Bright festival (thanh minh). The ETR describes:

In addition, an oblation called hè is offered on the fourteenth day of the fourth month, the fifteenth of the fifth month, and the sixteenth of the sixth month. On the full moon of the seventh months for the following two years, an oblation called bôi is offered during the Middle Period festival (trung nguyên).550 On the first anniversary of the death, a feast called “small memorial” (tiểu tường) is celebrated; on the second anniversary, the “great memorial” (dại tường). After 27 months, a ceremony called the rite of đàm is performed to mark the end of the mourning period. From then on, a memorial feast called giỗ or đôi ky is celebrated on the anniversary of the death.551

548 ETR, 81-82.

549 The first-week, first-month, and seven-week memorial offerings were influenced by Buddhist practices. Zhu Xi’s and other books of Family Rituals do not mention this custom.

550 Old lunar calendars divide the year into three periods: the first month is called Upper Period (thượng nguyên), the seventh month is called Middle Period (trung nguyên) and the tenth month is called Lower Period ( hạ nguyên).

551 ETR, 82-83.
Veneration of the ancestors: Many large families built an ancestral hall (từ đường) to house the spirit tablets of the ancestors up to five generations. Once an ancestor has passed the fifth generation, his or her spirit tablet is removed from the altar, and the memorial feast is no longer required for that ancestor. Regular worship of ancestors occurs in these halls at various times of the year. The spirit tablets of one’s immediate parents and paternal grandparents are usually kept on the family altar. The eldest son of the main line is charged with performing sacrifices to all direct ancestors as well as care of their tombs and the ancestral hall. A special plot of land is set aside as the inheritance field (hương hoá) to provide the means for the eldest son (and his main-line descendants) to carry out these duties. ETR notes that “in the case of the proto-ancestor, his descendants must worship him forever without ever removing his tablets.”

Other Customs Associated with the Funeral Practices

In writing these manuals, Zhu Xi and other Confucian authors aimed to promote Confucian values and practices, and tried to combat the practice of Buddhist or Daoist rites. Although the Confucian literati wanted to maintain time-honored customs and traditions, popular religiosity added other customs to the rites for the dead. Because most of these customs were of late origin, particularly from the Tang period, they were viewed by the literati as “superstitious” and thus did not appear in any Confucian ritual manual.

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552 ETR, 88.
Since some of these were quite popular in Tonkin and discussed by the author of the *ETR*, they are included here.

**Exhumation and Reburial**

Three years after burial the corpse is exhumed, the bones are cleaned and then reburied in a new vault. There are many reasons for this practice: reburial in the case of a poor or haphazard one necessitated by plague or war; reburial in the native place of an ancestor buried away from home; burial in a more auspicious plot for those whose belief in geomancy suggested a better future for the living if ancestors were reburied there; to assuage ancestral displeasure as interpreted through illness or misfortune striking the family. Not everyone could afford to follow this custom of reburial however, especially if there was no discernible trouble in the household. Although not discussed in *ETR*, the custom was widely practiced in many regions of Tonkin.\(^{553}\) The custom of reburial is linked closely with the practice of geomantic divination, which is discussed below.

\(^{553}\) Alexandre de Rhodes describes this practice in his *Histoire du royaume*, Chapter XXIII, 83-84. The custom is still being practiced today, although in much more limited circumstances. After my grandfather died in Saigon in 1974, he was exhumed and brought back to his native village in North Vietnam, for a reburial in 1980. As recently as 2008, an aunt of mine died in Hanoi and was buried temporarily in a cemetery in view of an eventual relocation to a “better spot” within three to five years.
**Geomantic Divination**

Chinese geomancy is the art of spatial arrangement based on the theories of yin-yang, the five elements and observations of the features of the land and course of water in order to find a location with a high concentration of vital energy (*khí*). It is believed that an auspicious plot can bring vital energy to benefit the person who lives there, or their descendants if an ancestor is buried there. In pre-modern Vietnam, almost every construction project of importance — mansions, temples, or palaces — was done according to geomantic principles. Thus people search for an auspicious burial plot for their ancestors because they believe that by doing so, they would have wealth, honor, many children, good fortune and longevity. The search was often conducted with the help of *thầy địa lý* [geomancer]

The art of geomancy originated among the non-Confucian schools of the late Zhou period and was later on adopted by religious Daoism. A school of diviners and geomancers existed during the Han dynasty, although not much is known about them. According to the author of the *ETR*, while the practice originated with Kan Xing in the fifth century, Liao Yu of the Tang dynasty was the first to compose geomantic manuals. Vietnamese historical sources mentioned the recourse to geomancy by Chinese governors during the times of Chinese occupation, such as Gao Pian of the Tang dynasty or Huang

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554 Geomantic divination or Chinese geomancy is a general term for what the Chinese call *feng shui* [wind and water] and the Vietnamese call *địa lý* [terrestrial measurement]. Unlike the *feng shui* masters, who concern themselves with the spatial arts of arrangements in the world of the living (*yang*) and the dead (*yin*), Vietnamese masters of *địa lý* focus their attention on finding an auspicious plot for burial.

Fu of the Ming dynasty. Vietnamese geomancers trace the origin of their esoteric art to two seventeenth-century scholars, Nguyễn Đức Huyền and Hòa Chính. The first was better known as Master Tà Ao, a name taken from his village. After learning from the best geomancers in China, he helped to spread the art in Tonkin by composing a manual of geomantic divination bearing his name, the Tà Ao Địa Lý [Geomancy by Tà Ao].

In practice, the geomancer’s main duty is to assist the family in finding the right time or place to bury their ancestors. The beneficent vital energy is said to be in the direction of the “green dragon,” thus the whole process is to search for the “dragon vein” and follow it to the correct spot. Land features are classified according to the principle of Five Elements and forms of animals. An auspicious plot of land, according to geomantic principles should have the following features:

The left side of the plot should have a feature called the green dragon (thanh long); on the right, the white tiger (bạch hổ); in the front, an open space (minh đường); and in the back, a little hill (huyền vũ). The center is the auspicious spot for burial to gain prosperity. The left side of the plot should face east and the right side, west; the front should face the south with the north at the back.

The different schools of geomancy can be divided into three main branches: those specializing in calculating the auspicious time based on astrology; those specializing in identifying features of the land and bodies of water; and those specializing in navigating a divination compass. A good master is said to know all three branches. Not everyone could master this esoteric and difficult art, and charlatanry was rampant. Finally, it is

556 Phan Kế Bình, Phong Tục Việt Nam, Part III, Chapter XXII, 279-80.

557 ETR, 91.
believed that only a virtuous person can benefit from geomancy. Thus it is said: “accumulate your good merits before searching for the dragon’s vein”. 558

_Burning of Joss Paper_

Because of the belief that the deceased still need material assistance in the netherworld, money and other paper goods are sent to them through burning at the grave site or at home during holidays and memorial services. They will be transformed into real money and objects for the dead to use in the afterlife. Burning spirit money and other paper objects is an expression of honoring and caring for the ancestors in the afterlife, guaranteeing their well-being and positive disposition toward the living. Spirit money or joss paper (vàng mạ) is also burned during a temple service so as to procure a favor from the spirit. The ritual is also used to pay the ancestor’s spiritual debts thus allowing them to be released from the underworld prison, and for Buddhists, speeding their way to the next life.

This custom had a long history in China. Like other ancient cultures the Chinese of the Zhou period had a custom of burying goods and mock money with the dead. Emperor Qin Shihuang, for example, had a large terra-cotta army consisting of thousands of soldiers, officers, horses, weapons and carriages buried in plots around his mausoleum. Following the invention of paper, people realized that paper would make a cheaper substitute for real or mock objects made out of other materials. Wang Yu of the Tang dynasty was credited with originating the use of paper money for imperial sacrifice. The

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558 Phan Kế Bính, 280-81.
custom has prevailed among the Chinese and Vietnamese since then. According to the author of _ETR_, the Đồng Hồ village in the east side of Thăng Long has been the manufacturing center of joss paper and paper objects since the time of the Lý dynasty.\(^{559}\)

The author observes that

> [W]hen wealthy people give their parents a proper funeral, they often have a large and decorated paper mausoleum made for them, and later burn it after the burial. On the seventh month, when they have a ceremony performed for the soul, they also have cloth and sacrificial animals made out of paper, and these are burned after the ceremony. Furthermore, every time a sacrifice is made, paper money and paper ingots of silver and gold are burned.\(^{560}\)

The burning of joss paper, according to the author, often appears in Buddhist funeral and memorial services. Not originally a Buddhist custom, it has been nevertheless widely practiced by Vietnamese Buddhists in Tonkin, especially during the feast of Ulambana, the Buddhist “Day of the Dead.”

**Appeasing the Wandering Souls**

According to traditional beliefs, a person who dies without an heir may turn into a lost soul if there is no one making offerings to him or her. Orphaned spirits lacking a family to offer sacrifices may become malicious. Such unhappy spirits cannot simply be ignored. Offerings for these destitute beings are made by cooking rice broth on the first and full moon, then sprinkling it on leaves for the soul to consume.\(^{561}\) There are two

\(^{559}\) _ETR_, 191.

\(^{560}\) Ibid.

\(^{561}\) According to popular beliefs, “these wandering souls have skinny legs and thin necks, and therefore cannot walk firmly on the ground but perch on tree branches [like birds]. And since they cannot eat rice (or
explanations for this custom: People extend compassion to the abandoned souls that beg from the living, or they might fear that “these wandering souls will rob the food offered to the ancestors, so they do this to ward them off.” The appeasing of the lost souls is particularly done on the full moon of the seven month, popularly known as “the day of the dead.” On this day, it is believed that all souls are allowed back to this world to be with their families. The hungry ghosts have a day off to wander the earth.

Popular Buddhism and the Afterlife

The author of ETR discusses features of Buddhism as it was practiced in the eighteenth-century Tonkin. Readers who are familiar with standard accounts of Buddhist beliefs and practices might wonder about these descriptions. Some are recognized as Buddhist, whereas others were a mixture of Daoist or folk beliefs. In the absence of other sources to the contrary, however, the descriptions regarding the Buddhist approach to the afterlife can be seen as a window onto folk Buddhism in Tonkin.

solid food), people cook rice porridge and sprinkle the soup on the leaves that for them to consume.” ETR, 202.

562 ETR, 203.
The Doctrine of Transmigration

One of the major features of the Buddhist teachings on death and dying is the doctrine of transmigration, or what is popularly called “rebirth” (luân hồi). Buddhism teaches that after death, people journey on one of the six paths of rebirth (lục đạo). Those who accumulated merit will be reborn in the worlds of the gods, the titans, or humans. Those with bad karma will be reborn as animals, suffering ghosts, or, worst of all, hell-beings. The latter are called the three wicked paths (tam đồ ác lộ). Vietnamese Buddhists believe that if one kills an animal, bird or sea creature, “one will become the same creature in the next life and will be killed by another in turn. Anyone who does not kill will die only once and not have to repeat the cycle of birth and death, or at the least, the person will have accrued enough merit to be reborn as a human rather than an animal.” This explanation is given to deter the killing of animals and to foster vegetarianism. On the surface, the doctrine of transmigration contradicts the Confucian filial sense and seems to go against the practice of ancestor worship. If one is to be reborn as another person or other life form, the familial connection between generations is severed, making the practice of ancestor worship useless. This has been a point of doctrinal contention between Buddhism and Confucianism for centuries. ETR simply repeats the standard Confucian arguments against this doctrine and brands it as

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564 ETR, 179.
ridiculous, inconsistent, and unfilial, calling it a “false and empty teaching that Buddhism has made up.”

Another version of rebirth was conceived by the followers of the “Inner Way” (nội đạo), a Daoist-Buddhist sect in Tonkin, a group that might include the authors of the esoteric “Buddhist” manuals called Bí Chi [Esoteric Branches] and Tâm Đăng [Lamp of the Mind] which I discussed in Chapter 5. This group interpreted the teachings on rebirth or “returning in cycle” (luân hồi) in physiological terms. According to ETR, the Buddhist teaching of the emptiness of life, expressed in the phrase “life comes, at death it is gone; then [at birth] life comes again,” reflects the natural phenomenon of how the soul comes into the body and animates it. The book explains the meaning of the phrase as follows:

When people are conceived in their mother’s womb, life first comes to the fontanel on top of the head; from there it gradually comes downward through the body all the way to the two feet. When people die, life is first gone from the two feet and gradually upward through the body all the way until it reaches the fontanel on the head, which is called the “outer hollow of heavenly sea” (thiên hải ngoại không). Because of this phenomenon, the Buddhist phrase “life is empty, death is also empty” actually means life enters the body through the “hollow space” (fontanel) at birth, and exits it at death. That cycle of coming and going is called “returning in cycle.”

According to this school, the transmigration or rebirth in another realm after death is only a metaphor rather than a reality.

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565 ETR, 182.

566 ETR, 174.
Buddhist Hell

Before they can be reborn into another form of being, wicked people with bad karma must undergo punishment in a place of torment called “hell,” or literally “terrestrial prison” (địa ngục). It is worth noting that prior to the seventh century, when Buddhism achieved solid ground among the people, the concept of “hell” as the place of punishment for the various sins one committed during one’s lifetime did not exist in China. In the older view, the world of the dead or âm phủ was very much like this world, where both joy and suffering co-exist. Medieval Chinese Buddhist rites for the dead gave rise to the popular concept of hell. In Chinese Buddhism, hell is a system of multi-level prisons, governed by the ten kings, in which the deceased undergo a trial administered by one of these kings every seventh day after death. The soul is sent to the next level after each trial until the seventh week. Although the concept of 49 days of trial and punishment also existed in other Mahayana Buddhist tradition, the next three levels of trial were a Chinese invention to accord with their traditional memorial services. The eighth trial will begin at the 100th day after death, the ninth in the first month after the first year, and the tenth during the third year. The soul of the deceased is imprisoned in one of many prisons of hell between trials and suffers the appropriate punishment for his transgressions. The concept of a dreadful place of afterlife punishment captured popular imagination and served as a powerful motive for people to do good and avoid evil. This

hell, however, is a temporary place of trial and punishment analogous to the Catholic concept of purgatory. But it is not a place without hope. People can pray to a compassionate bodhisattva called Dizang or Ksitigarbha who could help their loved ones to evade the trials of the ten kings.\(^{568}\)

Vietnamese Buddhism inherited this concept of hell from the Chinese and also its practice of seven-week sacrifices. On the seventh day of each week after death, the family asks Buddhist monks to perform prayer services and make offerings to spirits to help “speeding” their loved ones through the underworld trials. Devout Buddhists also follow a calendar to pray for a particular buddha or bodhisattva on a different day of the month to redeem their ancestors from suffering. On the specified day, the person must abstain from meat and recite the name of the buddha or bodhisattva a thousand times. The book *Lamp of the Mind* gives a list of these days. For example, on the first day one prays “Namo [homage to] Dīpankara Buddha”; on the full moon: “Namo Amitābha Buddha”; on the thirtieth day: “Namo Śākyamuni Buddha,” and so forth. For the living, this practice of reciting the name of the Buddha is also a means to insure for themselves a safe journey to the “Buddha’s land” after death.

**The Rites of “Breaking the Prison”**

During the three years of mourning, Buddhists often invite monks to their home to perform a rite of atonement called “breaking the prison” (*phá ngục*) to release the soul from hell. Although hell in Buddhism is a temporary stage of existence, still it is full

\(^{568}\) Teiser, *Scripture on the Ten Kings*, 1-6.
enough of suffering that one wishes to release beloved ancestors from it and speed the
rebirth process. The rite is performed as follows:

After days of abstaining from meat, reciting the sutras and making
offerings to atone for the bad karma of their ancestors, on the last day the
monks would perform the rites of “breaking the prison.” On that day, four
[bamboo] poles are planted in the house arranged into a square. Then
paper is used to cover the structure like a box. Four gates are drawn on
four sides, with one gate on the middle of the top to resemble a prison cell.
Then the chief monk puts on his ceremonial robe and cap and solemnly
offers sacrifices to the Underworld Kings of Ten Palaces and the ten lords
who govern the realm of the dead. He also sacrifices to Ksitigarbha (nguc
tăng vương)\(^{569}\) and to the five kings who guard the five doors (the Green
King, the eastern door; the White King, the western door; the Red King,
the southern door; the Black King, the northern door; and the Yellow
King, the central [or top] door.) Before making their sacrifices, the monks
walk in procession three times around the mock prison, chanting the sutras
and sprinkling holy water as they walk. After making the sacrifices, the
chief monk throws two coins for a positive sign that their offerings and
prayers have been accepted by the spirits. Then he takes a walking stick
and breaks open the paper gates to release the deceased’s soul from
prison.\(^{570}\)

The Buddha’s Land

Vietnamese Buddhists also believe in a Buddhist paradise, called the “Pure Land”
(tịnh thọ) or “the Buddha’s land.” This is the “land of bliss” or sukhāvatī mentioned in
the scriptures of Pure Land Buddhism.\(^{571}\) The concept is rooted in the Mahayana idea of

\(^{569}\) Ksitigarbha, known in Chinese as the “King of the Earth Treasure” (Dizang wang) is a Buddha of the
underworld. On the Chinese understanding of this Buddha, see Henri Doré, Research into Chinese

\(^{570}\) ETR, 195-96.

\(^{571}\) Scriptural authority for the Pure Land is found in the Larger and Smaller Pure Land Sutras (Sukhāvatī-
vyuha sūtras) of which Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese versions are available. There is also a third scriptural
source, the Meditation on Amida Sutra (Āmitāyurdvīpākā sūtra), but it is less authoritative since it lacks the
Sanskrit or Tibetan equivalents and does not appear until the fifth century. For an English translation of
these sutras, see Hisao Inagaki, The Three Pure Land Sutras: A Study and Translation from Chinese
(Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1995).
a Buddha field (*buddhaksetra*) that is formed through the merits of high-level buddhas and bodhisattvas. According to the *Larger Pure Land sutra*, the monk Dharmakara vowed to save all beings in a pure Buddha land. He determined to use his stored merits from many aeons (*kalpas*) and his meditative powers of image projection to create a Pure Land. His vows described the perfections of that land, the beings in it, and the methods by which people could reach his land. At the completion of his endeavors, Dharmakara became the ruler of a Buddha field called “the land of bliss.” He became known as the “Buddha of limitless life” (*Amitāyus*) and the “Buddha of limitless light” (*Amitābha*), both of which are reflected in the abbreviated form Amida Buddha. The Pure Land of Amida is another realm of existence, an alternative to the three worlds of desire, form, and formless of Indian Buddhism.

For the common Buddhists in Vietnam, the goal is to reach this Buddha’s land after death. One does so by diligently meditating or reciting the name of Amida, hundreds or thousands of times each day, with the aid of a rosary-like ring of wooden beads. Amida promises to deliver his devout followers, protect them from falling into the three wicked ways, and bring them to his land for a blissful afterlife.

**Journey to the Buddha’s land**

According to the book *Bí Chi* cited by the author of *ETR*, the afterlife journey to the Buddha’s land is long and arduous. A monk helps the dying get oriented by reciting the prayer “Protection for the Journey” (*bao đăng*) when a person is about to die. First he
calls the soul to exit the body through the fontanel; otherwise it cannot begin the journey.

When the soul travels in the netherworld, it should identify itself as a child of the Buddha. The soul needs to trust in the power of the Buddha to lead it away from hell and to the Buddha’s land. If the soul does not follow the guidance, it will end up in the three wicked worlds. If the soul wrongly follows the evil path, it will suffer hunger and thirst, and its descendants will also suffer a great deal.

The prayer “Protection for the Journey” is a guided journey to the after life. Since it gives us a description of the journey, it is worthy to be quoted here:

[I]n the netherworld, the soul must first cross the Âm Không Bridge on the way to Thanh Bình. Then the soul goes to the Hoàng Tuyền Mountain, where it will find a well and a tall coconut tree. Thousands and thousands of people are walking in that area. There, the soul will encounter General Gió Xá Tặc Lộ who guards the place. Upon meeting him, the soul must show him its permit to enter.

After passing the checkpoint, the soul proceeds to the Ái Hà River, to a ferry station named Tự Nhiên, where General Tô Giang is in charge. Upon meeting him, the soul must show its permit again to pass through. Then the soul may see a copper boat with silver paddles, but must not get on this boat for it is the wrong one. When the soul sees a golden boat with golden paddles, it must try to get on that boat. Then the soul asks: “Who is Trương Chiên, the ferry man? Will you take me to the other side?” And the ferry man will ask back: “Who is it that knows my name?” Then the soul must show its permit again. Upon seeing this permit, the ferry man will carry the soul on the boat to the other bank of the river. After disembarking, the soul goes straight ahead about a mile. When arriving at a sand dune named Tràng Sa, the soul will see a crossroad. There is a bridge made of copper pillars and iron boards named Âm Không. The soul should take a rest there. If hungry the soul can take out its prepared food and eat.

After resting a bit, the soul should continue its journey. Never travel on the eastern road, for the east is guarded by the large dog Phi Liêm. Never travel on the southern road, for the south is guarded by the spirit Hoả Lộ, who can set people on fire. Never travel on the northern road, for the north has a wrong path to the three hells. The soul should travel on the southwestern road, for the southwest is the silver road, which
is the religious path. Travelling on the silver road, the soul does not need to go around, carry a torch or make a bridge.

The soul goes for about a day journey to the base of a mountain that displays three words “Phổ Đà Sơn” [Mount Pokatala] where there are nine types of gem-like lotus flowers. In this place, saints and bodhisattvas recite the name of of Amitābha Buddha. The soul bows to them and says: “My name is such and such. I was born in the other world, and now after death, I have arrived in this realm. I was ignorant and did not know the dharma. Fortunately, I met an enlightened master and took refuge in the Three Jewels, reciting the sutras devoutly. After death I received a certificate of passage thanks to the Buddhist merit.” Then the soul kneels down, folds his hands and starts confessing his true nature. Then Amitābha Buddha and the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta will appear to greet the soul while he recites: “Homage to the Western Bliss Paradise, where there are countless realms; where there are numerous monks of the same name and the same title the ‘great compassionate accompaniers.’ Praise to Amitābha Buddha.”

**A Christian Interpretation of the Cult of the Ancestors**

The main objection of the author of *ETR* concerning the traditional funeral rites and memorial services was the food oblation. He considered any offering to the dead an act of ignorance and a mockery of true filial piety. The dead now belong to the spiritual world and they no longer need material sustenance. His view was expressed in the following comment:

People make such offerings to their parents and ancestors because they believe that the souls of their ancestors reside in the soul cloth or the spirit tablet to enjoy the food offerings. However, it is impossible for the deceased to return to consume the food and wine offerings of their descendants. Food and drink are sustenance for the bodies of the living.

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572 The residence of Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva.

573 *ETR*, 184-86.
But since the souls of the dead have already left their bodies, they have no bodies to be sustained. The human soul has a spiritual character; it is the only spiritual being among creatures; it does not depend on the body to be alive but has a life of its own. Therefore, when it leaves the body, the soul does not need food and drink as the living person does.\textsuperscript{574}

The dualistic view of the body and soul was further explained:

Moreover, when the soul is still one with the body, it does not need food to sustain itself; food is needed only to sustain the life of the body. And if the soul needs food to sustain itself, it must have food twice a day. If the soul is offered food only once a year on its memorial feast, how can it sustain itself? The dead body does not need food any more. So when one offers to the soul the food of the body, one is mocking the soul, for the soul does not eat and drink. Such an act is merely mocking the soul, making it angry and sad. Those who make offerings to their ancestors, therefore, are not filial to them but are truly un filial. All the foods offered are for the living people to eat; the soul does not consume them at all. Alas, those who make the offerings are profoundly ignorant. If the soul consumes the offerings, why does the amount of food remain the same, why does it not diminish at all? Even if the soul consumes only the essence of the offering, why do the offered foods remain tasty and nourishing? This can only mean that the soul does not return to enjoy the food offerings at all.\textsuperscript{575}

The author of \textit{ETR} was well aware of the emphasis on filial piety among Vietnamese. In his view people put filial piety in the wrong place for the wrong reason.

By making offerings to ancestors for the purpose that the deceased can bring material benefits to the living, the latter have erred greatly:

It is the duty of the living to help the dead, not the dead to help the living. The duty of the descendants to have a solemn funeral for their ancestors is to repay the filial debt to those who gave birth to them; this is a great debt that no one can ever repay sufficiently. If they believe that by doing this

\textsuperscript{574} \textit{ETR}, 83.

\textsuperscript{575} \textit{ETR}, 83-4.
their ancestors will repay them with richness, honor, and longevity, they are gravely mistaken.\textsuperscript{576}

Our author’s comment on ancestral sacrifices echoes a view of the seventeenth-century Jesuit missionary Alexandre de Rhodes. In his memoir on Tonkin, de Rhodes discussed the memorial banquets that he attended on several occasions.\textsuperscript{577} While admiring Vietnamese piety toward the ancestors, de Rhodes pointed out three “gross errors” in this practice, which according to him, led to “superstition.” The first error is the “belief that the souls of the deceased parents can freely come and go as they please or when invited, not knowing that there are permanent barriers separating them from us.”\textsuperscript{578} The second is the “foolish supposition that the deceased also can consume meat and wine at our banquet.”\textsuperscript{579} The third, a “more absurd error than the other two,” presumes that “life, health, the well-being of the family and all the material prosperity of the household depend on their deceased parents.”\textsuperscript{580}

**Christian Concept of the Human Person**

The Christian objection to ancestral sacrifices results from a different concept of the human person and the belief in the afterlife. Christians believe that the soul faces judgment immediately after death. Depending on its merit or sin, it will go to heaven, 

\textsuperscript{576} ETR, 90.

\textsuperscript{577} De Rhodes, *Histoire du Royaume*, Chapter XXIV, pp. 84-85.

\textsuperscript{578} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{579} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{580} Ibid.
where the soul enjoys the presence of God, or hell, the eternal punishment for the unrepentant. Catholic theology also speaks of an intermediate state between heaven and hell: a temporary place or stage of purification called purgatory, reserved for those who had not accumulated enough merit to enter heaven. In addition, medieval Catholic doctrine included a permanent state of bliss called “limbo,” where the unbaptized infants (and good pagans) lived without suffering but also without the joy of being with God.581

The realms of heaven, hell, purgatory (and limbo) are considered to be permanently separated from this world. There is no communication across worlds, except through prayer. Catholics believe that the best way to remember and honor their ancestors is by praying for them and performing acts of charity on their behalf, so that they may enjoy everlasting life. Once they get to heaven, they in turn will pray for the living. This view is expressed in the comment by the Christian Scholar in ETR:

However, those practices do not benefit the ancestors, because as living souls, they have been assigned by the Lord of Heaven to live in a place of reward or punishment where they cannot return to their earthly home. If they are still in purgatory, we ask the priest to offer Masses for them. We gather the relatives to pray for them so that the souls of our ancestors soon go up to paradise to enjoy eternal blessings. These are the cultic practices that bring benefits to the ancestors. Why do people not bring real benefits to the soul but spend money on these rituals in order to be praised as filial? These practices are foolish and useless. Moreover, taking the sustenance of the body and offering it to the soul is a mockery; those who do so are truly unfilial.582

581 The teaching on limbo is a theological solution for the problem that the infants cannot be condemned to hell because they have not sinned but they cannot enter heaven because they had not been baptized. Some theologians extended limbo for “good” pagans, who through no fault of their own did not receive baptism, the necessary condition to enter heaven according to Christian theology. This teaching was discontinued after 1965.

582 ETR, 89.
For the Christian Scholar, true filial piety toward the ancestors must bring real benefits to them rather than empty rituals.

There are Confucians who would agree with the Christian position. Many Confucians do not believe that the dead actually can come back to this world and eat the offered foods but they consider it a significant moral act that forms a basic attitude of gratitude toward one’s family (and by extension to the country). In the words of the Confucian Scholar, we read:

Among the Confucian scholars, there also are some who think that offering food to parents is pointless. In the Classic of Odes, it is written in a song of Zhou: “After one’s parents pass away, one can no longer see their faces, no longer hear their voices. Even if one has delicious food and good clothes, one cannot provide them with these things.” This is a useless and wasteful practice, for the many offerings are costly and the soul cannot enjoy them at all. Moreover, it is written in the Analects: “Sacrifice as if [it is] present, sacrifice to the spirit as if the spirit is present.” Hence, it is not that we believe the spirit of the dead is present at the sacrifice, but we act as if it is present there.583

An example from Vietnamese history can illustrate this point. In the late eighteenth century, Cochinchina felt into the hands of the Tây Sơn who drove the Nguyễn into exile. While on the run, Lord Nguyễn Phúc-Ánh was befriended by the bishop of Cochinchina, Msgr. Pigneau de Béhaine. Although favorably disposed toward Christianity, he explained to Pigneau de Béhaine that he could not convert to Christianity because it means to abandon ancestor worship:

I know that my ancestors are no longer with me. I also know that whatever I do for them (e.g., ritual worship) does not really benefit either them or me. But [I have to perform these rites because] I want to show everyone that I do not forget my ancestors, and I want to demonstrate a

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583 ETR, 84-5.
good example of filial piety to my subjects .... In my view, there is no other real obstacle to prevent my whole kingdom from converting to Christianity .... I have prohibited acts of sorcery and divination; I wholly consider the cult of the spirits wrong and ridiculous. But I have determined to keep ancestor worship for the reasons above, because I consider it to be one of the most essential foundations of our moral formation.  

Catholics and the Cult of the Ancestors in Practice

Despite the differences in the Christian and traditional views on the concepts of the human person and the afterlife, Catholic missionaries could not ignore the venerable custom of honoring the ancestors among the Vietnamese. The Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century had found creative ways to modify traditional funeral rites and honor the ancestors. In general they accepted most of the Confucian rites except acts which were considered superstitious and idolatrous, such as burning of joss papers and other objects, making food and wine oblations, praying to the various spirits during the funeral procession or making offerings to the god of earth. Catholics were to give Christian burial with Masses and prayers, and offerings to the dead were limited to flowers and incense. They were allowed to bow before the dead as they did with the living. Instead of burning joss paper, the living were to perform acts of charity to accumulate merits for their loved ones in the world beyond. Most of these acts, however, were thought to affect only the deceased who were in purgatory. No amount of Masses or prayers can save anyone from the eternal damnation of hell.

Attempts to separate the legitimate practices from the idolatrous did not endure however. During the rites controversy and its aftermath, the Catholic Church in Vietnam adopted a stricter policy. Since the traditional form of ancestor worship resembled the worship of spirits, many Western missionaries, uninformed about cultural symbols of these rites, judged them to be idolatrous. Any activities that could be interpreted as superstitious or following “pagan” customs were prohibited. In an attempt to foster a Christian identity, many traditional rites and customs with regard to the veneration of the dead and honoring ancestors were eliminated without consideration. Furthermore, Catholics were not allowed to participate in or contribute to the funeral and memorial services of their non-Catholic relatives or neighbors. This narrow-minded policy caused a lot of pain and alienation of Catholic members from their non-Catholic relatives. In fact, the clash on the cult of ancestors has been the primary reason why strict Confucians or Buddhists have adamantly refused to allow their children to marry Catholics, for fear that they would not be venerated but would be forgotten after death.

In reality, Catholics were not unfilial sons and daughters who abandoned their parents and loved ones after death. They held Catholic funeral services and burial. They prayed for their ancestors’ fate and offered Masses for them. But the failure to display what was considered standard custom caused grave consternation among non-Catholics. Catholics no longer offered oblations, used incense, kept a home altar, or kowtowed to the dead or the spirit tablets. The failure of Catholics to explain themselves convincingly
to the outsiders contributed to the hatred of Catholics that eventually fueled the severe persecutions in the nineteenth century.\footnote{585}

**Conclusion**

From a cultural point of view, the cult of the ancestors is the ritual manifestation of veneration, gratitude, and honor rendered to the elder members of a family. Children are brought up with the ideal of what is due to their parents in old age as well as after death. The acute cultural observer Matteo Ricci took a careful note of the pedagogy. In his journal, published posthumously in 1615,\footnote{586} Ricci makes this observation:

> The most solemn thing among the literati and in use from the king down to the very least being is the offering they annually make to the dead at certain times of the years …. In this act, they make the fulfillment of their duty to their relatives, namely to “serve them in death as though they were alive.” Nor do they think in this matter that the dead will come to eat the things mentioned or that they might need them; … they do this because they know of no other way to show their love and grateful spirit toward them [the dead] … the ceremony was begun more for the living than for the dead, that is, to teach the children and the ignorant ones to honor and serve their living relatives … since they do not recognize any divinity in these dead ones, nor do they ask or hope for anything from them, all this

\footnote{585}{A historical example illustrates the bias against the Catholics as being unfilial. When Lord Nguyễn Phúc Ánh (the future Emperor Gia Long) was living in exiles, he entrusted his oldest son, the seven-year old Prince Cạnh to accompany Bishop Pigneau de Béhaine to France in 1787 to seek support for his campaign against the Tây Sơn. When the crown prince came back to Vietnam after twelve years, he refused to kowtow to the spirit tablets of his ancestors. This irreverent act caused great scandal among the Confucian officials at the court. Fearing of alienating his Confucian supporters, the Emperor Gia Long (r. 1802-1820) distanced himself from the Catholics. When another son of Gia Long assumed the throne, the new emperor, known by his reign title Minh Mạng (r. 1820-1840), turned hostile to the Christian faith.}

stands outside of idolatry,\textsuperscript{587} and also one can say there is probable no superstition.\textsuperscript{588} [italics mine].

Ricci considered the cult of the ancestors to be essentially non-religious, that is, a civil act. He was aware of the religious elements in the rites, but for him these practices were accidental and could be regulated without destroying the essence of the ancestral rites.

The critical issue of our interest is not the religious nature of the Vietnamese cult of the ancestors, but how to interpret them contextually. If we look beyond the forms, the intention of the traditionally prescribed rituals expresses a deep love and respect for the deceased, a fact that no one can deny. Back in the seventeenth century, Alexandre de Rhodes was surprised at the “the extraordinary affection that the Tonkinese give to their deceased parents.” Many of them ended up in debt because they spent extravagantly on memorial banquets and other ceremonies, which de Rhodes regarded as “useless and frivolous, but they themselves could not disregard because of customs.”\textsuperscript{589} The author of \textit{ETR} also recognized this point in his long discussion of the funeral rites and memorial services. Within the context of pre-modern Vietnam, these rites were viewed as social functions to serve the good order of society by promoting right relationships in the exercise of the filial virtue which was the core value of Vietnamese family and society.

\textsuperscript{587} Ricci was told by his Chinese colleagues that the rite has a pedagogical purpose. That was the reason for his qualification of the rites as “probably” (forse) being free from superstition. This word “probably” in part is the basis for later attack on Jesuit “probabilism.” See Cummins, \textit{A Question of Rites}, 38-41.

\textsuperscript{588} Quoted by Minamiki, 17-18. See also, Gallagher, 96-97.

\textsuperscript{589} De Rhodes, \textit{Histoire du Royaume}, Chapter XXV, p. 89.
CHAPTER EIGHT

REFUTATION AND DIALOGUE:

THE RECEPTION OF THE ERRORS OF THE THREE RELIGIONS

This chapter considers the reception of The Errors of Three Religions (ETR) in the Vietnamese Catholic apologetic tradition. Although ETR was circulated in a limited way (we know of only one surviving hand-written copy), its influence reached beyond the original audience. Vietnamese catechisms and apologetic writings of the nineteenth century can be considered adaptations of ETR. The arguments, sources, quotations and vocabulary of ETR appear in later works.

Among these works, three are discussed in this chapter: Phép Giảng Đạo Thật [Treatise of the True Religion] (ms. 1758, print 1829), Hội Đồng Tứ Giáo [Conference of the Four Religions] (ca. early 1800s), and Bien Phan Ta Chinh Tu Quien [Distinguishing Lies from Truth in Four Volumes] (1864). In the following sections, I will briefly describe the situations of the Catholic Church in the nineteen-century Vietnam and then discuss each work and its relation to ETR.

590 Typeset and printed in Bangkok in 1864, the title of this work does not have diacritical marks. A copy is now preserved in the Bibliothèque Asiatique of the MEP in Paris (catalogue V-165)
The Historical Context of Catholic Apologetics in the Nineteenth Century

After two hundred years of division and rivalry, the two parts of Annam were united under Emperor Gia Long in 1802. This unification opened a new chapter in the complex relationship between the kingdom and the Catholic Church. With French military assistance, Lord Nguyễn Phúc Ánh of Cochinchina (Emperor Gia Long) retook the lands lost to the Tây Sơn and founded the Nguyễn dynasty (1802-1945), the last dynasty of imperial Vietnam. As a result, the French became more involved in the court politics of Vietnam and several Frenchmen occupied high positions in the court, as liaisons between France and Vietnam. The death of Gia Long and the ascension of Emperor Minh Mạng in 1820 severely strained relations between France and the Vietnamese royals.

For its part, the Nguyễn emperors increasingly saw the French presence, and by extension the missionaries, as a political threat. The Confucian officers and scholars, an influential faction in the dynastic system, also perceived a rival in Christianity. A proud Confucian, Emperor Minh Mạng (r. 1820-1840) considered that the “heterodox way of Jesus” (da-tô tà đào) was indeed harmful to the Vietnamese tradition. Coupled with other factors (i.e., court politics, fear of European expansion, etc.), the emperor decided to purge the country of Christians, resulting in a systematic persecution of Christianity by the successive emperors of the Nguyễn dynasty that lasted from 1833 to

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the 1862. The “unfilial attitude” of Catholics was cited as the main reason for these persecutions.

In 1825, Emperor Minh Mạng issued a prohibition against foreign missionaries in Vietnam, asserting that the religion of the Westerners perverted the mind of his people:

The Westerner’s perverse religion confuses the hearts of men. For a long time, many Western ships have come to trade with us and introduce Catholic missionaries into our country. These missionaries made the people’s heart crooked, thus destroying our beautiful customs. Truly this is a great disaster for our land. Our purpose being to prevent our people from abandoning our orthodox way, we must accordingly completely eliminate these abuses.\(^{592}\)

Missionaries, however, continued their activities in Vietnam under the protection of the governor of Cochinchina, Marshall Lê Văn Duyệt, who had been the chief military officer and advisor under Emperor Gia Long. After the death of the governor and following the Catholic support of the Lê Văn Khôi revolt (1833-1835), a total ban on Catholicism was enforced.\(^ {593}\) The persecution of Christianity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries quickly escalated. Missionaries were banned from entering the country, and those captured were imprisoned, condemned, and then executed.

Vietnamese priests and assistants to the missionaries suffered the same fate while the lay Catholics were forced to renounce the faith under the pain of death.

The conflict between the Nguyễn court and the Church — exacerbated by a severe, systematic oppression of believers — haunted the Catholic leaders throughout the

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nineteenth century. Under the policy of dispersion (phân sáp), Catholic families were broken up and members were sent to live in non-Catholic villages. Vietnamese Catholics now had to justify their faith to their fellow countrymen. In addition, a martyrdom complex spread among Catholics: death was preferred to renunciation of faith.

The prohibition of Christianity was the pretext for France’s invasion of Vietnam to “protect the Catholic interest,” ending in the gradual colonization of the whole country by 1883. Follow the treaty of 1862, the Nguyễn court reluctantly accepted the freedom of missionaries to propagate Catholicism in Vietnam. Under French protection, the Church began to operate more openly, and thus much Catholic literature in Nôm and Quốc-ngữ scripts was printed during this period.

The proliferation of nineteenth-century apologetic works and catechisms helped preserve the thought and content of ETR. Among the three works to be discussed, the first two were written both in Nôm and Quốc-ngữ scripts and were published in many

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594 Reports sent by missionaries to France fed the imagination of the French church and contributed to a perception that Catholic interests in Vietnam must be protected at all costs. For example, when Minh Mạng tried to establish diplomatic contact with the French government in 1840, the French rejected his request at the urging of the Catholic Church, which claimed that the emperor was an “enemy of religion.”

595 The French and Spanish naval forces attacked Danang in 1858 but failed to stop attempts to expel Catholic missionaries. After the French attack and the occupation of Saigon in 1859, the Nguyễn court was forced to cede parts of its southern territories to the French in 1862. Between 1864 and 1867, six southernmost provinces of Vietnam became French Cochinchina. Following more concessions of the Nguyễn court, the French annexed Tonkin (North Vietnam) in 1884 and Annam (Central Vietnam) in 1887 as “French protectorates” (semi-colonies co-ruled by the French governor and the kings of Vietnam). With the addition of Cambodia in 1867 and Laos in 1893, French Indochina was established as part of the French colonial empire. After 1954, all of these countries became independent.

596 Before 1945, there were three systems of writing in Vietnam. Chinese writing was used in official court documents from the first century until its abolition after World War II. In the thirteenth century, chữ Nôm, a modified script based on Chinese characters, was invented to accommodate the vernacular language. Chữ Quốc ngữ, the Romanized alphabetic script, was conceived by Jesuit missionaries, and it was adopted by the French colonial government in the early twentieth century for communication and education.
editions. The third work existed only in Quốc-ngữ and was reissued twice in the twentieth century. The number of available editions indicates that ETR has left a lasting legacy in the Christian population.

*Treatise of the True Religion* (1758)

**Background of the text**

Like ETR, *Phép Giảng Đạo Thật* [Treatise of the True Religion] (henceforth, *Treatise*) is a work dedicated to the religious education of believers in eighteenth-century Vietnam. It predated the more popular catechism of Bishop Pigneau de Béhaine, *Thánh Giáo Yêu Lý Quốc Ngữ* [Essentials of the Holy Religions in Vernacular] (1774), by sixteen years. This rare document deserves a separate study, for it reflects the combination of both catechismus and doctrina christiana traditions. The book includes both a refutation of the objections to Christianity and an exposition of basic Catholic doctrines and practices.

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597 According to a catalogue of Nôm works preserved in the Archives of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (AMEP), the *Treatise on the True Religion*, better known by its Sino-Vietnamese title *Chân Đạo Yêu Lý* [Essentials of the True Religion] had at least four Nôm editions (Cẩm Sơn: 1829; n.p.: 1864; Gia Định: 1867; Phát Đèm: 1868); *Conferences of the Four Religions* at least nine editions (n.p.: 1864, 1867, 1869; Phát Diệm: 1867, 1869, 1909; Hongkong: 1897, 1903, 1905), and 14 Quốc-ngữ editions. Chan Hing-bo and Isabelle Landry-Deron, eds., *Mục lục thư tịch Hán Nôm tàng trữ tại Hội Thừa Sai Ba-Lê* [Catalogue of works in Chinese and Nôm scripts preserved in the archive of the Society of Paris Foreign Missions] (Paris, 2004), 17-21.
The Manuscript

The extant manuscript of Treatise is preserved in the Archives of the MEP (AMEP), catalogue number V-1183. The document has 72 sheets of 16 by 22 cm paper, totaling 144 pages, bound into a notebook. Handwritten on both sides of the page in Quốc-ngữ script, the manuscript has a total of 143 pages of material. The last page is torn at the top, and parts of the first three lines are missing. A loose half sheet, numerated “53 bis,” is attached to the first page, and bears the title Catéchisme Raisonné: Tiong Keing [Analytical Catechism, Tonkin]. The last page ends with a Latin inscription: Finis. Laus Patris, Deus Filio, honor Sancto Spiritus et Gloria Virgini. M DCC LVIII [The end. Praise to God the Father, the Son; honor to the Holy Spirit and glory to the Virgin. 1758]. The manuscript shows signs of having been edited by another person whose handwriting was different from the author’s: there are occasional corrections and translations of words in Latin, underscored proper names and Sino-Vietnamese phrases, as well as Latin subtitles for each topic in the margins.

The Quốc-ngữ orthography of the Treatise exhibits characteristics that were closer to the spellings of nineteenth-century Vietnamese dictionaries than ETR. Whereas the double consonants “bl-” and “ml-” at the beginning of words are retained, the ending sign “-” (short for “-ng”) characteristic of seventeenth-century spelling is used with much less frequency. Words like “oũ” and “aõ” are used interchangeably with “ông” and “aong” accordingly, whereas “ơõ” is spelled as “uong” consistently. Abbreviations are seldom

598 The correct Latin phrase should be “Laus Patri Deo, Filio, honor Sancto Spiritui.”
used. Except for a few words and spellings peculiar to this manuscript, modern Vietnamese readers can understand the work without much difficulty.

Instead of the dialogue style as ETR, the Treatise’s narrative style is similar to that of Alexandre de Rhodes’s Cathechismus. Compared to ETR, there are fewer Sino-Vietnamese phrases and the vocabulary is simpler. The presentation of material is straightforward and free from cliché and historical examples, unlike the language of ETR. The argument and reasoning use examples of daily life so that the main points can be readily understood.

**Authorship and Dating**

The question of authorship can only be dealt with from circumstantial evidence since the manuscript is anonymous and there is no internal information indicative of possible author’s identity or the context of the work. The only datum available is the Latin inscription “M DCC LVIII” at the end of the manuscript, a dating of 1758, six years after ETR. Since the document is preserved at the AMEP, its author presumably was someone connected with the French missionaries. The style and content of the writing suggest that the author might be a Tonkinese priest. While one cannot rule out a missionary authorship, there were enough native priests by the middle of the eighteenth century that one can posit an indigenous authorship.\(^{599}\)

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\(^{599}\) Missionary records indicate that by 1758 there were 47 indigenous priests (26 secular, 8 Dominicans, 4 Augustinians, and 3 Jesuits) and 20 foreign missionaries (4 MEP, 4 Dominicans, 2 Augustinians, and 10 Jesuits) in Tonkin. André Marillier, *Nos pères dans la foi*, Vol. III: 161-163.
Written in Quốc-ngữ, the common script of the Tonkinese priests and catechists, the document was likely to be used for seminary training and formation of priests. In the early nineteenth century, this catechism was revised and printed in the demotic Nôm scripts. It also was given a Sino-Vietnamese title Chân Đạo Yếu Lý [Essentials of the True Religion]. The earliest extant printed copy preserved in the AMEP is dated 1829. It was reprinted and revised in several Nôm editions between 1864 and 1867.

**Structure and Content**

The catechism is divided in nine chapters: 1) On life and death, body and soul; 2) On the true and false beliefs about heaven and earth; 3) On the doctrine of Three Fatherhoods; 4) On who God is and how He creates the world; 5) On the life of Christ; 6) On the judgment after death, purgatory, heaven and hell; 7) On the four major points (Creed, Lord’s Prayer, Sacraments, and Commandments); 8) On the preparation for Baptism; and 9) On the duties of a new believer. From the topics, this work functions like a catechetical manual to prepare adults for baptism, and is structured somewhat like de Rhodes’s *Cathechismus*.

The Nôm editions of the nineteenth century were slightly different from the original manuscript. While retaining the content of most chapters, their slants reflect the interests of the nineteenth-century audience, that is, to defend Catholicism from anti-Catholic defamation. The Nôm editions replace the last two chapters with three new

The fact that this catechism was printed in Nôm script as early as 1829 indicates that, by the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Christian literature stirred up interest among literate Catholics. Although Quốc-ngữ has been used among Catholics since its invention in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, the romanized script served as a tool of communication for native priests and catechists to exchange information with missionaries. Books composed in Quốc-ngữ did not reach the wider audience that still read Chinese characters or Nôm. Moreover, to print any literary work in Nôm was time-consuming and costly. Before Western typesetting was available in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, printing in Nôm, as in Chinese scripts, required the extensive labor of carving the characters in woodblocks. Unless it is an important writing for a wide distribution, the common approach was to hand-copy to save time and money.

Refutation of False Beliefs

Of interest to us is Chapter Two, entitled “On the true and false beliefs about heaven and earth” (Giảng mlẽ về sự blơi đất cùng các tích là thế nào), which spans 34 ½ pages (pp. 15-49) of the manuscript. This chapter is a refutation of what the author considers erroneous views on true worship. In Chapter One the author establishes the existence of the Creator as the “Lord of Heaven and Earth” and the necessity of

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600 I possess a copy of Nôm of an unknown date, but judging from the writing style and vocabulary, it is a nineteenth-century correction and expansion of the aforementioned Quốc-ngữ manuscript. With regard to Chapter 2, the differences between the Quốc-ngữ and Nôm are mainly improvements in style rather than the content.
worshiping him, and Chapter Two can be considered an extension of that discussion, in which the erroneous views on the Creator are explained. This chapter can be divided into three thematic sections.

**Erroneous Beliefs**

The first section is devoted to the exposition of heaven and earth, the Buddha, Mục Mũi and Supreme Ultimate; Pangu; Laozi, and the Jade Emperor (pp. 15-23). In the treatment of each being, the author opens with a rhetorical question: “Is X the first cause of everything?” to be followed by an emphatic “No,” then the reasons for his answer. After the discussion, he concludes with the formula: “Therefore, we must not worship X, because he (or it) is not the first cause of everything.” The discussions of various beings in this section are not of equal length: some a single paragraph, others several pages.

The sections on Heaven, Mục Mũi, Supreme Ultimate and Pangu correspond to the arguments presented in the First and Second Days of de Rhodes’ catechism that are elaborated in several chapters of Book 1 of *ETR*. Heaven is interpreted as the azure sky in constant movement, not a “living being,” and thus it cannot be the architect of the universe. Likewise, Mục Mũi and Supreme Ultimate are judged as lacking a spiritual nature, life, and intelligence; these inferior entities are not suitable to be the first cause of

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601 Mục Mũi or Mộc Môi was a primordial being mentioned in de Rhodes’s catechism. His dictionary defines it as “the created body when the rational soul first entered it as spoken by some idolatrous sect.”

602 *Cathechismus*, First Day (Phan’s translation, “Heaven according to the Chinese,” 218-219); Cf. *ETR*, Book 1 Article 3.
Pangu was born out of chaos and owed his existence to heaven and earth, so he cannot be their creator.

With regard to the Buddha and other deified figures like Laozi and the Jade Emperor, *Treatise* uses a historical approach to demystify them, an approach borrowed from *ETR*. The account on Śākyamuni Buddha is composed of materials drawn from *ETR* (or its source on Buddhism) and de Rhodes’ catechism. On the early life of the Buddha, *Treatise* writes:

The Buddha was [a prince] from an Indian kingdom. His name was Siddhārtha, also known as “Patience” (Nhạn Nhự). He was born on the eighth day of the fourth month in the year giáp-dân of the reign of Zhou Zhaowang. His father was King Śuddhodana; his mother was Māyādevī; his wife was Yashodhara; and his concubine was Như La. At that time his father was supposed to pay tribute to King Lý Hổ, but failed to do so for three years. When King Lý Hổ planned to conquer his country, King Śuddhodana wanted to send an envoy to appease him, but no one dared to go. When the prince volunteered to go, the king joyfully sent him off with many fine tribute gifts. When King Lý Hổ met the prince, the king was pleased with him and gave his daughter Yaśodhara to be the prince’s wife. When the prince returned to his country, he became a celebrity, his father was pleased with his mission and wanted to pass the throne on to him, thus settling him on the east side of the palace. But the prince wanted more honors and so he planned to leave home to become an ascetic so that he would earn the respect of people. Since his father and his wives did not approve, he left home in the middle of the night and went to a mountain to pursue his lifestyle.

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604 Cf. *ETR*, Book 1, Article 2.

605 *Phép Giảng Đạo Thật* (AMEP, Vol. 1183), 17-18. My translation. Cf. *ETR*, 144-45. This account might be drawn from an unidentified Chinese source that has yet to be located.
The information about King Lý Hồ in *ETR* is repeated almost word for word here. In addition, the account of how Buddhism spread to China through the dream of Emperor Mingdi of the Han dynasty was drawn from de Rhodes’ description but reworked on the details supplied by the Chinese sources of *ETR*. The Confucian critique of Han Mingdi and Buddhism from the diatribe of Han Yu that appeared in *ETR* was also reproduced.

In the same vein, Laozi as well as the Jade Emperor cannot be considered the Creator and Lord of the universe as the Daoists proposed because they were human beings. Since Vietnamese popular religions often named these two as the rulers of heaven, *Treatise* gives accounts of their lives to show that they were merely mortal men:

Laozi was born on the fifteenth day of the second month during the reign of Zhou Lingwang in China. His surname was Li, given name Zhong’er, pen name Boyang and titled Qingni. He was also known as Lao Tan, who died at the time of Zhou Muwang. A mortal man, how can he be the creator of heaven and earth?

The Jade Emperor was a man named Zhang Yi. His father was Guang Yen of Miao Le kingdom; his mother was Bao Yueguang. He was born at noon on the ninth day of the first month during the Zhou period, after Zhang Liang, and died at the age of thirty. Since the emperor Huizong of the Song dynasty conferred on him the title “ruler of heaven,” people have mistakenly believed that the Jade Emperor is the ruler of heaven.

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606 *Cathechismus*, Fourth Day (Phan’s translation, “Buddhism in China,” 250-51.)

607 See *ETR*, 148-49.

608 See *ETR*, 157-58.

609 Here the author of the *Treatise* made a historical mistake. Zhang Yi was reputedly born in the Han dynasty.

Since these two persons were humans, they must not be equated to the supreme ruler of heaven. To do so is blasphemous, *Treatise* argues.

**False Veneration**

In the second section, *Treatise* argues against the worship of Confucius, Former Teacher (tiên sư), Tutelary Genie (thành hoàng), God of Thunder (thiên lôi), Yama Kings of Hell (diêm vương), Household Genie (thổ công) and Land Guard (thổ chủ), Duke of River (hà bá) and Phạm Nhan, Stove Genie (vua bếp) and the Wandering Soul (cô hồn). The refutations are taken from *ETR*, sometimes verbatim. The gist of the argument is that these figures are powerless to help the person who prays to them. There are two classes among them: the first are praiseworthy people – Confucius, the Former Teacher(s), and the Tutelary Genies; the rest are considered fictions created by popular beliefs and thus unworthy of worship.

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611 Cf. *ETR*, Book 1, Article 12.
612 Cf. *ETR*, Book 1, Article 11.
613 Cf. *ETR*, Book 1, Articles 9 and 10.
616 Cf. *ETR*, Book 1, Article 11.
618 Cf. *ETR*, Book 1, Article 11.
Honoring Confucius for his contributions to education is considered a praiseworthy act. However, one “should not pray to him for a bright mind, blessings, and longevity, for he has no power to grant them. To venerate him because he was a wise teacher is enough.”

Likewise, “to honor those who taught us the trade is a duty. When that they were alive, we had to respect them; when they passed away, we have to mourn them according to custom.” To pray to the Former Teachers for benefits is useless because they have no power to grant them. The veneration of Tutelary Genies, especially King Đóng and Lý Ông Trọng as national heroes, is judged a good custom. But since they were also mortal men, they do not possess the power to help those who believe in them.

When dealing with popular spirits, Treatise stresses their powerlessness and claims that one should not fear them but only the Lord of heaven and earth. The Thunder God is seen as a primitive belief explainable by science. Thunder is a natural phenomenon resulting from the clash between positive and negative charged airflows, and so it should not be feared. Likewise one should not fear the Yama Kings of Hell for they have no power over life and death.

Some spirits have dubious stories: because they killed a fierce tiger, the Lê brothers were honored as Household Genies for their courage; Vương Chất was

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620 Phép Giảng Đạo Thất, 24. See a similar argument in ETR, 71.
621 Phép Giảng Đạo Thất, 25.
622 Phép Giảng Đạo Thất, 26.
623 Phép Giảng Đạo Thất, 26-27.
honored as Land Guardian by his descendants; a certain person who found a water source for people to drink was honored as the Duke of River. Even if these stories were true, the Treatise argues, why should the Vietnamese worship these remote figures?

Other spirits are considered immoral figures, like Phạm Nhan, who was executed for fornication, or Trọng Cao, Thị Nhi and Phạm Lang who committed suicide and became the Kitchen God, or the messenger from heaven called the Wandering Soul who accepted bribery from Hành Mẫn in exchange for her prolonged life. These spirits are not worthy of belief or worship.

**Superstitious Practices**

The third section deals with what Christians in general consider superstitious beliefs and practices that go against the exclusive trust in the power of God. These include divination (bói), event-forecasting (xem khoa), natal astrology (xem số), offerings to the stars to change one’s fate (cầu sao đổi số), physiognomy (xem

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624 Phép Giảng Đạo Thất, 27.
626 Phép Giảng Đạo Thất, 28.
627 Phép Giảng Đạo Thất, 29.
628 Phép Giảng Đạo Thất, 29-30.
629 Phép Giảng Đạo Thất, 30-31.
630 Cf. ETR, Book 2, Article 8.
631 Cf. ETR, Book 2, Article 9.
632 Ibid.
divination with chicken feet (xem giò), astrology and geomancy (thiên văn địa lý), and joss paper (vàng mã). In treating these subjects, the author opens with a question, “What is such practice all about? Should we believe in it?” followed by an emphatic “No!” He then gives an account of the origin of the practice in question. The information given in these accounts is largely drawn from Book Two of ETR, which treats these practices as Daoist superstitions.

In his argumentation the author uses common sense to expose the inconsistency in these practices. For example, if the diviner really knows how to attain fortune, why does he not help himself first? If the forecaster can predict the outcome of an event, why does he not save himself from failure? If the fate of a person is determined by the time and day of his birth, why do twins have different lives and longevity? If a personal trouble can be altered by making offering to the stars, why do many people who do so still experience sickness and death? If one’s future can be predicted by facial features, then why are there cases where the predictions do not correspond to reality? With these lines of reasoning, the author demonstrates that such practices are nothing but tricks made up by their practitioners to make money from naïve believers.

To educate the audience, the author explains the differences between the science of astronomy and the pseudo-science of astrology, and likewise, geography from

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633 Cf. ETR, Book 2, Article 5.
634 Cf. ETR, Book 2, Article 11.
635 Ibid.
636 On geomancy see Cf. ETR, Book 1, Article 15.
637 Phép Giảng Đạo Thật, 31-37, 41.
geomancy (for the same Vietnamese names were used on these disciplines). His account of the use of joss paper is drawn from the same book used by the author of *ETR*.\(^{638}\)

While these practices are considered useless and foolish, other practices such as mediumship (*đồng cốt*) and sorcery (*phù thủy*)\(^{639}\) are considered demonic, strongly condemned by the author.

**The Relationship between *ETR* and *Treatise***

As our close reading of the text shows, Chapter Two of *Treatise* can be considered a summary of *ETR*. In presenting the Christian objections toward certain religious beliefs and practices of eighteenth-century Tonkin, the author clearly has drawn from materials available to him from de Rhodes’ *Cathechismus* and *ETR* in crafting his arguments. Even in revised editions of *Treatise*, the second chapter remains almost intact, except for some minor editorial improvements.

**Conference of the Four Religions (ca. 1780-1840)**

Another important document to the encounter of Christianity and the three religions of Vietnam is *Hội Đồng Tứ Giáo* [Conference of the Four Religions]\(^{640}\) (henceforth, *Conference*). Written by an anonymous author in *Nôm* script, this work

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\(^{638}\) Identified here as the book *Văn Lâm Quang Ký*, which is also mentioned by Adriano di Santa Thecla in *Opusculum*. Unfortunately, I do not have any further information on this book.

\(^{639}\) *ETR*, Book 2, Articles 3.

purported to be a report of a debate between representatives of the Three Religions and Christianity that took place in 1773 at the court of Lord Trinh Sâm, the ruler of Tonkin. The themes and concerns discussed in the debate reflected the complexity of the challenges that Christianity posed to the existing religious beliefs and practices. Unlike \textit{ETR}, which aimed only to expose the errors of the non-Christian religions, \textit{Conference} engaged its reader to debate with a Christian representative, presenting the first instance of answering criticisms of Christian doctrines as well as refuting errors of the other religions. In these debates, the author of \textit{Conference} sought to justify the presence of Catholic Christianity in Vietnam.

\textbf{Background of the Text}

\textit{Dating and Authorship}

The composition of this popular work is obscure. It was printed and circulated in various \textit{Nôm} and \textit{Quốc-ngữ} editions for almost a century (1864-1959),\textsuperscript{641} that is, from the time that Christianity was officially recognized by the Nguyề\'n court. The earliest surviving copy is a woodblock-printed book with the imprimatur of Bishop Joseph-Simon Theurel, MEP apostolic vicar of West Tonkin.\textsuperscript{642} Although the publication date is

\textsuperscript{641} This work survives in two Vietnamese scripts (\textit{chữ Nôm}, \textit{chữ Quốc-ngữ}) and a Chinese translation. It was hand-copied many times until set in print around the 1860s. Since then it enjoyed many reprints and editions until 1959. There are at least 9 \textit{Nôm} editions and 14 \textit{Quốc-ngữ} editions. The oldest extant \textit{Nôm} version is a 1864 woodblock-printed edition preserved at Hanoi’s Institute of \textit{Hán-Nôm} Studies, catalogue AB 305 (72 pages of 25 by 14cm). The oldest extant \textit{Quốc-ngữ} version is a 1887 third edition, 76 pages long published in Tăn Định (Saigon, Vietnam). There is also a literary Chinese translation that was done around 1887-1888 by a certain Damato [Damascene ?] Tran.

\textsuperscript{642} Bishop Theurel (1829-1868), known by his Vietnamese name as Chiêu, was a French missionary of the MEP. He came to Tonkin in 1853 and was consecrated a bishop six years later as the coadjutor for Bishop

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1864, many factors indicate it was written earlier. The argumentation, style, and the events described suggest a setting some ninety years earlier, in the time of Lê-Trịnh era. This work was probably composed in the late eighteenth century or the first half of the nineteenth century, and was circulated in handwritten copies before being printed in 1864.

Traditional accounts hold that this work is an eye-witness report on the debates on the true religion by the Dominican priests Jacinto Castaneda and Vincent Liêm that took place at the court of Trịnh Sâm (r. 1767-1752) shortly before their martyrdom in 1773. According to church records, both priests were arrested for preaching the Christian doctrine, and were personally interrogated by Lord Trịnh Sâm. They were condemned to death on November 4, 1773, and were decapitated three days later in Hanoi. The opening lines of Conference mentions an uncle of the Lord named Prince Six, who was interested in Christianity and wanted to learn about its doctrines. He called a conference at his palace for a debate among a Confucian scholar, a Daoist priest, a Buddhist monk, and the two imprisoned Catholic priests, while he served as the moderator. If the story is to be believed, this meeting must happen sometime shortly before these priests were executed.

Charles Hubert Jeantet (1792-1866), the apostolic vicar of West Tonkin (1862-66). Theurel was fluent in Vietnamese and the author of a revised edition of the Dictionarium Annamitico-Latinum (1877).


644 Both were canonized on June 19, 1988 by Pope John Paul II as two of 117 holy martyrs of Vietnam.
However, this conference could not have taken place when claimed since the mandarin Prince Six had died ten years earlier. While such an event might have occurred, the work was most likely a literary creation based on real characters — a mandarin who was disposed to Christianity and the two martyred Dominicans who were interrogated by Lord Trịnh for their faith. Most likely, years (or even decades) after the fact, an anonymous author reconstructed the legendary debates, using the arguments provided by previous apologetic works such as ETR and Treatise. The author is mostly likely a priest familiar with the Chinese classics and Vietnamese Christian literature. He wrote this work at a time that Christianity was still called the “religion of the Portuguese” (đạo Hoa Lang) and was suppressed by the state as a “false and harmful religion.” This puts us into the last decades of the eighteenth century at the earliest and during the Minh Mạng era (1820-1840) at the latest. Beyond this information, we cannot positively identify its author or its date.  

**Purpose and Structure**

From the text itself, we learn that Conference’s primary purpose is to explain and defend the legitimacy of Christianity against the accusation that “this foreign Portuguese religion [Christianity] is a false and superstitious teaching, full of lies and irrationality” which seduced “ignorant people.” The opponents of Christianity alleged that if it was a true and venerable religion like the “native three religions” then “the Lord [Trịnh]

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645 See Anh Tran, Hội Đồng Türk Giáo, 33-36.

646 Hội Đồng Türk Giáo (1867 Nôm edition), 1b (see my translation, p. 43).
would not have prohibited it; if the [Christian] priests were righteous, then why has the
king arrested them?⁶⁴⁷ To demonstrate to its detractors that Christianity is “not
superstitious, irrational, and full of lies,” the author proposes to set up a three-day debate,
each day with its own theme. The origin of the cosmos and humanity are explored on the
first day, human moral life and conduct on the second, and the afterlife on the third.

In the debates, each religious representative appeals to the religious writings of his
tradition to present his case. The dialogues are given in the following order: the Western
scholar (Catholic priest) engages in debate on a particular subject first with the Confucian
scholar, then with the Daoist priest, and finally with the Buddhist monk. The
representatives of the Three Religions present their understandings or views on the
subject and the Catholic priest challenges them with reason and historical examples.
After questioning the others’ views, the priest presents the Catholic teaching on the same
subject. Then his opponents, especially the Confucian scholar, have the opportunity to
refute him. At the end of each day, the mandarin gives the final comments on the merit
of the arguments, and declares the winner – always the priest.

A Defense of Christianity

The Three Debates

The actuality of a conference between the representatives of the four religions is
secondary to the message Conference conveys to the reader. It addresses three important

⁶⁴⁷ Hội Đồng Tứ Giáo, 1b (my translation, pp. 43-44).
issues that concern a seeker of truth: the origin, meaning, and end of human life. A synopsis of the debates follows.

On the first day, the question is: “What is the origin of humanity and of the cosmos?” First, the Confucian scholar argues that it was the Supreme Ultimate, which gave rise to the energies (khí) of yin and yang and the Five Elements. All things came from the expansion and condensation of these energies. Next, the Daoist explains the existence of everything as a self-generating process of nature based on the principle of Dao. Quoting from the Daodejing, he says “Dao produced one; one produced two; two produced three; and three produced innumerable things.” Then, the Buddhist monk claims that all things came from the one Buddha nature as told in the book Lamp of the Mind. According to his account, the cosmos was created in nine aeons by the power of the Buddha. In his turn, the Christian priest presents the biblical account telling how the God created the universe and the first human beings in seven days ex nihilo.

On the second day, the debate focuses on the question: “What should human beings do in this life?” The Confucian scholar lays out the norms for proper human conduct in two steps. First, they should approach the Sovereign-on-High (God) and the spirits with respect and make offerings to them. Second, they should keep social morality by cultivating the Five Virtues (i.e., of humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness) and upholding the Five Relations (i.e., between ruler and subject.

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648 Hội Đồng Tự Giáo, 3a-8a (my translation, 48-61).

649 Daodejing 42. This is the only quotation from the Daodejing, the canonical book of Daoism, in the whole argument. The author of ETR also cited the same quotation.

650 Hội Đồng Tự Giáo, 8a-29a (my translation, 62-110).
father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brother, and between friends). The Daoist priest advocates a natural approach to life based on Laozi’s teaching of “non-action, non-judging, non-differentiation.” The Buddhist monk explains the requirement of developing the Five Buddhist Virtues (i.e., giving alms, eating a vegetarian diet, enduring humiliation, cultivating the mind, and maintaining honesty) as well as keeping the Five Precepts (i.e., no killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, or intoxication). The Christian talks about the duty required of human beings, that is, to worship the true God and keep his Ten Commandments. The latter is summarized as “first love the Lord of Heaven with all your heart and mind above all things; and second love other people as you love yourself.” In addition, the Confucian scholar and the Christian priest debate on true worship, spirits and saints, reward and punishment, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the merit of ancestor worship.

On the last day the question is “Where do humans go after death?” In this round it is essentially a two-way conversation between the Buddhist monk and the Christian priest, since the other two do not have a theory about the afterlife. For the Confucian, the gathering of life-force (khí) brings life and its dispersion results in death; a human’s fate is no different from an animal’s. The Daoist has no concern for the afterlife, for his goal is to extend the present life to eternity. The Buddhist conceives of death as a journey to another world. Depending on one’s karma, one can end up in the Buddha’s land or hell. According to this teaching, which is drawn from Lamp of the

651 Hộ Đông Tù Giáo, 16a (my translation, 83).

652 Hộ Đông Tù Giáo, 29b-36a (my translation, 111-123)
Mind, at death the “soul” ascends from one’s fontanel and wanders on a journey to the next life. If there are monks to chant the prayer of “Protection for the Journey” (*kinh Bảo dàng*), then the soul will go to the Buddha’s land; otherwise it will end up in one of the three wicked worlds (i.e., of the animals, hungry ghosts, and hell). For those who could not keep the Buddhist precept and ended up in the underworld prison, an atonement service called “Breaking the Prison” (*phá ngục*) is conducted. The Christian priest presents the Catholic doctrines of the Four Last Things (*tứ chung*) (i.e., death, judgment, hell, and heaven). Depending on one’s deeds, one is rewarded or punished to an eternal fate by God in the Last Judgment.

Comprehensive is the range of topics in these debates. Non-Christian “errors” are refuted and Catholic doctrines are presented and examined for their merits. The principal criteria for assessing the validity of a view are rationality and consistency. The Christian priest wins in every debate, but it is not an easy victory. He must demonstrate the weakness of the other positions and defend his own from reasonable objections by the opponents, especially the Confucian scholar.

**Filiality and True Worship**

In *Conference*, the heart of the matter is “right worship,” which occupies the bulk of the discussion. More than half of the discussion takes place on the second day (e.g., 56 verbal exchanges in comparison with 14 on the first day and 21 on the third day). As discussed in previous chapters, the Vietnamese language lacks theological concepts for the distinction between worship or service to God and that to other spirits or humans.
The words *thờ* (worship) and *phụng* (service) encompass the devotion rendered to any being worthy of respect. Its meanings include veneration, homage, respect and submission.

Because of this linguistic ambiguity *Conference* proposes that proper worship should be done according to the doctrine of the Three Fathers (*tam phụ*): the High Father is God, the Middle Father is the monarch, and the Lower Father is the biological father. This concept, taken from the discussion in Ricci’s *True Meaning*,653 de Rhodes’ *Cathechismus*,654 and the *Treatise*,655 was a Christian adaptation of the Confucian “Three Respects.” According to this Confucian teaching, the proper order of loyalty and service should be given first to the king, then to one’s teacher or master, and last to one’s parents. By placing God above one’s monarch and parents, the *Conference* attributes to God the sovereignty over all other beings. The doctrine is a cultural adaptation of the First Commandment.

According to this doctrine, only the highest father — God who is the “Most High Unsurpassed Lord of Heaven” — deserves ritual worship and adoration. When applying the notion of “worship” to the king and the parents, the text means to honor and serve these people. The “worship” of the middle father takes on the meaning of service rendered to the king: respect him as the highest person of the nation; obey his orders despite their hardship; submit to his will and pay tributes; assist him when he is in need;

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653 *Tianzhu Shiyi*, section # 558, in Douglas’ and Hu’s translation, p. 433.
and be grateful and loyal, never rebel or usurp the throne. The “worship” of the lower Father (i.e., one’s parents) mainly refers to filial duties.

Since Christians were often accused of being unfilial, *Conference* cites the Fourth Commandment (honoring one’s parents) as the top among the commandments that regulate human relations, and it also lists seven ways a Vietnamese Christian can honor his or her parents:

First, respect and fear them; second, obey them; third, take care of them [in their old age]; fourth, bear with them [in their infirmity]; fifth, give them a proper burial; sixth, give alms as a way of praying to the Lord of Heaven for their souls; and seventh, commemorate their death anniversary by praying and visiting their graves [on that day]. Such are the teachings for children to honor their parents in thought, word, and deed. When parents are still alive, their children must visit them regularly, serve them, and take care of their needs. When they pass away, the children must honor them in a spiritual manner, by devotionally praying, giving alms, and doing good works to pray for their souls. That is how we [Christians] honor our parents.

With regard to the thorny issue of ancestor worship, *Conference* responds with careful arguments to the accusation that Christians do not honor their deceased parents. Christians do not make ritual offerings or prostrate themselves before the dead, not because they do not remember or respect their ancestors, but because they do not want to perform an “empty show.” The non-conformity of the Christians in ancestral worship derives from their different concept of the afterlife vis-à-vis their counterparts. The author of *Conference* acknowledges this fact when he states:

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Consider two teachings: One teaching [of Christianity] believes that once the souls of parents and ancestors have gone to another realm, they will not come back to eat and drink earthly food; thus their descendants do not have to make offerings and invite them to partake of the food. The other teaching [of the traditional religions] believes that the souls go back and forth between worlds, so that they still need to be fed as if they were still alive, and they have the power to grant fortune and protect their descendants…. Now which teaching is true?\textsuperscript{658}

This view clearly echoes \textit{ETR}'s arguments against the traditional expressions of ancestor worship.\textsuperscript{659} The author of \textit{Conference} maintains that Christians honor their ancestors after death by praying for their souls and performing charitable works on their behalf rather than offering them food that is useless to them. In so doing, Christians believe that they are more filial than their non-Christian relatives.

\textbf{The Influence of \textit{ETR} on \textit{Conference}}

Based on its style and Christian interest, \textit{Conference} is an imagined conversation that serves as a catechism for new converts to defend Christian beliefs and practices. \textit{ETR} exerts its influence on \textit{Conference}'s dialogical style, its use of Chinese texts and historical examples, as well as the content of the arguments. More like a revised and expanded version of \textit{ETR}, \textit{Conference} consists of a series of dialogues between the Western Scholar and the representatives of the Three Religions. Although the Eastern Scholar of \textit{ETR} is now portrayed in three different personas — as the Confucian Scholar, the Daoist Priest, and the Buddhist Monk — his voice still echoes throughout the text.

\textsuperscript{658} Hôi Động Tự Giáo, 27b (my translation, 106).

\textsuperscript{659} Cf. \textit{ETR}, Book 1 Article 14, 83-85, 89-90.
The Confucian Scholar of *Conference*, like his predecessor, the Eastern Scholar of *ETR*, still presumes to be the spokesman for the three traditions. His arguments and ideas are similar to those in *ETR*, at times almost identical in style and thought. Sino-Vietnamese phrases are used throughout the work, a deviation from the style of other Christian writings of the nineteenth century.

The close resemblance between the two works points to a literary dependence of the latter (*Conference*) on the former (*ETR*). Most of the quotations from the Chinese classics in the latter are taken from the former. Likewise are the accounts of Confucius, Laozi, the Buddha, the Jade Emperor, and the Twelve Governing Spirits of the Year. Sometimes the *Conference* author shortens or expands *ETR* materials to illustrate his points in the debates. The Buddhist creation story, the “Prayer for Protection,” and the description of the rite of “Breaking the Prison” reappear in an abridged version in *Conference*. On the contrary, the reasons for the Christian rejection of making offerings to Confucius, the Tutelary Genies, and the ancestors are elaborated in a more decisive forceful tone.

Not all materials of *ETR*, however, reappear in *Conference*. Absent from it are the discussion on particular Vietnamese genies (e.g. King Đóng, Princess Liễu Hạnh) and most topics in the second book of *ETR*. Comparing the styles of writing and argumentation of the two works, *Conference* proceeds with a clear agenda and focused arguments while *ETR* summarizes information on Vietnamese customs, beliefs, and religious practices that are loosely connected under the schemata of Three Religions. The information from *ETR* is used selectively in the arguments of *Conference.*
The *Conference* is not merely an updated version of *ETR* however. The former also incorporates materials from other Christian works, perhaps *Treatise* or another catechism available to him, to advance his agenda. Whereas *ETR* mentions almost nothing about Christian faith and practice, *Conference* integrates Christian beliefs into its arguments. It moves beyond a description of the “errors of the three religions” to an engagement with his opponents. The difference in these two approaches reflects their dissimilar contexts. Unlike *ETR*, arguably an internal document for the training of priests and catechists, *Conference* was written and printed in Nôm to reach a wider audience. Whereas *ETR* focuses on telling his Christian converts the reasons why they should reject their former beliefs and practices, *Conference* tells his audience both the what and the whys of Christian beliefs. It embraces the attitude of the nineteenth-century Vietnamese Christians: they persevered in faith despite the many sufferings and persecutions they had endured. It also expresses the Christian confidence that their religion is as good as, if not better than, the traditional religions.

*Distinguishing Falsehood from Truth in Four Volumes* (1864)

About the same time that *Conference* appeared in print in North Vietnam, another apologetic book was circulated in the South. *Bien Phan Ta Chinh Tu Quien* [Distinguishing Falsehood from Truth in Four Volumes] is another anonymous writing
defending the truths of Christianity. This 370-page book of the size 10 by 15 cm was printed in Bangkok in 1864. It is divided into four parts, each with three sections.

**Structure and Content**

As a series of questions and answers between a Western Teacher (*tây sư*) and a Confucian Scholar (*nhu sĩ*), the work presents what the latter wants to know about Christian beliefs and practices. Although the inquirer in the dialogue is labeled a Confucian scholar, the conversations are written in the popular style with a minimum of Sino-Vietnamese phrases or literary allusions. This suggests that the book is intended to reach a wider audience who might not have the benefit of a Confucian classical education.

In the preface, the anonymous author states that the book is to be a guide for honest seekers, answering their questions, removing their doubts, and guiding them to the truth. Like ETR, *Distinguishing* is probably meant for catechumens or potential converts.

In part one, the conversations center on the existence of God, his attributes, and some false conceptions of him. The second part deals with what the author considers

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660 This may be the first *Quốc-ngữ* catechism circulated in Vietnam for a general audience. Before this work, De Rhodes’s bilingual *Cathechismus* (1651) and Pigneau de Béhaine’s *Thánh Giáo Yêu Lý Quốc Ngữ* (1774) had a limited circulation among missionaries.

661 The first Catholic printing house was established in 1865 in Tân Định, Saigon. Before this time, books in Quốc-ngữ script had to be printed in French territories outside of Vietnam.

662 *Bien Chinh Chanh Ta Tu Quien* (Bangkok, 1864). Part I: Chapter 1: “There is a Supreme Being who is the Creator and Protector of all things,” pp. 3-26; Chapter 2: “The uniqueness of God; his omnipotence and omniscience,” pp. 27-55; Chapter 3: “Emptiness, Principle and Material-force, the Supreme Ultimate, yin and yang, and the Five Elements are not the first cause of all things,” pp. 56-85.
“erroneous worship” and false beliefs. Part three focuses on salvation, namely, the nature of the soul, reward and punishment in the afterlife, and the Christian way to salvation. The last part explains Christian morality and practices as well as answering objections to becoming Christian. Of interest here are Chapter 3 of Part I and all of Part II, to be discussed next.

**On the Origin or First Cause of the Universe**

Chapter 3 of Part I focuses on the origin of the universe, echoing a major interest of Christian apologetics, from *True Meaning* to *Cathechismus, Opusculum de sectis, ETR*, and *Conference*. Like the other works, *Distinguishing* rejects the idea of a self-creating and self-sustaining universe. For Christians, the universe and all things in it owe their existence to the Supreme Being who created and sustains it.

The author of *Distinguishing* expands on the arguments of his predecessors to build a case against the Daoist concept of “emptiness” (hu) and the Buddhist principle of “nothingness” as the universal originator. Everything, according to him, has its origin from Four Causes (efficient, material, formal, and final) — an Aristotelian metaphysical

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concept.\textsuperscript{666} Since “emptiness” and “nothingness” have no substance, no form, no author and no purpose, they cannot be the origin or the first cause of the universe.\textsuperscript{667} Likewise, the author rejects the idea that this universe is self-existent; nothing can exist without first having someone create it, he reasons.\textsuperscript{668} With regard to the Confucian concepts of Principle and Material Forces or Supreme Ultimate as the first cause, he uses a similar argument to dismiss them. For him, these metaphysical concepts are devoid of intelligence and living characters to be the universe’s creator,\textsuperscript{669} an argument used in \textit{ETR}. He also explains the nature of yin and yang and of the Five Elements to demonstrate that they cannot be the first cause of everything.\textsuperscript{670} He concludes this section with a discussion on the attributes of God to show that God alone is worthy to be called the originator of all life forms.\textsuperscript{671}

\textbf{On the Worship of Ancient Men and Women}

In Chapter 1 of Part II, the author attacks the worship of the deities in pre-modern Vietnam. In the question of the Confucian scholar we read:

The people of our country not only worship the heaven and earth, but also worship Thành Hoàng [God of Moats and Walls], Laozi, Ngọc Hoàng

\textsuperscript{666} Aristotle posits four causes, or four principles of explanation, for the make-up of all things: the material cause (the substance of which the thing is made), the formal cause (its design), the efficient cause (its maker and builder), and the final cause (its purpose or function).

\textsuperscript{667} \textit{Bien Phan Ta Chinh}, Part I, Chapter 3, pp. 56-60.

\textsuperscript{668} \textit{Bien Phan Ta Chinh}, Part I, Chapter 3, pp. 60-62, 80-82.

\textsuperscript{669} \textit{Bien Phan Ta Chinh}, Part I, Chapter 3, pp. 62-68.

\textsuperscript{670} \textit{Bien Phan Ta Chinh}, Part I, Chapter 3, pp. 68-77.

\textsuperscript{671} \textit{Bien Phan Ta Chinh}, Part I, Chapter 3, pp. 82-85.
[Jade Emperor], Chung Qui, Avalokitesvara, Thổ Chủ [Land Guardian], Tiên Sư [First Teacher], as well as Tảo Quân [Lord of the Hearth], Sakyamuni Buddha, Guanyu, and many others. The other day you explained why we should not worship the heaven and earth, now we would like to know who these deities are. Are they worthy to be worshipped?672

The author gives an historical account of each of these deities, in the same manner as in Treatise, to show that these mortal men and women are not gods and should not be worshipped as such. In his discussions, the author draws information from some sources that did not appear in the other works that we have examined, for example, the accounts on Laozi and Guanyu.673 His explanations of the Thành Hoàng, Tảo Quân, and Tiên Sư are also different from what is given in ETR and Treatise.674

On Superstitions

In chapter 3 of part II, the author evaluates the reputed powers of the “Daoist” priests (phù thủy pháp môn). These include saving someone from imminent death (cải tử hoàn sanh), dispelling bad fortune (giải ách tống tai), protecting with amulets, “breaking the prison” (phá ngục), and calling up the souls through a medium.675 The author describes these as tricks concocted by sorcerers and magicians to deceive people and make money. In some cases, demonic power helps these deceivers achieve their tasks.

672 Bien Phan Ta Chinh, Part II, Chapter 1, p. 77. My translation.

673 See the respective sections in Bien Phan Ta Chinh, Part II, Chapter 1, pp. 88-90, 95, 99-101.

674 See the respective sections in Bien Phan Ta Chinh, Part II, Chapter 1, pp. 87, 90, 104.

675 Bien Phan Ta Chinh, Part II, Chapter 3, pp. 150-54.
Other practices such as divination (including the use of *Classic of Changes* for divining), physiognomy, astrology, and geomancy are also explained and dismissed as superstitious. The main argument against these practices makes use of the inconsistencies in the lives of their practitioners to dismiss their efficacy. 676

The author uses scientific principles to explain popular beliefs about natural phenomena, according to which the sky is darkened because the sun and moon “eat each other” (i.e., solar and lunar eclipses) and the thunderbolt is the heavenly punishment for the wicked. 677 The Buddhist doctrine of transmigration of the souls and the prohibition on killing animals are dismissed as inconsistent with reason and Confucian morality, 678 an argument used in China and Vietnam since the sixteenth century.

**Evaluation of Confucian Teachings and Practices**

*Distinguishing* is also devoted to a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of Confucianism in Chapter 2 of Part II. This section marks the difference between this work and its predecessors. Here we see a direct criticism of Confucianism, an attitude that could not have existed before the 1860s. The Christian authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries relied on what is common in Confucian and Christian moralities to entice conversion to Christianity; hence they refrained from a direct attack on Confucianism. In the new era of religious freedom guaranteed by the French colonial

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676 *Bien Phan Ta Chinh*, Part II, Chapter 3, pp. 155-60.

677 *Bien Phan Ta Chinh*, Part II, Chapter 3, pp. 161-64.

powers, the author of *Distinguishing* does not hesitate to show the limitations of
Confucian teachings and morality.

Confident in his ability to challenge the orthodoxy of Confucianism, the author
approaches carefully to expose its weakness. Using the Socratic method of questioning,
he strategically shows the “confusing nature” of Confucian teachings and practices to
force the Confucian scholars to admit their inconsistencies. For example, he questions
the Vietnamese view of Confucius as divine simply because he had instituted the system
of writing and thus education. The inventor of *Nôm* script was not considered divine
and worshipped as such, so why should Confucius be? Not only was Confucius a
mortal and thus limited in his knowledge — for example, he was silent on matters of the
spiritual world — but he also proposed an imperfect system of morality. Discrimination
against women and the practice of polygamy, to name a few, are cited as contrary to
human dignity.

Among the Three Religions, Confucianism had dominated Vietnamese religious
and cultural customs for centuries. The challenge of this monopoly by the Christians of
late nineteenth century was a bold move to assert that their religion is intellectually
comparable with Confucianism, and that Christianity cannot be easily dismissed as a
superstition of the masses as Buddhism and Daoism have been since the fifteenth century.

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679 *Bien Phan Ta Chinh*, Part II, Chapter 2, pp. 117-121.

680 Since Vietnamese have used the Chinese system of writing for centuries, it was the common perception
that Confucius was the originator of this system of writing, hence Chinese characters were often considered
by many people, especially by the illiterate, as “words of the sages.” This might be a result of generations
of Vietnamese learning of the Confucian classics that often begins with the phrase “the Master said....”

ETR and Distinguishing

The greatest influence of ETR on Distinguishing appears in the discussions about Buddhism. The accounts of Sakyamuni Buddha, the arrival of Buddhism in China, and the diatribes against Buddhism by Chinese Confucians unmistakably bear the mark of ETR. The section on “Daoist practices” (Chapter 3 of Part II) also repeats the information and argumentation from ETR, but in more extended discussion. The main difference is that the author considered the rite of Breaking the Prison a sorcerer’s practice rather than a Buddhist one.

Conclusion

This chapter situates ETR in the larger context of apologetic literature. If ETR grows from the thoughts and style of its predecessors — Matteo Ricci’s True Meaning and Alexandre de Rhodes’ Cathechismus — it inspires a generation of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Catholic apologetics and catechisms. All three works examined in this chapter bear the marks of ETR, in style, ideas, arguments, or method. The second chapter of Treatise can be considered a summary of the essential points of ETR. Conference is an expanded and refined version of ETR. Finally, the topics and figures discussed in Distinguishing bear a strong resemblance to those of ETR, even though a

682 Compare Bien Phan Chinh Ta Tu Quien, Part II, Chapter 1, pp. 96-99, 108-111, with ETR Book 3, articles 1 and 2.
literary relationship between the works cannot be established with certainty. Although the manuscript of *ETR* (and even the Latin version by Adriano di Santa Thecla) was never published, the voice of its anonymous author was carried through the writings of its successors and reached beyond the original Tonkinese audience to many generations of Vietnamese Catholics until the middle of the twentieth century.
CHAPTER NINE

CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS:

AN EVALUATION OF THE ERRORS OF THE THREE RELIGIONS

A close reading of ETR within its historical and literary context does not permit a comprehensive evaluation of Vietnamese traditional religions. While the work is a valuable document for a contemporary reader to examine the religious beliefs and ritual practices in pre-modern Tonkin, neither its selective treatment of the topics discussed nor its author’s theological agenda can be ignored.

This chapter attempts to evaluate the theological message of ETR, its assessment of the traditional Vietnamese religions, and finally, the contribution as well as the limitation of apologetic works in the Christian approach to Asian religious practices in general and Vietnamese religious traditions in particular.

Theological Message of ETR

The attempt to penetrate truth and separate it from falsehood has been a main concern of Christian theology since its early history. In the genre of apologetics, the emphasis on separating falsehood from truth is even stronger since the goal and concern of Christian apologetics is to convince the hearer to accept the truth of Christianity.
Addressed to new and potential converts, *ETR* is preoccupied with distinguishing true belief and worship of Christianity from the “false” ones of the other religions. Such is also the concern of religious literature in Vietnam in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Deeply aware of the pluralistic religious setting of Vietnam, Christian authors strived to make the case for the Christian rejection of certain rites and practices of the Vietnamese general population.

The purpose of *ETR*, as I have shown in Chapter 4, is to persuade its reader of the “errors” of contemporary non-Christian beliefs and practices. Since the author of *ETR* wished that “[Vietnamese] people may know the true Lord, worshipping and following the true way, so that they may attain the blessing of dwelling in the eternal paradise,” he set out to expose the errors that “are contrary to the holy way to the Lord of Heaven.” The errors seen by the author as inhibiting a total devotion to the Lord of Heaven can be divided into three categories: (1) erroneous beliefs; (2) idolatry; and (3) superstitions.

Erroneous Beliefs

The author discusses two kinds of errors of belief: mistaken views of God and false beliefs about the power of the spirits.

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683 *ETR*, Preface.

684 *ETR*, 1.
**Mistaken Views of God**

The first mistaken view presented in *ETR* concerns the sovereignty of God. For the author, God is the absolute sovereign Being and no other figure can be equated to him. He is the first cause of the universe and the sustainer of the cosmos in all its life forms. According to the author, a major fault of Confucius was ignorance of this Creator. It led him to “teach people to worship heaven and earth and all creatures in them but forget to teach about the great Lord who creates heaven, earth, and all things.” In the Christian view, equating the creatures with the Creator is a great error.

Another mistaken view concerns the living and intelligent nature of God. The main reason for the author’s rejection of the Neo-Confucian concepts of cosmological realities such as Supreme Ultimate and Principle and Material Force as divine is that they lack the characteristics of a living being. The author’s basic principle is that “life begets life.” A non-living entity cannot be the primary source of life; at best it can be a secondary cause. From this perspective, the author urges Confucians to accept God, whom he calls “the Lord of Heaven and Earth,” as the first cause. The assertion that “The Lord of Heaven creates the Supreme Ultimate” must be added to the Confucian statement: “The Supreme Ultimate generates the Two Modes; the Two Modes generate the Four Forms; the Four Forms are transformed into the myriad of things according to their species and orders,” to make it complete and meaningful. Here we see a

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685 *ETR*, 21-22.

686 *ETR*, 7. See also my discussion in Chapter 5.
willingness on the part of the Christian author to use the existing philosophical tradition to explain his doctrine of God.

A third mistake in the author’s eyes is the identification of the Sovereign-on-High with God. Although “Sovereign-on-High” is the ancient name of the Most High, the author argues that the term has been too tainted by later popular and scholarly traditions to be a suitable name of God. For the author, the Neo-Confucian notion of Sovereign-on-High borders on pantheism because it does not clearly distinguish between the Creator and creation. By not differentiating Sovereign-on-High from the heavens, the Confucian negates the truth that “heaven cannot have the same dignity as its Lord.”

ETR insists that Christians should use the name “the true Lord of heaven and earth” and not “Sovereign-on-High,” to express their belief in the One who “creates and rules over heaven, earth, humans and all things,” rather than in One who is identical with heaven.

**False Beliefs**

False beliefs result from wrongly ascribing the power to grant favors and protection from evil to various spirits of nature and mortal beings. Natural objects and phenomena such as the sun, the moon, the stars, and the seasons are only creatures that operate according to the laws of nature. They possess neither the consciousness to hear the petition of the people, nor the power to make things happen. The author presents similar arguments against deified men and women who are honored as gods or spirits.

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687 *ETR*, 15.

688 *ETR*, 17.
(thần) by Vietnamese people. The inefficacy of the many figures that Vietnamese worship, be it Shennong, Confucius, Laozi, the Buddha, the Tutelary Genies, or the Kitchen God, to name a few, is exposed throughout the text. These gods or spirits are said to have no power of their own to affect the living. As creatures, they are subject to God, who is the absolute ruler of the universe. Thus, whatever power they might possess is ultimately derived from God.

The monotheistic message is clear in the dialogues. People should not mistake any creature for its creator. There is no other being but God who has the absolute power over humanity. Only the Lord of heaven and earth “who takes charge of all affairs in heaven and earth to care for human beings in every way” is the worthy object of human hope and trust.  

**Idolatry**

From the Christian standpoint, *idolatria* — the worship or honoring of any creature, natural or spiritual, except God — is a direct violation of the Judeo-Christian First Commandment (“You shall have no other gods beside me”). Catholic theology sees idolatry as a grave sin against faith since it deprives God of the divine exclusive honor. Nevertheless, the word “idolatry” or false worship (*thờ dối, thờ quấy*) does not appear in *ETR*, as it does in the apologetic works of the nineteenth century. Instead, there are only

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689 *ETR*, 44.
admonitions that one should not offer sacrifices to popular figures because it is contrary to the way of the Lord of Heaven.

According to the author, mistaken views of God and the false beliefs give rise to erroneous worship. The author does not condemn the worship of other spirits as being formally sinful, but he sees it as inculpable ignorance of the true way. Erroneous worship resulted from the corruption of the tradition handed down by the sages and philosophers. People did not understand true worship as it was originally intended by the ancient sage-kings. Instead, they blindly followed customs invented by later generations. The author gives his account of the origin of false worship as follows:

The ancient kings, especially the sage-kings Yao and Shun, probably did not make sacrifices to the Sovereign-on-High, the Spirit of Earth, and the Six Spirits of Nature, as recorded in the books of Documents and of Rites. Those sage-kings were known in the Confucian tradition as ones who possessed great wisdom and virtue. Hence, their knowledge was vast and their righteousness profound. Those kings lived in the ancient time when everyone in the world still worshipped one great Lord who created heaven and earth, humans and things. Consequently, we must think those sage-kings kept the right worship to the one true Lord of heaven and earth, calling him “the Sovereign-on-High.” They told their people to worship that one Sovereign only.

In later periods, people chased after worldly things. Gradually their minds were clouded, preventing them from remembering and recognizing the Lord who created heaven and earth and all things, and who is the utmost esteemed, the highest honored among the gods. Since the Lord is invisible, they took the visible sky to be the Sovereign-on-High. They took the creatures in heaven and earth to be objects of worship. After a few generations, the kings and people began to worship in the same way.... Therefore, we must not take the established rites as the right ones, and worship the Sovereign-on-High in the same way as heaven and other creatures of heaven and earth. We should not think the ancient kings established those rites for the people, because it was not fitting for these sage-kings, who ruled people with virtue to do so. Rather, we
should think those kings worshipped the one true Lord of Heaven and earth, who is the Sovereign-on-High, different from the heavens.  

According to this account, the ancient sage-kings taught true knowledge and worship of God but people of later generations failed to observe the practices. Because “their minds are clouded” and do not know the true God, people are misled by “the demon teaching them to worship the spirits.” Consequently, the author strives to enlighten these erroneous worshippers of the inefficacy of the spirits and to exhort them to abandon the futile worship of these spirits. It would be “vain and useless” to offer sacrifices to the spirits and ask for their help.

The author repeatedly persuades people to return to the true worship due to God. He writes:

We must worship and sacrifice only to the true Lord of heaven and earth, who is infinitely knowing, infinitely powerful, who governs the heaven and earth and everything in it, who makes the seasons change, and who takes charge of all affairs in heaven and earth to care for human beings in every way.  

In another place, the author comments:

Why should one need to offer sacrifices to heaven and earth, deceased rulers, and other spirits? One only needs to sacrifice to the true Lord of heaven and earth, who has the power to rule over everything in heaven and on earth, and who keeps people from having a wayward heart, and enlightens the rulers to govern their people with justice and peace in the country…. Heaven and earth, the kings and lords of the past, or the spirits do not bring peace and security to this country. Rather, it is the Lord of Heaven, creator of heaven and earth and ruler of everything, who gives

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690 ETR, 33-34.

691 ETR, 65.

692 ETR, 43.
peace and security to all. Therefore, you must sacrifice only to the Lord of Heaven; do not sacrifice anymore to heaven and earth and the others.\footnote{ETR, 48, 50.}

**Superstitions**

The third type of errors condemned in *ETR* involves beliefs and practices that the author considers superstitious and foolish. A false conception of natural phenomena — such as the movements of stars, thunderstorms, or solar and lunar eclipses — underlies the fear of their powers in human life. The author uses scientific theories to demythologize these phenomena, and consequently, to liberate the minds of the people from fear and ignorance. For instance, thunderstorms happen because of the collision of “hot and cold air,” not through the action of any thunder god.\footnote{Cf. *ETR*, 116-117.} Solar and lunar eclipses are shadows caused by the regular movements of these heavenly bodies in their orbits, not “the sun and moon eating each other, as people say.”\footnote{ETR, 140.}

In other cases, the popularity of magical healing, astrology, divination, and physiognomy is traced to the belief in ungodly powers that leads to superstitious practices. Obsession with fate lures people to these practices and diminishes their faith in God’s power. To dispel the fear and irrationality of these practices, the author highlights their inconsistency in the results sought. For example, if offering sacrifices to the stars can help one avoid troubles, then why is it the case that those who do so “still have...
diseases and trouble, but those who do not are still prosperous and healthy? If an astral reading is supposed to help predict the outcome of a battle, then why are so many battles lost despite favorable predictions?

With regard to the custom of acting only at favorable times or days, the author urges his audience to trust in God’s providence and act morally to ensure good results:

The results are good or bad, not because of the auspicious or inauspicious timing, but because people do good and avoid evil. If there are lucky or unlucky days, then why do twins, born from the same mother, at the same hour and day, end up with different fortunes? One is wealthy and elegant but the other is poor and base; one enjoys longevity but the other has a short life. Rather, their fortune is determined by the Lord of Heaven. Furthermore, one should not believe in the day of “fatality” and avoid going out to conduct business or work. Life and death are normal phenomena; birth and death occur every day. People die not because of an unlucky day but through other causes; that is why many deaths occur every day. The great Lord in heaven decides how long a person lives; a person will die when his or her date of death arrives.

Prediction of the future is regarded as useless because one’s “fortune is determined by the Lord of Heaven.” These practices are condemned as foolish and their believers naïve and vulnerable to the prey of magicians, sorcerers, fortune-tellers, and other charlatans.

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696 ETR, 116.
697 Cf. ETR, 136.
698 ETR, 118-119.
699 Ibid.
Christianity and the Traditional Religions of Vietnam

Christianity and the Other Religions

The view of ETR reflects the long-standing position of Christianity vis-à-vis other religions. The assessment of non-Christian religions in ETR displays a largely “exclusivist” view of Christian theology toward other faiths. Until Vatican II, the formula *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* [there is no salvation outside of the Church] was used as a principle for missionary work. Catholic missionaries regarded Christianity as either a total “replacement” or “fulfillment” of other religions. In essence, exclusivism is the rejection of other religious worldviews based on one’s own religious world view and concepts. Religious exclusivists claim that their religion is the only correct or true religion and other religions are false or defective.

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702 The categories of “replacement” and “fulfillment” are discussed by Paul Knitter in *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, Parts I and II, pp. 19-103.

703 In recent years, there have been critiques of Christian exclusivism from a pluralist point of view. While these critiques are from the modern era and not necessarily applied to the pre-modern world, they provide a
From its beginning, Christianity saw itself as a missionary religion with a mandate to convey God’s message to the people of Israel and the Gentiles (Cf. Mat 28:19). Born into a multi-religious milieu of the Greco-Roman world, the early Christians developed their identity in that context. In the process, they had to define themselves against both the Jewish community and the larger Greco-Roman culture. Marginalized by the Jewish community, they developed a theology of replacement, which portrays the Church as the New Israel and Christians as the “true” inheritors of Abraham. As inheritors of the monotheism of Israel, the early Christians considered themselves the true keepers of the covenant that had been renewed by Jesus the Messiah.

Whereas the relationship between Christians and Jews during the first few centuries was ambiguous, Christians emphasized the distance between themselves and the practitioners of pagan religions from the beginning. Although Paul and other New Testament writers were disappointed that their fellow Jews did not join them in their commitment to Jesus, these writers accepted the religious heritage of Israel as their own. The same cannot be said with regard to the early Christian reaction to pagan religions.


Here, Christians and Jews were on the same front — they showed the same deep disdain for the idolatry of the Greeks and Romans.\textsuperscript{707}

Because they were a small and persecuted minority, Christians had to assert their identity with great zeal and sacrifice. Concern for survival formed a defensive attitude among Christians, especially in matters of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Absolute claims in faith and morals helped to safeguard Christians from being absorbed by the religious syncretism of the times (e.g., Gnosticism). Early Christian rules of faith were based on the certainty of their beliefs and practices. Any compromise with the rules of faith was seen as weakening their unity, threatening their identity, and endangering their survival.\textsuperscript{708}

Once the Christians had confidence in their identity as a chosen people and in the universal nature of their religion, they embarked on a mission to evangelize the whole world, seeking to convert pagans to the Christian way of life. From a cultural perspective, Christian evangelization has both confronted and accommodated the cultures it encounters. In the process, Christian missionaries adopted some elements, rejected others, and transformed still other elements into practices acceptable to Christianity. In the battle against Roman and Germanic paganism, religious leaders developed a superiority attitude towards non-Christians. By the high Middle Ages, the formula \textit{extra}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{707}{Paul had a negative view of the Greek and Roman religions. He placed \textit{eidōlolatria} [idolatry] and \textit{pharmakeia} [sorcery] on the same level with other “works of the flesh” such as “fornication, impurity, licentiousness … enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.” (Gal 5:19-21).}

\footnotetext{708}{Henry Chadwick, \textit{Heresy and Orthodoxy in the Early Church} (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1991).}
\end{footnotes}
ecclesiam nulla salus was applied not only to schismatics and heretics but also to people outside of Christianity.

Since by the late Middle Ages, Western Europe had only one dominant religion and culture (i.e., Christianity), missionaries were not theologically and culturally prepared to understand and respect believers of other religions as co-pilgrims on the journey toward God. In addition, unfriendly relations between European Christians, Jews, and Muslims did not foster an acceptance of the followers of other religious traditions as respectable partners in dialogue. Missionaries presented Christianity to the people of East Asia as superior to and more logical than their native religions. Largely out of ignorance and cultural pride, missionaries treated the East Asian religions as wholesale superstition.709

A Christian View of the Vietnamese Religions

As we have seen, the author of ETR claims that in the “way of the Lord of Heaven” (Christianity) alone can one finds fulfillment and salvation. Non-Christians will not attain “eternal happiness” (salvation) unless they believe in and worship the true Lord of Heaven. The view of ETR towards the traditional religions of Vietnam reflects the early self-understanding of Christianity within the larger Greco-Roman world. As a minority group in Annam, Vietnamese Christians struggled to build their identity amidst hostile forces just as their spiritual forebears did in the Roman Empire in the first few centuries of Christian existence. Just as the early Christians appropriated Greek

709 I have made a similar point elsewhere. See also Anh Tran, Hội Dong Tu Giao (STL Thesis, 2006), Chapter 5.
philosophy but rejected Greek and Roman religions, the Christians in Vietnam
appropriated Confucian morality but not Confucian rituals. With regard to Daoism and
Buddhism, the Christians rejected both of these religions as idolatry and superstition, a
similar approach to the attitude of the early Christians toward pagan religions.

The drive to protect a monotheistic belief in and an exclusive worship to God was
behind the engagements of the ETR’s author with the traditional religions of Vietnamese.
His attitudes ranged from dismissive hostility in cases of Daoism and Buddhism to
reluctant acceptance of Confucianism. Disdain for Daoism and Buddhism is echoed in
the author’s refusal to engage their adherents in discussing their beliefs. In his
assessment Daoism is a “heterodox teaching of emptiness” and Buddhism is a “heterodox
teaching of extinction.” These negative assessments are inadequate and based on the
author’s limited exposure to popular religious practices of these two religions.

Even Confucianism — accepted by most Vietnamese people and rulers as
normative — is portrayed in ETR as inferior to the “religion of the Lord of Heaven.”
While the author views Confucian moral exhortation and self-cultivation are
praiseworthy and proper, he claims that a moral life alone does not bring eternal reward
without knowing and worshipping God. The author sees Christianity as the fulfillment of
Confucianism, whereas the Neo-Confucianism of his day was judged to have been
corrupted by other practices and thus ceased to be a beacon of light to guide people to
attain eternal life.
A Christian Appraisal of Confucianism

Reading the text, one cannot help but notice the author’s favorable attitude toward Confucianism over against Daoism and Buddhism. The main interlocutor of the Christian author is a Confucian Scholar who assumes the role of a spokesman for all the three religions. The author admits an admiration of Confucian moral teaching because “all noble persons take Confucianism to be the orthodox way and call it the ‘way of great learning.’” Confucianism has many fine qualities which the author finds compatible with the “way of the Lord of Heaven and Earth” (Christianity):

Confucianism has many qualities that belong to the true way of the Lord of heaven and earth. It transmits to the human heart the Five Virtues (of humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness) that everyone must keep within the Five Relations (between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brothers, friend and friend.) It also teaches people to ‘cultivate themselves, regulate their families, and govern their states until peace is achieved in the world.’ Those ideas belong to the way of the Lord of heaven and earth, which is instilled in the human heart.

However, the author judges Confucianism to be inadequate, because it “also has many erroneous teachings mixed with the right teachings.” The “error” of Confucianism is failure to recognize that there is one Lord and Creator of the universe and that one must render worship to that Lord. Thus, for the author, the way of Confucius “partly conforms

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710 ETR, 1.
711 ETR, 21.
to the true way of the Lord of Heaven, which resides in the human heart, and partly is contrary to that true way.”\textsuperscript{712} Examples of these errors include the following:

Confucian scholars teach people to worship heaven and earth and all creatures in them, but forgets [to teach about] the great Lord who creates heaven, earth, and all things. They teach people to ‘serve the Sovereign-on-High, to fear the Sovereign-on-High’ but that Sovereign is said to be identical with heaven, not different from heaven. They also teach people to worship the dead, as if they had the power to protect and bestow favors on their descendants.\textsuperscript{713}

Like other Western missionaries to China, the author considered the ancient sage kings of China to have been monotheists and true worshippers of God, and the present state of Confucian worship to be a degeneration of that original orientation toward God. Thus, for a Confucian scholar to be true to his tradition, he must accept the Christian message and worship God as well.

Through his dialogue with the Confucian Scholar, the author hopes to convince his audience to rediscover the monotheistic belief in God and to worship God above everything else. The author’s approach is clear. First, he argues for the recognition of God as the true source of all life. Once one accepts that God is the Creator of heaven and earth and all beings in it, it follows that God is the highest being of all spirits and must be worshiped above all things. Regarding the worship of other spirits, the author simply challenges it on the ground of ineffectiveness rather than declaring them as false or evil. True worship and avoidance of superstitious practices are the two constant themes that appear thorough \textit{ETR}, as we have seen.

\textsuperscript{712} \textit{ETR}, 22.

\textsuperscript{713} Ibid.
A Critical View of Daoism and Buddhism

While the author shows respect for Confucianism, he does not share the same attitude toward Daoism and Buddhism. He considers the Confucians learned men and Daoists and Buddhists ignorant people. He almost always quotes from the Confucian sources in his arguments, especially from the materials that are familiar to the literati. On the contrary, he does not exhibit a similar familiarity with Daoist and Buddhist texts, citing only from the Buddhist Sutra of Forty-two Sections, the esoteric Buddhist text of Tâm Đăng [Lamp of the Heart], and a single line from the Daodejing. He may have lacked access to texts of the non-Confucian traditions, or he may have deemed that these traditions, as being practiced by their adherents, were not worthy of further investigation.

Since orthodox Confucians consider Daoist and Buddhist teachings as “alien” (đị đạo), the author makes extensive use of Confucian arguments against Daoism and Buddhism. He also uses examples from historical figures both in China and Vietnam to dismiss any positive value of these two religions. Like the Confucian Scholar, he dismisses the other two religions as “contrary to morality and norms” as “the heterodox (or alien) teachings of ‘emptiness’ and ‘quiescence’ (đị đạo hư vô tịch diệt chi giáo). Elsewhere, he calls Daoism and Buddhism the “heterodox (or alien)

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714 ETR, 95.
715 The term “emptiness” (hư vô) here refers to the emptiness of reality.
716 The term “quiescence” or “extinction” (tích diệt) here refers to the extinction of passion.
717 This is a phrase used by Zhu Xi in the preface to his commentary Great Learning: Chapters and Verses, and it is often repeated in the Confucian circle.
ways of Laozi and Śākyamuni (Buddha) [which] use clever words that sound true.”718 In other words, both are counterfeit religions when viewed through the lens of Confucian orthodoxy.

Two reasons seem to explain the author’s dismissive attitude toward Buddhism and Daoism. First, he sees that these two religions are dangers to the Christian converts. Second, he attributes the degradation of Confucianism to its corruption by the beliefs and practices of the other two religions.

The author worries that the religions of the Buddha and Laozi are seductive to the Christian converts. Because of their popularity, these religions can mislead simple people, steer them from the truth, and lead them into falsehood through “deceitful magic and divination.” Consequently, the converts can fall back to the old ways and “injure themselves in this life and forever in the next.”719

Of the two “heterodox ways,” Buddhism is presumed to be the more dangerous one because it presents the Buddha as an alternative savior to the Christian God. According to the author, Buddhists claim that the Buddha “possesses power over heaven and earth to grant people wealth, fame and longevity.”720 With this claim, the Buddha is treated as another divine sovereign who can detract the convert from a wholehearted devotion to God. Furthermore, the author fears that Christian converts would be seduced by Buddhist doctrines that resemble the truth. Buddhism could trick people’s minds into

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718 ETR, 141.
719 ETR, 96.
720 ETR, 141.
believing these doctrines, leading them into false worship and superstitious practices which eventually bring them to damnation. He explains:

Buddhism frequently uses good words that seem to exhort people to practice the virtues, such as “quiescence,” “compassion,” “purity of mind,” “merit,” and other words like these. That is the reason why those who do not examine the truth take Buddhist teachings to be true and right… Those crafty words only resemble the virtuous way on the surface, but in fact they are all empty, useless, and wicked, bringing people harm.\textsuperscript{721}

With regard to Daoism, the author considers it a religion of magicians and sorcerers, as did other missionaries.\textsuperscript{722} \textit{ETR} dismisses Daoism as an “empty doctrine which contains nothing real and beneficial.”\textsuperscript{723} In the text, the author claims that Laozi is the originator of sorcery, crediting to him the invention of magic, charms, alchemy, and potions for immortality.\textsuperscript{724} The author argues:

Daoist sorcerers of past and present have always relied on the magic of Laozi. If their medicine is effective and if they possess the secret of immortality, why was the medicine not used to save them from death and to prolong their lives?\textsuperscript{725}

\textsuperscript{721} \textit{ETR}, 141-42.

\textsuperscript{722} Adriano di Santa Thecla also calls Daoism “the sect of the magician.” Until the twentieth century, the missionary portrait of Daoism in general was negative. Most descriptions of Daoism did not distinguish between Daoist philosophy and Daoist magic and alchemy, conflating the two as Chinese superstitions. Henri Maspero’s masterpiece \textit{Le Taoisme et les Religions chinois} (1950), ET: \textit{Taoism and Chinese Religion} (Amherst, MA: University of Massachussets, 1981) is an early serious attempt to understand Daoism as both a philosophy and a religion.

\textsuperscript{723} \textit{ETR}, 100-101.

\textsuperscript{724} \textit{ETR}, 99. In reality, these practices have nothing to do with Laozi but they are products of religious Daoism from the Han dynasty onward.

\textsuperscript{725} \textit{ETR}, 105.
The seduction of Daoism and Buddhism does not only affect the common people, but, as the author sees it, they also have corrupted Confucianism and led to its downfall. He gives the following reasons:

The ways of Laozi and Śākyamuni are the heterodox teachings of “emptiness” and “quiescence.” Those two ways are contrary to ethics and norms in every way. They contain nothing good and congruent to the orthodox way but often plot and plan [against] it, telling lies and deceptions to lure the ignorant. They confuse the minds of many gentlemen and make them lose the right and virtuous way. The deceiver often strives to speak with charm as if he speaks the truth. In the same way, Daoism and Buddhism frequently use crafty words resembling the truth to make people believe in them.726

Confucianism, despite its effort to proscribe Daoism and Buddhism, can neither destroy these religions nor prohibit people from following them because it has been infected by their alien doctrines and practices. Thus, rather than being the beacon of truth, Confucianism not only failed to correct the errors of the other two religions but has fallen into the same errors it condemns.

**Confucian Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy**

In denouncing Buddhism and Daoism, the author shared the same negative view of these religions that the Confucian elites had held since the fifteenth century. Vietnamese rulers raised Confucianism to the status of the state ideology at the expense of Daoism and Buddhism. An example from the time of King Lê Thánh Tông, one of the

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726 ETR. 95.
most Confucian kings of Vietnam, helps understand the negative attitude of Confucians toward Buddhism and Daoism.

At the national civil exam given during the fourth year of the Quang-thuân reign (1463), the king asked the prospective candidates:

When the ancient sages followed the Heavenly will to rule the country, their Way (đạo) was pure. Later, after the doctrines of the Buddha and Laozi started, discussion began on the Three Doctrines (tam giáo), and thus the way of ruling through the human heart was not as before. I observe that the teachings of the Buddha and Laozi deceive and mislead the people (hoặc thế vu dân) leading to the stagnation of the virtues (of humaneness and righteousness) (sung tác nhân nghĩa) in society. Their harmful effects have been incalculable, and yet many people still believe in and follow them. The way of the sages in every way – whether keeping the morality of Three Bonds and Five Norms in general or shaping the culture in particular customs – is practical in daily life. Yet, people do not believe in and follow it as they do the Buddhist teachings, why is it so?\(^\text{727}\)

On this question, the laureate Lương Thế Vinh (1441-?), a renowned mathematician of medieval Vietnam, answered:

[In the ancient days], when the rulers were wise and the people were good, the orthodox way was implemented in the world like the sun and moon brightening the sky; thus how could the heterodox teachings appear? … From the time of the Han dynasty until now, the Way of the sages has been like a light smoke, and the doctrines of the Buddha and Laozi have developed. The way of the Buddha, which takes the “quiescence” (tích diệt) as its doctrine, came into China from the time of Emperor Han Mingdi. Daoism, which takes ‘emptiness’ (hư vô) as its tradition, also originated during the time of the Han dynasty, but it has only grown since the Tang and Song era. After these periods, the doctrine of Three Religions came into existence. Nevertheless, the Way of the sages (Confucianism) is still the orthodox one and the doctrines of the Buddha and Laozi are false ways. How can the latter doctrines be compared with the former ones to make up the Three Doctrines?

The people of later generations have not critically examined their origin, and therefore they commit errors. For that reason, the way of ruling through the human heart has not been as it was in ancient times. Alas! The doctrines of the Buddha and Laozi resemble the truth but they are in fact contrary to the truth. Thus, the deception of the people that leads to the blockage of the virtues (of humaneness and righteousness) in society is indeed real…. If the Way of the sages is from heaven, but it is not understood enough to be able to [...] 728, not enough to be able to bring happiness to the people, then the commoners do not follow it. Then the Way of the sages is no different from the heterodox ways. They contrast like yin and yang. When one side prospers the other declines, and vice versa. 729

Lương Thế Vinh’s arguments are echoed in ETR. The author of ETR blames the decline of Confucianism in Tonkin of his day on the Confucian compromise with Buddhism and Daoism. While not being explicit, he seems to be critical of the idea of “three religions out of the same sources” (tam giáo đồng nguyên) advocated by some seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Confucians. The author considers the acceptance of Buddhist and Daoist doctrines by his contemporary Confucians as due to the lack of critical judgment:

When hearing anything, the gentlemen need to examine it thoroughly because no wise person should believe everything he hears. [People of] this world make up many teachings to make themselves famous rather than paying attention to whether they conform to reason or not. Some people in the past invented a few teachings, and later generations expanded them and turned them into customs. People of today claim that we should take the ancient rules and old customs handed down by our forebears to be the norm; whoever does not follow these norms is branded as guilty and ignorant. In this way, everyone practices [these customs] as habits without understanding their falsehood.730

728 Missing words.


730 ETR, 95-96.
The addition of Catholic Christianity to the three religions of Vietnam created a new dynamic in relations among the religions. It challenged the Confucian domination of society. The chief aims of the Confucian literati were to promote harmony in social relations under their leadership. While Buddhism and Daoism during these centuries were controlled and regulated by Confucian authority, Christianity refused to blend with the Confucian vision of harmony. With its own system of metaphysics, ethics and religious practices, Christianity competed with Confucianism for the fulfillment of the intellectual and religious needs of the people. In ETR the Christian scholar claims that his religion can correct the deficiency of Confucianism. His attitude reflects the self-confidence of Christians that their religion can overcome the monopoly of Confucianism. Thus, ETR is valuable for giving the reader insights into the self-assured attitude of Christians when confronted by Vietnamese Confucians.

A Contemporary Assessment of ETR

ETR was written as a Catholic apologetic work whose purpose was to convince its readers, new or potential converts, that “the holy way of the Lord of Heaven is the great and most righteous way; it is the way everybody and everywhere must believe and practice to attain peace.” On the one hand, such exclusivism on the part of Christianity is no longer warranted in the present atmosphere of interreligious dialogue. On the other hand, a modern reader is tempted to view this work from the perspective of contemporary

731 ETR, 1.
interreligious dialogue, rather than to examine their merits within their own contexts and in their own times, and thus to dismiss this type of work as a product of an ignorant past and not worthy of a serious engagement. When apologetic works are studied in their own context, however, a more nuanced critique is in order.

What insights can be gained from a close reading of *ETR* in terms of its materials on and approach to traditional religions of Vietnam? The following seems to strike me as significant.

**Contributions**

Despite the polemical nature of the work, a good deal can be learned and appreciated from studying it closely. Most important is the light that this work sheds, directly and indirectly, on Vietnamese culture and its religions during the eighteenth century. If one looks past the shortcomings of the work, including its polemical language, *ETR* provides many vivid sketches of reality that the broader literature on Vietnamese religions and cultures has overlooked.

The first is the importance of reason as the driving force behind the debates. The outcome of each discussion is usually decided through the demonstration of cogent arguments. The central concern is, however, not the rhetorical effectiveness but whether the belief or practice being debated is compatible with the Christian faith. The use of reason in evaluating another religion and to validate or refute its beliefs is the common method employed by missionaries. It demonstrates that faith and reason can go hand in hand. In using rational arguments, the author of *ETR* wants his view to be taken
seriously. Since Confucianism also favors reason and debate, the arguments can be an entry for further dialogue and discussion. This strategy of *ETR* provides an opportunity for the Vietnamese readers to critically examine many of the beliefs and practices that they might have taken for granted.

In addition to reason, one sees extensive use of history as a means of bolstering the author’s critique of traditional beliefs and practices. Through his use of numerous examples from both Chinese and Vietnamese history, the author displays with ease a comprehensive knowledge of historical events and figures. In many cases, *ETR* (and its companion *Opusculum*) is the only extant text that attempts to give the historical background of certain beliefs and/or practices. Despite its bias, *ETR* provides useful historical information on the propagation of Daoism and Buddhism from China into Vietnam. There are no other comparable pre-modern sources that describe the development of these two religions in Vietnam. In addition, *ETR* traces the origin of many beliefs and practices as well as providing descriptions of certain extinct and forgotten rituals. In doing so, the text invites the reader to return to a Tonkin of the past.

Invaluable is the vital role of *ETR* in helping us better understand the history of Christian-Vietnamese encounters before the French colonial era. Though the conversations might be a literary device to address the issues involved, they invite the reader to engage with matter that divided the Vietnamese Christians and their fellow countrymen. Despite its limitations and short-comings, *ETR* provide the reader a general idea of what was at stake for the Christian minority. Christians had to explain to themselves and justify to the others why they rejected some of the customary beliefs and
practices. The existence of Vietnamese Christian apologetic literature should vouchsafe its struggle to integrate Christianity into the Vietnamese culture.

Finally, in *ETR*, there is an attempt to engage the Vietnamese religious culture. A striking feature of *ETR* that sets it apart from other Vietnamese Christian writings between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries is the author’s extensive use of the Confucian and Buddhist literature available to him to construct his arguments and refutations. The sheer volume of citations of these writings in the dialogues reminds the reader of their privileged importance in the debates. In quoting Confucian classics and Vietnamese history rather than Western religious sources, the author of *ETR* shows an effort to meet his audience in their own cultural terms, and not his. Even though his readings of the Vietnamese religious heritage were rather superficial, the fact that he chose to engage with his audience in their cultural expressions speaks volumes about his desire to make the Christian faith accessible to a Vietnamese audience. Furthermore, by avoiding lengthy philosophical debates (such as those in Ricci’s *True Meaning*) and by using more examples from historical figures and from daily life to refute the “errors” of the Three Religions, he renders the defense of the Christian beliefs and practices accessible to the common people. Although the arguments used by the author seem at times repetitive, unsophisticated and unconvincing, they help the reader understand and appreciate better the world of those not immersed in a philosophical and theological milieu.
Limitations

Although *ETR* takes the form of a dialogue between a Western (Christian) scholar and an Eastern (Vietnamese) scholar, it is not a work of dialogue. Because of its apologetic agenda, *ETR* suffers from two major problems that inhibit the potential for a true dialogical encounter: the lacks of epistemic humility and cultural empathy.\(^{732}\)

*Lack of Epistemic Humility*

An exclusivist stand is necessary to safeguard one’s religious identity and remind oneself of the importance of truth against religious indifference and relativism. But expressing one’s religious convictions in a polemical spirit can obstruct openness and dialogue. If a believer of one religion (Christian or any other) approaches a believer of another religion with an *a priori* refutation of the others, no real understanding or encounter can take place. Animosities and prejudices fuel intolerant behavior towards other people who do not share the person’s views.

Because of its agenda, *ETR* suffers from a lack of objectivity when it describes and evaluates the religions of Vietnam. Written with an aim to refute the errors of the traditional religions, *ETR*’s biases prevent a full appreciation of the values of these religions. In apologetics, what is of ultimate importance is the defense of the faith. The truth of Christianity is the theological lens for the author to view and evaluate other

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\(^{732}\) These are two of many problems that could inhibit true dialogue. On the topic, see Catherine Cornille, *The Im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Crossroad, 2008).
religions. Only what fits in with this lens is considered legitimate; what jars with its vision is judged superstitious.

The author of *ETR* was also limited by his theology of revelation. He could not accept the East Asian apophatic approach to God. Abstract and non-personal terms for the primal principle of the universe such as *Dao*, the Supreme Ultimate, nothingness or emptiness do not make sense to him. For the author, God has to be a personal, living, all-knowing and all-powerful being to be worthy of worship and trust. That God is an absolute sovereign who demands from all human beings total love and service is taken as a self-evident proposition through natural reason. The vindication of Christian beliefs is presumed and not questioned, an attitude unacceptable in a genuine interreligious dialogue.

*Lack of Cultural Empathy*

The lack of cultural empathy is another impediment to dialogue. For effective dialogue one must understand the culture and background of those with whom one is in dialogue and to whom one speaks of one’s faith. The world’s great religions include many intricate elements involving not only the religious aspect but also the social, political, ethnic and cultural dimensions of their geographical settings. Failure to be sensitive to the diverse expressions of religious experience in various settings leads to misjudgment of another religious belief or practice.

Each religious culture has a different set of symbols, languages, and expressions that needs to be taken into account. Often the filter of one’s own language and cultural or
religious background will distort the meaning of the concept to be understood. Cultural translation is a challenge. For example, when a missionary translates the Vietnamese word thờ as “worship” or “adoration,” they naturally assume the Christian connotation of latria (the exclusive devotion to God) applying to thờ. Likewise, when Vietnamese see sin translated as tội [crime], they immediately think of punishment and miss the nuance of a broken relationship between humanity and the divine. Even if they use the same term, different ideas might arise. When Western Christians read “I bow to Heaven!” (Tôi lạy Trời), they might not always recognize it to be a pledge of submission to God, thinking that the Vietnamese worship the material sky. When Vietnamese hear the words Thiên Chúa [Lord of Heaven] or Thượng Đế [Sovereign-on-High], they might contextualize God in their own understanding of a hierarchy of spirits, whereas God usually means the Absolute Reality for Christians. Thus, effective interreligious dialogue requires an effort to understand the others in their own contexts, rather than simply translating one concept into another by using equivalent terms.

Like other missionaries of his times in Vietnam, the author of ETR did not understand the other religions in their proper terms and concepts, especially with regard to their religious practices. Due to a lack of the cultural and religious training available to the later missionaries such as Léopold Cadière, the author’s portrayal of Vietnamese religions was uneven, emphasizing more their superstitious aspects than their cultural values. The failure to connect beliefs and practices through cultural context led to an

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733 This misunderstanding is expressed in the arguments against naming Sovereign-on-High as God in Article 3 of Book 1. Prejudice prevents the author from recognizing the multivalent use of Heaven (to refer to the material sky as well as the creative power behind the cosmos).
under-appreciation of certain practices such as the cult of Confucius and of ancestors as I have discussed in the previous chapters.

**ETR and Inculturation**

Like any religion, Christianity is situated in its surrounding cultures and interacts with them. Christian mission from its earliest days has been confronted with a dilemma. How does Christianity proclaim its message to all nations and peoples while retaining its identity? How can Christianity maintain its essence without being absorbed into the dominant culture in which it immerses itself? This dilemma has been resolved in whole or in part through a process called “inculturation” by Catholics\(^{734}\) (and “indigenization” or “contextualization” in Protestant circles).

Although “inculturation” has become a major part of contemporary discussion in the past forty years, the concept of inculturation, or of the dynamic relationship of faith and culture, is not entirely new.\(^{735}\) Already in 1659, the *Instruction of the Propaganda Fide* advised the vicars and missionaries in the Far East:

\(^{734}\) This term is a Catholic theological expression which describes the interaction or implantation of the Gospel into a particular cultural setting. The term is different from “enculturation,” which is used widely in the social sciences. For the relationship between faith and culture in Christian context see Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985); Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (London: Dartman, Longmann & Todd, 1997); Peter Schineller, *A Handbook of Inculturation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990).

\(^{735}\) The popularization of this term is due to the Society of Jesus. One of the earliest usages of the term is attributed to Joseph Masson, SJ, of the Gregorian University at Rome. He wrote in 1962: “Today there is a more urgent need for a Catholicism that is inculturated in a variety of forms.” Quoted by Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 10.
Beware of forcing the people to change their way of life, their customs and traditions, as long as these are not in open contradiction to religion and good morals. Is there anything more foolish than to transplant France, Spain, Italy, or any other European country (that is to say its customs and practices) to China! That is not what you should bring to them, but the faith which neither despises nor rejects the lifestyle of any people or their customs as long as they are not evil in themselves, but rather desires their preservation and promotion.\textsuperscript{736}

These words of wisdom did not always translate into practice; but there were attempts to contextualize the Gospel for the land where it is preached. In his memoir \textit{Divers Voyages et Missions} (1653), Alexandre de Rhodes told of his being scandalized when he saw that Indian converts had to wear Portuguese clothing in Goa, and Chinese Christians in Macao had to cut their hair short in European style. De Rhodes protested these customs, for he thought that being a Christian was about adopting a new faith, not new clothing or hairstyle. In his interaction with the local culture, he adopted the Vietnamese tunic and hat and encouraged other missionaries to do the same.\textsuperscript{737}

But inculturation is more than adapting to a style of dress or learning a new language. It is about embracing a whole different set of cultural expressions, customs, and beliefs. In broad strokes, there are currently six models of inculturation (or contextual theology) as suggested by Stephen Bevans: (1) translation, (2) anthropological, (3) praxis, (4) synthetic, (5) transcendent, and (6) countercultural.\textsuperscript{738}

In all six models, Bevans shows the dynamic interactions between elements of the past

\textsuperscript{736} Quoted in the article “Propaganda Fide Congregation” by Joseph Metzler in \textit{A Dictionary of Asian Christianity}, ed. Scott Sunquist (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 677. See also “Instructions of 1659,” \textit{op cit.}, 384-85.

\textsuperscript{737} De Rhodes’ cultural adaptations are summarized by Phan in \textit{Mission and Catechesis}, 75-81.

(the Gospel message and tradition) and the present (culture and social change). These models differ from one another according to the degree of emphasis on fidelity to the Gospel message and tradition vis-à-vis on adaptation to the present cultural and social change.

*ETR* is best understood as representing Bevans’ “translation model.” This model presupposes that (1) all cultures, despite their diversities, possess the same structure, and (2) divine revelation is primarily a communication of truth in propositions that can be discovered by reason. This explains *ETR* author’s preference for reason. The Christian scholar told his partner at the beginning of the dialogue that if he was open to listening to reason he would discover the truth and return to the “way of the Lord of Heaven,” as many of his predecessors had done. This attitude reflects a presupposition that Christian beliefs are unchanging, substantive and knowable as an object of reason. However, stressing the eternal veracity of Christian truth limits the ability to adapt religious ideas and practices to national cultures.

A proper understanding of another faith must be grounded in its own context and not in one’s own. Early descriptions of Asian religions by Western missionaries often resulted in gross caricatures because the missionaries attempted to describe other religions in terms of pre-established Christian categories and concerns (e.g., faith, salvation, etc.) rather than allowing them to stand on their own terms and expressions. The soteriological concern expressed in *ETR*, namely, “to attain happiness in paradise,” is a Christian agenda. On the contrary, the Vietnamese Confucian concern is to maintain social harmony and to promote well-being in this life, rather than happiness in the
afterlife. Unless one understands the presuppositions, concerns, and background of the other, true dialogue cannot happen.

The story of Christianity in Vietnam should be seen as the outcome of the insertion of the faith into the land’s historical and cultural conditions, and thus must be understood contextually. Despite limited resources, the message of the Gospel was delivered to Vietnamese society as widely as possible. Christian communities were established throughout the coastal areas of Tonkin under the leadership of the missionaries. As Christianity made contact with Vietnamese culture, inculturation did take place, albeit incompletely. It created a Vietnamese Christian culture that is still alive and vibrant today. Even if Christian converts at the time never achieved a dominant position in society or exerted influence beyond their villages, their impact on Vietnamese society was felt by the ruling elite. Because of their historical circumstances Christians were struggling for survival and could not appeal widely to the Vietnamese society of their time. The full synthesis of the Gospel and the Vietnamese culture is still in the making.

**Conclusion**

What can we learn from a text like *Tam Giáo Chư Vọng*? My analysis of the text and its approach to Vietnamese religions leads to four related conclusions.

First, the traditional religions of Vietnam were syncretistic and eclectic. There was no clear demarcation between and among the religious beliefs and practices of
Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, at least in the popular mind. The tendency of mixing elements of Buddhist or Daoist practices in Confucian rituals is evident in the case of funeral rites and ancestor worship. This syncretistic tendency of the Vietnamese religious ethos was a challenge for Christians.

Second, the concern for orthodoxy and right practices is the main occupation of Christian missionaries and their converts. Given the objective of Tam Giáo Chư Vọng, the distinction between right and wrong in the traditional beliefs and worships is a major concern of its author. Whereas in general, Vietnamese did not object to the tendency of borrowing and mixing traditions, a Catholic would not accept using traditional practices in Catholic rituals. The refutation of non-Christian beliefs and religious practices is meant to protect Catholic converts from being corrupted by Daoism and Buddhism, as Confucianism, in the author’s view, had been corrupted.

Third, Tam Giáo Chư Vọng gives the Vietnamese audience an opportunity to examine critically many of their religious beliefs and practices. The greatest contribution of his work lies in the rich historical and descriptive information on some Vietnamese religious rituals that might have remained forgotten. More works remain to be done to compare the text’s treatment of Vietnamese religions with other description of Chinese and Vietnamese popular religions.

Fourth, religious language tends to be symbolic and cannot be accurately understood outside of its cultural and linguistic contexts. An example is the debate between the Christian and the Confucian on the origin of the universe. They seemed to talk past each another, and there was no real dialogue between them. Because of his
cultural and religious limitations, the author of *Tam Giáo Chư Vọng* could not fully engage the traditional Vietnamese religions on their own terms and concepts. In today’s atmosphere of multi-culturalism and religious pluralism, cross-cultural understanding is a necessary requirement if we want to engage the others appropriately and effectively.
EPILOGUE

Exploring an apologetic work like *ETR* is both rewarding and frustrating. What the author claims about the “errors” of the traditional religions of Vietnam reveals more about his view than about the actual beliefs and practices of the adherents of the Three Religions. Nevertheless, given a reasonable amount of contextual awareness, new insights can be gained. In the study of the early history of Christianity in Vietnam, and of its cultural context, we know the native religious situations mainly through the writings of foreign missionaries and merchants. Alexandre de Rhodes, Samuel Baron, Adriano di Santa Thecla, and the anonymous author of *ETR*, to name a few, have provided descriptions of the religious scenes in Tonkin. Despite their limitations, it is possible to test the accuracy of their accounts through a cross-examination of available Chinese and Vietnamese sources — dynastic records, law and regulations, and rite manuals — as I have done. Every recovered bit of information, when used with care, becomes significant in the quest for a more well-rounded understanding of Vietnam’s past.

Reviewing the past helps us to understand the present. In evaluating such a polemical work as *ETR*, we must remember the context in which it was composed. A text like *ETR* is typical of certain aspects of Christian apologetic tradition — the defiant struggle to establish and maintain the uniqueness of Christianity in its religious surroundings. Whether an accurate picture of the religious situations of eighteenth-century Vietnam lies behind this one-sided Christian description is impossible to
ascertain, given the scarcity of available materials on the subject. More comparative studies on specific Vietnamese religious practices should be done to provide a corrective lens to the information presented here.

What has been done is a preliminary attempt to provide the reader with an entry into the world of Vietnamese Christian apologetics. This study has explored the issues arising from a Christian encounter with the Vietnamese culture and religions, and it has also examined the interactions with and attitude toward the religious environment in which Christians found themselves. Hopefully, the translation of ETR and the introduction of this work to our contemporary audience will help blaze new trails for further investigation into the cultural and religious tradition of Vietnam.
PART FOUR

AN ANNOTATED TRANSLATION OF
TAM GIÁO CHÚ VỌNG

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Last update: 04/04/2011
Notes on the Translation

In this annotated translation, the following conventions are made:

- All Chinese names are rendered in pinyin wherever possible. Appendix C will provide their Sino-Vietnamese equivalents.

- Chinese and Vietnamese concepts are translated into English wherever possible. Since some Chinese and Vietnamese words have a surplus of meanings, they will be rendered according to the context. For example, giáo (Chinese: jiao) can be translated as “teaching,” “doctrine,” or “religion.”

- The capitalization of translated words depends on context, for example, “heaven” (physical sky) and “Heaven” (the divine). Consequently, the divine name is rendered as “Lord of Heaven” but when the term refers to the lordship of God, it will be translated as “Lord of heaven (or heaven and earth).”
The Errors of the Three Religions

Preface

In Annam\(^1\) there are three teachings (religions)\(^2\): they are the teachings of Ru\(^3\), Laozi, and Śākya[muni]\(^4\). Confucianism\(^5\) is the way of Confucius; Daoism is the way of Laozi; Buddhism is the way of Śākyamuni Buddha. These three teachings constitute three different paths. During the reign of the Chen kings [in Southern China], King Zhou Gaozu\(^6\) [of Northern Wei] ranked the three teachings, putting Confucianism first, Daoism

\(^1\) Annam [Pacified South] is the name of Vietnam under the Chinese rule of the Tang dynasty. This became the common designation of Vietnam by the Chinese and other foreigners until 1945.

\(^2\) Throughout this text I will use the word “three teachings” or “three doctrines” interchangeably with “three religions” to translate tam giáo. Strictly speaking, “religion” is not the best rendering of the Sino-Vietnamese words giáo [teaching] or đạo [path, way] but it could be understood in this sense.

\(^3\) Nho (儒, ru) is a class of erudite scholars in imperial China. Originally the term was used to designate people who were ritual masters and dancers in the Zhou dynasty. Under Confucius and his successors, the meaning of ru is expanded to include the Confucian form of learning, and thus this term becomes a synonym for the literati or the Confucian scholars.

\(^4\) Śākya (Thích ca or Thích già) is the clan name of the historical Buddha. After achieving enlightenment, Siddhartha Gautama is honored as the “sage of the Sakya clan” (Śākyamuni).

\(^5\) In conventional terminology, Nho giáo (儒 教, the teaching of Ru) is often rendered as “Confucianism.” Chinese and Vietnamese tradition, however, recognize Confucius only as a great teacher of the ru tradition, a ru scholar par excellence, but not founder of a new doctrine or school of thought. In the early twentieth century, when Kang Yuwei attempted to establish a Confucian religion, he coined the term Kongjiao (doctrine of Kong) which is the Chinese equivalent of Confucianism. In this translation I use “Confucianism” to refer to both Ru and Kongjiao.

\(^6\) During the North and South dynasties in China (the 4\(^{th}\) to 7\(^{th}\) centuries), Chen Wudi (posthumous name Chen Gaozu) ruled the South in 557-559. In the North, after conquering the Northern Wei, Zhou Wudi (posthumous name Zhou Gaozu) employed Confucian scholars as his court officials. This led to a revival of Confucianism, which was already in decline since the time of the Eastern Han.
second, and Buddhism last. In Annam, members of the three groups were admitted to the
civil examinations under the reign of King Trần Thái Tông. When King Lý Nhân Tông
returned to Kẻ Chợ, the followers of the three teachings came to congratulate him, as
mentioned in the national records: “When the king returned to the capital, the followers
of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism together offered laudatory poems.”

I have come from Italy of the Western world to the East to preach the holy way of
the Lord of Heaven to the people of Annam — to the lowly as well as the noble, to the
learned as well as the ignorant, to the old as well as the young. My goal is that they may
know the true Lord, worship him and follow the true way, so that they may attain the
blessing of eternal paradise after death. I am now very pleased to meet you, a learned
and virtuous Eastern scholar. This is a good opportunity for me to learn more
thoroughly about the three religions as well as to discuss the truth concerning them.

A learned person must not only study the books but also examine the arguments
contained in them. Since books can teach errors through the use of clever words, a
learned person must examine the arguments to see whether they are true or false, as stated
in Great Learning (Đại Học). “A scholar who cannot utilize his learning cannot be

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8 Kẻ Chợ literally is “the market place.” This term is used to designate any urban area. From the 16th to the 18th century it was the vernacular name of Hanoi, while its formal name was Thăng Long.


10 Literally, đạo is translated as way or path. Here it is used in the sense of religion.

11 Great Learning (大 學, Daxue) originally was a chapter in the Book of Rites (禮 記, Liji), but Zhu Xi separated it out to be one of the four major books of the Confucian canon.
called a learned person.” If a scholar cannot distinguish the right argument from the wrong one, he should not be called a scholar. Only one who can tell truth from falsehood deserves to be called a learned and wise person, as stated in Great Learning: “When things are examined, knowledge is reached.” Therefore, this Western scholar asks to have a conversation with the Eastern scholar to examine and discuss the arguments of those three religions to understand their errors thoroughly. Following the same order in which the kings of the past had ranked them, this discussion will be divided into three books: the first book will discuss the errors of Confucianism; the second, the errors of Daoism; and the third, the errors of Buddhism.

12 This text cannot be found in the Great Learning.

13 See chapter “Root of Knowledge” (知本) of the Great Learning.

14 “Western scholar” is the form of self-reference used by Matteo Ricci in his True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (天主實義, Tianzhu Shiyi).

15 In the context of the book, “errors” refer to beliefs or practices that are judged to be contrary to the Christian faith.
First Book: The Errors of Confucianism

Preface

All noble persons\textsuperscript{16} take Confucianism to be the orthodox way and call it “the way of great learning,” that is “to illuminate the illustrious virtue, to renovate the people, and to rest only after attaining the highest good.”\textsuperscript{17} They do so because Confucianism teaches them to cultivate the Five Virtues (of humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness) and to observe the precepts of the Five Relations (between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brothers, friend and friend) so that people can become noble and the world can be at peace. If I dismiss the teachings and practices of Confucianism as erroneous, the Eastern scholar will disagree and blame me for deliberately defaming Confucianism. I deeply respect and admire Confucianism because it wisely teaches the right truths about the Five Virtues and the Five Relations. However, Confucianism contains not only truths but also falsehood and errors. These errors are contrary to the holy way of the Lord of Heaven, which is the great and most righteous way that people everywhere must believe and practice to attain peace.

\textsuperscript{16} “Noble person” (君子, junzi) literally means “son of ruler,” a title reserved for the nobility of the Zhou. Confucius expanded the meaning to denote the ideal person. In the Analects, junzi is often contrasted with xiaoren (petty person).

\textsuperscript{17} This is the famous opening of the Great Learning.
Therefore, I invite the Confucian scholar to discuss and analyze with me, the errors that are mixed with Confucian truths. If, during the discussion, you find that I defame Confucianism, I will take the blame; but I speak the truth, you must agree to it and follow me on to the same path. In doing so, you would follow the examples of many other Confucian scholars who have submitted to the truth and turned to the holy way of the Lord of Heaven — the way that has brought people of this world on the right path to attain the most valuable and everlasting blessings.
Index of the Errors of Confucianism

Article 1: Discussion on How the Supreme Ultimate Created Heaven and Earth

Article 2: On the Origin of Pangu

Article 3: On the Sovereign on High

Article 4: On the Origin of the Right Way

Article 5: On the Great Flood

Article 6: On the Sacrifices to Heaven, Earth and the Six Spirits of Nature

Article 7: On the Sacrifices to the Five Emperors and the Five Spirits

Article 8: On the Hội Minh Ceremony and the Kỳ Đạo Sacrifice

Article 9: On Thành Hoàng [the Tutelary Genie] and other spirits

Article 10: On King Động, King Trèm, and King Bạch Mâ

Article 11: On Vua Bếp [Stove Genie], Thổ Công [Household Genie], Thổ Chủ [Land Guardian], and Tiền Sư [Primary Teacher]

Article 12: On the Cult of Confucius and the Great Sages

Article 13: On the Cult of the Grand Duke and the Mighty Generals

Article 14: On Funeral Rites and Veneration of Ancestors

Article 15: On Geomancy
Article 1

How the Supreme Ultimate Created Heaven and Earth

The Western Scholar says: I have read from the record: “The Supreme Ultimate\(^{18}\) generates the Two Modes;\(^{19}\) the Two Modes generate the Four Forms;\(^{20}\) the Four Forms are transformed into a myriad of things in their species and order.”\(^{21}\) So I ask you: What is the Supreme Ultimate, and how does it generate the Two Modes?

The Eastern Scholar replies: Confucius says: “What is meant by the Supreme Ultimate? The Supreme Ultimate is the Material Force (\(qi\))\(^{22}\) and the Principle (\(li\)).”\(^{23}\)

This means that the Principle is not a thing but the origin of things, the essence of things,

\(^{18}\) “Supreme Ultimate” (太 極, taiji) can also be translated as Supreme Polarity.

\(^{19}\) “Two Modes” or “Two Principles” (兩 儀, liangyi): the basic division in Chinese cosmology; at the fundamental level, they are yin and yang, or heaven and earth.

\(^{20}\) “Four Forms” (四 像, sixiang): Greater yin (太 陰, taiyin), Lesser yang (少 陽, shaoyang), Greater yang (太 陽, taiyang), and Lesser yin (少 陰, shaoyin).

\(^{21}\) According to Olga Dror, this quotation is from the Kangjian Hebian of Yuan Liaofan; see Dror, A Study of Religion, pp. 97-98, nn. 53, 61.

\(^{22}\) \(Qi\) (氣) is a Chinese concept that is difficult to render in English. The word originally means “vapor” but its range of meaning includes air, energy, vitality, spirit. In Neo-Confucianism, it is often paired and contrasted with \(Li\) (理, principle).

\(^{23}\) Since the doctrine of Supreme Ultimate was formulated by Song Neo-Confucians, this quotation cannot be from Confucius.
as Master Zhu [Xi]\textsuperscript{24} says: “The Principle is the origin of things.” Therefore, the Material Force and the Principle reside within heaven and earth and in all things according to the book *Nature and Principle*\textsuperscript{25} (*Tính Lý*): “The Supreme Ultimate is truly the Principle of heaven, earth and all things; within heaven and earth there exists the Supreme Ultimate; within all things there exists the Supreme Ultimate.” Hence, the Supreme Ultimate does not generate heaven and earth like parents giving birth to children, or like a worker building a house, but it generates heaven and earth like the blood of our body constituting the body, \textit{(p. 5)} or like the lumber of a house making up the house.

**The Western Scholar asks again:** You said that the Supreme Ultimate is the Principle (*li*) and the Material Force (*qi*), and that the Supreme Ultimate resides within heaven and earth and makes up heaven and earth. So does the Supreme Ultimate exist before heaven and earth, or does it come into existence with the generation of heaven and earth?

**The Eastern Scholar replies:** The Supreme Ultimate did not exist before heaven and earth. Rather, it came into existence at the same time with heaven and earth. The Supreme Ultimate as well as heaven and earth were generated by the same source on the same order, as stated in the book *Nature and Principle*: “It is said that the Supreme Ultimate generates the Two Modes [yin and yang]; the Two Modes generate the Four

\textsuperscript{24} Master Zhu (Chu Tứ) is the honorific title of Zhu Xi (朱熹, Chu Hy [1120-1200]) one of the famous Neo-Confucians in the Song dynasty.

\textsuperscript{25} The full title of this book is the *Compendium of Nature and Principle* (*性理大全, Xingli Daquan*) composed by the scholar Hu Guang, published in 1415. It is a standard textbook for civil examination in the Ming dynasty.
Forms; the Four Forms generate the Eight Trigrams. In fact, they come out together at the same time; whatever has form has shape; when there is One, there is Two; when there is Two, there is Three. Thus the Supreme Ultimate comes into existence at the same time as heaven and earth. As I have said earlier, the Supreme Ultimate is not a thing but the essence of things, that which makes things. Therefore, the Supreme Ultimate can not by itself exist before the formation of the heaven and earth — the two great entities that were born before anything else.

The Western Scholar comments: If the Supreme Ultimate co-exists with heaven and earth at the same time, then where does it come from? Is the Supreme Ultimate generated from itself or does it come from another source? I believe that the Supreme Ultimate cannot be self-generated but must come from another source. If the Supreme Ultimate did not exist, how could it bring itself into existence? If something does not exist, it must have another pre-existing being to bring it into existence. Let us look at all living things — all were born from existing entities. For example, all humans, birds and animals must have their parents, all fruits must come from trees, and one tree comes from another. This also applies to the Supreme Ultimate whose existence requires another pre-existing source, not self-generation. Since the Supreme Ultimate is not matter but the essence of its existence, there must be an all-knowing and all-powerful Being who exists

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26 The “Eight Trigrams” (八卦, bagua) are the arrangement of solid (yang) and broken (yin) lines divided into eight groups of 3 lines each, representing 8 directions.

27 This is an oblique reference to Daodejing 42. “One” refers to the undifferentiated reality; “two” refers to yin and yang; “three” refers to the triad of heaven, earth, and human, which give rise to other phenomena.
before the Supreme Ultimate — the Principle (li) and Material Force (qi) — to create it. This Being took the Principle (li) and Material Force (qi) and separated them {p. 7} into heaven and earth, then moved them to create yang energy and brought them to rest to create yin energy, as stated in the record: “When the Supreme Ultimate moves, it creates yang; when it rests, it creates yin.” This Being took the yin and yang energies to fashion all things.

Therefore, we must not take heaven and earth or the Supreme Ultimate to be the origin of all things. First and foremost, we must consider the One who is all-knowing and all-powerful to be the origin of all things. Therefore, we must place the highest Being before the Supreme Ultimate in the above statement. We must say: “The Lord of Heaven creates the Supreme Ultimate; the Supreme Ultimate generates the Two Modes; the Two Modes generate the Four Forms; the Four Forms are transformed into a myriad of things according to their species and orders.” Adding this makes the statement complete and brings out its truth. In that case, everything the Confucian scholars claim about the power of heaven and earth in generating all things is also true. In the Classic of Changes, Confucius says: “The great power of heaven and earth is to produce.”28 Master Zhu Xi explains this saying as: “To keep the heaven firm from above, the earth populated from below is none other than producing all things;”29 therefore, it is written in the Classic of Changes: ‘The great power of heaven and earth is to produce.’” Furthermore, the book

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28 This quotation is from chapter “Explaining the Diagrams” (Xici) of the Classic of Changes. Cf. Opusulum, p. 99. Quotation from Opusulum refers to the pagination of the Latin manuscript, not to the translation. Olga Dror’s translation and notes will be referred to henceforth as A Study of Religion.

29 Opusulum has the word dòi (類) in the phrase 地則竄然於下 instead of hōi (薈), so it can also be alternately translation as “the earth is broken down from below.”
Family Sayings\textsuperscript{30} says: "The Lord of heaven and earth produces everything." These statements \textit{(p. 8)} speak the truth when we take heaven and earth to be the secondary causes of origin and take the Lord of Heaven and Earth to be the first cause.

\textbf{The Eastern Scholar says:} The Supreme Ultimate together with heaven and earth did not emerge from a pre-existing being but out of void, as it is said by Master Cheng:\textsuperscript{31} "Heaven and earth take ‘voidness’\textsuperscript{32} to be their power; the ultimate goodness is voidness; voidness is the origin of heaven and earth; heaven and earth emerged from voidness."

Thus, before heaven and earth exist, their root was in the void. Since their existence begins with voidness, their root is from no other pre-existing entity but voidness.

\textbf{The Western Scholar replies:} Those who speak like that take non-existence to be existence.\textsuperscript{33} If voidness is nothingness, it has no quality; it cannot be a generative power; it cannot be the ultimate good, nor can it be the origin of heaven and earth. Nothingness is on the same order with heaven, earth and all things; thus, heaven and earth truly came from nothing. However we must not take emptiness as the root or the origin of heaven and earth. On the contrary, we must take a pre-existing Being \textit{(p. 9)} — the infinitely

\textsuperscript{30} The full title is \textit{Family Sayings of Confucius} (孔子家語, Kongzi Jiayu).

\textsuperscript{31} Master Cheng (Trình Tù) refers to Cheng Yi (程頤, Trình Di [1033-1107]). Together with his brother Cheng Hao (程灏, Trình Hạo [1032-1085]), they were instrumental in making the “principle (li)” central to neo-Confucian thought. Cheng Yi is famous for saying "principle is one but its manifestations are many."

\textsuperscript{32} Voidness or emptiness (虛, xu) is a Daoist concept. Philosophically it does not mean nothingness but undifferentiation.

\textsuperscript{33} This can also be translated as “taking the non-being to be being.”
intelligent and powerful Being, who creates heaven and earth from nothing — to be the origin of heaven and earth. In this way, [Master Cheng’s] statement that “heaven and earth emerged from the midst of voidness” can be valid.

Moreover, if the Confucian scholar takes voidness to be the generative power, to be the origin of heaven and earth, he would share the same position as Buddhists\(^3^{34}\) and Daoists, for the followers of those two religions often take “voidness” and “non-being” to be the root cause of everything. That is why on his commentary of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, Master Chen says: “Buddhists take ‘emptiness’ (không) to be their foundation; Daoists take ‘non-being’ (vô) to be their foundation.” That is why Confucian scholars call those two religions “the heterodox teachings of ‘emptiness’ and ‘quiescence.’”\(^3^{35}\) Therefore, you Confucian scholars must not take voidness and nothingness to be the generative power, the origin of heaven and earth, lest you agree with the followers of Śākyamuni and Laozi, who often take “emptiness” (空), “voidness” (虛), and “non-being” (無) to be the origin of heaven and earth and everything.

\(^{34}\) Literally, *đạo but* is the “way of the Buddha,” but it is often used in a pejorative sense as “secta idolatrum.”

\(^{35}\) According to the Confucian view, the doctrines of Daoism and Buddhism are heterodox (*đi đạo*) because they are based on the concept *hư vô tích diệt* (there is no permanence, everything is empty), which is contrary to Confucian realism.
Article 2

On the Origin of Pangu

The Western Scholar says: It is recorded that “Pangu\(^{36}\) was born of chaos, after the heaven and earth began to separate.”\(^{37}\) Now I ask you: “Did Pangu come to exist just then, or did he pre-exist before heaven and earth and only came out at that time of chaos”?

The Eastern Scholar replies: It is not possible that Pangu pre-existed before heaven and earth because when there was no heaven \(\text{p. 10}\) or earth, there was no place for him to live, so Pangu could exist only after heaven and earth.

The Western Scholar asks again: When Pangu came into being, to whom did he owe his existence, to himself or to another being?

The Eastern Scholar replies: Pangu came into being by the power of heaven and earth, because “the Supreme Ultimate generates the Two Modes; the Two Modes generate the Four Forms; the Four Forms are transformed into a myriad of things.” Master Hu\(^{38}\) says:

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\(^{36}\) Pangu (盤 古, Bàn Cǒ) is a Chinese mythical figure, the first being in the world who creates heaven and earth from chaos.

\(^{37}\) According to Olga Dror, the text Gangjian Hebian 1:1a claims that Hộn đốn (primordial chaos) is another name of Pangu. See Dror, A Study of Religion, p. 99, n. 64.

\(^{38}\) This possibly refers to Hu Zhitang (Hu Yin), 1098-1156, a neo-Confucian of the Song dynasty.
“Once heaven and earth existed, then came the transformation of the material force (qi) and the creation of humankind.”

**The Western Scholar says:** Since Pangu was truly a human who had a body and soul like us, it is right to say that heaven and earth begot his body. It is not right, however, to say that they begot his soul, because heaven and earth possess neither intelligence nor perception. Since they do not think or live, how can they beget humans who think, live, and possess the quality of being the most spiritual among the myriad things? For this reason, Pangu must be created by the one great Lord who also created heaven and earth. That Lord is infinitely intelligent and powerful; he creates body and soul, and fuses the soul with the body. Thus, Pangu comes into being.

**The Western Scholar says:** The record speaks of only Pangu’s existence after heaven and earth began to separate, but does not speak of any other human being. If only Pangu but no woman existed at that time, I ask, where did he find a wife to continue his lineage? When Pangu came into being, a woman must also be born with him so that the two of them could unite and beget children.

**The Eastern Scholar says:** Our tradition forgets to speak of the first woman who is to be Pangu’s wife. What does your Western tradition say about her?
The Western Scholar says: Our tradition speaks of a couple who was the ancestors of all human beings; his name is Adam, hers is Eve. According to our tradition, after the Lord of Heaven created heaven and earth, he also created Adam, and then took a short rib from his body to create a body for Eve. He also created a soul to be united with that body so that Eve came into being. Next the Lord told them to be united as one body of flesh and bone to beget children in order to perpetuate the human race. Afterwards, the Lord charged them to rule and make use of everything in this world. That is what our tradition teaches about the couple who was the ancestors of all human beings.
Article 3

On the Sovereign on High

The Western Scholar says: In the Four Books and Five Classics, the Confucian scholars teach people to “worship the Sovereign on High" and serve the Sovereign on High.” So, I ask you: Who is the Sovereign on High?

The Eastern Scholar says: The Sovereign on High is called Heaven by Confucian scholars. However, it refers not to the azure sky that we see, but to the power of heaven that resides within the sky that we cannot see. The Classic of Changes says: “Qian represents what is great: originating, penetrating, advantageous, [correct and firm].” Master Cheng teaches: “Qian means heaven. Oh, heaven! When spoken as an absolute, it is called Dao; when differentiated, it is called by different names: Dao

39 The “Four Books” (四書, sishu) refers to the Great Learning (Daxue), the Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong), the Analects of Confucius (Lunyu) and the Book of Mencius (Mengzi); the “Five Classics” (經, wujing) refers to the pre-Han collection of the Classic of Odes (Shijing), the Classic of Documents (Shujing), the Classic of Changes (Yijing), the Record of Rites (Liji) and the Annals of Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu). These books make up the Confucian canon required for every Chinese and Vietnamese scholar to study for their civic examination.

40 The term Thuông Đế (上 帝, shangdi) has been rendered variously as High God, Lord on High, Supreme Emperor, Supreme Ruler, and Sovereign on High. In this translation, Di is translated as “Sovereign” to avoid confusion with other terms used for Chinese human rulers such as king or prince (王, wang), ruler (君, jun), chief (后, hou), monarch (皇, huang) or emperor (帝, di).

41 Di or Shangdi (the Supreme Lord or Sovereign on High) is the high god of the Chinese during the Shang period (c. 20th to 16th century BCE). It was gradually replaced by Heaven (天), originally the sky god of the Zhou people, who conquered the land of the Shang in the 16th century BCE. In Neo-Confucianism Shangdi and Tian are used interchangeably.

42 Qian (乾) is the first trigram in the Classic of Changes. The first line of the Qian trigram states “乾元亨利貞”. The text erroneously omits the last word.
visible form, it is called the sky; in terms of ruling, it is called the lord; in terms of active power, it is called the spiritual forces;\textsuperscript{43} in term of marvels, it is called the gods; in terms of nature, it is called \textit{Qian}. Therefore, \textit{Qian} is the beginning of all things.\textsuperscript{44} [Vietnamese translation follows.\textsuperscript{45}] That is how Master Cheng explains the trigram \textit{Qian} and differentiates the various characters of \textit{Qian}, which means Heaven. Master Zhu [Xi] says: “What is the Heart-mind\textsuperscript{46} of heaven and earth? What is the Principle of heaven and earth? The Principle is the rational principle; the Heart-mind is the ruler.” Consider the saying from the \textit{Tư Phú}:\textsuperscript{47} “The Heart-mind is the ruler” and the saying from \textit{Nature and Principle}: “The character heart-mind (心) is called sovereign (帝); the sovereign is the ruler of heaven.” Thus, the Sovereign on High is Heaven, and Heaven is the Sovereign on High. Since the Heart-mind of heaven is the ruler of heaven, and the Sovereign on High is also the ruler of heaven, the Heart-mind and the Sovereign are both rulers; both of them are seen as one. \{p. 14\}

\textbf{The Western Scholar says}: If that is the case, then the Sovereign on High of the Confucian scholars is identical with heaven, not differentiated from heaven. That is why

\begin{footnotes}
\item[43] Literally “demons and gods” (guishen). For a Neo-Confucian understanding of guishen, see Dror, \textit{A Study of Religion}, pp. 101-102, n. 82.
\item[44] See also the translation in \textit{Opusculum}, p. 101.
\item[45] Sometimes the author provides a Vietnamese translation of long quotation from Chinese sources. In such cases, I omit the translation.
\item[46] The word tâm (心, xīn) in Chinese philosophy has a connotation of both heart and mind; thus in this translation, I use the compound heart-mind to render it.
\item[47] I am uncertain of the meaning, it may be the name of an obscure book.
\end{footnotes}
people often say “Heaven sees, Heaven punishes.” Now, once a year when the mandarins gather for the “Taking the Oath” ceremony (Hội Minh), the highest official swears: “I bow to the Supreme Emperor, August Heaven, and the Empress, August Earth.” The other officials swear: “We bow to the King of Heaven and the Queen of Earth.” The soldiers swear: “We bow to heaven and earth.” They do this because the Sovereign on High and the King of Heaven are identified with heaven (sky), they are one with heaven. Now I ask you: “Where does that Sovereign on High come from, through himself or from another?”

**The Eastern Scholar says:** The Sovereign on High comes to existence through himself. He does not owe his existence to another being because he is one with Heaven; he spontaneously comes out of nothingness. Although it is recorded that the Supreme Ultimate produces the Two Modes, in reality the Supreme Ultimate is not a being that exists outside of heaven to create the heaven, but one who resides inside heaven to create it. {p. 15}

**The Western Scholar argues further:** I believe the Sovereign on High is not self-generated, but comes from another being. As I have argued in Article One, the Supreme Ultimate and heaven (sky) owe their existence to another being. It follows that if the

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48 See the discussion in Article Eight of this book.

49 Here the Western Scholar understands the concepts heaven in terms of the physical sky or the natural world. The concept of heaven in Chinese philosophy is more complex; it can mean god or the originator of life and morality, or a cosmic force.
Sovereign on High is one with heaven, he must also come from another being.
Consequently, whoever created heaven also created the Sovereign on High who is one with heaven. It is incorrect for the Confucian scholar to identify the Sovereign on High with heaven because heaven cannot have the same dignity as its lord. I have another question: “Does the Sovereign on High possess the intelligence to know what he does?”

The Eastern Scholar says: The Sovereign on High possesses not only intelligence but also a supreme mind to know the important work he does. Therefore, people often pray to Heaven to judge and to guide their hearts, because they believe that the Sovereign on High has an intellect that knows everything.

The Western Scholar comments: If the Sovereign on High is the Supreme Mind, then heaven can enlighten people because the Sovereign on High is one with heaven and is the Heart-mind of heaven. If the Sovereign on High possesses intelligence and is a living being, he also makes the heaven alive just as the human soul, which is living within the body, animates the body.

However, {p. 16} I have not seen any sign that heaven is animated. All living things has a physical form: at birth they were small, then by eating they grow in size. Consider the grass and the trees, animals and birds, and humans – all are like that. But the azure heaven does not change in size, getting smaller or larger; it does not eat; nor does it produce another heaven, nor decline and die. Therefore, heaven is not a living form. For that reason, there cannot be a Sovereign who is identical with heaven, and at
the same time is a living being. In addition, if the Sovereign on High is identical with heaven, then he must follow the movement of heaven, back and forth, never stopping, because the heaven moves back and forth, never stopping, as stated in the *Great Learning*: “The heaven circles around nonstop, whatever goes forth will return.”\(^{50}\) It would be absurd to apply this to the Sovereign on High. Therefore, it is difficult and irrational to believe and accept the Sovereign on High of the Confucian scholars.

For these reasons, there is no Sovereign on High who is identical with heaven, but only a Sovereign on High who is outside heaven and different from heaven. He is the one \({\textit{p. 17}}\) who is spiritual, “the most honored among the gods,” infinitely all-knowing, infinitely all-powerful, who creates and rules over the heaven, earth, humans and things. Our religion calls him “the true Lord of heaven and earth” and not “the Sovereign on High,” lest others think we take heaven to be the Sovereign on High, as is postulated in your teaching. Therefore, you should join me in believing in the supreme King — who is the utmost noble — who fashioned heaven, earth, humans and all things, and call him “the true Lord of heaven and earth.” Furthermore, instead of saying, “revere the Sovereign on High and fear the Sovereign on High” we must say, “revere the Lord of Heaven and fear the Lord of Heaven.” When the ancient kings worshipped the Sovereign on High, they probably did not intend to worship him as One identical with the heaven, but to worship the One who is different from the heaven, the One who fashioned the heaven and earth. We will discuss this further in Article Six.

\(^{50}\) I have not found this sentence in the standard edition of the *Great Learning*.
Article 4

On the Origin of the Right Way

**The Western Scholar says:** The books of the Confucian tradition teach that there is a great way everyone must believe, love, study, and practice throughout life. Confucius {p. 18} says: “Have sincere faith and love learning; pursue the good way until death.” The sages call this way “the way of virtue and reason.” In the book *Doctrine of Nature* (Tính Giáo) it teaches that this way resides within people, as stated by Master Zhu [Xi]
“Human nature is not a thing, it is only a principle within us.” Master Dong [Zhongshu] wrote: “As for ‘the way’ (dao) in the world, there is no difference in the past or present.” So, I ask you: “From where comes that doctrine, that natural teaching within the human heart? Who bestows humans with the ability to know right from wrong, so all people from past to present have the same nature?

**The Eastern scholar replies:** Master Dong [Zhongshu] says: “The ultimate origin of ‘the way’ (dao) is from heaven.” Furthermore, in the *Great Learning* we read:
“Because Heaven gives birth to people, it must give them innate virtues of humaneness,

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51 This book has not been identified.


righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness.” Therefore, Heaven is the source of virtue and moral principle and it bestows them on humans.

**The Western Scholar argues:** Since Confucian scholars often take heaven and earth to be the origin of all things, they teach the source of the moral principle is heaven, and that heaven integrates the way (dao) into the human heart. They also say that “the way (dao) is from heaven and earth.” However, as I have argued earlier, heaven is not the origin of all things. There is first an utmost noble Being who fashioned heaven and earth; that Being is the root of all things. Moreover, I have argued that heaven cannot beget the human soul because it possesses neither intelligence nor perception. Since it does not think or animate, it cannot beget a human soul which thinks, lives, and possesses the quality of being “the most spiritual among all things.”

Therefore, there must be a great Lord who is infinitely all-knowing and all-powerful, and who creates humans in both body and soul. He endows the human soul with a teachable nature of the Five Virtues, which is the moral principle within a person. For that reason, we must not call that way the “way of heaven” or the “mandate of heaven,” as Confucian scholars often do. Rather we must call it the way of the Lord of Heaven. Moreover, we should consider that there are several ways different from one another: the first is the way of heaven; the second, the way of the earth; and the third, the way of humanity. The way of heaven is the heavenly nature that moves back and forth without ceasing to light up the world as well as to make up the four seasons. The way of

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54 I have not found this quote in the *Great Learning*. Cf. Hội Đồng Tứ Giáo (1867 ed), p. 17a.
the earth is the earthly nature which constantly produces grass and trees, the five types of grain, the five types of metal, and the five types of precious stones.\textsuperscript{55} The way of humanity is the nature of \{p. 20\} the Five Virtues which teach people to do goodness and avoid evil. Master Hu Wufeng\textsuperscript{56} writes: “The energies of yin and yang make up the visible forms; from these comes the heavenly way; the qualities of firmness and softness make up the elements; from these comes the earthly way; humaneness and righteousness make up the virtues; from these comes the human way.” Therefore, the way of humanity comes out of the human heart, and not from heaven. The way of humanity comes from the great Being who creates heaven, earth, and humans; it is he who gives the way (\textit{dao}) to the human heart. There exists such a Being who creates the ways of heaven, earth, and humanity, and endows them with different natures.

\textbf{The Eastern Scholar says}: I agree that the way of humanity within people does not come from the moving sky. However, in heaven there is the Sovereign on High, who is the Principle of heaven and the Heart-mind of heaven. From this Heart-mind of heaven the moral norms are infused into the human heart.

\textbf{The Western Scholar replies}: If the Sovereign on High, who is the Heart-mind of heaven, is identical with heaven, and if he is also the same as heaven, he must depend on

\textsuperscript{55} The five types of “grains” are hemp, millet, rice, corn, and bean. The five types of metal are gold, silver, copper, lead or tin, and iron. There is no agreement of the fives types of precious stones, but following the color of the five elements (like in the cases of the five metal), they should be yellow stone, white stone, red stone, blue or azure stone and black stone.

\textsuperscript{56} Hu Wufeng or Hu Hong (1106-1061) was also a Neo-Confucian philosopher of the Song dynasty.
a heaven that possesses neither intelligence nor perception. Then he does not think or live, as I have argued in the previous article. Therefore, the way within the human heart cannot come from the Sovereign on High, who is the Heart-mind of heaven. On the contrary, the way of humanity can come only from the great Lord, who is the Supreme Being and creates heaven and earth.

**The Eastern Scholar asks:** Is Confucianism the true way that comes from the great Lord, who creates heaven and earth?

**The Western Scholar replies:** Confucianism has many qualities that belong to the true way of the Lord of heaven and earth. It transmits to the human heart the Five Virtues (of humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness) that everyone must keep within the Five Relations (between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brothers, friend and friend). It teaches people to “cultivate themselves, regulate their families, and govern their states until peace is achieved in the world.” Those ideas belong to the way of the Lord of heaven and earth, which is instilled in the human heart.

However, because Confucianism has many erroneous teachings mixed with the right teachings, it is not the true way of the Lord of heaven and earth given to the human heart. Consider how Confucian scholars teach people to worship heaven and earth and all creatures but forget [to teach about] the great Lord who creates heaven, earth, and...
and all things. They teach people to “serve the Sovereign on High, to fear the Sovereign on High”, but they identify the Sovereign with heaven and do not differentiate him from heaven. They also teach people to worship the deceased, as if these people have the power to protect and bestow favor on their descendants. Thus, Confucianism partly conforms to the true way of the Lord of Heaven, which resides in the human heart, and partly opposes to that true way.
Article 5
On the Great Flood

The Western Scholar says: It is recorded that “in the time of Emperor Yao, the waters were swelling up to the sky.” Now let me ask the Eastern Scholar: How long did the great flood last?

The Eastern Scholar says: From beginning to end, the great flood lasted twenty years. In the 61st year of his reign, Emperor Yao assigned his minister Gun the task of saving the land of the Nine Regions from the flood. However, after laboring for nine years, Gun failed to control the flood [and was executed]. Two years later, King Shun ordered Yu, the son of Gun, to continue the task of flood-control. Yu worked hard for another nine years before he could save the Nine Regions from flooding in the 80th year of Emperor Yao’s reign. Master Zhu [Xi] records this story in Outline of History as

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58 Emperor Yao (堯, Nghiêu) is one of the sage-kings of ancient China, who ruled by virtue.

59 “Nine Regions” or “Nine Prefectures” (九洲, jiuzhou) is a general name for ancient China. The name refers to the division of the land around the Yellow River by King Yu the Great into nine prefectures. The reference is taken from chapter “Tribute of Yu” (禹貢) of the Classic of Documents.

60 Yu the Great (大禹, Đại Vũ) was the legendary founder of the Xia dynasty. King Yu is considered a hero in ancient China who spent thirteen years on flood prevention. His success in controlling the floodwaters won the respect of the people as well as the trust of his lord, Emperor Shun. On his death, Shun passed the leadership to Yu.

61 According to legend, the Yellow River erupted in a huge flood in the time of Emperor Yao. Yu’s father, Gun, was put in charge of flood control by Emperor Yao, but failed to alleviate the problem after 9 years. He was executed by Yao’s successor Emperor Shun. Yu then took over his father’s task and led the people in building canals and levees. After many more years of toil, flooding problems were solved under Yu’s
follows: “In the year giáp-thìn,\textsuperscript{62} the 60\textsuperscript{th} year of Yao’s reign, there was a great flood. The Four Great Ministers (tứ nhạc) delegated Gun to be the minister of public works. Until the year nhâm-tí, the 69\textsuperscript{th} year, Gun could not control the flood. In the year ást-mẹo, the 72\textsuperscript{nd} year, Yu was sent to control the flood and the land. In the year quí-họi, the 80\textsuperscript{th} year, Yu succeeded in controlling the flood. Since then, the people of the Nine Regions have prospered ….”\textsuperscript{63}

\textbf{The Western Scholar says:} I would like to examine this story. During such a long and great flood, when the waters were swelling up above the mountains, up to heaven, how did the people survive? There was no place to live and no land to cultivate. During that time, who had the ability and power to build dikes and dig trenches to drain water, so there would be dry land? If the great flood occurred over the whole earth, no one can do anything to survive; all must have \{p. 24\} drowned and died.

A great flood truly occurred in the ancient times, covering the whole earth. People everywhere died in that flood, except for a man named Noah and seven members of his family, who survived the flood in a boat. The great flood did not occur at the time of Emperor Yao, but a century before Yao, during the time of Noah. Because Emperor Yao told his people that once the whole world had submerged under the great flood, later command. In recognition of his accomplishment, Shun established Yu as the founder of the Xia dynasty. The main source for the story of Yu and the Great Flood comes from the \textit{Classic of Documents}.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{62} The Chinese and the Vietnamese divide time in 60-year cycles, assigning a name for each year. Each name consists of one “heavenly stem” (thiên can): Giáp, Ất, Bính, Dinh, Mậu, Kỷ, Canh, Tân, Nhâm, Quí, and one “earthly branch” (địa chi): Tí, Sửu, Dần, Mão/Mẹo, Thìn, Tí, Ngọ, Mùi, Thân, Dậu, Tuất, Hợi.

\textsuperscript{63} The translation is incomplete because the last phrase is undecipherable.
generations accepted his story and wrongly claimed that the great flood occurred during his time. Rather, it should be said that “in the time of Noah, the waters were swelling up to the sky.”

There are reasons to say the great flood did not occur during Yao’s time. For example, according to the account in the *Classic of Documents*, the great flood had been controlled before Yu was born. How then could you say that Yu was the one who controlled it? Consider that Emperor Shun\(^64\) had assigned that task to Yu in the 72\(^{nd}\) year of Yao’s reign. Since then, Emperor Yao still ruled for another 29 years until \{p. 25\} Emperor Shun assumed the throne for another 50 years. Afterward, Yu the Great ruled for another 27 years. If you count all the years from the time Yu took over the task of controlling the flood (that is, in the 72\(^{nd}\) year of Yao’s reign) until the time of his death, the sum comes to be 106 years all together. Since Yu only lived for 100 years, how can he be the one who saved the Nine Regions from the flood if there were 106 years between the 72\(^{nd}\) year of Yao’s reign to Yu’s death?

**The Eastern Scholar says:** Your account follows the incorrect report in the *Comprehensive Mirror (Cương Giám)\(^65\)* stating “Yu the Great ruled for 27 years.”

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\(^64\) Emperor Shun (舜, Thuân) was one of the Chinese sage-kings who succeeded Emperor Yao.

\(^65\) This probably refers to Sima Guang’s *Zizhi Tongjian* [Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government], a history critique written in the Song dynasty which became a model for other historical narratives.
Rather, we should accept the account by Master Zhu in the *Outline of History* (Cương Mục)\(^\text{66}\) which says “Yu the Great ruled for eight years” only.

**The Western Scholar replies:** According to the *Outline of History*, Yu the Great was born before the flood occurred and accepted the task of subduing the flood when he was not yet fourteen years of age. Here is why he is thought to have ruled for 8 years. Before him, Emperor Shun ruled for 50 years. After Yu succeeded in controlling the flood, Emperor Yao still ruled for another 29 years. Thus, there are still thirteen years left for the total of 100 years of his life. Regardless of the counting, this important task of controlling the flood \(\text{p. 26}\) was far beyond the ability of a child who was not yet 14 years of age. Because the Confucian scholars mistakenly believed that Yu saved the people from the great flood during the reign of Emperor Yao, they also mistakenly claimed that “in the time of King Yao, the waters were swelling up to the sky.” The great flood had already occurred before the time of Emperor Yao. But because Yao passed on the story of the ancient flood, later generations mistakenly believe the great flood happened during his rule.

**The Eastern Scholar asks:** What was the great flood at the time of Noah like?

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\(^{66}\) This probably refers to Zhu Xi’s adaptation of Sima Guang’s work, entitled *Tongjian Gangmu* [Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror]. This work was more popular during the Ming and Qing eras than the original longer work.
**The Western Scholar says:** When Noah was 600 years old, the Lord of Heaven made rain fall for 40 consecutive days. All the rivers and lakes were flooded; all the underground water sources burst forth. There was an abundance of water covering the whole earth, rising 15 meters above the mountains for one year. At the time, all people and the animals, birds, and reptiles everywhere died by drowning. There were only eight people in a boat, who were saved from death. The Lord of Heaven chose them to continue the human race: they were Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives.

After five months, the Lord of Heaven allowed the water to recede slowly, allowing the dry land to appear at the end of that year. Then he told Noah and his sons to leave the boat and move to land, bringing with them the animals, birds, and reptiles they had kept during those months of flood. People who were born after the flood are descendants of Noah’s three sons. That is our account of the great flood, according to our religion.

**The Eastern Scholar says:** The story you tell sounds reasonable. It agrees with Confucius’ account in the *Classic of Documents* about the great flood. The book records the words of Emperor Yao to his officers that “immense is the flood rising in wide partition; raging water submerged the mountains and covered hilltops; how vast is the overflow rushing to the sky,” meaning that the great flood caused terrible damage; the water covered the mountains and rose above the mountains and reached the sky.

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67 From chapter “Canon of Yao” (堯典) of the *Classic of Documents.*
The Western Scholar continues: One hundred years after the great flood, the descendants of Noah left to migrate {p. 28} afar in many directions. Thus, there must be some who came to the East and settled in the Nine Regions. As a consequence, from that time on we come to know the history of the Nine Regions (China) and the world.

The Eastern Scholar asks: Who should we take to be the first person who came to the East and found the Nine Regions?

The Western Scholar replies: I think Emperor Yao and some other people arrived in the East. Yao became the first king here, because the era of Yao matched the time in which Noah’s descendants migrated in all directions.

The Eastern Scholar says: What you say also matches what Confucius had recorded in the *Classic of Documents*. He wrote only about the affairs of the kings from the time of Emperor Yao onward, and not those of the kings before him.

The Eastern Scholar asks again: How many years have there been from the time of the great flood until the present? And how many years had there been before the flood {p. 29} counting from the time of the creation of heaven and earth?

The Western Scholar replies: There were 1,656 years from the time of the creation of heaven and earth until the great flood. There have been 4,100 years from the time of the
great flood until the present year – the year nhâm-thân, the 13th year of Cảnh Hưng’s reign. There is another method of counting, allotting more years for the period between the creation and the great flood, and between the great flood and the present time. However, since I am more certain about the first method of counting, let us follow my account.

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68 The year is 1752 since King Lê Cảnh Hưng started his reign in the year of 1739. This is important information for it gives the internal dating of the manuscript.
Article 6

On the Sacrifices to Heaven, Earth, and the “Six Spirits of Nature”

The Western Scholar says: The Confucian scholars teach people to make offerings to heaven, earth, and mountains and rivers. Consequently, at the beginning of the year offerings were made to the Sovereign on High, then to the earth. The court officials were also ordered to make offerings to the “Six Spirits of Nature” (lục tôn) and [the spirits of] mountains and rivers. I ask you: Where do those rites come from?

The Eastern Scholar says: Past and present kings have followed the prescription taught by Confucius in the Book of Rites. The chapter “Conveyance of Rites” (Lễ Vận) says:

“The ancient kings were concerned that the rites did not reach down to the people; therefore, they sacrificed to the Sovereign [on High] in the open space (giao郊) in order to establish the place of heaven; they sacrificed at the altar of the earth (xã社) inside the city-state to catalog the benefits from the earth.” Furthermore, the Classic of

69 See also Opusculum, Chapter 2 article 1.

70 The meaning of the term Luc Tông (六宗, Liuong) is obscure. Tông can be understood as “origin” or “lineage.” James Legge translates this term as “Six Honoured Ones.”

71 The text mistakenly ascribes this quotation to the chapter “Utensils of Rites” (禮器) of the Record of Rites.

72 Giao (郊, jiao) is an open space outside of the city to perform sacrifice to heaven.

73 Xã (社, she) is a lot inside the city-state to perform sacrifice to the earth.

74 From Chapter “Conveyance of Rites” (禮運), sect. 25 of the Record of Rites understood by all below them. They therefore sacrificed to God in the suburb (of the capital), and thus the place of heaven was
Documents says: “Shun makes four types of offerings, one special sacrifice named loài (類) to the Sovereign on High, and another named yên (禋) to the Six Spirits of Nature, another named vọng (望) to the spirits of mountains and rivers, and another named biến (遍) to the host of spirits.” These are the four types of sacrifices for different orders of gods, each with its appropriate altar. Moreover, the sacrifices to the Six Spirits of Nature are sacrifices to the seasons, to [the spirit of] cold and heat, to the sun, to the moon, to the stars, to [the spirit of] flood and drought, and a host of other spirits, namely the spirits of hills and valleys.

The first king of kings, the Yellow Emperor, sacrificed to the Sovereign on High and the gods. Thus, the historical record says: “The [Yellow] emperor made laws to establish a special palace, then he put together the veneration and worship of the Sovereign on High, and then of the numerous spirits, announcing the right teaching from there.”

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75 This is a quote from chapter “Canon of Shun” (舜典) of the Classic of Documents.

76 The Yellow Emperor (黄帝, Hoàng Đế) is a legendary Chinese sovereign and cultural hero who is considered in Chinese mythology to be the ancestor of all Han Chinese. He was one of the legendary Five Emperors – the other four are Zhuanxu, Emperors Ku, Yao, and Shun — mentioned by the Han historian Sima Qian in Records of the Grand Historian (史記, Shi Ji). See notes.

77 “Sử ký” in Vietnamese can refer to several different books of history. The source of quotation is not yet located.

78 See also the Latin translation in Opusculum, pp. 105-106 and nn. 109-110.
The Western Scholar comments: It is not suitable to worship the sun, the moon, the stars, [the spirits of] the seasons, heat and cold, rain and wind, mountains and rivers, and others like them. Because they possess no intelligence, they neither think nor have the power to make things happen, but only carry out whatever tasks their master, the Lord of heaven and earth, assigns to them. Thus, they do not know the human heart or the worship or the trust addressed to them.

The Eastern Scholar says: When the Confucian scholars sacrifice to the sun, the moon, the stars, flood and drought, mountains and rivers, and others like them, they intend to make offerings to the invisible gods residing in these creatures, not their visible forms. Any creature with the intelligence and power to carry out its activities can be called a god. Consequently, the gods who resides within these creatures must have the intelligence to know the affairs of their creatures, and know the worship that humans offer them.

The Western Scholar replies: It is not possible for a god to exist in a creature and knows everything which belongs to the creature. The intelligence and power of a creature is not different in nature from the creature’s, but it wholly depend on the creature. If a god is the intelligence and power of a creature, and if he is one with the creature, then he has no mind to think, he only has the intelligence and power of an inanimate object. If there is a knowing and thinking god acting within the creature, then the creature is a living being. If the creature has intelligence, it is a living being, as it is
said in the *Nature and Principle*: “Matter of perception belongs to the mind,” and also “perception is quality of the mind.” For this reason, if all the creatures of heaven and earth are living beings, the Confucian scholars \( \text{(p. 32)} \) would teach “every creature is a living being” and not “in every creature there is an intelligent god, who knows he is worshipped by that creature.”

Therefore, we must not sacrifice to heaven and earth and to the creatures in heaven and earth, but solely to the “true Lord of heaven and earth” – the highest Being who creates and rules over heaven and earth, humans and things. \( \text{(p. 33)} \) He makes the movements of the sky; assigns the sun, moon and stars to give light to us; sends down good weather, rain and wind for the changing seasons; makes the earth produce at the right time every kind of plants as well as the five types of grains, five types of metal, five types of stone; and gives life to all kinds of animals, birds, and fish for us to use.

**The Eastern Scholar asks:** If we must not offer sacrifices to the Sovereign on High and Spirit of the Earth and the aforementioned entities, why, in the ancient times, did the sage-king Shun sacrifice to the Sovereign on High, Six Spirits of Nature, mountains and rivers? Moreover, why did the ancient kings sacrifice at the ceremony *giao* and *xā* as recorded by Confucius in the *Classic of Documents* and *Record of Rites*?

**The Western Scholar replies:** I am not sure whether those accounts are accurate for the following reasons. The ancient kings, especially the sage-kings Yao and Shun, probably did not make sacrifices to the Sovereign on High, the Spirit of Earth, and the Six Spirits
of Nature, as recorded in the *Classic of Documents* and *Record of Rites*. Those sage-kings were known in the Confucian tradition as ones who possessed great wisdom and virtue. Hence, their knowledge was vast and their righteousness abundant. Those kings lived in the ancient time when everyone in the world still worshipped one great Lord who created heaven and earth, humans and things. Consequently, we must think those sage-kings kept the right worship to the one true Lord of heaven and earth, calling him “the Sovereign on High.” They told their people to worship that one Sovereign only.

In later periods, people chased after worldly things. Gradually their minds were clouded, preventing them from remembering and recognizing the Lord who created heaven and earth and all things, the Lord who is the most esteemed and most honored among the gods. Since the Lord is invisible, they took the visible sky to be the Sovereign on High. They took the creatures in heaven and earth to be objects of worship. After a few generations, the kings and people began to worship in the same way. Up to the time of Confucius, the tradition said that in the ancient times Emperor Shun not only sacrificed to the Sovereign on High, but also to the Six Spirits of Nature and mountains and rivers. Hence, when Confucius collected and edited the six classics, he included the story as well as the other sacrificial ceremonies of *giao* and *xā*, and the sacrifices to heaven and earth that were copied in other books.

Therefore, we must not take the established rites as the right ones, and worship the Sovereign on High in the same way as heaven and other creatures of heaven and earth. We should not think the ancient kings established those rites for the people,

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79 The six classics include the Five Classics and the lost *Classic of Music* (Yuejing).
because it was not fitting for these sage-kings, who ruled people by virtue to do so. Rather, we should think those kings worshipped the one true Lord of heaven and earth, who is the Sovereign on High, different from the heavens.

[The Spirit of Earth]

The Western Scholar says: When people bury the dead, they often sacrifice to the Spirit of Earth (Hậu Thổ). What is this rite all about?

The Eastern Scholar says: People perform the rite because the book Correct Practices of Family Rituals (Gia Lễ Chính Hành) tells them to do so. In the beginning, the ritual offerings to the four seasons, five emperors and five spirits were established in the Qin dynasty. One of the five spirits is named “Minister of Land” (Hậu Thổ), as the Record of Rites on the rites to the four seasons say: “In the middle of the year, sacrifice is offered to its king the Yellow Emperor and its attending spirit Minister of Land.” This spirit was Goulong, who held the post of Minister of Land in the ancient time (and earth is considered as the center of the Five Elements). In the Tang dynasty, when King Xuanzong reestablished the rites for his reign, he changed the name of Goulong to “Minister of Land.” In the Song dynasty, when Duke of Wen composed the book of rituals, he did not distinguish between rites performed by kings and rituals performed by

80 From chapter “Monthly Proceeding” (月 令) of the Record of Rites.

81 Reign 712-756.

82 This probably refers to the Song historian Sima Guang (司 馬 光, Tư Mã Quang [1019-1086]) whose posthumous title is [Sima] Wengong.
the common people. He took the earlier Tang practice and included in his ritual book, the worship to the “Minister of Land.” From that time on, when there is a burial, people include a sacrifice to the Minister of Land and offer a prayer to him. Then, in the reign of Song Xiaozong, when Master Zhu (Chu Văn Công) composed the Correct Practices of Family Rituals, he changed the title “Minister of Land” to “Spirit of the Earth” and taught people to sacrifice to this spirit on the right side of the tomb, and to pray thus: “My parents are buried here, please guard them safely.” That is the history of the rite to the Spirit of Earth. Originally, the rite was offered to the Minister of Land, and later, it became the rite to the Spirit of Earth.

**The Western Scholar comments:** The rite to the Spirit of Earth is contrary not only to the holy way of the Lord of Heaven, which teaches one to worship only the Lord of Heaven, but also to Confucianism. Even if one should sacrifice to the Spirit of Earth, the officers and the people are not allowed to do so, because Spirit of Earth is paired with August Heaven. Only the king who sacrifices to Heaven can be the one who sacrifices to Earth. Since the rest of the people are not allowed to sacrifice to Heaven, why then should they be allowed to sacrifice to Earth? If ritual vessels are found in the household of common people, this would be usurping the sacrifice to Heaven, which was reserved for the king, the special kind offered to the Sovereign on High.

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83 Reign 1163-1189.

84 Chu Văn Công (Zhu Wengong) was the posthumous name of Zhu Xi.

85 Apparently this prayer is to deter against the tomb-robbers.
Article 7

On the Sacrifices to the Five Emperors and the Five Spirits

The Western Scholar says: You have mentioned, the rites of the four seasons were established during the Qin dynasty to sacrifice to the Five Emperors and the Five Spirits. Can you explain these rites?

The Eastern Scholar says: These rites come from the chapter “Monthly Proceeding” of the Record of Rites. It was composed by Lü Buwei, the [adopted] father of Qin Shihuang, to teach the king to offer seasonal sacrifices to the Five Emperors and the Five Spirits, who belong to the four directions and the center according to the five elements, that is, earth, fire, wood, metal and water. The five rulers and their attending officials had done great things for their people. That is why kings of later generations offer them sacrifices to remember their merits. These rites are as follows:

86 Five Emperors (五帝) refers to five mythical kings of the Xia dynasty: Fuxi, Shennong, Huang Di, Shaohao, and Zhuanxu.

87 Lü Buwei (呂不韋) (ca. 290-231 BCE) was the chancellor of the state of Qin who made his adopted son Ying Zheng the future emperor of unified China.

88 Qin Shihuang (秦始皇) was the king of the state of Qin from 246 to 221 BCE and the first emperor of China from 221 to 210 BCE. He was famous for building the first Great Wall of China and his own city-sized mausoleum guarded by a life-size terra cotta army in Xi’an.

89 Chinese cosmology is patterned after a system of Five Elements, in which each natural element is assigned a direction and a color. Besides the four directions east, west, north, south, the “center” is also considered a “direction.”

90 See also the summary in Opusculum, pp. 122-123.
The three months of spring — the first, second and third months of the lunar calendar — belong to the wood element and to the east. King Taihao\(^91\) grows stronger by the power of the wood element, and the governor of the wood element is Goumang.\(^92\) Therefore, the spring offerings are made to Taihao, the “ruler of the green star,” and to Goumang, the “governing spirit of the wood element.” Goumang was one of King Shaohao’s sons.

The three months of summer — the fourth, fifth and sixth months — belong to the fire element and to the south. King Yan Di\(^93\) grows stronger by the power of the fire element, and the governor of the fire element is Zhurong.\(^94\) Therefore, the summer offerings are made to Yan Di, the “ruler of the red star,” and to Zhurong the “governing spirit of the fire element.” Zhurong was a descendant of King Zhuanxu.

The end of the sixth month is the middle of the four seasons; it belongs to the earth element, which is at the center of the four directions \(\text{p. 39}\) and the four seasons. The Yellow Emperor\(^95\) grows stronger by the power of the earth element, and the governor of the earth element is Goulong. Therefore, the middle of the year offerings are made to Huang Di, the “ruler of the yellow star,” and to Goulong the “governing spirit of the earth element.” After his death Goulong was honored as the Spirit of Earth.

\(^{91}\) Taihao (大皞) is an honorific name of Fuxi (伏羲), the first mythical god-king of China. 

\(^{92}\) Goumang is the wood deity and assistant of Fuxi. 

\(^{93}\) Yan Di (炎帝) is an honorific name of Shennong (神農), the god-king of agriculture. 

\(^{94}\) Zhurong is the god of fire and of the south. 

\(^{95}\) Huang Di (黃帝), or the Yellow Emperor, is considered the founder of Chinese civilization.
The three months of autumn — the seventh, eighth, and ninth months — belong to the metal element and to the west. King Shaohao\textsuperscript{96} grows stronger by the power of the metal element, and the governor of the metal element is Rushou.\textsuperscript{97} Therefore, the autumn offerings are made to Shaohao, the “ruler of the white star,” and to Ru Shou the “governing spirit of the metal element.” Rushou was the mentor of King Shaohao’s sons.

The three months of winter — the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth months — belong to the water element and to the north. King Zhuanxu\textsuperscript{98} grows stronger by the power of the water element, and the governor of the water element is Xuanming.\textsuperscript{99} Therefore, the winter offerings are made to Zhuanxu, the “ruler of the black star,” and to Xuanming the “governing spirit of the water element.” Xuanming was one of King Shaohao’s sons.

\{p. 40\} The sacrifices to the spirits of the seasons are done in the open space outside the city, where the king comes to welcome the seasons. These sacrifices are known as the establishment of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. It is how the rites have been done since the time of the Three Dynasties.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{96} Shaohao (少皞) (ca. 2600 BCE) is traditionally considered the successor of the Yellow Emperor and father of Emperor Zhuanxu.

\textsuperscript{97} Rushou was an official of King Shaohao.

\textsuperscript{98} Zhuanxu (顓頊) also known as Gao Yang (高陽) was the last of the mythical kings of the Xia dynasty.

\textsuperscript{99} Xuanming was the official of King Shaohao.

\textsuperscript{100} The three early Chinese dynasties of Xia, Shang and Zhou.
[Five Household Spirits]

In addition, the chapter “Monthly Proceeding” also refers to the sacrifices to the Five Guardian Spirits: in the spring offerings are made to the Door spirit; in the summer, to the Hearth spirit; in the autumn, to the Gate spirit; in the winter, to the Road spirit; in the middle of the year, to the Central Flow spirit.

The Door spirit is the guardian of doors. He is the yang energy residing at the doors in the springtime. As the yang energy (qi) flows out, it brings life to everything. Therefore, in the spring one sacrifices to the Door spirit. The spleen is the primary sacrificial food, and the altar is set up inside the door to the west.

The Hearth spirit is the guardian of the kitchen. In the summer the fire energy grows stronger, displacing the yin energy because fire burns everything. Therefore, in the summer one sacrifices to the Hearth spirit. The lung is the primary sacrificial food, and the altar is set up near the hearth.

The Gate spirit is the guardian of the gate. He takes on the lesser yin energy during the autumn, gathering the energy (qi) together. Therefore, in the autumn one makes sacrifices to the Gate spirit. The liver is the primary sacrificial food, and the altar is set up on the left of the gate.

The Road spirit is the guardian of roads, also called the spirit of water. In the winter, as the yin energy moves back and forth, the water energy is abundant, giving rise to the cold. Consequently, one sacrifices at the road to bring the yang energy back. Therefore, in the winter, one sacrifices to the Road spirit. The kidney is the primary sacrificial food, and the altar is set up outside the gate of the temple.
The Central Flow spirit is the guardian of the house. He is also called the Land spirit for he guards the land. Therefore, at the end of the summer, in the middle of four seasons, we offer sacrifices to the Central Flow spirit. The heart is the primary sacrificial food, and the altar is set up at the center of the house. That is how the rites have been carried out since the time of the Three Dynasties.

The sacrifices described in the chapter “Monthly Proceeding” can be summarized as follows: {p. 42}

- Spring: its divine ruler is Taihao; its attending spirit is Goumang; its guardian spirit is Door.
- Summer: its divine ruler is Yan Di; its attending spirit is Zhurong; its guardian spirit is Hearth.
- Middle of the year: its divine ruler is Huang Di; its attending spirit is Goulong or Spirit of Earth; its guardian spirit is Central Flow.
- Autumn: its divine ruler is Shaohao; its attending spirit is Ru Shou; its guardian spirit is Gate.
- Winter: its divine ruler is Zhuanxu; its attending spirit is Xuanming; its guardian spirit is Road.

The Western Scholar says: The sacrifices to the Five Emperors and the Five Spirits only began in the Qin dynasty, because the Three Dynasties — the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties — did not know of these rites and Confucius did not include them in the
Record of Rites. It was only when the Qin rulers decided to express thanks to the five rulers and the five officials, (p. 43) who cared for the people that the rituals of venerating and of welcoming the four seasons were established. The sage-kings Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu, who ruled the world by the Way (dao), obviously knew the right protocols and ritual. Why were these rites not established at their time, but later during the Qin era? Moreover, what is the reason for establishing the rites to venerate the five rulers mentioned above, while there is no rite to venerate Yao and Shun, whom the Confucian scholars called sage-emperors? Are these emperors not considered to have much more merit and virtue than Shao Hao and Zhuan Xu?

Why are there rituals about welcoming the four seasons? If there is no ceremony to welcome the seasons, will they not come? What kind of intelligence do the four seasons possess to know that they are ceremonially welcomed? And what about the sacrificial offerings to the five guardian spirits of the Door, Gate, Hearth, House, and Road? No king before the Qin rulers mentioned about these guardian spirits. If there are such guardian spirits, then there must be countless guardian spirits. For if every house and every road need guardian spirits, the number of guardian spirits is proportional to the number of houses and roads, (p. 44) just as there are as many village gods as there are villages. With reference to the veneration of the Five Emperors and the Five Spirits who govern the five elements, we should look at the reasons behind the common custom of worshipping the dead, which I will discuss in Article 14.

101 Apparently the Western Scholar makes an error here. The chapter “Monthly Proceeding” is part of the Record of Rites.
Therefore, we must worship and sacrifice only to the true Lord of heaven and earth, who is infinitely knowing, infinitely powerful, who governs the heaven and earth and everything in it, who makes the seasons change, and who takes charge of all affairs in heaven and earth to care for human beings in every way.

[Agricultural Rite]

The Eastern Scholar says: There is a special rite to offer sacrifices to Yan Dì, commonly known as the god of agriculture, or Shennong (Thần Nông). In the autumn, the ceremonial coming down to the field [to plant the rice] was called “Hạ Điện.” The ceremonial going up from the field [when planting is finished or harvesting] is called “Thượng Điện.” During those times, every village offers sacrifices to Shennong in remembrance of his teaching on agriculture. It is recorded in history: “Cutting the wood to make the blade, bending the wood to make the plough, Shennong taught people the skill to grow the five types of grains. Thus, agriculture was developed.” During the sacrificial ceremony, there is a recitation of praise to Shennong, and petitions are made for a successful harvest, {p. 45} prosperity, and peace. I do not know of its origin, but it is a common ritual is found in every village in this country (Annam) as well as in the other neighboring countries\textsuperscript{102} from the past to the present.

\textsuperscript{102} In the pre-modern era, China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam share an affinity for Chinese customs and writings.
The Western Scholar says: To remember and praise the merit of the Divine Farmer in teaching agriculture is appropriate. However, if for the sake of honoring him, one takes him to be a holy being who has the power to help people in cultivation and to bless them with good harvests and other good things, then this is not appropriate to do so for the reasons that I have discussed before and will discuss again in Article 14. There is only one Lord of Heaven who endows people with all kinds of skills and gives them the five kinds of grains in the field, the possessions in the house, and peace in the village. For that reason, do not put your trust in the Divine Farmer and offer sacrifices to him.
Article 8
The Hội Minh and Kỳ Đạo Ceremonies

The Western Scholar says: In this country, there are two solemn ceremonies every year: one is called Hội Minh,\textsuperscript{103} and the other Kỳ Đạo.\textsuperscript{104} I ask you: What happens in these two ceremonies? \{p. 46\}

[Taking Oath Ceremony]

The Eastern Scholar says: The Hội Minh ceremony is celebrated in the last month of the year, when civil and military officials gather to take the oath of loyalty to their king and their lord.\textsuperscript{105} The ceremony takes place in a spacious square, which has a main gate and two side gates on the left and the right. In the front there is a main altar to sacrifice to heaven and earth. On the left are raised platforms (đàn) to venerate the nine recently deceased kings (vua). On the right are raised platforms to venerate the nine recently deceased lords (chúa). The left side also have high altars to venerate the spirits of the highest rank and the spirits of mountain and river. At the center, there are three incense

\textsuperscript{103}“Hội Minh,” also spelt as “Hội Miêng” in the text, is a ceremony for subjects to take an oath of loyalty to their rulers. This ceremony was first recorded in the year 1028, the first year under the reign of Lý Thái Tông, after his brothers rebelled against him for the throne. See Toàn Thư Bản Kỷ II:14b-15a (2004, Vol. 1: 262). Cf. Opusculum, chapter 2, art. 5, pp. 132-135.

\textsuperscript{104}“Kỳ Đạo,” spelt as “Cờ Đạo” in the text (literally “flag of the chief”), is a memorial service to honor the deceased national heroes. Cf. Opusculum, chapter 2, art. 4, pp. 129-131.

\textsuperscript{105}In Tonkin at this time there were two rulers: vua is the king, but without real power; and chúa is the viceroy or lord, who actually governs the country. From 1600 to 1785, the lordship of Tonkin was in the hand of the Trịnh family.
tables where civil and military officials take their oaths. On the lower level, there are 28 small tables on both sides for soldiers to take their oaths. On the day of this solemn ceremony, three chief officials go to the main altar, take the golden knife belonging to the lord [Trịnh], kill a chicken, and drain its blood into a bowl of rice wine. Afterwards, they burn a written copy of the oath, mix the ashes with the blood and liquor, pour the liquid into six cups, and place the cups on the three incense tables. They also prepare many cups of rice wine mixed with the blood of a buffalo on smaller tables for the soldiers to take the oath.

After the preparation is completed, the Prefect of Rites offers sacrifices to heaven and earth as well as to the deceased kings and lords and other spirits at their dedicated altars. After the offerings, the mandarin and military officers kneel in front of the three incense tables to recite the oath and drink the rice wine mixed with chicken blood. The soldiers also do the same thing in front of their tables. The highest official swears: “I bow to the Supreme Emperor August Heaven (hoàng thiên thượng đế) and the Empress August Earth (hoàng địa kỳ).” The other officials swear: “We bow to the King of Heaven (hoàng thiên) and the Queen of Earth (hậu thủy).” The soldiers swear: “We bow to Heaven and Earth.” Then all of them recite this formula: “I come from such a prefecture, district, and village. I am N. ___ and I was born in such year. I swear my complete loyalty to King N. ___ and to Lord N. ___. If I do not remain loyal after I

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106 See the diagram of the placement according to Adriano di Santa Thecla in Opusculum, p. 131.

107 In a solemn ceremony, either the king himself or an appointed prefect acts as high priest, for in the Confucian tradition there is no “ordained priest” but a ritual specialist.

108 In the text, the author inserts the Latin word “nomen” (name) here.
drink from this cup of wine and blood, may the Supreme Emperor August Heaven and
the Empress August Earth (or the King of Heaven and the Queen of Earth, or Heaven and
Earth) and all the spirits, to strike and kill me.”

That is how the ceremony Hợi Minh is celebrated in Kè Chợ (Hanoi). In other
prefectures, the head of that prefecture and his officials also make their oath of loyalty.

The Western Scholar comments: It is truly righteous that the great and small officials
take an oath of loyalty to serve, wholeheartedly, their rulers, {p. 48}, but is it not absurd
to make people drink wine with the blood of chicken or buffaloes to seal their oaths?
Moreover, why should one need to offer sacrifices to heaven and earth, deceased rulers,
and other spirits? One only needs to sacrifice to the true Lord of heaven and earth, who
has the power to rule over everything in heaven and on earth, and who keeps people from
having a wayward heart, and enlightens to help the rulers to govern their people for the
justice and peace in the country.

[Veneration of the Leader’s Banner]

The Eastern Scholar says: Now I must tell you, the Western Scholar, about the
ceremony Kỳ Đạo, about which you asked me earlier. In Kè Chợ, on the second month
of the year, we choose a spacious place at the river bank to erect 36 small altars and four
or five altars on high platforms. The first altar is dedicated to the Supreme Emperor
August Heaven and the Empress August Earth. The second altar is dedicated to Kinh
Dương Vương and Lạc Long Quân. The third is dedicated to the former kings. The fourth, on the left side of the gate of the altar area, is dedicated to the Five Emperors and Five Generals. The fifth altar and the remaining ones are dedicated to a great spirit, either to [the spirit of] Mount Tản Viên, or Đờng Thiên Vương, or Lý Ông Trọng, or Không Lộ, or Giác Hải, and so on. The ceremony is called “Sacrifice of Banner of the Chief” because Kỳ Đạo is the large flag used by the general. On the day of the ceremony, the lord [Trịnh] goes to his palace nearby to watch. The military officials also bring their troops there. Then the Prefect of Rites comes to each altar, offers the sacrifice to heaven and earth, former kings and lords, the Five Emperors and Five Generals, and other spirits. He thanks them for their blessings and also to request their protection for the king and the lord, and for all people to have peace and prosperity. After the offerings are completed, cannon shots are fired; then the large flag of the chief is waved near the palace of the lord. Then the

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109 Kinh Dương Vương and his son Lạc Long Quân are the mythical founders of Vietnam. According to the Vietnamese tradition, Kinh Dương Vương was a descendant in the third generation of Shennong, the god of agriculture. His son Lạc Long Quân subdued demons, civilized people and protected them from intruders. In Vietnamese mythology the earliest king Hùng was one of 100 children born of Lạc Long Quân’s union to a mountain fairy named Âu Cơ. The stories of King Dương Vương and Lạc Long Quân are mentioned in Toàn Thư, Ngô Kỳ, I:1b-2a (2004, Vol. 1: 127-29).

110 Mount Tản Viên is considered the most sacred mountain in Tonkin.

111 King Đờng or the Heavenly King of Phú Đờng (see Article 10), a national legendary hero of Vietnam.

112 King Trèm or Chèm (see Book 1, Article 10), another national hero of Vietnam.

113 A prominent monk who lived during the reigns of Lý Nhân Tông (r. 1072-1127) and Lý Thân Tông (r. 1128-1138).

114 Another prominent monk who was a contemporary and a confreere of Không Lộ. Both Dương Không Lộ and Nguyễn Giác Hải are mentioned in the 14th century collection of Vietnamese legend entitled Linh Nam Chích Quái.
banner-carrying soldiers wave their flags and fire their guns. The regular soldiers fire their muskets three times, raising their swords and spears up and down. With these actions they intend to drive away the spirits of the rebels who had revolted against the kings and lords of the past, lest the tranquility of the country be disturbed. After the ceremony, the officials and their soldiers gather to greet the lord and compete in sports and games. That is how the ceremony Kỳ Đạo is celebrated in Kẻ Chợ. In other prefectures, the head of the prefecture also celebrates the ceremony on the same day.

{p. 50}

**The Western Scholar comments:** Heaven and earth, the kings and lords of the past, or the spirits do not bring peace and security to this country. Rather, it is the Lord of Heaven, creator of heaven and earth and ruler of everything, who gives peace and security to all. Therefore, you must sacrifice only to the Lord of Heaven; do not sacrifice anymore to heaven and earth and the others. Moreover, why do you need to wave the flags, fire the cannons and muskets, and raise the weapons up and down to drive away the spirits of the rebels? The dead cannot affect us in this life and we cannot affect them. There is only one Lord of Heaven who sends his angels to punish the people who sin against him. The Lord of Heaven also allows the devils to torment sinners. That is why we must fear the power of the Lord of Heaven, who is able to punish people, and yet, we must trust in the mercy of the Lord of Heaven, who is infinitely compassionate.
Article 9

On Thành Hoàng [the Tutelary Genie] and Other Spirits

[The Cult of Thành Hoàng]

The Western Scholar says: I note that every village in this country has a cult of Thành Hoàng [tutelary genie]. So I ask you: Which spirit is named Thành Hoàng? And how is his cult celebrated? 116

The Eastern Scholar replies: Thành Hoàng is the guardian spirit of the village and protects the village. Each village chooses a spirit as its tutelary deity. It is the spirit of a deceased person, who has achieved great merit in that region. Sometimes, it is the spirit of a tiger, a horse, or a dog that attacked people, or a spirit that displayed marvelous power. If the villagers can afford it, they would build a temple dedicated to that spirit. If they cannot afford a temple, they dedicate a place in the village temple for the cult of that spirit. Those spirits who are given honorary offices by the king have their own temples. [In their temples] their names followed by two characters Đại Vương, which

115 Thành Hoàng (城隍, chenghuang) literally means the king of the city-wall, but in Vietnam, it is the guardian of a village rather than a city. This deity is often called upon for communal concerns, such as the need for rain or warding off a natural disaster or plague. He (or she) also responds to personal requests such as recovery from illness or exoneration from wrongly accused criminal charges.

116 See also the description in Opusculum, Chapter 2, art 6, pp. 135-138.
means “great prince,” are written on their spirit tablets. However, people usually call Thành Hoàng “king.”

The national custom stipulates the sacrifice to Thành hoàng to be performed three or four times a year for different purposes. At the beginning of the year, there is a ceremony of supplication for tranquility (Kỳ An); in the tenth month of the year an offering of new crops; in the eleventh month of the year there is a ceremony of supplication for happiness (Kỳ Phúc). If there is a drought, there is a ceremony for rain (Đảo Vũ); if there is a plague, there is a ceremony for dispelling misfortune (Tống Ách). On the occasion of the ceremony, the whole village offers food for the feast, or contributes money to buy the sacrificial pig, and the villagers gather to celebrate the sacrifice. In addition, in the first month, the third month, or another month, they sing for several days in honor of the tutelary deity to solemnly venerate him. Each day they offer sacrifices, then sing songs throughout the day and night, and play games like wrestling, stick-fighting, or cricket. However, during the mourning period for the king (vua) or lord (chúa), all forms of entertainment are prohibited.

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117 Thần vị (神位, Shenwei) is a wooden tablet on which is inscribed the name and the title of the deceased person.

118 In Vietnamese they are called đánh vật, đánh thó, đánh cầu.
[The Testing of the Spirits]

The Western Scholar asks: You have mentioned some tutelary deities have an honorary office given by the king. So I ask you: How does the monarch bestow an honorific office on that spirit?\(^{119}\)

The Eastern Scholar replies: Three ranks of spirits are elected to a dignitary status by the monarch: they are called spirits of the supreme rank,\(^{120}\) spirits of the middle rank,\(^{121}\) and spirits of the lower rank.\(^{122}\) Before a spirit is promoted to one of these three ranks, there is a test to determine whether he deserves the honor. Every year the ceremony is celebrated with the villagers petitioning a spirit to become the tutelary deity for their village brings in a buffalo and writes the name of the spirit on its head. The appointed official commands the spirit to strike the designated buffalo dead if he wants to obtain his rank. If the buffalo is stricken dead in front of everyone present, the spirit receives a royal certification to become a \(\text{thần}\) (deity) and is registered in the official record of the spirits. This ceremony is called “establishing the ranks \(\text{p. 54}\) and promotions of the spirits” \(\text{tạo khoa bất thần}\). After the ceremony, the villagers carry the royal certification back to the communal hall in a solemn procession that attracts a crowd from neighboring

\(^{119}\) On this topic of ranking and certifying spirit, see also the description in \textit{Opusculum}, Chapter 2, art 7, pp. 139-140.

\(^{120}\) \textit{Thuồng danh thần} (spirits of the supreme rank) are spirits whose histories and actions are famous, whose names are clearly known, and who received from successive dynasties the rank of \textit{thượng danh thần}.

\(^{121}\) \textit{Trung danh thần} (spirits of the middle rank) are spirits who have been worshipped in the villages, but their deeds are not well-known. Phan Kế Bình, pp. 79-80.

\(^{122}\) \textit{Hạ danh thần} (spirits of the lower rank) are spirits who are less well-known and are often worshipped in groups. Phan Kế Bình, p. 80.
villages. Then, each following year, the prefecture head (ông Phú), the district head (ông Huyện) and the educational officer (ông Giáo) offer sacrifices to those spirits of the middle and lower rank at their individual temples. In the case of the spirits of the supreme rank, a royal official from Kẻ Chợ comes to offer sacrifices.

The Western Scholar comments: It is right to venerate and trust in the guardian deity as protector of the village. However, one must choose a spirit who truly has merits and virtues for veneration. One should not choose a false spirit who has no merit and power. One must choose a being among those in heaven, who are favored by the Lord of Heaven, because they are worthy of our total reverence and trust. The followers of our religion in all places often choose a holy man or woman as the patron saint of their village for the protection of the people who live in the area. {p. 55} But the spirits worshipped in this country are rebels against the Lord of Heaven. Since they are being punished in hell, they do not have the power to help us and is not worthy of our veneration. There may be spirits who exhibit marvelous power, for instance, striking the buffalo dead to attain the ranking. It is the power of the devil, who deceives people into believing in him. Therefore, do not believe or worship those spirits of the three ranks who, in fact, are demons.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{123} This reflects the exclusivist attitude of the Western (Christian) scholar who sees other spirits and deities as evil spirits.
The Western Scholar asks: Which deities are the most famous among the spirits of supreme rank?

The Eastern Scholar replies: The most famous among the deities are King Dông, King Trème, King Bạch Mã, and Lady Liễu Hạnh.

[King Dông]

King Dông is also known as [Phù] Dông Thiên Vương [the Heavenly King of Phù Dông village]. During the reign of King Hùng the Sixth, in Phù Dông village of Tiên Du district, there was a rich man who had a three-year old son. The boy ate and grew, but did not speak a word. At that time, Annam was being attacked by powerful enemies. King Hùng sent an envoy to announce to the whole kingdom that whoever could fight off the invaders would be rewarded with a high position. When the boy heard the announcement, he immediately began to speak, asking his mother to call in the royal envoy. The boy told the official: “Give me a horse and a sword, and the king will not

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124 See also the description in Opusculum, Chapter 2, art 8, pp. 140-147.

125 King Dông, also known in Vietnamese as “ông Dông” or “thánh Dông,” is a national hero and an immortal. His story is recorded in Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư, ngoài ký and Việt Điện U Linh Tấp. For a discussion of his cult, see Tran Quoc Vuong, “The Legend of ông Dông,” in Essays into Vietnamese Pasts, ed. K. W. Taylor and John K. Whitmore (Ithaca, NY: Cornell-SEAP, 1995), pp. 13-41.

126 In Opusculum (p. 140) the district is identified as Vũ Ninh.
have to worry about the enemies.” The envoy returned and reported the matter to the king, who agreed to the boy’s request. The boy rode the horse brandishing his sword and led the army to victory. Legend has it that afterward King Đông rode to Mount Sóc and ascended to heaven. King Hùng built a temple in his honor in Phù Đổng. Also, there is a shrine at Thanh Nhàn, a shrine at Mount Sóc, and a shrine where he left the horse. King Lý Thái Tổ,¹²⁷ conferred upon him the title “Soaring-to-Heaven Divine King” (Xung Thần Thàn Vượng) at his main temple in Phù Đổng village.

[King Trèm or Lý Ông Trọng]

King Trèm is Lý Ông Trọng,¹²⁸ who lived during the reign of An Dương Vương.¹²⁹ At that time, in [Trèm village], Thụy Hương commune, Từ Liêm district, Quốc Oai prefecture, Đoài province, there was a young man by the name of Lý Ông Trọng who was twenty-three cubits (two thước and three thước)¹³⁰ tall. During his forced labor for the village, he was struck by an official. He escaped to China, and later Emperor Qin Shihuang made him a commander-in-chief (tư hiệu úy) {p 57}. Later

¹²⁷ The first king of the Lý dynasty, he reigned from 1010 to 1028.

¹²⁸ Lý Ông Trọng is the posthumous name of Lý Thân, a legendary warrior of the third century, who served the Chinese Emperor Qin Shihuang. His story is told in Viết Diện U Linh Tập (a 14ᵗʰ-century collection of Vietnamese legends by Lý Tề Xuyên).

¹²⁹ An Dương Vương is the title of Thúc Phán, who was the ruler of the ancient state of Âu Lạc, which comprised much of North Vietnam, Southern Guangxi and Western Guangdong today. By defeating the last king of Văn Lang state, King Hùng the Eighteenth, Thúc Phán united the tribes Lạc Việt and Âu Việt together. He was defeated by the general Zhao Tuo (趙佗), or Triệu Đà in Vietnamese, and his state was annexed to the kingdom of Nan Yue in 207 BCE.

¹³⁰ According to Từ Điển Tiếng Việt [Dictionary of Vietnamese Language] ed. Hoàng Phê (NXB Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1988), p. 1093, there are two units of measurement with the name thước: (a) roughly about 10 Chinese yards (4.7m), or (b) 4 Vietnamese thước (1.6m). A thước or xích is 40cm. In either case, the height of Lý Ông Trọng is physically impossible (at least 4.4 meters).
on, the emperor sent Ma Tian to build a long wall to deter the Huns, and he also sent Lý Ông Trọng to protect the Lintao region from invasion. Since Lý Ông Trọng was known for his incredible strength, the Huns were afraid of him. When he became old man, he returned home and died there. Emperor Qin Shihuang had a bronze statue of Lý Ông Trọng made in remembrance of his service, placing it at Sima gate in the Hanyang region. Inside the statue there was a machine operated by 30 people to make life like movements. When the Huns saw the statue, they thought Lý Ông Trọng was still alive, and thus they dared not enter China. Later on, during the Tang dynasty, when the officer Zhao Chang was assigned to Annam, he often dreamt of Lý Ông Trọng discussing the Annals of Spring and Autumn with him. The officer came to Lý Ông Trọng’s village and built a temple there to honor him. When the Prefect Gao Pian\(^\text{131}\) came to Annam to fight against the rebels from Nanzhao, Lý Ông Trọng appeared \(\text{p. 58}\) to him and helped him win the war. As a sign of gratitude, Gao Pian rebuilt Lý Ông Trọng’s temple, made his statue for worship, and named him Lý the Commander-in-Chief (Lý Hiệu Úy). Since the temple is located at the Trèm village, he is called King Trèm.

\(^{131}\) Gao Pian (高駢, Cao Biên) was a general of Tang China, who led a campaign against the Nanzhao in 864-865, and restored Chinese control over North Vietnam when it fell to Nanzhao in 862. He was credited with building the citadel Đại La (Hanoi) and his deeds are described in Toàn Thư, ngoài kỳ, 5:12b-16a (Vol. 1: 197-200). On Gao Pian’s activity in Vietnam, see Taylor, The Birth of Vietnam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 246-254.

\(^{132}\) Nanzhao (南詔, Nam Chiếu) is an ancient kingdom founded by several Tai-Burmese tribes who occupied the area around Yunnan province today. In 750, Nanzhao rebelled against the Tang Dynasty. In retaliation, the Tang sent an army against Nanzhao in 751, but this army was soundly defeated. The kingdom declined during the late 9th century and fell in 902, when a rebel official killed its last emperor and set up a new state named Dali. The Mongol empire conquered it in 1253. During the two preceding centuries, its people migrated southward and eventually founded the kingdom of Siam.
King Bạch Mã [White Horse] is Ma Yuan,\textsuperscript{133} a general during the reign of Han Guangwu\textsuperscript{134} who led an army to this country, which then was called Jiaozhou.\textsuperscript{135} He fought against the Trưng sisters, who declared themselves rulers. [After he defeated them], he erected a bronze pillar and inscribed these words: “If this bronze pillar is broken, Jiaozhou will be destroyed.” Then he returned home and died some time later. After his death the Trưng sisters commemorated him and built a temple\textsuperscript{136} dedicated to Ma Yuan in Phúc Lộc district, Sơn Tây province.\textsuperscript{137} There is also a temple dedicated to Bạch Mã [White Horse] in Kẻ Chợ today.\textsuperscript{138}

The stories about these three deities are found in the \textit{Historical Record of Great Việt (Đại Việt Sử Ký).} \{p. 59\}

\begin{footnotesize}
\{133} Ma Yuan (馬 援, Mã Viên), also known as Phúc Ba Trưởng Quân [Subdue-the-Wave General], was a Chinese general who defeated the Vietnamese revolt led by the two Trưng sisters against the Han in 40-44 CE.

\textsuperscript{134} Reign 25-28 CE.

\textsuperscript{135} Jiaozhou (Giao Châu) is the name of a region in North Vietnam and Southern China given by the Han administration in 203. Prior to this, North Vietnam was called Jiaozhi (Giao Chi).

\textsuperscript{136} The information given here is historically inaccurate. Since the Trưng sisters died in battle in 43 CE during their fight against Ma Yuan, they could not have erected a temple for him.

\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Opusculum} records the location to be in Thanh Hóa province. Phúc Lộc district is more likely to be in Sơn Tây, which is near the place of the revolution by the Trưng sisters.

\textsuperscript{138} Apparently the author of the text confuses Mã Viên with another deity named Bạch Mã (White Horse). For a discussion of this error, see Dror, \textit{A Study of Religion}, pp. 42-47.
\end{footnotesize}
Lady Liễu Hạnh

Lady Liễu Hạnh from the Lê family was born at the An Thái commune of the Thiên Bàn district, Nghĩa Hưng County in Sơn Nam prefecture. After growing up, she traveled to many regions. When she came to Nghệ An province, she got married and had a son. She subsequently left her husband and returned to An Thái and became a courtesan (con chơi bội). After her death, Liễu Hạnh often appeared in the form of a beautiful girl. The lord [Trịnh] conferred on her the title Princess Liễu Hạnh, also known as Lady Thắng, and built a temple for her. People everywhere worshipped her in their homes; thus she is also known as the “Lady” of the world. There is a temple dedicated to her at Cửa Tuân in Kênh Sắt, Quỳnh Lưu District, Nghệ An province. Later, when I discuss the sect of sorcery, I will tell the complete story of Liễu Hạnh.

The Western Scholar comments: The four spirits of supreme rank are demons, who appeared in human form and performed marvels in order to make people believe in them. For instance, the stories about the child-king Đông’s battle and victory over his enemies, or King Trèm, who was twenty-three cubits tall (about the height of 5 or 6 persons) are myths and not worthy of belief.

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139 For a modern study of Liễu Hạnh, see Olga Dror, Cult, Culture and Authority: Princess Liễu Hạnh in Vietnamese History (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2007).

140 Con chơi bội can mean a prostitute. However, since St. Thecla reports that “since she had sung, as they say, disgracefully and shamelessly [impudica], people being jealous, killed her and threw her into a river” (Opusculum, p. 145), it is also possible that Liễu Hạnh was engaged in some form of entertainment, like the geisha in Japan. On this point, see Dror, A Study of Religion, pp. 47-49.
The Western Scholar says: I note that people often worship the Stove Genie (vua bèp). So I ask you: Who is this Stove Genie, and how did the worship of the Stove Genie begin?"

The Eastern Scholar replies: It is written in the Correct Practices of Family Rituals (Gia Lễ Chính Hành) that sacrificing to the Stove Genie is also sacrificing to Zhurong, who was the minister of the fire at the time of King Zhuanxu. Furthermore, it is written that the Stove Genie is often identified with Laomi, the person who gives flavors to food. Consequently, Trinh Huyền explains that the Stove Genie is both Zhurong and Laomi.

[The Legend of the Stove Genie]

There is a nice story to explain the origin of the Stove Genie.

[Once upon a time, there was a couple.]  

141 See also Opusculum, Book 1, art 9.

142 In Vietnam, Vua Bếp (Stove Genie) is also known as Táo Quân (灶君, Lord of Hearth) or Táo Thần (灶神, Hearth Spirit). The popular Stove Genie not only watches over the family but is also a moral force in the lives of all family members. At the end of each year, he goes up to heaven to report to the Jade Emperor on the domestic affairs of the family during the previous year. The family will then be rewarded or punished according to the Stove Genie’s report. People make special offerings to him on the 23rd day of the twelfth month (a week before the lunar New Year Eve), the date he goes to heaven to make his report.

143 The story is told in verses; here the translation approximates the poetic nature of the original.
The husband’s name was {p. 61} Trọng Cao; his wife was Thị Nhi.

One day they had a conversation:

Our house is rich; our wealth is abundant.

Whose good fortune is it? They began to quarrel.

The wife claimed it was hers; the husband maintained it was his.

Trọng Cao became angry and struck Thị Nhi. She left the house and sat at the crossroad, crying and tearing out her hair:

Oh Heaven, Oh Earth, my husband rejected me!

I left the house to him.

Whatever our fortune is, only the future can tell.

Arguing cannot settle the question.

Good fortune is from heaven, from the previous karmic affinity.

She thought to herself, and considered her feelings.

“Alas, Heaven, why do you let good people down?”

Heaven shifted again; her fate was changed.

She met a fine man, one with position and power;

Fate brought them together; his name was Phạm Lang.

On the road, he saw Nhi and talked to her.

Bringing her home, he made her his wife,

and she shared his fortune.

Trọng Cao’s fortune ended.
His life turned difficult and became a beggar.

Unknowingly, he came to his former’s wife home.

When he begged there, she recognized him.

Phạm Lang was out hunting, and had not yet returned.

Only Thị Nhi was home, busy with the chores.

Her tears flowed, feeling pity for the former husband. \{p. 62\}

She cooked a good meal, served him food and wine; he ate and drank his fill.

When Phạm Lang returned, Thị Nhi was still crying.

Afraid that he would find out, she told Trọng Cao:

"Go hide in the back, if you want to live.
Bury yourself in the haystack, do not hesitate."

Phạm Lang brought back the game meats from the hunt.

Going to the haystack, he lit up the fire.

Roasting the meats, the fire burned Trọng Cao to death.

Thị Nhi was distraught; she jumped into the burning hay;

The fire consumed her; Phạm Lang loved his wife;

He was inconsolable; he jumped into the fire.

To die together with her. Thus, all three persons died.

Even the maidservant was in distress for her master.

She too jumped into the fire, and burned herself to death.\textsuperscript{\textendash}144

\textsuperscript{144} Chinese mythology has over 40 stories about the origin of the Stove Genie. In one version, Zhang Dan was a wealthy farmer who had a good family. However, when he became attracted to another woman his wife left him. He lived an extravagant life until exhausting all his wealth. His concubine abandoned him and he was left to wander the streets as a homeless beggar. One day in the winter Zhang became too weak...
That is the story of the Stove Genie, whom people believe in and worship. However, according to the chapter “Monthly Proceeding” of the Record of Rites, the Stove Genie is called the Hearth Spirit (táo thàn). Furthermore, the book prescribes the summer sacrifice to the Hearth [spirit], and this spirit is none other than Zhurong. It is written: “the summer’s divine ruler is Yan Di; its attending spirit is Zhurong; its guardian spirit is Hearth.” Consequently, whenever there is a feast, people make offerings to the Stove Genie; a newly married {p. 63} woman also prays to the Stove Genie to help her cook fine meals. On New Year’s Eve, a picture of the Stove Genie is hung next to the hearth.

[Local Spirits]

The Western Scholar asks: Who are the Household Genie (thổ công) and Land Guardian (thổ chủ)?

The Eastern Scholar replies: The chapter “Monthly Proceeding” in the Record of Rites teaches that at the middle of the four seasons, a sacrifice is made to the guardian spirit of

and fainted while knocking on a door begging for food. The lovely lady who answered the door took him in and nursed him back to health. When he awoke he found himself in a small kitchen next to the warm hearth. When he looked out the window he saw his host. To his surprise, it was his old wife. Embarrassed and unable to look her in the face, he jumped into the hearth. She tried to douse him with water but the fire kept on blazing and in a flash his ashes went up to the heavens. Upon receiving a report of Zhang’s story, the Jade Emperor declared and appointed Zhang to be the Stove Genie. See E.T.C. Werner, Dictionary of Chinese Mythology (Shanghai, 1932; reprint, New York: Julian Press, 1961), p. 520.

145 See Article 7.

146 The “Household Genie” (thổ công) is the house god; the “Land Guardian” or “Local Master” (thổ chủ) is the guardian spirit of one’s land and field.
the household, who is also called the spirit of the land. Subsequently people regard this spirit as the Household Genie.

There is a story about him in Buddhist books. Once upon a time, there was a ferocious tiger in another kingdom.\textsuperscript{147} It killed many people, and no one could subdue it. The king published an edict in his kingdom saying whoever could subdue the tiger would be made an official. Five brothers from the family of Lê Nhân Đôn and Lê Nhân Đức captured the tiger. As reward, the king proclaimed them rulers of five parts of his kingdom:\textsuperscript{148} the eldest brother rules as the Green Lord of the East; the second eldest brother as the White Lord of the West; the third brother as the Red Lord of the South; the fourth brother as the Black Lord of the North; the fifth brother as the Yellow Lord of the Central. Later, these brothers were worshipped collectively as the Household Genie.

People also worship the Land Guardian.\textsuperscript{149} According to an account in the book \textit{Loại Tư}, \textsuperscript{p. 64} goblins often played chess on Mount Thạch Thất of Sơn Tây Prefecture. In the Jin dynasty, there was a poor wood-gatherer named Vương Chất.\textsuperscript{150} One day, on the way to gather wood, he stopped and watched the goblins play chess. He was enchanted and stayed there for a long time until the blade of his ax was gnawed away by moths and his face became badly disfigured. When he returned home, none of his

\textsuperscript{147} In the text, the author uses “another kingdom” as a reference for China which is made explicit in the \textit{Opusculum}.

\textsuperscript{148} Cf. \textit{Opusculum}, p. 48.

\textsuperscript{149} The text has “Household Genie” (thổ công); however, the word “Land Guardian” (thổ chủ) fits better in the context.

\textsuperscript{150} I am uncertain whether this is a Chinese or Vietnamese story, hence the name is spelled in Sino-Vietnamese rather than pinyin.
relatives could recognize him. When seeing that no one welcomed him at home, he went and built a modest hut at the corner of his land. When he died, he was given the title “eunuch” (thái giám)\(^{151}\) and was honored as the Land Guardian (thóżчу).  

**[Guild Founder]**

**The Western Scholar asks again:** Why do craftmen and merchants often worship the primary teachers of founders (tiên sư) of their craft or trade?

**The Eastern Scholar replies:** People have respect for teachers. Since all crafts and trades have their originators, people venerate them, pay them due respect, and pray to their Primary Teachers to assist them in their crafts and trades. The seventh day of the first month, the fifth of the fifth month, the tenth of the tenth month are days to honor the Primary Teachers. In addition, whenever they have {p. 65} memorial feasts for their ancestors, they also made offerings to the Primary Teachers, the Household Genie, the Land Guardian, and the Stove Genie. I do not know when this custom began.

**[Further Comments]**

The Western Scholar has pity on those who worship the Primary Teachers, the Household Genie, the Land Guardian, the Stove Genie and other spirits, because their minds are clouded and do not know the great Lord of heaven and earth and all creatures,

\(^{151}\) According to Dror, the “blade of the ax” that was “gnaw away by moth” was an euphemism for “phallus,” hence the post-humous title “eunuch.” There is no known cult of eunuch in Vietnam. (*A Study of Religion*, p. 148, nn. 159, 162).
who rules over everything and assists people in their crafts and trades. Instead, they listen to the demons teaching them to worship these spirits.\footnote{This passage seems to be out of context since there is no identified speaker.}
Article 12

On the Cult to Confucius and the Great Sages

The Western Scholar asks: I notice Confucian scholars often revere and offer sacrifices to Confucius as the First Sage and Master (tiên thành tiên sư). Thus I ask you: Who is Confucius, and what merit does he have among the Ru?

The Eastern Scholar says: Master Kong (Confucius) is from Changping village in the state of Lu,\textsuperscript{153} his ancestors were from the state of Song.\textsuperscript{154} His father was Shu Lianghe; his mother was Zheng Zai. Being childless, she went up to Mount Ni Qiu to pray for a child. The following year, in the 21\textsuperscript{st} year of the reign of Zhou Lingwang,\textsuperscript{155} she gave birth to a son and named him Qiu \textit{(p. 66)}. Zhongni is his courtesy (literary) name. As he grew up he became a learned scholar and edited the six classics: Odes, History, Rites, Music, Changes, and Spring and Autumn. He had 3,000 students, of whom 72 were sages. He taught them the way to learning is “to illuminate the illustrious virtue, to renovate the people, and to rest only after attaining the highest good.” He taught eight principles as norms for action as follows:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Modern day Shandong.
\item A state southwest of Lu in modern-day Henan.
\item Since Zhou Lingwang’s reign began in 571 BCE, Confucius would be born in 550 BCE according to this account. The exact date of Confucius’ birth is not universally agreed upon, although 551 BCE is frequently cited by most biographers following Sima Qian’s \textit{Records of the Grand Historian} (Shiji), Chapter 47.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
When things are investigated, knowledge is extended; when knowledge is extended, thought becomes sincere; when thought becomes sincere, the mind is rectified; when the mind is rectified, the person is cultivated; when the person is cultivated, order is brought to the family; when order is brought to the family, the state is well-governed; when the state is well governed, peace is brought to the world.\footnote{From the opening chapter of the \textit{Great Learning}.}

Confucius lived for 73 years and died in the 41\textsuperscript{st} year of Zhou Jingwang.\footnote{Since Zhou Jingwang’s reign began in 519 BCE, according to this account, Confucius would have died in the year 478 BCE. The traditional date is 479 BCE. The dating is a problematic because if Confucius was born in 550 BCE, and lived for 73 years, he probably would have died in 477 BCE. The discrepancy might be explained if one notes that Chinese usually count their age from the moment of conception. Thus a person who is 73 years old may actually have 72 years or less in age.} Because of his achievements, Confucius exercised great influence on scholars, kings and people of the East. Therefore, from past to present, not only do Confucian scholars revere Confucius, but also rulers and ordinary people often praise and worship him. Master Liu writes:

From the king to ordinary people, there is no one who has not venerated and worshipped Confucius. In the last thousand-plus years no one has surpassed him in honor. How could it be otherwise since he taught the doctrine of right relationships between rulers and subjects, between fathers and sons, the doctrine of humaneness and righteousness, and ceremonies and music? \footnote{In the manuscript, several pages are out of order, and consequently the pages are numbered incorrectly. Here the correct page number is noted, and the original number is given in parentheses: 67 (instead of 69).}
North can neglect his teaching for a moment. When Han Gaozu 159 passed by the state of Lu [in 195 BCE], he used the solemn sacrifices to honor Confucius. 160 [In 739] Tang Xuanzong 161 posthumously conferred upon Confucius the title ‘Exalted King of Culture’ (Văn Tuyên Vương). Song Taizu 162 issued an edict to erect a shrine; he commissioned an image of the First Sage and Master to be made for worship. The emperor himself composed words of praise to honor Confucius and his disciple Yan Hui. [In 1008] Song Zhenzong 163 additionally conferred upon him the title ‘Profound Sage, Exalted King of Culture’ (Huyền Thánh Văn Tuyên Vương) and also commanded that temples be built to honor Confucius in all prefecture capitals. [In 1307] Yuan Wuzong 164 raised Confucius to the rank of ‘Ultimate Sage of Great Perfection, Exalted King of Culture’ (Đại Thánh Chí Thánh Văn Tuyên Vương).”

159 The first emperor of the Han dynasty who ruled from 202 to 195 BCE.

160 This event marks the beginning of the cult of Confucius.

161 The seventh emperor of the Tang dynasty, also known as the Illustrious Emperor of Tang (Tang Minghuang), who ruled from 685 to 762.

162 The first emperor of the Song dynasty who ruled from 927 to 976.

163 The third emperor of the Song dynasty who ruled from 968 to 1022.

164 Also known as Kulug Khan, the seventh khans of Mongolia and third emperor of Yuan China who ruled from 1308-1311. He was the successor of Kublai Khan and Temur Khan.
[The Cult of Confucius in Annam]
In Annam, King Trần Thái Tông established the National Academy, in which he placed statues of Confucius, the Duke of Zhou [and Mencius],\(^{165}\) and portraits of the 72 sages, in order to offer sacrifices to them. Thereafter, solemn sacrifices are offered to Confucius, twice a year in the first week of the second month in the Spring and the eighth month in the Autumn. This ceremony began at least in the Tang dynasty, because King Xuanzong prescribed that sacrifices to the Grand Duke (Thái Công) be offered in the capital and in all prefectures during the second and eighth months and in the same manner as the sacrifices to Confucius. However, I do not know which king established the cult of Confucius in this country (Annam). In addition, \(\text{p. 68 (70)}\) school teachers and successful candidates in the three levels of civil examinations had to come to Confucius’ temple to make offerings and sacrifices and to pay homage to him.

The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar again: When Confucian scholars give offerings to Confucius, do they give sacrifices to any other sage?

The Eastern Scholar replies: Confucian scholars not only sacrifice to Confucius, but also to his Four Associates (Tứ Phối) and the Ten Philosophers (Thập Triết). The Four Associates are Yan Hui, Zeng Shen, Zi Si, and Mencius. Both Yan Hui and Zeng Shen were Confucius’ disciples. The first was considered a sage [by Confucius himself], and he died prematurely at the age of 31. Zeng Shen [or Zengzi] was the author of the Great

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\(^{165}\) This reference is taken from Toàn Thư, bản ký, V: 19a, but the manuscript omits the name of Mencius.
Learning and the Analects. Zi Si [or Kong Ji] was the grandson of Confucius and compiled the Doctrine of the Mean. Mencius’ name was Meng Ke. He studied with Zi Si and wrote the book Mencius. He lived during the reign of Zhou Xianwang, approximately 150 years after Confucius. The Ten Philosophers are:

{p. 69 (71)}


[Description of the Rite to Confucius]

{p. 70 (72)}

The Western Scholar asks again: How do Confucian scholars make offerings and sacrifices to Confucius and these sages?

The Eastern Scholar replies: In the Confucius’s Temple, the sage’s tablet is placed at the center. The tablets with the names of the Four Correlates are placed on both sides, with the name tablets of the Ten Philosophers behind them. In front of Confucius’ tablet is an incense table (huong án). When performing the ceremony, the two masters of ceremonies stand on both sides of the incense table, while several officials of rites stand at the center facing the table with assistants behind them. The night before the sacrifice,  

\[\text{Reign 330-321 BCE.}\]

\[\text{Since the manuscript is blank, I supply the missing information here. There are small variations in the names on this list depending on the local temples.}\]

\[\text{In the past the Vietnamese often did not use the name “Confucius,” but called him the Sage.}\]
the literati gather at the Temple. One of them prays out loud: “We earnestly announce to
the First Sage that the ceremony will be performed tomorrow morning.” Then he
examines and kills the sacrificial animals — a buffalo, a pig and a goat — and places
their meat on the sacrificial table. On the following morning, the main celebrant prays
out loud: “Welcome to the Sage King (nghinh Thánh Vương),” then makes offerings of
food, wine, meat, and a white cloth of silk. Next, he reads a cultic oration (văn chức)
praising Confucius’ merits for editing the Six Classics that form the basic texts of
education, and exalting him as the “Ultimate Sage of Great Perfection, King of Culture.”
He also asks Confucius to grant to the students bright minds so they may understand his
teachings thoroughly, preserve them, \{p. 71 (73)\} and teach them to the next generations,
so that they too will know his teachings. The oration also praises to the Four Correlates
and the Ten Philosophers. After the sacrifice, the master of ceremonies calls out: “Drink
the blessings (âm phúc)!” The official drinks the sacrificial wine to receive Confucius’
blessing. At the end of the ceremony, the master of ceremonies calls out again: “Farewell
to the deity (từ thần)!” Then, the official of rites and all in attendance prostrate
themselves four times to thank Confucius and bid him farewell. Thereafter, they feast on
the sacrificial food and drink and take a portion home. This food and drink is considered
special. That is what the cult of Confucius is about.

The Western Scholar comments: It is right that the Confucian scholars revere
Confucius, who has supreme wisdom and knowledge and who has great merits in
teaching people of the world the right doctrine. However, your offering of food from this
world is futile, because he no longer needs it. Also, you should not pray to him for a bright mind and success in examinations, because he does not have the power to grant them. Only the Lord of Heaven, the One who has the power and authority to govern everything in heaven and earth, can grant a bright mind and fame and prosperity to anyone he wishes. Even Confucius, himself, was granted \[\textit{p. 72 (74)}\] by the Lord of Heaven the favor of being extraordinarily wise and knowledgeable, in order to teach the people of the world.
Article 13

On the Cult of the Grand Duke and the Mighty Generals

The Western Scholar says: The military officials often offer sacrifices to the mighty generals of former times. So I ask you: To whom is the cult offered?

The Eastern Scholar replies: In the nineteenth year of the reign of Tang Xuanzong [732 CE], the king ordered a temple to be built in the capital and in each of the prefectures to honor the Grand Duke (Thái Công). Zhang Liang and ten great men among the mighty generals of the past were also to be worshipped there. Offerings are sacrificed to them on the first week of the second and eighth months in the same manner as to Confucius and his disciples. Consequently, the military officials follow this order to sacrifice to the Grand Duke and the Two Associates, Zhang Liang and Sun Wuzi, together with twelve other generals in a solemn ceremony on the first week of the second and eighth months. Statues of the Grand Duke and the generals are kept in the Temple of the Military (Vũ Miếu). 169

The Western Scholar asks: What merits did the Grand Duke and Zhang Liang achieve?

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169 The Temple of the Military (Vũ Миếu) in Hanoi was first erected under the Trần dynasty as the counterpart to the Temple of Culture (Văn Миếu) but it no longer exists today. See Olga Dror’s discussion, A Study of Religion, p. 128, nn. 64 and 66.
The Eastern Scholar answers: The Grand Duke is Lü Wang, who lived during the reign of the wicked King Zhou of Yin. He left China to live near the Eastern Sea for more than eighty years, fishing in the water of the river Wei. When Si Bo, also known as King Wen of Zhou, went hunting in the area, he met Lü Wang, took him home on his carriage, and honored him as the Grand Duke. Since King Wen learned the Grand Duke’s art of warfare, his military strategy is called Civil Style. Later, his son King Wu also learned the art of warfare from the Grand Duke, and referred to it as the Military Style. The Grand Duke taught also taught other styles, namely, the Dragon, Tiger, Leopard, and Dog military strategies. Together, they are called the Six Strategies of Warfare (lục thao). Years later, the Grand Duke surrounded King Zhou in a siege so complete that the king, having no place to flee, committed suicide by throwing himself into the fire. Upon this victory, King Wu acquired power over the entire country and

170 More popularly known as Jiang Ziya (姜子牙, Khương Tử Nha) the legendary military advisor of Kings Wen and Wu of Zhou.

171 King Zhou (紂, Trụ) is the posthumous name of Di Xin (帝莘, Đế Tân) also known as Zhou the Cruel. He was the last ruler of the Shang/Yin dynasty (reign 1154-1122 BCE).

172 The Six Strategies (六韬, Lục Thao) is the title of a Chinese tactical manual attributed to Jiang Ziya. His methods can be summarized as follows: (1) The Civil Strategy: Be benevolent and help others achieve their aspirations for a better world. (2) The Military Strategy: Outwit your opponent through diplomacy and manipulation. (3) The Dragon Strategy: Explore the subtle and complex aspects of the situation without ceding control to advisors or becoming confused. (4) The Tiger Strategy: Guard against laxity and act in accord with ever-changing conditions. (5) The Leopard Strategy: Know your strength and direct it against the weakness of your enemy. (6) The Dog Strategy: Time a concentrated attack when the moment is right. For a full text, see Ralph D Sawyer and Mei-chun Sawyer, The Seven Ancient Military Classics of China, including the Art of War (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 19-106.

173 This refers to the battle of Muye when King Wu of Zhou and his military advisor Jiang Ziya defeated Zhou’s forces which were supposed to be outnumbered them about ten to one.
ruled over all. In gratitude, King Wu made the Grand Duke the ruler of the state of Qi.\footnote{Qi (齊) was a small kingdom during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods that lasted from 1046 to 221 BCE; its territory was located in Shandong province.}

In the reign of Tang Dezong,\footnote{Reign 779-805. The manuscript misspells his name as Đường “Túc” Tổng. Note that “Túc” and “Đức” is close in orthography.} the Grand Duke was posthumously conferred the title “Accomplished King of the Military” (Vũ Thành Vương). Since the Grand Duke taught both kings Wen and Wu the art of warfare, people study his tactical strategies to become capable military generals \{p. 74 (76)\} who can conduct warfare with skillful stratagems and tactics. Whoever knows the Six Strategies can become a general.

Zhang Liang learned the Grand Duke’s arts of warfare and became a military officer in the state of Han.\footnote{Han (韓) was one of the kingdoms of the Warring States period that lasted from 403 to 230 BCE; its territory corresponded to the present provinces of Shanxi and Henan.} When Qin Ershi\footnote{Qin Ershi (秦 二 世, Tân Nhị Thế) was the successor of Qin Shihuang ruled from 209-206 BCE.} conquered Han, Zhang Liang offered his service to the king of Han,\footnote{King of Han (漢 王, Hán Vương) was the title given to Liu Bang (劉 邦, Lưu Bang) who revolted against the harsh government of the Qin emperors to found the Han dynasty, posthumously honored as Han Gaozu.} helping him fight against the Qin. Subsequently, when the king of Han acquired power over all China, he conferred upon Zhang Liang the title “Marquis of Liu.”\footnote{Liu (劉, Lưu) was the family name of the Han emperor. Receiving the emperor’s family name is a high honor; it means that the recipient is considered by the emperor as part of his family.}

Afterward, because Zhang Liang saw the emperor mistreat and abuse scholars and officers, he resigned from his position and left the world to live a
monastic life with the spirits on a mountain until his death in the sixth year of Han
Huidi.\textsuperscript{180}

Sun Wuzi is a general of the state of Wu.\textsuperscript{181}

The twelve generals are chosen from many generations as shown in the following chart:

\[Since\ this\ page\ is\ blank,\ I\ insert\ the\ names\ from\ the\ last\ page\ here\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The left wing of the outer temple:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Chancellor of Han, Marquis of Wuxiang, Jia Geliang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Head of the Military of Qi, Tian Xiangru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Minister of Wei, Liao Zi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Marquis of Huai Yin of Han, Han Xin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Grand Officer of Tang, Guo Ziyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Baron of Ming, Liu Ji</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The main chamber of the inner temple</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- On the left side: General of Wu, Sun Wuzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- On the right side: Marquis of Liu of Han, Zhang Liang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The right wing of the outer temple:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Great Teacher of Trần, Prince Hưng Đạo, Trần Quốc Tuấn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pacifying the West Prince of Tang, Li Sheng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Great Minister and Prince Zheng of Song, Yue Fei</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{180} Since Han Huidi reigned from 194-188 BCE, Zhang Liang died in 188 BCE according to this account.

\textsuperscript{181} Sun Wuzi or Sunzi (孫 子, Tôn Tử) was an eminent general of the state of Wu during the Warring States period. He was the author of the famous treatise *The Arts of War*. 

444
The Western Scholar comments: The military officers revere and worship the generals at the Temple of the Military with the hope that the generals will help them win in battle. However, these generals have no power to do so because the skills, intelligence, or strength that helped them win a battle or found a state do not belong to them. These things are given to them by the power of the great Lord who created all things in heaven and earth. Moreover, from the past to the present, many who worship those generals have lost battles, and the generals could not help them at all. Therefore, the military cult of the Grand Duke and the mighty generals is ineffective.

The Western Scholar argues further: The Grand Duke and his descendants were rulers of the state of Qi. If he really had power, he would not have lost his kingdom to the invaders. For instance, when King Yan of Zhao ordered Yue Yi to attack Qi and conquered 72 towns, King Min of Qi had to go into hiding. Later, when Qin

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182 Reign 311-279 BCE.
183 Reign 300-284 BCE.
184 In 285 BCE, King Zhao of Yan (Yan Zhaowang) formed allies with the states of Zhao, Qin, Han and Wei for a joint expedition against the powerful state of Qi. Led by General Yue Yi, the campaign was successful and within a year almost destroyed Qi. However, with the death of King Zhao and the subsequent expulsion of Yue Yi to Zhao, Qi army managed to recapture their lost cities.
Shihuang dispatched Wang Bi to attack Qi, the king of Qi surrendered and the state of Qi collapsed [in 221 BCE.] If the Grand Duke had power, he could have saved his descendants so they would be rulers of Qi forever. Why did he allow them to lose their own states? Moreover, Tang Xuanzong earnestly prayed in front of the Temple of the Grand Duke to set an example for later generations. Yet, when An Lushan rebelled against him, the emperor ran away from the capital Zhang’an to hide in the Shu region, but the Grand Duke did not have the power to save him. It would be sufficient to revere and to honor the Grand Duke; however, one should not offer him sacrifices and ask for his help. It would be vain and useless.

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185 In reality, the descendants of the Grand Duke ruled the state of Qi for more than 800 years, a record in ancient times.

186 The rebellion carried out by Sogdian general An Lushan (703-757) was one of the longest and most costly internal wars in Chinese history. It lasted from 753 to 765, spanning the reigns of three Tang emperors. It marked the beginning of the decline of the Tang dynasty.

187 Modern day Si’an.

188 Modern day Sichuan.
Article 14

On the Rites to the Ancestors

The Western Scholar says: I note that people often do their best to give their parents and ancestors the most solemn funerals. So I ask you: How are those ceremonies celebrated?

The Eastern Scholar replies: When children perform rituals honoring their ancestors, they observe them according to two rites: one is the rite as laid out in *Family Rituals*, the other is the Buddhist rite. Here, I only discuss the Confucian rites according to *Family Rituals*. In Book 3, Article 8, I will discuss the Buddhist rite for the Western Scholar to understand them thoroughly.

The *Correct Practices of the Family Rituals* (Gia Lễ Chính Hành) states:

Immediately after a person dies, a family member climbs to the roof of the house, calls out the name of the deceased, and invites him or her to return home. Then, the body is shrouded and placed in a bed in the middle of the house. Afterwards, one knots a piece

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189 See also *Opusculum*, Chapter 2, articles 10 and 11.

190 There are many versions of *Family Rituals* both in China and Vietnam. The most popular in Vietnam since the eighteenth century is *Tho Mai Gia Lễ* [Family Rituals by Tho Mai]. The description of the cult of the ancestors here has many details that may be particular to the ritual manual that the author had access to.

191 The Chinese and Vietnamese believe that when the soul exits from the body, it loses its direction and easily becomes a wandering ghost if it does not return home with its relatives. This practice is called *hú viá* or *triệu hồn* (calling the soul back). In the *Record of Rites* (Chapter “Conveyance of Rites”), it is recorded that “when a person dies, the relatives go up on the housetop, and call out his name in a loud voice: So and so, come back.”
of fine silk into a figurine to make a “soul cloth” (hồn bạch)\(^{192}\) and places it in front of the “soul seat” (linh toa),\(^{193}\) where the soul of the deceased is believed to reside and enjoy the food offered to it. After being clothed, the body is placed inside a coffin. Next, an offering called “daily food offering” (triệu điện) is performed to signify that the offering of food to the deceased will be made in the morning and evening.\(^{194}\) Then, one sets out the ritual utensils [such as incense burner, incense box, cups, decanter, etc…]\(^{195}\) A ritual chair (ỷ) is placed at the center of the soul seat and on it are placed a robe and a cap with the soul cloth inside. In front of the ritual chair one sets out the food offerings to the deceased, who is worshipped there; on its left is the “inscribed banner” (minh tinh),\(^{196}\) and on its right are the “blanket and pillow” (chăn gối). In front of the soul seat table is the incense table (hương án).

On the fourth day after death, there is the ceremony of “wearing the mourning garments” (thành phục).\(^{197}\) When the body is kept in the house for a long time [to wait for the relatives to gather]. {p. 78} food offerings must be made twice a day, in the

\(^{192}\text{Hồn bạch (魂帛)}\) is a cloth of fine silk placed on the chest of the dying. After “calling the soul back,” it is knotted into the shape of a human person to represent the soul of the deceased. In modern practice, it is replaced with a picture of the deceased.

\(^{193}\text{Giữ dũng linh toạ} \) is a table serving as the soul seat (靈座), where oblation is made to the deceased.

\(^{194}\) In the offering triệu điện, rice is offered daily for 100 days after death.

\(^{195}\) I could not make sense of the Vietnamese words for the ritual utensils. Other sources list these common utensils for rituals.

\(^{196}\text{Minh tinh (銘旌) also known as triệu (旐)}\) is a piece of silk on which is written the name, title and office of the deceased.

\(^{197}\text{Lễ thành phục (成服, also known as Lễ phát tang)}\) is the ceremony to mark the beginning of the mourning period. This is performed after the body is shrouded and placed in the coffin, and the surviving relatives start wearing mourning garments.
morning and evening, in addition to the mid-day meal offering. Each month at the first and full moon, food must be offered to the deceased in the morning; this offering must be performed for three months.

On the day of burial, the soul cloth is first taken to the ancestral hall. This means that since a living person always informs the elders of his or her travel, now the soul of the deceased must also go to the ancestor’s hall to greet them. Afterward, the soul cloth is carried back to the soul seat. Then, a rite of “moving the coffin” (chuyển cữu) is performed before the coffin is carried out of the house. When it is completed, food is offered on the soul seat again. *Family Rituals* also mentions the custom of imitating Cao Công to “examine my permit” (khảo vấn ngô sắc) and buy a funeral carriage (liễu xa) for the soul of the deceased, meaning buying a paper house for the soul in the underworld. The common people call it sắc đạc, also known as “funeral house” (nhà táng). When purchasing a funeral carriage, one reads the following lament:

“Alas! my father (or mother), I am in pain when I see you in the present form, leaving me behind. My painful heart is cut by a torrent. Tears flow down my face like rain. Today, I have purchased a funeral carriage for you, I pray you will be safe and happy with your dwelling, and may blessings be granted to your descendants. We respectfully pray.”

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198 This may refer to a person or an office.

199 I am uncertain of the spelling.

200 This is a rough translation and paraphrase, since some words are indecipherable.
After this rite, the coffin is placed on a hand-led carriage (đại dư). Before the procession, offerings are made to the Protector of the Travelers (Đư thần), asking him to protect the soul on the journey, to kept it safe and not frightened [by the demons].

*Family Rituals* also adds the rite of announcing the journey to Loa Tổ, the guardian spirit of the road. A prayer (*chúc văn*) is said: “We earnestly announce the funeral procession to the spirits of the roads in five directions.” The five directions are East, West, North, South, and the Center. Prayers are offered to the guardian spirits of the road to keep the road safe for the procession, and to prevent the demons from disturbing the funeral carriage, by using these words: “We earnestly implore the spirits of the roads in all five directions and the Five Emperors to remember the merits of the spirits of the earth that accompany the soul of the recently deceased N__, and allow it safe journey.” If the coffin is carried by boat, an offering is made to the god of river. Whenever taking a rest during the procession, an offering of “middle of the journey” (tế trung đồ) is made. At a three-way crossroads, an offering is made to the spirits guarding the crossroads (tế tam kỳ lộ).

At the burial site, before placing the coffin into the grave, the “name banner” (*minh tinh*) is spread on the casket. When creating a grave, an offering must be made to

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201 Đại dư is a hand-led carriage on which the coffin is placed.

202 “Loa Tổ” may be a mispell of “Đạo Tổ.”

203 Chúc văn is another name of tế văn (祭文, cultic oration), a type of literature that is read at funeral and memorial services.

204 Trung đồ or đạo trung (道中) is an oblation in the middle of the journey. It allows the coffin carriers and the procession to rest and take some food, for the walk to the burial site is often long.
the god of the earth requesting his assistance for the burial to go smoothly. Upon lowering the coffin halfway down into the grave an offering is made to the god of the earth by the right side of the grave. After filling the grave with dirt half-way, another offering is made to the god of the earth.

After the burial, the ceremony of “marking the spirit tablet” (để chủ) is performed, and the posthumous name and title of the deceased are engraved on a wooden tablet. The tablet is then placed on the altar with the soul cloth behind it, and an offering is made. During the offering, a prayer is said: “We earnestly pray to N__. Your body now returns to the earth, your spirit returns to the household altar. Your spirit tablet has been made. We implore your venerable soul to move from the old to the new dwelling place; this tablet is where you will rest,” thus, asking the soul to leave the soul cloth and return home in the spirit tablet. Then the spirit tablet is carried home and a special oblation (tế ngu) is done for three days. On the first day, the offering is called “First Pacification” (sơ ngu), on the second day, “Second Pacification” (tái ngu), and on the third day, “Third Pacification” (tam ngu). When making these offerings, the first offering must be given to the paternal and maternal ancestors, and then to the recently deceased soul; if these offerings are made, then everything will be all right. It is written

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205 Đế chủ (writing the tablet) or điểm chủ (marking the tablet) is a ceremomial marking of the thần chủ (spirit tablet), meaning from this moment onward the spirit tablet will replace the soul cloth as the new “home” of the soul.

206 This is a rough translation and paraphrase, since some words are indecipherable.

207 Ngu (虞) is the oblation in the first three days after burial. According to traditional belief, the soul needs to adapt to its new environment, so oblations are made to “pacify” it. This also serves as thanksgiving meals for the neighbors and relatives who help out during the funeral.
in *Family Rites*: “When the flesh and bones return to the earth, the soul does not have a place to go,” meaning the body is already safely resting in the ground, but the soul is still left wandering around to find its home. Thus, one must plan to bring the soul of the deceased home by making offerings to the soul, and have it reside in the spirit tablet. This ritual is called the rite of “pacifying the soul”

When performing the rite of “pacifying the soul,” the ritualist first calls out: “Let the spirit descend” (*giáng thần*). Then, as he calls out: “Pour the wine” (*châm thử*), the eldest son acting as the master of the ceremonies offers wine libation on the soul table, and takes a cup of wine and pours it on the “mat of reeds” (*sa mao*), then he places cups of wine on the soul table. The same procedure is repeated during the other two rounds of libations. During the second round of libation or “second offering” (*á hiến lễ*), a person kneels in front of the incense table to recite the prayer, calling the names of the descendants who make the food offering, and then asking the soul to enjoy the food offering by calling out: “May you enjoy it!” (*thượng hương*). The third round of libation is called “final offering” (*thang hiến lễ*.) More wine is poured into the cups for the fourth round of libation called “consummation of the food” (*hựu thực*) to pour more wine into the cups. Next, when the ritualist shouts: “Master of ceremonies, please come forward!” (*chủ nhân dĩ hạ giai xuất*), the male presiding mourner comes out and stands to the east of the altar facing west [with other men behind him in rows], the female presiding mourner stands to the west facing east [with other women behind her in rows]. Then the ritualist calls out: “Close the door” (*hap môn*) and they close the door of the altar. A curtain is lowered if there is no door. Then the ritualist makes a “coughing
sound‖ (hi hâm)\textsuperscript{208} to signal a time for silence while the soul enjoys the food and wine offerings privately. After three more coughs, the ritualist goes to the door or the curtain and reopens it. Then he announces: “Serve the tea” (đần trà) to indicate that after eating the meal, the soul now is taking tea. When everything is finished, the ritualist calls out: “The offering is completed” (lễ thành) to indicate the oblation is done. Then he calls out: “Farewell to the spirit” (từ thần) to indicate that the soul is ready to depart. At that moment, the eldest son and all those relatives who are there weep aloud and prostrate themselves twice, to thank the deceased for having accepted the offering and to bid farewell to the soul. After the rite of “pacification,” the soul cloth is buried in a clean plot of land.

Thereafter, food offerings are made to the spirit tablet. There is a solemn offering on the 7\textsuperscript{th}, 30\textsuperscript{th}, 50\textsuperscript{th}, and 100\textsuperscript{th} days after death. In addition, an oblation called hè is offered on the 14\textsuperscript{th} day of the fourth month, the 15\textsuperscript{th} of the fifth month, and the 16\textsuperscript{th} of the sixth month. On the full moon of the seventh months for the following two years, \{p. 83\} an oblation called bôi is offered during the Middle Period festival (trung nguyên).\textsuperscript{209} On the first anniversary of the death, a feast called “small memorial” (tiều tường) is celebrated; on the second anniversary, the “great memorial” (đại tường). After 27 months, a ceremony called the rite of đàm is performed to mark the end of the mourning period. From then on, a memorial feast called giỗ or đôi kỳ is celebrated on the

\textsuperscript{208} The word “hi hâm” can be a coughing sound (嘻噓), or “enjoy the essence [of the food]” (僖歆).

\textsuperscript{209} Old lunar calendars divide the year into three periods: the first month is called Upper Period (thượng nguyên), the seventh month is called Middle Period (trung nguyên) and the tenth month is called Lower Period (hạ nguyên).
anniversary of the death. The descendants must keep the annual memorial feast for all ancestors in five generations. After the fifth generation, his or her spirit tablet is removed from the altar, and the memorial feast is no longer required for that ancestor. Such are the teachings of Family Rituals with regard to giving offerings to the ancestors.\textsuperscript{210}

**The Western Scholar argues:** People make such offerings to their parents and ancestors because they believe that the souls of their ancestors reside in the soul cloth or the spirit tablet and enjoy the food offerings. However, it is impossible for the deceased to return to consume the food and wine offerings of their descendants. Food and drink are sustenance for the bodies of the living. But once the souls of the dead have already left their bodies, they have no bodies to be sustained. The human soul has a spiritual character; it is the most spiritual being among all creatures; it does not depend on the body to live, but has a life of its own. Therefore, when it leaves the body, the soul does not need food and drink as the living person does. Moreover, when the soul is still one with the body, it does not need food \textsuperscript{p. 84} to sustain itself; food is needed only to sustain the life of the body. If the soul needs food to sustain itself, then it must have food twice a day. If the soul is offered food only once a year on its memorial feast, how can it sustain itself? The dead body does not need food any more. When one offers food to the soul, one is mocking the soul, for the soul does not eat and drink. Such an act is merely mocking the soul, making it angry and sad. Those who make offerings to their ancestors,

\footnote{210 In pre-modern Vietnam, this was not only a custom, but also a legal requirement. Failure to perform the sacrificial offerings according to the legal codes was punishable according to the gravity of the offense.}
therefore, are not filial, but prove to be truly unfilial. All the food offerings are for living people to eat; the soul does not consume them at all. Alas, those who make the offerings are profoundly ignorant. If the soul consumes the offerings, why does the amount of food remain the same? Why does it not diminish at all? Even if the soul consumes only the essence of the offering, why do the offered foods remain tasty and nourishing? This can only prove that the soul does not return to enjoy the food offerings at all.

**The Eastern Scholar comments:** Among the Confucian scholars, there are some who think that offering (p. 85) food to deceased parents is pointless. In the *Classic of Odes*, it is written in a song of Zhou: “After one’s parents pass away, one can no longer see their faces, no longer hear their voices. Even if one has delicious food and good clothes, one cannot provide them with these things.” This is a useless and wasteful practice, for the many offerings are costly and the soul cannot enjoy them at all. Moreover, it is written in the *Analects*: “Sacrifice as if [it is] present, sacrifice to the spirit as if the spirit is present.” Hence, it is not because we believe the spirit of the dead is present at the sacrifice, but we act as if it is present there. Therefore, those Confucian scholars who believe the souls of their parents and ancestors reside in the spirit tablets, and enjoy the offerings do not follow the teachings of Confucius and other great scholars. In the foreword to the *Great Learning*, Zhu Xi chastises those who do not follow the classics with these words: “No matter what the book says, I do what I want, so what good is

211 This is also quoted in the *Hội Đông Tử Giáo*, (1867 ed.), p. 26b.
learning?" These are scholars who do not take the teachings of the classics seriously, and who ignore them and follow their own thinking. If one acts this way, one should not be called a scholar, but an ignoramus.

The Western Scholar argues again: During the sacrifice, there is the rite “serving the wine (p. 86) for the descending spirit” (giảng thần châm tửu,) that is, pouring wine onto the sa mao so the soul can come down to enjoy the libation. What is the reason for pouring the wine onto the sa mao for the spirit to descend, if the soul is already present in the spirit tablet after the ceremony of “marking the tablet” (đề chủ)? Furthermore, if one believes that the soul is already present in the spirit tablet, why must one still perform the rite “pacification” for the soul to reside there? These practices are contradictory and unreasonable.

The Eastern Scholar comments: In the rites according to Family Rituals, not only these practices are unreasonable, but there are also other absurd practices, which contradict the Confucian teachings. Although Confucian scholars taught that the use of spirit money is a Buddhist practice, they still use it at funerals. The two customs of making offerings to the guardian spirits of the road and purchasing a the funeral house (nhà táng) to burn afterward are Buddhist customs. Furthermore, the offerings on the 7th, 30th, 50th, and 100th days are Buddhist rituals. The person who wrote the Family Rituals is a Confucian

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212 I cannot locate this sentence in the introduction to the Great Learning.
The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar: Does the king, his officials and the common people have ancestral temples?

The Eastern Scholar replies: Only the king and his high and low ranking officials have ancestral temples. According to the chapter “Royal Regulations” of the Record of Rites:

The ancestral temple of the Son of Heaven consists of seven shrines: three on the left and three on the right, and that of his great ancestor [facing the south] – in all, seven. The temple of a feudal prince consists of five such shrines: two on the left and two on the right, and that of his great ancestor — in all, five. The temple of a great official consists of three such shrines: one on the left, one on the right, and that of his great ancestor — in all, three. Other officials had only one temple (that is, the temple to his late father; he has no temple of his great ancestor).”

Zhu Xi comments: “Since the common people are not allowed to erect the ancestral temple, they offer their sacrifices in the main chamber on the east side of their house, where they erect the spirit tablets of their great-great-grandparents, great-grandparents,

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213 This comment refers to ritual manuals in Tonkin, not to Zhu Xi’s Family Rituals, which does not contain these practices.
grandparents, and parents; they also build a three-chamber ancestral hall to worship their ancestors of five generations.\textsuperscript{214}

In the chapter “Understanding the Rites” of the \textit{Correct Practices of Family Rituals}, Zhu Xi draws a diagram of a three-chamber ancestral hall. In the middle chamber, on the left side are placed the spirit tablet of the great-great grandfather and on his right that of the great-great grandmother; their tablets are next to each other. In the same chamber on the right side \textit{(p. 88)} are placed the tablet of the great grandfather and on his left side, that of the great grandmother; their tablets are next to each other. In the east chamber are placed the tablet of the grandfather and on his right side that of the grandmother, near the middle chamber. The tablet of the late father is placed in the west chamber, and that of the late mother is to his right, near the west wall. That is the arrangement of the ancestral hall, where the tablets of five generations of ancestors are worshipped. The tablets of those beyond five generations are removed. It is how the secondary branches of the family and clan worship their ancestors.

In the case of the proto-ancestor and his main-line successors, the main-line descendants must worship them forever without removing their tablets. If a family member obtained an official position and title in the imperial court, he must be worshipped as the proto-ancestor. The eldest son of the main line of the family must care for his tomb and the ancestral hall, and must make sacrifices to the proto-ancestor forever. A special plot of land is set aside as the “inheritance field” (\textit{hương hoả}) to be

\textsuperscript{214} The five generations include the speaker. Chinese and Vietnamese familial hierarchy counts a total of nine generations: 1) great-great-grandparents (\textit{cao tổ}), 2) great grandparents (\textit{tăng tổ}), 3) grandparents (\textit{tổ}), 4) late father (\textit{khão}) and mother (\textit{t意}), 5) the subject (\textit{ngã}), 6) children (\textit{trẻ}), 7) grandchildren (\textit{tôn}), 8) great-grandchildren (\textit{tăng tông}), 9) great-great grandchildren (\textit{huyền tổn}).
passed on from eldest son to eldest son to provide the means for them to carry out the filial duty. Similarly, in the royal court, the king also divides land and property among his children, so they have the means to carry out their worshipping duties.

\{p. 89\}

**The Western Scholar comments:** The many reasons given to justify the establishment of the cult of the ancestors are merely words to express the breadth of learning.

However, those practices do not benefit the ancestors, because as living souls, they have been assigned by the Lord of Heaven to live in a place of reward or punishment, where they cannot return to their earthly home. If they are still in purgatory, we ask the priest to offer Masses for them. We gather the relatives to pray for the souls of our ancestors to soon go up to paradise to enjoy eternal blessings. These are ritual practices that bring actual benefits to the ancestors. Why does one not bring real benefit to the soul, but spend resource on the conventional rituals in order to be praised as filial? Such behaviors are foolish and futile. Moreover, taking the sustenance of the body and offering it to the soul is a mockery; those practicing these rituals are truly unfilial and violate the practice of our Holy Way.\(^{215}\)

**The Western Scholar asks again:** When the descendants make offerings to their ancestors, do they truly believe their ancestors will grant them wealth and honor?

\(^{215}\) This passage seems to be directed to the Christian converts who might have wanted to keep the traditional customs concerning ancestral worship. Catholic Christians often refer to their religion as the “Holy Way” or “Holy Teaching.”
The Eastern Scholar replies: They do believe it; consequently, they strive to make solemn offerings to their ancestors.

The Western Scholar comments: When the parents were living, they could support their children to have a life of riches and honor. {p. 90} After the parents pass away, they can no longer help their children, because they are no longer of this world. If the deceased parents had the power to assist their children in this world, why do the fortune of some devoted worshippers (of parents and ancestors) change from riches and honor to hardship and destitution? Why is there no help from the ancestors to keep their descendants wealthy, honored and prosperous as before? Consequently, it is the duty of the living to help the dead, not the dead to help the living. The duty of the descendants to have a solemn funeral for their ancestors is to repay the filial debt to those who gave birth to them; this is a great debt no one can ever repay sufficiently. If they believe by doing this their ancestors will repay them with wealth, honor, and longevity, they are gravely mistaken.
Article 15
Geomancy

The Western Scholar says: I notice some people request the assistance of a geomancer to find an auspicious plot of land to bury their ancestors. I ask you: Why do people use geomancy, and how is it done?

The Eastern Scholar replies: People request geomancers to find an auspicious plot of land as a burial place for their ancestors, because they believe by doing it, they will have wealth, honor, longevity, good fortune, and be blessed with many children. Geomancy originated with Kan Xing during the reign of the Chen dynasty, and Yang Jun followed suit. Liao Yu who lived during the Tang dynasty, composed many books on geomancy. He taught that a plot of land should have the following features: The left side of the plot should have a feature called the azure dragon (thanh long); on the right, the white tiger (bạch hổ); in the front, an open space (minh duòng); and in the back, a little hill (huyền vĩ). The center is the auspicious spot for burial to gain prosperity. The left side of the

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216 Geomancy is a general term for what the Chinese call fengshui and the Vietnamese call địa lý. Unlike fengshui, which concerns the spatial arts of arrangements in the world of the living and the dead, Vietnamese địa lý focuses exclusively on finding an auspicious spot to bury ancestors.

217 Apparently the author is mistaken here, for already in the Han dynasty there was a school of diviners/geomancers named Kham Dư Gia (堪 興 家). Is it possible that Kan Xing (Kham Hành) was a person in this tradition? For a history of geomancy in pre-modern China, consult J.J.M. De Groot, The Religious System of China, Vol III, Chapter XII (original 1882, reprint, Taipei: Ch’eng Wen Publishing, 1976), pp. 982-1010.
plot should face east and the right side, west; the front should face the south with the north at the back. [The explanations are as follows:] The left side of the grave faces east, the direction which belongs to the wood element and green color; thus the left is called the azure dragon of the east. The right side of the grave faces west, the direction which belongs to the metal element and white color; and thus is called the white tiger of the west. The front side of the grave faces south, the direction which belongs to the fire element and red color; and thus is called the vermilion bird of the south. The back side of the grave faces north, the direction which belongs to the water element and black color; and thus is called the black tortoise of the north.218

**The Western Scholar comments:** The believer in geomancy takes the shape and form of the grave to be a channel for good fortune. How can a grave have any power to produce good fortune for the descendants of the one buried there to have wealth, fame, children, and longevity, which are gifts granted by the Lord of Heaven to us? Besides, in the ancient times no one knew about geomancy, and yet there were people who had lives of wealth, honor, and leisure. Nevertheless, since the times of the Chen, Sui, and Tang dynasties,219 many people have practiced geomancy, and not only has it been useless to them, but also it has brought them bad fortune. I imagine the founders of geomancy have shared the same fate.

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218 The azure dragon, white tiger, vermilion bird and black tortoise are the mythical creatures representing the four directions of Chinese constellations.

219 Sixth to tenth century CE.
The Eastern Scholar says: You are correct! Kan Yu’s descendants fell into destitution; Yang Jun was executed by the king; and Liao Yu was childless. [Another example is] Gao Pian, who lived under the Tang dynasty and was known for his great skills in geomancy. King Tang Yizong appointed him as the governor of Annam. Wherever he saw an auspicious burial spot which might produce a king, he would destroy it, in order for his descendants to rule Annam for a long time. However, when King Tang Xizong recalled him back to China, he left his grandnephew, Gao Yun behind to rule Annam; collectively they ruled for 30 years. When King Liang Taizu appointed Liu Yan as the governor of Annam, Gao Pian’s descendants lost their succession. In another example, during the Ming dynasty General Huang Fu was sent to invade Annam in order to capture Hồ Quý Ly and his son. After he accomplished the military mission, Huang Fu stayed in Annam, travelling throughout the country to find auspicious plots for him, for he was a skillful geomancer. Then, King Lê Thái Tông started a revolution against the Ming occupying forces, driving them home. The Ming emperor again sent Generals Liao Shang and Huang Fu to re-capture Annam. King Lê Thái Tông slew Liao Shang,

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220 Are Kan Yu (Kham Dư) and Kan Xing (Kham Hành) the same person? Both names are used in this article.

221 Vietnamese legends about his geomancy skill are told in Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái, especially in the stories of Mount Tân Viên and Tô Lịch river.

222 Reign 860-874.

223 Reign 874-888.


225 Hồ Quý Ly (1400-01) and his son (1401-1407) were founders of a brief Hồ dynasty. They were considered usurpers of the thrones of Trần kings. Under the false pretense to help the Trần, Ming Chengzu sent troops to invade Vietnam in 1406 and occupied it for 14 years (1414-1427), until they were driven out by Lê Thái Tông.
captured Huang Fu, and brought him back to China as a prisoner. Such was the fate of
Huang Fu, who was skillful in geomancy. Not only did he fail to become a king of
Annam, but he also lost the battle and became a prisoner. Such is the efficacy of
geomancy!
The Second Book

The Errors of Daoism

Preface

The ways of Laozi (Daoism) and Śākyamuni (Buddhism) are heterodox (dị đọan)\textsuperscript{226} teachings of emptiness (hư vô) and quiescence (tích diệt). These two ways are contrary to morality and religion in every way; they contain nothing good and congruent with the orthodox way, but often plot and scheme against it, telling lies to deceive the ignorant. They confuse the minds of many gentlemen (quân tử) and make them lose the right and virtuous way. The deceiver often strives to speak with charm, as if he speaks the truth. In the same way, Daoism and Buddhism frequently use crafty words resembling the truth to make people believe in them. When hearing anything, a gentleman needs to examine it thoroughly because no wise person should believe everything he hears. People make up many teachings to make themselves famous, instead of paying attention to whether they conform to reason or not.

\textbf{(p. 96)} Sometimes things are invented by previous generations, and later became widespread and developed into customs. People of later generations claim that they must take the old rules and ancient customs passed down by the forebears as the norms;

\textsuperscript{226} \textit{Dị đọan} (異 端, yiduan, alien custom) is often understood in the Christian context as “superstition.” In Confucian terminology, it only means a strange or different belief. \textit{Mê tín} (迷 信, mixin, false belief) is a Confucian word that is closer to the notion of superstition.
whoever does not follow these norms is accused of being wrong and ignorant. As a result, everyone practices these customs as habits without understanding their falsehood. Therefore, in the following two books, I ask the reader to examine the errors of the false doctrines invented by the two heterodox ways of Laozi and Śākyamuni, with the hope that people come to a clearer understanding, will reject them once and for all, as well as stay away from the deceitful magic and divination of these two heterodox ways. In this way you will not fall into error and harm yourself in this life and forever in the next. In Book Two, I will consider the errors of Daoism and other errors, which appears to be similar to the beliefs of the true way.
Index of the Errors of Daoism

Article 1: On the Founding of Daoism by Laozi
Article 2: On the Propagation of Daoism by Zhang Yi and Zhang Jue
Article 3: On the Healing Work of Sorcerers
Article 4: On the Twelve Yearly Governing Spirits
Article 5: On the Nine Stars and the Thunder God
Article 6: On Auspicious and Inauspicious Times
Article 7: On Hà Bá, Phạm Nhan, and Liễu Hạnh
Article 8: On Divination
Article 9: On Astrology and Event-Forecasting
Article 10: On the Five Constellations
Article 11: On Physiognomy and the Reading Chicken Feet
Article 12: On Solar and Lunar Eclipses
Article 1

On the Founding of Daoism by Laozi

The Western Scholar says: In this country, Annam, there are many followers of Daoism. So, I ask you: Who founded Daoism?

The Eastern Scholar replies: The founder of Daoism is Laozi, also known under other names, such as Lao Tan, Laoxian, or the Lord Lao. Laozi was born on the fifteenth day of the second moon in the seventh year of the reign of Zhou Lingwang [565 BCE] in Huguang province. He lived for 81 years and died in the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Zhou Jingwang [485 BCE] at Hangu Pass [of Xieli district]. Laozi was a contemporary of Confucius, as attested to by Zhen Xishan in his commentary of the Analects: “Lao Tan, Yang Zhu, Mo Di — all lived in the same era of

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227 See also Opusculum, Chapter 3, Article 1.

228 Laozi (老子), literally the Old Master, is the title given to a person of whom we know little. Laoxian or Laojun are honorific titles of Laozi. Sima Tian in Chapter 63 of his Records of the Grand Historian (Shiji) identifies Laozi as Lao Tan (老聃) and conflated him with Li Er (李耳), a historical person in the Warring States era: “Laozi was a native of Quen hamlet, Li village, Ku district of the state of Qu. His given name was Er, his school name was Dan, and his family name was Li.” Modern scholars, Fung Yu-Lan for one, have disputed this account. See Fung Yu-lan, A History of Chinese Philosophy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1952), Vol. 1: 171-72.

229 Now it is central China.

230 In popular legend, he never died but simply rode a buffalo to the west.

231 Yang Zhu (楊朱; 370-319 BCE) was a Chinese philosopher during the Warring States period. Known for his egoistic and sophist alternative to Confucian thought, Yang Zhu’s ideas are preserved in Chapter Seven of the Liezi. See Fung Yu-lan, A History of Chinese Philosophy, Vol. 1: 133-43.
Confucius.” When Confucius was 34 years old, “he went to the court of the Zhou emperor to ask Laozi about rituals.”

Legend has it that Laozi was in his mother’s womb for 81 years. One day his mother went out for a walk; while she rested at the foot of a prune tree, he bit her left side and came out from there, and his mother died as a result. It is also written that Lao Tan rode a green buffalo to heaven. The cult of Laozi began in the seventh year, the giáp-dân year, of the emperor Song Zhenzong [1004 CE]. The emperor visited the tomb of Laozi and conferred upon him the title “Supreme Lord Lao” (Thái Thượng Lão Quân). Next, the emperor Song Huizong [r. 1101-1125] was a devoted Daoist. He called himself the lord of Daoism, as is written: “The emperor conferred upon himself the title ‘The Head of Daoism, the Emperor Lord of Daoism.’” Sorcerers offer solemn sacrifices to Laozi every year to pray for protection from harm and for accumulation of good fortune.

**The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar:** Which teachings of Laozi do people regard as the foundation?

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232 Mozi, original name Mo Di (墨 翟; 470-391 BCE) was a Chinese philosopher during the Warring States period. Founder of Mohism, he advocated the doctrine of “impartial caring” or “universal love” (jian ai) against the Confucian attachment to family and clan structures. For Mozi and his school of philosophy, see Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 1, Chapter 5, pp. 76-105; Wm Theodore de Barry and Irene Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), Vol. 1, Chapter 4, pp. 64-76.

233 Many sources have recounted this episode, but it is likely that the author quotes from the *Family Sayings of Confucius* (Kongzi jiayu).

234 The eighth emperor of the Song dynasty, Emperor Huizong (宋 徽 宗), ruled from 1100-1126. He was a patron of fine arts and a devotee to Daoism.
The Eastern Scholar replies: In the *Classic of the Way and Power* (Daodejing), Laozi taught: “The Way gave birth to One; One gave birth to two; two gave birth to three; and three gave birth to myriads of things;” that is the great way of voidness and spontaneity (hư vô tự nhiên chi đại đạo). In addition, Laozi created the arts of magic, alchemy, sorcery, magic potions for immortality, and methods of invoking the spirits and sacrificing to the deceased.

The Western Scholar reasons: It is wrong to take “non-being” as the way. Since “non-being” (hư vô) is “emptiness” (không), how can it have the power to make anything exist? If one takes “being” as the way, then it has some use to us; if one takes “non-being” as the way, then it has no use to anyone. Moreover, those who seek magic and alchemy do not reap any benefit from these practices, but only waste money and still have misfortune. Eastern Scholar, since you are a learned man and have a profound knowledge of the history, you should be able to give evidence to what I have said.

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235 The *Đạo Đức Kinh* (道德經 Daodejing), commonly ascribed to Laozi, is the most important text of Daoist philosophy. Most scholars today think that the text is an anonymous work of the Warring States era. Renowned for its poetry, it is the most translated Chinese text into English since the nineteenth century. For a recent and readable translation by Irene Bloom (1999), see de Barry and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1, Chapter 5, pp. 77-94.

236 *Daodejing* Chapter 42.

237 See also Book 1, Article 1.

238 Here the author wrongly credits Daoist magic and sorcery of later generations to Laozi.
**The Eastern Scholar says:** When the emperors Qin Shi Huang and Han Wudi\textsuperscript{239} were destitute, they sought help from Daoist deities, but they failed to help them. Emperor Qin Shi Huang crossed the sea to Mount Ming Zhou to seek immortality, but died in a storm at sea. Emperor Han Wudi followed the Daoist sect of Huang-Lao\textsuperscript{240} and wasted a lot of resources and effort. Emperor Tang Xianzong took Daoist medicine and ended up dying of diabetes and became a laughingstock. Emperor Song Huizong was devoted to Daoism and offered pious sacrifices. Yet when he was captured and humiliated in the northern desert by the Jin [in 1125], the Daoist deities was unable to help him.\textsuperscript{241} Thus, we can call Daoism an “empty \{p. 101\} doctrine”, which contains nothing real and beneficial. Has the employment of this method ever contributed to the art of ruling? Such poor fates await those who follow Daoism.

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\textsuperscript{239} The seventh emperor of the Han dynasty, King Wu (漢 武 帝) ruled from 141-87 BCE. He is remembered for expanding the Chinese territory and creating a Confucian government.

\textsuperscript{240} This second century sect was also known as Taiping dao (太平 道, the way of the great peace), which incorporated Daoist philosophy, popular religious beliefs and Chinese cosmology. Its main deity was Huang Lao, a combination of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi) and Laozi.

\textsuperscript{241} After passing on the throne to his son, Emperor Huizong was captured together with his family by the Jurchen when they ransacked the Song capital Kaifeng in 1127 (the Jingkang incident). He died in Manchuria as a prisoner in 1135.
Article 2

On the Propagation of Daoism by Zhang Yi and Zhang Jue

The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar: Who propagated Daoism?

The Eastern Scholar replies: Daoism spreaded quickly because the members of Zhang family studied it and passed it on. First, there was Zhang Liang a court official of Han state, who later served under the Han dynasty. He studied and practiced the magic of Laozi, and later passed it on to his descendants. His grandson Zhang Yi learned to fly with the magic of Laozi, and taught many disciples. When Zhang Yi died at the age of thirty, his disciples made up a story to honor him, saying: “Our master ascended to heaven.” According to a Daoist story, the emperor Song Huizong once had a dream, where Zhang Yi helped him fight against the rebels. The emperor thought Zhang Yi had become a god, so he conferred upon him the title ‘Jade Emperor the Supreme Lord’ (Ngoc Hoàng Thượng Đế). However, according to history, Emperor Huizong

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242 See also Opusculum, Book 2, article 2.

243 On Zhang Liang, see Book 1, article 13. Han (韓) and Han (漢) is written by two different characters.

244 Literally, “attaining the Dao” (đắc đạo).

245 Chinese 玉皇上帝, commonly known in English as the Jade Emperor. Both Chinese Buddhists and Daoists claim him as their own. Buddhists identify him with the Indian god Indra, and call him Jade emperor (玉帝, Yudi) with Jade as a symbol of purity. The Daoist tradition, however, associates the Jade emperor with Zhang Daoling (張道陵, Trương Đạo Lăng), one of eight Daoist immortals, not Zhang Yi. See Werner, Dictionary of Chinese Mythology, pp. 598-601.
did not confer upon Zhang Yi that title, but ascribed the title of ‘Jade Emperor the Supreme Lord’ to heaven.\textsuperscript{246}

The Buddhists also made up this story: the Jade Emperor was the son of King Guang Yen of Miao Le kingdom. His wife, Queen Bao Yueguang was barren. One night, she dreamt that the Daoist god Yuanshi brought her a boy. Upon waking, she was pregnant. The following year, she gave birth to a son on the ninth day of the first month, and named him Yuhuang [Jade Emperor].\textsuperscript{247}

**The Western Scholar comments:** The manner of the Jade Emperor’s birth is not only fictional, but also he cannot be the son of King Guang Yen, for there is no kingdom by the name Miao Le on the world map.\textsuperscript{248} Besides, if the Jade Emperor was a descendant of the Zhang family, he cannot be a prince of Miao Le.

**The Eastern Scholar continues:** Later on, Zhang You,\textsuperscript{249} a p. 103} an eighth-generation descendant of the aforementioned Zhang Liang, was renowned for his magic and charm. He taught magic to Zhang Jian, who passed it on to Zhang Lu. Then there was Zhang

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\textsuperscript{246} According to E.T.C. Werner, who follows Chinese sources, both the emperors Zhenzong (r. 998-1023) and Huizong (r. 1101-26) of the Song dynasty conferred upon Yuhuang various titles. *Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, p. 600.

\textsuperscript{247} See also the legend of Yuhuang in Werner, *Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, p. 600.

\textsuperscript{248} This argument is repeated in *Hội Đông Tú Giáo* (1867 ed.), p. 13b.

\textsuperscript{249} Also known as Zhang Daoling.
Jue of Luju district who lived during the time of Han Lingdi [r. 168-188]. He studied the books of the Huang-Lao sect, composed his own books of magic and charms, and taught many followers. He took on the title “Daoist Master of Great Peace” (Thái Bình Đạo Trú). He practiced magic and sorcery and was able to heal people with good results. He traveled all over the country for ten years, enchanting many people. His followers numbered more than 30,000. When the Han emperor tried to subdue him, Zhang Jue called on his followers to rebel. They wore yellow bands on their foreheads to distinguish themselves from the Han soldiers, thus earning them the name “Yellow Turban.” The Han army attacked them many times without success; only later could General Cao disband them.

There is another account of Zhang Jue: Once Zhang Jue went into the forest in search of medicinal herbs. He met an old man, who called him to a cave and gave him a book entitled Magical Keys to Great Peace (Thái Bình Yêu Thuật). He asked the old man his identity, and the man replied: “I am the genie of Mount Nanyang.” Then the old man immediately disappeared. Zhang Jue took the book home. In the first month

250 Styling himself as the “Great Teacher,” Zhang Jue or Zhang Jiao (張角; d. 185) was a leader of a Daoist movement in the second century called the “way of great peace.” The deity Huang-lao, who according to Zhang Jiao had given him a sacred book called the Essential Keys to Great Peace (太平要術, Taiping Yaoshu).

251 Together with his brothers, Zhang Bao and Zhang Liang, Zhang Jue started a military campaign called the Yellow Turban against the Han dynasty in 184. All three brothers died in battled the next year, but the rebellion continued until it submitted to Cao Cao in 192.

252 Cao Cao (曹操) [155-220] is a war lord and the chancellor during final years the Eastern Han dynasty. He was posthumously honored as the King Wu of the Wei kingdom.

253 This is a deliberately play on word, for the book titled Essential Keys to Great Peace (太平要術, Taiping Yaoshu) is changed to the Magical Keys to the Great Peace (太平要術, Taiping Yaoshu). The book may be a variation of the Taiping jing (太平經, Scripture of the Great Peace), an important Daoist scripture.
of the following year, a plague appeared and many people got sick. Based on a recipe from the book, Zhang Jue made a potion by writing the characters “Jade Emperor the Supreme Lord” on paper, burning it and mixing the ashes with water. He gave people the potion to drink and cured many, and thus many more people came to seek his powers. He called himself “the Great Virtuous Benevolent Master” (Đại Hiền Lương Sư).

Because Zhang Jue practiced magic and taught it widely to his followers, Daoist magic spreaded everywhere. In the Tang dynasty, someone composed a book entitled *Anthology of Magical Arts* (Âm Dương Tạp Thư), which contains deceptions, sorcery, and false promises such as “in choosing an auspicious time to bury the dead, one may attain prosperity.” People followed these teachings until the Song and Yuan dynasties.

*[Daoism in Annam]*

**The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar:** In this country Annam, when did the practice of Daoist sorcery begin?

**The Eastern Scholar replies:** In the year nhâm-dần, the fifth year of the *Dade* era of the Yuan dynasty in China, and the tenth year of the Hưng Long reign of King Trần Anh Tông [1302], a Chinese Daoist named Xu Zongdao followed the merchant ship and came to {p. 105} Annam. He settled at the river bank of Yên Hoa²⁵⁴ and practiced Daoist magic, rituals and sacrifices.²⁵⁵ Afterward, Daoist sorcery spread throughout the time of

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²⁵⁴ Now the Yên Phù region in Hanoi.
Kings Minh Tông [r. 1314-1329], Hiến Tông [r. 1329-1341], and Dụ Tông [1341-1369] with many followers for over 50 years. In the tenth month of the eleventh year of the Đại Trị reign of King Trần Dụ Tông [1368], the king summoned the Daoist priest Huyền Vân, a native of Chí Linh district in the Eastern prefecture, to the capital. The king asked him about Daoist sorcery and allowed him to settle in the grotto Huyền Thiên. Since then, Daoist sorcery has multiplied until the present.

**The Western Scholar comments:** Daoist sorcerers of past and present have always relied on the magic of Laozi. If their medicine is effective and if they possess the secret of immortality, why was the medicine not used to save them from death and prolonging their lives? Look at Zhang Jue, who died because of an illness when he was fighting against King Han Lingdi; consequently his brother Zhang Liang lost the battle to the king. After the victory, King Lingdi had Zhang Jue’s corpse exhumed and cut up into many pieces, then mounted his head on a pole in the capital. If Zhang Jue had the power to heal other people, why did he not save himself from death, so that his body would not be desecrated in such a manner?

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257 Here Liang (Lương) is written in a different character (梁) from that of Zhang Liang (良) who served under Han Gaozu.

258 This refers to the rebellion of the Yellow Turbans in 184, led by the followers of Taiping Daoist sect. Zhang Jue, together with his brothers Zhang Liang and Zhang Bao, were their leaders. The rebellion was brutally suppressed, but the Han dynasty was severely weakened and soon came to its end.
Article 3

The Healing Work of the Sorcerers\textsuperscript{259}

The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar: What do sorcerers do when they treat sick people?

The Eastern Scholar replies: When sorcerers treat the sick, they first perform the sacrificial rituals to Laozi, the Jade Emperor, and the Governing Spirit of the year,\textsuperscript{260} as well as to other spirits. They also make sacrificial offerings to the ancestors of the sick person. They recite prayers to those spirits asking them to eliminate the malevolent spirits afflicting the sick person; they beat drums, ring bells, and shout loudly to scare the harmful spirits away. Now and then they make a paper boat with a sail and paddles like a real one, and placed it on a pond or a river, so that the evil spirits, whom they compel to enter that boat, are driven away from the sick person, preventing these spirits to (p. 107) come back to afflict the patient with a worse disaster. They give the sick person a potion in which the ash of a therapeutic charm is mixed into medicine.\textsuperscript{261} When needed, they order for the sick person to be carried to another house, so the malevolent spirits or the souls of the deceased ancestors will not find him or her and afflict him or her again. Sometimes, they order the corpse of a deceased relative to be exhumed and reburied in

\textsuperscript{259} See also Opusculum, Book 2, Article 3.

\textsuperscript{260} See the next Article 4.

\textsuperscript{261} For examples of therapeutic charms, see Henri Doré, Research into Chinese Superstitions, Vol II, Article 4, (Shanghai, 1914; reprint Taipei: Ch’eng-wen, 1966), pp. 165-209.
another spot so that, when the deceased is pleased with a good place, they will stop tormenting their descendants. Other times, they advise that instead of reburying the exhumed corpse, they expose it to the heat and rain, believing the deceased will suffer and leave the sick person alone. Still other times, they send an assistant to take a wand and go out to collect the material soul of the sick, for as they often say: “Men have three spiritual souls (hồn) and seven material souls (viâ); women have three spiritual souls and nine material souls.”  

In addition, the sorcerers often make protective talismans by writing magic characters on pieces of paper. People wear the talisman on their body or post them on their doors. Thus, the elephant trainer in the capital seeks this type of talisman every year to keep his elephants safely contained in the barn. Moreover, the female mediums (bà cốt) also treat the sick and perform strange ritual acts, especially pretending the soul of the deceased possesses their bodies. The sorcerers and mediums order the living to bow to the spirits of their ancestors residing inside them and to offer food to them. Then, after eating and drinking to satisfaction, they tell the living ridiculous stories concerning the dead and their living relatives.

**The Western Scholar comments:** The sorcerers and female mediums seek to benefit only themselves with the food offerings. Now and then, people are cured because of good medicine, not because of the tricks they used to deceive them. How can beating the

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262 Vietnamese (and Chinese) believe that the soul of a human person has two components: a spiritual, immortal component, called hồn, and a material component, called viâ or phách.
drum and wailing loudly have any power to cure the sick? The sick person only suffers more or is in a worse condition than before. Even if they could cure the sick, it is not because of their skills, but because demonic power helps them deceive people.

**The Eastern Scholar continues:** Some sorcerers make a voodoo doll and send it out to harass people, such as throwing dirt into their houses, putting sand into their cooking pots, burning their houses, or bringing other disasters upon the victim. This evil trade had already existed in the time of Han Wudi. Once, while the king was taking a nap, he dreamt that 300 wooden men beat him with a stick. Upon awakening, thinking that he had been harmed by demonic spirits, the king ordered Jiang Chong to arrest whoever performed this black magic as well as the crown prince. The crown prince sent out his troops to stop the king’s soldiers from arresting him. When he failed to deter them, he ran away but the king still pursued him. The crown prince committed suicide. Later on, the king erected a temple in a lake to remember his son and called it Palace of Mourning (Từ Tử Cung), meaning he was waiting for the soul of his son to return. The art of voodoo already existed long ago, but in this country, Annam, no one dares to practice such an art because the kings and lords prohibit it under the pain of death.

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263 A doll is made from straw, paper, or wood with the name of a person inscribed on it.

264 According to *Opusculum de sectis* (p. 167) the motive of such an act is to compel the victim “to return to the same magicians for liberation from such incommodities or misfortunes; and the magicians [will] destroy the previous evil deeds with a different magic.”

265 I am uncertain of the name here.
There are magicians called “hypnotizers” (thầy thiếp tinh) who can make a medium unconscious like being dead. When waking up, the medium narrates what he or she saw in the underworld, concerning the fate and condition of the deceased. The medium claims that his or her soul has truly traveled to Hades and seen everything with his or her own eyes. All such talks are deception by the devil to those who believe in sorcery.
Article 4

On the Twelve Yearly Governing Spirits

The Western Scholar says: Sorcerers often worship the Governing Spirits (thần Hành Khiển). Thus I ask you: Who are these spirits?

The Eastern Scholar replies: The sorcerers created the story of the twelve kings who have the power to bring calamity to people under their governance. Each year a king is in charge, and he will be replaced by another in the following year. During their appointed reign, their heavenly army brings plagues and death to the world. Hence, people must make offerings to appease them.

According to one tradition, the worship of the twelve governing kings originates with the official Mengzong of the Song dynasty. Then, in the first year of the Dương Đức era of King Lê Gia Tông [1672] in Annam, a mandarin named Trịnh Thiên Xuân and a sorcerer named Trịnh Đạo Kiêm — both natives of Giang Lục commune, Gia Phúc district, Hạ Hồng county — wrote a book entitled Hồng Lục Thư that listed the twelve governing kings. Also, their names were published on the calendar as follows:

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266 See also Opusculum, pp. 170-171.

267 Hành Khiển (行 遣) in Chinese/Vietnamese folk religion is a genie who controls the world for one year. Since there are twelve years in a cycle, there are twelve genies who take turns governing human affairs. These are seen as trouble spirits who often bring natural disasters, plagues, and calamities, so offerings are made at the end and in the beginning of the year to say farewell to the old genie and welcome the new genie.

268 See a similar list from a modern author, Toan Ánh, Tín Ngưỡng Việt Nam [Vietnamese Religious Beliefs] (Saigon, 1966; reprint Hochiminh City: Văn Nghệ, 2000), Vol. 1: 188.
[1] The year of the Rat is under the control of King Chu, the governing spirit of Thiên Ôn star; his assistant minister is Quý Tào. 269

[2] The year of the Buffalo 270 is under the control of King Triệu, the governing spirit of Tam Tháp Lực Thương star; his assistant minister is Khúc Tào.

[3] The year of the Tiger is under the control of King Ngụy, the governing spirit of Mộc Tinh star; his assistant minister is Tĩnh Tào.

[4] The year of the Cat 271 is under the control of King Trịnh, the governing spirit of Thạch Tinh star; his assistant minister is Liễu Tào.

[5] The year of the Dragon is under the control of King Sở, the governing spirit of Hoả Tinh star; his assistant minister is Y Tào.

[6] The year of the Snake is under the control of King Ngô, the governing spirit of Thiên Hao star; his assistant minister is Hứa Tào.

[7] The year of the Horse is under the control of King Tần, the governing spirit of Thiên Hoa star; his assistant minister is Ngọc Tào.

[8] The year of the Goat 272 is under the control of King Tống, the governing spirit of Ngư Dao star; his assistant minister is Lâm Tào. {p. 112}

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269 These are the names of stars and constellations according to Chinese astronomy. I have not been able to identify the Chinese characters for most of these.

270 This is the same as the year of the Ox in the Chinese calendar.

271 This would be the year of the Hare in the Chinese calendar.

272 This would be the year of the Sheep in the Chinese calendar.
[9] The year of the Monkey is under the control of King Tề, the governing spirit of Ngưu Miếu star; his assistant minister is Tống Tào.

[10] The year of the Rooster is under the control of King Lỗ, the governing spirit of Sơn Nhạc star; his assistant minister is also Khúc Tào.

[11] The year of the Dog is under the control of King Việt, the governing spirit of Thiên Cậu star; his assistant minister is Việt Tào.

[12] The year of the Boar is under the control of King Lưu, the governing spirit of Ngưu Ôn star; his assistant minister is Nguyễn Tào.

These twelve kings were formerly vassal lords appointed by the Zhou emperors. The sorcerers use this chart to make offerings to the appropriate calamity king of the year to save people from illness.

The Western Scholar comments: Those twelve kings were feudal lords appointed by the Zhou. Since they had not existed before that time, who would be the calamity spirit to govern life and death? If these Governing Spirits caused deaths, how did people from the Xia and Shang periods survive until the Zhou era? Moreover, if these genies accept the offerings by people to protect them from death and disability, {p. 113} then why were there so many deaths in the year of the plague, were the offerings not effective? Since the Governing Spirits have no power at all, we should not make offerings to them.
The Eastern Scholar says: I also note that, according to the *Compendium* (Tổng Luận)\textsuperscript{273} “after moving the capital to the East, the descendants of Zhou were incompetent in governing, leading to the seizing of power by their vassal lords.” Since the lords of those vassal states were disloyal to the king of Zhou, they did not deserve to become Governing Spirits in heaven. Moreover, if these Governing Spirits make people sick in order to receive their offerings, they are corrupt and unrighteous. Consequently, one must not believe that they have any power.

\textsuperscript{273} I have not been able to identify this book.
Article 5

On the Nine Stars and the Thunder God

The Western Scholar says: When the sorcerers treat people, they often make offerings to the stars. So I ask you: How many stars do they take as the sources of troubles?

The Eastern Scholar says: In the book Hồng Lục Thư, there is a chart of nine stars listing their names and the troubles they bring, as follows:

The La Hầu constellation has nine stars. At hợi hour (9-11 pm) on the eighth of each month, the stars descend to the southern part of the sky. For anyone who is born during that time, which is called the hour of La Hầu, or the hour of “trouble in mouth and tongue,” a man will have diseases of eyes, throat and mouth; a woman will have diseases of the blood and difficult childbirth.

The Thổ Tú constellation has five stars. At hợi hour (9-11 pm) on the ninth of each month, the stars descend to the central part of the sky. Anyone who is born during that time, which is called the hour of Thổ Tú, or the hour of the “disastrous star,” will not have peace at home; will often incur illness, trouble in raising cattle, and disaster when traveling.

The Thủy Diệu constellation has six stars. At hợi hour (9-11 pm) on the twenty-first of each month, the stars descend to the northern part of the sky. For anyone who is

274 I have not been able to locate this work.

275 See a similar list by Toan Ánh, Vol. 2: 214-218.
born during that time, which is called the hour of Thủy Diệu, or the hour of the "auspicious star," a man will be prosperous but a woman will not.

The Thái Bạch constellation has eight stars. At **tuất** hour (7-9 pm) on the fifteenth of each month, the stars descend to the western part of the sky. Anyone who is born during that time, which is called the hour of Thái Bạch [or the hour of "trouble,"] will often incur misfortune and will need to watch out for trouble.

The Thái Dương constellation has ten stars. At **hợi** hour (9-11 pm) on the twenty-seventh of each month, the stars descend to the eastern part of the sky. For anyone who is born during that time, which is called the hour of Thái Dương, [or the hour of "great yang"], a man will be intelligent and wealthy but a woman will be ill and incur trouble.

The Vân Hán constellation has fifteen stars. At **hợi** hour (9-11 pm) on the twenty-ninth of each month, the stars descend to the southern part of the sky. For anyone who is born during that time, which is called the hour of Hoả [Đức], or the "disastrous star," both men and women will have misfortune, disasters, difficulty in childbirth, and trouble in raising cattle. They must guard themselves from incurring troubles.

The Kế Đô constellation has twelve stars. At **tuất** hour (7-9 pm) on the twenty-eighth of each month, the stars descend to the western part of the sky. Anyone who is born during that time, which is called the hour of Kế Đô, or the hour of the "inauspicious star," will incur disaster. If they move away, they will be prosperous; if they stay at home, they will be poor and lowly.
The Thái Âm constellation has seven stars. At **tuất** hour (7-9 pm) on the twenty-sixth of each month, the stars descend to the northern part of the sky. For anyone who is born during that time, which is called the hour of Thái Âm, or the hour of Chú Dương star, a man will be prosperous but a woman will incur misfortune and poverty.

The Mộc Đức constellation has twenty stars. At **tuất** hour (7-9 pm) on the twenty-fifth of each month, the stars descend to the eastern position of the sky. For anyone who is born during that time, called the hour of Mộc Tinh, or the hour of Càn Nguyên, a man will have diseases of the eyes; a woman will have diseases of the blood; husband and wife {p. 116} will quarrel.

The practice of sacrifice to the stars in order to change one’s fortune originates from Nghiêm Quân Bình.276

**The Western Scholar comments:** If sacrificing to the star constellations enables to protection against disasters, diseases and brings good fortune, then how come those people who made sacrifices (to the stars to pray for protection from evil) still have diseases and trouble, but people who did not sacrifice are still prosperous and healthy? Therefore, one should not sacrifice to the stars.

**[On the Thunder God]**

**The Eastern Scholar says:** The school of sorcerers also came up with the story of Thunder God, who is called the Chief Messenger Trương. He often takes the form of a

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276 I have not been able to identify this person.
hawk. When he is angry, he shouts out lightning and thunder in five directions — east, west, north, south, and central — striking peoples, animals and trees. People are frightened when they hear his booming voice. For that reason, the sorcerers often give people a replica of a thunderbolt to protect themselves from being struck by the Thunder God.

**The Western Scholar says:** The story is unbelievable. The heat produced by the union of hot and cold air in the sky causes lightning and thunder. When the vapor \(\text{p. 117}\) or cold air meets the dry or hot air, it makes a sound. When the dry air runs into the cold air, it emits lightning. The striking lightning is called thunder. Wherever thunder strikes, it brings destruction. Anyone who does not believe this may take a piece of burning hot iron and stick it into the cold water. Will he not see that the hot and cold air oppose each other and cause sparkles of fire and make noise? Whoever has thought about this will know that lightning and thunder are caused by the cold and hot air, not by a Thunder God who is called the Chief Messenger Trương.

**The Eastern Scholar says:** What you, the Western Scholar, have just said is also written in the book *Outline of Pharmacopoeia* (*Cuống Mục Bản Thảo*).\(^{277}\) The book criticizes the custom of a certain country where its people cast thunderbolts every year and offer them to the Thunder God for him to produce thunder.

\(^{277}\) This book by Li Shizhen is a manual of Chinese medicine. I have not been able to locate the materials on thunder bolts in this pharmacopeia.
Article 6

On Auspicious and Inauspicious Times

The Western Scholar says: The sorcerer often warns people to choose auspicious days and avoid inauspicious days. Thus I ask you: What is this custom all about?

The Eastern Scholar says: Sorcerers create these deceptions to make people be fearful. Then they perform rituals to dispel the victim’s misfortune, showing off their power and taking offerings from people for helping them. They claim that there are ill-fated years, times of disaster; there are days of death, days to kill, days on which one is prone to drowning, and hours of accidents. They tell people to avoid those inauspicious days and hours, and make expiatory sacrifices.

In ancient times, there were no precepts about lucky or unlucky days and hours. People did not choose a favorable time to act or an unfavorable time to avoid action. In modern times, the book Anthology of Magical Arts (Âm Dương Tạp Thư) from the Tang era propagates the lies and deceptions of sorcerers, claiming that by acting on the lucky days and hours one can be prosperous, and by avoiding the unlucky days and hours, one can save oneself from mishaps.

In Annam, in the first year of the Dương Đức era of King Lê Gia Tông [1672], two people from Gia Phúc district, Hạ Hồng county — the mandarin Trịnh Thiện Xuân

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278 I have not been able to locate this work.
and the sorcerer Trịnh Đạo Kiêm — made up these practices in their book Hồng Lục Thư. They also composed and distributed astral charts for sorcerers to follow.

**The Western Scholar comments:** Why do people need to choose a favorable time to act? The results are good or bad, not because of the auspicious or inauspicious timing, but because people (p. 119) do good and avoid evil. If there are lucky or unlucky days, then why do twins, born from the same mother, at the same hour and day, end up with different fortunes: one is wealthy and elegant but the other is poor and base; one enjoys longevity but the other has a short life. Rather, their fortunes are determined by the Lord of Heaven.

**The Eastern Scholar says:** Let us reflect on further. In ancient times, when King Wu fought with King Zhou on the same day, the giáp tý day, King Wu won the battle and killed King Zhou. If that day was a lucky day, why did King Zhou lose? And if that day was unlucky, why did King Wu win? King Wu became king because he was virtuous; King Zhou was evil, so he lost his kingdom. Moreover, one should not believe in the day of “fatality” and avoid going out to conduct business or work. Life and death are normal phenomena; birth and death occur every day. People die not because of an unlucky day but through other causes; that is why many deaths occur every day. The

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279 This may be a scribal error, for the argument is from a Western Scholar’s view.

280 The first day of a sixty-year cycle.

281 See also Book 1, Article 13.
great Lord in heaven decides how long a person lives; a person will die when his or her date of death arrives.
Article 7
On Hà Bá, Phạm Nhan, and Liễu Hạnh

The Western Scholar asks: Since sorcerers and female mediums often act in the names of Hà Bá, Phạm Nhan and Liễu Hạnh, can you explain the origins of those three spirits?

[The Duke of the River]

The Eastern Scholar answers: Hà Bá is the spirit of river. During the time of King Wei Lie of the Warring States era, in the giáp-tí year, the ninth year of his reign [417 BCE], Duke Ai of Qin tried to build a citadel in the Long river. He gave his daughter to be Hà Bá’s wife to gain his support. The king of Wei imitated the Qin custom, making his people offer a bride to the spirit of river. The people of Wei suffered a lot for this custom. [Another explanation is that] in the Three Kingdoms era [221-265], there was a man from Huayin district, who was able to lift a big eight-sided rock, revealing a source of water for people to drink. Later on, people called him the Duke of the River (Hà Bá).

The common people believe Hà Bá is the king of deep water; he often comes up into the mountain to get stone and lumber. They also believe that girls are drowned

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282 In China, there are specific guarding genies or spirits for different bodies of water, from the great seas and rivers to streams, lakes, ponds, and wells. In Vietnam, Hà Bá (河伯) is a name for the spirit of the river, who is connected with flooding and drowning. Certain parts of Vietnam today still suffer from annual floods; consequently, temples or shrines dedicated to him are often located in major watercourses in the Mekong Delta (South Vietnam) and Hue (Central Vietnam).

283 This is a myth to explain flood and landslide.
because the king of water wants to take a bride. Sorcerers and mediums put together a story saying that (p. 121 (211)) when people cross a river or a well, and later become ill, it is because the Duke of the River has captured their souls; they must make offerings to him to regain their souls. In addition, when carrying a funeral casket on a boat, one must make offerings to Hà Bá [to ensure safe passage.]

The Western Scholar comments: Hà Bá does not have the power to capture someone’s soul. If one has to get back one’s soul from him in order to live, then why are there many people who survive an illness without doing anything, except take medication? And why are there people who, despite making offerings to him, still die? If Hà Bá has the power to save, why did the people of Wei, who worshipped him, lose their country to the Qin? And why did the Qin surrender to the Han despite the fact that they worshipped him? Therefore, do not believe in the power of Hà Bá.

[Phạm Nhan]

The Eastern Scholar says: Phạm Nhan was born in the Ming era.²⁸⁴ His father Nguyễn Bá Tiên (or Quang) was from the area of Dihong stream, Minglei district, Yinzhu county in China. His mother was Nguyễn Thị Tri, an Annamese from Đồng Trặt commune, Đồng Triệu district, Kinh Chu county. Phạm Nhan’s nickname was “hammer boy”

²⁸⁴ It should be in the Yuan (Nguyên) dynasty (1257-1368). If Phạm Nhan lived during the reign of Trần Anh Tông (1294-1314) and was executed by Hùng Đạo Vượng (d. 1300), he must have lived in the late 13th century.
During the reign of Trần Anh Tông [r. 1294-1314], he went into the royal harem and committed fornication. The king sent Hưng Đạo Vương Trần Quốc Tuấn\textsuperscript{285} to capture him. He was executed by disembodiment and cut into three pieces. At that moment, a demon entered his body and called himself Phạm Nhan, the prince consort. Any woman who is possessed by Phạm Nhan can be treated by a sorcerer, who uses red ink to write an amulet on a piece of yellow paper to capture and jail Phạm Nhan, and then writes a mandate ordering King Anh Tông to send Hưng Đạo Vương to kill the demon.\textsuperscript{286}

**The Western Scholar comments:** Phạm Nhan is a criminal. If the king had him executed, why do sorcerers revere him as one who has the power to harm people?

\textsuperscript{285} Trần Quốc Tuấn, titled Hưng Đạo Vương (1228-1300), was a military commander of the Trần dynasty. Considered the national hero after repelling two invasions by the mighty Mongol armies, he has been worshipped by Vietnamese as the god protector of the nation. There are many temples dedicated to him and his cult still exists today.

\textsuperscript{286} The story of Phạm Nhan seems to be based on an account in the appendix of *Việt Điển U Linh Tập* [Collection of Stories on the Past Spirits of Viet Realm] (14\textsuperscript{th} century) concerning the legends associated with Hưng Đạo Vương. In this work, the story is told as follows: “Phạm Nhan’s name was Nguyễn Bá Linh. His father was a merchant in Guangdong province, his mother was from An Bài village of our country. He earned a doctorate (tiếng sĩ) at the Yuan court. Since he had excellent magical skills, he often got into the royal harem and committed fornication. He was caught and was about to be executed. However, since the Yuan army was planning to attack our country, Bá Linh volunteered to be their guide to save his life. In the battle at Bạch Đằng river, Bá Linh was captured by Hưng Đạo Vương, and was decapitated at his mother’s village, and his head was thrown into the river… Before being executed, he asked Hưng Đạo Vương: ‘What are you going to give me to eat?’ Vương angrily answered: ‘You can eat the blood from birth delivery.’ Thus, after death Bá Linh’s spirit wandered around the country. Whenever he sees a woman giving birth, he will possess her and she will immediately go in to a coma – no medicine can revive her. Relatives of the ill woman come to the temple of Hưng Đạo Vương to pray and take an old mat that belongs to the temple, quickly cover the patient or let her lie on it. Next, they give the patient a potion of water mixed with the offering incense ashes to make her recover. In some cases, even bringing the mat home already facilitates the recovery process. How marvelous is the power of Hưng Đạo Vương!” (*my translation*).
Besides, sorcerers are commoners. What authority do they have to order King Anh Tông to have Hưng Đạo Vương capture the demon for them? Moreover, the king already had Phạm Nhan executed once, why does he have to do it again? This story is nonsense, not worth listening to.

[Princess Liễu Hạnh]

The Eastern Scholar says: I already mentioned about Liễu Hạnh in Article 10 of the first book. However, {p. 123 (213)} I have not told the sorcerer’s account of her story, which is as follows:287 Liễu Hạnh was the daughter of Indra (Đế Thích). The Jade Emperor sent her down to the hill of Vân Cát in Annam. She wandered around and was born into the Lê family at An Thái commune of the Thiên Bàn district, Nghĩa Hưng county in Sơn Nam prefecture. When she died at the age of thirty-seven, her spirit took on human form and traveled throughout the country. When she came to Nghệ An region in the area of Duyên (or Lục) Quán, she opened a refreshment booth. One day a young scholar stopped by for refreshment. Attracted by her beauty, he married her, and they had a son. When the child was three years old, she told her husband: “I am the daughter of Indra. The Jade Emperor sent me down to the world to be the daughter of the Lê family, and I took human form. Now it is time for me to return home; you stay here and raise our son.” After saying that, she disappeared and came to An Thái commune. She

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287 Most modern legends about Liễu Hạnh are based on Đoàn Thị Điểm’s fictionalized account entitled Vân Cát Thần Nữ Truyện [The Story of Vân Cát Goddess] (early 18th century). The work itself is based on earlier legends, in which one version may be preserved here in The Errors of the Three Religions. Apparently the cult of Liễu Hạnh was so popular in the 18th century that the author of The Errors of the Three Religions found it necessary to discuss her twice, in Book 1 Article 1 and Book 2 Article 7.
appeared as a beautiful girl in fine clothing, seducing the travelers with magic, and her story spread throughout the area. The lord [Trịnh] honored her with the title Princess Liễu Hạnh, also known as Lady Thắng. A temple was built for her, \{p. 124 (214)\} with two female attendants in fine clothing standing to the left and right of her statue. She often appears in the form of a young girl to seduce men and hypnoitize them, saying: “I am taking your soul. If you want to live, you must worship me.” Therefore, people worship her everywhere; in their homes, there is a picture of her sitting with two attendants on her sides.

**The Western Scholar comments:** Liễu Hạnh is a demon, not a being from heaven. A celestial being is chaste and does not engage in seducing scholars and men as she did. She surely is a goddess of lust; her temple is a temple of lust. We must practice scholar Hồ Dĩnh’s advice that whenever one passes a temple of lust one should burn it down.

**The Eastern Scholar says:** There are many others genies and spirits on whom the sorcerers and mediums rely and to whom they pray: \(^\text{288}\) Mạnh Tông, \(^\text{289}\) One-legged Genie (độc cửu), \(^\text{290}\) Xưng Sỗ Sát, Three Honorables (tam danh), \(^\text{291}\) Three Leaders (tam đầu), \(^\text{292}\)

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\(^{288}\) Many genies and spirits listed here might be particular to the region where this manuscript was composed. Some names are generic and obscure, for example Three Names or Three Heads, etc. There is a similar listing of names in *Opusculum*, pp. 172-175.

\(^{289}\) The person who supposedly invented the worship of 12 yearly Governing Spirits. See Article 4 above.

\(^{290}\) A warrior genie from China, the “one-legged” genie is worshipped by medium and sorcerer. For more information, see Dror, *A Study of Religion*, p. 173, n. 81.
Three Persons (tam vị), Tür Dương, Nine Tails (cửu vị), King Đông, King Càn, King Đinh, King Bạch Hạc, King Mê Hê, Lady Quế, Lady Trì, Water Governor (Thủy Tề), Water Creature (thủy tộc).

291 According to Dror (A Study of Religion, pp. 173-74, note 83), Xưng, Số, Sắt (or Sùng, Sô, Sắt in Opusculum) are the names of the Three Honorable (Tam danh). However, it is also possible that “Tam Danh” is a corruption for “Tam Thanh,” the high deities of Daoism.

292 This spirit is not identified, but it is possibly a corruption of Tam Đảo, a mountain in North Vietnam.

293 This spirit is not identified.

294 According to the information given in Opusculum (p. 173), Tür Dương was a criminal who lived during the Han dynasty. Since he terrified others with his impiety, he is venerated in order to restrain him from doing harm.

295 Dror suggests this spirit to be a water spirit. See A Study of Religion, pp. 175, 176, nn. 92, 94.

296 The legend of King Đông is already mentioned in Book 1 Article 10.

297 This spirit has not been identified.

298 This refers to King Đinh Tiên Hoàng (r. 968-79) who united the independent Vietnam from the warlord and established the imperial tradition. His main temple is located in the ancient capital Hoa Lư, Ninh Bình province.

299 His story appears in Viết Điện U Linh Tấp. When the official Lý Thường Minh built a temple in Bạch Hạc region, he invited the powerful spirits to come to be worshipped. Two spirits appeared and competed with one another, and the winner was declared the guardian spirit of that region.

300 According to Dror (A Study of Religion, p. 146, n. 151), this may be a reference to Lady My Ê, the wife of Champa’s king Sוא đầu, who upon being captured by the Vietnamese, committed suicide to be loyal to her husband. Lady My Ê is honored by Vietnamese, and her story appears in Viết Điện U Linh Tấp.

301 According to Dror (A Study of Religion, p. 146, n. 151), Lady Quế is an attendant of Princess Liễu Hạnh.

302 Opusculum records this as “Chúa Tri” (Lady of the Pond).

303 Water Governor and Water Creature are generic names for spirits of giant fish or other sea creatures, which fishermen often worship for protection.
The Western Scholar says:  Now let us discuss the practices of sorcerers such as divination, fortune-telling, astrology, reading chicken feet, and physiognomy. Those who engage in these practices imitate and help one another. Since people often seek divination and the diviners are many, I ask you: How do diviners practice divination?\(^{304}\)

The Eastern Scholar replies:  In ancient times, King Fuxi saw a kind of dragon-horse\(^{305}\) marked by a pattern in the River Meng. The pattern had eight parts: at the top were nine dots, at the bottom was one, on the left were three, on the right were seven, on the top left and right were two and four, on the bottom left and right were six and eight, with five in the center. Fuxi took the eight directions from the chart drawn on the back of the dragon-horse to create the eight trigrams: qian, kan, gen, zhen, xun, li, kun, and dui, expanding them, eight times eight, to 64 hexagrams of six lines each — a total of 384 lines.

Later, King Wen [of Zhou] assigned each hexagram a name and a meaning, and the Duke of Zhou gave each line an explanation. Confucius then added the “Great Appendix” (Hệ Từ) (p. 126 (216)), which records the stories of past kings to teach morality to younger generations. At the age of fifty, Confucius learned the Classic of

\(^{304}\) See also Opusculum, Chapter 4 Article 1.

\(^{305}\) A mythical beast.
Changes, took the doctrine of the mean as his moral principle. Consequently, he did not engage in excessive behaviors but he examined the pros and cons for self-correction.

People of the past learned the Classic of Changes as a guide for moral living, to do good and avoid evil.

In later eras, diviners took the eight trigrams from the Classic of Changes, turning the three lines of each trigram qian, kan gen, zhen, xun, li, kun, and dui\textsuperscript{306} into the means of divination. They pray to Fuxi, King Wen, the Duke of Zhou, Confucius, the great saints and sages, and other spirits to assist them in telling a fortune. Afterwards, they examine the correspondences and oppositions among the five elements (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth) to determine whether the event in question would be beneficial or destructive. They then divine by throwing two coins.\textsuperscript{307}

When a person wants to consult a diviner, he brings money and a plate of betel leaves for the diviner to offer to the spirits. The diviner holds the plate of betel leaves above his head and prays to the spirits of the sages, asking them to help him tell the fortune. The client also prays to the spirits of the sages in silence as follows: “I ask the sages for a sign, whether good or bad (p. 127 (217)), concerning my family affairs, household business, family relationships, and whether any tomb of my ancestors has been disturbed. Please assist the diviner to tell me my fortune.” Then the diviner takes the coins and throws them into a basin three times, saying: “The first line of a trigram…

\textsuperscript{306} Each of the eight trigrams is made up of three lines, either solid (yang) or broken (yin).

\textsuperscript{307} The divination by two coins is called in Vietnamese: ‘xin [quê] âm dương’ (asking for the sign of yin or yang). If the coins fall on the same sides, this is yin, which is bad for divination; if one coin is a head and the other is a tail, this is yang, which is good for divination.
second line… the third line.” Each time he reads the coins to see whether the result is yang (one head, one tail) or yin (two of the same side). Then, considering the corresponding trigram, he says: “Is it true that in the past few years you have suffered some misfortune, loss of goods, sickness or injury? If you agree to this assessment, then I will tell you more.” By saying this he forces the client to agree with him, for who does not experience some misfortune in a period of three or four years? If he does not know what to predict, then he will say: “This forecast is unfavorable (bất thuận). There is no meaning in the book [Classic of Changes].”

If he fails to predict one issue, he will move to another, or he will make suggestions such as making a proper reburial because a tomb of the client’s ancestors has been disturbed, or making monetary and other offerings to the spirits because an ancestor of the client committed a transgression in the underworld. In this way, the client pays the diviner in order to restore peace to the household; otherwise, lives and wealth will be lost. The diviner also says things like: “If the husband and wife have incompatible astrological signs, they must pretend to divorce, \{p. 128 (218)\} then remarry so that they can live together peacefully.” To those who have difficulty in raising a healthy child, he says: “Give the child to another family for adoption then the child can live.” Or to those who suffer misfortunes in their household, he says: “A fierce spirit or a spirit of fire is occupying the land; a magician must be hired to make a talisman to control it, then everything will be fine.” Or he says: “The main road or a side way has cut into the energy [of the house], or there is a defect in a particular direction; a stone dog must be buried to guard that direction, then the trouble will be gone.” He also says: “There is trouble in the
household because of incompatible astrological signs among family members, and this often causes sickness. Lady Liễu Hạnh must be worshipped in the house, a special bamboo (trúc đài) must be planted in the yard outside, and incense offerings must be made to heaven in the evening.” The fortune-teller watches for the client’s accidental disclosures as opportunities to create business for himself and make money.

**The Western Scholar comments:** Because people are ignorant and uncritical, whenever they want to decide on something, they consult a diviner. And diviners often worship guardian spirits in their houses; these spirits are the devil, who is a liar. When a diviner or female medium makes predictions by throwing coins, the devil assists him or her to talk about this or that trouble to scare people, making them worried. Then, whatever the diviner tells them to do, they have to carry out {p. 129 (219)}. The evil spirits often possess the male and female mediums to tell people strange things that make them panic. Since people tend to seek life and avoid death, they will do whatever the diviner tells them. Hence, is divination not an evil practice? After consulting a diviner, one starts worrying — as they say “breath produces vapor; divination produces ghosts.” Through divination, one brings the ghost home, inviting evil troubles to self; it is a waste of time and resources, where there is no benefit.
The Eastern Scholar says: It is written in the book of history: “After the decline of the Shao Hao era, people were terrified and tricked one another with the stories of gods and demons; all families practiced mediumship, people committed profanity in sacrifices; subsequently disasters increased.” Any generation fond of divination will end up like that.

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King Shao Hao is a legendary figure. He was the alleged elder son of Yellow Emperor (Huang Di) who was the mythic sage-king of prehistoric China.
Article 9

On Astrology and Event-Forecasting

The Western Scholar says: I have heard that many people engage in the arts of astrology and Event-Forecasting. So I ask you: What are those practices?

The Eastern Scholar replies: During the Spring and Autumn era, there was a man in Jin state named Wang Xu, also known as Master Guigu, who practiced the art of astrological divination. He composed a divination book entitled *Four Letters to Discern One’s Fate* (_TRUNC). The diviner takes the date and time of birth (p. 130 (220)) to chart a person’s horoscope. For example, a person is born in the giáp-tí year, ất-sửu month, bính-dần day, and dinh-sửu hour. These four letters will determine a reading of a person’s fate. In this art of divination, there are six readings. The first reading is on personal matters, to determine whether a person’s life will be good or bad. The second reading is on the family, to see the number and fate of his or her siblings. The third reading is on career life, to see whether this person will have success or failure. The fourth reading is on marriage to see whether this person will live in harmony with his

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309 Wang Xu (王诩), better known as Master Guigu (Guiguzi), was a founder of School of Diplomacy (”) during the Warring States Period. He was known for his strategic and diplomatic skills. According to the historian Sima Qian, Guiguzi was the teacher of famous diplomats, statesmen and military strategists, including Su Qin, Zhang Yi, Sun Bin and Pang Juan. Popular beliefs ascribe the art of fortune telling to him.

310 As explained before, the Vietnamese share with the Chinese a similar lunar calendar of a sexagenary cycle. Each year, month, day, and hour are assigned a name paired from one of ten heavenly stems and one of twelve earthly branches. The cycle begins with giáp-tí and ends with quy-hợi.
or her spouse. The fifth reading is to see how many children this person will have and their futures. The sixth reading involves a prediction on later life to see whether this person will have longevity. That is the art of astrological divination originating from Master Guigu.

The art of Event-Forecasting originates from Sun Bin, a disciple of Master Guigu. Sun Bin created the art of event-forecasting by calculating on one’s fingers to determine whether an action is favorable or not. In this system, the twelfth month is called thần hậu tí; the eleventh, đại cát sửu; the tenth, công tào dần; the ninth, thái xung mèo; the eighth, thiên trắc thin; the seventh, {p. 131 (221)} thái ất tí; the sixth, thắng quang ngọ; the fifth, tiểu cát mùi; the fourth, truyền tống thần; the third, tống khởi đau; the second, a khởi tuất; and the first, đăng minh hợi. From these months, one can calculate good and bad event awaiting a person.

Both Sun Bin and Pang Juan were disciples of Master Guigu, and both served at the court of the Wei state. Since Pang Juan was jealous of Sun Bin’s superior skills, he plotted against Sun Bin and cut off his left leg. After the incident, an envoy of the Qi state rescued Sun Bin and brought him to Qi. King Wei of Qi made him his military

311 Sun Bin (孫 胄) was a military strategist who lived during the Warring States Period. He was tutored in military strategy by the hermit Guiguzi. While serving in the state of Wei, he was accused of treason, and was sentenced to face-tattooing and had his kneecaps removed, rendering him handicapped for the rest of his life. Sun escaped from Wei later and rose to prominence in the state of Qi, by serving as a military strategist and commander. He is the author of a tactical manual that bears his name, the Sun Bin’s Art of War.

312 Pang Juan (龐 濱) was a military general of the state of Wei during the Warring States Period. A classmate of Sun Bin, he was jealous of the latter’s talents, and secretly plotted against him when the two of them served under King Hui of Wei (known in the book Mencius as Liang Huiwang). Accused of treason, Sun Bin almost lost his life and had to escape from Wei. The two became sworn enemies after Sun Bin discovered Pang Juan’s betrayal. At the battle of Maling between Wei and Qi (432 BCE), Pang Juan was ambushed by Sun Bin’s army and killed in battle.
advisor. When going to battle, Sun Bin would stay in the carriage and calculate conditions favorable to victory. Later, when Qi attacked Wei, Pang Juan lost the battle and committed suicide.

Those who foretell marital relationships compare the birth year, month, day, and hour of a man and a woman to predict when they should marry, or whether they can live together for life. The art of predicting marriage originates with a Song official named Li Chunfeng. The king of Song was suddenly attacked by his enemies and his troops could not arrive in time. Li Chunfeng devised a scheme to help the king by giving him his daughter in marriage. He composed a book of divination as the marriage gift; in it he wrote the eight words of year, month, day, and hour as the auspicious time to carry out the battle. The use of eight letters (as a code to attack) was a military tactic. In later generations, however, many things were added to this book to misinform people.

The Western Scholar says: If it is possible to predict favorable conditions to act and to avoid disaster through the art of divination, no one would have to endure any hardship. If Guigu was skillful enough in his art of divination to write about it, why was he unable to predict that one of his disciples would have his leg cut off and warn him? If Sun Bin can master the art of Event-Forecasting, why did he not know in advance that Pang Juan

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313 The author might confuse this person with a famous Sui-Tang mathematician and astronomer named Li Chunfeng (李淳風; 602-670). He worked at the Imperial Astronomy Bureau and was responsible for instituting a calendar reform (which adds intercalary months to the lunar calendar). He was the author of a number of treatises on mathematics and numerology. Because of his reputation as a skillful astrologer, some works on divination and esoteric practices were later credited to him.
would cut off his leg and avoid him? If Guigu taught his two disciples the art of warfare, then why did he not know that they would later use it, to fight each other to death? Therefore, books on divination and the art of Event-Forecasting are useless and cannot predict anything.

**The Eastern Scholar further comments:** In the time of Tang Taizong, an official named Lü Cai\(^{314}\) criticized the book *The Fate of Fortune* (Lộc Mệnh). He said to the emperor: “Now, people who were born in the same time should share the same fortune, and yet their wealth and status are different — one person is rich and the other is poor. Twins who were born from the same womb, but they have different life spans — one remains alive and the other dies [in infancy]. Their fate is not the same. Obviously the claims in the book *The Fate of Fortune* are not true.” [Vietnamese translation follows] \(\textit{p. 133 (223).}\) People respected Lü Cai for his words of reason.

\(^{314}\) Lü Cai (呂才) was a Chinese musician during the reign of Tang Taizong (r. 626-649). Lü was also good at alchemy, astronomy, mathematics, history and geography. I cannot confirm of his view on fortune-telling as described in the text here.
Article 10

On the Five Constellations

The Western Scholar says: There are people who watch the Five Constellations to predict the future. So I ask you: What are the Five Constellations, which these people base their predictions on?

The Eastern Scholar replies: In the manual of warfare, there is the following account: During the Han dynasty, there was a certain person named Zhang Liang who came to Xiali. At night, a deity gave him a book to teach him the art of warfare. Zhang Liang used the book to help the Han king conquer the whole country. When he died, the book was not passed on to anyone, but was put in a pillow and buried with him. Later on, in the time of the Jin dynasty, five people dug up the grave of Zhang Liang, took the book and passed it on. By later generations, the book was called Secret Book Inside the Pillow (Chẩm Trung Bí Thư) and was used by the military to predict the outcome of battles.

In the book (p. 134 (224)) there is a chart of Five Constellations as follows:

Constellation Tuệ in the east belongs to the wood element. When it moves in the spring or summer, the enemy soldiers will win; in the autumn or winter, the soldiers of the Lord [Trinh] will win. If the stars go to the western quadrant, the enemy will attack;

315 The same Zhang Liang mentioned in Book 1, Article 13.
to the eastern\textsuperscript{316} quadrant, there will be drought; to the northern quadrant, there will be flooding.\textsuperscript{317}

Constellation Huỳnh Hoặc in the south belongs to the fire element. When it moves in the spring, the enemy soldiers will retreat; in the summer, autumn or winter, the enemy soldiers will win. If the stars go to the center of the sky,\textsuperscript{318} there will be plague and bad harvest; to the western quadrant, drought; to the northern quadrant, flooding.

Constellation Bắc Thần in the north belongs to the water element. When it moves in the autumn or winter, the enemy soldiers will win; in the spring, they will retreat; in the summer, the soldiers of the Lord will triumph. If the stars go to the eastern quadrant, there will be victory without a fight \textit{(p. 135 (225))}; to the center, there will be peace; to the southern quadrant, drought and an enemy attack; to the northern quadrant, flooding.

Constellation Thái Bạch in the west belongs to the metal element. When it moves in the spring or summer, the enemy soldiers will win; in the autumn, the soldiers of the Lord will win; in the winter, the enemy soldiers will retreat. If the stars go to the eastern quadrant, the enemy will attack; to the center, there will be bad harvest and famine; to the southern quadrant, drought; to the northern quadrant, flooding.

Constellation Diên Trần in the center belongs to the earth element. When it moves in the spring, the enemy soldiers will win; in the summer or winter, they will lose;

\textsuperscript{316} Perhaps this should this be “southern,” a possible scribal mistake.

\textsuperscript{317} At this time, the Trinh were trying to suppress various rebellions throughout Tonkin. Famine, plague, natural disaster, and uprisings of the peasants were a constant feature in Tonkin between 1730 and 1770. Apparently, this text is describing an application to contemporary problems.

\textsuperscript{318} This means straight up from where one stands, central to all four directions.
in the autumn, there will be victory without a fight. If the stars go to the southern quadrant, there will be drought; to the western quadrant, an enemy attack; to the northern quadrant, flooding; to the eastern quadrant, famine {p. 136 (226)}

The Western Scholar comments: The Five Constellations and the stars are not writings in the sky to describe human affairs in this world. How then can a person who watches the constellations know which side will win or lose in a battle? Winning or losing a battle depends on the military skills of the generals and the strength of an army, not in the power of any star. There is a great Lord in heaven who governs everything in heaven and on earth, who allows this side to win and that side to lose. If he lets anyone see the future, then that person can know which side will win in a battle. Because of the belief in the stars, many people have consulted Secret Book Inside the Pillow to predict the outcome of a battle; but later they found out what the book says is not true: the side they predict to win ends up losing. Therefore, do not believe in the power of the Five Constellations.
**Article 11**

**On Physiognomy and Reading Chicken Feet**

**The Western Scholar says:** Since there are those who read facial features and chicken feet for divination, I ask you, Eastern Scholar: What are they all about? {p. 137 (227)}

**[Physiognomy]**

**The Eastern Scholar says:** A physiognomist looks at the facial and physical features to predict the fortune of a person. Those who want to be rich and famous would ask for a physiognomist’s reading, and they would believe that what is said is true.

**The Western Scholar comments:** Those who read the facial and physical features of a person can only see the exterior. How can they see the interior of a person? Riches and honors do not come from a person’s body, but from his or her mind, and through the help of other people. Again, does good or evil come from the facial features? Good or evil comes from within a person. It is better to change one’s heart than to have a facial reading. It is better to correct one’s fault than to have a physical reading. A good or evil way of life is the feature one must read, in order to avoid troubles and to reap the benefits that bring true blessings in this life and the next.
[Reading Chicken Feet]

The Eastern Scholar says: A reader of chicken feet takes a chicken and first offers it to heaven and earth. Then he kills it and cooks it in water. Afterward, he cuts off its two feet and puts them into a basin of cold water; then he takes them out and examines how they look — whether the digits are straight or crooked. If they are all straight up or all crooked, then no sign can be discerned. If the middle digit bends toward the left or the right digit, then it is a bad sign that one must not act. If other digits bend toward the middle digit, then it is an auspicious sign to act. The middle digit is considered as the “heaven and earth” digit, which points to the auspicious. Those who are about to begin a task or to take a journey often read the sign from chicken feet before they act.

The Western Scholar comments: If the chicken digit has the power to guide people, why does one read from the feet of a dead chicken and not a live one? Why is the middle digit of a chicken called the “heaven and earth” digit when the chicken is dead and not while it is alive? Moreover, how is it that heaven and earth use such a base means to give signs of the more important things of human affairs? There are those who read an auspicious sign from chicken feet, but when they act, the results turn out badly. Therefore, do not believe in the divination by reading chicken feet.\(^{319}\)

\(^{319}\) Apparently, this form of divination was popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Alexandre de Rhodes mentioned it in his *Histoire du Royaume de Tunquin*, Chapter XXIV.
Article 12

On Solar and Lunar Eclipses

The Western Scholar says: In this country, there is a ritual to save the sun and the moon when they lose their light. So I ask you: What is the ritual about?

The Eastern Scholar replies: People believe on the day of a solar eclipse or the night of a lunar eclipse, the sun and moon consume each other. Therefore, on that day or that night, everyone — from the officials to the commoners — goes outside, sets up an altar and offers incense, beats drums, rings bells and other instruments, and shouts out loud “Please leave each other alone!” They do so in order to drive the sun and moon away from each other, lest they eat each other — like scaring away the wild animals from seizing the chickens and pigs. The Lord [Trịnh] and his officials perform this ritual in the capital (Ké Chợ); at the local level, the prefecture official, the county official, and the district official also perform this ritual in their areas.

The Western Scholar comments: The sun and the moon lose their light because of the following reasons: solar eclipses occur on the thirtieth or the first day of the month, when the two bodies meet each other in their regular cycles of movement.

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320 In Vietnamese, the words of solar eclipse and lunar eclipse literally mean “the sun is eaten” (nhạt thực) and “the moon is eaten” (nguyệt thực).
The sun is on top and the moon is at the bottom blocking the sun, allowing for darkness to exist during the day. When the sun moves forward, sunlight can be seen again. Lunar eclipses occur on the fifteenth or sixteenth of the month when the sun and the moon line up on their regular cycles. The earth’s shadow blocks the sunlight on the moon, resulting in darkness at night. When the earth’s shadow moves forward, the sun’s shine on the moon resumes. That is what really happens during solar and lunar eclipses, not the sun and moon eating each other as people say.

**The Eastern Scholar comments:** Our books have the same explanation that you, Western Scholar, have. Master Hu Zhitang writes: “The solar eclipse happens on a regular basis,” which means solar eclipse always happens at a particular time, not at any other time.
The two heterodox ways of Śākyamuni and Laozi often use clever words that sound true. Buddhism, especially, often speaks that way. It exalts Śākyamuni greatly, claiming he created heaven, earth, humans, and things, and that he possesses power over heaven and earth to grant wealth, fame and longevity to people. Moreover, Buddhism frequently uses edifying words to exhort people to practice virtue, words such as “quiescence” (tích diệt), “compassion” (từ bi), “purity of mind” (thanh tịnh), “merit” (công đức), and other similar words. For this reason, people who do not exercise a critical mind, take Buddhist teachings to be true and right, and as a result, they come to believe in Buddhism. Many scholars of the Confucian tradition have also fallen into that wicked way. In this Third Book, we need to examine the errors and false doctrines, the magic and divination practices of Buddhism, and strive to teach people how to recognize these deceptions and avoid the tricks that Buddhism uses to mislead people at large. No one should listen to those crafty words which only resemble the virtuous way superficially. In fact, they are all empty, useless and wicked words, which bring people harm. Let the learned person who has been deceived into Buddhism understand the arguments discussed in this book, in order to leave the false way that he has mistakenly followed until now, and quickly return to the right way of virtue, the true
way and principle, the way everyone must follow to attain true blessings in this life and in the next.
Index of the Errors of Buddhism

Article 1: On the Origin of Buddhism
Article 2: On the Spread of Buddhism to China.
Article 3: On the Confucian Evaluation of Buddhism
Article 4: On the Buddhist Story of Creation in Nine Aeons
Article 5: On the True Meaning of the Nine Aeons
Article 6: On the Meanings of the Words Không (emptiness) and Phật (Buddha)
Article 7: On the Precepts against killing and the Teaching of Transmigration
Article 8: On the Prayer “Protection for the Journey” (Bảo đàng)
Article 9: On the Burning of Paper Mausoleum and Joss Paper
Article 10: On Hell
Article 11: On Quan Âm (Avalokiteśvara) and the Wandering Soul
Article 1

On the Origin of Buddhism

The Western Scholar says: Many people in this country worship the Buddha. They use many resources to build temples as well as to perform ceremonies and feasts. Also many people have become monks residing in the temple in the service of the Buddha. Thus, I ask you: Who is the Buddha?

The Eastern Scholar replies: The Buddha is a native of the Tianzhu kingdom in the Western region [of China]. He was born on the eighth day of the fourth month in the giáp-dân year during the reign of Zhou Zhaowang [r. 1052-1002 BCE] – not the 24th year but the 26th year of his reign [1027 BCE]. His father was King Śuddhodana and his mother was Lady Māyādevī. According to the account of the seventh kalpa [aeon] in the book Lamp of the Mind (Tâm Đăng), it is written: “Śākyamuni Buddha was the son of

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321 It is an old name for the region which corresponds to North India, including the Indus Valley and the Ganges River basin.

322 The traditional birthday of the Buddha in Chinese sources does not correspond to that of the Pali texts. This may be an attempt by Chinese Buddhist apologists to “prove” the antiquity of Buddhism, in comparison to Daoism and Confucianism. Modern research sets the time of the Buddha between the seventh and fifth century before Christ, though there is no universal agreement on the exact years (the years 624-544 BCE, 563-483 BCE, and 448-368 BCE have been suggested). Nevertheless, the eighth of the fourth lunar month is still celebrated across East Asia as the Buddha’s birthday.

323 A book compiled in Vietnam, which was one of the main sources on Buddhism for the author and Adriano di Santa Thecla. For a discussion of this obscure work, see Dror, A Study of Religion, pp. 51-54.
Lady Māyādevī and King Śuddhodana. He was born on the fifth watch of the eighth day of the fourth month in the giáp-dân year.”

[Zhu Xi’s] Outline of History (Cương Mục) recounts: On the eighth day of the fourth month in the year giáp-dân of the reign of Zhou Zhaowang, the wife of a Western region king, Lady Mâyādevī, went out to the garden of Lumbini. When she came to rest at the pipa tree, she immediately gave birth to Śākyamuni, whose given name was Siddhartha — the original Buddha in the Tianzhu kingdom, which is also known by various names [in Chinese] as Yindu or Shendu.324

In the West, there are many big countries, in the East there (p. 145 (235)) is China or “the land of nine regions.” The king of Tianzhu was supposed to pay tribute to King Lý Hồ325 but failed to do so for many years. When King Lý Hồ planned to conquer Tianzhu, Śuddhodana wanted to send an envoy to appease him, but no one dared to go. When the crown prince Siddhārtha volunteered to go, the king joyfully sent him off with many fine tribute gifts. When King Lý Hồ saw the many precious tributes, he was pleased and abandoned his plan to attack Tianzhu. Moreover, he gave the crown prince his daughter Yaśodharā to be his wife, as well as a noble lady named Như La326 to be his concubine. When Siddhārtha returned to his country, his father wanted to pass the throne

324 India was called by various names in the Chinese sources. The most common was Thiên Trúc or the land of a Thousand Bamboos (天竺, tianzhu). Other forms are Ấn Độ (印 度, Yindu), Thần Độc (身 毒, Shendu), and Thần Đậu (腎 豆, Shendou) – all are variant transcriptions of “India” (the ancient name of the region).

325 I have not been able to identify this person, or the source of this story. This does not appear in any standard Buddhist account.

326 The Sanskrit form of this name does not appear in any common Buddhist account.
on to him, settling him on the east side of the palace. As Siddhārtha enjoyed all the wealth and fame, he thought to himself: “Even if I became a king, people will only honor me when I am alive; when I die no one will remember me.” He thought of leaving his home to become an ascetic, so that he would earn the respect of people for generations. Therefore, at the age of thirty, he left everything behind — his parents, wives and children, and his throne — and went to the mountain to be an ascetic and founded Buddhism.

According to Lamp of the Mind, “Śākyamuni forsook his throne, took on the ascetical life, and became the Buddha at the Vulture Peak.” The Sutra in Forty-two Sections (Tứ Thập Nhị Chương kinh) also mentions: “When the Buddha left home, he first came to the Himalayas to lead the religious life.” The Lamp of the Mind records: “On the eighth day of the second month in the quáy-mùi year, Śākyamuni became the Buddha.” There were thirty years between the giáp-dần year [when he was born] and the quáy-mùi year [when he was enlightened]. When Śākyamuni founded Buddhism on the mountain, his teachings were collected in a book of 42 sections.

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327 This mountain outside of the ancient city Rajgir is one of the most holy sites of Buddhism. According to the Zen tradition, it was the place where Buddha transmitted the dharma to his disciple Maha Kashapa.


329 This sentence is not found in the standard text of Sutra of Forty-two Sections. Perhaps it is from a preface of a version of the sutra circulated in Tonkin at the time.

330 The Vietnamese often celebrate the day of Śākyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month. It is possible that the author of the text here mistakenly left out the Chinese character “ten” reducing 12 to 2.
called the *Sutra of Forty-two Sections*. The *Nirvana Sutra* ( bölüm kinh) recorded the words of Śākyamuni to his disciples as follows: “O monks! When I die, if you love my teachings and treasure them as jewels, you yourselves will become masters.”

The Buddha chose among his 42 maxims to teach his monks. The first maxim states: “The Buddha said: A person who left his family to join the sangha (Buddhist community), and devotes himself wholeheartedly to practice the true dharma (Buddhist teaching) is called ‘śramaṇa’ (ascetic).” [Another maxim states:] “He, who shaves his head and face to become a śramaṇa and receive the dharma must abandon all worldly wealth and possessions, and beg, seeking only what is necessary.”

The Buddhist monks obeyed his teaching. Thus, Śākyamuni lived on the mountain with his many disciples and practiced Buddhism until the old age of seventy-nine, when he passed away and was buried in Kuśinarā (Kuśinagara) in the Western Region. According to *Lamp of the Mind*, “at the sunset on the fifteenth of the second month in the nhâm-thân year, the Buddha entered nirvana.”

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331 It is a major Mahayana scripture which deals with the final months of the Buddha’s life. Its full title is *Mahāparinirvana Sūtra*, but to avoid confusion with a similar text in Pali, it is usually referred to as the *Mahāyāna Nirvana Sūtra*.

332 *Dharma* is a Sanskrit word often means “law” or “method.” For Buddhists, it means the “teaching of the Buddha.”

333 *Śramaṇa* is a pre-Buddhist word that was used to denote a group of mendicant monks who opposed brahmanic rituals and focused instead to the cultivation of self.

334 *Sutra of Forty-two Sections*, Section # 1. Note that the version used in this manuscript is slightly different from the common version.

335 *Sutra of Forty-two Sections*, Section # 4.

336 The text says that the Buddha was buried at “Tiêu-tây-tưởng-tích-lang-khiêu.” According to the Buddhist tradition, the Buddha passed on to nirvana in the ancient city of Kuśināra or Kuśinagara, then he was cremated and his relics were venerated in different stupas all over South Asia.
Article 2

On the Spread of Buddhism to China

The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar: Buddhism was founded by Śākyamuni in the west of China. How did Buddhism come to the east?

The Eastern Scholar replies: Buddhism existed in India for more than a thousand years and did not come to China until the reign of Han Mingdi [58-75 CE]. The History of Eastern Han recorded the event as follows:

In the ăt-siu year, the eighth year of Yongping era [64 CE], the king heard that there was a deity in the western region named Buddha. Therefore, he sent envoys to Tianzhu (India) to inquire about the religion and to bring back its scriptures and monks {the monks of this religion, also called śramana, were supposed to be otherworldly}. That is how his sect appeared and his images were created in China. [Vietnamese translation follows].

337 This may be another name of the Hou Hanshu (後 漢 書, Book of the Later Han) which recorded the events of the Han dynasty from Han Guangwu [r. 25-57 CE] onward.

338 This phrase seems to be an addition to the text; it is not found in Adriano’s version of the quotation (See Opusculum, p. 85; Dror, p. 187).

339 This can also be found in Mouzi Lihuo lun, a Buddhist apologetic of the third century CE. See John Keenan, trans., How Master Mou Removes Our Doubts (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1994), pp. 123-24.
The commentator, Fan Shiyong⁴⁰ reports that “during the Yongping era, the king sent envoys to Tianzhu (India) to obtain the Sutra of Forty-two Sections; he stored it in at the stone palace Lantai, and he erected statues of Buddha at Qingliang tower and Xianjie mausoleum.”

[The preface of] Sutra of Forty-two Sections mentions:

During the Yongping era, because Han Mingdi had a dream about a golden figure [of a man], he knew that the way of the Buddha was coming to the east. Consequently, he sent Cai Yin and Qin Jing to the west to meet the two Indian monks Kaśyapa-matanga and Dharmarakṣa. They used a white horse to carry the Sanskrit sutras written on leaves to the capital Luoyang, then [the monks] translated this sutra from Sanskrit into Chinese, and published it for all to learn its teachings.⁴¹ [Vietnamese translation follows] {p. 149 (239)}

The Western Scholar asks: Since the Tianzhu kingdom (India) in the Western region was far away from China, how did Emperor Han Mingdi know that Buddha lived there?

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³⁴⁰ The author of the General Discussion (Tông Luận), a book on history in the Ming dynasty which are quoted by the author of this text and also by Adriano di Santa Thecla.

³⁴¹ The legendary dream of Han Mingdi was used by many Chinese sources to date the beginning of Chinese Buddhism; for example, Mouzi Lihuo lun section 21, Hou Hanshu section 86, Gaoseng zhuan, etc. The earliest versions do not mention the name of the monks, which led scholars to propose that this sutra was a later production compiled in the fourth or fifth centuries. See Kenneth Ch’en, Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, University Press, 1964), pp. 29-36; Tsukamoro Zenryu, A History of Early Chinese Buddhism from Its Introduction to the Death of Hui-yüan, trans. Leon Hurvitz (Tokyo: Koshanda, 1985), Vol. 1, pp. 41-50.
The Eastern Scholar replies: During the reign of Han Wudi [r. 140-87 BCE], China developed trading and diplomatic relationships with many kingdoms in its western region, so there were already routes to that region. Ban Gu, who wrote History of the Han Dynasty, recorded:

In the bính-dân year, the second year of Yuanding era [115 BCE], [the Han envoy] Zhang Qian went on a diplomatic mission to the kingdom of Bactria (Ô Tôn). From that time on, communications took place between the western region and China. In the kỷ-mạnh year, the third year of the [Taichu] reign [102 BCE], after [the diplomatic mission to] the kingdom of Fernaga (Đại Uyên), Han envoys who came to the western region were able to hold office there.

From that time onward, the Han court knew about the affairs of India and other kingdoms in the western region. Therefore, it is not unusual that Han Mingdi heard about a deity of the Western region called Buddha.

The Western Scholar asks again: How have people responded to Buddhism since the time that Han Mingdi brought Buddhism to China?

The Eastern Scholar replies: When Han Mingdi first brought Buddhism to China, there were many high officials who wanted to please the emperor by worshipping the Buddha, including the emperor’s brother Chu Wangying. The author of History of the Han
Dynasty comments: “Among the royal household and the nobles, Chu Wangying is most fond of this religion.” Since members of the royal household and the nobles worshipped the Buddha, the common people imitated them, and thus Buddhist temples and shrines were erected everywhere. Then in the reign of Han Lingdi [r. 168-189 CE], the emperor began to build a temple inside the royal palace to worship the Buddha.  

From the time of the Wei and Jin dynasties onward, the worship of Buddha proliferated day by day. The number of Buddhist and Daoist monks and nuns increased daily. [During the Three Kingdom era] Wei Wendi [r. 220-226] often went to Buddhist temples to hear dharma talks, and he adapted to a vegetarian lifestyle. Then, during the period of Northern and Southern kingdoms [420-589], the empress dowager of Northern Wei built the Yongning temple and a stupa that was 900 cubits high. Monks were assigned at a thousand temples. Buddhism could not enjoy any better time than during the period of the Northern Wei dynasty [386-534]. [In the South] King Liang Wudi [r. 502-549] was more devoted to Buddhism. In the first year of Datong [527], he went to Tongtai temple, took off his royal robe, put on the robe of a monk and recited the Nirvana sutra for the people. He sold himself into service of the temple three times, and his subordinates had to pay a ransom to get him back each time. In the first year of the Dadong [great convergence] era [535] he went to Tongtai temple again, to preach Three Mental Faculties Sutra (Tam Tự Kinh). On that night, a fire came down

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342 Adriano attributes this information to Fan Shiyong. See Opusculum, p. 86 (Dror’s translation, p. 189).

343 Literally, 90 trượng. A trượng is 10 thước, roughly about 10 cubits (4.0-5.0m). Since there was no standard measurement, the length varied from place to place.
from heaven and burned down the stupa at the temple. King Liang Wudi commented: “The fire disaster was caused by the evil spirit.” Then he rebuilt a twelve-storied stupa.

Then, in the Tang dynasty, Emperor Gaozu [r. 618-626] disliked the fact that Buddhist and Taoist monks were uninvolved in civil service. He listened to the official Fu Yi who requested the suppression of Buddhism. Emperor Gaozu issued an imperial edict to evict Buddhist and Taoist monks and nuns from their temples. At the time 100,000 Buddhist monks and nuns were laicized. However, his son Emperor Taizong [r. 627-649] went back to build stupas to venerate the Buddha. His grandson Gaozong [r. 650-683] often visited the Buddhist temples to offer incense. During the reign of Xianzong [r. 806-820], the Buddha’s finger relic was carried to China to be worshipped in Buddhist temples. [As it is recorded,] in the first month of the kỷ-hợi year, the fourteenth year of his reign, [819], the royal envoy carried the relic to the capital for veneration. In the second month, the relic was carried around to other temples.

Following the Tang dynasty were the Five Periods of the Later Liang, Later Tang, Later Jin, Later Han, and Later Zhou dynasties; then came the dynasties of Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing. In those Chinese dynasties, some emperors favored

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344 Fu Yi (譯 奕) (555-639) was a Daoist scholar and a grand astrologer (Taishiling, the officer in charge of making the calendar) under Emperor Tang Gaozu. As one of the most determined adversaries of Buddhism, in 621 he presented a memorial to the emperor insisting that the religion should be banned. He cited Buddhism’s tenets of celibacy and withdrawal from worldly duties, including subjection to civil authority, as threats to Chinese social stability. His view prevailed with the emperor, who restricted the number of persons allowed to become Buddhist monks.

345 The manuscript has “fourth year.” However, this would be the year dinh-hợi not kỷ-hợi as given in the text. The scribe probably left out the word “thập” (十 ten) by mistake. See also the same quotation in Article 3.
Buddhism and other emperors detested it. However, no one strived to suppress Buddhism completely; that is why Buddhism spread everywhere.

[Buddhism in Annam]

The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar: By which king of Annam was Buddhism propagated throughout the country as we see it today?

The Eastern Scholar replies: In our country Annam, before the Lý dynasty, the mother of King Lý Thái Tông, whose surname was Phạm, visited Đồng Tiêu temple on Mount Tiêu in Tiêu Sơn ward, An Phong district. After the visit, she conceived and gave birth to a son on the twenty-second day of the second month in the giáp-tuất year, the fifth year of Thái bình era of the Đinh dynasty [974]. When the boy was three years old, he was adopted by Lý Dổ Văn and was given the name Lý Công Uẩn. When he grew up, he served under the court of King Lê Thái Tổ (Lê Đại Hành) [r. 981-1006], and then King Lê Trung Tông [r. 1005], who was murdered by his brother [Lê] Ngọa Triệu [r. 1005-1009]. When King Ngọa Triệu died, the court officials elected Lý Công Uẩn to be the king.347 He changed the dynastic name to Lý, and moved the capital to Đại La citadel, which is the present capital. Inside the capital, he built the Hưng Thiên royal temple; outside the capital, he built Thăng Nghiêm temple and other regional temples. {p. 153}

346 According to the Toàn Thư, bản ký, II: 1a, the person name was Lý Khánh Văn.

He gave money to temples everywhere to cast bells and carve Buddha statues; he also
selected and ordained 1,000 monks in the capital. 348

His grandson, King Thánh Tông [r. 1054-1072], built the Báo Thiên stupa that
was 12 stories and 300 cubits high. 349 King Lý Nhân Tông [r. 1072-1127] built a stupa at
Lâm Sơn temple, and he traveled everywhere to build Buddhist temples and stupas. 350 In
[the history of] Annam, the Lý kings were most devoted to Buddhism. Lý Huệ Tông [r.
1210-1224], who had no son, chose his daughter to be Queen Lý Chiêu Hoàng [r. 1224-
1225] and resigned from the throne to be a Buddhist monk. Later he was killed by Trần
Thủ Độ. 351 When Queen Chiêu Hoàng passed on the throne to her husband, a man from
the Trần family, then the Lý lost their dynastic rule.

More Buddhist temples were built under the Trần dynasty. Whenever there was a
disaster or plague, a temple was built for people to worship. King Trần Anh Tông [r.
1293-1314] published the Buddhist books Phật Giáo Pháp Sự, Đạo Trường Tân Văn,
Công Văn Cách Thức 352 and also issued guidelines for each village to build a temple.

From that time onward, Buddhist followers multiplied. People imitated one another in
devotion, praying for children, honors and offices; making reparation for ancestors;


349 This stupa, named Đại Thánh Tự Thiên or Bảo Thánh Tự Thiên, was built in 1057. See Toàn Thư, bản


351 The name is misspelled as Trần Thúc Đại in the manuscript. See Toàn Thư, bản ký, IV: 31b-34b (2004,
Vol. 1: 362-364.)

352 In 1290, the king had these books printed and distributed in the country. See Toàn Thư, bản ký, VI: 8a
(2004, Vol. 2: 82). I am uncertain whether Phật Giáo Pháp Sự Đạo Trường Tân Văn is one book or two
books.
reciting sutras; doing penance. Monks and nuns crowded the temples, {p. 154 (244)} but were ignorant of their doctrines. They only knew how to recite the mantra nam mô, praying for blessings to come. They strived to solicit donations, and produced works of merit to entice people. Everything I have told you can be found in the History of the Great Viet [Đại Việt Sử Ký].
Article 3

On the Confucian Evaluation of Buddhism

The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar: How do Confucian scholars value Buddhism?

The Eastern Scholar replies: Confucian scholars in general belittle and vilify Buddhism. First of all, they say: “Buddhism teaches a strange doctrine;” then, “[the Buddha] was of barbarian origin, he did not recognize the righteous duties between ruler and subject and the relationship between father and son.”\footnote{These lines are from Han Yu’s famous memorial against Buddhism, as we will read later.} They call Buddhism “the heterodox teachings of emptiness (hư vô) and quiescence (tích diệt).”\footnote{This sentence is from the preface of Zhu Xi’s commentary on the Great Learning, as we will read later.} They say: “[Buddhism] is not the holy way, but the wicked way, an evil in the world.” They reproach Han Mingdi for bringing Buddhism to China, saying: “Alas! The sin of Mingdi rises up to the heaven.” You, Western scholar, should read the comments of some great scholars to understand the Confucian attitude toward Buddhism.

[The first account is] Fu Yi’s memorial at the time of Tang Gaozu: In the bính-tuất year, the ninth year of his majesty’s reign [621], the grand astrologer Fu Yi presented a memorial requesting the proscription of Buddhism, saying:

The Buddha lived in the West, a land far away where he preached his strange doctrine. (p. 155 (245)) When the barbarian scriptures were
translated into Chinese, people were led to a libertine and erroneous lifestyle that caused them to be disloyal to their ruler and unfilial to their parents. Buddhists showed no reverence to kings and parents with their shaved heads; they led an idle and unproductive life; they evaded tax payment. They deceived people with the doctrine of three hells and six ways of reincarnation, causing people to try to earn merits in a false way. They caused harm to the true way. Oh, what a pity! [Vietnamese translation follows.]

Prior to Buddhism’s arrival during the Han dynasty, kings were enlightened and subjects were righteous, and the dynasties lasted for long periods of time. Since the worship of this alien deity, the Western barbarians invaded China; kings were weak and subjects were toady, thus the governance declined, and the dynasties were shortened. The histories of Liang Wudi and Qi Xiang were clear examples of such fates. Nowadays, in the empire the number of monks and nuns exceeds a hundred thousand. I petition his majesty to pair them off to produce male and female offspring. It takes ten years for these children to grow up and twelve years to educate them; then there will be {p. 156 (246)} enough soldiers. [Vietnamese translation follows.]

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Since the emperor also disliked the monks and priests, who dodged public service and refused to obey the imperial laws and orders, as affirmed by Fu Yi, the emperor issued an edict ordering the officials in charge to expel the monks, nuns and priests from monasteries across the country. [Vietnamese translation follows.]

Next, under the Emperor Tang Xianzong, the official Han Yu\textsuperscript{356} made a petition to the emperor [against Buddhism]. According to the story, in the first month of the kỷ-hợi year, the fourteenth year of his majesty’s reign [819], the royal envoy carried a relic of the Buddha to the capital for veneration. In the second (p. 157 (247)) month, the relic was carried around to other temples. Han Yu made a petition saying:

Buddhism is only a worship system of the barbarians. From the time of the Yellow Emperor to the time of emperors Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu, everyone enjoyed longevity, every household was at peace; at that time, Buddhism had not yet appeared. [Vietnamese translation follows.]

Buddhism first entered China at the time of Han Mingdi. From that time on, chaos and rebellions occurred frequently, dynasties were unstable. From the time of the [dynasties] Song, Qi, Liang, Chen, and Northern Wei onward, each dynasty was more seriously devoted to Buddhism than the previous, and yet their reigns were short each time. [Vietnamese translation follows.] Only Liang Wudi had a long reign, 48 years altogether. The emperor was devoted to Buddhism – three times he sold

\textsuperscript{356} Han Yu (韓 愈, 768-824) was a high official in the Tang dynasty. A Confucian reformer, he opposed the advancement of Daoism and Buddhism at the court. In 819 he made a petition to emperor Tang Xianzong, bidding him not to venerate the relic of the Buddha’s finger bone.
himself into servanthood at a Buddhist temple. Still, later he was oppressed by Hou Jing (p. 158 (248)) and died of hunger at Tai city, and his country was lost. He worshipped the Buddha in hope of blessings, and yet what he got was misfortune. Thus one can see that the Buddha was not good enough to believe in. [Vietnamese translation follows.] The Buddha was of barbarian origin, he did not recognize the righteous duties between ruler and subject and the relationship between father and son…. Therefore, I [Han Yu] petition your majesty to turn the bones of the Buddha over to the official in charge to destroy them by fire and water, in order to cut off the root of the error and dispel the confusion of the people, thus preventing the misbeliefs of later generations. [Vietnamese translation follows.]

In the time of Emperor Song Xiaozong [r. 1163-1189], Master Zhu [Xi] wrote in the preface to his commentary on the Great Learning: The heterodox teachings of emptiness [of Daoism] and quiescence [of Buddhism] are loftier than the great learning, yet they are not true teachings. They aim at devising ways of trickery to achieve fame and

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357 The author omits a long argument of Han Yu in this quotation.

358 Again, here are only excerpts and paraphrase, for a full text and English translation, see De Groot, Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China, Vol. 1: 54ff.

359 This is known as Great Learning: Chapters and Verses (Daxue zhangju).

360 This is the source of the phrase “đi đoạn hư vô tịch chi giáo” [the heterodox teachings of emptiness and quiescence] that is often repeated in this text.
fortune. [Vietnamese translation follows]. This leads to the unfortunate consequence that the noble person is unable to hear the basic teachings of the great learning, and the petty man is unable to benefit from the favors of a good rule. As a result, they all have become blind and trapped; trickery becomes an incurable disease. Therefore, during the Five Periods [following the Tang dynasty], the decline resulted in extreme corruption and chaos. [Vietnamese translation follows].

During the Song dynasty, Master Cheng, Master Qiu of Mount Qiong, Master Jin of Mount Ren, Master Chen of Xin’an and many other Confucian scholars, all belittled and vilified Buddhism. In the time of Ming Taizu [r. 1368-1398], the official Fan Shiyong, the composer of General Discussion, also criticized [p. 160 (250)] Buddhism as being contrary to reason (phi lý).

[Vietnamese Confucian View of Buddhism]

In History of the Great Viet, during the Hồng thuận reign of king Lê Tương Đức [r. 1509-1516], the official Vũ Quỳnh wrote an essay, commenting that:

Generally speaking, although the errors of the Lý and Trần dynasties [led to their downfalls] came from the breakdown of social relations,361 the true cause was their embracing heterodoxy. [Vietnamese translation follows].

361 Literally, “the disorder of [three] bonds and [five] constant virtues.” This refers to the practice of endogamy among the Lý and Trần nobility.
They took money from the royal treasury to make Buddha statues; copper from the royal storehouse to cast temple bells; paper from the royal office to write Buddhist sutras. The Lý and Trần kings worshipped Buddha diligently; and yet when descendants of the Lý were killed by the wicked and ferocious Trần Thủ Đarcy (Dộ),\(^\text{362}\) the Buddha was unable to save them. [Vietnamese translation follows]. The whole Trần clan was devoted to Buddhism: from their kings came abbots; from royal harem came nuns; from the noble houses came monks; and yet when descendants of the Trần were killed by the deceitful Hồ Quý Lý {p. 161 (251)}, the Buddha was unable to save them. [Vietnamese translation follows]. Therefore, how does the worship of Buddha benefit anyone at all? [Vietnamese translation follows].

**The Western Scholar comments:** The Confucian scholars belittled and vilified Buddhism only after the Tang dynasty. Before the Tang period, none of the Confucian scholars was critical of Buddhism. Therefore, it seems that before the Tang period, the Confucian scholars were probably fond of that religion, and they worshipped the Buddha like any other deity, because Confucianism also teaches of spirit worship.

**The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar:** Why could the Confucian scholars, who worked to belittle and vilify Buddhism, not eradicate it? On the contrary, it gains

\(^{362}\) Scribal error, the name should be “Trần Thủ Đở”.

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more and more followers each day. From the highest to the lowest levels [of society], many have followed Buddhism. Even the learned Confucians and the teachers of Confucianism worship the Buddha like everyone else!

The Eastern Scholar replies: Because the commoners are uneducated and cannot think critically, and because the Confucian scholars are mesmerized by Buddhism, people from the highest to the lowest levels [of society] have fallen victim to the deception and seduction of Buddhism with its heterodox teachings.

The Western Scholar says: However many Confucian scholars have belittled and vilified Buddhism; they can neither destroy it nor prevent people from following it. The reason is that in terms of rituals and worship, Buddhism and Confucianism are alike: both take mortals to be gods and worship them. Only if Confucian scholars do not worship any deified mortal can they admonish Buddhists not to worship the Buddha. If they also worship spirits who are deified mortals, how can they tell Buddhists to refrain from worshipping their deity? They must first worship the great Lord who creates heaven, earth, and everything, and follow his commandments. Only then can they in turn admonish the Buddhists to forsake their way. Buddhism is contrary to the orthodox way — the way everyone must believe and follow, the way which teaches everyone to worship and love {p. 163 (253)} only the true Lord of heaven and earth. Since the
Confucian scholars do not hold such a belief, they cannot persuade people to forsake Buddhism or weaken it in this country.
Article 4

On the Buddhist Story of Creation in Nine Aeons

The Western Scholar says: I have heard about the Buddhist story of creation in nine aeons. Thus I ask you: What is the story of the nine aeons all about?

The Eastern Scholar says: The story about creation in nine aeons is hard to understand and to listen to. However, I will tell you about it as expounded in Buddhist books.

About the first aeon, it is said: Before anything existed, a drop of dew appeared from emptiness. This is Buddha nature. It divided into three parts: the first was a green and formed the heaven; the second part, yellow, formed the earth; and the third part, white, formed human beings. These parts then came together as one and it was called the Primordial Source. The three parts of the one dew condensed into something resembling a stone egg. It broke into four pieces: the first became heaven, the second became the earth, the third became the father, and the fourth became the mother. The Primordial Source flowed in four directions to create heaven and earth.

See also Opusculum, Chapter 5, article 3.

Although this creation account purports to be Buddhist, its contents are not really Buddhist, except for a small reference to the birth of Śākyamuni Buddha in the seventh age. The rest of the account is a mixture of Chinese mythology and Taoist sources.

Literally “kiế” or “kiế ba” from the Sanskrit kalpa, a word meaning aeon.

According to Santa Thecla, the sources of this account are the books Esoteric Branches (Bí Chí) and Lamp of the Mind (Tâm Đăng). The story given here is not coherent because it leaves out too many details. For a fuller account, see Opusculum, pp. 89-95 (trans. pp. 191-202).

According to Dror this should be understood as “a drop pregnant with emptiness.” A Study of Religion, p. 192, n. 64.
Buddha together with Tỳ lô,\textsuperscript{368} came out of the Primordial Source before heaven and earth. Then the primordial source formed another source called Mộc Mủi.\textsuperscript{369} It is composed of clear and turbid essence and lacks intelligent nature. At that time, the sky was not closed and the earth was not condensed. A great power from the void energy created the Buddha and formed heaven, earth, and human beings. All things thus came out of emptiness from \textit{Qian}. Heaven was formed from the one energy, called Buddha nature. And so it is said: “Conditioned by one energy, Buddha nature was transformed into heaven and earth.”

About the second aeon, it is said: There was a couple named Tu Là of Heaven\textsuperscript{370} and Ma Ha of Earth.\textsuperscript{371} He made ten pillars out of his ten bones, and she fashioned nine beams out of the nine sections of her intestine. In this manner the two of them created heaven and earth. And so it is said: “Ma Ha of Earth uses her body to support heaven and; from these two persons \textit{Qian} and \textit{Kun} (or heaven and earth),\textsuperscript{372} [day and night, water

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Lô or Tỳ lô}, is defined in de Rhodes’ Annamite-Portuguese-Latin dictionary (1651) as “the second stage of human life when the embryo was formed; this stage is called by idolators the second stage of human life, or as they say, \textit{kiếp} (aeon).” Dror suggests that Tỳ lô is short for Tỳ lô Giá Na or Vairocana, the Buddha Supreme and Eternal. This cosmic Buddha is venerated in Mahayana Buddhism as an eternal being, the source and originator of all things. \textit{A Study of Religion}, pp. 192-193, n. 59.

\item \textit{Mộc Mủi}, also spelt as Mộc Môi or Mộc Мос, is mentioned by Alexandre de Rhodes in his catechism. In his dictionary de Rhodes defines it as “the created body when the rational soul is first infused as spoken by some idolatrous sect.” The 1838 Tabert’s Dictionarium Annamitico-Latinum, also has a similar definition: “\textit{organizatum corpus cum primum anima infunditur}.”

\item Tu Là might be Asura, a celestial titan of Indo-Buddhist tradition.

\item Ma Ha is a transphonetic of a Sanskrit term meaning “greatness.” Perhaps here the myth juxtaposes the powers of the spirits of heaven and earth to create the physical forms.

\item Being the first two hexagrams, they often are used together to denote the combination of yang and yin, or heaven and earth.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
and fire] the Three Powers, the Four Forms, the sun and the moon, and the Eight Trigrams are formed."

About the third aeon, it is said: Suddenly, there were Five Ministers. The first, called the Green Minister of Great Change (taiyi), was 150 cubits tall; the second, Red Minister of Great Beginning (taichu), was 130 cubits tall; the third, White Minister of Great Origin (taishi), was 110 cubits tall; the fourth, Black Minister of Great Element (taisu), was 150 cubits tall; and the fifth, Yellow Minister of Great Polarity (taiji), was 100 cubits tall. [And so it is said that] these five ministers transformed the five colors [to make heaven and earth]. It is also said: “there were 36 layers of heaven and 30 layers of earth and everything evolved from them.”

About the fourth aeon, it is said: Suddenly there was primordial man named Pangu who was 50 cubits tall with a human body and a dragon head. At that time the

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373 This phrase is omitted in this text but it is present in Lamp of the Mind and quoted in Opusculum (p. 90).

374 Tam Tài (tam tài, san cai): the three powers of heaven, earth, and human being.

375 Tứ Tự (tứ tự, si xiang): the subdivision of yin and yang into greater and lesser yin and greater and lesser yang.

376 See also Opusculum, p. 90 (trans. p. 193).

377 In Opusculum, these are five brothers (p. 91).

378 Or “15 trượng.” A trượng is 10 thước, roughly about 10 cubits (4.0-6.0 m). Since there was no standard measurement, the length varied from place to place.

379 Manuscript has “Đại Thủy.” The characters for Thái (tài) and Đại (đại) are often mixed up.

380 These five names are cosmological terms used in Daoism. Among the five, Thái cực (tài cực, taiji) is considered the Absolute, the primary cosmological principle.

381 This quotation apparently was shortened. Opusculum (p. 91) gives the full quotation.

382 See also Book 1, Article 2 about Pangu.
clear and the turbid energies were not yet separated but mixed in chaos. Pangu
harmonized heaven and earth by separating the clear energy to make heaven and turbid
energy to make the earth. Everything came out of his body. Opening his eyes, he made
day; closing them, he made night. His left eye was turned into the sun; his right eye into
the moon. At the time of creation, there was darkness and not yet light. Each day the
heaven rose up one *trường* (10 cubits) and the earth grew thick by one layer each day.
Since Pangu was big and lived for a thousand years, the heaven was pushed higher and
the earth was made thicker to create space [for the world]. {p. 166 (256)}

About the fifth aeon, it is said: In this age there were three leaders, named
Heavenly August, Earthly August, and Human August. Heavenly August was 300
cubits tall and had 12 heads and 12 siblings; Earthly August was 150 cubits tall and had
11 heads and 11 siblings; Human August was 100 cubits tall and had 9 heads and 9
siblings. They also say: “Heavenly August created the twelve earthly branches and the
ten heavenly stems; Earthly August separated days and nights; and Human August
brought the mountains and streams into their forms.”

About the sixth aeon, it is said: During this age, the sky was not yet complete. A
woman named Nüwa used five cubits of stone to mend the sky. She formed the shape

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383 This is an oblique reference to the three major clans, or the Three August Ones (*Tam Hoàng*), which
ruled China in antiquity.

384 The twelve earthly branches are: *tí, sửu, dān, mǎo, thin, tị, ngo, mùi, thân, dấu, tuấ, hợi*. Ten heavenly
stems are: *giáp, át, bính, đinh, mật, kỉ, canh, tân, nhâm, quý*.

385 I am uncertain of the last phrase.

386 Nũ Oa (女媧, Nüwa), the mythical sister or wife of Fuxi; she allegedly was involved with the creation
of the sky.
of heaven to last forever, and it never needs to stretch again. There were also three persons in this age — Ma Ha, Đại Ngộ Chân Trí, and Ban Nhược — who took 500 catties of gold and 500 catties of copper to form the sun, and 500 catties of silver to form the moon. Inside the sun there was a three-legged heron; inside the moon were a rabbit and the palace of the Queen Mother [of the West] — the mother of the immortals. They also say that five emperors were born during this age. They are Yuanshi tianzun, Xuhuang dadao, Jade Emperor, Taishang laojun, and Guyun tianshi.

387 According to Dror, the names are slightly different: Ma Ha Đại Ngộ [Great Awakening], Chân Trí [Genuine Mind] and Ban Nhược or Bát Nhã [Prajna, Wisdom]. See Dror, A Study of Religion, p.198 nn. 100-101.

388 Literally, a cân which is about 600 grams.

389 Vương Mẫu or Tây Vương Mẫu (西 王 母, Xi Wangmu), often translated as “Queen Mother of the West” is a goddess who is associated with immortality.

390 Nguyên Thi Thiên Tôn (元 始 天 尊, Yuanshi tianzun) [Celestial King of the Primordial Beginning] is one of the three supreme gods of Daoism.

391 Not much is known about the deity Hư Hoàng Đại Đạo (虛 皇 大 道, Xuhuang daidao) [Great Way of the King of Emptiness].

392 Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế (玉 皇 大 上 帝, Yuhuang shangdi) [Jade Emperor the Supreme Lord] is the most popular and highest god of the celestial court in Chinese mythology.

393 Thái Thượng Lão Quân (太 上 老 君, Taishang laojun) [Great Supreme Lord Lao] is the title conferred on Laozi by Emperor Song Zhenzong [r. 1023-1064]. Laozi was turned into a Daoist god in the Song dynasty. He is discussed in Book 2, Article 1.

394 Cù Vân Thiên Sư (瞿 雲 天 師, Quyun tianshi) [Cù Vân the Celestial Master]. Olga Dror suggests that Vân (雲) might be a substitute for Đàm (曇) in the word Cù Đàm (瞿 曇) which is a transliteration of the Buddha’s family name Gautama. A Study of Religion, p. 197, n. 98.
About the seventh aeon, it is said: the Buddha once resided in the realm of Song Lâm. On the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the quý-sửu year, the Tathāgata left heaven and descended to the earth. Having met Yama in the southern region of the world, he was led into the womb of Lady Māyādevī. Conceived by her, he became the son of Śuddhodana. He was born at the dân hour [3-5 am], on the fifth watch of the eighth day of the fourth month in the giáp-dân year. Immediately after his birth, the Tathāgata took seven steps in each of the four directions, and lotus flowers sprouted in his footprints. He pointed his left hand at the heaven and his right hand at the earth. A tree of immortality sprang forth from heaven, and his mother Lady Māyādevī took its leaves and mixed them with water to wash herself and her baby. Another account says: At noon on the eighth day of the fourth month in the giáp-dân year, as Lady Māyādevī was in labor, nine dragons sprouted water to bathe her, and she gave birth to the prince, and his father named him Siddhārtha.

About the eighth aeon, it is said: There was a Buddha called Đại Ngộ Chân Trí who helped sentient beings. When Śākyamuni Buddha moved from the Heaven to the black mountain Vulture Peak (Linh Thứu), his disciples, the monks Chân Trí and Ban Nhựt, caught three carps that were eating the grain. They brought them to

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395 Tathāgata or Như Lai means “one who had come and had gone [to the nirvana].” This is one of the epithets the Buddha applied to himself and other buddhas.

396 Yama or Diêm Vương (閻王, Yanwang) is the god of the dead of the Buddhist pantheon, appropriated from earlier Brahmanic tradition.


398 Apparently there are two accounts of the birth of Buddha retold here, for the times of birth are different. In the first account, he was born in the early morning; in the second account, at noon.
Śākyamuni Buddha, who taught people that […] 399 In that age, there were three ministers who governed the realms of heaven, earth, and humans. The first was Thổ Công, who governed the world of heaven; the second was Thổ […], 400 who governed the world of earth; and the third was Kiên Lao, 401 who governed the world of humans.

On the ninth aeon, it is said: Spontaneously, out of nothingness there came both a father [sky] and a mother [earth], out of the yin and yang energies. When the two energies met, the father [sky] looked down to see the mother [earth], and she looked up to see him. From the empty nature (tính không) and out of emptiness, Tịnh Lồ, who also is called Ban Nhưrotch, was born. 402

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399 The story ends abruptly in the manuscript. Opusculum (pp. 93-94) tells the complete story as follows: “Thích Ca had compassion on people who were without means to sustain a long life. Because of this, his three servants were turned into three kinds of fish, three rivers, and five species of fruit, birds, and animals. Đại Ngộ Chân Trí and Ban Nhưrotch, who led solitary lives near the stream called Bàn Cổ, saw three carps that were eating crops and shaking down grain, and Chân Trí took them and brought them to Thích Ca, who by chance was present there. Thích Ca ordered King Thần Nông to cultivate the fields, to plant rice, to feed these fish, and to gather crops and winnow grain to feed people, and to pass on to subsequent generations the arts of cultivating fields, gathering harvests, and winnowing grain for their sustenance.” This account is taken from the first chapter of Lamp of the Mind.

400 The manuscript misses a word here.

401 I have not been able to identify this figure.

402 According Opusculum (p. 93), this reference is from Esoteric Branches (Bí Chi).
Article 5

On the True Meaning of the Nine Aeons

The Western Scholar says: Everything you, Eastern Scholar, have told me about the Buddhist account of the nine aeons are lies and errors. Their words are crafty and obscure, and their content is utterly empty and meaningless. Why do people believe in such a strange and odd account propagated by the Buddhists? Anyone who uses his mind to analyze will not accept the story, but rather will ridicule it {p. 169 (259)}. First, how can it be reasonable to believe the Buddhist teaching, that “Śākyamuni created heaven, earth, human beings and everything”? For Śākyamuni was born only in the seventh or eighth age,\(^{403}\) and the heaven, earth and everything else had already existed in the previous ages. How can he create heaven, earth and everything? Moreover, why were heaven and earth created incomplete in the first age, so that in the second age Tu Là of Heaven and Ma Ha of Earth had to make pillars and beams to support the heaven? And in the third age, the five ministers also created heaven and earth. And in the fifth age, Pangu separated the heaven from the earth, and day by day the heaven was raised up and the earth was pressed down. And in the sixth age, Nügua took five pieces of stone to mend the sky, then two or three persons cast the sun and moon [out of precious metals].

\(^{403}\) Adriano di Santa Thecla reports that according to Lamp of the Mind, Śākyamuni was born in the seventh age, but according to Esoteric Branches, in the eighth age.
Who would listen to such strange tales? Or is it possible that Buddhism says one thing and means another?\footnote{Adriano di Santa Thecla, quoting Francisco Gil de Federich (a Dominican missionary in Tonkin who died as a martyr in 1745), makes the following remark: “[From his words], it seems to me that the aeons (kiểp) that they describe and all these kings are a transformation of an idol into them [into epochs and kings], since they talk about one idol (Phật), and the effort is to explain the origin of Thích Ca; then the things that happen in reality in the development of the body during different months they explain with the help of these nine kiểp; so Thích Ca in the first kiểp and similarly in the second was what they describe here.” \textit{Opusculum}, p. 96 (trans. p. 202).}

The Eastern Scholar says: You are right. The Buddhist stories about the nine aeons are different from one another, for there are two teachings of Buddhism: one is external, the other is internal.\footnote{This possibly refers to Mật tông (密宗, Mizong), the esoteric Buddhism which was popular in Vietnam besides the Zen and Pure Land sects. Adriano offers another explanation: “[The doctrine which Thích Ca] as a teacher passed on to his disciples is two-fold: one part of it is external, another is internal…. If, in the external doctrine, many things appear interwoven in stories and fables, in the internal doctrine they have their real appearance. Thích Ca passed along the external doctrine and made it known to everybody; the internal doctrine, however, he shared with one, or in any case with a few well-tested and faithful students, and strictly ordered them to keep it in secret.” \textit{Opusculum}, p. 89 (trans. p. 191).} These two groups teach the same doctrines, but the meanings are different. Buddhism has a book named “Secret Transmission” that\footnote{Literally \textit{đạo sĩ} (道士) means “religious scholar.” However, \textit{đạo sĩ} is also a compound noun to denote Daoist priest or monk. This use of the word here in the Buddhist context might mean that the alleged “Buddhist” writings were of Daoist origin.} the priests\footnote{Vietnamese translation follows.} have tried to keep from the public to prevent people from knowing the true meaning of the Buddhist teachings. These priests tell one another to keep this book secret, as they often say: “Keep the secret, keep the secret that one must not reveal and pass on, even for a thousand measures of gold.” [Vietnamese translation follows.]

Therefore, in the accounts of the nine aeons I have told earlier, everything in those stories has a true meaning. First, you must know that everything in the nine stories refers to the
act of intercourse that gave birth to humans. The Buddhist account intends to speak of
the three persons: father, mother, and child. They also refer to the bodily parts of these
three persons.

Therefore, the [true] meaning of the first aeon is about the time when Śākyamuni
was conceived in his mother’s womb. Before the conception of a child, there is no
mother and father. When a child is conceived, then there are the father, the mother, and
the child; [these three are] symbolized by heaven, earth, and human beings: heaven is the
father, earth is the mother, and man is the child. Hence [they say] when Śākyamuni was
conceived in his mother’s womb, he created heaven, earth, and man; that means from that
time on, there were his father, his mother, and himself. The unintelligent and (p. 171
(261)) frightened Mực Mủi refers to Śākyamuni in his mother’s womb.

The true meaning of the second aeon refers to the time of his birth, after nine
months and ten days in his mother’s womb. At that time Śākyamuni’s parents truly
became father and mother.

The true meaning of the third aeon refers to the growth of the five organs inside
Śākyamuni’s body. The five organs are liver, heart, lung, kidney, and spleen, symbolized
by the five colors of green, red, white, black, and yellow [of the ministers].

The true meaning of the fourth aeon refers to [the development of] Śākyamuni in
the womb: the five-month fetus is symbolized by the 5-truông (50 cubits) body; the
turbidity refers to the not-yet developed parts of the body.

The true meaning of the fifth aeon refers to the fact that when Śākyamuni was
born, his father was 30 years and 12 months old, so the Heavenly King was 30-truông

546
tall and had 12 heads; his mother was 15 years and 11 months old, so the Earthly King was 15-trueong tall and had 11 heads; Śākyamuni was in his mother’s womb for 9 months and 10 days, so the Human King was 10-trueong tall and had 9 heads.\textsuperscript{407}

The true meaning of the sixth aeon refers to [the relationship between the mother and the fetus]. When Śākyamuni’s mother conceived him in her womb, she used the five elements of her five internal organs to nourish him, and when she gave birth to him she became his mother forever \{p. 172 (262)\}; from this time onward, her status as his mother can never be taken away.

The true meaning of the seventh aeon refers to the gestation of Śākyamuni in his mother’s womb for nine months before birth. Other stories are fanciful tales to make people respect Śākyamuni and honor him as one who came from heaven.

The true meaning of the eighth aeon refers to the fact that [during this time] Śākyamuni lived by his mother’s blood just like anyone else. The story of how he taught his disciples to save the fish, however, belongs to the Buddhist precept of non-killing. The three ministers who govern the heavenly, earthly and human realms refer only to the three persons — father, mother, and child.

The true meaning of the ninth aeon refers to intercourse between the father and the mother for procreation. Those are the true meanings of the nine ages that Buddhists made up.

\textsuperscript{407} The explanation does not quite fit here in the case of Śākyamuni. Technically, it should be “9-trueong tall and 10 heads” to correspond with 9 months and 10 days of gestation.
Article 6

On the Meaning of the Words Không (emptiness) and Phật (Buddha)

The Western Scholar says: Buddhists often take không [emptiness] to be their basic teaching as well as the root of everything, and they often talk about that word. Thus I ask you: What does the word không mean in Buddhism?

[Không [Emptiness] Explained]

The Eastern Scholar says: Buddhists often take không as their basic teaching as well as the root of everything, for the ideogram không (空) consists of two words: on the top is the word huyệt (穴), on the bottom is the word công (工). The word huyệt refers to the mother, the word công refers to the father, because the two of them unite together to beget children. Therefore, Buddhism teaches that all things are born out of không. For this reason, in front of Buddhist temples a stone pillar is often erected in the courtyard, and the temple door is shaped in the character huyệt and the pillar is shaped in the character công to form the character không. This character represents the gate from which the Buddha comes, as they say: “a painting of the Buddha comes out of a locked gate.” Moreover, Buddhists often add the word không to the four existing energies in the human person, namely wind, fire, water, and earth, calling them the Five Fires (ngũ

408 Emptiness or Không (空) is the Sino-Vietnamese translation of the Sanskrit word śunyatā. It is the basic concept of Mahayana Buddhism in which all existence is unreal, illusory, or impermanent. In this doctrine, all things are compounds of unstable elements, possessing no self-essence. Alternative translations include: vacuity, emptiness, non-existence, immateriality, unreality, etc.

409 This translation is approximate since I am unsure of the last two characters in the phrase.
hoà). They give them the expression: “Phật dà vô nam đa” [Homage to the Buddha]. The word Phật symbolizes fire; dà, wind; vô, water; nam, earth; and đa, emptiness. These five elements are applied to father, mother, and child.

Furthermore, Buddhism often says: “Life is empty (không), death is also empty.” Śākyamuni has taught: “Life comes, at death it is gone; then [at birth] life comes again.” The book Secret Transmission (Bí Truyền) explains this phrase as follows: “When life comes, from emptiness it descends into the ‘outer hollow’ (ngoại không), the outer hollow is the top of the head. From natural nothingness, the germ of life comes down to the two feet; when it returns it comes back up as a cloud to the ‘outer hollow of heavenly sea’ (thiên hải ngoại không) and comes out from the top of the head. That is why they say: ‘At death it is gone, then [at birth] life comes again.’” When people are conceived in their mother’s womb, life first comes to the fontanel on the top of the head; from there, it gradually comes downward through the body all the way to the two feet. When people die, life is first gone from the two feet and gradually upward through the body all the way until it reaches the fontanel on the head, which is called the “outer hollow of heavenly sea.” Because of this phenomenon, the Buddhist phrase “life is

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410 Correct word order should be “Nam mô Phật đa đa” to correspond to the Sankskrit phrase “Namo buddhaya” [Homage to the Buddha].

411 Adriano di Santa Thecla refers to this book as Bí Chi [Esoteric Branches], a book purported to be the secret teaching of the Buddha handed down from generation to generation. I have not found this book yet.

412 This refers to the fontanel as explained in the text.
empty, death is also empty”\textsuperscript{413} actually means life enters the body through the “hollow space” or the fontanel at birth and exists through it at death. That cycle of coming and going is called the “returning cycle” (\textit{luân hồi}).\textsuperscript{414} Everything I have told you is the true meaning of the word \textit{không}, which Buddhists often take as the root of everything when they say: “life is empty, death is also empty.” Therefore, the fabricated external teachings of Buddhism that “out of emptiness comes everything and death is a return to emptiness,” and that “there is transmigration or rebirth in another realm after death,” are lies to deceive and mislead people by using words that sound virtuous.

[The Various Meanings of “Buddha”]

The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar: What is the meaning of the word \textit{Phật} \textit{[Buddha]}?

The Eastern Scholar replies: The Buddhists aim to take things belonging to the human body and comparing them to things in heaven and earth, so they can be analogous with one another. Therefore, they put together the characters \textit{nhân} (人) and \textit{thiên} (天) to make

\textsuperscript{413} The text here adds another meaning to the Buddhist maxim “life is empty, and death is empty.” The common understanding of this phrase refers to the interdependence between life and death, representing transitional stages in human life. Here, the author tries to give a physiological explanation of life and death: life is a descending of some immaterial force or energy (the soul ?) to the body from the fontanel. When death comes, the force or energy leaves the body.

\textsuperscript{414} \textit{Luân hồi} (輪 迴) is a Buddhist concept of transmigration of life, moving up and down in the six realms of existence: gods (deva), titans (asura), humans, animals, hungry ghosts (preta), and hell-beings. Here, the text gives a physical explanation of \textit{luân hồi} as the coming and returning of life, based on a literal reading: \textit{luân} (輸, the wheel) and \textit{hồi} (迴, return).
up the word Phật (イ天), saying “Phật is made up of human and heavenly being.” They also say: “Phật comes from human being; human being comes from heaven and earth.”

The Buddhists often compare the five internal organs to the five agents, five elements, five seasons, and five directions. Since there are only four directions, four seasons, four energies or four elements, they often add an extra word to these sets to make them five: the word “space” or “hollow” (không) is added to the four elements; the word “ending of season” (quý) is added to the four seasons, the word “center” (trung ương) is added to the four directions, in order to form the five elements, five seasons, or five directions, to match with the five organs: heart, liver, spleen, lung, and kidney.

Another explanation for the word Phật (イ天) takes it as being formed out of two characters for “human” (nhân 人 or 人) and the character “two” (nhị 二), meaning a man and a woman bringing a child to life. [p. 176 (266)]

[On Other Buddhist Concepts]

The Western Scholar says: [I have heard of the phrase] “buddha is the heart-mind; the heart-mind is buddha.” Thus, I ask you, Eastern Scholar: What does that phrase mean?

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415 This character for Phật (イ天) which is different from the more common character 佛 also appears on some Nôm texts. Adriano (Opusculum, p. 84; trans. p. 86) also mentions this particular explanation of the word Phật in Sino-Vietnamese character as the “human and deva” being. Perhaps it is taken from one of the epithets applied to the Buddha as the “teacher of men and devas” (nhân thiên sư 人天師).

416 The five Buddhist elements (ngũ đại 五大) (i.e., earth, water, fire, wind, and space) are slightly different from the traditional Chinese five agents (ngũ hành 五行), also called the five elements (i.e., wood, fire, earth, metal, and water).
**The Eastern Scholar replies:** Buddhists not only take “emptiness” (không 空) but also “heart-mind” (tâm 心) as their basic doctrines. For that reason, the *Sutra of Forty-two Sections* teaches: “Take ‘emptiness’ as the way; take ‘heart-mind’ as the way.”

Buddhists often take “heart-mind” as the way because among the five internal organs the heart occupies the most important place. Since the character for heart has four dots, Buddhists often draw the four dots to symbolize the image of the Buddha. Because of this practice, they often say: “buddha resides within one’s heart-mind” and “buddha is the heart-mind; the heart-mind is buddha.” That is the true meaning of the external teaching of Buddhism I have discussed briefly, without exhausting it. If you, Western Scholar, want to learn more about it, you should read the book *Secret Transmission*. Furthermore, you can read the works by the scholar Lê Ích Mục, who is knowledgeable in Buddhism and can explain everything about it. He lived at a Buddhist temple during the rule of the lords Trịnh. I have heard that in your religion there is also a three-volume book called *Doctrine of Superstitions* (Dị Đoan Chí Giáo) that discusses the issues presented in *Secret Transmission*. If you do not have that book, look for it and read it to gain full knowledge about the errors of Buddhism.

If we follow the true meaning of the Buddhist teachings as they explain them, we must bear in mind the Buddha is no different or more worthy than other human beings. All people are also buddhas, since according to Buddhist teachings

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417 This quotation cannot be found in the *Sutra of Forty-two Sections*.

418 According to Adriano (*Opusculum*, p. vii; trans. p. 84), this book (now lost) was written by Hilario di Gesù (Hilario Costa), the apostolic vicar of East Tonkin (r. 1737-1754).
everybody possesses a heart-mind and other characteristics like what the Buddha possesses. Although Śākyamuni called himself the Buddha because he wanted people to worship him and everything in his body, all people also possess the same things in their bodies, and therefore they are equal to him. Although the Buddhist disciples often tell tales and mysteries about the Buddha, all people also have inside their bodies all the characteristics, which Buddhists talk about. Hence, everyone is equal to the Buddha and the Buddhist disciples.

The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar again: Was the book Secret Transmission passed down from Śākyamuni?

The Eastern Scholar replies: The book that Śākyamuni passed down is called the Sutra of Forty-two Sections, which the Han envoy who went to Tianzhu (India) to acquire Buddhist scriptures brought back for Emperor Han Mingdi, as I have discussed in the second article of this book. The Secret Transmission was fabricated by priests of later generations, who added many doctrines to the teachings of Śākyamuni, things that he never taught his disciples. For example, in the story of nine aeons, the book mentions Pangu, the Three Augusts and Five Emperors, the Three Powers, and

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419 Some modern scholars have questioned the purported Indian origin of this work. Robert Shaft suggests that this work may be a Central Asian or Chinese composition in imitating the style of the Dhammapada. See “The Scripture in Forty-two Sections,” in Religions of China in Practice, ed. Donald S. Lopez, p. 260.

420 Tam Hoàng Ngũ Đế (三皇五帝) are the mythical and sage kings of ancient China. Three Augusts refers to Fuxi (Phuc Hy 伏羲), Shennong (Thanh Nông 神農), and the Yellow Emperor or Huang Di (Hoàng Đế 皇帝); Five Emperors refers to Taihao (Thái Hào 太昊), Yendi (Viêm Đế 炎帝), Huang Di (Hoàng Đế 皇帝), Shaohao (Thiệu Hào 少昊), and Chuan Xu (Chuyên Húc 頤頑). The first three of the
the Eight Trigrams. These belong to the Confucian teaching in the East, which is different from the way of Western China.

Moreover, Secret Transmission speaks of the Three Religions of the East and compares their origins. The book asserts that “the three ways of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism are born together out of the same energy source (qi): Confucianism is the way of Confucius, Daoism is the way of Laozi, and Buddhism is the way of Śākyamuni. Confucian scholars call this the three powers.” Laozi and Confucius were born 500 years after Śākyamuni, since the latter was born during the reign of Zhou Zhaowang [r. 1052-1001 BCE] and the other two persons during the reign of Zhou Lingwang [r. 571-544 BCE]. For this reason, it is not possible for Śākyamuni to mention these two figures, who were born many generations later [in his book]. Therefore, the author of Secret Transmission must be someone who lived after Laozi and Confucius. After Emperor Han Mingdi imported Buddhism into China, the person who wrote the book Secret Transmission borrowed some Confucian teachings and entered them in his book, in order to please the Confucian scholars so that they could accept living in harmony with Buddhism. Once Buddhism was a foreign teaching, but now it has become part of the native culture, and has transformed itself into a native religion. For that reason, the Buddhists honored Confucius {p. 179 (269)} as one of the buddhas; hence the Buddhist

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Five Emperors sometimes are identified with the Three Augusts, the last two are identified with Yao (Nghiêu 堯) and Shun (Thuấn 舜). See also Book 1, Article 7.

421 The idea that the Three Religions are from the same source (三 教 同 原) was common during the Ming dynasty in China and 18th century Vietnam.

422 Apparently Chinese Buddhists pushed back the birthday of Śākyamuni to be 500 years older than Laozi and Confucius to prove that their religion was older, and therefore was superior.
calendar in *Lamp of the Mind* also recorded Confucius’ birthday: “The fourth day of the fifth month is the birthday of the Sage of Great Perfection, King of the Literati.” The book also gives the list of Confucius’ ancestors, because Buddhists want to be in harmonious relationship with Confucian scholars.
Article 7
On the Precepts Against Killing and the Teaching of Transmigration

The Western Scholar says: Buddhism forbids killing and teaches transmigration.\(^{423}\) So I ask you: What are these teachings about?

The Eastern Scholar replies: In the Sutra of Forty-two Sections, it is forbidden to kill all sentient beings, such as chickens and pigs, cattle, wild birds and animals, fish and sea creatures, snakes and reptiles, and bees and insects. It is also taught that anyone who kills any creature will become the same creature he killed in the next life, and will eventually be killed by another person. Furthermore, anyone who does not kill will die only once and will never have to be reborn again in the cycle of birth and death,\(^{424}\) or at least, will gain enough merit to be reborn as a human being and not as an animal. Ban Gu, the author of History of the Han Dynasty, made the following derogatory comment about Buddhism:

Generally speaking, [Buddhism] takes the concept of voidness and nothingness (hư vô) as its basic teaching: it values compassion and \(\text{p. 180 (270)}\) not killing. [It teaches that] after death the human spirit does not

\(^{423}\) It is common to translate of luân hồi (輪 迴) as “reincarnation.” However, the Buddhist interpretation of the word strictly means transmigration: after each life, one is born again into one of the six realms of life and death. It does not necessarily mean that a person will come back as another human being, as in certain Hindu teaching.

\(^{424}\) Hindus and Buddhists believe that the cycle of birth and death, called samsāra, is a never-ending process due to one’s own karma. The only way to end this cycle is to seek liberation (Sanskrit: mokśa) through Hindu or Buddhist practices.
perish, but receives another bodily form. In this world, every act of good
or evil has its consequence. Hence, the best thing is to cultivate one’s
mind to become a buddha.

This means that Buddhists take emptiness as the basic teaching; they teach kindness
toward others and compassion toward animals. When a person dies his soul does not die,
but comes back in another bodily form. If a person has acted kindly and did not kill
when alive, that person would become a human again; but if that person did evil or killed,
he or she would become an animal. Therefore, whoever focuses on keeping the precepts,
cultivating himself or herself, that person would become a buddha. This is the great
commandment of Buddhism.

**The Western Scholar comments:** The Buddhist teaching claiming that after death
people are reborn as another human or animal is extremely contrary to reason. Consider
this: if a person’s ancestors or parents die and are reborn in another household, and [by
chance] they come to work as servants in their descendant’s home, then whenever the
master curses and beats these servants, is he not abusing his ancestors or parents? Again,
if a person’s grandmother or mother dies and is reborn in another household, and later on
if a descendant [by chance] marries this person as wife (p. 181 (271)) or concubine,
without knowing that she was his grandmother or mother, is this not a case of incest?

Furthermore, if a person’s ancestors often kill animals for food, then die and
become animals themselves, hence, whenever the descendants kill these animals for the
sacrificial feast, are they not killing their own ancestors? Besides, in the ages of the
Three Dynasties each household was asked to raise [at least] five chicken and two pigs to have enough meat to feed the elderly as well as to sacrifice with oxen and goats in memorial feasts.\textsuperscript{425} From the time of the great flood until the time of Śākyamuni —, more than 1300 years — people, including the Buddha’s ancestors, did not abstain from meat. If people are really reborn as animals because of killing, why are there more and more people and not animals?\textsuperscript{426}

**The Eastern Scholar comments:** Your argument against transmigration is indeed correct. I will add some more arguments. If the ancestors and parents have already been reborn in another household, what is the use of celebrating their memorial feasts or performing atonement ceremonies for them? If their parents are reborn as another person, the children should worship that person instead. Likewise, if their parent is reborn as an animal, they should worship that animal instead. Furthermore, before the Buddha’s renunciation at the age of thirty, he often went hunting birds and animals for food. \textsuperscript{(p. 182 (272))} After he died, should he not be reborn as a bird or an animal [by the law of karma] and then be killed by others? Besides, Buddhist monks force the horse to carry them, the mule to carry their possessions, the ox to cultivate their field, mistreating these animals until they die. Afterward, they make the animals’ horns into wind instruments for the nuns to blow every month and every year, take their skins to make drums for the ritualists to beat day and night [during their ceremonies]. They kill cats to

\textsuperscript{425} A solemn feast requires a sacrifice of three animals: an ox or buffalo, a goat or sheep, and a pig.

\textsuperscript{426} See also similar arguments in Hỏi Động Tư Giáo (1867 Nôm ed.), pp. 15a-15b.
make pens from their hair in order to copy the sutra, rob the chicken of its eggs to paint images of the Buddha. Moreover, to practice self-immolation, they teach novices to burn their elderly monks. Thus, the Buddhist monks neither have compassion nor keep the precepts of not killing animals and people. Therefore, whoever considers the arguments I have presented will know that the precept of not killing and the teaching on transmigration are truly irrational, false and empty teachings that Buddhism has made up. On the other hand, I have explained the true meaning of transmigration (luân hồi), as taught by their inner teaching, in the section above.

**The Western Scholar says:** In the holy way of the Lord of Heaven there is also the teaching of “a returning cycle” (luân hồi). However, the meaning is different from what has been described. At the end of the ages, the Lord of Heaven will resurrect all the dead in their bodies: the good people will live again in their glorious bodies and they will enter into paradise to enjoy the eternal blessing; the wicked people will live again in their ugly bodies and they will descend to hell to suffer eternal damnation. That is the true “transmigration” that will happen to everyone in the future; and we must believe in this kind of “returning cycle.”

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427 Interestingly enough, the Christian scholar here uses the same Buddhist word luân hồi to describe the resurrection of the body.
Article 8

On the Prayer of Protection for the Journey

The Western Scholar says: Buddhist monks often recite the prayer “Protection for the Journey” (kinh bảo dàng).\(^{428}\) Thus, I ask you: What is that prayer all about?

The Eastern Scholar replies: First, when a person is about to die, a Buddhist monk recites the prayer “Protection for the Journey” [to guide the soul in the netherworld.] He calls out to the soul, saying: “Buddha’s nature! Oh, Buddha’s nature! Do not come out from the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, or the lower orifices,\(^ {429}\) otherwise you will be in trouble. Come out through the fontanel.” Buddhism calls the fontanel the “gate of heaven” (thiên môn), as it is written in the book Secret Transmission: “The head represents heaven. At death, if the soul exits through the “outer hollow of the heavenly sea” (the fontanel), it will rise up to heaven; if it exits through the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, or the lower orifices, it will not become immortal.” After death, the monk tells the soul of the deceased to identify itself as the “child of the Buddha” (phật tử) when it travels in the netherworld. The soul should trust in the Buddha to lead it away from hell. If it follows the Buddha’s guidance, it will be led to the Buddha’s land. Otherwise, it will end up in the three hells and will always suffer hunger and thirst. If the soul wrongly follows

\(^{428}\) Bảo Đàng (保 唐) literally means protection of “the path from the gate of a temple to the main hall” (唐). See Matthew’s Chinese-English Dictionary (1931), entry 6116 c.

\(^{429}\) Literally the gate of yin (陰門). In modern biology, this term is used to denote the female organ. But in this context, this could be generalized to include the anus and the reproductive parts of both male and female.
the evil path, one’s descendants will suffer a great deal, and they will need the saints and
the bodhisattvas to save them. Therefore, the proper thing [for a person] to do is to
submit to the Buddha; one can reap the benefits and call on him in time of need. The
Buddhist monk recites the sutras to pray for the deceased \{p. 184 (274)\} and to protect
his or her soul on the journey.

He tells the soul that in the netherworld, it must first cross the Âm Không Bridge
on the way to Thanh Binh. Then, the soul goes to the Hoàng Tuyền Mountain, where it
will find a well and a tall coconut tree. Thousands and thousands of people are walking
in that area. There, the soul will encounter General Gió Xá Tắc Lỗ, who guards the
place. Upon meeting him, the soul must show him its permit to enter.

After passing the checkpoint, the soul proceeds to the Ái Hà River, to a ferry
station named Tự Nhiên, where General Tô Giang is in charge. Upon meeting him, the
soul must show its permit again to pass through. Then, the soul may see a copper boat
with silver paddles, but must not get on this boat for it is the wrong one. When the soul
sees a golden boat with golden paddles, it must try to get on the boat. Then the soul asks:
“Who is Trương Chiên, the ferry man? Will you take me to the other side?” And the
ferry man will ask back: “Who is it that knows my name?” Then the soul must show its
permit again. Upon seeing this permit, the ferry man will carry the soul on the boat to the
other bank of the river. After disembarking, the soul goes straight ahead about a mile.

When arriving at a sand dune named Tràng Sa, the soul will see a crossroad. There is a

\[\text{\textsuperscript{430}}\] This is a rough translation of the Sino-Vietnamese phrase: \textit{minh sự vân phục Phật tuyên sống hiên hổ điều dưng}. 

561
bridge made of copper pillars and iron boards \{p. 185 (275)\} named Âm Không.\(^{431}\) The soul should take a rest there. If hungry, the soul can take out its prepared food and eat.

After resting a bit, the soul should continue its journey. Never travel on the eastern road, for the east is guarded by the large dog, Phi Liêm. Never travel on the southern road, for the south is guarded by the spirit Hoả Lồ, who can set people on fire. Never travel on the northern road, for the north has a wrong path to the three hells. The soul should\(^{432}\) travel on the southwestern road, for the southwest is the silver road, which is the religious path. Travelling on the silver road, the soul does not need to go around, carry a torch or make a bridge.

The soul goes for about a mile to the base of a mountain that displays three words “Phổ Đà Sơn” [Mount Pokatala],\(^{433}\) where there are nine types of gem-like lotus flowers. In this place, saints and bodhisattvas recite the name of Amitābha Buddha.\(^{434}\) The soul bows to them and says: “My name is such and such. I was born in the other world, and now after death, I have arrived in this realm. I was ignorant and did not know the dharma. Fortunately, I met an enlightened master and took refuge in the Three Jewels, reciting the sutras devoutly. After death I received a certificate of passage thanks to the Buddhist merit.” Then, the soul kneels down, folds his hands and starts confessing his

\(^{431}\) The manuscript has “Âm Huyiết” but it is a possible error for “Âm Không,” since the character Không (空) and Huyiết (穴) can be confused, as described in Article 6. Also, in Hỏi Động Tứ Giáo (p. 31b) this is called Âm Không Bridge.

\(^{432}\) The text has “should not.” This is a scribal error, for it is contrary to the general sense.

\(^{433}\) The residence of Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva.

\(^{434}\) This is a rough translation.
true nature \( \text{(p. 186 (276))} \). Then Amitābha Buddha and the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta will appear to greet the soul, while he recites: “Homage to the Western Bliss Paradise, where there are countless realms;\(^{435}\) where there are numerous monks\(^{436}\) of the same name and the same title of being the ‘great compassionate accompaniers.’ Homage to Amitābha Buddha.” There is a religious poem as follows:

- Living, you are responsible for your good or evil actions.
- Dying, you are relieved of your \textit{karma}.
- O soul, remember to chant the name of Buddha.
- Even if you fall into hell, you will be released.\(^{437}\)

After reciting the prayer “Protection for the Journey,” the Buddhist monk draws a nine-dragon amulet with his stick, and then he tears down the repentance residence to set the soul free. He takes a golden stick and writes a letter with it to make the permit for the soul to travel in the netherworld. The soul will carry this permit on its sleeve – man on the left side, woman on the right side.\(^{438}\)

\textbf{The Western Scholar says:} Why does the Buddhist monk ask the soul to exit the body through the fontanel rather than through the lower orifices? When the soul leaves the

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\(^{435}\) Literally, 3,000 of 60,000 of 100,000 (\textit{tam thiên lucr vạn ức}) realms.

\(^{436}\) Literally, 10 of 19,500 (\textit{nhất thập nhất vạn cửu thiên ngũ bách}) monks.

\(^{437}\) \textit{Hỏi Động Tự Giáo} (p. 31b) cites the same poem.

\(^{438}\) This description of the “Protection for the Journey” is the most difficult section to translate for the text refers to many obscure words that cannot be verified.
body, it will exit only through the fontanel, for it is through the fontanel that the soul first enters the body. Life descends from the head downward to the toes, and in death it reverses from toes to head; that is why the Buddha taught, “Life is empty; death is also empty.” However, the soul is a spirit different from the body; it does not require a gate to enter or exit the body. It comes in and out of the body in a mysterious way, which we do not know.

What you have said about going to the Buddha’s land (p. 187 (277)) is hard to accept. Only those who are uneducated and cannot think critically would believe in such nonsense. The land of the Buddha is the kingdom Tianzhu (India), which countless travelers from the west have passed through. They do not encounter the Âm Không Bridge, Mount Hoàng Tuyên, the well and the coconut tree; they do not cross the Ái Hà River by the ferry Tự Nhiên. They do not come to the crossroad next to the copper-pillar and iron-board bridge named Âm Không. Moreover, the kingdom of Tianzhu is a barbaric country, where dark-skinned people and savages live. That country is not so civilized as Annam, so how can they teach the Annamese soul how to go to the Buddha’s land?

Besides, the soul of the blessed person already has a happy place to live; the soul of the wicked person is already condemned to hell; a Buddhist monk or the master of ceremony (cao công) can in no way change the reward and punishment of the afterlife.

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439 I am uncertain of the exact meaning, but in this context, it refers to someone who is involved in the funeral practices.
with the prayer “Protection for the Journey” to the Buddha’s land. With regard to the religious poem:

One does not have to do good or avoid evil.

For at death, all crimes are forgiven.

Ask the soul to recite the Buddha’s name.

Even if it falls into hell, it will be released.\(^{440}\)

It teaches that it does not matter whether one does good or evil. One only needs diligently to recite the Buddha’s name for protection, and then one does not have to worry about being condemned to hell. If it is true, then why does Buddhism teach the monks to practice religious precepts, refrain from eating meat, recite the sutra, and give alms? \(\textit{p. 188 (278)}\) Buddhism speaks empty and false words that one should not listen to.

**The Eastern Scholar says:** When the Buddhist monk finishes the prayer of Protection for the Journey, he makes sacrifices to the guardian spirits of the three roads \(\textit{\(t\text{am k\text{y} l\text{o}\)}}\), who are Ban Niên Đại Thuê (?) Thần, Đoạn Huyền Nhất Thần, Tuy Hận Trường Quân, to Danh Lan, Danh Lực, Danh Lai, to the four guardians, as well as to the meritorious monks and the evil spirits — using silver and gold, meat and wine as offerings. After making the sacrifices, he sends the evil spirits off to their places to prevent them from harming the soul of the deceased. He does this by using a knife to strike at the coffin three times to ward off the Wood spirit\(^ {441}\) \(\textit{\(m\text{o}c th\text{\`a}n\)}}\), saying:

\(^{440}\) Here the Western Scholar paraphrases and reinterprets the religious poem in the previous section.

\(^{441}\) This is known as \textit{Lệ Phạt Mộc} (Ceremony of Striking the Coffin) in pre-modern Vietnamese custom. People believed that evil spirits hid in the coffin. Thus before placing the body into the coffin, the master
With the first hack, I chop away the disasters from heaven for the soul to reap the benefit. With the second hack, I chop away the disasters from earth for the soul to enter the heaven. With the third hack, I chop away the disasters caused by the Wood spirit, dispersing all misfortune so the soul can go to the Land of Bliss (tịnh thọ), and the deceased’s family may have long-lasting luck. All respond: “Long live the spirits.”

For the ceremony of “controlling the spirit” (am phù hạ quan), before putting the body in the coffin, one takes three coins and enough rice to fill the deceased’s mouth. The first coin and rice go to the left side of the mouth; the second coin and rice to the right side, and the third to the middle (on the tongue). If this is done, the soul will never be hungry. Then, one makes the “soul cloth” (hồn bạch), writes the “name banner” (minh tinh) and “soul banner” (linh phướn) for the animate and inanimate souls to reside.

After shrouding, the body is transferred to the coffin. Then one performs the ceremony must “strike” the coffin three times to drive away the evil spirits from bothering the deceased and the living. He uses a knife to do so while saying a mantra to expel the evil spirits.

442 People believed that every tree has its spirit. When a tree is cut down to make a coffin, its spirit will continue to hide in the wood, so it is important to expel the spirit of the wood as well.

443 Land of Bliss (淨土), or Sukhavati in Sanskrit, is the Western Paradise (西方極樂) of Pure Land Buddhism. It is also known as the Buddha’s Land (佛國).

444 Literally, “thousands of years, ten-thousands of ages” (thiền thu vạn tuổi).

445 This is known as Lễ Phan Hạm (Ceremony of Putting Rice into the Mouth). People put three coins and a handful of rice into the mouth of the deceased. They believed that the rice is food for the journey in the underworld, and the three coins are toll fees. Rich people could use three pieces of gold for the coins and nine pearls instead of rice.

446 Literally, “the three hồn and the seven phách.” Chinese and Vietnamese believe that the human soul has two main components: hồn is the animate or spiritual soul (which has three sub-types), and phách (or via) is the inanimate or material soul (which has seven sub-types). At death, the spiritual souls go to heaven, and the material souls go to earth.
the rite of “Calling Back the Soul” (triệu hồn), praying: “May the spirits help bring the deceased’s soul to its glorious destiny. If the soul is still wandering around in the Three Realms (tam giới), or is lost on the roads, the bridges, the four directions, or the scenic areas somewhere, please lead it back [to the right path].”

**The Western Scholar comments:** The rites Buddhist monks perform at the funeral are empty and false. The act of putting coins and rice into the mouth of the deceased to save him or her from starvation and to attain eternal life is the greatest deception. An intelligent person must reject this practice. For the soul is a spirit; when it leaves the body, it no longer needs bodily nourishment. Furthermore, how could three coins and a handful of rice provide eternal nourishment for the soul? In addition, how could a monk recall the wandering soul back to his or her home? Once the soul leaves the body, if it has merits, it will enter paradise; if it has sins, it will go to hell. What kind of power does a Buddhist monk have over the soul to recall it? Such talk is only exaggeration to deceive people into believing in his power.

**The Eastern Scholar says:** In addition, the Buddhists imitate the rite of wearing mourning garments as specified in the Confucian *Family Rituals*. On the fourth day after the deceased passes away, when a Buddhist monk or a master of ceremony comes to distribute the mourning garments, he takes a round plate and a bowl of water. He then

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447 Buddhist cosmology divides the many worlds into three types: realms of sensuous desire, of form, and of pure spirit.
takes out a scissors and cuts off the hair of the children who mourn their parents, or the hair of the wife who mourns her husband \{p. 190 (280)\}. Before the hair-cutting ceremony, he reads a funeral oration, saying:

From Mount Côn Lôn comes the iron core
to make the famous Mô (Mạc) Da knife.\(^{448}\)

Cutting away my hair
to repay the hardship of parents [in raising children].

Hard work is the way of filial piety,
so that more blessings can be acquired.

May their souls enter the Buddha’s land
so that their descendants may enjoy prosperity and fame.\(^{449}\)

First, he cuts the hair off the back of his head, then the hair in front, leveling it to the eyes. The Confucian ritual does not permit cutting the hair; on the contrary, it teaches one to let the hair grow. Therefore, whoever follows the Confucian ritual does not cut his or her hair like Buddhist monks, but they will wear the mourning garments and a cap for the deceased father (tràm thôi),\(^{450}\) or deceased mother (tề thôi) accordingly.\(^{451}\) For other

\(^{448}\) Name of a famous knife.

\(^{449}\) The text is in four-word verses, so this translation is approximate.

\(^{450}\) Tràm thôi (斬 衰) is the funeral garment a son wears to mourn his late father.

\(^{451}\) Tề thôi or Tư thôi (齋 衰) is the funeral garment a son wears to mourn his late mother. In some cases, a son without a father can wear tràm thôi to mourn his mother.
degrees of mourning, the person will wear other specified mourning garments.\textsuperscript{452} The person in mourning does not cut off his or her hair like Buddhists, but wears proper mourning garments. Those who do not know the Confucian family ritual see other people cut off their hair and imitate them. Hair-cutting is a heterodox custom originating from Buddhism.

**The Western Scholar comments:** The practice of cutting one’s hair is from Śākyamuni. When he became the founder of Buddhism, he said to his disciples, the bhikṣus: “to become a śramaṇa, one must shave off one’s hair and beard.” From that time on, Buddhist monks (bhikṣus), began obeying the teaching of the Buddha; as they became śramanas, they shaved their heads. Hence, these monks made up the funeral custom of requiring people to cut their hair. Buddhists who shave their heads are truly barbarians. That custom \textsuperscript{[p. 191 (281)]} is the custom of savages. Hence, an Annamese with good manners does not follow that barbaric custom.

\textsuperscript{452} Literally, “Mộ phuc (墓 服, garment for one-year mourning), Đạo công (大 功, garment for nine-month mourning); Tiểu công (小 功, garment for five-month mourning), and Tì ma (緦 麻, garment for three-month mourning).”
Article 9
The Burning of Paper Mausolem and Joss Paper

The Western Scholar says: When rich people give their parents a proper funeral, they often have a large and decorated paper mausoleum made for them, and later burn it after the burial. In the seventh month they have a ceremony performed for the soul, in which cloth and sacrificial animals made of paper are burned after the ceremony. Furthermore, every time a sacrifice is made, paper money and paper ingots of silver and gold are burned. Thus, I ask you: What is the meaning of this custom?

The Eastern Scholar replies: Because people believe burning joss paper will produce real tools and materials for their deceased parents and ancestors to use in the netherworld, they imitate the custom of burning funeral effigies and paper money.

In the book Family Rituals, Master Zhu Xi quotes Master Zhao, saying: “Paper money originates from the [time of the] chief historian Yin to Wang Yu.” Master Zhu himself also used paper money in funeral sacrifices. [Another story says that] in the period of Later Tang, a man named Cai Lun operated a shop where joss paper items were made. Since he wanted his business to prosper, one day he discussed a scheme with his wife. He would pretend to die for three days, and his wife would cry and mourn after efforts to revive him failed. Then she would burn the joss paper — ingots of

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453 Wang Yu (王 璯), who lived under the Tang dynasty, is credited with the use of paper money for imperial sacrifices.
gold and money — while praying: “I will burn these monetary offerings for my husband so that he may live again.” She acted according to the plan, and then he came back to life again. Seeing this, people started believing in the power of burning joss paper. Whenever a person became ill, the family purchased joss papers and burned them, praying for his recovery. From that time on, the custom of burning joss papers has been observed.

In Annam, since the time of Lý and Trần dynasties, people who are devout Buddhists regularly come to the Đông Hồ village to purchase joss paper. On the seventh month [during the ceremony of Ulambana], more joss paper items are burned at ceremonies praying for the dead and wandering souls.

The burning of paper mausoleum originates from a book written by a certain person named Duke Gao,454 who lived during the Ming dynasty. He told the following story in his book. One night, Shu Di was relaxing in his courtyard. Looking up to the moon, he saw the fairy Heng E455 and fell in love with her. Heng E conceived, and nine months and ten days later, she gave birth to a son and named him Chang Cheng. When Chang Cheng grew up, he asked about his father. Heng E told him his father was a mortal named Shu Di. Chang Cheng rode the White Rooster to the world of mortals and took his father to heaven. When the Jade Emperor came to meet his son-in-law, he gave

454 This may refer to a real person or be a generic name for master of ceremonies here. The name could mean “Eunuch Gao” for eunuchs were powerful during the late Ming dynasty.

455 Heng E (姮娥), also known as Chang E (嫦娥), is a fairy who resides in the moon. Originally she was a mortal, the wife of the archer Hou Yi (后羿) who lived in the legendary reign of Emperor Yao. Legend has it that she stole an immortal potion from her husband and drank it. Her body became lighter and she flew to the moon.
him a bowl of water, a peach and a small knife. Shu Di did not use the knife, but took a bite of the peach and ate it [without cutting it up]. \( \textit{p. 193 (283)} \) The Jade Emperor considered him rude and sent him back to the earth. Upon returning, Shu Di saw his whole palace was in ruin, except a single pillar of copper. Feeling angry, he banged his head into the pillar and died. After he died, his soul transformed into a swan-hen (\textit{chim cuốc}). His body, however, was laid naked on the ground without a cover. Chang Cheng came down from heaven, using leaves to cover his father’s body and he commissioned a decorated mausoleum 10,000 cubits high for his father. But before he can house his father’s body, a violent storm came and blew the mausoleum away to the sea. The sea General Wu Gang seized the mausoleum and kept it. Chang Cheng took some money and asked the Great Supreme Lord Lao to go and reclaim it. In a written contract Wu Gang agreed to return the mausoleum to Chang Cheng to house his father’s remains. Consequently, whoever wants to have a mausoleum must ask Duke Gao to buy it from Wu Gang to house the deceased’s tomb, and to burn it so the deceased may have a house in the netherworld.

**The Western Scholar says:** Those who burn paper mausoleum and joss paper only waste their money and efforts, for the dead in the netherworld are spirits. They do not have bodies like when they were living; hence they have no need of material things. If the burning of paper items can turn into real tools and materials for the deceased to use, one must first make a paper doll of the deceased and burn it. For only if the deceased has a body, only then may he or she enjoy using money and other materials as the living do.
The Eastern Scholar comments: I do not think the love of the mortal Shu Di for the moon fairy, Heng E could possibly make her conceive and have a son. And if Chang Cheng was the grandson of the Jade Emperor, then he must have had spiritual power to prevent the storm from carrying his father’s mausoleum to the high sea, so that he did not have to redeem it with gold when the mausoleum was captured by Wu Gang.

Furthermore, no one can live on the moon, for the sky moves around like a wheel with no resting moment; how can anyone live in such conditions? Heng E was the wife of Hou Yi — the one who shot down the extra suns during the reign of Emperor Yao. She did not have any power to live on the moon. Shu Di was a mortal named Wang Di Du Yu, not a contemporary of Heng E. The history book which wrote about him said: “From the mountain of Shu (Sichuan) there was a humane king, who was the brightest and kindest person, called Wang Di Tu Wu.” Therefore, do not purchase paper mausoleum because of the story of Duke Gao.

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456 The comment seems to come from the Western Scholar rather than the Eastern Scholar.

457 Hou Yi (后羿), or the Divine Archer, was a heroic figure in Chinese mythology. According to legend, in ancient times, ten suns appeared in the sky. The heat scorched the earth, no crop could grow and people suffered. Since Hou Yi was a skillful archer, he took on the task of shooting down nine suns, leaving only one to light the earth.

458 This is only an approximate translation since many words in the text are obscure.
Article 10

On Buddhist Hell

The Western Scholar says: According to Buddhist teachings, a person who dies with bad karma will be punished in hell. Thus I ask you: What is hell all about?

The Eastern Scholar says: First, Buddhism teaches that there are “earthly prisons,” also known as Hades, which are governed by the ten lords (p. 195 (205)) or the Underworld Kings of Ten Palaces—the first being King Yama. There are also five generals who guard the five gates of these prisons: White King, Black King, Red King, Green King, and Yellow King. The Buddhists also had a story about those who live in hell and how they can still use the materials from this world, which their children sent to them. Therefore, the descendants must burn paper goods of money, gold, and clothing to

459 Literally, “crime” (tội). Bad karma is the Buddhist equivalent to the Christian concept of sin. But there is a crucial difference: sin is a theological concept – an offense against God by not keeping the divine laws or a state of being alienated from God. In Buddhism, people accrue good or bad karma as a consequence of their action, independent of a divine judgment. Vietnamese use the word “crime” to denote sin and/or “bad karma.”

460 Literally, the “earthly prison” or địa ngục (地 狱) is a place of punishment in the netherworld. Ancient Vietnamese had no concept of hell, which was introduced with the arrival of Buddhism. The popular term to describe the realm of death is âm phủ (陰 府) or “abode of the dead,” something analogous to the Greek concept of Hades, to contrast it with the realm of the living – the dương gian (陽 間). In this work, the author equates the “earthly prison” with the “abode of the dead,” although they are not the same.

461 Traditional Chinese hell is divided into ten palaces, each of which is governed by a genie or a buddha. For a detailed description of the Ten Underworld Kings (thập diên minh vương) see Henri Doré, Researches into Chinese Superstition, Vol VII, chap III, art 10 (Shanghai, 1920; reprint Taipei: Ch’eng-wen, 1966), pp. 250-302.

462 Yama, or Diêm Vương (閻王), is an Indian king of the dead who was incorporated in the pantheon of Mahayana Buddhism.
transform them into real money, gold and clothing for their ancestors to use in the netherworld; the descendants also burn these to make offerings to the prison chiefs in order to lighten their ancestor’s sentences. Furthermore, Buddhism teaches people to perform ceremonies of atonement to redeem their ancestors from bad karma and guarantee their release from prison.

**The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar to explain:** What is the rite of “breaking the prison”\(^\text{464}\) (phá ngục)?

**The Eastern Scholar says:** During the three years of mourning, Buddhists often perform the ceremony of atonement by inviting monks to their home. After days of abstaining from meat, reciting the sutras and making offerings to atone for the bad karma of the patron’s ancestors, on the last day the monks would perform the rites of “breaking the prison.” On that day, four [bamboo] poles are planted in the house, arranged into a square. Then paper is used to cover the structure like a box. Four gates are drawn on four sides, with one gate on the middle of the top to resemble a prison cell. Then the chief monk puts on \(\text{(p. 196 (286))}\) his ceremonial robe and cap and solemnly offers sacrifices to the Underworld Kings of Ten Palaces and the ten lords who govern the

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\(^{463}\) This custom is still popular among North Vietnamese today.

\(^{464}\) See also *Opusculum* (pp. 105-107; trans.. 213-215).
realm of the dead. He also sacrifices to Ksitigarbha (nguc tướng vương) and to the five kings who guard the five doors (the Green King, the eastern door; the White King, the western door; the Red King, the southern door; the Black King, the northern door; and the Yellow King, the central [or top] door.) Before making their sacrifices, the monks walk in procession three times around the mock prison, chanting the sutras and sprinkling holy water as they walk. After making the sacrifices, the chief monk throws two coins for a positive sign that their offerings and prayers have been accepted by the spirits. Then he takes a walking stick and breaks open the paper gates to release the deceased’s soul from prison. This is how the rite of “breaking the prison” is performed according to the book Hoàng Đồ Lĩnh. The arrangement is shown as follows:

South

Red King

East

Green King

Yellow King

West

White King

Black King

North

{p. 197 (287)}

The Western Scholar comments: Buddhists often make up solemn ceremonies to entice people into believing in Buddhism. However, if we critically think about it, many

\footnote{Ksitigarbha, known in Chinese as the “King of the Earth Treasure” (Dizang wang) is a Buddha of the underworld. On the Chinese understanding of this Buddha, see Henri Doré, Research into Chinese Superstitions, Vol VII, chap III, art 9, pp. 235-249.}

\footnote{I am uncertain of the title. Adriano di Santa Thecla refers to this as Hoàng Đồ Vĩnh. Dror proposes that it is the first three words of the phrase “Hoàng Đồ Vĩnh Cớ” [Let the fortune of the emperor be eternal and firm] that was often found in the title pages of texts written during the time of Lê dynasty. See A Study of Religion, p. 207, n. 159.}
teachings and rituals of Buddhism are nonsense, deceptive, and useless. If the Buddhist monk has the power to break open the prison and rescue the soul therein, who gives him his power to this? If it is Śākyamuni, who gives him that power, why does the Sutra of Forty-two Sections not say a single word about it? This rite is only a later invention from the time of Liang Wudi, who lived 1,500 years after Śākyamuni. He first established the ceremonies for atonement, as it is told in the book Lamp of the Mind: “Liang Wudi established the ceremonies for the dead.” Furthermore, the atonement ceremonies and the rite of “breaking the prison” are actually contrary to Buddhist teaching, for the Buddha has taught: “Life is empty; death is also empty; everything is empty.” If the dead return to emptiness, what is the need to redeem the deceased’s bad karma and break open the prison door? When the dead returns to emptiness, everything should cease to exist; hence, the custom of burning paper money, gold, and clothing for the dead to use in the netherworld is nonsense and deceitful to people.\footnote{Another reason is people in hell no longer have any need for material things of this world. The living people need these things because they have bodies. The dead are spirits without bodies, thus they have no use for material things.} The Eastern Scholar says: In your religion, there is a rite similar to the Buddhist rite of breaking open the prison. The Buddhist monk can use this fact to defend his practice from your criticism.\footnote{Strictly speaking, the custom of burning joss paper and paper items is not Buddhist but belongs to the popular religion.}
The Western Scholar says: It is impossible for the Buddhist monk use it against me! In my religion, there is a rite to save the dead from purgatory. When the person was alive and he or she had sinned and repented, but did not complete the penance; after death, he or she still needs to complete the penance in purgatory. The merciful Lord of Heaven has allowed the living to pray and perform a rite (the Mass) to atone for the souls in purgatory. On the contrary, if a person committed a mortal sin, when he or she was alive and did not repent, the person’s soul is condemned to hell for eternal punishment. In this case, we are not able to save his or her soul, and thus, we do not pray or perform a rite (the Mass) for that person. It is the teaching of the holy way of the Lord of Heaven about atonement for the dead.

The Eastern Scholar says: What you have said sounds right, and I agree with your reasoning. Now, I will explain {p. 199 (289)} to you, about all the Buddhist teachings on hell. The Buddhist monks have made up prayers for the living to redeem the dead. They set apart ten days in a month; each day is dedicated to a particular Buddha who has the power to help the individual, who vows to abstain from meat and pray to the Buddha of that day. The prayer is a mantra, starting with two words “nam mô” (Sanskrit: namo, [homage to]) followed by the name of the Buddha prescribed for that day. Since the person needs to recite this mantra a thousand times, he or she often uses a rosary-like, 100-bead ring to keep track of the counting — ten rings are equal to a thousand counts. The book Lamp of the Mind makes up this calendar. For example, on the first day, one
prays, thus: “Namo [homage to] Dīpankara Buddha.”468 If one recites this a thousand times, at death one does not lose the way to bliss.469 On the full moon: “Namo Amitābha Buddha.”470 On the thirtieth day: “Namo Śākyamuni Buddha.”471

The Western Scholar asks the Eastern Scholar again: What is the meaning of the two words “nam mô” that Buddhists recite?

The Eastern Scholar says: The Buddhists ascribe multiple meanings to these two words; which is why they often emphasize these two words in their prayer. The book Lamp of the Mind explains these two words as follows: “Nam means ‘the heaven covers,’ mô means ‘the earth supports;”473 nam is father, mô is mother; nam is water, mô

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468 Dīpankara is known in Chinese as the “Light Bearer Buddha” (燈燃佛, Deng-ran fo) or the “Fixed Light Buddha” (定光佛, Ding-guang fo). He is the first of the 24 mythical buddhas, who appeared before Gautama. On the Chinese understanding of this Buddha, see Henri Doré, Researches into Chinese Supersition, Vol VI, Chapter 3, article 1, pp. 89-102.

469 The translation of this phrase is approximate.

470 Amitābha or A Di Đà (阿彌陀) is the buddha who governs the Western Paradise. He is the Buddha revered by the Pure Land sect, which is considered the largest Buddhist sect in China, Japan, and Vietnam.

471 Śākyamuni or Thích Ca Mâu Ni (釋迦牟尼) is the historical Buddha, whose name was Siddhārtha Gautama.

472 Santa Thecla gives a fuller calendar of the buddhas and bodhisattvas to whom one prays in a month: on the 1st to Dīpankara (Đình Quang Vương); the 8th to Bhaisajyaguru (Dược Sư); the 14th to the thousand buddhas of the present eon (Hiền Kiếp Thiên); the 15th Amitābha (A Di Đà); the 18th to Ksitigarbha (Địa Tạng Vương); the 23rd to Mahāsthāma-prāpta (Đại Thế Chí); the 24th to Avalokiteśvara (Quán Thế Âm); the 28th to Lochana (Lồ Xá Na); the 29th to Bhaichadyaradja and Bhaichadyaradjasamudgata (Được Vương, Được Thư ông), and the 30th to Śākyamuni (Thích Ca Mâu Ni). Opusculum, p. 97; (trans. pp. 204-205 and nn. 143-150).

473 Apparently the Vietnamese proverb “the heaven covers, the earth supports” (thiên phù địa tài) is divided to fit the yin-yang concept of nam mô. Here nam refers to the heaven; and mô refers to the earth.
is fire; nam, the heart-mind, mò, the nature; nam, fatherhood, mò, motherhood; nam, the Kan trigram, mò, {p. 200 (290)} the Lì trigram; nam refers to yin, mò refers to yang; nam, the Qian trigram, mò, the Kun trigram; nam, the sun, mò, the moon; nam, the substance, mò, the action; nam the form-body, mò, the dharma-body; thus in everyday life, the ins and outs correspond to nam and mò.\textsuperscript{474}

\textsuperscript{474} The last phrase is only an approximate translation.
Article 11

Quan Âm (Avalokiteśvara) and the Wandering Souls

The Western Scholar says: People often worship a buddha named Quan Âm and rely on this buddha to help them. Thus I ask you, Eastern Scholar: Who is this Buddha Quan Âm (Avalokiteśvara)?

475

The Eastern Scholar replies: In Buddhism, there are many buddhas called “bodhisattvas,” meaning “the ones who have power to save people from evils.”476 The most loved among those bodhisattvas is Quan Âm, because she has more power to save people than any other buddhas.477 The Buddhist tradition tells her story as follows:

Quan Âm, the daughter of King Miao Zhuang, was named Princess Miao Shan — also called Mầu Thiện in Vietnamese. Quan Âm kept her virginity and did not want to marry. Her father got angry and sent her away. Quan Âm went into Xiangshan district in Guangdong province and took refuge in a small temple in Mount Xiang. She stayed with

475 Quan Âm is the Vietnamese version of Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. Originally a male figure in Indian Buddhism, he was transformed into a female goddess in East Asia – known as Guanyin in China, Kannon in Japan, and Kwon-um in Korea. In Vietnam, she is often called “Lady Buddha” (Phật bà).

476 In Mahayana Buddhism, bodhisattvas are enlightened beings who defer their entrance into nirvana to aid the sentient beings of this world to get into nirvana as well. These enlightened beings are said to have powers to save people from evils and aid them on the quest of enlightenment. No doubt, the most popular of all bodhisattvas in Vietnam is Quan Âm, who personifies the virtue of compassion.

477 The cult of Quan Âm in Vietnam apparently is a mixture of the native tradition of goddess worship with the cult of Guanyin in China. Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, which discusses Avalokiteśvara’s promise that those who believe in her will be saved from harm, is the basis for the cult of Guanyin in China. There are volumes of literature about Guanyin. The most recent and comprehensive discussion is Chun-fang Yü, Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
the nuns and did not return home. [After repeated attempts to call her back but fail], the king sent people to burn down the temple. All the nuns were burnt to death, while Quan Âm held a weeping willow branch and was unharmed by the fire. She then told people: “I have already achieved my enlightenment and now have great miraculous power.”

({p. 201 (291)}) She is also referred to the “one who has a thousand eyes and a thousand arms” (thiên thủ thiên nhồn), or Lady Buddha, who often appears on the South China Sea. The Buddhists choose the twenty-fourth day of each month to recite her name a thousand times to be saved from falling into hell, as is written in the book *Lamp of the Mind*: “Those who earnestly pray to the bodhisattva a thousand times will not go to hell to be punished.” This is the reason why many people worship Quan Âm in their homes.

**The Western Scholar comments:** If indeed Quan Âm has great power to perform miracles, why was she unable to save the nuns from being burnt to death by her father? Since she was unable to save her nuns from harm, how can she save anyone else? Those who worship Quan Âm believe she has the power to save them from harm, but when they suffer from fire disasters, theft and robbery, and illness, we do not see anyone appearing to save them. Furthermore, a normal human being has two eyes, two ears, and four limbs. No human person ever has three or four eyes, let alone one face but ten eyes, one

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478 The story of Quan Âm here is based on the Legend of Miaoshan, circulated in China since the twelfth century. For a thorough discussion of different versions of this legend, see Glen Dudbridge, *The Legend of Miaoshan* (Oxford, 1978; reissue 2004). Apparently the story somehow found its way into Vietnam very early and has fostered a cult of the “Third Princess” in the renowned Perfume Pagoda in the province of Ha Tay, North Vietnam. Most Vietnamese trace the legend of Quan Âm to this story of the “Third Princess” and to another indigenous story called “Quan Âm Thị Kính,” in which the female heroine went through an extraordinary ordeal of being misunderstood for her compassionate character. Only after her death was her true identity as a bodhisattva revealed.
body but a thousand arms — this is very odd for a human being. And if it is not a human being, then it is a demon. Buddhist books often tell false stories, thus they are criticized by the book *General Discussion* as follows: “In general, these stories contains ghosts and demons, false doctrines of malice; they are used to deceive people.”

**The Eastern Scholar says:** Quan Âm is truly a demon, not a human being. In the history of China (p. 202 (192)) there is no mention of a king named of Miao Zhuang. The Buddhist book tells this strange tale, and people make pictures and statues of this king. Consequently, the demon appears in the form of a Lady Buddha for people to worship. In reality, she is a demon.

[Concerning the Lost Souls]

**The Western Scholar says:** I have seen people care for the wandering souls by cooking rice porridge on the first and the fifteenth days of the month, then sprinkling it on leaves for the souls to consume. Thus I ask you: What is this practice about?

**The Eastern Scholar says:** People say the wandering souls are abandoned souls, who have no descendants to make offerings for them, so they turn to begging from living persons. They also say that these wandering souls have skimpy legs and thin necks, so they cannot walk firmly on the ground, and stay on tree branches; since they cannot eat

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479 Approximate translation.

480 See also the discussion in *Opusculum* (pp. 98-99; trans. pp. 206).
rice (or solid food), people cook rice porridge and sprinkle the soup on the leaves so that they can eat. The Buddhists tell this tale: Once upon a time, there was a woman, named Hành Mãn, who was destined to die at the age of thirty. She sold food and drinks to passengers near the bridge. One day, three messengers named Wandering Souls came down from heaven to take her soul. Knowing this, she treated them to a fine feast, allowing them to eat and drink their fill. After the feast, these three messengers told Hành Mãn: “Your life has already expired; however, since you treated us so well, we will change the record to have you live for 3,000 years.”

The Western Scholar says: The wandering souls are destitute beings. The reason people make offering to them by cooking rice porridge and sprinkling it on the leaves for them to eat \( \text{p. 203 (293)} \) is not because they care for them, but out of fear that these wandering souls will rob the food offered to their ancestors. They make such offerings to ward them off. With regard to the story of the wandering souls, who were messengers from heaven in charge of keeping the record of one’s life, who have the power to change people’s lifespan to make them live longer, it is truly a big lie. Who has the power to change the time of death as it is determined by heaven? Therefore, the story of the three Wandering Souls, who changed the record so that Hành Mãn could live to 3,000 years, is fictitious.

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481 In Chinese characters, thirty (三十) is different from three thousand (三千) by a small stroke.
Article 12

On the Custom of Erecting the Nêu Pole and Sprinkling Lime Powder on New Year’s Eve

The Western Scholar says: In this country, everyone from high officials to the commoner carries out the custom of erecting the Nêu pole and sprinkling lime powder for protection. What is this custom about?

The Eastern Scholar says: Buddhists tells the following story: Once upon a time, the demon and the Buddha competed with one another to see who would be superior in magic. First, the demon hid a small bird in his hand and posed a riddle to the Buddha: “Is this bird alive or dead?” If the Buddha said “alive,” the demon would kill it in his hand [before opening the palm]; if he said “dead,” the demon would release it alive. The Buddha could not answer the riddle, so he ran toward the door and put one foot outside the threshold and the other inside, and replied: “Am I going in or going out?” If the demon said “out,” then he would walk in; if the demon said {p. 204 (294)} “in,” then he would walk out. The demon could not answer him, so he got angry and threw the bird toward the Buddha’s head. As a consequence, a bird statuette is often mounted at the top-end of the monk’s walking stick. Next, they competed on sea-diving to see who could stay longer under the water. The demon dived first, but could not hold his breath

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482 See also Opusculum, Chapter 5, Article 6, p. 103 (Dror, pp. 211-12).  
585
for long. Then the Buddha dived; and he stayed under the water for such a long time that
snails clamped to his head. Hence, in Buddhist temples we see snails on the head of
Buddha’s statues.\textsuperscript{483} Then, the two competed in other games, and the Buddha won every
time. Finally, the Buddha and the demon competed for territory. While the demon was
still at sea, the Buddha ran to land first. Wherever he went, he erected a Nêu pole [to
claim his territory] and made bows and arrows with lime powder to shoot at the demon.
Consequently, whenever the demon sees the Nêu pole and lime-powdered bows and
arrows, he dares not to trespass on the territory, which the Buddha has claimed. The
Buddhists write these stories to show the power of the Buddha over the demon.

Once a year, people erect a Nêu pole. On the last day of the year (the thirtieth of
the twelfth month), they cut down bamboo to make a pole; then they tie bunches of gold-
paper money on the top-end of the pole and erect it in the front yard. They also sprinkle
lime powder at the gate entrance and around the house to mark the Buddha’s territory, in
order to ward off the demon. The Nêu pole will be displayed until the seventh day of the
New Year before it is taken down. This custom is repeated every year, as written in the
Buddhist sources.

\textit{\{}p. 205 (295)\}\textit{\}}

**The Western Scholar comments:** Buddhist books are written by devils that make up
legends to praise the Buddha, in order to entice people to believe in him. Whoever

\textsuperscript{483} Vietnamese statues of the Buddha often portray him with curly hair locks resembling a bunch of snails
(ốc). So it is the origin of the name “Bụt ốc” (snails on the Buddha’s head).
believes these stories will fall for the devil’s trick. If they say the demon cannot enter the Buddha’s territory, how it possible for those households with the Nêu pole and sprinkled lime powder to still suffer with illness caused by evil spirits? As a result, they have to call in the sorcerer to make amulets and perform ceremonies to drive the demons away. If a person erects a Nêu pole to mark the Buddha’s territory and arms himself with bow and arrows, but the demon is still able to enter his house to cause illness, then the Buddha does not really have any power to protect him. If the demon does not dare to enter the territories claimed by the Buddha, then why is it written in Buddhist books: “It is the same spirit that is called by different name: At home, we call it “Household Genie” (thổ công); on the field, “Soil Deity” (thổ kỳ); in the river, “Dragon King” (long vương); and in the Buddhist temple, “Dragon God” (long thần)? This spirit is the devil. If the demon can enter the Buddhist temple, then he is present everywhere, so the Nêu pole and the lime-powdered weapons are totally ineffective.
APPENDIX A

THE TEXT OF

TAM GIÁO CHỦ VỌNG

Annotated and edited by Anh Q. Tran
based on the Quốc-ngữ manuscript
AMEP Vol. 1098

Georgetown University

Last updated: 3/31/2010
PRELIMINARY NOTES

To make this document intelligible to non-specialists, I will follow the following editorial guidelines:

Orthography:
1. Quốc-ngữ words are left in the 18th-century original spelling. Refer to Appendix B for a comparison between different systems of Vietnamese spelling. As a general rule, the difference in 18th century and modern Vietnamese spelling can be summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the Text</th>
<th>Modern Spelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“~” = abbreviation of “-ng” ending</td>
<td>ng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ũ = u[ng]</td>
<td>ung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oũ = o[ng]</td>
<td>ông</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aũ = a[ng]</td>
<td>ong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uũ = uo[ng]</td>
<td>uông</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uơ = uo[ng]</td>
<td>uong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ml : mlở; mlề; mlơn</td>
<td>lồi; lề; lơn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bl : blởi; blở; blá; blai</td>
<td>tròi; trò; trà; trai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Abbreviations will be spelled out, with missing characters in bracket.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbrev</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Abbrev</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Abbrev</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n’c nh`</td>
<td>n[uô]c nh[ìeu]</td>
<td>ph’</td>
<td>ph[ài]</td>
<td>s.le</td>
<td>s[aõ] le</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ng`</td>
<td>ng[uôi]</td>
<td>ml`</td>
<td>ml[õi]</td>
<td>T. sì</td>
<td>t[áy] sì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.c</td>
<td>d[trä]c</td>
<td>ch`g</td>
<td>ch[ãn]g</td>
<td>l hòn</td>
<td>l[inh] hòn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.n th`g</td>
<td>d[nã]n th[án]g</td>
<td>ch</td>
<td>ch[un]g</td>
<td>h là</td>
<td>h[ay] là</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b’g</td>
<td>b[ãn]g</td>
<td>cũ</td>
<td>cu[ng]</td>
<td>ng`ta</td>
<td>ng[uôi] ta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r`g</td>
<td>r[ãn]g</td>
<td>m’nh</td>
<td>m[în]h</td>
<td>tr[uô]c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. In some cases, words are left in their original spellings to reflect different pronunciations. For example: “đàng, thì, vũ, ngoạt, huinh, nguyên, với, đều” instead of “duong, thoi, vo, nguyet, huynh, nguyen, voi, dieu.”
Other notes:

- The original pagination of the manuscript is inserted in the text. For example: /7/ means page 7.
- Scribal mistakes and alternate readings are noted.
- Punctuation is changed or added to clarify the meaning of a sentence, when necessary.
- Proper names are capitalized according to modern usage.
- Book names are underlined.
- Sino-Vietnamese phrases and quotations are italicized, and punctuation is added when necessary.
- I compare this manuscript with the Opusculum de sectis apud Sinenses et Tunkinenses (1750) and the Hội Đồng Tứ Giáo (1867 Nôm ed.) to ensure the best possible reading of Sino-Vietnamese phrases.
Trao nước Annam này có nho đạo thích tam giáo. Nho đạo là đạo oũ Khổ tử, Đạo giáo là đạo oũ Lao tử, Thích giáo là đạo Bụt Thích ca. Ba đạo ba đăng khác nhau. Đời nhà Trần, vua Chu Cao Tổ định tam giáo chỉ tiên hậu, đi nho vi tiên, đạo vi thứ, thích vi hậu.\(^1\) N[uơ]c Annam Trần Thái Tổ tam giáo giả. Mà khi các môn ba đạo ấy đã đến mừng vua Lý Nhân Tổ mới về Kẻ chợ như mlời traõ sách quốc sử r[ằn]g: ―Đế hoàn kinh sư nho đạo thích tịnh hiến hạ thi.\(^2\)

Ta là người ở phương thái tây traõ nước Italia đã sang bên phương đó này giảng giải đạo thánh ĐCB\(^3\) cho kẻ ở nước Annam này, kẻ hèn kẻ sang, kẻ già kẻ trẻ, d[uơ]c biết chính cha ph[ai]i thơ c[ung]g chính đạo ph[ai]i giữ mà ngày sau d[uơ]c phục ở trên thiên đàng đời đời chẳn g cùng. Ta bây giờ gặp Đồ sĩ hay chữ nghĩa và có nhân đức, thì mừng lắm bởi vì đ[ượ]c dịp tốt /ii/ mà biết cho tỏ mọi sự thuộc về tam giáo lại luận cù[ng] Đồ sĩ chính mlẽ về ba đạo ấy.


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\(^1\)定三教之先後, 以儒為先, 道為次, 釋為後 = Phân định Tam giáo trước sau, lấy đạo Nho giáo làm đầu, rồi đạo Lão, đạo Thích ca rốt het. Cf. Opusculum de sectis, p. 6. (Number refers to the pagination of the original manuscript, not Olga Dror’s translation).


\(^3\) Abbreviation of “Đức Chúa Blôi” (= Đức Chúa Trời)

\(^4\) Sự thật sự chẳng = sự thật sự giả dối.

\(^5\) 學者 不可以 不可也 = Người có học không biết đúng sự học thì không thể kế là người có học.

\(^6\) 物格而後知至 = Nghiên cứu thứ đầu đảo sự việc [vật cách] rồi mới đạt đến kiến thức [tri chỉ].
Nho giáo chư vương
Quyển thứ nhất

Tụa


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7 In the text, sometimes there are two ways of writing a word. For example, vong = vương or v.gmail. The “-” (tilde) is the abbreviation of the ending “-ng”; it often appears as ū = ung and ŏ = ông.

8 Đại học之道在明明德，在新民，在止於至善 = Dạo của việc học rộng thêm sáng tỏ cái đức sáng, đổi mới lòng dân, chỉ đúng ở mức toàn thiện. Cf. the Great Learning.

9 Modern spelling is “diều.”
Nho Giáo Chư Vạo  Mục lục

Đoạn thứ 1: Luận Thái cực sinh blòng đất
Đoạn thứ 2: Luận Bàn Cơ bồi ai mà ra
Đoạn thứ 3: Luận Thượng Đế là đấng nào
Đoạn thứ 4: Luận chính đạo bồi ai mà ra
Đoạn thứ 5: Luận hối thủy
Đoạn thứ 6: Luận tế thiên địa lục tổ
Đoạn thứ 7: Luận tế ngũ đức ngũ thần
Đoạn thứ 8: Luận lễ Hội Miêng cung lễ tế Cờ đạo
Đoạn thứ 9: Luận Thánh hoàng cung thượng trung hạ đặng thần
Đoạn thứ 10: Luận vua Dáơ, vua Trèm, vua Bạch Mạch
Đoạn thứ 11: Luận Táo quân, Thổ cương, Thổ chủ, Tiên sư
Đoạn thứ 12: Luận tế ôu Khổng cung các đại diện
Đoạn thứ 13: Luận tế ôu Thái Cô cung các đại tướng
Đoạn thứ 14: Luận tế tang tế ôu bà cha mẹ
Đoạn thứ 15: Luận sự địa lý
Đoạn thứ 1
Luận thái cực sinh bòi đất

Tây si viết: Sách sư có mlở [rẫng]g: Thái cực sinh lương nghi, lương nghi sinh tự tướng, tự tướng biến hóa, như thứ loại phồn (phồn)10 hì.11 Vậy ta hỏi Đồ sị r[ẵng]g: Thái cực là gì, 12 cử[ng] sinh lương nghi là thế nào?


Tây si lại hỏi Đồ sị r[ẵng]g: Thái cực tức khí, tức lý, ở traọ ml[ýn]h Bòi đất làm cho nên Bòi đất, dâ có tr[ô]c khi chủ ra có Bòi đất h[ay] là mới có khi Thái cực mới sinh ra Bòi đất ch[ẵng]?


10 “Phồn” is also pronounced as “phồn” (繁).
11 Tự giác兩儀,兩儀生四象,四象變化而次序繁矣 = Thái cực sinh ra hai thành tổ [âm dương], hai thành tổ này sinh ra bốn dạng thẻ [thái âm, thiên dương, thái dương, thiên âm], sau đó bốn dạng thể biến hoá ra những giống loài khác theo thứ tự.
12 Đì gì là cài gì là thế nào?
14 朱子云: 理為物之原也 = Chu Tử (Chu Hy) rằng: Lý là cơ trẻ mọi vật.
15 性理云: 太極只是天地萬物之理,在天地則天地有太極,在萬物則萬物中有太極 = Sách Tính Lý rằng: Thái cực chính là nguyên lý của trời đất; ở nơi trời đất nghĩa là ở trong trời đất có thái cực; ở nơi vật vật nghĩa là trong vật vật có thái cực.
16 Mòt là = chỉ là, nhưng là.
hữu hình tác hữu ấn, hữu nhất tác hữu nhi, hữu nhị tác hữu tam. 17 Thái cực mới có cụ[n]g một thi cụ[n]g Blợi dạt; vi ch[un]g ta đã nội tr[uóc]c này r[ặn]g: Thái cực ch[ặn]g phải là vât, bèn là vón vạt 18 ở trao m[ิน]h vật làm cho nền vật, cho nên thái cực ch[ặn]g ở đ[uộc]c một m[ิน]h khi chưa có Blợi /6/ dạt là hai vật cả sinh ra tr[uộc]c hết.


17性理云：惟為之曰‘太極生兩儀，兩儀生四象，四象生八卦’，其實一時具足，如有形則有影，有一則有二，有二則有三 = Sách Tính Lý ràng: Mạc dù nói “thái cực sinh ra lương nghi, lương nghi sinh ra tự tương, tự tương sinh ra bất quá”, thật ra chúng xuất hiện cùng lúc, như có hình tật có ảnh, có một tật có hai, có hai tật có ba.
18 Vón vạt = bàn vật, cốt lối.
20天主生太極。太極生兩儀，兩儀生四象，四象生八卦，而次類繁矣 = Thiên Chúa sinh thái cực, rồi Thái cực sinh ra âm dương, hai thành tổ này sinh ra bổn dũng thể, sau đó bổn dũng thể biến hoá ra những giống loài khác theo thứ tự.


Sau nữa nhà như láy sự kho[u]i làm đức làm tổ Blörü đặt thì hòp một ý cùng đạo Bụt và cùng đạo Laõ tử; vi ch[un] g hai dô ay hay láy sự hư kho[u]i làm bản côi rể mọi sự; cho nên traõ sach Trung Daõ Trân thì noi r[ân]g: "Thích chi di kho[u]i vi toù; Laõ tử dì vô vi toù" 25; và lại nhà như gọi ai dô ay là dì hoan hư vô tích diệt chi gia. 26 Và các sô sê ch[un] g nên láy sự hư kho[u]i làm đức, làm tổ Blörü dâ kẽ hòp một ý cùng đạo Thích-ca Laõ tử hay láy chư kho[u]i hư vô làm côi rể Blörü đặt mọi sự.

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22 维天则果然於上, 地则蔚然於下; 一無所為只以生萬物為事, 故易曰: 天地之大德, 明生 = Giữ cho trôi được chắc chắn như thế ở trên, cho đât được sống dục như thế ở bên dưới, độ không làm gi hồn là việc sinh ra van vật, bôi thế nên kính Dịch noí ràng: năng lúc lơn của trôi đât gọi là chữ sinh.


24 程子曰: 天地以虛為德, 至善者虛也, 虛者天地之祖, 天地從虛中來 = Trình Tự (Trình Di) nói rằng: Trôi đât lấy sự trông rộng (hu) làm năng lúc (dúc); cãi cùng dịch của thiên là trông rộng; cãi trông rộng là côi rể của trời đât; trôi đât từ trong cái trông rộng mà ra.

25 釋氏以空為宗, 老子以無為宗 = Đạo Thích lấy chữ không làm nền tảng; đạo Lão lấy chữ hư làm nền tảng.

26 異端虛無寂滅之教 = Đạo di doan, giáng lý của hư vô, tích diệt.
Đoạn thứ 2
Luận Bàn Cổ bởi ai mà ra


Đ[oũ] sì đáp việt: Ch[àn]g có mlể nào mà có Bàn cổ khi trách c[tập], vi ch[mu]g khi chửa có blọi 10/ dắt, át là ch[àn]g có nơi nào mà Bàn cổ ở đ[ử]c cho nên khi oũ Bàn cổ mới ra mới có mà thôi.

T[áy] sì lại hỏi Đ[oũ] sì r[ằn]g: Khi oũ Bàn cổ mới ra, bởi ai mà có, tự nhiên có, hay là bởi kẻ khác mà có?


Hồ thị viết: Ký hữu thiên địa tắc khí hóa nhi nhân sinh yên.


27 混沌之世天地始分, 即有盘古出 = Thời kỳ hồn đóm, lúc trời đạt bắt đầu phân chia, mới có Bàn Cổ xuất hiện.

28 Vị chung = bối lê.


30 無靈明無知覺 = Không có tính thiêng liêng sáng suốt, không có hiểu biết cảm xúc.

31 萬物之最靈 = Có tính chất thiêng liêng nhất trong van vật.

32 天地始分 = Lức trời đạt bắt đầu phân chia.


Đoạn thứ 3
Luận Thượng Đế là dòng
33 nào


598


47 The word “dắt” is written over “tôn.”

48 Dùng = dùng.


50 Khỏ chưu = khổ chầu nanh.

51 神之最尊 = bậc tôn kính trên hết các thần.

52 天地真主 = chú nhất của trời đất.

Đoạn thứ 4
Luận Chính Đạo Bởi Ai Mà Ra


53 敬上帝畏上帝 = kính thượng đế, nên sợ thượng đế.

54 孔子曰：督信好學，取死善道 = Khổng Tử nói ràng: Kiến định lòng tin mà ham học hỏi, gìn giữ đạo lành cho đến chết.


58 大學云：盖自天降生民，則既莫不與之，以仁義禮智信之性矣 = Sách Đại Học ràng: Vì trời đã sinh ra dân nên không thể không phù cho họ tính nhân nghĩa lề trí tìn.


Đ[oũ] sĩ văn viết: Đạo Nho có phi[ai] chính đạo bởi Chúa cả đường nên brutality đặt mà ra ch[ăn]g?

Tây sĩ viết: Sách sử chép: Nghiêu thì hòũ thủy thao thiên.

Đoạn thứ 5
Luận Hòũ Thủy


62 修身齊家治國至於平天下 = Tu sửa nhân thân, gin giữ gia đình, cai trị đất nước, cho đến đem lại bằng yên cho mọi người.

63 事上帝畏上帝 = Thờ phương Thường đức, kính sợ Thường đức.

64 堯時洪水滔天 = Thờ vua Nghiêu, nước lụt lên đến trời.

65 Should be “huyền khuê” (玄圭).

66 "甲辰六十有一載, 洪水為患. 思四岳舉鲧為司空司藝. 王子六十有九載, 閑治水續用弗成. 乙卯七十有二載, 使禹平水土. 壬亥八十載, 閑治水成功, 人丁九洲貢賦, 秉
Tây sĩ viết: Vậy ta phải xét đang khi nước lụt cả thể lâu năm, cao lên trên các núi; cho nên hòù thủy thao thiên, ngưoi ta giữ mình cho sóùi lâu sao d[uơc]. Bây giờ ch[ăn]g có nơi nào mà ở d[uơc], ch[ăn]g có đất nào mà cây cây d[uơc]. Lại bây giờ ai có tài có sức mà lập đất cho cao, đào đất cho sâu, cho nước chảy xuống mà để nơi cao cho khô. Trên cả và đất có nước lụt cả thể lâu năm thì ngưoi ta chẳng làm việc gì được cùng cỏ nữa, nhưng phải chết... llegar thây mà thôi.

Thuở xưa thật là có hòù thủy lụt cả và đất cho nên các ngưoi ta ở khắp mọi nơi thì chẳng chết hết. Có một oũ tên là Noe cùng bảy ngưoi nhà oũ ấy ở trảo một tàu khỏi chết mà thôi, vì chẳng phải là đời Đế Nghiêu đâu: Lụt cả đã phải đời oũ Noe hơn 100 năm trước đời Đế Nghiêu. Bởi vì đến sau Đế Nghiêu truyền lại sự lụt cả cho thứ dân biết xưa cả và thế gian đã phải lụt cả, cho nên đời sau ngưoi ta lấy sự Đế Nghiêu đã truyền làm sự mới có đời vua ấy mà mlầm lòi Nghiêu thì hòù thủy thao thiên, nhưng phải nói rằn: Noe thì hòù thủy thao thiên.

Lại có mlẽ mà suy rằn: Hòù thủy chẳng phải đời Đế Nghiêu, vì ch[un]g cứ sách Sử Ký oũ Vũ chưa sinh ra sao đã lấy đất Cửu Chu cho khỏi Lụt. Thử xem Đế Thuấn tiếp vị 67 mới phó cho oũ Vũ việc trao ấy năm thứ 72 Đế Nghiêu trị. Từ ấy Đế Nghiêu truyền lại sự lụt cả cho thứ dân biết xưa cả và thế gian đã phải lụt cả, cho nên đời sau ngưoi ta lấy sự lụt cả cho cao, đào đất cho sâu, cho nước chảy xuống mà để nơi cao cho khô. Trên cả và đất có nước lụt cả thể thì ngưoi ta chẳng làm việc gì được cùng cỏ nữa, nhưng là phải chết... llegar thây mà thôi.

Đ[oũ] sĩ viết: Oũ chép pho Cương giám đã sai r[ạn]g: Đại Vũ tại vị nhị thập thất niên, ph[ai] cùng uổ Chu tự chép Cương mục r[àn]g: Đại Vũ tại vị múi tên mà thôi. 68


Đ[ôũ] sì hỏi T[â]y sỉ: Lụt cả ph[â]i đối ouch Noe là thế nào?


Đ[ôũ] sỉ vàn: Ta lây ai làm kê dâ trây sang bênh đoũ ngày tr[uô]c nhât mà lâp ra n découvert Cựu Chu?


70 Should be “vô.”

71 湯湯洪水利統，炎炎懷山襄陵，浩浩滔天 = Cuốn cuốn nước lút đường làm hài. Mênh mong bọc núi trùm gò, man mà ngắt trời.

Đỗ sĩ lại hỏi Tây sĩ: Từ hòù thủy cho đến rày đã đ[ượ]c mấy nghìn năm, lại từ hòù thủy/blob lên 29/ cho đến khi/blob đất mới sinh ra thì mấy nghìn năm?


Đoạn thứ 6
Luận Lễ Tế Thiên Địa Lục Toũ

Tây sĩ viết: Nhà nho dạy tự thiên địa lục toũ cử [ng] mìn[ở]i, mà oũ Khỏu tự truyền sự ấy truyền raõ Kinh Thư. [Thiên] Lễ Chế viết: Tiên vương hoạn lễ chi bất đạt ư [thiên] hạ dã; cố tế đế ư giao sở dĩ định thiên vị dã; tự xã ư quốc sở dĩ liệt địa lợi dã.75 Traỗ Kinh Thư lại truyền r[ăn]g: Thuan tự loai vu thuơng[ng] đế, yên (nhạn)76 vu lục toũ, vao vu son xuyen, bien vu quan than, tu loai da, 77 loai yen vao gaiat te, cac y xa tu vi chi; co viet loai te lục toũ gia, vi te thi da, te hanh thu da, te nat da, te nguyet da, te tinh da, te thuy han da, te...

72祀天地六宗山川 = Tế trời đặt, “lục tổng” (các thần cai quản bốn miền khí hậu), và thần sông núi.

73 Đăng quan = các quan.

74 Should be “Lễ Văn” (禮 運), Chapter 7 of the Record of Rites (禮 祭).

75 故先王忠禮之不達於[天]下也，故祭帝之郊，所以定天位也；祀社於國，所以列地利也 = Các vua đời trước lo lắng về thế chê không đến được với những người ở dưới; vì vậy tế Thương Đế ở “giao”, đúng đây để định vị trí của trời; tế “xã” ở trong nước, đúng đây để sắp xếp lối ich của đất.

76 Also read as “nhạn” (禮).

77 舜肆類於上帝，禋於六宗，望於山川，過於群神，四類也 = Vua Thuấn dùng lễ “loai” tế thương để, lề “yên” tế lục tổng, lề “vọng” tế thần sông núi, lề “biển” tế các thần khác, đó là 4 loại tế. Hội Đông Tử Giáo (p. 9b) has a partial quotation: “lề vu lục tổng, vọng vu son xuyen.”


78 Modern spelling is “khâu” or “khuru” (丘).

79 玩禮望階祭, 各意社祀為祇. 故曰: 類祭六宗者, 謂祭時也, 祭寒暑也, 祭日也, 祭月也, 祭星也, 祭水旱也, 群神謂丘陵墓衍 = Các lễ “loi”, “ýên” và “vọng” là lập đản ở dưới đất mà kính. Lại nói thêm rằng: lễ tế dâng cho “lực tổng” gọi là tế thời gian, tế mưa lạnh và nóng, tế mặt trời, tế mặt trăng, tế sao, tế [thần lo về] lữ lối, hạn hạn; lễ tế cho các thần khác là thần gò, non, đất cao, đất trũng. Hội Đồng Tư Giáo (p. 9b) has a partial chart: “lực tổng là tế thời gian, tế hạn hạn, tế mặt trời, tế nghiệp dâng, tế thần gò, tế đất cao, tế đất trũng.”

80 帝作宮室之制, 遂作合帛祀上帝接萬靈, 作正教焉 = [Hoàng] Đế đặt phép tắc để xây cung điện, rồi sau đó kết hợp việc kinh và thờ Thường để và van thần linh, công bố chính giáo từ đấy.

81 Có lẽ có phép = có lý lẽ (tri khôn), có quyền phép.

82 性理云: 事知覺為之心; 又曰: 知覺便是心之德 = Sách Tinh Lý rằng: Việc gì có ý thức có cảm giác là có tâm, lại nói rằng, cảm thức chính là năng lực của tâm.


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83 Cử = theo vào, cây vào.
84 神 之 最 尊 = được tôn vinh nhất trong các thần thành.
Vì vậy chẳng nên lấy lễ vua đời trước đặt ra mà cứ, mà thờ thương cõi biết cụng bên dưới, và các /35/ vật ở trên biếu dưới dài. Vì vậy tiên vương thương cổ thì chẳng có lẽ nào mà đặt Lễ ấy cho thiên hạ cứ, là Lễ chẳng xứng cõi biết thương vương lập cực đạo triền hậu, một phài nghĩ cho vua ấy kính thờ một thiên địa chân Chúa là chính thương vương lập cực đạo trị thiên hạ, một phài nghĩ cho vua ấy kính thờ một thiên địa.

Tây sĩ viết: Khi người ta táng kẻ chết quen tế Hậu thổ, vậy ta hỏi Đỗ sĩ lễ ấy là sự làm sao?

Đỗ sĩ viết: Người ta làm lễ ấy vì chung sách Giáo lễ Chính hành dạy làm thể ấy.

Thuở xưa nhà Tần đặt ra lễ bốn mùa ngũ đế cõng ngũ thần, mà traõ ngũ thần có một tên là Hậu thổ cho nên Kinh lễ về sự tế bốn mùa chép rằn: Trung cử kỳ đế Hoàng đế kỳ thần Hậu thổ thần, ấy là người Câu Laõ xưa làm quan/H36/ Hậu thổ là hành ở giữa ngũ hành. Đến nhà Đàng vua Huyền Toũ định khai nguyên lễ cải tên thần ấy mà gọi là Hậu thổ thị. Đời nhà Tóũ ngôi Ôn Coũ là làm sách Lễ mà chẳng suy xét lễ nhà vua cõng lễ dân, mà cứ bản quốc khai nguyên mà đặt vào sách Lễ từ Hậu thổ thị. Từ ấy Gia lễ cứ làm như vậy: hễ có mồ táng thì tế Hậu thổ lại làm văn tế. Đến đời nhà Tóũ Hiế (Hiếu) Tóũ Chu Văn Coũ là làm sách Giáo lễ Chính hành mới cải Hậu thổ thị làm Địa thổ chi thần, mà dạy tế Địa thổ chi thần ở mồ bên hữu mà đọc văn rằn: Phụ mẫu táng ở đất này thì gìn giữ cho bằng yên. Ấy là lễ tế Hậu thổ bởi lễ tế thần /37/ chưa giống nhau Nhân tế chung cụng người Hậu thổ, Thiên tử có tế thiên mới được tế địa, quan dân cũng được tế thiên sao được tế địa: Sĩ thế chỉ gia hữu tự tắc tế thiên loại ý tế thương cụng đe.

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85 Thánh vương (vua Ngu vua Thuần) đạt ra tiêu chuẩn đúng đạo mà cai quản mọi người.

86 Ở khi vương, ở chung cụng vua là Hoàng đế, có thần là thần Hậu thổ.

87 “Khai Nguyên” (開元) is the reigning title of Tang Xuanzong during the years of 713-741.

88 A historical error. Should be “Hiếu Tông.”

89 Nhà chủ gia có thị tế thần địa chỉ thượng vương. Nhà chủ gia có thị tế thần địa chỉ thượng vương.
Đoạn thứ 7
Luận Lễ tế Ngũ Đế Ngũ Thần


Mùa hè ba th[án]g: th[án]g tư th[án]g năm th[án]g sáu, thuộc về nam phương. Vua Viêm Đế dĩ hòa đức vượng, mà người Chúc Đaõ là doùi chính; cho nên mùa hè tế đế Viêm Đế là xích tinh chi quân; tế thần Chúc Đaõ là hòa quan chi thần. Chúc Đaõ là người lể, cháu vua Xuyên Húc.


Vả lại tự thi ấy dã tế rôi ở nơi giao, vua quen ra rước mùa mới đến, mà v[j]e[c] ấy gọi là lập xuân, lập hạ, lập thu, lập doùi. Từ đời Tam Đại về sau thì tế thế ấy.

Sau núa thiên Nguyệt Lệnh lại dạy bốn mùa tế ngũ tự. Có 5 thần khác: mùa xuân tế Hổ thần; mùa hè tế Táo thần; mùa thu tế Môn thần; mùa doùi tế Hàn thần; trung trung tế Trung Lưu thần.

90 The word “thanh tinh” is written above “mộc đức”. It seems like the two are interexchangeable.
Hộ thần là thần giữ cửa người ta ra vào; thần ấy gọi là khí dương mùa xuân thì ở cửa, khí xuất sinh ra mọi sự; cho nên mùa xuân thì tế Hộ thần, mà tế thì lấy lá lách làm tiên các vật, lập đàn ở trầu cửa về bên tây.

Táo thần là thần bếp ở nơi người ta nấu ăn; mùa hè khí hỏa thịnh hóa khí âm đi, là lửa hóa độc mọi sự; cho nên mùa hè thì tế Táo, mà tế thì lấy phổi làm tiên các vật, lập đàn tế nơi gần bếp.

Môn là thần ngoài cửa người ta, thần ấy hóa khí thiếu âm, mùa thu thu lại mọi sự vào; cho nên mùa thu tế Môn, mà tế thì lấy gan làm tiên các vật, lập đàn ở bên tả cửa ấy.

Hành là thần nơi đàng cái người ta đi lại, gọi là thủy thần; mùa đông khí âm đi khí âm lại, thủy khí thịnh hàn, tế ngoài đàng, rước khí dương về; cho nên mùa đông thì tế Hành, mà tế thì lấy mục dục làm tiên các vật, lập đàn tế ở miếu môn ngoài.

Trung Lưu là thần ở giữa nhà, thần ấy ở trầu nhà người ta, gọi là thổ thần, là thần giữ đất ấy; cho nên rốt mùa hè ở giữa bốn mùa là trung ương thì tế Trung Lưu; mà tế thì lấy blái tim làm tiên các vật, lập đàn tế ở nơi đền hạ.

Từ tam đại về sau thì lễ tế làm vậy.

Vì bấy nhiêu sự có trao thiện Nguyệt Lệnh thì tóm lại như sau này: /42/

Mạnh xuân: kỳ đế Thái Hiệu; kỳ thần Câu mang; kỳ tự Hộ

Mạnh hạ: kỳ Đế Viêm Đế; kỳ thần Chúc Dáo; kỳ tự Táo

Trung ương: kỳ Đế Hoàng Đế; kỳ thần Hậu thổ; kỳ tự Trung Lưu

Mạnh thu: kỳ Đế Thiệu Hiệu; kỳ thần Nẫu mục (Nhục Thu); kỳ tự Môn

Mạnh đông: kỳ Đế Xuyên Húc; kỳ thần Huyễn Minh; kỳ tự Hạnh.


91 Mục Đức = thân.

92 Uncertain of meaning.

93 Should be “Nhục Thu” as in the previous section.
doạn thứ 14.

Vì vậy ph[ài] kính thờ cử[ng] tế lê thiên địa chân Chúa, thượ[ng] trí vô cùng, ph[ép]
tắc vô cùng, cai trị b[ằn] đời muôn vật làm cho bốn mùa thay đổi và cho nên mọi việc trên
bối duôi đất mà gìn giữ coi sóc ng[ười] ta mọi đàng.

Đ[oũ] sĩ viết: Lại có Lễ riêng tế Viêm Đế quen gọi là Thần Nông,94 sang mùa thu thì
xuí duy, là hạ điền; khi lên duy thì gọi là thượ[ng] điền; bấy giờ mọi làng mọi có tế vua
ấy, nhớ ơn thuở xưa ng[ười] làm cho thiên hạ đ[ượ]c biết làm rụõ cù[ng] cày cấy. Sách
sử chép r[rành]: Trắc mộc vi trĩ, nhu mộc vi lồi (lỗi), thủy giáo dân nghệ ngũ cốc nh[ì
noũ] sự hưng hĩ.95 Khi tế có đọc văn mà khen vua Thần Nh[ì]u nh[ì]ều, cù[ng] xin cho thiên
hạ đ[ượ]c mùa nh[ì]ều của b[ằn]g yên. Lễ ấy ở ch[ung] khắp mọi làng traõ cả và
nước này cử[ng] các nước thuộc về Trung quốc, xưa nay có lễ ấy mà ta chẳn
gì biết từ đâu mà có.

T[lý] sĩ nghĩ r[rành]: Nhớ ơn cử[ng] khen tài trí vua Thần Nh[ì]u truyền lại cho dân
Có một DCB giúp sức cho ng[uôi] ta cho đ[uô]c làm mọi nghề, cử[ng] cho đ[uô]c ruõ
cóc ngoại duy, của cái traõ nhà, b[án]g yên traõ lòng mà chổ. Nhân vì sự ấy troũ cây mà
tê lê vua Thần Nh[ì]u làm chi.

Đoạn thứ 8
Luận lệ Hội Miêng, cử[ng] lê té Cờ Đạo

T[lý] sĩ r[rành]: Traõ nước này mỗi năm mọi có làm hai Lễ cho traõ thế: một gọi là
Hội Miêng,96 hai gọi là té Cờ Đạo; vi vậy hỏi Đ[oũ] sĩ traõ hai lê ấy thì làm đi gì?
/46/

94 This is the only case where “ông” is not spelt as “ōũ” like in the rest of the manuscript.

95 斂木為耜，糅木為耒，始教民藝五穀，而農事興矣 = Vót gổ thành lư tỉ cây, uốn gổ thành cán
cây, bắt đầu dạy dân biết trồng ngũ cốc, từ đó việc dòng áng hùng thịnh lên.

96 Alternate spelling of “Hội Minh.”


Ây lễ hội miêng làm ở Kẻ Chợ là thế ấy. Sau nữa ở khắp mọi xứ quan tran thủ c[u]ng các quan ở xứ ấy cùng hội miêng nữa.


Đoũ sai viết: Ta bây giờ ph[аi] nói ra cho Tây sai biết Lễ tế Cờ Đạo đã hỏi ta trước này. Vậy đến ngày làm Lễ ấy thằng hai ở Kẻ Chợ chọn một chỗ rọi lại ngoại bài soũ

⁹⁷ Vị = thân vị. The text mistakenly has “vì.”

⁹⁸ The manuscript has “hào thiên” crossed out and written as “hoàng thiên.” In the Opusculum de sectis “hào thiên” is used as in the phrase “hào thiên thường đức.”

⁹⁹ The word “hoàng thiên” is written over “hào thiên” in the text.

100 及 諸靈神等 = và các vị thiền linh các cấp.
mà đặt đầy 36 bàn thờ, bốn năm đàn. Đệ nhất Hoàng thiên ngự, Hoàng địa kỳ; đệ nhị, Kinh Dương Vương, Lạc Laõ Quân; đệ tam, liệt vị tiên vương; đệ tứ, cờ đạo tả biên đản môn ngũ đế ngũ tướng; đệ ngũ, dĩ hạ: mỗi nhất đàn nhất đại thần vị, hoặc Tản Viên Sơn, hoặc Đỏũ Thiên Vương, hoặc Lý Oũ Trạõ, hoặc Khỏũ Lộ, Giác Hải bất năng tận kỳ.

Cờ đạo là cờ lớn đại tướng quen dùng, bởi đấy lễ này gọi là lễ tế Cờ Đạo. Ngày ấy Đức Chúa ngự nhà lầu ở gần đấy. Các quan vũ củng binh bầy ra ở bãi ấy. Bấy giờ quan tế vào chỗ các bàn thờ mà tế lễ thiên địa các vua chúa đời trước, ngũ đế ngũ tướng củng các thần, tạ ơn các dòng ấy đã ban ơn cho xưa nay lạiixin phù hộ cho nhà vua nhà chủ củng thứ dân được bambah mọi sự lành. Khi đã tế lễ rồi, có bắn óũ lệnh, đọạ n phất đại kỳ ở gần nhà lầu, mà các hiệu binh liền phất các cờ, lại bắn ống báu, mà các binh liền bắn súng trụ súng hiệp ba lần, và lại cầm lấy các khí giái mà làm bấy nhiêu sự, thì có ý xua đi các thần nghịch đảng đã làm ngụy củng vua chúa đời trước, kẻo mất sự bambah nước. Rồi lễ ấy các quan các binh hợp lại đến trước mặt Chúa, mà có nhiều kẻ đánh vật đánh cờ củng nhiều thể cho vui vẻ. Ấy là lễ tế Cờ Đạo ở Kẻ Chợ thì làm vậy. Vả lại các quan trấn thủ mọi xứ cũng một ngày ấy còn làm Lễ ấy nữa.


/50/

Xem thêm chi tiết về các quan trọng quan trong văn hóa và lịch sử của Việt Nam. Các vua chúa các thần đời trước để lập lễ tế với các vị thần nhục sự, để cầu mong sự bình yên cho dân tộc. Việc tế lễ này không chỉ nhằm tôn vinh các vua chúa mà còn nhằm ghi nhớ những sự kiện quan trọng trong lịch sử nước này. Việc tế lễ Cờ Đạo cũng là một phần quan trọng trong các lễ hội truyền thống của dân tộc, được kết hợp với các phong tục và tập quán địa phương. Đây là một phần quan trọng trong văn hóa và lịch sử của Việt Nam, được ghi nhận và truyền下来 cho thế hệ sau.

/51/

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101 The word “hoàng thiên” is written over “hảo thiên” in the text.

102 烈位先王 = các đẳng vua chúa có công đối trước.

103 見究左邊壇門五帝五將 = Công dân bên trái của kỳ đạo là [bàn thờ của] Ngũ đế và Ngũ tương.

104 Should be “Không Lở.”

105 第五以下 … 一壇一大神位 … 不能盡記 = từ [bàn thờ] thứ 5 về sau… mỗi đàn một bài vị của một thần lớn … không biết.

106 Đại = sọ.
Đoạn thứ 9
Luận Thành Hoàng cùng Thường ng [trong Hịa Đăng Thần


T[ây] sī r[ấ]n[g]: Đôũ sī dâ[ò]i nói có thò Thành hoàng có chức vua chúa phaõ cho thò, ấy vậy ta hỏi D[oư] sī: Vua chúa phaõ chức cho thò là thò nào?


107 Should be “thần vị.”

108 Modern spelling is bıc or bıc.

109 造 科 技 神 = phân đăng cấp để bất các thò.
thượng đẳng thần thì quan phụng sai ở Kê Chợ đến tế thần; ấy mới năm mới có làm lễ như vậy.

Tây sĩ nghĩ rằng:

Sự kính thờ cùng troũ kính một thần phù hộ gìn giữ làng nước thì chính phải. Sả lể cũ phải chọn lấy thần thật có có đức mà thờ, chẳng nên chọn lấy thần dối chằng có gì phép gì. Vậy phải chọn lấy một đấng trai các thần đẹp là ĐCB ở trên thiên đàng, vì chúng các đấng ấy thật là đáng ta kính ta cậy minden. Các bổn đạo ta ở khắp nơi hay chọn lấy mà thờ một oũ Thánh nào bà Thánh nào làm quan thầy thành làng ấy ở, cùng cậy ngư người gìn giữ phù hộ các kẻ ở đây.

Đoạn thứ 10
Luận Vua Đáõ, Vua Trèm, Vua Bạch Mã

Tây tự hỏi Dười si: Thần nào nổi tiếng trai các thượng đẳng trung đẳng hạ đẳng thần như này?

Đười viết: Vua Đáõ, Vua Trèm, Vua Bạch Mã, Chúa Liễu Hạnh trai các thần có tiếng lớn lớn.

Vây Vua Đáõ là Đười thiên vương. Đời vua Hùng vương thứ 6 trị vì, ở Tiên Du huyện có làng Phú Đou, có một oũ nhà giàu sinh Dười một con hom ba năm hay ăn uống lên nhưng chăng ngay hay nói. Thì ấy nước An nam có nhạc Vua Hùng Vương sai /56/ sứ rao trai các: có ai đánh đắc oũ mà đánh, cho đưa các chức ấy là phép qui làm, cho dụ của đối bất ngư oũ ta tin người ta tin người cậy. Vì vậy chảnh tin thờ Thánh Hoàng cùng các thượng đẳng đang trung đáng là thần nh[uõi] mà ma mà chô.


616
Trão quốc Trung Quốc, ngày sau Thủy Hoàng khiến Mả Diệm làm quan tư hiệu Tư Lệ Hiệu Úy. Ngày sau Thủy Hoàng khiến Mã Điềm đắp thành dãy nước Hung nô, khiến Lý Ông Trạo đến làm quan Tư Lệ Hiệu Úy. Ngày sau Thủy Hoàng khiến Mã Điềm đắp thành dãy nước Hung nô, khiến Lý Ông Trạo làm quan Tư Lệ Hiệu Úy, ngày sau Thủy Hoàng khiến Mã Điềm đắp thành dãy nước Hung nô, khiến Lý Ông Trạo làm quan Tư Lệ Hiệu Úy. Ngày sau Thủy Hoàng khiến Mã Điềm đắp thành dãy nước Hung nô, khiến Lý Ông Trạo làm quan Tư Lệ Hiệu Úy, ngày sau Thủy Hoàng khiến Mã Điềm đắp thành dãy nước Hung nô, khiến Lý Ông Trạo làm quan Tư Lệ Hiệu Úy.


Bây nhieu sự thuộc về ba thần trước này, có traọ sách Đại Việt Sử Ký.

Chúa Liễu Hạnh là con họ Lê sinh ra ở Sơn Nam xứ, Nghĩa Hưng phủ, Thiên Bàn huyện, An Thái xà. Đến khi đã lớn dọc di chơi các xứ. Đến xứ Nghệ An lấy chòũ sinh một con blai, dóan bô chào mà về An Thái xã làm con chơi bời. Liễu Hạnh hay hiện hình con gái đẹp đẽ; cho nên nhà Chúa phạọ cho làm Liễu Hạnh coũ cha, lại có tên là Chúa Thăng, lập đến tế tự. Ng[uố]i ta mới nói thơ Chúa Liễu Hạnh traọ nhà coũ[ng] gọi là Chúa thiên hậu. Lại có miêu thơ Chúa Liễu Hạnh ở xứ Nghệ An, Quinh Lưu Huyện ở nơi Cửa Tuần traọ Kênh Sắt. Đến khi ta luận sự Thủy Thụy sẽ nói đến các tích Chúa Liễu Hạnh cho đủ.

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111 Now is written as “Trung quốc.”
112 Missing the word “Lệ”; the complete title of this office is Tư Lệ Hiệu Úy (司 隸 校 尉).
113 Ngữ = án ngữ, chẩn lại.
114 Should be “Lâm Thao” (临 潍).
115 Also written as “Chém.”
116 Should be “chiệt.”
117 鋼 住 折 交 州 滅 = Trù dòng gây dò thì Giao Châu sẽ bị diệt.
118 The text has “hai” which is most likely is a scribal error.

Đoạn thứ 11
Luận Táo Quân, Thổ Coũ Thổ Chủ, Tiên Sử

T[ây] sỉ r[âm]: Ng[ô[i] ta hay thờ Vua bêp, vậy ta hỏi Đ[ou] sỉ Vua bêp là ai mà bồi đâu có thời thơ vua ấy?


Nhân vì sự ấy thế gian lập ra làm truyện cho xinh mà làm đồ vẻ vào, nguyên vì sự ấy:
Chòũ là /61/ Trường Cao, vợ là Thị Nhi. Vợ chòũ khi một, nói truyện cù[mong] nhau:
Cửa nhà ta giầu, giầu vì có lộc, lộc này ở ai, hai ng[ô[i] cãi dai, vợ r[âm]g lộc vợ, chòũ r[âm]g lộc chòũ.

Trưởng Cao giàn đánh, Thị Nhi để nhà mà đi, ngô[i] khóc ngã ba đàng, đầu tóc tả tơi:
Blôi ôi dắt ôi, chòũ tôi phụ tôi, tôi đề nhà cho, có lộc hay ch[âm], mai ngày mới biết, lọ tranh mới đ[cô]. Lộc thì bởi blôi, tiến duyên ch[àng] miâm, một m[in]h tương thâm, tương sự tâm tình, Blôi ôi đề đánh, quí vật quí nhân.
Blôi lại xây văn, tình cò gặp người, dân ôi tốt tươi, có chức có quyền, có phân có duyên, tên là Phạm Lang, Phạm Lang đi đàng, gặp Nhĩ hỏi han, đem về nhà quan, kết bạn phụ thê, và giàu và sang.

Trưởng Cao đã tăng, tài vaxter khó khăn, dân may nuôi nì, nó thì ch[âm]g biêt,
vợ mìn|h khi xureka, khi ấy đến nhà
biết lộc nh[un]g là, Phạm Lang đi săn
còn đi chưa về, một m[inh] Thị Nhi
ở nhà chiều đăm, nước mắt đăm đăm
lạõ thương chòũ tr[uó]c, /62/ com com n[uó]c n[uó]c
ruou chè thiết đái, ăn uống no say.
Phạm Lang săn về, Thị Nhi lệ thì
dài119 chòũ biết ch[àn]g, báo Trạo Cao r[àn]g:
Cô án neo nay, muốn sòõ nam nay
chui vào dòõ rác, chờ còn được lắc
Phạm Lang săn d[uó]c, cây cao houro nai
den dòõ với ng[uó]i, đốt lửa dùng dùng
thui vát son hào, chê đura Trạo Cao
Thị Nhi thương sao, thương lại nhây vào
lửa chay áo áo, Phạm Lang thương vô
tiế thay cuõú lão, lại nhây vào cú[ng]
dòú sinh dòú tư, chêt cõ và ba
cô dài trạõ nhà, tiếc chưa nhà m[in]h
dám dâu vào nayg, lửa chay cú[ng] thác.

nghi r[àn]g: Vua bèp là Táo thần. Sách ấy dạy tế mùa hệ kỳ tự tạo mà Táo thần nh[ùn]g
ph[ai] là quan Chúc Đao. Lại tế tạo, cho nên chếp r[àn]g: mạnh hạ kỳ để Viêm Đệ kỳ
thần Chúc Đao kỹ tự Táo. Ví vậy hệ có cõ bàn thi ph[ai] đom tè vua bèp; cõ gõi môi
dùa /63/ dâu về nhà chòũ cú[ng] lay vua bèp vung hổ nâu nương cho chín chán ngon
lành. Đèn ngày Tét dò tò tạo quan bên bèp.

T[ây] sí lui Đ[oũ] sí: Thời coũ Thời chủ là ai?

Đ[oũ] sí vié: Kinh Lể thiên Nguyệt Lệnh dạy giữ bốn mùa tự Trung Lưu là thần ở
giữa nhà mà gìn giữ ng[ùn]g gọi là thổ thần. Vì vậy ng[ùn]g làm thần Trung Lưu là Thời coũ.

Sách But hay bey dát nhiều dò nói r[àn]g: Dói xưa có một con hứm ở đất n[uó]c
g[uó]i làm hãi ng[uó]i ta ch[àn]g có ai đánh d[uó]c nó. Vua n[uó]c ấy có sắc ra cho
thiền hạ r[àn]g: Ai đánh d[uó]c hứm dër, thì cho làm quan. Bây giờ ng[uó]i họ Lê là Lê
Nhạn Don, Lê Nhân Đức, có 5 anh em bắt đánh d[uó]c con hứm ấy. Vua liên phao cho
năm ng[uó]i làm vua 5 phương: một là Đô phương Thanh đệ, hai là Tây phương Bạch
dé, ba là Nam phương Xích đệ, bốn là Bắc phương Hắc đệ, năm là Trung ương Hoàng đệ.
Đèn sau n[uó]c ấy thở làm Thời coũ.

119 Dài = sạ.

T[ày] sì hỏi D[ou] sì: Vì mlê nào các kề buôn bán các nghề nghiệp hay thờ tiên sự?


Đoạn thứ 12
Luận Lễ tế oũ Khâu từ cù[ng] các Đại Hiền


120 Also read as “Khâu” or “Khưu.”

121 Modern spelling is “Trọng Ni.”

122 学 事 明 德 新 民 止 於 至 善 = Học sự làm sáng tỏ được sáng, đời mới dân, chỉ đứng khi đạt đến mục tốt lành. Cf. the Great Learning.
lạy bất điều là quỉ mờ, là vật cách nhau tri chì; tri chì nhau ý thành; ý thành nhau tâm chinh; tâm chinh nhau tu thành; tu thành nhau gia tế; gia tế nhau quốc trí; quốc trí nhau thiên hạ bình.\(^{123}\) Khourke từ sốu d[barang]c 73 tuổi là năm Chu Kinh Vương tự thấp nhất niên.

Vi vậy ơi Khourke từ có coũ rất trau c[barang]ng nhà nhọ, c[barang]ng nhà vua, và thiên hạ ở phương doù nay cho nên xưa nay ch[barang]ng nh[barang]ng là nhà nho khinh ơi Khourke tự, mà lại đang làm vua c[barang]ng thứ dân hay thọ ơi Khourke tự nhọ. Lưu thời viết: Tự thiện tự chì tự thực nhân, mặc bất sung\(^{124}\) phương lịch thiện du nhiên, vị hữu như Khourke tự chì thân giá, khi\(^{125}\) phi quan thanh phụ tử tự nhân nghĩa lệ nhạc chì giáo / 69 = 67\(^{126}\) tùy man màch chì bang bất khả tự tu (tu du)\(^{127}\) xã (xả)\(^{128}\) hò.\(^{129}\) Hán Cao tổ quá Lỗ di thái tao (thái lao)\(^{130}\) tổ tự (tư)\(^{131}\) Khourke từ.\(^{132}\) [Hán Hậu để truy thủ Khourke tự vị Bao thành hâu Tuyên Nơi coũ].\(^{133}\) Đặng Huyền Toùi truy thủ Khourke tự vị Văn Tuyên Vương. Tống Thái Tổ chiếu tang chấp (thập ?) tự vô tổ hội Thiên Thánh Thiên Sử chỉ tương tự vị tân thượng tự Khourke nhan chì


\(^{124}\) The word “sùng” is written over “toũ (tông)” in the text.

\(^{125}\) Modern spelling is “khợi” (豈).

\(^{126}\) Manuscript pagination is 69, which is out of order. It should be 67.

\(^{127}\) Scribal error. It should be “du” (須臾).

\(^{128}\) The character 舍 is pronounced as “xá” or “xã”; it is often used for the character 拾 (xá).

\(^{129}\) 自天子至於庶人, 莫不崇奉曆千餘年未有如孔子之盛者, 豈非君臣父子仁義禮樂之教, 雖蠻貊邦不可斯須臾捨乎 = Từ vua đến dân, chẳng có ai không tôn kính, thô phương trong cả ngàn năm nay, chưa có ai sáng bằng Khourke tự, há chẳng phải là do giáo thuyết quân thần, phụ tư, điều nhân nghĩa lẽ nhạc sao. Đâu là các nước chưa hai hòa cùng không thể vứt bỏ [lệ nhạc] trong chắc lát.

\(^{130}\) Should be “thái lao” (太牢).

\(^{131}\) Should be “tư” (祀).

\(^{132}\) 漢高祖過魯以太牢祀孔子 = Hán Cao Tổ đi qua đất Lỗ dùng lễ thái lao (lễ tam sinh) cùng Khourke Tứ.

\(^{133}\) The manuscript left out one phrase that is preserved the Opusculum de sectis (p. 12): 漢后帝追諡孔子為褒成侯宣尼公 = Hán Hậu Đế truy phong Khourke tự là Bao thành hâu Tuyên Ni Công.
tọa đoan. 134 TỔ Chân Toũ gia thi vi Huyền Thành Văn Tuyên Vương, hưu chiếu chu thành tác Khểu tư miêu. Nguyên Vũ Tổ gia phajo Khểu tư vi Đại Thành Chí Thành Văn Tuyên Vương. 135


T[ży]y sĩ lại hỏi D[oũ] sĩ: Khi nhà Nho tế oũ Khểu tử cùng các hiền ấy là thể nào?


Thập Triệt là [...] /71 = 69/138

/72 = 70/


134 Tương Trì Trì văn chi quần , sau Tri đại tử giáo (?) chủ trì hợp phô sao không Việt phi, sao thiết vương khả vấn tước đồ của chưn thành hiển như từ thiện, từ lợi dài tận đường về Khểu Tư Nhan Hội đất trên ngài thờ.

135 Tương Trì Trì văn chi quần , sau Tri đại tử giáo (?) chủ trì hợp phô sao không Việt phi, sao thiết vương khả vấn tước đồ của chưn thành hiển như từ thiện, từ lợi dài tận đường về Khểu Tư Nhan Hội đất trên ngài thờ.

136 Thương đình = day of the sign “dính” (丁) in the first week of the second and eighth lunar month.

137 Lương Khých Trì tài công... như tự ở lễ = Kinh độ và các châu (tinh) tế ông Thái Công... như lễ tế Khểu Tư.

138 This page is blank.
Đoạn thứ 13
Luận Lễ tế ôu Thái Coũ cừ[ng] các Đại Tướ[ng]


\[139\ V_i = \text{thắn vị, bài vị.}\]

\[140\ \text{今 未 来 日 事 于 先 前 懇 告} = \text{Chân thành báo rằng sáng ngày sắp đến sẽ tế Tiên Thánh (Không Tứ).}\]

\[141\ \text{Tính sinh (省牲)} = \text{xem xét các thú vật đánh để cúng tế.}\]

\[142\ \text{Now is written as “vô.”}\]
Đòου sĩ viết: Đặng Huyễn Tốu khai nguyên thập cửu niên so lệnh vương kinh [chu] chu các tri Thái Cô miếu đời Tương [Lương] phối hưởng, tuyễn có danh tựở[n]g dĩ vì thập triết, dĩ nhị bát ngọt thường[n]g mới143 tri thế như Khậu Túc lệ. Vì vậy các quan vù cử phép ấy thì tế oũ Thái Cô vuội Tương Lương, Tôn Vũ Tù là nhị phối cử[n]g nuôi hai tuổi[n]g khác mà làm lễ cho trách thể, th[án]g 2 th[án]g 8 ngày thường mò (mẫu). Ở Vũ Miếu có tướng oũ Thái Cô cùng các tuổi[n]g ấy.

Tôi ấy sĩ hỏi Đòου sĩ: Oũ Thái Cô cùng Tương Lương có coũ trách bên vũ cóũ là thế nào?

Tây sĩ hỏi Đòου sĩ: Oũ Thái Cô cùng Trương Lương có coũ trách bên vũ cóũ là thế nào?


143 The text has “thường mò.” According to Trần Văn Kiệm, “mò” is a nöm pronunciation of “mẫu,” the fifth of the ten heavenly stems (giáp, át, bính, dinh, mẫu, …). In Opusculum de sectis, Adriano di St Thecla also writes “thường mò.”

144 Since the text is damaged in two spaces, I take the liberty to fill out the blanks. 唐 玄 宗 開 十 九 年 初 令 王 京 [諸] 州 各 置 太 子 廟 以 泽 [良] 配 享, 選 古 名 將 以 位 十 哲, 以 二 八 月 上 戊, 置 祭 如 孔 子 禮 = Dấu năm thứ 19 đời vua Dương Huyền Tông, có lệnh truyền ở kinh đô và [các] châu đều dụng miếu Thái Công đặt Trường [Lương] cùng hưởng cùng tế, chọn trong các danh tướng đời xưa lấy 10 người khôn ngoan lập bài vị [mẫu], tháng 2 tháng 8, ngày “mẫu” bài có tế như tế đức Khương Túc.

145 以 年 八 十 餘 養 於 為 泽 水 = Hom 80 năm ngôi cữu ca ở sông Vị.

146 尊為太公 = tôn lên làm ông Thái Công.

147 Should be “thành.”
thần thì từ chức bỏ sự thế gian xin đi tu ở trên núi cù ng thần tiên ở đấy cho đến khi chết là năm thứ sáu vua Huệ Đế. Đến đời nhà Áp Túc Tộ pháo cho làm tiên vương.

Tôn Vũ Tử là tướng nước Ngô.
Muội hai tướng ở nhiều đời nhà vua như như trả bàn đô sau này.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Từ tạo tử ngoại gia Miếu</th>
<th>Tà vương ngoại gia Miếu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hạn Thừa tướng Vũ hương hầu Gia Cát Lượng</td>
<td>Tà vương ngoại gia Miếu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tề Đại tư mã Điền Như vương Thư</td>
<td>Ngô Từ vương Tôn Vũ Tử</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nguyên Ý Liễu Tự</td>
<td>Hạn Lưu hầu Tướng Tiến Sinh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hạn Hoài âm hầu Hạn Tín</td>
<td>Hựu vương ngoại gia Miếu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Đặng Thái Ý Trưng Thư Lệnh Phán Thứ quân nước Philippe</td>
<td>Quách Tư Nghị</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minh Thành ý Bá Lưu Cơ</td>
<td>Minh Thành ý Bá Lưu Cơ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vũ Miếu 
Chiếu Liệt
Vũ Thành Vương
Chính vị Miếu nội

Tà vương ngoại gia Miếu

- Trần Thái sự hung Đạo Đại vương Trần quốc Trân (Tuân)  
- Đặng Tây Bình vương Lý Thịnh
- Tố Thái Ý Trịnh vương Nhạc Phi
- Tề Tướng quốc Quân Trạo
- Ngụy Tây Hà Thù Ngô Khi
- Đặng Tư đồ Vệ quốc coũ Lý Thịnh

Hựu tạo tử ngoại gia Miếu

67 = 75  
Tây sĩ nghĩ rằng:
Quan vương kinh thò các tướng[vng] ở Vũ miếu, ấy là có ý cho các tướng[vng] ấy phù hộ cho mình đánh giặc d[vng] chiến. Sự a vư các tướng ấy ch[áng] có

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148 Manuscript is blank here. The description is written on a lose page at the end of the book.

149 Historical error. Should be “Trấn quốc Tuân.”

150 In the text, the materials in pages 67 and 68 are inserted in between pages 76 and 77, so I have to renumber them accordingly.


Đoạn thứ 14
Luyện Lễ táng tế cha mẹ ố bà

T[áy] s[í] r[ân]g: Con cháu hay ra sức táng tế ố bà cha mẹ cho traõ thể; vay ta hỏi Đ[oũ] s[í] con cháu làm lê ố là thế nào?


151 I am uncertain of the words.

152 Triêu diên thích diên (朝 奠 夕 奠) = cừng com sôm tôi.
thương thục. Một tháng 2 tuần sóc vắng cự[ng] như triều diên là dom combуча sóm, mà
dom còn tiếc ây cho dù ba th[ăng].

Đến ngày đi tang thì tr[uộc]c ph[ai] ruốc hồn bách đi chào tổ: nghĩa là khi sở[ú] có đi
dau thi có lỡi cự[ng] kể cả khi ây cự[ng] vậy, cho nên ph[ai] đi đến nhà tổ sinh ra
m[ihn] mà chào tổ. Đoạn lại đem dom bách về linh toạ, đoạn tế chuyển cự ra
nhà. Thành sự dem gióng [linh toạ] ra bấy cở dom té. Đây Gia Lễ tiếp kinh
cự[ng] bắt chước Cao Cổ[ú] kháo vân ngơ sắc có mái liều xa 153 cho vao hồn, nghĩa là mua
nhà tang cho vao hồn làm nhà ở dưới âm phủ. Thủy dẫn viết sắc (?) đặc (?) cự[ng] tén là
nhà tang. Khi mái liều xạ có tế văn r[ăn]g: Thông duy phu hoặc mẫu vĩnh đặng yềm khi, tự
tăm chỉ sau /79/ thiết như vấn, diển tính chi lẽ thủy nước vư, kim mãi đặc liều xa kinh vi
vư thân, có nguyên báo thú an ư, ti khăn lưu hậu dư, kiến cáo.154

Tế rồi liên dem cự đồn dài dur, lại tế straightforward, nghĩa là tế đư thân, là thân giữ kê đì
xa, xin thần ấy phu hộ cho d[uộc]c b[ẩn]g yên keo kinh sở. Gia Lễ Tiếp Kinh lại thêm ra
cáo tế đao lỗ, là tế thân ở ngoài đằng, bày dạt r[ăn]g: Thân dao lộ là Lao Tổ đao chỉ thân.
Chúc văn có câu r[ăn]g: Cảm chiều cao vu ngũ phương đạo lộ chỉ thân. 155 Nắm phương
là doủ tả nam bắc cự[ng] trung ương, xin thần đao lộ giúp đỡ sách cho nghiêm. Cảm triệt
yếu phần ti linh xa yên ộn. Lại có chịu văn r[ăn]g: Cảm chiều cao vu ngũ phương Đạo lộ
(lỗ)156 chỉ thân Ngũ đề, tri coũ lao sự giả Thọ đa đặng thần kim N[omen] 157
chính hồn 158 cho hồn d[uộc]c vê b[ăn]g yên. Nhược b[ăn]g dí thuyết thì tế Hà Bá thủy quan. Dì
dàng /80/ có nghi đầu thì tế dây goi là tế trung đỗ. Hoặc qua ngã ba đằng thì lại tế tam kỳ
lỗ là tế Thần Tam Kỳ Lỗ. Khi đã hạ cự xu[ông]ng huyệt lấy minh tinh phù trên cựu. Hạ
thô pha đường d[uộc]c não thì tế Hậu Thổ ở mồ bên hữu. S[aõ] le khi chịu táng, thì coũ159
khai

153 I am Uncertain of the meaning. “Liêu xa” maybe another form of “ling xa.”
154 This is my attempt to supply the Chinese characters: 痛如父或母样, 情气(?) 子心之切如
云, 面精之液垂若雨, 今得柳车, 敬为于亲, 故愿保守安居, 俾庆流后裕, 俗告 = Than
oí, vong linh cha (hoạch mẹ) som lía, nội đâu đào cát lòng như mây, nước mất đắm dia sắc mắt tổ như mưa.
Hơn nay mưa được xe nhã tang, kinh đャ cha mẹ đã khai, nguyên xin ngoài quá có được báo vẻ gin giữ,
như ở đước yên, khiên thực quyền con cháu đổi sau. Kính xin cáo.
155 敢昭告于五方道路之神 = Dám xin thưa rỗ với thiên đường xa ở nam phương.
156 Should be “lỗ” (路).
157 Here inserted a Latin abbreviation N, short for Nomen or name of the person.
158 敢昭告于五方道路之神五帝, 知功使者土地等神 = Dám xin thưa rỗ với
thiên đường xa ở nam phương là Nguyên Đế, xin nhờ đến công lao của các thần đó dia được sai hổ tông N
chính là hồn của người mới mất.
159 Should be “coũ (công)” (功).
huyệt cũ [ng] đã tế Hậu Thổ xin thần phứ hổ táng cho yên. Đến khi táng lập đạt nửa mùa, lại tế Thổ Địa chi thần.


Từ ấy về sa cơ dom té thi cú [thần] chủ. Vây có cơ té thì bày ngay, 30 ngày, 50 ngày, 100 ngày là ngày làm chay để có dom té cho traõ thể. Lái ngày 14 th[ûng]g tur, ngày râm th[ûng]g nâm, ngày 16 th[ûng]g sau làm hè. Lái th[ûng]g bấy hai nâm /83/ làm bóni giôi là tiêt

160 敢昭告于N形歸反(?) 神反室登 神主既安 伏惟尊靈扱舊從新 是憑是依 = Dám xin thưa rõ với N _, xác đã bố lại đang sau, hồn trở về ngại trong nhà, thần vị đã an định. Cúi xin linh hồn bố cữ (hồnbach) mà theo mới (thần vị), xin dừa vào ngày (= thần vị) tương vào ngày.

161 骨肉歸于土魂氣則無所不之 = Xương thịt đi vào đất, hồn khi tất chẳng có chỗ mà đi.

162 主人以下皆出 = Chủ nhà và những người dưới đều đi ra.

163 Modern spelling is “hiệp/hợp môn” (合 門).

164 Modern spelling is “lễ thành” (禮 成).
trung nguyên, lại giỗ đầu là tiều tưởng gọi hết là đại tưởng. 27 tháng thì tế đâm liên đoạn tang. Từ ấy về sau cứ một năm một lần là giỗ gọi là ngày đôi kỵ cho đến hết năm mới dời chủ ấy đi mà chẳng giỗ nữa. Bấy nhiêu sự về sách Gia Lễ bày ra về sự dom tế cha mẹ tổ tiên.


165 Phúc = dữ tang.


165 Phúc = dữ tang.


168 It should be “chi” (之).


T[ány] si hội D{oũ} si: Vua victorious quan cử[ng] dán có miêu thì tổ toũ ch[ăn]g?


Chu Văn Côũ làm sách Gia Lễ Chính Hành thiên Thoũ Lễ có vẻ đội nhà tự đứng bằng. Trao gian giuong giutra, về bền ta thì tổ cao tổ khảo, mà cao tổ ti về bền hữu, hai oũ bá áy gân nhau cử[ng] một nữa giuong giutra áy; về bền hữu /88/ thì tổ tổng tổ khảo mà tăng tổ ti thì về bền ta, hai oũ bá áy gân nhau cử[ng] một nữa giuong giutra áy. Tổ khảo thi tổ ở giuong nhâ về bền dou, tổ tự cử[ng] một giuong áy về bền hữu gán giương

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169 Thích thi pháp = pháp môn nhà Phật.
171 This is a slight alteration from verse 26 of chapter Royal Regulations (王制) of the Record of Rites: 天子七廟, [左] 三昭 [右] 三穆, 與太祖之廟而七, 諸侯五廟 [左] 二昭 [右] 二穆, 與太祖之廟而五. 大夫三廟, [左] 一昭 [右] 一穆, 與太祖之廟而三. 士一廟 (即考廟, 士無太祖廟) = Hoa ng để được dùng 7 miêu, hằng “chiều” (= các tổ đội 3, 5, 7) bên trái 3 miêu, hằng “mục” (= các tổ đội 2, 4, 6) bên phải 3 miêu, kể cả tổ miêu là 7; chủ hầu được 5 miêu, hằng chiều bên trái 2 miêu, hằng mục bên phải 2 miêu, kể cả tổ miêu là 5; quan đại phụ được 3 miêu, hằng chiều bên trái 1 miêu, hằng mục bên phải 1 miêu, kể cả tổ miêu là 3; sỉ phụ chỉ có 1 miêu (là miêu thờ cha mẹ, sỉ phụ không được có tổ miêu).


\textit{T[áy] sì lăi hôi Đ[ōu] sī:} Con cháu dom để cha mẹ ợu bà, có cậy tổ tiên sẽ phù hộ cho con cháu đ[uơc] của cải chức tước ch[ān]g?

\textit{Đ[ōu] sī việt:} Con cháu thật là có tin cậy thế ấy cho nên ra sức dom để cha mẹ ợu bà cho trảọ thế.


\textsuperscript{172} Cao tổ khảo/thò ti = ky ông/ky bà (5 đổi); tăng tổ khảo/thò ti = cử ông/cu bà (4 đổi); tổ khảo/thò ti = ông/bà nội (3 đổi); khảo/thò = cha/mẹ đã qua đổi (2 đổi).

\textsuperscript{173} 百世不遷 = trăm đời chẳng thay đổi.

\textsuperscript{174} 君頌田池土宅…以供祭祀 = Vua cấp choирует những ao cá, đất đại nhà cửa… dùng đó mà cùng tế thờ phương.

\textsuperscript{175} Modern spelling is “ngợi.”

/91/

Đoạn thứ 15
Luận sỹ Địa Lý


176 Historical error. It should be “Hy Tông” since there is no emperor “Ký Tông” in the Tang dynasty.

177 Historical error. It should be “Lương Thái Tộ.”

\textsuperscript{178} Modern spelling is “khỡ.”
Đạo Giáo Chư Vượng
Quyển chi nhị

Từ

Đạo Lão Tử, đạo Thích Ca là dị đoan hư vô tịch diệt chi giáo. Hai đạo ấy trái nghịch cuộc đạo lý mọi đẳng chưởng có sự lành hợp một ý chính đạo, hay một mưu lo nhều chức, cứu nói nhều đều đối bất mà cảm dỗ kẻ ngu dân theo nó, cứu làm cho nhließ ngưới ta quan.fold trí lại, mà lạc mất đẳng chính nhân đức. Kẻ muốn dối mà cám dỗ kẻ dân theo nó, cũng làm cho nhließ người quân tử tối trí lại, mà lạc mất đàng chính nhân đức. Người trước bày ra một chút, người sau sinh sự ra nhiều cho nên thành lệ. Kẻ hậu sinh retal người ta cứ lệ luật đời xưa thói tục làng nươc cha tổ lập ra vịn lấy mà làm; ai chăng cung như làm vậy thì bắt lỗi cũng dốt nát, cho nên ai nấy tập dữ tính thành chằng còn suy xét sự trái ấy nữa. Vì vậy ta dạy traõ hai quyển sau này, phải suy luận những sự vشاء phi tà thuyết hai đạo dị đoan Lão Tử Thích Ca bày đặt, cho người ta biết cho tỏ mà bỏ cho dứt, cũng lánh cho xa các quyền mưu thuật số hai đạo dị đoan ấy, kẻo làm mất mình đời này đời sau chằng cũng.

Người trước có bô bày ra một chút, người sau sinh sự ra nhiều cho nên thành lệ. Kể hâu sinh rần, ta cứ lệ luật đời xưa thói tục làng người ta cứ lệ luật đời xưa thói tục làng; ai chăng cứu như làm vậy thì bắt lỗi cứu chăng rần không sát, cho nên ai nấy tập dữ tính thành chăng cũng cung suy xét sự trái ấy nữa. Vì vậy ta dạy traõ hai quyển sau này, phái suy luận những sự vشاء phi tà thuyết hai đạo dị đoan Lão Tử Thích Ca bày đặt, cho người ta biết cho tỏ mà bỏ cho dứt, cứu như chăng lên đó cho xa các quyển mưu thủ thuật số hai đạo dị đoan ấy, kẻo làm mất mình đời này đời sau chăng cứu. Traõ quyển thứ hai này ta sẽ suy xét sự vشاء với đạo Lão Tử cứu như vشاء khác có hình như sự đạo thật.

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179 异端虚无寂灭之教 = thuyệt hư vô, tích diệt là giáo thuyệt khác lạ.

180 Hay một = hay.

181 Tập dữ tính thành (習與性成) = tập theo thành thói quen.

182 Quyển mưu thủ thuật số = quyển phép, điều bày vẻ vẻ phù phép, bị toan.

183 Có hình= mang vẻ, tương tự như.
Đạo Giáo Chư Vạõ Mục lục

Đoạn thứ 1: Luận Lão Tử lập ra đạo Đạo / 98
Đoạn thứ 2: Luận đạo Đạo bởi Trương Nghi Trương Giác mà sáng ra / 101
Đoạn thứ 3: Luận việc Thầy Phù Thủy làm chữa người ta / 106
Đoạn thứ 4: Luận 12 Thần Hành Kinh / 110
Đoạn thứ 5: Luận Cửu tinh cùng Thiên Lôi / 113
Đoạn thứ 6: Luận ngày giờ tốt xấu / 117
Đoạn thứ 7: Luận sự Hà Báb thủy quan, Phạm Nhan, Liễu Hạnh / 121
Đoạn thứ 8: Luận sự Bói / 125
Đoạn thứ 9: Luận sự xem số cùng xem khoa / 219
Đoạn thứ 10: Luận ngũ tinh / 133
Đoạn thứ 11: Luận sự xem tướng cùng xem giờ / 136
Đoạn thứ 12: Luận sự Nhật thực Nguyệt thực / 139-140
Đoạn thứ 1
Luận Lão Tử lập ra đạo Đạo


Vậy ta hỏi Đ[oũ] đấng nào lập ra đạo Đạo?


Vậy ta hỏi Đ[oũ] đấng nào lập ra đạo Đạo?


Vậy ta hỏi Đ[oũ] đấng nào lập ra đạo Đạo?


Vậy ta hỏi Đ[oũ] đấng nào lập ra đạo Đạo?


Vậy ta hỏi Đ[oũ] đấng nào lập ra đạo Đạo?


184 Cú = theo.

185 Mặc Diệc = Mặc Dịch (墨 翟).


187 Nén = đuổi, lơn.

188 Tục ngữ = tục truyền.

189 Here Hội Đồng Tứ Giáo has “giáp dẫn nguyên niên.”

190 Sĩ giới người(TEXT) = Sĩ giới người(TEXT)

191 Hội Đồng Tứ Giáo, p. 13a.

192 Sĩ giới người(TEXT) = Sĩ giới người(TEXT)


Đoạn thứ 2
Luận đạo Lão bởi Trương Nghi Trương Giác mà sáng ra

Tây sử hỏi Tôi sử: Ai làm cho đạo Lão Tử sáng ra?

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194 Should be “trú” (祀).

195 祭祀醮祭之法 = Phép cầu thần linh, cùng tế người chết.


198 用此數者 曾何補於治道哉 = Dùng những phương thức ấy, thì bù đắp được gì cho đạo cai trị?

Lại bên Bụt báy đất r[ân]g: Ngọc Hoàng là con vua Quang Nghĩm Diệu Lạc199 quốc vương, vò là Bâu Nguyệt Quang.200 Bội ch[ân]g có con liên năm chiều bao thầy Nguyên Thủy Kiện Đạo quan âm một con blai dựa cho nãng Nguyệt Quang. Nguyệt Quang thuc dạy liền có thai, năm sau th[â]ng giêng mới sinh d[uôc]c con blai đất tên là Ngọc Hoàng.


199 Variation of Diệu Lạc (妙 樂).
200 Bâu Nguyệt Quang = Bào Nguyệt Quang (寶 月光).
201 Should be “vẽ.”
vào nước đem đi mà chữa người ta cho nên người ta đến xin bùa. Nó lại xưng rằng: 

Mình là Đại Hiền Lương Sư. Vì vậy bởi đứa Trưởng Giác làm phù thủy cho đầy tớ nó ra mọi nơi mọi có truyền. Đến đời nhà Đàng làm sách Âm Dương Tạp Thu
nh[ieu] sự ngoa nguy vu yêu vào ngọn trạch địa tuyển thì dĩ hi phú quí, ng[uôi] ta theo dõi cho đến đời nhà Tố nhà Nguyên.

Tây sĩ hỏi Đỗ sĩ: Trao n[uôi]c An nam này từ đời nào mà có phép phù thủy?


202 偽詐 巫 妖 望 言 宅地 迴時 以 希 富 貴 = những điều đời trá, đồng bông kỳ quặc, những lời nói enhancements [như] chọn giờ tốt để chọn thì hy vọng được phù thủy.

203 Đại Đức ngũ niên... Hung Long thập niên = năm thứ năm thời Đại Đức... năm thứ 10 thời Hưng Long.

204 Giang Tân = bên sông.

205 Đại Trị thập nhất niên tuế thứ mất thân = năm mất thân là năm thứ 11 thời Đại Trị.
Đoạn thứ 3
Lươn việc Th[ây] Phù Thủy làm mà chữa người ta


D[ou] sỉ viết: Lai có ké làm hình tương mò nhûn207 h[ay] là con mòi208 mà khiêen nó đê đênh nhã ng[uối] ta là làm hai cho ké ây, nhû thê nên đôm traô nhã, bô cá tê vôi nói, đôm /109/

206 Đôm canh = đôm kinh.

207 Mò nhûn = bu nhûn.

208 Con mòi = hình nhûn.
nhà cưng làm tổ chức việc khác nữa. Đời vua Hán Vũ Đế, đã có kẻ làm nghề
nghiệp xấu ấy. Có một lần vua ấy ngủ ngay chiều bão, thấy hơn 300 mộc nhân cầm gậy
dành vua. Vua thức dậy, phì hơi quất đầu, liền sai đưa Giang Sung bắt những kẻ làm sự ấy
cưng Thái tử. Bấy giờ Thái tử phát binh giữ, đã bắt 300 mộc nhân. Thái tử thua chạy, Vua
cưng chằng tha. Thái tử liền tự vẫn. Ngày sau vua nhớ con làm đền ở trấn hồ gọi là
Tư Tử cung, có ý đêm ngày trở hội con về đấy. Đời ấy đã có kẻ làm sự mộc nhân mà
trao n[uố]c. An nam ta ray ch[n]g có ai dám làm sự ấy, vì ch[u]n vua chúa cấm cách
nghiệp ấy cho nhất người mà bắt được kẻ ấy thì làm tội lắm.

Lại có Thầy thiếp tinh hay làm cho một người đầu tinh nhân sự mà ngã ra như
cế vây; d[oa]n kẻ ấy tinh lại thì kẻ ra các sự dà xem thấy về kẻ chết ph[ài] thể nó thể kia
ở dưới âm phủ cưng nói r[rằn]g: hồn mìn[m]h đã đi đến nơi mà thật xem /110/
thấy. Bấy
nh[n[ieu]s sự ấy là chước ma quỉ dối

Đoạn thứ 4
Luận sự 12 thần Hành Khiển

Hành khiển nghĩa là thế nào?

mỗi năm mới có một vua trị, hết năm vua khác lên trị. Vậy hệ đến năm ấy thì vua ấy;
năm nọ thì vua nó ở trên bối mà dem bình xúy ha giải210 làm ông sau làm chết ng[ười] ta
thì ph[ài] lấy vàng bạc lể vặt tiền quan Hành khiển. Có kế chuyện r[ràng: Đứa Mạnh Tsuch
lắm quan nhà Tòu mỗi bày đặt ra làm 12 vua Hành Khiển. Đến đời vua Lê Gia Tòu
Đường Đức nguyên niên quan Lệnh sự Trịnh Thiện Xuan cưng[ng] thấy pháp môn Trình
/111/ Đao Kiểm. Hai ng[òi] ở Hà Hòu phù Gia Huyễn Giang Lục xa làm sách Hòu
Luc thư211 có vẻ (vẽ)212 đồ tập nhì vương Hành khiển cưng[ng] in vào sách lịch nữa
r[ràng]:

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209 Ngữ = án ngữ, chăn lải.

210 Ha giải = ha giải, thể giải nói.

211 In the Hồi Đông Tư Giáo, p. 14a, the book name is Hồng Lệ Thư (洪 蓬 書). The Chinese character
for Liệu and Lục is the same.

212 Should be “vẽ.”
Năm Tí thì Chu vương hành khiển, gọi là Thiên ồn hành binh chi thần, Quí tào phó phán quan.
Năm Sửu thì Triệu vương hành khiển, gọi là Tam thập lục thương hành binh chi thần, Khúc tào phó phán quan.
Năm Dần thì Ngụy vương hành khiển, gọi là Mộc tinh hành binh chi thần, Tỉnh tào phó phán quan.
Năm Mẹo thì Trịnh vương hành khiển, gọi là Thạch tinh hành binh chi thần, Liễu tào phó phán quan.
Năm Tị thì Ngô vương hành khiển, gọi là Thiên hao hành binh chi thần, Hứa tào phó phán quan.
Năm Ngọ thì Tần vương hành khiển, gọi là Thiên hoa hành binh chi thần, Ngọc tào phó phán quan.
Năm Mùi thì Tống vương hành khiển, gọi là Ngũ đạo hành binh chi thần, Lâm tào phó phán quan.
Năm Thân thì Tề vương hành khiển, gọi là Ngũ miêu hành binh chi thần, Tống tào phó phán quan.
Năm Dậu thì Lỗ vương hành khiển, gọi là Sơn nhạc hành binh chi thần, Khúc tào phó phán quan.
Năm Tuất thì Việt vương hành khiển, gọi là Thiên cẩu hành binh chi thần, Việt tào phó phán quan.
Năm Hợi thì Lưu vương hành khiển, gọi là Ngũ ôn hành binh chi thần, Nguyễn tào phó phán quan.

Mười hai vua trước này thì nhà Chu phaõ cho đi làm vua chủ hầu. Ấy vậy nghĩa của ấy phù thủy dùng phép ấy mà đóm tế vua hành khiển cho đượç chữa người ta. Tây sĩ nghĩ rằng: 12 vua ấy mới có từ đời nhà Chu phaõ cho làm vua chủ hầu mà thôi, thì từ đời nhà Chu về trước các vua ấy, lấy ai hành khiển cầm quyền sinh tử, hay là đợi hành khiển làm cho người ta chết, thì như người nhà Hạ nhà Thương nhẫn lên hãy còn sóỉu đến đời hành khiển ru? Mà hành khiển lại hay ăn của thụ lộ cho người ta khỏi chết cùng tham tham gia ứng nghiệm.  znalaz hành khiển chẳng có phép tắc gì. Vậy thì chẳng nên đưa tiễn hành khiển.

Đỗ sĩ viết: Ta lại suy rằng: Sách Tổng Luận rằng: Chu thất doí thiên chỉ hậu vương chính bất hành, chủ hầu đa tiếm. Ảy thì bày nghĩa của ấy để phái ai tổi bất trung chẳng có phép gì để làm hành khiển. Lại rằng: Hành khiển di làm

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213 周室东遷之後，王政不行諸侯多僭 = Đối sau của nhà Chu, từ sau khi đổi địa về phía đông, việc cải tổ không trở lại cha, nên chủ hầu phân lớn tiếm quyền.

Đoạn thứ 5
Luận Cửu Tinh cưng Thiên Lôi


D[oũ] sĩ viết: Traō sách Hòũ Luc thư th[áy] phương hay dùng có 9 vi sao về ra có tên có ph[ép] như sau này :


- Thổ Tú 218 tinh quân có 5 sao mọi th[án]g mọi cụ ngày mồng 9 giờ hợi bố blòi mà xúō trung cưng cho ng[uời] ta sinh ph[ái] giờ ấy là giờ sao Thổ Tú gọi là ách tinh, tuổi ấy ch[ăn]g yên cửa nhà, hay ph[ái] tai, nuôi lục súc ch[ăn]g lợi, ch[ăn]g nên đi xa.

- Thủy Diệu 219 tinh quân có 6 sao mọi th[án]g mọi cụ ngày 21 giờ hợi bố blòi mà xúō bắc phư[ng] cho ng[uời] ta sinh ph[ái] giờ ấy là giờ sao Thủy Diệu tinh gọi là Phúc lộc tinh, tuổi ấy con blai có phúc lộc, con gái bất lợi.


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214 Chừ chùng = Cửu chủa (cf. Đại Nam Quốc Ấn Tự Vi, p. 161).

215 Làm cú = làm có, làm bằng.

216 Mọi tháng mọi cú = mọi tháng đều theo.

217 Tai = tai vạ.

218 Also known as Thổ Đức.

219 Also known as Thủy Đức.

220 Also known as Kim Đức.
• Thái Dương tinh quân có 10 sao mỗi tháng mỗi ngày 27 giờ hồi bộ bởi gió mà xú đạo phương cho ngời ta sinh phải giờ là giờ 115 sao Thái Dương, tuổi ấy thì con blái sáng láng có của cải, con gái phải bệnh cùng ngời ta.

• Vân Hán221 tinh quân có 15 sao mỗi tháng mỗi ngày 29 giờ hồi bộ bởi gió mà xú đạo nam phương cho ngời ta sinh phải giờ là giờ sao Hóa tinh gọi là Tài tinh, tuổi ấy nam nữ bất lợi phải tai cùng sản nan, lực sức chấn thương, phải giữ mình.

• Kê Đô tinh quân có 12 sao mỗi tháng mỗi ngày 28 giờ tuất bởi gió mà xú đạo tây phương cho ngời ta sinh phải giờ là giờ sao Kê Đô gọi là Hung tinh, tuổi ấy phải tai vạ, đi xa thì lợi, ở nhà thì hèn.

• Thái Âm tinh quân có 7 sao mỗi tháng mỗi ngày 26 giờ tuất bởi bởi gió mà xú đạo bắc phương cho ngời ta sinh phải giờ là giờ sao Thái Âm gọi là Chú Dương tinh, tuổi ấy thì blái sáng trảo, con gái tật nghèo.

• Mộc Đức tinh quân có 20 sao mỗi tháng mỗi ngày 25 giờ tuất bởi gió mà xú đạo phương cho ngời ta sinh phải giờ là giờ sao Mộc tinh gọi là Cấn Nguyên tinh, tuổi ấy blái phải bệnh đau mắt, con gái phải tai cùng đau máu, vợ chồng chốn chung hòa.

Việc đưa tế sao xấu gọi là đổi tuổi là sự đứa Nghiêm Quân Bình bày đặt trước nhất.

Tây sĩ nghĩ rằng: Những ngôi sao đã kể trước này đem lê mà đưa tế cho khỏi tai ách tai bệnh mà ra sự tốt lành bằng yên thì sao nhĩ mìn ngời đã đưa sao cầu cho khỏi sự đầu, nhân sao hãy còn tất bệnh tai vạ, mà nhĩ mìn ngời chỉ chấn thương đưa tế sao, thì sao cùng sang trảo sức khỏe. Thể ấy thì chấn thương nên đưa tế sao làm chi.


221 Also known as Hóa Đức.

222 Tích lịch = sắm sét.

Đoạn thứ 6
Luận ngày giờ tốt xấu


Đời xưa chẳng có ai rắn ngày tốt ngày xấu giờ tốt giờ xấu; ch[ân]g có chọn năm tháng ngày giờ tốt thì làm, giờ xấu thì kiêng. Đến đời cận thế, gần nhà Đàng làm sách Âm Dương Tập Thư nhưng cũng ngụy kẻ yêu vu bày đặt ra chọn ngày chọn giờ tốt hoặc đ[uố]c ăn của ăn cổ lũy hoặc kiêng lũy và ch[ân]g. Đến đời Lê Gia Toủ Dương Đức nguyên niên n[uố]c An nam có hai ng[uố]i ở Hạ Hậu phù Gia Phúc huyện, một là quan Lệnh sự Trình Thiên Xuan hạ là th[â]y pháp môn Trình Đạo Kiệm bày đặt ra nh[û]n gự sự ấy trảo sách Hậu Lục Thư lại tặng soạn khán bản các pháp môn phù thủy cứ ngày mà làm.

Tây sĩ nghĩ rằn rằng: Chọn ngày chọn giờ làm chỉ tốt xấu ch[ân]g tại ngày giờ; tại ng[uố]i ta /119/ làm lành làm dở. Nếu cứ ngày giờ có cát hung thì sao có khi một mẹ sinh ra hai con cùng một ngày một giờ ch[ân]g khác nhau mà đến sau một đứa nên hàng, một đứa sói lâu một đứa cha nhỏ khác nhau. Sự ấy tại ĐCB (ĐCT) cho thế nào thì ph[aì] thế ấy.

223 Giải = thể giới, bầu trời.
Đoạn thứ 7
Lsuspendeacute;an sự Hà Bá Thủy Quan Phạm Nhan Liễu Hạnh


226 The numeration jumps from 120 to 211 from this point on.


Tây sĩ tưởng rằng: Phạm Nhan là đứa có tội rất nặng Vua đã giết, thì sao thầy phù thủy lấy nó làm kẻ có phép làm hại người ta, lại thầy phù thủy là kẻ thứ dân có phép gì trẫm mà khiến vua Anh Tổ là đấng quân vương sai Hưng Đạo Đại Vương bắt quỉ cho mình. Lại vua ấy xưa khiến quan chém Phạm Nhan thì lại khiến quan làm tội cho nó bây giờ làm chi?  Ấy là sự nói phét vậy chẳng có lý mà nghe được đâu.

Đoул sĩ viết: Liễu Hạnh thì ta đã nói đến bà ấy traō quyển thứ 1 đoạn thứ 10. Song le / 213 = 123/ chưa có nói sự kế hay phù phế [ep] lấy đất về bà ấy có nói rần:l: Liễu Hạnh là con vua Đề Thích, Ngọc Hoàng cho xūở ở n[uốì]c An nam đau non Văn Cát chói khắp mọi nơi hiện ra làm ng[uốì] làm con họ Lê sinh ra ở Sơn Nam xị Nghia Hưng phủ Thiện Ban huyện An Thái xã. Đến 37 tuổi Liễu Hạnh thắc đị hiện hình đi chối các xứ. Đến xị Nghia An traō miên Duyên (Luc)233 Quán hiện ra bán hàng ph[ai] khi sĩ tưới hàng nghi chằ người hayat chúa Liễu Hạnh thanh tân két lấy vọ choủ sinh đ[uốì]c một con blai. Đến ngày con đã nên ba liêng bảo chờì rần:l: Thiep là than nư con vua Đề Thích,

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228 The text has the word “Quang” written over “tiên.”
229 Maybe “Ngân.”
230 Scribal error; it should be “Trần Quốc Tuấn.”
231 Now is written as “phò mà.”
232 Should be “Trần Quốc Tuấn.”
233 The manuscript has two names here, one on top of the other, so I am uncertain which one is correct.


/215 = 125/

Đoạn thứ 8
Luan sự Bôi


Đ[oũ] sĩ viết: Khi xưa vua Phúc Hi có thấy một gióû laõ mà phu đến soû Mạnh Hà. Traõ do có bâ bát điểm đại cử[ng] lý nhất ta tam hưu thật nhi tử vì kiên lực bất vị đức, ngủ trì kỳ phuc.237 Phúc Hi cử đồ soû Hà trên lòng con laõ mà, có bất phương, mối dường làm bất quái cản khám cản dân tròn lì không đạo điền ra bát bát lực thấp hưu từ là 64 quẻ; một

234 Should be “đề.”

235 所過姪祠則必焚之 = khi đi ngang qua đến thờ ta đâm, tát phải dót nó vậy.

236 This should be Độc Cưốc (One-legged genie). It is also mentioned in Opusculum de sectis, p. 70.

237 八點: 戴九履一左三右七二四為肩六八為足五置其腹 = Tám điểm, trên đầu là 9, dưới chăn là 1, bên trái là 3, bên phải là 7, lấy 2 và 4 làm vai, 6 và 8 làm chăn, 5 đặt vào làm bụng.


239 Phù lưu = lá trâu không.
240 Tiến chúa = tân chu, người đăng cung.
241 Should be “chân.”
242 Tiêu hông (′| ′) = ngôi, đường nhô.
sân để ba nhiều hương tối thì đốt hương thờ
blời
, rình người ta nói hở đều gì thì đón lấy
bày biện ra sự nọ sự kia là những chước mốc làm cho đắt hàng lấy tiền.

T[áy] si nghĩ r[ần]g: Bộ nh[ünk]g ng[uôi] thập tri c[hán]g biết suy hệ có v[iec]c gì thì
đi hỏi th[áy] bộ mà th[áy] bộ hay thơ sự tướng mà sự tướng là ma qui, qui thì hay nói
đói. Th[áy] bộ gieo duỗi tiến qui liên giúp cho quệ ấy kẻ ra tai nọ và kia, nó nát ng[uồi]
ta cho ng[uồi] ta sợ bảo làm sao thì ng[uồi] ta ph[ái] làm /219 = 129/ như thế ấy. Ma qui
hay nhập vào th[áy] bộ cót chàng cuf[ng] duôi nờ nói ra nh[ünk]ng sự quả gớ cho ng[uồi]
ta kinh sợ lánh tim sòi bau sao nghề xây tim đẳng dâu đón. Cho thì th[áy] bộ ch[án]g
ph[ái] sự gi dữ ru? Bộ đón liễn lo lắng, thế thì ra khỏi, bộ thì ra ma,)rước ma về

Đ[oũ] si viết: Sách Sử đầu r[ằn]g: Thiếu Hiệu thì suy thiên hạ chi nhân tương cụ dĩ
thần tưởng (tương) hoặc dĩ quái, gia vi vu sử, dân độc vu tự, tai hại tiến chí,
dời nào chuồ bói thi cú[ng] thế ấy.

Đoạn thứ 9
Luận sự Xem Số cú[ng] Xem Khoa

ta. Vậy ta hỏi Đ[oũ] si th[áy] ấy xem số xem khả hoa cho nào?

Côc tiền sinh hay xem số ng[uồi] ta định làm sách số là Tư Tứ Kinh Tiện Định Số lấy
ng[uồi] sinh ra năm /220 = 130/ ấy là can chi mới định làm số ấy cú[ng] định cách cử,
như giáp tí niên, ất sửu ngoạt, bính dần nhật, đinh sửu thì sinh, tức giáp ất chi số, nhạn
dấy mà tính tuổi khác cú[ng] vậy. Lại phân ra sáu số như sau này: Thứ nhất xem số th[ò]
, đoán sự m[ình] ng[ười] ta lành dữ thể nào. Thứ 2 xem số con ngọc, đ[òá]n sự anh em
ng[ người] ta nh[ìeu] ít tốt xấu thể nào. Thứ 3 xem số hành táng đ[òá]n sự công nghiệp ng[uồi]
Thứ 6 xem số qui án, đ[ôá]n sự ng[uồi] ta sọi lâu cháo chết thế nào. Ấy xem số thì bộ
th[áy] Qui Côc mà ra.

243 It should be “trường” (相) as quoted in Hội Đồng Tú Giáo, p. 19a.

244 少吴时衰 天下之人相憶以神相惑以怪. 家為巫史民適于祀, 災害荐至 = Thời vua
Thiều Hiệu bị suy vong, người trong thiên hạ lấy thần làm cho nhau sự, lấy quái làm cho nhau mê hoắc,
nhà nhà làm chuyên động bồng, dân chúng kháng nhơn việc tế tử, tai hại cứ lặp lại mãi.

245 Should be “tử” ( tử).
Bằng sự xem khoa bởi đứa Tôn Tẫn mà ra. Tôn Tẫn học thầy Quỉ Cốc tiên sinh lập làm khoa lục nhâm đại độn đà đô kể ra đốt ngón tay mà xem sự lành sự dữ người ta.

Vì vậy tháng chạp gọi là thần hậu tị; tháng 11 là đại cát sửu; tháng 10 là coũ tào dắn; tháng 9 là thái xung mẹo; tháng 8 là thiên trắc thìn; tháng 7/221 = 131/7 là tháiất tị; tháng 6 là tháng quang ngọ; tháng 5 là tiểu cát mùi; tháng tư là truyền tổú thán; tháng 3 là tàõ khôi dậu; tháng 2 là a khôi tuất; tháng giêng là đăng minh hợi.

Lấy bấy nhieu sự mà đoán sự cát hung.


Lại có kẻ xem số về vợ chòũ thì cứ tám chữ mà kể năm tháng ngày giờ mà đoán có năm vợ chòũ lấy nhau hay là ở cùng nhau. Bởi là đứa Lý Thuần Phaõ là làm qua nước Tòũ mới bày đặt ra. Vậy vua nước Tòũ phải giặc săn đến bất ý binh ra chẳn gđể Lý Thuần Phaõ lên làm chước gả con gái vua cho làm nghĩa hôn nhân hẹn ngày sính lễ làm một sách số chú năm tháng chép ngày giờ làm tám chữ hẹn ngày ấy /222 = 132/ mới nên cho được muu sắm binh đánh giặc. Ấy là chước người vận binh. Đến đời sau truyền lấy sách ấy lại bày đặt thêm nhiều sự khác nói dối người ta.


Đo[i]i si lai suy r[ ]an: Đối nhã Đàng vua Thái Toū có người Là Tài chế sách Lộc Mệnh mà nói r[ ]an: Kim hưu đỗi niën đồi lộc, nhi qui tiến (tiền)246 huyền thưu, cung (công)247 mênh cung (công) thai, nhi tho yêu canh đi thứ, giai lộc mênh bất nghiêm chi trừ mình hi,248 nghĩa là có kẻ cùng thái một năm tuổi nau thái cũ[ng] một lộc ấy mà lại có kẻ sang kẻ hèn khác nau. Có ng[người] /223 = 133/ sinh dài hai con cùng lộc ấy chịu khí huyết cha mẹ ở cùng một thái tuổi nau nau, mà lại có dưa sói đưa chết chẳn gnhu nau

246 Should be ―tiền‖ (賤).

247 Should read as “công”. The character 共 has two pronunciations: “công” and “cung.”

248 今有同年同祄而貴贱懸殊，共命共胎而壽夭更異，此皆祄命不驗之著明矣 = Nay có người cùng tuổi cùng phúc lộc, sao lại sang hèn khác nau xa lắm, cùng một mạng cùng đến từ một báo thái, sao lại thọ yếu chẳng giống nau. Thế nên, lời sách Lộc Mệnh chẳng đúng, không phải đã rõ sao.

Đoạn thứ 10
Luận Ngũ Tinh

T[áy] tỉ r[ần]g: Có kẻ xem ngũ tinh mà đoán sự lành sự dữ cho ng[uội] ta. Vây ta hỏi Đ[ôũ] tỉ: Sao này là ngũ tinh kẻ ấy lấy làm cụ?


đ[ução]c. Phạm vào nam phương đại hạn, phạm vào tây phương có giặc đầy, phạm vào bắc phương hổ thủy, phạm vào đầu phương thiên hạ đói.

/226 = 136/


Đoạn thứ 11
Luận sự Xem Tướng cục[ng] Xem Giò


249 Giò = chân cẳng.

250 Dung = đằng.

251 Cây = ngón cái.


/229 = 139/

Đoạn thứ 12
Luận Nhật thực Nguyệt thực


252 Text has the word “giữa” written over “trao (trong).”

253 Dũng = dưng.

254 Vận đì = xoay đì.

255 Nhật thực có thường độ = nhật thực cứ lực độ thì có.
Thích Giáo Chư Vạõ
Quyển chi tam

Từa


256 Cho kíp = cho mau.
/233 = 143/

Thích Giáo Chư Vạõ Mục Lục

Đoạn thứ 1: Luận Phật giáo bởi ai mà ra / 144
Đoạn thứ 2: Luận Phật giáo nhập vào Trung quốc / 147
Đoạn thứ 3: Luận lão nhà Nho về Phật giáo / 154
Đoạn thứ 4: Luận cửu kiếp Phật giáo truyền lại / 163
Đoạn thứ 5: Luận chính nghĩa cửu kiếp / 168
Đoạn thứ 6: Luận nghĩa chữ Khoũ cùng chữ Phật / 172
Đoạn thứ 7: Luận về cấm sát sinh cùng luân hồi / 179
Đoạn thứ 8: Luận kinh Bảo đằng / 183
Đoạn thứ 9: Luận lễ đốt nhà táng cùng vàng mã / 191
Đoạn thứ 10: Luận địa ngục / 194
Đoạn thứ 11: Luận Bụt Quan Âm cùng cô hồn / 200
Đoạn thứ 12: Luận ngày tết lên neo ba vôi bột / 203-205
Đoạn thứ 1
Luận Phật giáo bởi ai mà ra


Sách Tâm Đăng chèp r[ằn]g: Thích ca bất thời vươn trong vi, tu hành thành Phật, Linh túc (thứ) son dã. Sách Tứ Thập Nhị Chương / 236 = 146 / nói r[ằn]g: Phật sở xuất

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257 Tây vục = Tây vục (西域).

258 释迦牟尼佛生摩耶夫人為母, 與淨飯王為父, [至]甲寅年四月初八日五更而出世 = Phật Thích Ca Mâu Ni sinh ra từ mẹ là Ma Da phu nhân và cha là vua Tịnh Phạn, đến canh năm, ngày mồng 8 tháng 4 năm Giáp Dần ra đời. Cf. Tâm Đăng (A 2481), 3a:1-2 (i.e., Institute of Hán Nôm, ms. A2481, page 3a, columns 1-2); also see 20a:10-20b:1-2.

259 Text has the word “Cương mực” written over “Cương giám."

260 Should be “Linh Thứ” (靈鷲).


Sách Tâm Đăng rằng: Nhâm Thân niên nhị ngoạt thập ngũ nhật dậu thì Phật nhập nát bàn.
Đoạn thứ 2
Luận Phật giáo nhập vào Trung quốc

T[ay] sỉ hỏi D[oũ] sỉ: Phật giáo Thích Ca la bộ nên ở bên tây vực nhập vào bên dou là thế nào?


273 Ký (記) = ghi lại, chép lại.

274 This is an explanation note. Opusculum de sectis (p. 85) does not have this phrase.

277 永平乙丑八年初，帝闔西域有神其名曰佛人，使之天竺求其道，得其書及紗門以來 {淨於其道者曰莎門} 於是中國始得其術圖其形像 = Vào đầu năm Ất Sửu, năm thứ 8 niên hiệu Vĩnh Bình [65 CN] [dời Hán Minh Đế], vua nghe nói ở vùng Tây vực có một thần nhân gọi là Phật, vua sai sứ giả đi Thiên Trúc cầu đạo ấy, được sánh và sa môn mang về, {những người thanh sạch trong đạo này còn gọi là sa môn,} từ đó Trùng quốc bắt đầu có được thuyết ấy, có các bước về hình ảnh đạo ấy. Cf. Opusculum de sectis, p. 85.

276 Uncertain of the word.

279 懷永平年間，明帝因夢金像，乃知佛道相備東下，遣蔡愔秦景使西國，睹 [迦葉] 摩騰竺法 [蘭] 二梵僧，白馬駄是奘梵文，解之洛都，譯梵成漢，出此經，備基闔訓 = Khoảng đời Vĩnh Bình, nhân vua Minh Đế mong thấy người vàng biết rằng Phật đạo sắp tới pháp đồng (Trùng Quốc), sai hai ông Thái Âm, Tần Cảnh đi sứ nước Tây đôn hãi Phạn tăng là [Ca Diệp] Ma Đăng và

T[чь] s hội D[u]ITE: N[uở]c Thiên Trúc ở bên tây vực xa xôi Trung quốc lắm mà Vua Hán Minh Đế làm sao nghe biết bên ấy có But?


/T[чь] s hội D[u]ITE: Từ vua Hán Minh Đế rước But vào Trung quốc ng[uở]c ta chọ Phật giáo là thế nào?


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Trúc Pháp [Lan], đặt ngựa tráng chớ kính văn chử Phan chẹp trên là giải đến thụ đồ Lạc [Đường], dịch chử Phạn sang chử Hán, làm đầu tiên xuất bản kinh này, chuẩn bị nên tăng để mà dạy [đạo Phật].

280 Text has “tráng” instead of “trảng.”

281 Commonly pronounced as “Trương Kiên” (张 邈).

282 Ô tọn (烏 孫) = Bactria, an ancient kingdom in the West of China.

283 It is ambiguous here: if this is the third year of the reign yuanding, then the year should be dinh-mào (114 BCE); if it is the third year of the reign taichu, the year correctly is ký-mào (102 BCE). I think the latter one is correct.

284 Đại Uyển = Đại Uyển (大 宛), or Fergana, the name of a kingdom in the West of China during the Han era.

285 Text has “bị” (?) instead of “chi.”

Nhà Nguyễn, nhà Tấn bỏ xúõi thờ Bụt, càng ngày càng thịnh. Tăng ni đạo sĩ nhặt dĩ ích chúng

Nguyên Nguyên Hiếu Văn [đế] đi chùa ăn chay nghe giảng.  Đến đời Nam Bắc triều, đời nhà Lương có Nguyễn Thái Hậu làm chùa Vĩnh Ninh tự, lại làm tháp cao 90 thước phao thập tầng một nghìn gian, tháp miếu chẳng đời nào thịnh bằng nhà Ngụy. Vua Lương Vũ Đế lại sang chùa làm am làm chùa mà thờ.  Đến năm Đại Đồúng nguyên niên lại đến chùa Đồú Thái giảng Tam tuệ kinh; trực đêm ấy có lửa bởi đời mở mà đốt tháp phù đồ nơi chùa Đồú Thái.

Vua Lương Vũ Đế rằng: Hỏa tai thì tại ma ngăn.  Lại làm phù đồ 12 từng.

Đến đời nhà Đàng vua Cao Tổ ghét sa môn đạo sĩ lánh trốn bua việc, nghe người Phó Dịch xin trừ phế Bụt.  Vua Cao Tổ liền ra chiếu cho thiên hạ đuổi tăng ni đạo sĩ về nhà.  Khi ấy có mười vạn tăng ni. Sả le con vua này là Đàng Thái Tổ phục lập phù đồ nghĩa là làm tháp thờ Bụt.  Cháu là Cao Tổ nghệ tự hành hương nghĩa là đến chùa đốt hương cầu Bụt.  Đến đời Hiến Tổ ruóc xương ngón tay Bụt về Trung quốc mà thờ, cùng dạy đem đi đến các chùa.


T[áy] s[hi] hồi D[ô]u s[í]: Trao n[uố]c An nam này Phật giáo bởi vua nào mà sáng ra như ta xem thấy bày giờ?

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287  而王公貴人獨楚王英最先好之 = Mà trong dâng vương công quý nhân, chi có Sở Anh Vương yêu chuộng đạo này hơn hết.


289  日以 益 盛 = ngày càng thêm đông.

290  Uncertain of meaning.

291 己亥 [十] 四年正月中, 使迎佛骨至京師, 二月乃曁送諸寺 = Vào giữa tháng giêng năm ký hợi, năm thứ 14 [niên hiệu Nguyên Hoà], sứ giả dọn xuong Phật vào kinh sư, rồi tháng 2 lần lượt đưa đến các chùa

Đoạn thứ 3
Luận Lão nhà Nho về Phật giáo

Tày]sĩ hỏi Đ[oǔ]sĩ: Nhà nho có ch[ỏ] đạo Bụt ch[âng]g?

Đ[oǔ]sĩ viết: Các nho sǐ đều chê bắc295 Phật giáo mà chớ. Tr[uố]c hết thì r[ân]g : Phạt giáo ngọn yeu,296 lại r[án]g: Bốn điều chỉ nhân, bạt tri quên thân chỉ nghiệp, phụ tự

292 Historical error; it should be “Tràn Thu Đô.”

293 Should be “căp.”

294 Năm vô = nam vô, nam mồ (南 無, from the Sanskrit term “namo” means to praise).

295 Chê bắc or chê bác = chê bai, bài bắc.


296 佛者言 妖 = đạo Phật nói lỗi kỳ quái.
297 本夷狄之人,不知君臣之義,父子之恩 = [Phật] góc là người man đi, không biết đến nghĩa vua tôi, an tình cha con.
298 異端虚無寂滅之教 = thuyết hư vô, tích diệt là giáo thuyết khác lạ.
299 非聖人之道, 等惡人, 中世之罪人 = [dạo Phật] không phải đạo của thành nhân, [nhưng có] người trong bốn ác, tôi nhân trong thế gian.
300 鳴呼! 明帝之罪上通于天 = Than ôi! Tôi của vua Minh để thâu đến trời.
301 Should be “ky” (其).
302 Tiếp (楫, paddle) is a misreading of “áp” (揖, deep bowing). It is also possible that this character is “tiếp” (接, welcome). The Vietnamese translation provided by the author leans toward the first interpretation.
303 Should be “thần” (親).
304 Or “tô phủ” (租 賦).
305 Now is pronounced as “khởi” (啟).
307 Buông thia = bung thia.

308 Ba đô = tam đô ác lở, ba cợi sức sanh, ngũ quý, diệu ngục.

309 Should be “mlô (lở).”

310 Sâu đào = lúc đào loạn hối.

311 “Cảnh” (景, situation) is a misreading of “kinh” (鏡, mirror). The Vietnamese translation provided by the author has “bright mirror.”

312 Should be “doanh” (盈).

313 Should be “thâôp” (十).


315 Should be “tu” or “ty” (司).

giữ lẽ luật đều rắn, đều như miối oũi [Phổ] Dịch nói bên xùo chiếu cho quan Hữu tự thái bất (bốt)³¹⁷ tăng ni dạo sỉ trao thiên hạ.


³¹⁷ Should be “bốt”.

³¹⁸ Missing words.


³²¹ Old pronunciation of “thò” (時).

³²² Another pronunciation of “cảnh” (竟).

³²³ Should be “nga” (餓).

³²⁴ Should be “cảnh” (更).

³²⁵ Should be “thờ” (此).


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\(^{327}\) 夫佛本夷狄之人, 不知君臣之義, 神子之恩. 乞以此骨付 [之] 有司投諸水火, 永絶根本, 斷天下之惑 = Phật vốn là người man dì, không biết nghĩa vua tôi, ông cha con. Xin [vua] hãy giao xướng [Phật] cho quan hương thức ném vào nước vao lửa, để bô sạch gốc rễ của nó (đạo Phật), để cắt dứt mùi ngoài của thiên hạ, để doan tuyệt mê hoặc của đổi sau.

\(^{328}\) “Thực” is another pronunciation of “thực” (實).

\(^{329}\) 宋孝宗時朱子大學序: 異端習創滅之教, 其過於大學而無實, 自聾 Vegatarian, 一切以易功之說 = Thiện Tông Hiển Tông. Chu Tư trong lời tức sách Đại Học nói rằng: các giáo thuyết khác lạ như thuyết hư vở [đầu đạo Lão], thuyết tích biết [của đạo Phật], chúng vờn tạo quái cái học lón mà chẳng thắt, chúng trau đổi muư kệ thật số, hết thấy vĩ thuyết thân tự công danh.

\(^{330}\) 使其君子不幸而不得聞大學之要, 其小人不幸而不得看至治之澤, 明盲乖塞, 反覆沈痼, 以及五季之衰而壞亂極矣 = Khién người quan tuần chẳng may không còn được nghe điều chính yếu của cái học lớn, kẻ tiểu nhân không còn được tham nhàn ơn hứa của thời tỉnh trĩ, [tất cả] hoà ra tối tâm bất tác, tráo trở thành bệnh lâu ngày không khỏi, cho đến đổi Ngũ Quí [hậu Đương] bị suy vong mà ra hoài loạn cực kỳ như vậy.

\(^{331}\) Uncertain of the word. Possible: “mãi.”


332 大越史記全書黎襄異時洪順年武瓊獻論曰: 大抵李陳之望雖由簡常之文, 亦亂由異端之巋惑 = Trong sách Đại Việt Sử Ký thời Lê Tướng Đức niêm hiệu Hồng Thuận, Vư Quinh đăng bài luận nổi rằng: Nói chung, sự sai làm của thời Lý Trần, tuy rằng do roi loan cương thường [lê nghĩa], nhưng cũng do sự mế làm của đạo đồi doan.

333 Should be “cân” (姫).

334 Scribal error. Should be “Trần Thư Đổ.”

335 发庫錢而造佛像, 發庫銅而鑄洪鐘, 發庫紙而寫佛經; 李陳之事佛謹矣, 然殺李氏之子孫者, 贊出於陳首度之凶隕, 而佛不能救 = Phát tiền trong kho mà tạo tượng Phật, phát đồng trong kho mà đức chúng lớn, phát giây trong kho mà phép kinh Phật; nhà Lý nhà Trần tổ Phật cánh trong, vậy mà việc giết con cháu nhà Lý vốn xuất phát từ sự hung hiểm của Trần Thư Đổ, thế mà Phật không thế cứu.

336 Should be “Trần Thư Đổ.” The character 度 is pronounced both as “đổ” and “đắc”.

337 Should be “gian phi” (奸非)

338 以天子而為大夫, 以妃嬪而為丘尼, 以王主而為眾僧, 陳家之事佛篤矣, 然弒陳氏之宗室者, 贊出於胡季犖之奸非, 而佛不能渡 = lạy thiện tử làm đại phu, lạy phi tân làm ni có, lạy vua chủ làm sư sãi, nhà Trần tổ Phật hết lồng, vậy mà việc giết tổng thất tổ Trần đều xuất phát từ sự gian Xiao của Hồ Quý Lý, vậy mà Phật chẳng thể cứu được.


/252 = 162/


Đoạn thứ 4
Luận cửu kỷ Phật giáo truyền lại

T[áy] sỉ viết: Phật giáo truyền lại cửu kỷ. Vậy ta hỏi D[ô]u sỉ cửu kỷ ấy là thế nào?

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339 則 奉 佛 之 事 果 何 補 哉 = thế nên việc thờ cùng Phật có kết quả gì đâu?

340 The words “chớ thơ nó” were written over “dừng thơ Phật” in the text.

341 Vừng cử = vâng theo.

Đạo Hiện 342 đề nhất kiếp nói [tầng]: Khi xua chưa có đi gi剌; tự nhiên liền có một giọt sương ở khoủ gọi là Phật tính, tự nhiên phân ra làm b[añ]i; hai phần có mùi 343 xanh làm błoi; hai phần có mùi vàng làm dät; ba phần 344 có mùi tráng 345 làm ng[ôũ]. Bây giờ liễm hóa ra một, tên là Nguyên Thủy. Đoạn ba phần một giọt sương đoũ lại ra hình như một trứng rắn như đá, mà lại phá ra làm bốn tấm; một tấm hóa ra błoi; hai tấm 346 hóa ra đất; ba tấm 347 hóa ra cha; bốn tấm 348 hóa ra mẹ. Bây giờ tự nhiên nên một tổ gọi là Nguyên Thủy hóa ra bốn phương mà làm błoi đất bởi hai tổ là Nguyên Thủy cùng là con Lô 347 nên một hình Bụt xuất ra trước thiên địa; đ[oạ]n Nguyên Thủy lại hóa ra một tổ tên là Mục Mũi oũ là tính dại dột mê muội traõ mình có khí thanh cùng có vật. Khi ấy błoi chưa hợp đất chưa dầy, mà một ph[ép] cả bởi một khí khoủ lập nên Phật tạo thành thiên địa nhân, lại vạn vật tự nhiên ở traõ khoủ bởi Càn mà hóa ra, vì vậy bởi có một khí là Bụt thì hóa nên błoi, duyên đắc nhất khí Phật tính biến thành thiên địa dã. 348

Đạo Hiện đệ nhị kiếp nói [tầng]: Có hai oũ bà oũ tên là Tu là Thiên lấy mười cái xương làm mười cột. Bà tên là Ma ha Địa lấy chín khúc ruột làm chín cái rường 349 nhân tạo lập thiên địa chi thành dã, 350 lại nói [tầng]: Bà Ma ha Địa dụng thân tư trợ thiên địa, tạo vi Càn khôn [tí ngọ thủy hoả] 351 tam tài tư tượng nhật nguyệt bát quái thư (thử) 352 nhân dã.

342 Uncertain if this refers to a book chapter or the name of the author.

343 Mùi = mau.

344 Một phần... hai phần... ba phần = phần thứ nhất... thứ hai... thứ ba (first... second... third part). Apparently there was no distinction between ordinary number and numernary number.

345 Mùi tráng = mau tráng.

346 Một tấm... hai tấm... ba tấm... bốn tấm = tấm thứ nhất... thứ hai... thứ ba... thứ tư.

347 Lô or Tì Lô = một giai đoạn của báo thai (cf. De Rhodes’ dictionary).


349 二人造天立地之成也 = Hai người tạo lập thành trời đất.

350 From the quotation in Tâm Đăng (A 2481) 2a:1.

351 This word possibly is “thủ” (this), not found in Tâm Đăng.


Dao Hien de tư kiếp nói rằng: Tự nhiên có một tổ gọi là Bàn Cổ Thị người đầu rọi cao năm trượng, thì hỗn độn thanh trọc chứa phân. Bàn Cổ hòa vi thiên địa phân thanh khí làm blời trọc khí làm đất nát mìn ra muôn vật, mở con mắt ra thì ra ngày, nhắm con mắt lại thì ra đêm. Con mắt bên tả làm mặt blồng, con mắt bên hữu làm mặt blơi. Khi sinh ra còn tối tăm chưa sáng biết thửa người thửa blời cao một ngay mà đất dầy một ngay mà oũ Bàn Cổ rọi lớn sóũ hơn người ta nghìn tuổi mà blời cao đất dầy hóa nên bốn phương.


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353 Should be “thái” (太).

354 Should be “tố” (素).


356 Should be “ky” (其).

357 其天有三十六層, 其地有三十層, 而變化也 = Trời ấy có 36 tầng, đất kia có 30 tầng, từ đó mà biến hoa ra. Cf. Tâm Đăng (A2481) 2a:3.

358 Thi = thời.

359 Thọa = cái đó, người đó.

360 Should be “ngày.”

361 Ibid.


363 Commonly pronounce as “tương” (相).
Dao Hien de luc kep noi r[an]g: Kiep nay tren bloi ccon thieu chu va co du. Co ho Nur Oa lam nam thuc da dem len va bloi lai cho lang cu[ng] ve nen hinh tương bloi trang ton vinh kep bat dan.\(^{365}\) Lai noi r[an]g kep nay co ba ng[troi] goi la Ma ha Dai ngo Chan tri Ban nuoc laly 500 can vang 500 can dou duc lam mat bloi lai laly 500 can bac duc lam mat blang.\(^{366}\) Trao mat bloi co cai chim hac ba chan. Trao mat blang co con tho cu[ng] den Vuro[ng] mau la me Chua tean. Lai noi kep nay co ngu De, mot ten [la] Nguyen Thuy Thuong Ton, hai ten la Hu Hoang Dai Dao, ba ten la Ngoc Hoang Thuong De,\(^{257} = 167/\) bon ten la Thai Thuong Lao Quan, nam ten la Cu Van Thien Su.


Dao Hien de bat kep noi r[an]g: Tự nhiên sinh ra một Bụt gọi là Đại ngộ Chân Trí làm ich lôi cho chúng sinh, thưa Bụt Thích Ca ở chốn Đà Thienen đến trao núi Linh Thục (Thu)\(^{368}\) ở son có ba con [c]a chếp, kẻ đề từ \(^{258} = 168/\) ở trò[ọc]ng m[inh] là Chân Trí Ban Nuoc Ti Kheo bat được ba con chếp, miếng nhai bọt liên đến dưng Bụt Thích Ca mà But ay day ng[trói] ta r[an]g: Vây thừa kịp ấy tự nhiên nên ba trường làm Thiện Phú Dja Phu Nhân Phu. Thự het ten là Tho Co tuong Thiện Phu; thủ hai Tho [...]\(^{369}\) tương Dja phu; thủ ba ten là Kien Lao tuong Nhân Phu.

Dao Hien de cuu kep noi r[an]g: Tự nhiên nên hai cha mẹ có một khí âm dương thật là tự nhiên khou vay, khi gap nhau thì cha cui mat xu m xem mẹ, mẹ ngura mat len mà xem cha tinh khou boi tro khou mat sinh con Lô ten là Ban Nuoc.

\(^{364}\) 天皇為十二支又為十干，地皇分晝夜，人皇相山川其相一也 = Vua trời làm nên 12 địa chỉ còn làm nên 10 thiên can. Vua đất chia ngày đêm. Vua người giúp núi sông cùng hợp thành một vây.

\(^{365}\) 長存永劫不引 = tồn tài lâu dài từ kiếp này sang kiếp khác, chẳng phải căng lên nữa.

\(^{366}\) Cf. Tấm Đăng (A 2481) 2b:8-9.

\(^{367}\) Missing the word “lai” in Nhu Lai.

\(^{368}\) Should be “Linh Thuu.”

\(^{369}\) Missing a word.
Đoạn thứ 5
Luận chính nghĩa cửu kiếp


Ay vậy nghĩa kiếp thứ nhất khi mới có Thích Ca traò lão mẹ, khi tr[uơ]c c[hùa] chưa có con traò thai mẹ, chưa nên cha nên mẹ, khi mới có con traò thai mẹ thì tạo thành thiên địa nhân, liên hòa nên cha nên mẹ vô cùng, cha là thiên mẹ là địa con là nhân, cho nên Thích Ca mới ở traò lão mẹ, thi tạo thành thiên địa nhân làm cho nên cha nên mẹ nên con là m[ùn]h Thích Ca. Mục Mùi o[ì] dòi dot /261 =171/ hoang hot là Thích Ca mới ở traò lão mẹ. Chính nghĩa kiếp thứ hai là khi cha mẹ đã sinh Thích Ca traò 9 th[àn]g 10 ng[ày] đã nên cha nên mẹ cho b[òi]n. Chính nghĩa kiếp thứ ba là ngǔ [ò] của traò xác Thích Ca dân

370 釋迦 造成 天地 人物 = Thích Ca tạo nên trời đất, người và vật.

371 祕支 祕支. [千] 金 不可 傳之 = Giữ bí mật, giữ bí mật, dù được vàng cùng không thể truyền ra.
Chính nghĩa kiếp thứ 6 là khi Thích Ca đã có ở traøy 5 tháng để khiến mình dài 5 thước thì còn ở nơi mù mịt cùng được dùng cá mà traøy xác mình. Chính nghĩa kiếp thứ 7 là cha Thích Ca khi sinh con có 30 tuổi dự 12 th[án]g là Thiên hoàng cao 30 thước có 12 đầu mẹ nén 15 tuổi 11 th[án]g là Địa hoàng cao 15 thước có 11 đầu con là Thích Ca sinh ra khi đã ở traøy lâu mẹ 9 th[án]g 10 ngày là Nhận Hoàng cao 10 thước có 9 đầu. Chính nghĩa kiếp thứ 8 là khi mẹ Thích Ca mỗi chiều thai thì dùng ngũ tạng ngũ hành ở traøy mình mà dưỡng nuôi cho mình, mà sinh con ra thì mẹ nén cha nén mẹ bốn /262 = 172/ đôi, ch[ăng] có khi náo mất d[uơ]c tên cha tên mẹ nữa. Chính nghĩa kiếp thứ 7 là khi Thích Ca đã ở traøy lâu mẹ mà chịu khí mình th[án]g thì mới sinh ra. Các mlôi khác là mlôi phi lý bày đặt cho người ta kính Thích ca cùng lấy làm trạøy như đấng bố mẹ. Chính nghĩa kiếp thứ 8 là bởi mình có nghĩa nào.

Doạn thứ 6
Lưu nghĩa chữ khoũ cùng chữ Phật


372 肝臟青也, 心臟赤也, 肺臟白也, 腎臟黑也, 脾臟黃也 = gan thuộc sắc xanh, tim thuộc sắc đỏ, phổi thuộc sắc trắng, thận thuộc sắc đen, ti thuộc sắc vàng.

373 佛出鎖門相圖 = bức họa hình dáng Phật đi ra từ cửa khóa.
đá giả phaở dâ; vô giả thủy dâ; nam giả địa dâ; da giả khow dâ. Năm sự ấy thì đạt cho bả đâng là cha mẹ con; mà cử thự tự khác nhau thự tự các nơi thuộc về cha.


T[áy] sỉ hỏi D[ôu] sỉ: Phật có nghĩa nào?


374 佛 駄 無南耶也: 佛者火也，駄者風也，無者水也，南者地也，耶者空也 = Phật dâ vo nam da: chữ phát dây là lâ, đâ là giô, vô là nước, nam là đất, đâ là không.

375 生 也 空 死 也 空 = sông ây là không, chét cùng là không (= châng có sông mà cùng chẳng có chét).

376 生 來 死 去 又生 來 = sinh ra chết đi lại sinh ra.


378 感 世 子 民 充則 仁 義 者 = lừa đói đói ngưoi, dây nhưng lôi nhân nghĩa.

379 仏 (= 佛) 者人天也 = Phật ây là [sự kết hợp] ngưoi và trời vây.

380 仏 (= 佛) 者人身也 人者天地也 = Phật von thân là ngưoi; còn ngưoi, ây là trời đái vây.

³²⁶ = 176/


T[â]y si hỏi Đ[où] si: Sách Bì Truyền có ph[ái]i sách Thích Ca chêp ra mà truyền lại c[tư]c nh[û]n[g]?

³⁸¹ 五臓者心肝肺腎脾也 = Ngũ tâng. Áy là tim gan phế thân tý.

³⁸² Scribal error; should be “thì” (是). See the same quotation a few sentences below.

³⁸³ 佛是心, 心是佛 = Phật chính là tâm, tâm chính là Phật.

³⁸⁴ 以空為道, 以心為道 = láy chữ không làm đạo, láy chữ tâm làm đạo.

³⁸⁵ 佛在心 = Phát ở tại tâm của mỗi người.

Sách Bí Truyền là sách Bí Truyền là sách những đạo sĩ chép ra đời sau mà bày đặt trao d[ơ]n thứ hai. Sách Bí Truyền viết: Trở sách Tư thập nhị chương Kinh là sách Phú nhất khí sinh, Nho giả Khổ tử đạo dã; Đạo giả Lão Đam đạo dã; Thích giả Thích Ca đạo dã, nho chỉ sở vị tam tài


387Uncertain of meaning.


T[ây] sĩ nghĩ rằng: Phật giáo dạy rằng: người ta chết lại sinh ra làm người khác hay là vật khác thì thậm trái mlễ. Thử xem tổ tiên cha oũ nó lại luân hồi về làm con nhà khác phải khi đến làm tôi đòi thuê mướn con cháu mình mà nó giận dữ chửi rủa thể ấy, chẳng phải con cháu chửi rủa trách phạt cha oũ? Lại bà nó mẹ nó chết đạo lại luân hồi về làm con cái họ khác mà con cháu nó phải khi lấy con gái làm thê thiếp, mlầm phải bà nó mẹ nó. Thể vậy thì chẳng ra loạn đạo nhân lý? Và lại cha oũ nó hay sát sinh cùng các vật khác mà con cháu oũ nó mẹ nó phải khi giết con trâu bò gà lợn, chết đạo lại hóa ra làm vật mà con cháu oũ nó phải khi giết con trâu bò gà lợn ấy thể vậy thì ch[àng] ra con cháu giết cha oũ? Sau nữa đời tam đại cho dân nuôi năm mái gà hai nái lợn làm thịt dưỡng lão cùng khi giỗ chạp giết trâu bò dê cùng các vật khác; từ hòũ thủy cho đến đời Thích Ca ngoại 1300 năm, các ng[uơi] ta cùng tổ tiên nhà Bụt chẳng ai kiêng thịt thay sất sinh thì loài ng[uơi] càng nhiều chẳng hóa ra làm vật?


389其自大抵, 以虚無為宗, 貴慈悲不殺, 以為人死精神不滅, 過復受形, 生時所行善惡皆有報應, 故所貴所修練精神以至為佛 = Tóm lại, Phật giáo là lấy hai chữ hư vô làm gốc, chung từ bi mà không giết chóc, cho rằng người chết đi tính thần không tuyệt, rồi sau đó nhân hình hài khác; thời con sống làm việc thiện việc á đạo có báo ứng; cho nên điều quỳ chính là việc tu luyện tâm hồn cho thành Phật.

390 Hinh lành = hiền lành.

391 Missing words.
nó cho đến chết, lại lấy sừng làm lược và chờ cho đến chết, lại lấy sừng làm lược và
cho sãi vãi thổi hằng năm hằng tháng, lấy da bưng trỏe cho đạo tràng đánh đau ngày đêm, lại giét con mèo lấy lũ làm bút chép
kính cú[ng] cuộp giả lấy trường pha thuốc mà tọ But. Và lại m[uô]n thiếu sinh đẩy tiếp đất
sự thế ấy thì kẻ ở chùa chẳng có từ bi cùng chẳng giữ điều cấm sát sinh và lại giét
ng[uối]. Vì vậy ai suy các m[ê] ta đã nghĩ ra, thì mới biết sự sát sinh cú[ng] sự luân hồi
thất là sự phi lý dối blá cùng hư vô đạo Bụt bầy đặt mà chớ. Bằng chính sự luân hồi
dào nội dạy là khác như ta đã nói ra traõ d[oà]n tr[uố]c này.

mê làm, là dân ngày tận thế ĐCB sẽ làm cho các ng[uối] ta sô[ú] lại traõ xác moi ng[uối]
mới có xưa, mà kẻ lánh sê sô[ú] lại traõ xác tổ lánh uy nghi cú[ng] sẽ lên th[iê]n đáng chủ
phúc vô cùng; kẻ dể sê sô[ú] lại traõ xác xấu xa ghớm ghiếc cùng sẽ xuống địa ngục
chỉ chịu phạt khốn nạn vô cùng. Ấy là chính sự luân hồi khắp mọi ng[ười] sẽ

Đoạn thứ 8
Lương kinh bảo đàng

T[áy] sĩ r[ân]g: Th[áy] tăng hay niệm kinh bảo đàng cho kẻ chết. Vậy ta hỏi
Đ[oú] sĩ có bảo đàng là thể nào?

đàng hay một kêu r[ằn]g: Phật tính ôi là Phật tính, chớ ra cửa
con mắt lỗ tai miệng mũi âm môn kẻo khốn, cùng traõ ra lỗ thóp trên đầu. Phật giáo gọi nó là thiên môn như
ml[ơi] traõ sách Bí Truyền r[ằn]g:

Đầu giả thiên dã, nhược tử đáo thiên hải ngoại

Khi ng[ười] ta đã chết đ[oạ]n thì thầy tăng dạy và hồn đi đàng xưng m[ìn]h là Phật tử cậy
Bụt cho khỏi lạc vào địa ngục, lấy Bụt làm cứ
d[ussels] về nước Bụt hoặc nhập tam đồ
niên niên cơ khát.

392 Luộc vâ = tù và.

393 Should be tiên (僊 or 仙).


395 Lâm cử = làm bằng, làm chứng cử.

396 Lượ cỏ và tù và.

397 Người phùng ác lộ khuyết hại tử tôn do thử thành hiền bồ tát cứu

679


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398 若逢惡路缺害子孫由此聖賢菩薩救渡 = Bằng như gặp phải đường ác làm ton hai đến con cháu, thì do đó các vị thành hiền, bố tát [ra tay] cứu độ.

399 明事云: 服佛宜顯胡妙用 = Việc nên làm là phục tòng Phật thì được sung sông hiện hạng (?), có chớ đúng được (?). The meaning of this sentence is not clear.

400 Thiệp pháp độ hồn = lặp phép cầu siêu cho hồn.

401 Should be “Âm Không” (陰 空).

402 N. is short for Nomen (Latin for name). This demonstrates that the author of Tam Giáo Chu Vợng is a foreigner. A Vietnamese will use the word “mỗ” instead.

403 Obscure meaning. Possibly “mái bắc.”

404 Obscure meaning. Possibly “mái vàng.”

405 It should be Âm Không bridge, as written in later paragraphs.

406 Possibly tam độ = tam độ ác lọ.

Sôũ làm lành dữ mặc thân ta,
Thác thị chưa đi nghiệp gian tà,
Chân linh nhớ lấy kinh niệm Phật,
Dù vào địa ngục lại đ[ượ]c ra.

Niệm kinh bảo đàng đ[ọa]n thì thầy tăng lấy gậy vẽ cửu laõ phù tụng phá là trú sám hối cho hồn tiêu thoát lấy gậy vàng viết thư làm sắc cho vaõ hồn tra vào t[ay] áo nam tả nữ hữu.


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407 Should be “bắc.”
408 Possibly “Phổ đa son” (Pokatala).
409 Now pronounced as “duyên.”
410 Bốn tỉnh = Phật tịnh.
411 Di đà = Phật Di Đà
412 Thế ch[î] = Đại Thế Chí bỏ tát.
413 南無西方極樂世界三千六萬億, 一十一萬九天五百同名同號, 大慈大悲, 接引大師, 阿彌陀佛 = Nam mô thế giới Tây phương cực lạc, có ba ngàn sau vận uc (100 triều) cơi, mươi một vị bàn chân ngàn năm trầm vi thấy đan đường cùng nên cung hiếu. A di đà Phật.
414 Uncertain of meaning.
415 Có một kể = kể nào.
Nước nhà Bụt là nước Thiên Trúc; mà người ở phía tây hay tự sang nước ấy thì chê ngon; nước này chỉ người ở phía tây hay tự sang nước ấy thì chẳng có đi qua tam đồ ác lộ, chẳng có đi qua cầu Âm kinh; chẳng có qua soũ núi Hoàng Tuyền giếng có cây dừa, chẳng có qua soũ Ái Hà sang đò Tự nhiên, cũng chẳng quá đặng ngã tư cầu đờũ ván sắt hiệu cầu Âm kinh. Và lại nước Thiên Trúc là nước mang hình người đen cung rợ mọi ở chẳng bằn người miền Nam mà dạy linh hồn người nước Nam tìm sang nước Phật làm chi? Hồn kẻ có phúc đã có nơi rất lành ở, hồn kẻ có tội đã có ngục luân hình, chẳng có mún gì cho thầy tăng cung Cao công cấm chẳng cho thưởng phúc phạt tội mà bảo đàng về nước Bụt được.

Trao đọc rằng:

Chẳng nên làm lành làm dữ
hễ chết thì khỏi tội gian tà
bảo hồn lấy kinh niệm Phật
dù vào địa ngục lại được ra,
 thì chẳng nên làm tội phúc gì nữa, hãy mẫn đỗ bảo đàng niệm Phật, thì chẳng lo phải tội trả đùa địa ngục, thì sao Phật giáo lại dạy thầy tăng nhân tu hành ăn chay tụng kinh bố thí cung đức làm chi.  Phật giáo nói những đề hầu hư vô dối chẳng nên nghe.

Đạo sĩ viết: Khi thầy tăng đã niệm kinh bảo đàng đọc thì tế tam kỳ lộ là Ban niên đại thuê thần, Đoạn huyền Nhất thần, Tuy Hàn tướng quân, dữ danh lan danh lực danh lai tứ bội chi thần, cập tránh phúc tránh thương đẳng hung thần dĩ kim ngân tửu nhục đẳng vật.

416 Cao công = Uncertain of meaning; possibly = thầy cúng.
417 Mẫn (敏) = cố gắng chăm chỉ.
418 與名圖(?)+名力名來(?)四貝(?)之神, 及重福重僧(?)神 = với danh lan danh lực danh lai từ bội chi thần, cập tránh phúc tránh thương đẳng hung thần đi kim ngân tiêu như đẳng vật.
420 這 nhị trảm trảm địa ương, và giả đắc sinh thiên.  Đệ tam trảm trảm mộc ương hung chủ[ng] khử thà phượng, và giả siêu tịnh thổ gia quyến thọ điện tràng, các xướng thiên thu vạn vạn tuế.
421 這 tước quỉ kỳ quốc = duôi quỷ về nước của nó.
422 Should be “xướng” (昌).
gạo cho dây tra vào miệng kẻ chết áy, một dỗ xúc gạo tra vào bên tài khâu, một dỗ xúc gạo tra vào bận tại khâu, một dỗ xúc gạo tra vào trao miệng thì vịn vô van kiếp cõ hu (í) làm hồn bạch, để mình tình linh phướn cho tam hồn thật phúc,śaj đi, liêm /279 = 189/ rồi phù thủy (thi) /424/ vu quan.Ś425 Bây giờ phúc hồn thiếp triều hồn chỉ lề, cảm bàng sự giả chỉ thần coi tiếp dẫn l[rinh] hồn chỉ hiện đi, hoặc hồn du tam giai, hoặc tại thà phương kiều lương đạo lỗ đội này nam bác văn thầy sởn xuyên ś426 thi bình sự giả dẫn hồn áy về.


thú bà là chém tài trọng do hành móc, dây những điều hưởng hiền di khắp nơi; vong hồn vào chỗ “tinh thọ” (cõi phát), người trong nhà được sống lâu. Mọi người thưa: thiên thuan vấn vạn tuế.

422 坟 符下 棺 = lề yểm búa trước khi dưa vào hồn.

423 三 魂 七 赓 = ba hồn bày vía.


425 扶 屍 于 棺 = đưa xác vào hồn.

426 復魂 帖召魂之 禮 , 感墮 使者之 神公 , 功接引靈魂之 顯至 , 或 魂遊三界 , 或 在他方 僑 梁 族東 西 南 北, 雲水 山 川 = việt thiết phúc hồn, làm lề triều hồn: xin các thanh sự giả góp công đưa dân linh hồn về nơi sinh hiền, hoặc hồn còi di chở ở bá cõi (thiên, địa, nhân gian), hoặc con đang lang thang ở ngoài đường ngoài cấu, ở 4 phương may nước nủi sóng.

427 四 日 成 服 = ngày thứ 4 phát tang.

428 Phue (服) = áo tang.

429 崑 崴 出 竿石 , 莫 者 名 剪刀 , 割 披 蛤 脊 血 , 報 父 母 勤 勞 , 勤 勤 子 道 , 福 德 適 適 高 , 燕 者 超 佛 國 , 子 孫 富 貴 豪 = sát đa đến từ núi Côn Lớn, làm thành đạo Mạc Đà; cắt roi di phán mở tóc

Đoạn thứ 9
Lươn Lễ đốt nhà táng vàng mã


Đoạn thứ 9
Lươn Lễ đốt nhà táng vàng mã


nay, bão công khó nhọc của cha mẹ; khó nhọc vật và là đạo hiệu; phức đức ngày càng nhiều; linh hồn vào nước Phật; con cháu đầy phụ quý hơn người.

430 斬 袁 逶 期 銘 (? 大 功 小 功 五月 組 麻 = mac áo trăm thời, áo tư thời; tôi kỹ (? ) mặc áo đại công, áo tiêu công, năm tháng thì mặc áo tí ma.

431 Các phục kỹ phục = mặc các loại áo tang ấy.

432 Phật giáo = lời Phật dạy.

433 Bối = ma chạy (?)

684


/284 = 194/


434 Vâi = văn (?)

435 Should be “rê.”

436 Thô bô = thô lâu, thô lô.
Đỗ Vũ ở đời nhà Minh chăng phải một thì vuối Hằng Nga. Sách sử đều chép Thục Sơn thị triệu tự nhân hoàng chí Minh thị tối hậu Vạo Đế Đỗ Vũ văn. Áy thì chớ tin sự Cao coû mài nhà táng làm chi.

Đoạn thứ 10
Luận Địa Ngục


Tây sĩ xin Đ[oũ] sĩ nói cho tỏ: Lễ phá ngục có làm thế nào?


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437 蜀山是(?) 朝(?) 自(?) 仁(?) 皇至明最厚望帝杜禹(?) 云(?) . The meaning of this sentence is obscure.

438 rugcc tăng vương = Địa tăng vương.
ngục cho [linh] hồn [được] ra cho khỏi.  Ấy lể phá ngục là thể ấy mà đạo Bụt dạy dạy bấy nhiêu sự trảo sách, tên sách ấy là Hoàng Đồ Lĩnh⁴³⁹ có bản đồ như sau này:

![Diagram]

/287 = 197/


⁴³⁹ Opusculum de sectis (p.105) has “Hoàng Đồ Vĩnh”; Hội Đông Тур Giáo (p. 32b) has “Hoàng Đồ Vĩnh Quyệt” (黃圖永訣).

⁴⁴⁰ 梁武立為齋會 (Vua Lương Vũ Đế lập nên chay đàn). Cf. Tâm Đăng (A 2481) 5a:2; Opusculum de sectis (p.104); Hội Đông Тур Giáo (p. 32b).

⁴⁴¹ 生也空,死也空,萬事皆空 = sinh vốn là không, tử vốn là không; mọi sự đều là không.
Tây sĩ rằn rành:

Chẳng có mlề nào mà thầy tăng cãi ta được sự ấy, vì chúng ta không làm lề cầu xin đỡ tội cho lịnh hồn ở lửa giải tội, là kẻ khi còn sống ở thế gian đã phạm tội mà ăn năn nên lại khỏi tội ấy, Sàõ le chửa đền đủ phần phạt tội ấy cho nên liểa xác doạ đồng phải chịu phạt vì tội cho đủ, lại ĐC B là lành vô cung đã định cho kẻ còn sống làm lề cầu xin đền tội cho lịnh hồn ở lửa giải tội. Bằn nga con còn sống đã phạm tội trật lại ĐC B mà chết an nán tội chẳng nên khi còn sống lại làm lề cầu xin đền tội cho lịnh hồn ở lửa giải tội.  Bằn nga con còn sống đã phạm tội mất là ĐC B mà chết, ăn năn tội chẳng nên thì linh hồn kẻ ấy phải sa đĩa ngục chịu phạt đời đời chẳng cung mà ta chẳng cứu được lịnh hồn ấy cung chẳng có ý cầu nguyện làm lễ cho kẻ ấy nữa, ấy là phế đạo Thánh ĐC B về chữa tội kẻ đã chết.

Đoũ sĩ viết:


Tây sĩ hỏi Đoũ sĩ:

Hai chữ nam vô Phật giáo đọc trại kinh ấy nghĩa là đì gì?

Đoũ sĩ viết:

Đạo Bụt đặt nhiều nghĩa cho hai chữ ấy cho nên hay lấy hai chữ ấy làm mạnh mà đọc trại kinh ấy. Sách Tâm Đăng cắt nghĩa hai chữ rành: Nam vi thiên phú, vô vi địa tải; nam vi phụ, vô vi mẫu; nam vi thủy, vô vi hỏa; nam vi tâm, vô vi tính; nam tính phụ, vô tính mẫu; nam vi khảm, vô vi ly; nam âm vô dương; nam căn vô khôn, nam vi nhật vô vi Nguyệt; nam vi thể vô vi dụng; nam vi sắc thân, vô vi pháp thân; cố nhật nội, ngoại nam vô...

442 念一千遍, 死不盗 (?) 道山 = Niệm được một ngàn lần, khi chết thì không bi cũр làm (?) noi tu tập). Cannot locate this quotation in Tâm Đặng.

443 南為天覆無為地載; 南為父無為母; 南為水無為火; 南為心無為性; 南為性父無為性母; 南為坎無為離; 南為日無為月; 南為水無為火; 南為色身無為法身; 故日内外南南 = nam là trái che, mồ là dắt chỗ; nam là cha, mồ là me; nam là núi, mồ là lừa; nam là tầm, mồ là tinh; nam là tỉnh cha, mồ là tinh me; nam là quê khám, mồ là quế ly; nam là âm, mồ là dương; nam là quế dân, mồ là quế khổ; nam là mất rơi, mồ là mất trường; nam là [chat] thể, mồ là hoat động; nam là nhạc thân, mồ là pháp thân; mỗi ngày ở trong ngoại là nam mồ. Quoted from Tâm Đặng (A 2481) 9a:5-9.

688
Đoạn thứ 11
Luận Quan âm cụ[ng] cõ hồn

T|áy| sì r|ăn|g:  Thiện hóa hay thở Bụt Quan Âm mà cậy Bụt ấy hay giúp ng[wróci] ta. Vậy ta hỏi D[ô[i]] sì But Quan Âm là ai?

D[ô[i]] sì viế[t]: Phật giáo đã đặt nhiều Bụt gọi là Bồ Tát, nghĩa là có phép chữa người ta cho khỏi sự dữ, mà trên các Bụt ấy hay Quan Âm r[ành] ta hơn các Bụt. Sách Phật giáo nói r[ành]: Quan Âm là con gái vua Diệu Trang Vương tên là Diệu Thiện Coũ Chúa gọi là Mẫu Thiện. Quan Âm giữ trinh tiết chẳng có lấy chòũ. Cha là Diệu Trang Vương giận liền đuổi Quan Âm đi. Quan Âm vào xứ Quảng Đoũ Huyện Hương Sơn ở Hương Sơn am. Đấy có nhiều tăng ni, ở mãi chẳng về. Cha liền khiến người đi đốt am ấy. Quan Âm cầm ngành liễu traõ lửa chẳng phải nào. Các ni traõ am ấy đều đốt chết hết. Quan Âm r[ành] ng[cesso] ta nay đắc đạo có phép thiên biến vạn hóa thiên thủ thiên nhỡn hay hiện ra bể nam, gọi là Bụt Bà. Sau nữa Phật giáo đã định ngày 24 mọi tháng mà lần một nghìn hạt đọc tên Bụt Quan Âm cho khỏi địa ngục như traõ nặng Tấm Đăng dạy r[ành]: Nam vô Bồ Tát thành tử bất đạo tốt (?) tạo địa ngục. Nhờ vì sự ấy có nhiều người thờ Bụt Quan Âm traõ nhà.


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444 南無菩薩千誠, 死不尊推 (注) 碎地獄 = thành tâm niệm một ngàn lần ‘nam mô bồ tát’, khi chết thì sẽ không đâm vào bi tuyệt diệt, nghiêm nhất nói coi được ngược. Cannot locate this quotation in Tâm Đâng.

445 Should read “bạo hạnh.” The character (行) can be pronounced as “hành,” “hạnh,” “hạng,” or “hang.”

446 恥復有鬼怪人妖, 邪説暴行, 以惑世誣民者乎 = Hương hố lại còn có chuyện quỷ quái, nhân yếu, tà thuyết hung hiem, ngan cờ, đề mà thưa đời đời người vay.


Đoạn thứ 12
Luận tết lập nêu ba vị bột

Thói n[uoi]c này nhà quan nhà dân ngày 30 tết quen lập nêu ba và lấy vôi bột làm cung nỏ là thế nào?


/295 = 205/


448 Năm năm = hàng năm, mỗi năm.
## APPENDIX B

**COMPARISON OF QUỐC-NGỮ SPELLINGS**

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# APPENDIX C

## GLOSSARY OF SINO-VIETNAMESE TERMS IN THE TEXT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Character</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bát quái</td>
<td>八卦</td>
<td>Eight Trigrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Càn</td>
<td>乾</td>
<td>First trigram, heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cửu Châu</td>
<td>九州</td>
<td>Nine Regions, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Di đoan</td>
<td>異端</td>
<td>Alien custom/doctrine, heterodoxy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dịch Kinh</td>
<td>易經</td>
<td>Classic/Book of Changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Đại Học</td>
<td>大 學</td>
<td>Great Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Đạo (concept)</td>
<td>道</td>
<td>Dao, Way, path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Đạo (philosophy)</td>
<td>道</td>
<td>Daoism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gia Ngữ</td>
<td>家語</td>
<td>Family sayings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gia Lễ</td>
<td>家禮</td>
<td>Family rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giáo</td>
<td>教</td>
<td>Teaching, doctrine, religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hành khiển</td>
<td>行 遣</td>
<td>Governing Spirit of the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hậu thổ</td>
<td>后土</td>
<td>Spirit of Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoàng địa kỳ</td>
<td>皇 地 祺</td>
<td>August Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoàng thiên</td>
<td>皇 天</td>
<td>August Heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hồn bạch</td>
<td>魂 帛</td>
<td>Soul cloth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hur</td>
<td>虚</td>
<td>Void, hollow, empty, unreal, vacant, insubstantial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hur không</td>
<td>虚 空</td>
<td>Void, hollow, empty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hur vô</td>
<td>虚</td>
<td>Empty, false, unreal, nihilistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hur vô tịch diệt</td>
<td>虚 空 寂 滅</td>
<td>Vacant and quiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khi</td>
<td>氣</td>
<td>Material Force, vital energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khôn</td>
<td>坤</td>
<td>Second trigram, earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Không</td>
<td>空</td>
<td>Empty, hollow, void (in space)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lễ (virtue)</td>
<td>禮</td>
<td>Propriety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lễ (ceremony)</td>
<td>禮</td>
<td>Rites, rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lễ Ký</td>
<td>禮 記</td>
<td>Record/Book of Rites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linh toạ</td>
<td>靈 座</td>
<td>Soul seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lực thao</td>
<td>六 韜</td>
<td>Six strategies (military tactics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lương nghi</td>
<td>兩 儀</td>
<td>Two Modes/Dynamics, yin and yang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lý</td>
<td>理</td>
<td>Principle, reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minh tinh</td>
<td>銘 旌</td>
<td>Inscribed banner (name banner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nhân</td>
<td>仁</td>
<td>Humaneness, benevolence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nho</td>
<td>儒</td>
<td>Ru, literati, Confucian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nho giáo</td>
<td>儒教</td>
<td>Confucianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nghĩa</td>
<td>義</td>
<td>Righteousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngọc hoàng</td>
<td>玉皇</td>
<td>Jade Emperor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngu (rite)</td>
<td>虞</td>
<td>Pacifying the soul, reposing the soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngữ đế</td>
<td>五帝</td>
<td>Five Emperors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngữ đức</td>
<td>五德</td>
<td>Five Virtues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngữ hành</td>
<td>五行</td>
<td>Five Elements/Agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngữ kinh</td>
<td>五經</td>
<td>Five Classics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngữ luận</td>
<td>五倫</td>
<td>Five Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngữ phương</td>
<td>五方</td>
<td>Five directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngữ tang</td>
<td>腎</td>
<td>Five organs/viscera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngữ thường</td>
<td>五常</td>
<td>Five Norms/Constant Virtues/Morals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quán tử</td>
<td>君子</td>
<td>Noble persons, gentlemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quỷ</td>
<td>鬼</td>
<td>Demon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quỷ thần</td>
<td>鬼神</td>
<td>Spiritual beings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sa môn</td>
<td>沙門</td>
<td>Śramana, buddhist ascetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Táo quân</td>
<td>燒君</td>
<td>Stove genie, kitchen God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tam cương</td>
<td>三綱</td>
<td>Three Bonds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tam tài</td>
<td>三才</td>
<td>Three Powers (heaven, earth, humans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tâm</td>
<td>心</td>
<td>Heart, mind, heart-mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tâm Đăng (book)</td>
<td>心 登</td>
<td>Lamp of the Mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Táo quân</td>
<td>灶君</td>
<td>Stove Genie, lord of the hearth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tề</td>
<td>祭</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thái cực</td>
<td>太極</td>
<td>Supreme/Great Ultimate, the Absolute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thái công</td>
<td>太公</td>
<td>Grand Duke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thành hoàng</td>
<td>城皇</td>
<td>Tutelary Genie;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thần</td>
<td>神</td>
<td>Spirit, deity, god</td>
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<td>Thần vị</td>
<td>神位</td>
<td>Spirit tablet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thi Kinh</td>
<td>詩經</td>
<td>Classic/Book of Odes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thiên</td>
<td>天</td>
<td>Heaven; sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiên chủ</td>
<td>天</td>
<td>Lord of Heaven (God)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiên địa</td>
<td>天</td>
<td>Heaven and earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiên hạ</td>
<td>天</td>
<td>the empire, the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thổ công</td>
<td>土</td>
<td>Household genie,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thổ chủ</td>
<td>土</td>
<td>Land guardian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu Kinh</td>
<td>書 經</td>
<td>Classic/Book of Documents</td>
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<td>----------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tịch diệt</td>
<td>寂 滅</td>
<td>Quiescence, extinction of passion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tiên sư</td>
<td>先 師</td>
<td>Primary teacher, guild founder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tiên vương</td>
<td>先</td>
<td>Ancient rulers, deceased rulers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tín (virtue)</td>
<td>信</td>
<td>Sincerity; Trustworthiness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tính Lý (book)</td>
<td>性 理</td>
<td>Principle and Nature; Metaphysics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tịnh thảo</td>
<td>淨 土</td>
<td>Land of bliss, pure land</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thập triết</td>
<td>十 哲</td>
<td>Ten Great Disciples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thương đề</td>
<td>上 帝</td>
<td>Sovereign-on-High, Supreme Ruler</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trí</td>
<td>智</td>
<td>Wisdom, knowledge, prudence</td>
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<td>Trung Dung</td>
<td>中 厥</td>
<td>Doctrine of the Mean</td>
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<td>Trường</td>
<td>丈</td>
<td>10 cubits</td>
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<td>Tứ Thập Nhị Chương Kinh (book)</td>
<td>四 十 二 章</td>
<td>Sutra of Forty-two Sections</td>
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<td>Tứ thư</td>
<td>四 書</td>
<td>Four Books</td>
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<td>Four Associates/Correlates</td>
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<td>Tứ tướng</td>
<td>四 象</td>
<td>Four Forms/Images</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tự nhiên</td>
<td>自 然</td>
<td>Nature, spontaneousity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Văn vật</td>
<td>萬 物</td>
<td>Myriad of things</td>
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<tr>
<td>Văn Miếu</td>
<td>文 廟</td>
<td>Temple of Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vật</td>
<td>物</td>
<td>Matter, substance, living creatures, things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vô</td>
<td>無</td>
<td>Non-being, without, negation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vô cực</td>
<td>無 極</td>
<td>Limitless, ultimate non-being</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vũ Miếu</td>
<td>武 廟</td>
<td>Temple of the Military</td>
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## APPENDIX D

**CHINESE NAMES AND THEIR SINO-VIETNAMESE EQUIVALENTS**

<table>
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<td>Cai Yin</td>
<td>Thái Âm/Hâm</td>
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<td>Xương Bình</td>
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<td>Cheng Hao</td>
<td>Trịnh Hạo</td>
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<td>Trịnh Di</td>
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<td>Chengzi (Cheng Yi)</td>
<td>Trịnh Từ (Trịnh Di)</td>
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<td>Chu Wangying</td>
<td>Sở Vương Anh</td>
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<td>Dade</td>
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<td>đói</td>
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<td>Phan Thị Vinh</td>
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<td>Phúc Hy</td>
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<td>Cao Ân</td>
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<td>Cao Công</td>
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<tr>
<td>gen</td>
<td>cán</td>
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<td>Goulong</td>
<td>Cầu Long</td>
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<td>Goumang</td>
<td>Cầu Mang</td>
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<td>Guan Zhong</td>
<td>Quản Trọng</td>
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</table>
Guangdong  Quang  Đông
Guang Yen  Quang Nhiệm
Guiguzi (Wang Xu)  Quy  Cốc Tử (Vương Hủ)
Gun  Côn
Guo Ziyi  Quách Tự Nghị
Guyun tianshi  Củ Văn Thiên Sư

Han  Hán
Han Han  Hán Cao Tổ
Han Guangwu  Hán Quảng Vũ
Han Huidi  Hán Huệ Đề
Han Lingdi  Hán Linh Đề
Han Mingdi  Hán Minh Đề
Han Wudi  Hán Vũ Đề
Han Xin  Hán Tín
Han Yu  Hán Dữ
Hanyang  Hầm Dương
Heng E  Hằng Nga
Hou Jing  Hậu Cảnh
Hou Yi  Hậu Nghệ
Hu Wufeng (Hu Hong)  Ngụ Phong Hồ Thị (Hồ Hồng)
Hu Zhitang (Hu Yin)  Trí Đường Hồ Thị (Hồ Dần)
Huainanzi (Liu An)  Hoài Nam Tử (Lưu An)
Huang Fu  Hoàng Phúc
Huangdi  Hoàng Đế
Huguang  Hồ Quảng

Jia Geliang  Gia Cát Lượng
Jiang Chong  Giang Sung
Jiaozhi  Giao Chí
Jiaozhou  Giao Châu
Jin  Kim
Jin  Tân
Jin Renshan  Nhân Sơn Kim Thị

kan  khám
Kan Xing  Kham Hành
Kan Yu  Kham Dư
Kongzi (Kong Qiu)  Khóng Tự (Không Khâu)

kun  khôn

Laomi  Lão Mị
Laoxian  Lão Tiên

699
Laozi (Lao Tan)  Lào Tử (Lão Đam)
li  lý
li  lý
Li Chunfeng  Lý Thuấn Phong
Li Jing  Lý Tĩnh
Li Sheng  Lý Thịnh
Liang  Lương
Liang Taizu  Lương Thái Tổ
Liang Wudi  Lương Vũ Đế
Liao Shang  Liêu Thằng
Liao Yu  Liêu Dữ
Liao Zi  Liêu Tứ
Liezzi  Liệt Tứ
Lintao  Lắm Thảo
Liu Bang (Han Gaozu)  Lưu Bang (Hán Cao Tổ)
Liu Ji  Lưu Cơ
Liu Yan  Lưu Ân
Longhe  Lũng Hà
Lu  Lổ
Lü Buwei  Lã Bát Vi
Lü Cai  Lã Tái
Lü Wang (Jiang Ziya)  Lã Vọng (Khương Tử Nha)
Luju  Lộc Cự
Luoyang  Lạc Dương

Ma Tian  Mã Diệm
Ma Yuan  Mã Viên
Mengzi (Meng Ke)  Mạnh Tử (Mạnh Kha)
Mengzong  Mạnh Tông
Miao Le  Điện Lạc
Miao Shan  Điện Thiên
Miao Zhuang  Điện Trạng
Min Ziqian  Mẫn Tử Khiên
Ming  Minh
Ming Taizu  Minh Thái Tổ
Minglei  Minh Lợi
Mingzhou  Danh Châu
Mozi (Mo Di)  Mặc Tử (Mã Điếm)

Nanyang  Nam Dương
Nanzhao  Nam Chiêu
Ni Qiu  Ni Khâu
Nügua  Nữ Oa
Pang Juan
Bàng Quyên
Pangu
Bản Cổ

qi
Qi
Qi Minwang
Qi Weiwang

qian
Qin
Qin Aigong
Qin Ershi
Qin Jing
Qin Shihuang
Qiu Qiongshan

Shao Hao
Shen Du
Shen Nong
Shi Xie
Shu
Shu Di
Shu Lianghe
Sibo (Wenwang)
Sima Guang
Sima Qian
Song
Song Huizong
Song Taizu
Song Xiaozong
Song Xiaoqiong
Song Zhenzong
Song Zhenzong
Sui
Sui Wendi
Sun Bin
Sun Wuzi

tai chu
taiji

khí
Tề
Tề Mân Vương
Tề Uy Vương
càn
Tấn
Tấn Ai Công
Tấn Nhi Thị
Tấn Cạnh
Tấn Thủy Hoàng
Quynthia Song Khưu Thị

Nhằm Bá Ngưu
Nhằm Hữu
Nhục Thu

Th %(ò
Thành Đông
Thành Nông
Sĩ Nhiếp
Thực
Thực Đệ
Thực Lương Hạt
Tây Bá (Văn Vương)
Tư Mã Quang
Tư Mã Thiên
Tòng
Tòng Huy Tông
Tòng Thái Tổ
Tòng Hiếu Tông
Tòng Hiếu Tông
Tòng Chấn Tông
Tòng Chấn Tông
Tuyên
Tuyên Văn Đệ
Tôn Tần
Tôn Vũ Tử

thái so
Thái Hiếu
thái cực
Taishang laojun
Thái Thượng Lão Quân
taishi
thái thủy
taisu
thái tố
taiyi
thái dịch
Tang
Durong
Tang Dezong
Durong Đức Tông
Tang Gaozong
Durong Cao Tông
Tang Gaozu
Durong Cao Tổ
Tang Taizong
Durong Thái Tông
Tang Xianzong
Durong Hiện Tông
Tang Xizong
Durong Hy Tông
Tang Xuanzong
Durong Huyền Tông
Tang Yizong
Durong Ý Tông
Tang
Thang
Tian Xiangru
Diên Tương Như
Tianzhu
Thiên Trúc
Tongtai
Dồng Thái
Wang Bi
Vương Bí
Wang Di Du Yu
Vương Đế Đỗ Vũ
Wang Yu
Vương Dự
Wei
Nguy
Wei Liewang
Uy Liệt Vương
Wei Wendi
Nguy Văn Đệ
Wengong (Sima Guang)
Ôn Công (Tư Mã Quang)
Wenwang
Văn Vương
Wu
Ngô
Wu Gang
Ngô Cang
Wu Ji
Ngô Khởi
Wuwang
Vũ Vương
Xi Wangmu
Tây Vương Mẫu
Xiali
Hạ Lịch
Xiangshan
Hương Sơn
Xieli
Huệ Lý
Xu Zongdao
Hứa Tông Đạo
Xuanming
Huyền Minh
Xuhuang dadao
Hứ Hoàng Đại Đạo
xun
tón
Xunzi
Tuấn Tử

Yan Di
Viêm Đế
Yan Hui
Nhan Hồi (Nhan Uyên)
Yan Zhaowang
Yến Chiếu Vương
<table>
<thead>
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723


