

22. THE CAO BAI RELIGION.

GOD'S MESSAGE

"Formerly, the peoples did not know one another and lacked means of transport: I then founded at different epochs, five branches of the Great Way: Confucianism, the Worship of Genii, Catholicism, Taoism, Buddhism, each based on the customs of the race called particularly to apply them.

Nowadays, all parts of the world are explored: people knowing each other better, aspire to a real peace. But because of the very multiplicity of those religions, men do not live always in harmony with one another. That is why I decided to unite all those religions in one to bring them to the primordial unity.

Moreover, the Holy doctrine of these religions has been, through centuries, more and more denatured by those who have been charged to spread, up to such a point that I have now firmly resolved to come Myself, to show you the Way."

(Message transmitted on April 24, 1926)

It was the middle of the year At-Suu (1925). A little group of Vietnamese scholars amused themselves by dabbling in Spiritism (or divine writing). Their questions put to the Spirits received surprising answers. Their parents and friends showed themselves to talk family affairs and gave counsels. These sensational revelations taught them of the existence of an occult world. No doubts were raised concerning the nature of the conversations, first, because it was equally new to all, it was impossible to suspect one another

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of connivence, and later, because certain communications from the correspondent of the occult world revealed such lofty sentiments, scientific knowledge and depth of philosophy that none among them was capable of being the author.

One of the communicating Spirits became particularly noticeable by his high level of moral and philosophic teachings. He signed under the pseudonym A.A.A. (A.A.A. are the first three vowels of the Vietnamese alphabet) and did not wish to reveal himself in spite of the entreaties of his hearers.

Only on Christmas eve, the 24th of December 1925, this Spirit A.A.A. revealed himself at last as the "Supreme Being" coming under the name of Cao-Dai, to teach truth to Vietnam. He said in substance:

"Rejoice this day, it is the anniversary of my coming in Europe to teach my doctrine. I am happy to see you. O disciples full of respect and love me. This house will have my blessings. Manifestations of my power will inspire even greater respect and love in my regard."

a. The Prophecies. The coming of God was prophesied by Jesus Christ in His New Testament (Matthew XXIV; 42,43,44 - John X; 16,17,18). He also said to the Jews: "You will be wandering on earth till I come". Only in 1948, after the coming of God in Vietnam the Jews re-established their nation now located in the Middle East. The coming was also prophesized in Buddhist canons.

b. A Newly Born Religion. The new Religion came out it's limited circle to spread among the people in 1926, after an official declaration to the Government on October 7, 1926.

At the head is enthroned the Gao-Tong (Pope) whose titular is Saint LY-TAI-PE's Spirit (Ly-Tai-Pe was for China what Homer was for Greece and Ossian for Scotland).

c. What "Caodaism" means. CAODAIISM derives from CAO-DAI (Cao: High; Dai: Palace). Literally speaking the Supreme Palace where God reigns, our Divine Master, the Father of all. CAO-DAI is the symbolic name of God who for the third time would reveal himself to the Orient (the Orient was the cradle of all Religions).

d. The Three Manifestations of God. Since the creation of mankind, the Great Way of God has been shown in the three different epochs:

	1st Time	2nd Time	3rd Time
Buddhism	Nhien-Dang Co-Phat	Sakyamuni	In 1926, under the
Taoism	Thai-Thuong Dao-Quan	Laotze	name of CAO-DAI
Confucianism	Phuc-Hi	Confucius	God united these
Catholicism	Moses	Jesus Christ	religions in
Islamism		Mahomet	one: CAODAIISM.

In the first two periods, the people of the world did not know each other and lacked means of communications, God then founded through human beings, at different countries, his Religions based on the usages and customs of the races particularly called to practice them.

Nowadays, all parts of the world are explored, means of transportation are more and more rapid, humanity knows itself better, so God united all Religions in one: CAODAIISM. Moreover, human thought does change. Mankind aspires to have a universal conception of love and justice, that is to say, in order to survive, harmony is needed among all peoples. None of us would say, "My religion is the only truth for all times, and the founder of my religion is the only saviour of all mankind". This conception would lead mankind to many horrible cruelties and wars.

e. Spiritualism. As we see above, the creation of CAODAIISM proceeds from Spiritism. By Spiritism (or Divine and Supernatural writings) and with the help of our mediums from 12 to 15 years old, we communicate with God and the Divine Spirits. We receive their teachings and their messages.

At first, we used a tipping table, then God prescribed us to replace it by a billed basket which is more practical. Instead of coming as formerly in human shape, God manifested himself through Spiritualism to teach his doctrine. He will not grant any mortal the privilege of founding the new religion, for a human being still belongs to a

nation or race. This new manifestation of God so comes, because all religions submitted to human founder authority, are unsuited to universality, seeing that his prophets protested against the truths proclaimed by other religious faiths, towards which they show a market of intolerance. And by this way, God will integrate religion and science, giving inspiration to the spiritual and material life of mankind, will adapt his teaching to the progress of the human spirit, now more advanced and more refined than formerly.

This new manifestation of God was prophesied by Jesus Christ in his New Testament, "I will come like a thief", (Luke XII: 40; Mark XII: 32, 33; Matthew XXIV: 42, 43, 44; Thessalonica I, Chapter V: 2; Second Epistle of Peter, Chapter III: 10; Apocalypse III: 3).

By Spiritism, that is to say, without a human form, God comes down on earth unknown to us, like a thief entering our house.

f. The Divine Eye. How do we represent God? By a human shape? No. It would be unsuited to Universality for each people has it's vanity.

God prescribed us to symbolize him by an Eye which is the image of the Universal conscience and the Individual conscience. There is only one God, first cause, principal of all that exists.

There is one God worshipped, venerated, prayed under diverse names at every point of the globe.

g. Fundamental Principles. The Chodaiist doctrine tends not only to conciliate all the Religious convictions, but also to adapt itself to all degrees of spiritual evolution.

(1) From a moral point of view, it reminds man of his duties toward himself, his family, society, which is his broadened family, and then toward humanity, the universal family.

(2) From a philosophical point of view, it preaches the despising of honors, riches, luxury, in a word, the emancipation from servitudes of matter, to seek in spirituality, the full quietude of the soul.

(3) From the point of view of worship, it recommends the adoration of God, the Father of all, and the veneration of superior Spirits that constitute the occult August hierarchy. Admitting the national worship of ancestors, it prohibits however, meat offerings as well as the use of votive papers.

(4) From a spiritual point of view, it confirms, in harmony with other religions and systems of spiritualistic and psychic philosophy, the existence of the soul, its survival of the physical body, its evolution by a successive reincarnation, the posthumous consequences of human actions ruled by the law of Karma.

(5) From the initiate point of view, it communicates to those of the adherents who are worthy, revealed teachings that shall enable them by a process of spiritual evolution, to accede to ecstasies of felicity.

h. The Direction of the Religion. The religion is managed by two powers: the Celestial Power and the Earthly Power.

(1) The Celestial Power seated at the Bat-Quai-Dai (Octogonal Palace of Maha Manvantara or Place of Creation), headed by God himself, giving orders and messages to the earth. God is assisted by Divine Spirits.

(2) The Earthly Power. As God did not desire that on earth one earth, on man should hold both Spiritual Power and Temporal Power, he divided the Earthly Power into two and committed it to two bodies: The Hiep-Thien-Dai and the Cuu-Trung-Dai. We thusly avoid a dictatorship.

(a) The Hiep-Thien-Dai (Place or meeting between God and Mankind) or Legislative body on earth. Representing the Spiritual Power; it has the right of jurisdiction and control. It is headed by the Ho-Phap (Ho: To protect; Phap: Law, rule).

(b) The Cuu-Trung-Dai (Nine degrees of the Angelic hierarchy) or Executive Body, headed by the Giao-Tong (Pope). Representing the Temporal Power, it is in charge of the Administration of the Religion.

Besides the two above bodies, there is also the Charitable Body placed under the supervision of the Hiep-Thien-Dai or Legislative Body.

We see the God's universal government consists of two distinct branches: The one is the government of souls and beings, and the other, instruction and education.

The first step of a Cao-dai is to become a follower (Tin-Do). He will enter either the Cuu-Trung-Dai of the Hiep-Thien-Dai. The 12 Zodiacal Dignitaries are: Bao-Dao, Khai-Cao, Hien-Dao, Tiep-Dao (religious branch); Bao-Phap, Khai-Phap, Hien-Phap, Tiep-Phap (mystical branch); Bao-The, Khai-The, Hien-The, Tiep-The (social branch). These 12 Zodiacal Dignitaries are also assisted by 12 Technical Academicians: Bao-Huyen-Linh-Quan (theosophy); Bao-Tinh-Quan (astronomy); Bao-Co-Quan (law); Bao-Van-Phap-Quan (arts); Bao-Hoc-Quan (education); Bao-Yi-Quan (health); Bao-Vat-Quan (sciences and industries); Bao-Si-Quan (literature), Bao-Sanh-Quan (social); Bao-Nong-Quan (agriculture); Bao-Cong-Quan (public works), and Bao-Thuong-Quan (economics).

i. Nomination and Promotions. Nominations and promotions in the episcopal hierarchy are first submitted to the Popular Counsel (Hoi-Nhon-Sanh) made of Le-Sanh, Chuc-Viec, and Tin-Do. Then they are submitted to the Sacerdotal Counsel (Hoi-Thanh) made up of Priests, Bishops, Archbishops and Principal Archbishops. They are also submitted to the High Council (Thuong-Hoi) made up of Cardinals, Censor Cardinals and the Pope, and finally must be approved by God or by the Spiritual Pope Ly-Tai-Pe. Sometimes, a follower may be directly appointed by God.

Lady dignitaries reach the rank of Dau-Su only (Lady Cardinal).

j. The Three Branches of the Executive body. These gentlemen dignitaries of the Executive body, form the rank of Chuong-Phap (Censor Cardinal) to that of Le-Sanh (Student Priest), each

echelon is subdivided into three branches, each corresponding to the three principle religions, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism.

(1) Buddhist branch (Phai Thai). These dignitaries are dressed in yellow, the color of virtue.

(2) Taoist branch (Phai Thuong). These dignitaries are dressed in azure, the color of tolerance and pacifism.

The dignitaries of the same echelon, either Confucianists, Taoists or Buddhists have the same attributes.

Suppose Mr. John Smith is appointed Student Priest. By divine revelation, he belongs to the Buddhist branch (Phai Thai) his religious name would be Thai Smith Thanh (wearing yellow gown).

Mr. Scott belonging to the Taoist branch, would bear the name of Thuong Scott Thanh (wearing azure gown). Mr. Burne belonging to the Confucianist branch would bear the name of Moc Burne Thanh and dress in red.

During the papacy of the Spiritual Pope LY-TAI-PE, all the dignitaries of the Executive Body bear the particle Thanh (limpid, pure) after their names. The dignitary will conserve his religious name when he is appointed to the higher echelon.

Sub-dignitaries and followers are dressed in white, symbol of purity. Lady Dignitaries have no branch. They all dress in white. Each of them would bear only the particle Huong (perfume) before their maiden name. (Example: Huong Margaret) whatever the rank she may be.

k. The Constitution of Caodism. The regime is fundamentally democratic. Three councils govern the Holy See.

(1) Popular Council (made up of Student Priests, Subdignitaries and representative of followers in the ration of one delegate per 500 members) make plans for the future.

(2) Sacordotal Council (made up of Priests, Bishops, Archbishops) assumes the plan of the Popular Council.

(3) High Council (made up of Cardinals, Censor Cardinals and the Pope). Every plan is submitted to this Council for approbation.

When these three Councils are not one, the plan must be submitted to God who arrives at a decision.

1. Administrative Structure

(1) Central Administration. Three Cardinals of the Executive body control the administration of the religion. They are assisted by three Principal Archbishops in charge of nine religious ministries (Cuu-Vien) according to their branches.

(a) The Principal Archbishop of the Buddhist branch (Phai Thai) takes charge of Ho-Vien (finances), Luong-Vien (supply), and Cong-Vien (public works).

(b) The Principal Archbishop of the Taoist branch (Phai Thuong) sees to Hoc-Vien (education), Y-Vien (health), and Nong-Vien (agriculture).

(c) The Principal Archbishop of the Confucianist branch

(Phai Ngoc) takes care of Lai-Vien (interior), Le-Vien (rites), and Hoa-Vien (Justice).

(2) Provincial Administration

(a) Region (consisting of several provinces) is headed by a Kham-Tran-Dao (chief of region) ranking among a Giao-Su (Bishop).

(b) Province is headed by a Naum-Chau-Dao (chief of province) ranking among the Giao-Huu (Priest) and placed under the control of the Chief of Region.

(c) Delegation is headed by a Dau-Toc-Dao (chief of delegation) ranking among the Le-Sanh (Student Priest) and under the control of the Chief of Province.

(d) Village unit of administration headed by a Dau-Kuong-Dao (chief of village) who is a Chanh-Tri-Su (Sub-dignitary). He is assisted by a Pho-Tri-Su (member of the Popular Council) representing the Executive Body and a Thong-Su (member of the Popular Council) representing the Legislative Body. A local committee helps them.

m. Cao-dai Ritual. Four daily services are held in temples as well as in the homes.

- (1) Ty thoi: between 11 pm and 1 am
- (2) Mao thoi: between 5 am and 7 am
- (3) Ngo thoi: between 11 am and 1 pm
- (4) Dau thoi: between 5 pm and 7 pm

High masses celebrated at the temple at midnight on the 14th and

30th of each month (lunar month). The service consists of :
Offering of incense; Offering of prayers; Hymns to the glory of
God; and Three hymns in honor of the Holy Three (Buddha, Lao-tze,
and Confucius).

n. Adherents' Duties. The followers must observe the five
interdictions (Panchashila).

(1) Not to kill living beings (because of the spark of
life, the counter consciousness that is in them).

(2) Not to cover in order to avoid the fall into material-
ism through the needs of possession and domination.

(3) Not to practice high living.

(4) Not to be tempted by luxury which attracts a cruel
Karma.

(5) Not to sin by word.

They also keep four principle observances: obedience, modesty,
honesty and respect. They must also observe the 10 day diet.

o. Sacraments

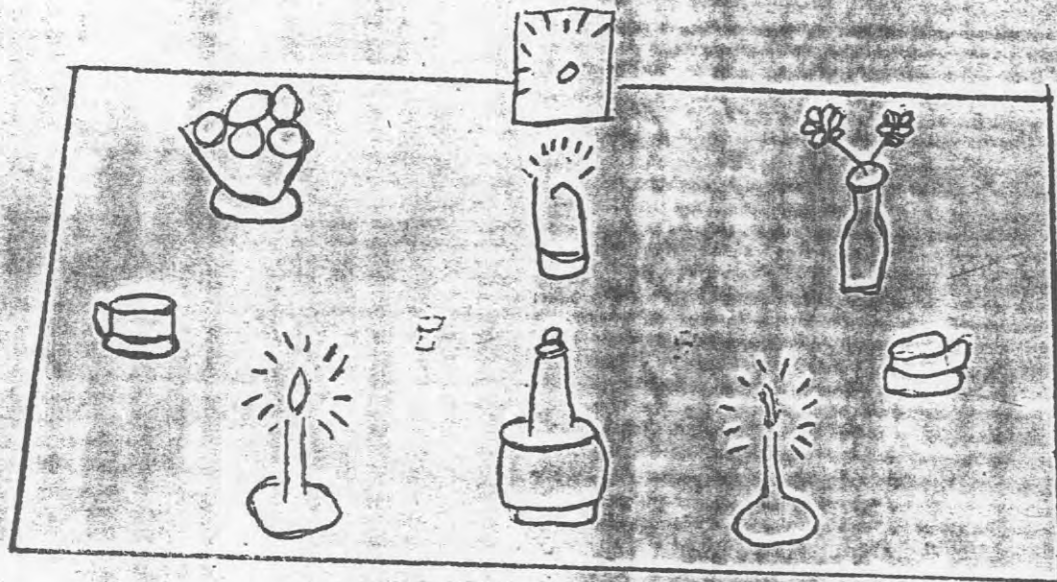
(1) Baptism

(2) Marriage with previous publication of ban. Con-
cubinage is forbidden. But when the first wife has no issue, the
husband may marry a second wife with the consent of the former.

Divorce is forbidden.

(3) Cure

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Signification of this disposition

(1) No. 1 - The Divine Eye. We are taught in Nirvana that God's throne is in the North, the rising is in his left (male Logo, or Yang), and setting (or female Logo, or Yen) on the right. It follows from this teaching that wherever God's Alter is installed, the Divine Eye is the North, the rising or Yang is on his left, and the setting of Yin is on his right. In the Universe, there are two principles, Yang and Yin that form the origin of all creation,

(2) No. 2 - In the middle of the altar is constantly kept lit a small lamp with a spherical glass symbolising the Universal Monad (Thai-Cuc). In the beginning of the ages, the Universe was constituted by the Monad who is the Universal soul, the manifested form of God.

(3) No. 10 and 12 - Two candles. By its manifestations

the Monad successively presented its two aspects male and female Logos represented on the altar by two candles: the candle (No. 12) represents the male Logos or Solar light, the right candle (No. 10) represents the female Logos or Lunar light. The two Logos united for production in general. The Solar and the Lunar lights (Yin and Yang) still conserve the image of that productive.

The left candle (No. 12) representing the solar light (Yang) must be lit first at each ceremony.

(4) No. 3 - Fruit representing the Yin (Female Logos).

(5) No. 4 - Flowers representing the Yang (Male Logos) on the left of the Divine Eye.

(6) No. 5 - Cup of tea on the right of the Divine Eye, representing the Yin.

(7) No. 9 - Cup of Pure water on the left of the Divine Eye, symbolizes the Yang. Tea and pure water mixed together form Holy water used for baptism.

(8) No. 6, 7, and 8 - Three glasses of wine or alcohol representing the Astral being or our vital energy.

The offering of flowers, wine and tea, respectively symbolize the three constitutive elements of the human being: the Tinh, the Khi and the Than.

The Tinh is the essence of all matter, the cosmic sperm, without which no light may be manifested. It is the Sexual energy of man and animal, the generative virtue of plant. By its evaporation,

the Tinh, which resided in man, constitutes the coarse part of the perispirit. It is to the perispiritual body as the flesh is to the physical body.

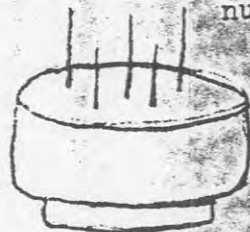
The Khi, which literally means breath, air in man, health, strength, vital energy. It is the perispirit, the agent that unites the soul with the physical body which it vivifies.

The Than, intelligent principle, is double in the human being, the superior mental (duong-than or hon) is the Divine Spirit in man, the inferior mental (an-than or phach) is the most subtile part of the perispirit.

The convert sexual energy into vital energy, vital energy into mental energy, such is the processing of the mystical purification of the three constitutive elements of the human being.

(9) No. 11 - Vase of five sticks of incense. Five sticks of incense stand for the five levels of initiation.

- (a) Giai-huong: purity (shila) number one.
- (b) Dinh-huong: meditation (dhyana) number two.
- (c) Hue-huong: wisdom (prajna) number three.
- (d) Tri-kien-huong: Superior knowledge (dijnana) number four.
- (e) Giai-theat-huong: Karmic liberation (apavaraga) number five.



At each ceremony, they are fixed into a vase by the left hand

following numerical order.

p. Explanation of the five levels of initiation. To be admitted to the threshold of initiation, the first condition for the worshipper is purity in all its forms: purity of body, action, language and thought.

Once the threshold is crossed, he sets himself to meditation. By this spiritual exorcise, the believer whose thoughts and sensations stand aloof from the world of sense, lifts his soul toward the Superior itself, with which he is put into closer contact. In the tete a tete of this inner with-drawal carried the completest possible abstraction where the human soul seeks to identify itself with the universal soul, truths shine little by little onto the worshipper's spirit, no longer lured by the illusory appearances of anything in the world.

At the highest degree of ascension, he feels in his being the full wakening of the Superior knowledge that permits him to perceive all eternal truths and embrace without the least effort, the whole of the past and the future. In this state of supreme wisdom, he can contemplate without being azzled, the Divine Light, a Light that purifies, illumines and beautifies. Before him, the way of salvation is now open: The Karmic.

q. Position of the hands. According to the lunar calendar, each year corresponds to an animal: Ty year (mouse), Suu year (buffalo), Dan year (tiger), Hro year (cat), Thin year (dragon), Ty year (snake), Ngo year (horse), Mui year (goat), Than year

(monkey), Dau year (cock), Tuat year (dog), and How year (pig).

See figure one.



figure one

First position. We put the thumb of the left hand on the bottom of the ring finger; i.e., at the place of Ty year. See figure two.



figure two

Second position. We cover the left hand with the right hand by putting the thumb of the right hand on the bottom of the index finger, i.e., the place of Dan year of the left hand. See figure three.



figure three

r. Explanation of the position of both hands joined. The Heaven was created in the Ty (the beginning of each cycle), Earth in the Suu year and finally Humanity in the year of Dan, that is why we put the thumb of the left hand at the place of the Ty year, and that of the right hand at the place of Dan year (Cao-dalism was born in 1926 corresponding to the Dan year).

Besides the teachings of the prophets of the first period (Nhien-Dang Co-Phat, Moses) are compared to the buds, those of the prophets

of the second period (Jesus Christ, Sakyammuni, Confucius) to the flowers. (So we remark that religious men of this period joined flat hands representing flower petals). At last the teachings of Cao-daism are compared to the fruit, symbol of reproduction, fructification (with hands so joined as to form fruit, both thumbs being hidden inside). See figure four.



figure four

s. The Three Saints. Signatories of the 3rd Alliance between God and Mankind.

(1) Sun-Yat-Sen (1866-1925) leader of Chinese Revolution in 1911.

(2) Victor Hugo (1802-1885) France's famed poet, full of compassion for the miserable, revealing himself through Spirituality under the name of Chuong-Dao-Nguyet-Tam Chon-Nhon (Superintendent of Monasteries).

(3) Nguyen-Binh-Khiem (1442-1587) commonly called Trang Trinh by the Vietnamese, first poet-laureate and famous prophet revealing himself as the Master of a Holy Lodge named Bach-Van-Dong (White Stanza) with many Saints for disciples among them Victor Hugo and Sun-Yat-Sen.

These Saints being entrusted with the mission of realizing the 3rd Alliance between God and Mankind (the first by Dipamkara,

Phuc-Hi, Moses; the second by Sakyammuni Laotze, Confucius and Jesus Christ), give spiritual guidance and assistance to the Cao daists in spreading the New Holy Doctrine.

Victor Hugo is the spiritual chief of the foreign missions of Cao daism.

t. The Great Divine Temple. (Started in 1933-achieved in 1941)

The Great Divine Temple shows the fusion of the three principle Religious Architectures: The Buddhism is marked by its horizontality, the Catholicism by its vorticality and the Islamism by its sphericity.

The Temple with its audacious conception and scope was realized by H.H. Pham-Cong-Tac under the most unfavorable circumstances. He was inspired by God and the Spiritual Pope Ly Tai So. H.H. Pham-Cong-Tac was neither an architect nor an engineer.

The Temple was built by voluntary contributions from the several dedicated young followers. The latter, during the workings had observed the vegetarian diet and abstained themselves from sexual intercourse.

In 1941, being warned of the future exile of His Holiness Pham-Cong-Tac.

Cong-Tac, the builders pledged to achieve the Temple before the departure of their Superior to Madagascar Island. (H.H. Pham-Cong-Tac was exiled by the French Government from 1942 to 1946).

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