

## Settlement Process and Belief Characteristics of the Chinese People in the Southern Vietnam in the XVII-XIX Centuries

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### Abstract

*The article clarifies the process of Chinese people coming to the Southern region and gradually shaping the cultural and religious characteristics in the area with the largest concentration of Chinese people in Vietnam. In the context of great upheavals in China at the end of the 17th century, a large number of Chinese people boarded boats to leave their homeland and go south to find the promised land. When the Chinese came to Vietnam, they brought traditional beliefs from their homeland to the new land as a way to support their lives in the new land, and at the same time they also integrated and continued to live, absorbing and adapting the beliefs of the communities that had previously settled here (especially the Vietnamese community) to create unique characteristics in the religious activities of the Chinese people in the Southern region. In addition, we will analyze and compare the beliefs of the Chinese people in the South with the beliefs originating from China to see the change and mixture between Chinese culture and the culture of other communities. Indigenous residents during the community settlement process.*

**Keywords:** *Chinese; 17th - 19th centuries; religion; Southern region; Vietnam.*

### Introduction

Chinese people settled in large numbers in Gia Dinh and Dong Nai (today's South) around the end of the 17th century, mainly participating in the failed "anti-Qing and restore Ming" sentiment that fled to the Southeast Asia region and settled in the southern region of Cochinchina territory. In the context of promoting the expansion to the South, the Nguyen government had arranged and cleverly used this force in the work of exploring, establishing sovereignty, and stabilizing Gia Dinh land. With the favor of the Nguyen lords and later Nguyen kings, Chinese community institutions were established. The Chinese community has gradually formed its own religious institutions to provide spiritual support for them in the process of settling, exploring and integrating into new lands.

### Overview of the settlement process of Chinese people in Southern Vietnam

In the middle of the 17th century, China's political situation had many fluctuations, the Ming Dynasty collapsed, and the Manchu Dynasty was established (in 1644). The failed of "anti-Qing and restore Ming" sentiment were suppressed one after another, and many groups of Chinese people in these movements sailed to Southeast Asia to seek refuge. Due to a series of political upheavals and constant wars in the early Qing Dynasty, the population of Southeast China, mainly engaged in commercial activities, had to migrate abroad. Also during this period, the southeastern coastal areas of China such as Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong were rife with pirates, especially in Fujian, pirates colluding with Thien Dia Hoi<sup>6</sup> to become a

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<sup>6</sup>Thien Dia Hoi (天地會), also known as Hong Hoa Hoi, is a secret society that originated in China during the Kangxi period with the purpose of rebelling against Qing and restoring the Ming Dynasty, restoring the country of the Dai Ming Dynasty, and expelling foreign Manchu troops. clan. Thien Dia Hoi is also called Hong Mon Hoi or Freemasonry Hoi. Thien Dia Hoi is headed by the General Dao Master, followed by ten paths, the First Five Rooms have five lines, the Later Five Rooms have five lines, each line operates in a province of China. See more: 欧阳潮龙起着 (2002), 中国秘密社会, 第四卷。清代会党, 福建人民出版社.

terrifying plundering force called is the sea bandit (松浦章, 2009, p.230-233). According to Duong Van Huy, this was essentially an action aimed at isolating the Ming Dynasty forces wandering along the coast carrying out the plan to failed "anti-Qing and restore Ming" sentiment especially the forces of Zheng Cheng Gong (鄭聲公) on the island of Taiwan. Therefore, the Trinh family had to send merchant ships to many Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam, to buy food and weapons (Huy, D.V., 2023, p.35-36). Zheng Cheng Gong's resistance war failed, and the Ming dynasty's relics one by one left to settle permanently in Vietnam. One more reason, in August 1645, the Manchu Qing court ordered to dress according to the Qing Dynasty's "y quan gia nghi tuan ban trieu chi che" (wearing clothes must comply with the regime of our dynasty) and issued a decree. The "Chi Phat nghiêm Chi" order forced people to cut their hair and follow Qing Dynasty customs to braid their hair in pigtails to force the Chinese people to change their customs. Many Chinese people saw the order to cut their hair as an insult to their culture, and were dissatisfied with the harsh rule of the Qing Dynasty and left the country to find a place to live elsewhere, including Southern Vietnam.

During this time, Chinese immigrants arrived in Gia Dinh (at the same time as the Vietnamese) and joined forces with the communities that had previously settled here, broke the land, set up markets, and built this land into a prosperous rich and bustling land. According to Vietnamese history books, in 1679, the old generals of the Ming Dynasty, Longmen General Duong Ngan Dich and deputy general Hoang Tien, and General Cao Loi Liem, Tran Thuong Xuyen and deputy general Tran An Binh, brought soldiers and more than 3,000 family members came to Tu Dung seaport (Hue) to "ask to become servants" to Lord Nguyen (Don, L.Q., 2007). However, unlike Vietnamese historical sources, some regional documents have confirmed that the major migration of Chinese people led by Duong Ngan Dich into Cochinchina took place later than the year 1679 (around 1682)<sup>7</sup>. Chen Ching Ho also said that regarding the timeline of the great migration of Chinese people to Vietnam, Vietnamese histories under the Nguyen Dynasty wrongly recorded the year 1679, in fact through studying documents, such as "Guangdong locale". local area", the Dong Kinh trading journal of the British East India Company (March - April 1682), then refer to the reports of the 5th and 19th Siamese merchant ships arriving in Nagasaki in In the 3rd year of Reigen (Quy Hoi, 1683), he proved that Duong Ngan Dich's fleet came to Vietnam twice in 1682 and 1683, then divided into two groups to My Tho and Bien Hoa (Chen Ching Ho, 2023, p.45).

Tran Thuong Xuyen brought his troops into Can Gio gate, down to Ban Lan (Bien Hoa) then moved to Cu Lao Pho area (about 5 km away). When Tran Thuong Xuyen came to Dong Nai in general and Cu Lao Pho in particular was formed, Vietnamese migrants settled in large numbers to explore the land and initially established hamlets here. With the experience of a merchant (and pirate) who had roamed throughout South China, Tran Thuong Xuyen gathered more displaced people from concentrated places to the Cu Lao Pho river confluence area, building this place. into a bustling urban area in the early 18th century (Duc, T.H., 2005). Phan Khoang also said: In Bien Hoa, Tran Thuong Xuyen concentrated Hoa Thuong on Cu Lao Pho, in the middle of Nong Nai River (Dong Nai River), south of Bien Hoa province today (Khanh, P., 2001). Cu Lao, where Europeans, Japanese, Malays, Chinese... came to buy and sell, grew and prospered, becoming the commercial center of the Southern region until the day the Tay Son army attacked<sup>8</sup>. Cu Lao

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<sup>7</sup>Reference: Li Tana (2015), "Epidemics, Trade and local Woorship in Vietnam, Leizhou peninsula and Hainan island", printed in Imperial China and Its Southern Neighbors/edited by Victor H. Mair and Liam C. Kelley. First published in Singapore in 2015 by ISEAS publishing Institute of Asian Studies; Brian A. Zottoli. (2011). *Reconceptualizing Southern Vietnamese History from the 15th to 18th Centuries: Competition along the Coasts from Guangdong to Cambodia*. USA: A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of History in The University of Michigan; Yoneo Ishii (1998), *The Junk Trade from Southeast Asia: Translations from the (Tosen Fusetsu-gaki, 1674-1723)*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore; Robert J. Antony (2014), *Violence and Predation on the Sino-Vietnamese Maritime Frontier, 1450-1850*," *Asia Major* 27.2 (Fall), upcoming 2014; Huynh Ngoc Dang. (2006). *A few words discussed about the character Tran Thuong Xuyen*, *Journal of Historical Scientific Information*, No. 2/2006, Binh Duong... In this article, the author focuses on the characteristics of beliefs so he will not discuss them in depth at this time. The author will return to this topic in another article.

<sup>8</sup> **According to Tosèn documents** Chen Chang-shuan (Chen Thuong Xuyen) was first mentioned by a Chinese merchant ship owner in August 1690, **who was then a pirate operating in the lower Mekong River region** (Yoneo Ishii, 1998). Also according to Brian A. Zottoli, based on the use of Tosèn documents, and a comparison between Vietnamese documents and Chinese documents, it is confirmed: Tran Thuong Xuyen did not go with Duong Ngan Dich to Dang Trong in 1679, but went straight to Chan Lap, operating in the lower **Mekong River** to block

Pho is an urban area that was formed early in the Southern region. Cu Lao Pho urban area was formed on the basis of a deep inland river port, so it has optimal advantages to become a bustling goods exchange center with many diverse and rich types of goods. Dong Nai River has a fairly large flow, making it easy for ships from other countries to dock. John Barrow described this river as follows: “The great river Donnai on the chart, Cambodia, is described as being navigable for the largest sized vessels upstream up to 40 miles inland” (Barrow, 2008). The ancient Dong Nai region was a place with many products, attracting traders from other countries to purchase.

Born in the same period as Nong Nai Dai Pho (today is Cu Lao Pho, Bien Ho), since the late 17th century, My Tho port town has become an important urban area of the South. After being approved by Lord Nguyen to settle down, Duong Ngan Dich established My Tho Dai Street, where ships and boats went back and forth for crowded trade, and gathered Chinese, Cambodian, and Vietnamese people to use land to farm and divide up hamlet farms (Khanh, P., 2001). Realizing that this was a fertile land, Duong Ngan Dich gathered Vietnamese, Khmer, Chinese... to come here to reclaim, break up the land, and expand the area. Trinh Hoai Duc commented on the position of My Tho port in the trading system in Cochinchina as follows: All merchant ships traveling from place to place must stop and rest in My Tho river, enjoy the cool air, watch the moon, wait for the tide to rise, Follow the flow up to the west or down to the east (Duc, T.H., 2005). Many large markets in My Tho have been formed, where rice is traded in large quantities. Traders from other regions as well as foreign traders come to My Tho to trade, especially to buy rice, bustling day and night. Ships and boats travel back and forth bustlingly, sometimes moored like a large marina.

In addition, a part of the Long Mon army in Tran Thuong Xuyen's force stopped in the Saigon-Cho Lon area to explore land and establish a market. The Saigon-Cho Lon area was soon formed. During this time, in addition to the Chinese who fled from China, there were also people from Minh Huong villages in Thuan Quang who also settled in Bien Hoa and Saigon - Cho Lon. Especially after Tran Thuong Xuyen was assigned to lead the army of Long Mon general in Gia Dinh and moved his headquarters from Cu Lao Pho to Phien Tran (later was called Cho Lon area). Here, with his influence, he recruited a large number of Vietnamese and Chinese people to continue to live, build market streets along both sides of the Tau Hu canal, open deep-water ports on the Saigon River, attracting trade. Boats go in and out to trade... Bustling Cho Lon gradually formed, becoming a trade center between the two urban areas of My Tho and Cu Lao Pho (Dang, H.N., 2018, p.34-35). The ancient Cho Lon area is now part of District 5 and District 6 (today's Ho Chi Minh City). This is an urban area founded by the Chinese, with very bustling trading activities. According to researcher Vuong Hong Sen, this area can be traced to Quang Dong Nhai hamlet, where Quan De temple and Tam Hoi temple are today. According to the map drawn by Nguyen Van Hoc at the time of Gia Long's 14th year (1815), the current Cho Lon area is noted as: Sai Con Xu (Kiem, T.V., 1960).

Based on the two large groups of Chinese people settling in Cu Lao Pho and Saigon - Cho Lon, in the year of Mau Dan (1698), Marquis Le Thanh Nguyen Huu Canh visited the Southern region and the Chinese people here were gathered. They reside in two communes: Thanh Ha (Tran Bien - Dong Nai) and Minh Huong (Phan Tran - Gia Dinh) (National History Office of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2002). These two villages are organized in a "consulate" style without specific geographical boundaries. Regarding this, the Khoan Uoc and the biographies of our predecessors also clearly state: "Minh Huong commune is like a consulate" (Ha, T.T.L., 2010). Not only living in Vietnamese villages, Thanh Ha and Minh Huong people also live together, not clearly defined, Minh Huong people also live in Tran Bien, Thanh Ha people also settle in Phien Tran. This explains why, Cu Lao Pho (Bien Hoa) is the cradle of the Minh Huong people in Gia Dinh, but Lord Nguyen founded Thanh Ha village here. Although the Chinese people in these two communes are organized in a "consulate" style, this proves that the number of Chinese people in Tran Bien and Phien Tran is relatively large. In Phien Tran, according to the author, Chinese people are also concentrated mainly in the area around the old Lon market<sup>9</sup>, where General Tran Thuong Xuyen's

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merchant ships and interfere in Chan Lap's internal affairs. In 1690, Tran Thuong Xuyen was first mentioned by a Chinese merchant ship (Brian A. Zottoli, 2011).

<sup>9</sup>Located neatly in the area from Tan Da street to Kim Bien market, and from Nguyen Trai street to Tau Hu canal in District 5 today.

headquarters is located and there are many traces of the Chinese community here (Ong Bon pagoda, Thien Hau temple, Minh Huong Gia Thanh communal house...). By the end of the 18th century, the Tay Son attacked Lord Nguyen in Gia Dinh, destroying a number of urban areas in this area such as My Tho, Cu Lao Pho, Ha Tien (places that supported Lord Nguyen), a part of the people. Flowers in those places (mainly from Cu Lao Pho) have just evacuated to the Saigon - Cho Lon area, making this urban area even more crowded<sup>10</sup>. At the end of the 18th century, Saigon - Cho Lon became the center of the southern region. Cho Lon at that time belonged to Tan Long district, Tan Binh district, Phien Tran. By the end of the 18th century (around 1795), the Cho Lon area was noted on the map as "Bazar Chinois" (Dong Khanh street) (Lien, T.H., 2001). This further proves the large concentration of Chinese people (mainly) in this area <sup>11</sup>.

In the early 19th century, Nguyen Anh defeated the Tay Son movement to establish the Nguyen dynasty (1802). To repay the people who helped him during his exile days, the founder of the Nguyen Dynasty had many very open policies towards the Chinese. As commented by Tsai Maw Kuey: "These people enjoy the same rights as Vietnamese people but do not have the same obligations, because they are exempt from military service and periodic conscription" (Tsai Maw Kuey, 1968). The Chinese community in the South is even more favored. Chinese merchants residing in Cho Lon, if sponsored by Minh Huong commune chief, will enjoy preferential rights. In the 13th year of Gia Long (1815), with the approval of Minister Trinh Hoai Duc, the Chinese in Minh Huong Gia Thanh (Cho Lon) were allowed to use the rituals, customs and ethnic languages of each country. Different localities, divided into self-governing states, include: Quang Trieu, Phuoc Thien, Chaozhou, Hainan and the Hakka people, called the five states. The chief was elected by the merchants and managed the Association's affairs, mediated disputes in the Chinese community, and collected taxes to pay to local authorities. During the Minh Mang period, the king gave the Governor the authority to manage Chinese immigration and control Chinese communities operating within the framework of local customs and laws. States are also organizations that help new immigrants and support community members in business and funerals; Build, preserve and organize offerings at temples and shrines to worship the community's protector, according to local traditions. After Le Van Khoi's uprising, because many Chinese people in Gia Dinh responded to participate, King Minh Mang had more vigilance and stricter control over this community (Trang, H.N., et al., 2012). In 1842, Thieu Tri issued regulations: "All localities where newly arrived Qing people must follow the established rules: record them in the state book and pay taxes. The children of that state are not allowed to cut their hair and put it in pigtails. Once they reach the age of 18, the head of the state must report to the mandarins and have them pay taxes according to the Minh Huong book. Thanh" (Nguyen Dynasty Cabinet, 1993).

Regarding the number of Chinese people in South Vietnam, according to many different sources, the number of Chinese people residing (permanently) in South Vietnam until the mid-nineteenth century was about 40,000 people (Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Athers*, 2002, p.81). In which, in Phien An town (mainly Ho Chi Minh City today), in 1819 alone, it was recorded that more than 11,000 overseas Chinese participated in dredging rivers and repairing roads for more than 3 months, causing traffic problems. Things go smoothly here, especially the waterway in Gia Dinh (巫乐华, 1997). It can be seen that, by the first half of the 19th century, the Chinese in the Cochinchina region accounted for about 3/4 of Vietnam (40,000/65,000 people), of which the main settlement center was still the area of Cholon, belonging to Ho Chi Minh City today.

### **Some Characteristics of Chinese Beliefs in Southern Vietnam**

During the process of settling down in Vietnam, people from China, especially in the southern region (Guangdong, Fujian...) who came to settle down had a number of basic advantages that contributed to

<sup>10</sup>See more: (Nguyen Dynasty National History Institute, 2002); (Dong Nai Museum, 2007); (Tran Hong Lien, 2001), ...

<sup>11</sup>From the area around the old Cho Lon, Cho Lon continuously expanded to become the busiest urban area in Cochinchina. During the French colonial period, Cho Lon city had the following administrative limits: to the north was Beylié Avenue (today's Ngo Quyen Street); To the west is Charles Thompson Avenue (Hung Vuong Street today); to the south is Bao Ngan canal; To the east is Tau Hu canal (Truong Thi Bich Lien, 2006)



promoting the process of settlement, integration of their community into the new land. That is the proximity in terms of geographical location, natural conditions, and cultural similarities; similarities in hydro-climatic environment; The long-term settlement process leads to mixed marriage relationships with other communities (especially the Vietnamese); Facilitation policy of the Vietnamese State towards overseas Chinese and Chinese people. These are the factors that create the meeting of each other in terms of culture, especially beliefs. The two Vietnamese and Chinese communities have had a natural interference process in terms of culture and beliefs. The process of living together for many centuries between the Chinese and the Vietnamese and other indigenous communities has formed many forms of cultural exchange. The characteristics of the community's religious activities are gradually shaped.

### *Belief in worshipping Thien Hau Thanh Mau*

Most Chinese people in the South worship the Holy Mother Thien Hau. Wherever Chinese immigrants settled, there was a temple worshipping Thien Hau. Legend has it that Thien Hau Thanh Mau originated from Chau Mi, Bo Dien district, Fujian province. She was originally a girl with the Lam family and was enlightened, displaying miraculous powers to help people in distress at sea. According to Tsai Maw Kuye: She had an epiphany to help the Song dynasty's envoys in trouble at sea. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, she continued to have many epiphanies to help the imperial fleet, and was awarded the title "God of Fortune"., "Queen", "Thien Phi" and in the Kangxi period (Qing Dynasty) she was given the title of Holy Mother. People worship her as "Holy Mother" and "Heavenly Mother" (Tsai Maw Kuey, 1968).

During the early days of exploration (17th-18th centuries), the belief in worshipping Thien Hau Thanh Mau was closely associated with the process of immigration and settlement of Chinese people in the Southern region. In Phien Tran (Saigon-Cho Lon), Thien Hau Temple (Tue Thanh Hoi Quan) was built in 1760 (See Figure 1), the other temple (Ha Chuong Hoi Quan) has an unknown year of construction, but a pair of ancient tureens of The temple recorded the year of restoration "Gia Khanh Ky Ty year" (1809), so the temple was built before 1809 (Lien, T.H., 1998), other Thien Hau temples are dated later. In Tran Bien (Bien Hoa), the Chinese community in the early days when they came to the new land also brought with them the very unique belief of worshipping Ba Thien Hau. Most Chinese religious relics in Bien Hoa have a shrine next to her. The ancient temple in Buu Long ward, Bien Hoa city today is a project built by the Chinese relatively early (around the end of the 18th century - early 19th century). This place was originally a small temple of Chinese people from the Hemi state who worked in the stone industry to worship Patriarch Ngu Dang. Thien Hau's inspiration attracted many people to worship her, so the Hac people welcomed her to marry her at the relic. This is a quite unique architectural work coordinated by many construction elements but mainly stone architecture, exquisitely expressed by artisans of the Chinese people of the Hakka state (Co, N.D., 2021). In other localities of the Southeast, the Chinese settled later and were smaller in number, so the Thien Hau temples here were also built later than in Saigon - Gia Dinh and Bien Hoa. In Binh An district (present-day Binh Duong), the earliest Thien Hau Palace was located in area 8, Chanh Nghia ward (Thu Dau Mot) established in 1867 (on the bank of Huong Chu Hieu canal). In 1945, due to the destruction of this base's war equipment, the Four Chinese Clans then moved the Lady statue and worshipping objects to Thien Hau Palace in Phu Cuong today <sup>12</sup>. In Tay Ninh, Thien Hau Temple is currently located in Quarter 1, Go Dau town, founded by the Chaozhou Chinese group in 1938, worshipping Thien Hau Thanh Mau and worshipping many gods and Buddhas such as Quan Cong, Phuc Duc Chanh Than, Kim Hoa Nuong Nuong, Dragon Mother, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (Co, N.D., et al., 2020).

If in China, Thien Hau is worshiped in the form of a painting of "a woman sitting on the waves or clouds, or only when sitting on a throne" (Henri Maspero, 2000), then in the South, the Chinese worship the statue of Thien Hau, solemnly placed in the main hall, a place dedicated to worshipping Lady "Thien Hau Cung". She is revered as one of the first gods of the community. "Thien Hau is dressed in a dark-colored robe, embroidered with brocade, the outfit of a prince" (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1990). In addition to the establishments where Thien Hau Thanh Mau is the main god, Chinese people also worship Thien Hau at temples worshipping Quan Thanh De Quan (Ong Pagoda - Nghia An Hoi Quan,

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<sup>12</sup>Often called Ba Pagoda in Binh Duong

Ong Lang Pagoda - On Lang Hoi Hoi). Not only worshiped at the common temple of the community, Thien Hau Thanh Mau is also worshiped at home along with other gods.



Figure 1. Tue Thanh Assembly Hall, also known as Ba Thien Hau Pagoda in Cho Lon

It can be seen that the function of Thien Hau has changed, because it was originally from the need to find spiritual support in the face of countless storms when leaving her homeland that people worshiped Thien Hau Thanh Mau as a sea god (god of the sea). However, when she came to Vietnam, the function of this goddess expanded, she became an omnipotent goddess, meaning the god who governs an area (ie areas with settlements of Vietnamese people). Vietnamese people also come to worship her during Tet holidays. Therefore, the belief in worshiping Lady Thien Hau is evidence of cultural interference between the Chinese and Vietnamese ethnic groups and it can be affirmed that she is a powerful object of worship with the function of protecting and ensuring life. not only of the Chinese, but also of the Vietnamese. Vietnamese people in the Southeast have adopted the Chinese belief in worshiping Ba Thien Hau and also look up to Ba Thien Hau as a deity of their community.

#### *Belief in worshiping Ong Bon*

Most Chinese people in the South have the custom of worshiping Mr. Bon. The Chinese considered Mr. Bon to be their supporter during their journey on the sea to migrate to the South. The Chinese worship Mr. Bon in the same way as the Vietnamese worship Thanh Hoang Bon Canh (who supports the community). And these two beliefs have harmony and mutual interference for the two Chinese and Vietnamese communities in the South. Therefore, the way of worship, rituals, as well as the image of Mr. Bon of the Chinese people in Southern Vietnam have many differences from other localities. According to



Luong Van Luu: Mr. Bon is a phenomenon, so depending on each Chinese group, the image of Mr. Bon has its own history:

- At Nhi Phu Temple (Cho Lon), Phuc Kien people understand Mr. Bon as Chau Dat Quan (See Figure 2).
- The Chinese in Hoi An believe that Mr. Bon is General Phuc Ba
- The Guangdong people in the South refer to Mr. Bon as Mr. Dia
- Chinese people in Malaysia and Singapore consider Trinh Hoa as Mr. Bon
- The Chinese in Cambodia consider Quan Cong as Mr. Bon... (Luong, V.L., 1972).

Fujian Chinese people in Cho Lon (currently Ho Chi Minh City) often call him "Bon Dau Cong", specifically Chau Dat Quan (1266-1346), worshipping him as a god who protects people. Hoa in foreign countries makes a prosperous living and lives peacefully. Therefore, depending on each locality, Mr. Bon has different names.

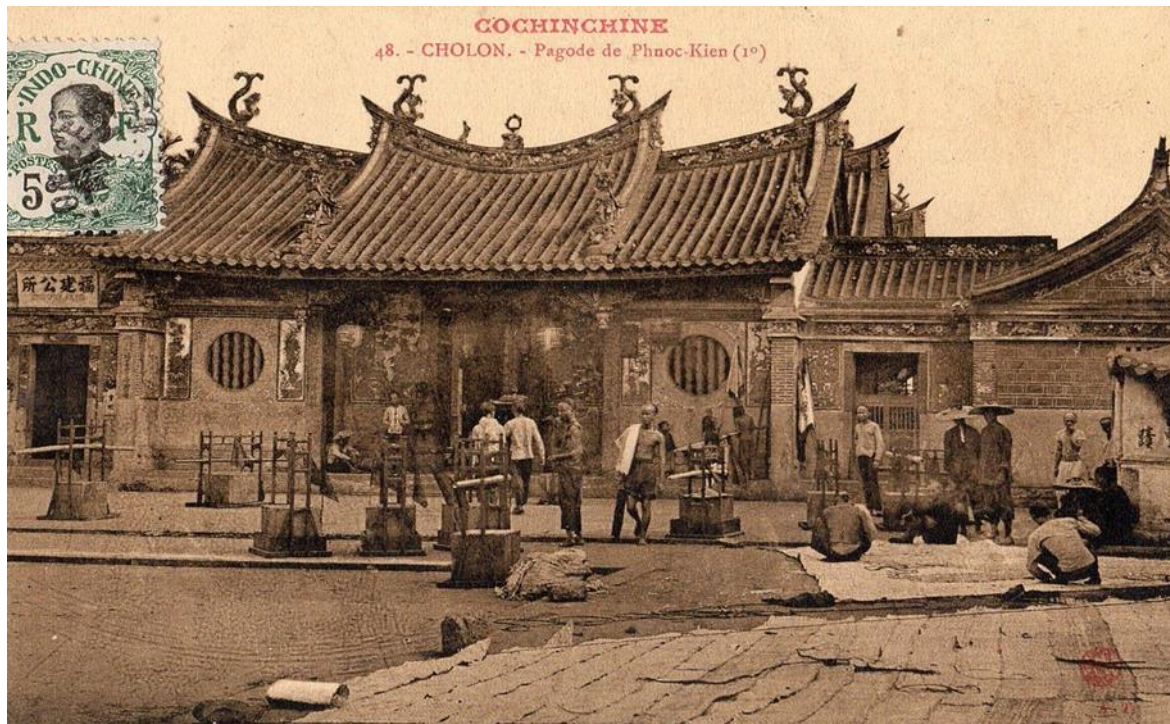


Figure 2. Nhi Phu Temple (Cho Lon) on a postcard during the French colonial period

For the Chinese (and Vietnamese) in the Southeast, Mr. Bon is also considered the Earth God - God of Wealth. The Chinese believe that there is a god who governs the land area where the family, clan, and community reside. This god is called the earth god or earth god. This means that this god will bless us in our place of residence, prosperous business, and a happy life, so the worship page often has the couplet: "Earth energy produces white jade/God produces sulfur gold", meaning: "The land has the ability to produce white jade; From the gods comes gold". In "Dai Nam Quoc Am Tu Tu", Huynh Tinh Cua explains that the God of Earth and God of Wealth are both "gods of Earth, gods of money" (Cua, H.T., 1895). In the South, the God of Wealth and Earth Earth are still worshiped together as a couple, inseparable everywhere. It is worth noting that the image of the Vietnamese God of Wealth, in terms of iconography, is a variation of the main Chinese god Tho Dia/Phuoc Duc. This is evidence of the interference of Chinese beliefs with Vietnamese people. In the South, the Chinese use the image of an old man with white hair and

beard, wearing a shirt, a hat, and holding gold in one hand to give to the people. This is the image of the God of Wealth, Fortune, and Duc Chinh Than commonly worshiped in the South. Sites worshiping Earth and God of Wealth of Chinese and Vietnamese people in District 5, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (Trang, T.D.K., 2008).

However, it is also necessary to see that Ong Bon of the Chinese people is very diverse, even complex, because they are referred to according to different diverse reasons. At worship facilities, it is also understood with many meanings, depending on the indigenous people of that area. For example, the Earth God who presides over the entire Cho Lon area (the ancient city of Saigon) is worshiped at Nhi Phu Hoi Quan (customarily called "Ong Bon Pagoda"). According to the altar tablet, the official name of the god is "Nhi Phu Temple Dai Ba Cong", identified with Mr. Bon (本頭公) (Bon Dau Cong - Chau Dat Quan). On the banner hanging in front of the main hall of Nhi Phu Temple, it is written that "Wu Tho Dia Ye" (吾土地也) and on it is written the year of creation during the reign of King Dong Tri (1861-1875) of the Qing Dynasty, China: "Tong Tri Giap Ty "Good day, second month, Dong Trinh, year of the Rat - 1864) and his main function is to protect wealth. This shows that this is the God of Wealth, God of Earth and God of Humanity; But in fact, this is a god of the "five earths": the god Tho Phu, protecting the warehouse of goods, more broadly understood as the market and more broadly understood as the Cho Lon/Bazar Chinois region. In the neighborhoods where Chinese people reside (neighborhoods, alleys, streets...) there are shrines worshiping Tho Dia/ Phuoc Duc god. In Binh Duong, according to the Fujian Chinese with the Ly family, Mr. Bon is That Phu Dai Nhan (worshiped at Phuoc An temple), and according to the Phuc Kien people with the Vuong family, Mr. Bon is Huyen Thien the god (worshiped at Phuoc Vo Dien) (Co, N.D., et al., 2019)<sup>13</sup>.

This belief not only demonstrates a very profound cultural interference between China and Vietnam, when the Chinese have contact with the very typical belief of Thanh Hoang Bon Canh of the Vietnamese people; Vietnamese people have absorbed and adapted the Chinese culture of Earth worship. Dang Hoang Lan had a very subtle comment when he said: "Worshiping Ong Bon also shows that the Chinese people consider Vietnam their homeland. This proves the trend of shifting from Chinese nationals to Vietnamese citizens" (Lan, D.H., 2014).

#### *Belief in worshipping Quan Thanh De Quan*

Besides the belief of worshipping Ba (Ba Thien Hau), Chinese people in the South also worship Ong (Quan Thanh De Quan). Quan Thanh Di Quan is the name of Quan Cong, a character who lived during the Three Kingdoms period of China. His real name is Quan Vu - from Van Truong (162-219). Along with Liu Bei and Truong Phi, Guan Yu became brothers with the famous anecdote "Taoyuan Sanjie". Worshiping Quan Cong shows that Chinese people value loyalty and loyalty in social relationships. In Tran Bien (Bien Hoa), That Phu ancient temple, commonly known as Ong Pagoda, was built early. This can be considered the first cradle of the Chinese people in Dong Nai and the entire South. As soon as he set foot in a new land, "Dong Nai is a strange land, the birds are afraid, the fish are scared", Tran Thuong Xuyen gathered Vietnamese and Chinese immigrants to break the land, build streets and set up markets. According to Luong Van Luu, the Quan De temple was built around 1684 by the Minh Huong group of people from Guangdong and Phuoc Kien, at Binh Hoang pine, Chau Pho, Nong Nai (Luu, L.V., 1972). Trinh Hoai Duc describes: the temple is located in the south of Cu Lao Pho, overlooking the Dong Nai River four unicorns squat. Along with the Phuc Chau Assembly Hall on the west side of the main road and the Guangdong Assembly Hall on the east side are three large temples. Also, according to Trinh Hoai Duc, when Quan De Pagoda was repaired by Hoa Minh Huong people, a board was discovered that dated the temple's founding in 1684 (Duc, T.H., 2006). With such an early date of formation and development, it can be affirmed that this is an early pagoda and the cradle of the Hoa Minh Huong people in Dong Nai and Gia Dinh areas. The overall architecture of the monument is in the shape of a script arranged according to "internal and foreign". In

<sup>13</sup>During the festival of Mr. Bon's pagoda with the Ly or Vuong family in Binh Duong, there is a very special type of huu dance. Hau is also the mascot that opens the way and has an additional position to escort Mr. Bon as he travels through the area where the Fujian community resides to purify and bestow blessings.



the pagoda, a set of statues of the main deities of the Chinese people living in Bien Hoa are kept. Initially, this was a Chinese temple built to worship Quan Cong (Quan Thanh De Quan) hoping to receive his protection in the new land, then expanded to worship: Ba Thien Hau, Mother Sanh Mother Do, Phuc Than, Tai god... (See Figure 3). From this project, the Chinese in Dong Nai built many different facilities to worship Quan Thanh De Quan and it became an important belief of the Chinese people here.



Figure 3. That palace ancient temple (Ong Pagoda) in Bien Hoa, Dong Nai

In Phien Tran (Saigon - Gia Dinh), the largest place to worship Quan Cong is Nghia An Assembly Hall in District 5 (also known as Ong Pagoda) of Chaozhou people. Here, Quan Cong is worshiped in the middle of the main hall. Following the left and right sides were Quan Binh and Chau Xuong. According to tradition, Chinese people generally celebrate Guan Gong's ghost day on January 13 (Quan Cong's refuge in the three jewels), May 13 (Quan Cong's ghost) and June 24 (Quan Cong's ghost) of the lunar calendar. annual. However, at Nghia An Assembly Hall, the most important and most celebrated holiday is the 15th day of the first lunar month. These are truly great festivals for the Chinese community in general and the Chaozhou Chinese in particular. They come to offer incense to commemorate and pray for Quan Cong's blessings for health, happiness, prosperity, and smooth business...

The Chinese in the Southeast region worship Quan Cong as a special way of existence for them in their foreign land, although today, that worship as well as the sacrificial activities have been somewhat streamlined. many and there are some changes to suit the conditions of the new land and the mixture with Vietnamese culture. However, all of that still does not lose the value of the worship of Quan Cong, but on the contrary, it is still very developed with its own identity.

#### *Belief in worshipping Thien Quan Tu Phuoc (Jade Emperor)*

Receiving influence from Taoism, the worship of heaven has been integrated into folk beliefs by the Chinese. However, if in Taoism, people worship the Jade Emperor (玉皇上帝) is the supreme king of the sky, the chief god of heaven, on the contrary, in folk beliefs, the Chinese (and Vietnamese) simply call it "Heaven" (Ho Chi Minh City Ethnic Minorities Literature and Arts Association, 2016). In the South, the

Heaven altar (Thien altar) is placed high in front of the main door of each house, while in the countryside it is placed in the yard. The arrangement is quite simple: including an incense burner, a vase of flowers (there may or may not be two small glasses of water for offerings). The tablet has four words "Thien Quan Tu Phuoc (Phuc)" (天官賜福), meaning "God bestows blessings". Normally every evening, the homeowner will burn incense and pray to God regularly. During Tet holidays, you can add some flowers and fruits and change the offering water.

It can be seen in the belief of worshipping "Thien Quan Tu Phuoc", which is an expression of fusion with indigenous communities including the Vietnamese, folklorizing an ancient form of Chinese religion. Looking at the surface of this belief, people may mistakenly think that it is simply the reception and transformation of Taoism, but in fact, the inner meaning of this belief is derived from the ancient beliefs of humanity. type, which is nature worship. Because the Jade Emperor is the master of Heaven, has the power to govern and operate all things in the universe, so worshipping him is worshipping nature. In the Southern Chinese people's belief in worshipping Heaven, we see a close blend between the two forms of belief and religion (See Figure 4). It is a manifestation of the flexibility and creative thinking in the Chinese worldview and the fusion of Chinese and Vietnamese beliefs about worshipping Heaven in the source.



Figure 4. Statue of the Jade Emperor at Minh Su Pagoda (Ho Chi Minh City)

#### *Belief in worshipping Ancestors and lineages*

Around the world, Ancestor worship beliefs exist in many different cultures of countries and ethnic groups. Worshipping grandparents and parents is also an expression of awareness of the universe and outlook on life of the Chinese and Vietnamese people. The concept of life and death is clearly expressed through Ancestor worship. Ancestor worship is also an expression of sacredness, reflecting the children's belief in the existence of their ancestors' souls, "... even though they have passed into eternity, there is still a mystical connection. mysterious and strong with children and grandchildren, protecting and instructing them to avoid evil and keep good..." (Lien, H., 2002).

In most Chinese families, the ancestral worship site is always the most focused spiritual space with an altar placed high up. In Chinese families in the Southeast, the ancestral altar will worship Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and Quan Thanh De Quan and burn incense every day. On the altar will be a plate of fruit and flowers during Tet holidays of the year. Ancestor worship is highly emphasized by the Chinese, the ancestral altar is placed in the most solemn position in the house, in the middle of the living room, altar room or upstairs.



With nostalgia for the dead and the desire for them to have a community life like the living, Chinese people of all dialect groups have their own cemeteries. Unlike other ethnic groups, the Chinese not only worship their ancestors in the family, but moreover, they also build a temple to worship the same ancestor who founded the family. The clan leader will be the one responsible for taking care of the street. They are the officiants in their death anniversary ceremonies. Operating expenses are based on arbitrary contributions from families. Through such ancestral death anniversaries, the spirit of solidarity of the members is tightened and more connected. With nostalgia for the dead and the desire for them to have a community life like the living, Chinese people of all dialect groups in the South have their own cemeteries (Nguyen, V.C., 1994).

In the context of leaving for a new land, the worship of their ancestors further proves an already tight community institution, aiming to create solidarity and love among the exiles. In addition to worshipping family ancestors in the temple, the spirit of solidarity and mutual love of the Chinese people in the South can also be seen in the way the Chinese people established states. Accordingly, it can be understood: "A state is a type of social organization born from the survival needs of Chinese immigrants, whose activities are to support members of the state materially and spiritually..." (Lien, T.H., 2015). Therefore, Ancestor worship beliefs represent the spirit of solidarity, solidarity, mutual love and the spirit of remembering the roots of the Chinese people in the Southeast. This has created a solid basis for the Chinese to preserve the traditional cultural values of their homeland, while also absorbing some elements of the ancestral worship beliefs of the Vietnamese community. had settled in large numbers in the Southeast before that.

It can be seen that Ancestor Worship has a profound influence on the entire life of the Chinese people, so they worship very thoughtfully (Xinh, N.T.H., 1997, p.58). Chinese people rarely worship in the form of images or urns, but instead worship with a glass painting (in which there are lines of Chinese characters written vertically, the top row records the ancestors' lives, the first row in the middle reads "family name"). On the altar there are incense bowls, lamps, flower vases, and fruit plates. The death anniversary offerings are held on the days of the ancestors' deaths and are mainly undertaken by the eldest son (Anh, M.T., 2021). In addition, on holidays, such as Lunar New Year, Nguyen Tieu Tet, Qingming Festival or on important family days (such as weddings, housewarmings, store openings...) Chinese people often light incense, offering fruit cakes and burning votive paper (See Figure 5).



Figure 5. Nguyen Tieu Festival of the Chinese people in the South



## Conclusions

Since Lord Nguyen established Gia Dinh palace in 1995, the Chinese have lived together with the Vietnamese and other communities, contributing to the formation of the most dynamically developing land of Vietnam later. During the arduous process of leaving their native homeland to find a new land, the Chinese people in the South brought with them traditional beliefs from their homeland as a way to remember the place where they were born and were born. Find security in your mind.

The process of exploring, developing and protecting new lands has created cohesion and interaction between the Chinese community and other communities (especially Vietnamese) in all fields, from economics to society. and culture. The integration of the Chinese people in the new land has created an interference of beliefs between the Chinese people and the same resident communities here, creating unique features in the religious activities of the South Chinese community. Ministry of Vietnam in the early days of exploration.

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