

Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ
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The Philosophy of Caodaism

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A bilingual Vietnamese-English Edition

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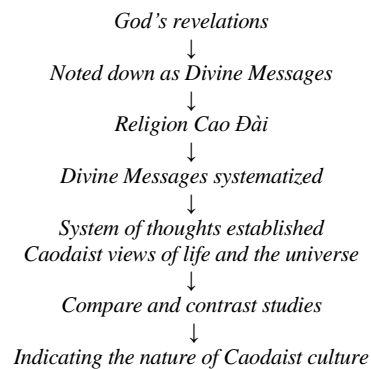
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Chapter 1

How to study Caodaism

It is generally understood that thanks to spiritualism, God and other divine beings' revelations, which were noted down and called the divine messages, were the foundation of Caodaism. Revelation is called *mạc khải* in Vietnamese. *Mạc* - the curtain. *Khải* - opening. So the term means God raises a curtain so that humans can gain fascinating insights into the magical realms, for which they have never had enough explanations. It is those revelations that established the religion Cao Đài, which then results in the philosophy of Caodaism.

Carefully systematizing the points of those divine messages, you can see the development of the philosophy of Caodaism as follows:



To study the philosophy of Caodaism, you need to examine:

- The Caodaist view of human life and the universe.
- Caodaist external laws and internal laws.¹ An insight into both laws is a must to explain Caodaist view of human life and the universe.

According to the way projects are usually done in anthropology in college, an investigation into Caodaism includes three sections:

- Presentation of the philosophy of Caodaism.
- Methods: gaining insight into the spiritual world.
- Explanation of the way of the book.

1. The purpose

¹ *Thế pháp* and *bí pháp* are two polysemous terms. In this paragraph they mean external and internal laws. External laws affect what you can see in the material world. Caodaist external laws aim to help humans free themselves from suffering while Caodaist internal laws help humans avoid the permanent cycle of reincarnation.

This book is written to thoroughly explain the philosophy of Caodaism and supplement any fundamental research on Caodaism.

Purpose 1. To thoroughly explain Caodaism

From time immemorial, religious men and philosophers have pondered human life and death. We common people always dream of meeting a divine being, who can tell us what those gurus and philosophers still cannot completely explain. The first thing we need is that divine being detailed what heaven is. Second, he tells us why we are born. Third, why we have to be born into this world. Lastly, what will happen afterlife and where will we go then?

Of those four points, scientists and materialists deal with the second point, human origin while philosophers and gurus worldwide provide a variety of explanations of the third point. Despite their abundant work, they have not fully covered the first and the last points, which are about what exists before life and what will happen afterlife.

Something, too simple, of course, has been written by a few people on behalf of God, the Supreme Being, for points three and four. That is why lots of people still thirst for a full explanation from any divine beings. While undertaking research on Caodaism, I myself was greatly satisfied to find out those divine beings. God and other deities have explained what we still thirst for through the medium of spiritualism. From the spiritual world, those divine beings give humanity the enlightening and thought-provoking *Chon Lý Khải Định*². Therefore, I aim to explain the Caodaist divine messages and sermons in order to complete what we still lack.

Purpose 2. To supplement any fundamental research on Caodaism and correct any politically affected “studies”.

As for a lack of research on Caodaism

Đông Tân³, a writer, wrote:

- At the Caodaist Culture Society on November 29th, 1970, Professor Jeremy Davidson, University of London, stated, “Besides the lengthy, complicated rituals and the one-sided dogma, the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council never discusses philosophical topics.” Then he asked the Caodaist Dignitaries there, “Can one define Caodaism as a religion’s philosophy?”

- At the same place on March 30th, 1971, Pastor Victor L. Oliver stated, “Deeply examined, Caodaism seems to have an unclear basic doctrine.”

- In 1970 Pr. R.B. Smith Wrote, “To some extent, western ignorance about Caodaism is the responsibility of the Caodaists themselves⁴.”

² Chon 眞 : true; lý 理: righteousness; Khải 啟 : opening; Định 定: arraignment. The truth arranged and revealed by God.

³ Đông Tân, Tìm hiểu triết lý Cao Đài, Cao Hiến xb, Sài Gòn, 1974, tr.12, 18.

⁴ R.B.Smith, An introduction to Caodaism, Bulletin of the school of Oriental and African studies, University of London, vol. XXXII, part 2, 1970

- Most non-Vietnamese researchers⁵ work is based on previous studies and covers such topics as history, organization, teachings, internal events, and Caodaist sects, not a thorough explanation of the philosophy.

- In 2010, Huỳnh Ngọc Thu⁶ wrote in his doctoral thesis (page 37): *“The already published research has chiefly mentioned the issues of history, ideology and culture, not the nature of Caodaists’ religious activities or the detailed explanations of the rituals, the organization or the religious system so far.”*

As for the research conducted for political and beneficial reasons.

Reading the doctoral theses by Nguyễn Thanh Xuân, Huỳnh Ngọc Thu, Huỳnh Thị Phương Trang⁷, knowledgeable readers can see they lack the “honest intellectuality” because they only write what the government permits.

It is true that God Himself founded Caodaism through the medium of spiritualism, but Professor Huỳnh Ngọc Thu, Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities, for his own benefit, has mistakenly written⁸: *“Caodaism was founded by the French-trained intellectuals based on Confucianism and supported by several wealthy landowners. Those people really wanted to establish a religion that combines a variety of beliefs and cultures of the Vietnamese southerners.”* and *“Caodaism is a native religion invented and founded by the Vietnamese southerners based on the foundation of other established religions.”*⁹

It is usually known that communist writers give fake information for their benefit. For example, to explain why Caodaism expanded so quickly, Nguyễn Thanh Xuân wrote: *“Seriously oppressed and exploited, some starving and poor southerners, whose struggle against the French colonists was unsuccessful, turned to religion resolution, Caodaism.”*¹⁰

According to Đặng Nghiêm Vạn, Caodaists try to find out what current farmers think and *“show how to free themselves from the repression of everyday life.”*¹¹

What ruins the reputation of Caodaism is some people take advantage of their Ph.D. to distort the truth for political benefit. That is why the second purpose of the book is to restore the truth.

2. The method

In a project, a good method will lead to success. The method of the book is based on two chief factors: document and insight into the divine world.

⁵ Blagov, Sergei, *Caodaism, Vietnamese traditionalism and its leap into modernity*, Nova, New York, 2001

Oliver, Victor L., *Caodai spiritism, Caodai overseas missionary*, Washington D.C, 2004

Smith R.B. *An introduction to caodaism, Caodai overseas missionary*, Washington D.C, 2004

Werner, J. S. *Peasant politics and religious sectarianism: peasant and priest in the cao dai in viet Nam*, Caodai overseas missionary, Washington D.C, 2004

⁶ Huỳnh Ngọc Thu, *Đời sống tôn giáo của tín đồ Cao Đài trong bối cảnh văn hóa Nam Bộ*, 348 tr. 2010 (Doctoral Thesis in history, Anthropology), presently a professor of Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities.

⁷ Nguyễn Thanh Xuân, *Đạo Cao Đài, hai khía cạnh lịch sử và tôn giáo*, NXB Tôn Giáo, Hà Nội, 2013, (Nguyễn Thanh Xuân is the deputy head of the religion department of the Vietnamese government, who directly controls Caodaism now.)

- Huỳnh Thị Phương Trang, *Đạo Cao Đài hiện nay và ảnh hưởng của nó đến đời sống văn hóa tinh thần của cộng đồng người Việt vùng đồng Nam Bộ*, published by Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities 2008, (doctoral thesis)

⁸ Huỳnh Ngọc Thu’s doctoral thesis, page 217.

⁹ Huỳnh Ngọc Thu’s doctoral thesis, page 220.

¹⁰ Nguyễn Thanh Xuân, *Đạo Cao Đài, hai khía cạnh lịch sử và tôn giáo*, NXB Tôn Giáo, Hà Nội, 2013, page 49.

¹¹ Đặng Nghiêm Vạn, *Bước đầu tìm hiểu về đạo Cao Đài*, NXB Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội. 1995

Document

The information in this book is based on the original document like the Divine Messages.

References

- The Collection of Divine Messages.
- Collected Divine Messages.
- The Religion for Advanced Practitioners.
- Official Scriptures published by the Tây Ninh Temple.
- Sermons given by Caodaist leaders.
- The ebooks, which are carefully selected, at www.daocaodai.info and caodaism.net.
- Lots of compared and contrasted explanations from different authors.

Difficulties with document

All Divine Messages have not been systematically arranged and often incomprehensible because of the metaphors. I have overcome the problem by consulting the work by Caodaist leaders or the dignitaries knowledgeable about the doctrine. Then I categorized the Divine Messages into four sections, which are presented in this book.¹²

An insight into the Cao Đài esoteric practice and the divine realm

In spite of being knowledgeable and experienced, I have not gotten enlightened yet, so I just try my best to explain God, other Divine Beings and the Caodaist dignitaries' explanations and systematize the Divine Messages. In addition, I explain some Caodaist important sacraments such as Dâng Tam Bửu, Tắm Thánh, Hôn Phối, Phép Xác, Phép Đoạn Căn, etc.¹³

It is the most difficult for me to examine how to save all souls in the divine realm. First, I have not got enlightenment yet. Only the divine beings, the spiritually enlightened persons and His Holiness Hộ Pháp, who have the Divine Eye¹⁴, can see this. I only try to elaborate on what those divine beings have explained. Second, the earthly language is also an obstacle. Language represents thoughts from your senses, so it is limited. Language represents facts, not the nature of facts. It is, however, used to teach humans by God. Average people often pay much attention to the literal meanings of the words, so they usually mistakenly understand what God and other divine beings said. I try to give explanations as clear as possible. Third, I sincerely pray I would be enlightened enough to understand the metaphors used by divine beings.

¹² Such as His Holiness Hộ Pháp, His Holiness Cao thượng Phẩm, the late Hiền tài Nguyễn Văn Hồng, etc.

¹³ Offering the Three Treasures, Holy Bath, Marriage, Purification, Cutting the Earthly Ties, etc.

¹⁴ The Divine Eye is between the two human naked eyes.

3. The way

In this book, based on the philosophy of Caodaism, I will try to answer the questions commonly asked by humans such as “What is the heaven?”, “Where do humans come from?”, “What do humans live in the world for?”, “What happens after death?” and “What should humans achieve at last?”

Part 1

The Caodaist view of the universe

This is how Caodaism describes the formation and evolution of the universe. The view is established to describe two viewpoints:

- The nature and outlook of the universe.
- Holiness or Selfless God.

According to the Divine Law, the mutual affecting Yin and Yang create and change the universe in the infinite. This changing mechanism produces the concept of Selfless God.

Page one

Heaven

What is the invisible world?

From the invisible world, God used the psychic pen to describe it and His explanations elaborate on the concept: "Everything comes from the same origin."

The first page of this book tells about God and other Deities have descended into the world, using the psychic pen to reveal what humans wish to know about the universe. (Chapter 2) :

- The origin of the universe and God.*
- The two-phase creation.*

In chapter 3, God describes the scenery of the invisible world in two phases:

- The pre-creation, before God exists.*
- The post-creation, after God decided heaven and earth and Yin and Yang and created living beings.*

Chapter 2

The constitution of the universe

To study Caodaism, you should begin with the origin of the universe, which is Đạo or khí Hư Vô 虛無¹⁵. Đạo is the primeval power, which creates the universe and all living beings. Đạo has developed through two phases:

1. The primeval phase called Tiên Thiên¹⁶ Cơ Ngẫu¹⁷. This is the phase of Vô Vi¹⁸. The universe is a dark space made of Khí Hồng Mông 洪蒙¹⁹.
2. The phase of motion called Hậu Thiên²⁰ Cơ Ngẫu. This is the phase during which Đạo transformed and God appeared, creating the universe.

1. The primeval phase: *Tiên Thiên Cơ Ngẫu*

As for this phase, God explains two vital points: the origin of the universe and the power in the Đạo (Hư Vô Chi Khí).

The origin of the universe

God explains that before the universe, there was Đạo. Đạo, which is the origin of the universe, is Hư Vô Chi Khí, whose inactive form is called Đạo. Đạo is empty, quiet, invisible, unhearable and untouchable. It exists without beginning and without end. It travels everywhere in the universe, exists in everything including form and emptiness, action and non-action and Yin and Yang. Đạo is the absolute truth and the spirits of everything. Each containing Đạo which regulates and nurtures itself.

The Tiên Thiên Cơ Ngẫu, which means no birth and no death, came before God. At that time, the universe, which is a dark space made of Khí Hồng Mông, was formless, borderless, soundless and dustless.

The power in the Đạo

The universe then contained the Khí Hồng Mông and three elements which triggered the Đạo: the Thái Cực²¹, Yin and Yang. The Yin and Yang combined, forming a mass called Linh Quang²². That the three elements

¹⁵ Hư vô, Hư 虛 empty, Vô 無 nothing.

¹⁶ Tiên Thiên (pre-creation) is everlasting.

¹⁷ Thái Cực (the Absolute) is cơ (odd, singly), Yin Yang are ngẫu (even, pair)

¹⁸ Vô vi (wu wei) means "never acts yet nothing is left undone".

¹⁹ Hồng 洪: huge, Mông 蒙: covering, enveloping. This primeval dark gas exists, but no-one knows where it came from and when it happened. It is also called Hư Vô chi khí, Khí Vô Vi, Khí Tiên Thiên, Khí Hạo Nhiên. Taoism calls it Đạo, Confucianism calls it Vô Cực, Buddhism calls it Chơn Như.

²⁰ Hậu Thiên (post-creation) is transient.

²¹ The Absolute.

²² Linh - holy; Quang - light.

appeared explains why Đạo is the primeval power, which moved and created the universe and living beings in the phase of Hậu Thiên Cơ Ngẫu. When the mass of gas called Hư Vô²³ changed and transformed, God appeared.

2. The changing phase: *Hậu Thiên Cơ Ngẫu*²⁴

Everything in the universe is changeable and transient. Changing creates a new life. Đạo performs the same way. Even the term Đạo²⁵ suggests a thorough inspection of its mobility in order to explain how it creates things. In this phase, the universe is created by the operation of the Thái Cực - Yin Yang mechanism within the Khí Hồng Mông or Vô Cực²⁶.

God appeared

When the primeval power of Đạo started the universe, God appeared from Tiên Thiên Hư Vô Chi Khí after the mass of Linh Quang exploded.

Therefore, the important change made by Đạo is the appearance of God and the universe. *“Without Me, there wouldn’t have been anything in the universe and without Hư Vô Chi Khí, I wouldn’t have existed”*²⁷. As a result, *“I myself have to act under the authority of Đạo.”*

Three points are clearly made by the Divine Messages:

- Đạo or Hư Vô Chi Khí is the origin of God and everything in the universe, so God says: *“Children, I am you and you are Me.”*²⁸ and *“I am the Hư Vô Chi Khí or Đạo.”*

- The principle Nhất Thể or Nhất Nguyên²⁹ means everything completely united and Nhất Nguyên comes from the active Thái Cực

- God Himself created the universe: *“I am the one who started the universe...Only one perispit transformed into the universe and humanity... I opened the Bát Quái³⁰ to create the universe, which is called Pháp³¹. Pháp gave birth to things and then humans existed, which is called Tăng³².”*

From then on there has been an omnipotent and omniscient Thái Cực or the Grand Soul called God. *“When there was nothing in the universe, the Khí Hư Vô gave birth to Me and My throne called Thái Cực.”*³³

The constitution of the universe and things

²³ Nothingness.

²⁴ The phase after Cơ Ngẫu (the Absolute, Yin and Yang), when God created the universe and life.

²⁵ The term Đạo 道 begins with two brush strokes 丿 丨 which are Yin Yang. Then, a dash 一 to represent the combination of Yin Yang ㄣ. That is why one transforms into two, two transforms into three, three transforms into everything then everything transforms back into one. The term Đạo symbolizes Yin Yang in both active and inactive modes. In active mode they create and in inactive mode they are invisible. Next, the term tự 自, which means self-existing, is put below, making the term thủ 首 or highest, that is the origin of the universe. The term Đạo 道 belongs to the set xước 走 meaning traveling around. Next to this set is the term tẩu 走 meaning changing or transforming.

²⁶ No ends or poles, referring to Khí Hư Vô or Hồng Mông.

²⁷ The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 1 page 32.

²⁸ The Collection of Divine Messages. Page 43

²⁹ Oneness, monism.

³⁰ The Bagua or Pa Kua are eight symbols used in Taoist cosmology to represent the fundamental principles of reality.

³¹ Dharma.

³² Sangha.

³³ The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 2 page 62.

The universe we humans live in is constituted by two mechanisms:

- Yin Yang mechanism.
- The Thái Cực and Yin Yang mechanism.

The Yin Yang mechanism

To form the universe, the two huge masses of gas Âm Quang and Dương Quang³⁴ cooperate and become a mechanism.

Controlled by God, this mechanism, which moves according to the Thiên Luật³⁵, continuously change from inactive to active mode thanks to the nguyên lý thiên nhiên³⁶. The Yin Yang mechanism is both compatible and incompatible and can create:

- The invisible world: the Thirty Six Heavens, the Twelve Heavens, the Four Upper Grand Continents.

- The visible world: the Three Thousand Worlds, the Four Lower Grand Continents, the Seventy Two Planets (including the 68th one, our earth).

In this phase, things in the universe are categorized into Yin or Yang, high or low position, light or heavy things, heaven or world.

The Thái Cực and Yin Yang mechanism produces living beings

Being alone, God cannot reproduce living beings or create the universe, so God emits another mass of light, divides Thái Cực into Lưỡng Nghi, that is Dương Quang and Âm Quang. *"I divided Thái Cực into Lưỡng Nghi, which transformed into Tứ Tượng. Tứ Tượng changed to Bát Quái, which continuously transformed in order to establish the universe."*³⁷ According to the Divine Messages, the active Thái Cực and Yin Yang mechanism operate in the nature of Vô Cực, following Thiên Luật to reproduce living beings. *"I also separated My peri-spirit into multiple pieces which became living beings like materials, plants, insects, and animals."*³⁸

The transformation of God

While creating the universe, God transforms into the assigned beings to take proper responsibility. For example, God transforms into Đức Phật Mẫu³⁹ to govern Âm Quang, or Thập Nhị Thời Thần⁴⁰, each of whom is in charge of a

³⁴ Âm Quang (lit. Yin Light) is the primeval chaotic gas not shone by Dương Quang (lit. Yang Light). The space of Âm Quang shone by Dương Quang will sink and produce living things.

³⁵ Thiên Luật - Divine Law controlled by God.

³⁶ In Yin, there is a part of Yang, so there is the magic gas (similar to the Khâm in the Later Heaven Bagua) which rises. In Yang, there is a part of Yin, so there is the fire of nothingness (similar to Ly in the Later Heaven Bagua) or Hạo Nhiên Khí which sinks. This mechanism collects the khí Hư Vô (the huyền khí in Yin and hạo nhiên khí in Yang). Huyền khí and hạo nhiên khí look like two electrical lights crossing each other, making the images of Lưỡng Nghi, which turn endlessly. Lưỡng Nghi expands continuously to create the Tứ tượng looking like a cross (✚). Tứ tượng then turns like a propeller, spreading thousands of planets which we see now.

Tứ Tượng, which is called Tứ Tượng Yang, is like the two electrical lights, so there is a shadow called Tứ Tượng Yin. They all constitute the Bagua. Bagua transforms endlessly and changes the Tiên Thiên Ngũ Khí (white, black, blue, red and yellow gases) into Hậu Thiên Ngũ Hành (metal, water, wood, fire and earth). Therefore, there are five directions (east, west, south, north, center) on earth and five organs in a human body (heart, liver, spleen, lung and kidney).

³⁷ The Collections of Divine Messages. Volume 2 page 62.

³⁸ The Collections of Divine Messages. Volume 2 page 62.

³⁹ God the Mother.

⁴⁰ The Twelve Time Deities.

part of the daily time. God says *"I am the Thập Nhị Khai Thiên⁴¹, controlling the Thập Nhị Thời Thần."*

Thái Cực works in active or inactive mode. In active mode, Thái Cực changes into Yang for fire.⁴² In inactive mode, Thái Cực changes into Yin for water.⁴³ Since nobody governs Âm Quang, God transforms into Đức Phật Mẫu to be the Governor. Taking orders from God, Đức Phật Mẫu obtains the Dương Quang from the Thái Cực and combining it with Âm Quang to create all physical beings in the universe.

Earthly religions

Having located heaven and earth, Yin and Yang and living beings, Đạo expresses its use which is the appearance of religions on earth. Religions help humans understand Đạo Vô Vi⁴⁴. Using worldly means, religions teach humans. In Vietnam, the use of Đạo is Caodaism or the Third General Salvation.

In Caodaism, Đạo is the method of religious practice to have a satisfying life and to return to the previous heavenly statuses after death. Beginning with eradicating earthly temptations, you will gradually gain what is called Wuwei⁴⁵ and finally Thiên Nhơn Hiệp Nhứt⁴⁶. Therefore, religions are the doors leading to the Đạo Vô Vi, to the Truth and to where there is no more reincarnation. *"Caodaism is the large road built by God for humanity to take in order to attain enlightenment, becoming Divine Beings" "Đạo is the way for the Deities who were exiled to the world to take so that they can regain their previous heavenly statuses. Đạo is the way for humanity to avoid reincarnation."⁴⁷*

You can see the two important following points:

1. All materials come from Wuwei, that is the physical world comes from the invisible world.
2. Everything and God come from the same origin that is Hư Vô Chi Khí.

Summary

Tiên Thiên Cơ Ngẫu : Đạo Vô Vi	Hậu Thiên Cơ Ngẫu : Đạo Hữu Vi
1. Vô Cực is the mass of Hư Vô Chi Khí, which contains Thái Cực and Yin Yang 2. The mass of Đại Linh Quang explodes.	3. God appears and transforms into Âm Quang 4. Điều Trì Kim Mẫu controls Âm Quang 5. Dương Quang and Âm Quang transform into the universe. 6. The invisible world. 7. The physical world. 8. Religions appear.

⁴¹ The Founders of the Twelve Heavens.

⁴² Ancient religious books call it Mộc Công (Mr Wood) because wood can start a fire.

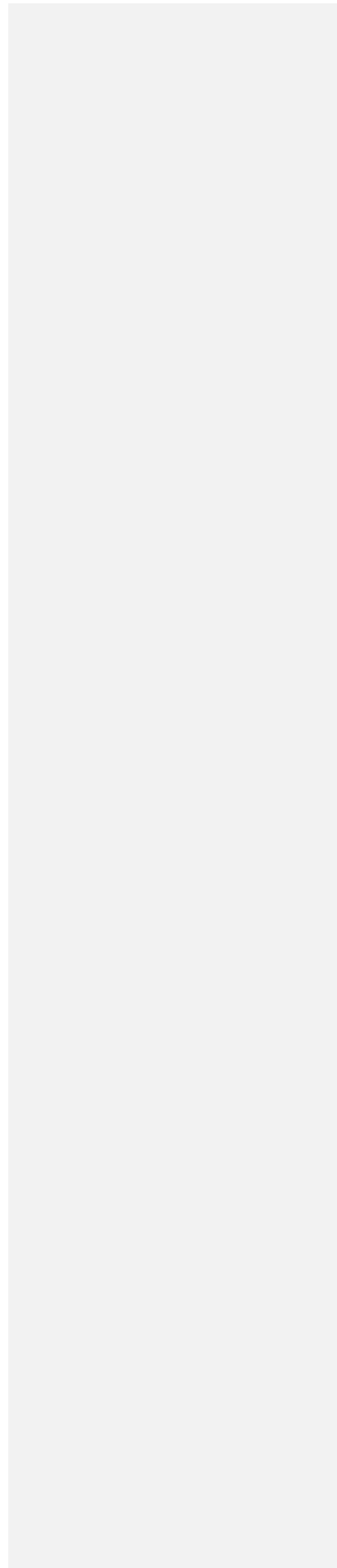
⁴³ Ancient religious books call it Kim Mẫu (Mother Metal) because metal can change to water.

⁴⁴ Đạo Wuwei.

⁴⁵ Non- action.

⁴⁶ Becoming one with God.

⁴⁷ The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 2 page 3.



Chapter 3

The universe

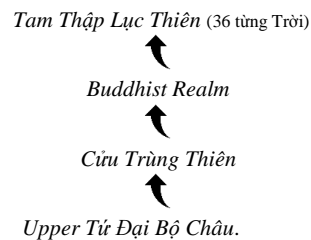
From the Khí Hư Vô⁴⁸ appear the Thái Cực, which is God. God creates the universe and describes it through Divine Messages: “*I say Tam Thập Lục Thiên⁴⁹, Tứ Đại Bộ Châu⁵⁰ are in mid-air. They are not planets. The other Thất Thập Nhị Địa⁵¹ and Tam Thiên Thế Giới⁵² are planets. The total number is 3072 stars.*”⁵³ In order to reach Bạch Ngọc Kinh⁵⁴, you have to: “*Crossing Tam Thiên Thế Giới, you will reach Tứ Đại Bộ Châu. After Tứ Đại Bộ Châu, you can enter Tam Thập Lục Thiên. In Tam Thập Lục Thiên, you need more religious practice in more incarnations before reaching Bạch Ngọc Kinh.*”

Generally speaking, the universe includes two parts: the invisible heaven and the physical world.

1. The invisible heaven

According to the Divine Messages, from the highest position to the lowest position, there are:

- Tam Thập Lục Thiên.
- Thất Thập Nhị Thiên, 3 upper for Buddha and 9 lower for Cửu Trùng Thiên.
- The upper Tứ Đại Bộ Châu.



Who can see this invisible world?

All divine beings, His Holiness Hộ Pháp⁵⁵, the people who get enlightenment and the peri-spirits leaving the physical bodies can see this world.

⁴⁸ Khí - gas. Hư Vô - nothingness.

⁴⁹ 36 Heavens.

⁵⁰ 4 Grand Continents.

⁵¹ 72 Earths.

⁵² 3,000 Worlds.

⁵³ The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 1 page 45.

⁵⁴ The White Gem Capital, where God reigns over the universe.

⁵⁵ Hộ Pháp Phạm Công Tắc, the leader of Hiệp Thiên Đài.

The divine beings in heaven, for example, Bát Nương⁵⁶.

Bát Nương describes: “*The invisible world is divided into Tam Thập Lục Thiên, the highest of which is for The Lord of the universe. The physical world includes three thousand worlds, which are divided into Tứ Đại Bộ Châu to govern Thất Thập Nhị Địa.*”⁵⁷”

According to Bát Nương, the invisible world is Dương Khí⁵⁸, where Dương Quang led by Thái Cực comes from and where Dương Quang produces numerous souls to create heaven.⁵⁹

Furthermore, Bát Nương says: “The realm of Hư Vô⁶⁰, which is invisible compared to your physical world, is visible compared to the invisible Dương Quang.

His Holiness Hộ Pháp, who had the privilege of being granted the Divine Eye

*The priest who attains enlightenment will have Divine Eye, Divine Ears, Divine Nose and Divine Heart, so he can see the invisible world.*⁶¹

To know what Heaven is, ordinary people like us have to learn from the Deities like Bát Nương or people with Divine Eyelike His Holiness Hộ Pháp. Only after death can we see Heaven with our peri-spirits.

Tam Thập Lục Thiên

In Tam Thập Lục Thiên, Bạch Ngọc Kinh is located in the highest heaven in the middle of the universe. Thái Cực changes to Lưỡng Nghi. Yang occupies the second heaven and Yin the third heaven. They all form Ba Ngôi Trời or Tam Thiên Vị⁶² in the middle of the universe. Below Tam Thiên Vị are 33 more heavens, each of which is governed by a Thiên Đế⁶³. All Thiên Đế are God's incarnations. The total number is 36 heavens.

Thập Nhị Thiên

Below Tam Thập Lục Thiên is Thập Nhị Thiên⁶⁴. “*Below the 36 heavens is another heaven called Niết Bàn*”⁶⁵. Then there is another nine called Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa⁶⁶. Nine heavens and Niết Bàn make ten. That is why people usually say: nine realms for heaven and ten realms for Buddha.”

Cảnh Niết Bàn

⁵⁶ The Eighth Female Buddha.

⁵⁷ Luật Tam Thế page 43.

⁵⁸ Yang.

⁵⁹ Luật Tam Thế page 43.

⁶⁰ Nothingness.

⁶¹ Luật Tam Thế page 44.

⁶² The Trinity.

⁶³ Heavenly King.

⁶⁴ Twelve Heavens.

⁶⁵ Nirvana.

⁶⁶ Cửu Thiên - Nine heavens. Khai Hoá - Education.

This realm is for the Buddhas, including three heavens: the tenth heaven called Hư Vô Thiên⁶⁷ governed by Đức Phật Nhiên Đăng⁶⁸, the eleventh heaven called Hội Ngươn Thiên⁶⁹ and the twelfth heaven called Hồn Ngươn Thiên⁷⁰ governed by Đức Phật Di Lạc.

Cửu Trùng Thiên⁷¹

Cửu Trùng Thiên includes 9 heavenly levels: the First, the Second, the Thanh Thiên, the Huỳnh Thiên, the Xích Thiên, the Kim Thiên, the Hạo Nhiên Thiên, the Phi Tướng Thiên, and the Tạo Hoá Thiên⁷². The First level is the lowest and heaviest.

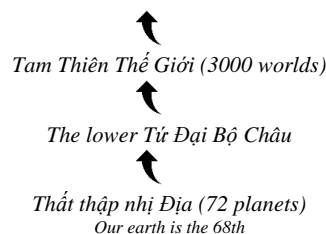
The three Levels for Buddha and nine heavenly levels are where Buddhas, Immortals, and Saints regulate all activities in the universe and the evolution of living beings.

Tứ Đại Bộ Châu Thượng⁷³

Tứ Đại Bộ Châu Thượng, which includes Đông Đại Bộ Châu, Nam Đại Bộ Châu, Tây Đại Bộ Châu, Bắc Đại Bộ Châu⁷⁴, govern Tam Thiên Thế Giới.

2. The physical world

According to the Divine Messages, the other Thất Thập Nhị Địa⁷⁵ and Tam Thiên Thế Giới⁷⁶ are planets. The total number is 3072 stars.



God told the early Caodaists to paint 3072 planets on the Quả Càn Khôn⁷⁷, which is painted azure and placed in the Bát Quái Đài.⁷⁸ The Tam

⁶⁷ Hư Vô - emptiness. Thiên - heaven.

⁶⁸ Dipankara Buddha.

⁶⁹ Hội - Combination, Ngươn - era.

⁷⁰ Hồn - chaotic, Ngươn - era, Thiên - heaven.

⁷¹ Nine celestial planes or nine heavens.

⁷² First, Second, Azure, Yellow, Red, Golden, Immense, Beyond Thought and Creation Level.

⁷³ Tứ - 4, Đại - grand, Bộ Châu - continent - Thượng - upper. According to Hiền Tài Nguyễn văn Hồng there are two Tứ Đại Bộ Châu, the Upper and the Lower, but such information cannot be found in any Divine Messages.

⁷⁴ Eastern, Southern, Western and Northern Grand Continents.

⁷⁵ 72 Earths.

⁷⁶ 3,000 Worlds.

⁷⁷ The Universe Sphere.

⁷⁸ The Bagua Tower, which is said to be controlled by God.

Thiên Thế Giới is above the Thất Thập Nhị Địa. The purer and lighter the planets are the higher positions they are.

Tam Thiên Thế Giới⁷⁹

These pure and light worlds for Gods, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas only, so they are above the Thất Thập Nhị Địa. According to His Holiness Cao Thượng Phẩm⁸⁰, Tam Thiên Thế Giới is for the people who have higher heavenly positions and Thất Thập Nhị Địa is where examinations are held for people to compete for those heavenly positions.

Tứ Đại Bộ Châu Hạ⁸¹

They are Đông Thắng Thần Châu, Nam Thiệm Bộ Châu, Tây Ngưu Hóa Châu, Bắc Cù Lưu Châu located in the east, south, west, and north respectively. They are said to govern the Thất Thập Nhị Địa.

Thất Thập Nhị Địa

These planets include our earth (the 68th). The earth is governed by Nam Thiệm Bộ Châu because in The Prayer to Praise the Virtues of Deities you can read:

*Lòng sở vọng lâm tâm tụng niệm,
Xin giải nạn Nam Thiệm Bộ Châu.
I quietly say my prayers
Save my Nam Thiệm Bộ Châu, please!*

The first planet is the purest and lightest, so it is the highest. Below our earth, the 68th planet, are four other planets that are in the dark, so they are called U Minh Địa⁸².

From the middle of the universe, God controls both the invisible and the visible world.

⁷⁹ Each world is an earth or a planet.

⁸⁰ Mr Cao Quỳnh Cư, one of the two assistants to the Hộ Pháp.

⁸¹ Tứ - 4, Đại - grand, Bộ Châu - continent - Hạ - lower. According to Hiền Tài Nguyễn văn Hồng there are two Tứ Đại Bộ Châu, the Upper and the Lower, but such information cannot be found in any other Divine Messages.

⁸² U Minh - dark, Địa - land.

Summary



⁸³ Đông Đại Bộ Châu, Nam Đại Bộ Châu, Tây Đại Bộ Châu, Bắc Đại Bộ Châu

⁸⁴ Đông Thắng Thần Châu, Nam Thiệm Bộ Châu, Tây Ngưu Hóa Châu, Bắc Câu Lư Châu

Conclusion for page 1

On the first page, you can see what you have wished to know for a long time: the map of the universe.

I have systematized what God has revealed to humanity: the formation and transformation of the universe. This is also the Caodaist view of the universe. The view is also expressed by Caodaist teachings and by the arrangement of the offerings on God's altar. In addition, Caodaist rituals also contribute to the explanation of the relationship between the invisible and physical world.

The symbol of the universe on the Caodaist altar

God: the Divine Eye.

Thái Cực or the Đại Linh Quang⁸⁵, the source of the universe: the Thái Cực Lamp.

Lưỡng Nghi (Yin and Yang) in the Earlier Heaven Phase: two candles.

Lưỡng Nghi (Yin and Yang) in the Later Heaven Phase: two cups. The cup of water on the left represents Yang and the cup of tea on the right represents Yin.

The Tam Bửu⁸⁶: the flower vase (body), the cup of wine (mind) and the cup of tea (soul).

The Tam Tài⁸⁷ and Ngũ Khí⁸⁸: the first inner row of three joss sticks symbolizes Tam Tài. The second outer row of two joss sticks, which makes the total number of five joss sticks that stand for Ngũ Khí. These five sticks have to be placed in a specific order. First, the middle (heaven). Then, the right (earth or Yin). Last, the left (man or Yang). The second row is placed next.

How the view of the universe is expressed

The Caodaist cultural nature is visually emphasized during a rite. The Thái Cực lamp, which is permanently lit, stands for the universe eternally shone by God. The philosophy of combined Yin Yang is expressed by:

- The ritual of lighting the joss sticks with two lit candles, one of which on the left represents the sun or Yang and the other on the right the moon or Yin. They are called Lưỡng Nghi Quang.

⁸⁵ The Grand Holy Mass of Light.

⁸⁶ The three human treasures: body, mind and soul.

⁸⁷ Three essential elements: heaven, earth and man.

⁸⁸ Five vital energies.

- The two hands joined together to represent Yin Yang. *“The left hand is the sun, the right the moon, so they stand for Yin Yang. Combining, Yin Yang starts the universe, transforming and reproducing. That is called Đạo.”*⁸⁹

- The rite of filling the cups. 80% of a cup is filled with tea, which symbolizes eight categories of souls in the universe. 80% of the other cup is filled with water symbolizes eight precious characteristics of the water in the Ao Thất Bửu in heaven.⁹⁰

How the philosophy of Tam Tài and Tam Bửu is expressed

You can see kowtowing expresses Tam Tài. Joining the two hands, a Caodaist puts them in front of his forehead, which is the position of Heaven. Put on the ground, the two hands are on the position of Earth and in front of his chest is the position of Man.

The three cups of wine on the altar also represent Tam Tài. The middle is Heaven, whose 30% of wine represents the Sun, Moon, and Stars. The cup beside the cup of tea is Earth, whose 30% of wine represents Water, Fire, and Wind. The cup beside the cup of water is Man, whose 30% of wine represents Body, Mind, and Soul.

When their wine combines, it makes 90% of a cup, which represents the 9 planes of heaven. Returning to God after death, a soul has to cross these planes.

⁸⁹ The Collection of Divine Messages.

⁹⁰ The Seven-Gem Pond, whose water is said to have eight valuable characteristics: pure, cool, sweet, gentle, slippery, peaceful, giving a secure feeling and nutritious.

Part 2

The Caodaist view of human life

This is a philosophical system that deals with the origin of humanity, life and death and the significance of life.

According to Caodaism, humans, and God comes from the same source: the Khí Hư Vô⁹¹. Humans are born, evolve and return in a spiritual circle. The beginning and the returning points are the Đại Linh Quang⁹². In the process, God is considered the King, the Teacher, and the Father. That is why it is usually thought that God is personal.

In Part 2, there is an explanation for the three main routes according to the Caodaist view of human life.

Page 2 describes the way from heaven to earth. Combining with peri-spirits, souls start from the Đại Linh Quang to descend into the earthly world.

Page 3 describes human life on earth. The bodies, the souls and the peri-spirits live together, preparing to return to their former heavenly statuses.

Page 4 describes the way to ascend to heaven for the souls and the peri-spirits.

⁹¹ The Nothingness.

⁹² The Grand Mass of Holy Light.

Page two

Origin

Nhân sanh hà tại?
Why do humans exist on earth?

We humans sometimes wonder where we come from and why we exist. Through spiritualism, God has answered that man is made in the spiritual world by combining a part of God's soul and the peri-spirit given by God the Mother. The soul and the peri-spirit enter a body as soon as a person is born. God's answer satisfies both theism and atheism because an immortal soul is recognized to exist inside a mortal body.

Chapter 4

Where humans come from

According to Caodaism, the man comes from God and God the Mother. Though coming from the same origin, divine beings say, humanity is categorized according to the source and the evolution of the souls. There are three categories:

- Hoá Nhân⁹³ - the people with the souls which have been evolving from plants and animals to humans after the Creation.

- Nguyên Nhân⁹⁴ - the people with the souls coming directly from God and sent to earth by God the Mother.

- Quỷ Nhân⁹⁵ - the people with the souls from two sources. First, from the Hoá Nhân and Nguyên Nhân, who have violated the divine law and are punished by being forced to work for Quỷ Vương⁹⁶. Second, from the Tam Thập Lục Động⁹⁷. These evils descend into the world in order to challenge someone to see if he deserves a place in heaven.

In this chapter, I will cover the stages, during which Nguyên Nhơn is made.

- Stage 1: the soul, which is part of the Đại Linh Quang⁹⁸ or God, is separated. Then the peri-spirit created by God the Mother begins to cover the soul.

- Stage 2: a man is born on earth with three combined parts: the body or Tinh, the peri-spirit or Khí and the soul or Thần.

1. Chơn Linh⁹⁹

All religious people believe in the soul and always wonder where the soul comes from and how it enters and leaves the body. Through divine messages, God explained: *"I have a Chơn Linh take care of your life, each of you. That Chơn Linh is unbiased and able to communicate with the Genies, Saints, Immortals, Buddhas and the Đấng Trọn Lành¹⁰⁰ in Ngọc Hư Cung.*

⁹³ Hoá - evolving, Nhân - humans.

⁹⁴ Nguyên - primeval, original, Nhân - humans.

⁹⁵ Quỷ - evil, satanic, Nhân - humans.

⁹⁶ God said: *"Do you know who opposes the process of life? It's Satan. He always wants to stop the process of life. It's like if there is life from Me, then there is death from Satan."* Satan kills humans with hatred: *"Because of hatred, all living beings disagree with, oppose and kill each other. That will end the world."* According to His Holiness Hộ Pháp, Satan used to be the Immortal Chief Kim Quang Sứ, who was punished by Ngọc Hư Cung for being a traitor. He became Satan since then.

⁹⁷ 36 Caves, which is said to be evil spirits' realm.

⁹⁸ The huge mass of holy light.

⁹⁹ Soul - also called Chơn Hồn, Vong Hồn, Anh Linh, Hương Hồn.

¹⁰⁰ The Super Morally Good Beings.

What you have done, either good or bad things are noted down and presented to the Tòa Phán Xét¹⁰¹. That Chơn Linh, who not only protects but also instructs you, is commonly called conscience.”¹⁰²

Origin

Chơn Linh or Tiểu Linh Quang¹⁰³, which is separated from the Đại Linh Quang¹⁰⁴ of God, is granted to each person. It enters the body as soon as a person is born to make that person alive and intelligent.

Bát Nương¹⁰⁵ said, “Souls are from the particles of Dương Quang¹⁰⁶.” Dương Quang comes from Dương Khí¹⁰⁷ of Ngôi Thái Cực and makes all the souls.

His Holiness Hộ Pháp preached, “Chơn Linh coming from Nguyên Khí creates life. Chơn Linh has limitless power granted by God.”¹⁰⁸

Characteristics

Coming from the Tiên Thiên Khí¹⁰⁹ in heaven, Chơn Linh has the following characteristics:

- Representing human immortality. Since it is separated from the Đại Linh Quang, it is part of God. After the body dies, it either returns to the Đại Linh Quang or incarnates on earth again.

- Coming from God, Chơn Linh is not affected by the law of Âm Dương, Ngũ Hành, Biến Dịch and Vô Thường¹¹⁰ in the physical world.

- Chơn Linh is really purified, saintly, unbiased, intelligent and enlightened, so it is called Thiên Lương¹¹¹. It can attain what the human six senses cannot.¹¹²

- Chơn Linh is able to communicate with all Deities. Thanks to Chơn Linh, Caodaist priests could communicate with Divine Beings via spiritualism in Hiệp Thiên Đài to found Caodaism.

Mission

Chơn Linh is covered by Chơn Thần and responsible for morally guiding people on earth and after death.

On earth

Taking advantage of the body, Chơn Linh and Chơn Thần practice religion on earth. The practice is considered the same way as taking an

¹⁰¹ The Judgement Court.

¹⁰² The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 2 page 66.

¹⁰³ The Junior Holy Light (lit)

¹⁰⁴ The grand mass of holy light or The Senior Holy Light.

¹⁰⁵ The Eighth Female Buddha.

¹⁰⁶ Yang light (lit)

¹⁰⁷ Yang Qi, Yang energy.

¹⁰⁸ According to His Holiness Hộ Pháp, Chơn Linh only enters a newly born baby.

¹⁰⁹ Tiên Thiên - Earlier Heaven. Khí - energy or gas.

¹¹⁰ Âm Dương - Yin Yang. Ngũ Hành - Five Elements. Biến Dịch - change. Vô Thường - Mortality.

¹¹¹ Thiên : God, Lương : Goodness. The innate conscience.

¹¹² Divine Messages: “The conscience is the best part God grants humans. It enters the physical body, making humanity intelligent, able to know what is right or wrong, able to worry...”

examination held by God in the Third General Salvation. Their responsibilities are:

Guiding Chơn Thần

Chơn Linh controls Chơn Thần, which takes command and directs the body. His Holiness Cao Thượng Phẩm said, “ If unable to control the body’s earthly desires, Chơn Linh will be admonished and become a failure in the Cõi Thiêng Liêng Hằng Sống.¹¹³”

Archiving

Good or bad behaviors in life are all recorded by Chơn Linh. That archive will result in either a good or bad life in the next incarnation.

Instructing the body

“ Being so saintly, Chơn Linh not only protects but also teaches you, children.”¹¹⁴ Chơn Linh, however, only controls the body via a go-between, the Chơn Thần.

Mission after death

On the way back to heaven, Chơn Linh instructs Chơn Thần to purify itself so that it can pass the heavenly planes.

2. Chơn Thần¹¹⁵

In Âm Quang Tiên Thiên¹¹⁶, there is already Nguơn chất¹¹⁷ 元質 in the Kim Bồn¹¹⁸ in Điều Trì Cung to create Chơn Thần. Nguơn Chất is composed of : Nguơn Tinh (Nguơn Chất âm)¹¹⁹ and Nguơn Khí or Khí Sanh Quang (Nguơn Khí dương)¹²⁰.

*Lưỡng Nghi phân khí Hư Vô,
Điều Trì Kim Mẫu nung lò hóa sanh.
Âm dương biến tạo Chơn Thần,
Lo cho nhơn vật về phần hữu vi.¹²¹*

*Lưỡng Nghi¹²² separated the Khí Hư Vô¹²³,
Điều Trì Kim Mẫu¹²⁴ operates the divine kiln.
Âm Dương¹²⁵ are combined to create Chơn Thần¹²⁶,
That is the physical part of a human.*

¹¹³ The Eternal Life or heaven.

¹¹⁴ The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 2 page 64.

¹¹⁵ Also Thần Hồn, Linh Thần, Chơn Thần, Pháp Thần, Phách, cái Vía, Tướng Tinh, Hào quang.

¹¹⁶ Âm Quang - Yin Light. Tiên Thiên - Earlier Heaven, before the Creation.

¹¹⁷ Nguơn (nguyên): primeval, origin; Chất: materials. According to Caodaism, the two nguơn chất from which the universe was created are Âm quang and Dương quang

¹¹⁸ Kim - Gold. Bồn - vessel, container.

¹¹⁹ Nguơn Tinh or Nguơn Chất Âm - Primeval Tinh or Primeval Yin.

¹²⁰ Nguơn Khí or Khí Sanh Quang or Nguơn Khí dương - Primeval Khí or Khí Sanh Quang or Primeval Khí Yang.

¹²¹ Kinh tán tụng Công Đức Điều Trì Kim Mẫu

¹²² The two forms Yin and Yang.

¹²³ The gas of nothingness.

¹²⁴ God the Mother.

¹²⁵ Yin Yang.

¹²⁶ Peri-spirit.

Đức Phật Mẫu uses Nguơn Chất to make Chơn Thần, so Chơn Thần is an invisible eternal form, which is always changing depending on the moral or immoral actions in each incarnation.

The divine tool

The divine tool is placed in Diêu Trì Cung run by Đức Phật Mẫu in the Ninth Heaven called Tạo Hoá Thiên. It is the Kim Bồn, the golden vessel, which contains the primeval material to create Chơn Thần.

*Nơi Kim Bồn vùn vùn nguơn chất,
Tạo hình hài các bậc Nguyên Nhân¹²⁷.
In Kim Bồn, there is a huge amount of primeval material
To create the forms for the Nguyên Nhân.¹²⁸*

The mechanism

From the Đại Linh Quang, God releases the Tiểu Linh Quang or souls. Đức Phật Mẫu obtains those souls and covers them with the Chơn Thần she makes from the primeval materials in Diêu Trì Cung. The results are divine beings.

*Sanh quang dưỡng dục quần nhi,
Chơn Linh phối nhứt thân vì Thánh hình¹²⁹.
God the Mother gives birth to your children,
By combining Chơn Linh and Chơn Thần to make a divine being.¹³⁰*

Therefore, God is the Father, who grants humans souls. Đức Phật Mẫu is the Mother, who grants humans the peri-spirits. We humans have the same Divine Parents besides our own parents.

Incarnation

As soon as a person is born on earth, the divine beings composed of Chơn Linh and Chơn Thần enter the body. From then on the person has enough three parts.

*Đại Từ Phụ từ bi tạo hóa,
Tượng mảnh thân giống cá càn khôn.
Vẹn toàn đủ xác đủ hồn.
God the Father is a mercy to create
humans, who represent the universe
And who have both bodies and souls*

Mission

On earth, Chơn Thần, which is also called the Second Body¹³¹, mainly acts as a go-between for the body and the soul. Its role is like the Hiệp Thiên

¹²⁷ Kinh Đệ Cửu Cửu.

¹²⁸ Kinh Đệ Cửu Cửu.

¹²⁹ Phật Mẫu Chơn Kinh

¹³⁰ Phật Mẫu Chơn Kinh.

Đài's¹³² in the Holy See. Chơn Thần takes orders from Chơn Linh and instructs the body in daily life.

Incarnation

Thanks to Chơn Linh's directions, Chơn Thần can gradually control its cruelty. If failing to fulfill its responsibilities, that is satisfying the body's immoral desires, Chơn Thần becomes corrupted and has to reincarnate to compensate for those immoral actions.

Before reincarnation, the Buddhas in the Tạo Hoá Thiên¹³³ renew the Chơn Thần by eradicating all the old memories. The new Chơn Thần, therefore, forget all previous experiences in the next incarnation.

3. Physical Body

The human physical body is created by the combination of sperms and eggs. It is like the temporary house for Chơn Thần and Chơn Linh to learn and morally improve themselves.

Composition

Like the universe, a human is born by the combination of two power Yin and Yang. Through sexual intercourse, a sperm from a husband meets an egg from a wife then an embryo is created and develops into a baby. Inside the womb, the unborn baby receives the Chơn Linh and Chơn Thần, forming a human with three basic parts: Tinh, Khí, and Thần.

A mass of numerous living things

"A human body is made of numerous living things. Those living things are connected with each other. They live on other living things like vegetables, fruits, and rice. The food eaten changes into khí¹³⁴, which changes into huyết¹³⁵. They then can create another human body. Thus the cycle of birth and death keeps going on forever."¹³⁶

The transformation of vô vi¹³⁷

¹³¹ The First Body - the physical body. The Second Body - the mind. The Third Body - the soul.

¹³² Hiệp Thiên Đài - one of the three main organizations of Caodaism, which is in charge of the Caodaist Law.

¹³³ The Creation Heaven or the Ninth Heaven.

¹³⁴ Energy.

¹³⁵ Blood.

¹³⁶ The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 1.

¹³⁷ Wuwei - non action (lit)

The body is formed by the combination of ngũ hành¹³⁸ and Yin Yang, operated by Khí Hư Vô¹³⁹. The body is only a temporary means. Each human is composed of three parts: the physical body and the invisible part, which includes Chơn Linh and Chơn Thần.

The role

For Caodaists, life on earth is only a temporary means to prepare for eternal life in heaven. The body is made of materials, so it is like a motel for a traveler to rest in the evolutionary process.

*Tôi nay ở trọ trần gian,
Trăm năm về chốn xa xăm cuối trời.
I am now staying in the world
And will go far far away after death.*

According to Caodaism, the body is only a lodge for the Chơn Linh and Chơn Thần to practice religion, learning and morally improving themselves for the self-liberation of the Chơn Thần. Hence, you need the body for esoteric practice¹⁴⁰.

Characteristics

The body, which is made from materials, is a living being with five senses and emotions, so its basic activities are like an animal's. "A human is basically an animal."¹⁴¹

The body is always badly influenced by the surroundings. If not being properly controlled, it is willing to satisfy its worldly desires. That way the Chơn Thần will be contaminated and have to reincarnate forever. That is why a religious person must always take orders from the Chơn Linh to control the body.

Since the Chơn Linh and Chơn Thần enter the body, they begin the process of morally improving themselves in order to return to God. Being either a Hoá Nhân¹⁴² or a Nguyên Nhân¹⁴³, they live the same way on earth.

¹³⁸ Wu xing - five elements.

¹³⁹ Nothingness.

¹⁴⁰ God said: « Children, My Đạo is formless. But it still needs to combine with materials (soul and body). You should not choose the form and discard the formlessness. You should not choose the formlessness and discard the form either. They both should go together. For example, for food you eat the grain and eliminate the husks, but you need the husks for agriculture to have more rice. Practicing religion is the same way. For the soul to have a higher divine status, you need the body. »

¹⁴¹ The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 1.

¹⁴² A person with the soul that has evolved from an animal to a human after the Creation.

¹⁴³ A person with the soul that came directly from God.

Summary

God



*1. Releases a Chơn Linh or a Tiểu Linh Quang
From the Đại Linh Quang*



*2. Đức Điều trì Kim Mẫu creates a
Chơn Thần to cover the Chơn Linh*



3. Descending to the world



4. Chơn Linh and Chơn Thần enter a body

Evolution

In the universe, souls have to evolve in a circle according to the divine law. Beginning from the Đại Linh Quang, souls ascend to the world for incarnation then return to the Đại Linh Quang.

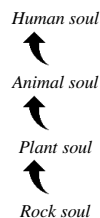
On earth, people with the souls directly coming from God are called Nguyên Nhân. They try to gain higher heavenly status by teaching others, especially the Hoá Nhân. As for the Hoá Nhân, they try to learn from the Nguyên Nhân to also gain a heavenly status after death.

1. The evolution of the Hóa Nhân

According to Caodaism, the people, whose souls have evolved from materials→ plants→ animals→ humans after the Creation, are called the Hoá Nhân¹⁴⁴. Traditionally, the term “root and top” is used to explain this type of evolution. Root or the head controls the body and top is the results. Look at plants and animals.

- Plants: the head is underground (more Yin), so plants are not intelligent.
- Animals: the head is at the same level with the root, (at the border of Yin and Yang) so they are more intelligent than plants.
- Humans: the head is high up (more Yang), so they are the most intelligent.

The Hoá Nhân have enough three kinds of souls (Sanh Hồn, Giác Hồn, and Linh Hồn¹⁴⁵). At each of evolution levels, the living beings receive the appropriate souls from God. Plants receive Sanh Hồn, animals Giác Hồn and humans Sanh Hồn, Giác Hồn, and Linh Hồn.



¹⁴⁴ According to His Holiness Thượng Phẩm, after Lương Nghi changes into Bát Quái, materials are created then evolve until they become humans called Hoá Nhân, so their Chơn Thần are still materialistic.

¹⁴⁵ Living Soul, Conscious Soul and Holy Soul (lit).

Đức Phật Mẫu combines the Khí Âm Quang and Khí Dương Quang to create living beings including Nguyên Nhân and Hoá Nhân. Then all of the eight categories¹⁴⁶ of living beings are sent to the earth for incarnation.

*Càn khôn sản xuất hữu hình
Bất hồn vận chuyển hóa thành chúng sanh¹⁴⁷
God the Mother creates all physical things
And sends eight categories of souls to the earth.¹⁴⁸*

Being created by Đức Phật Mẫu, the Hoá Nhân receive the Chơn Linh from God to enter the Trường Thi Công Quả¹⁴⁹. Through numerous incarnations, they evolve from humans→ Deities→ Saints→ Immortals→ Buddhas. If they practice religion well enough, they also attain high heavenly statuses like the Nguyên Nhân. God said, “Either a Nguyên Nhân or a Hoá Nhân’s life is the result of what that person has done in former incarnations.”

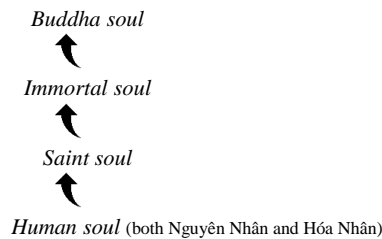
Unlike Darwin’s Theory of Evolution, the Caodaist Law of Evolution deals with both the human body and soul.

*Vòng xây chuyển vong hồn tấn hóa,
Nương xác thân hiệp ngã Càn Khôn¹⁵⁰.
All souls have to borrow bodies
To evolve until they unite with God*

2. The evolution of the Nguyên Nhân

Having been born in the world, Nguyên Nhân evolves by practicing religion in many incarnations to attain the positions of Deities, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas. God said, “Children, you have to reincarnate lots of times to attain your highest level in Niết Bàn¹⁵¹.”¹⁵²

Becoming a Buddha, the soul still keeps on practicing religion in heaven until he reaches the final destination, which is God’s Soul¹⁵³.



¹⁴⁶ Rock, plants, animals, humans, Deities, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas.

¹⁴⁷ Phật Mẫu Chơn Kinh

¹⁴⁸ Phật Mẫu Chơn Kinh.

¹⁴⁹ The Virtue Competition.

¹⁵⁰ Kinh Giải Oan

¹⁵¹ Nirvana.

¹⁵² The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 1 page 57.

¹⁵³ Also, Thiên Hồn, Thái Cực, Đại Linh Quang.

On the process of evolution, a Nguyên Nhân or a Hoá Nhân can either skip some levels if he/she is extremely successful or go backward to incarnate as an animal if he/she commits a crime. In the Third Salvation, a person can achieve enlightenment in only one incarnation.

3. Descending to earth

The Nguyên Nhân, who is usually called the world's visitors, incarnate for the following reasons to:

- Practice religion for higher heavenly statuses.
- Teach Hoá Nhân.
- Make up for bad deeds in former incarnations.
- Save people as assigned by God.¹⁵⁴

Practicing religion for higher heavenly statuses

The Nguyên Nhân incarnate in the world, where God holds the Virtue Competition, to share unhappiness and to serve people for their own higher positions in heaven.

Teaching the hóa nhân

Since the Hoá Nhân is still stupid, cruel and uncivilized, Đức Phật Mẫu took orders from God, sending 10,000,000 Nguyên Nhân to teach them. Those Nguyên Nhân, whose souls coming directly from God, have divine positions already. Their teaching will contribute to their attaining higher positions. They will return to God after finishing their missions.

Bad karma

At first, the Nguyên Nhân, who incarnated in the world, were moral and intelligent. They, however, were gradually so contaminated by worldly temptations that they forgot their assignments. They even committed a crime, so they had to reincarnate for compensation.

In addition, Satan also tempted them into doing the wrong things. As a result, they lost the Vạn Cứu Nang¹⁵⁵ given by Phật Mẫu. They then could not go back to heaven.

¹⁵⁴ His Holiness Hộ Pháp said there are five categories of world's visitors:

- The debtors.
- The creditors.
- The students.
- The travelers.
- The heavenly assigned persons.

¹⁵⁵ Vạn cứu nang (nang 囊: a bag) a bag that contains 9,000,000 things. According to Khai Pháp Trần Duy Nghĩa, when the Nguyên Nhân descended into the world, Đức Diêu Trì Kim Mẫu gave one to each of them, saying that they would not be able to come back if they lost

Feeling great compassion towards them, God found Three Periods of Salvations to save them. Caodaism is the Third One.

Saving people as assigned by God

In addition to the high moral souls who incarnated in the world to save humanity like the Buddha, Jesus Christ, Laozi, etc. other Saints or Immortals are assigned to the earth.¹⁵⁶

According to Caodaism, lots of its dignitaries were divine beings who were assigned to earth by God. For example, His Holiness Hộ Pháp Phạm Công Tắc is Vi Hộ's¹⁵⁷ incarnation. In Báo Ân Đường Kiêm Biên¹⁵⁸ Sep 19th, 1956 Thanh Sơn Đạo Sĩ said: *"Yes, you incarnated in Vi (Hộ) family and now in Phạm (Công Tắc) family..."*

Đầu Sư Thái Thơ Thanh is Từ Hàng Bồ Tát's¹⁵⁹ incarnation. On Jan 11th, 1927 God told him, *"You are Quan Âm's incarnation."*

Đầu Sư Lâm Hương Thanh is Long Nữ's incarnation.

even one thing. At the same time Satan descended with his five evils, who transformed into money, beautiful women, wine, anger, and opium to tempt them.

¹⁵⁶ July 30th 1923 in Miếu Nôi, Tào Quốc Cự said, "You are so lucky to live when Caodaism is founded because lots of divine beings came here to save people."

¹⁵⁷ A Saint in Chinese mythology.

¹⁵⁸ A Caodaist Temple in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

¹⁵⁹ Từ Hàng Bồ Tát or Quan Âm - Guan Yin.

Page three

The world

Where do you live?
Why do you live here?

Where do you live? According to Caodaism, life on earth is temporary. Your body is just a motel for Chơn Thần and Chơn Linh to learn and improve themselves in the Third Salvation.

Why do you live here? According to Caodaism, your mission is to fulfill your human responsibilities and to practice religion for your returning to God.

Fulfilling your responsibilities

A Caodaist believer begins with the process of fulfilling his/her responsibilities. This is the first of the Five Levels: Nhơn Đạo, Thần Đạo, Thánh Đạo, Tiên Đạo, and Phật Đạo. This is mandatory for all humans to complete this first.

In the Third Amnesty, from October 15th, 1926 to the Long Hoa Competition¹⁶⁰ held by Di Lạc Vương Phật¹⁶¹, people can fulfill their responsibilities by:

- Practicing Caodaism as a member of Cửu Trùng Đài¹⁶².
- Practicing Caodaism as a member of Phước Thiện¹⁶³.

Having finished this stage, a Caodaist believer can do the esoteric practice of Caodaism. In this phase, the believer mainly purifies his/her Chơn Thần¹⁶⁴ by eliminating the Khí Hậu Thiên¹⁶⁵ or his/her seven emotion¹⁶⁶ and six desires¹⁶⁷.

1. Why you have to practice religion now?

According to Caodaism, the earth or the 68 planets has experienced two *ngươn*¹⁶⁸:

- Thượng *ngươn*¹⁶⁹ also called *Ngươn Tạo Hoá*¹⁷⁰. The First General Salvation was held by the Ancient Buddha, Hồng Quân Lão Tổ¹⁷¹ and Văn Tuyên Đế Quân.

- Trung *ngươn*¹⁷² also called *Ngươn Tiến Hoá*¹⁷³. The Second General Salvation was held by the Buddha, Jesus Christ, Laozi, Confucius, Jiang Shang.

Presently, it is Hạ *Ngươn*¹⁷⁴ also called *Ngươn Bảo Tồn*¹⁷⁵. God has held the Third General Salvation in Vietnam for all souls to enter the first *ngươn* of the next *Chuyển*¹⁷⁶ when everyone and everything becomes ethical again.

¹⁶⁰ Long - dragon. Hoa - flower. This is the same as Judgement Day.

¹⁶¹ Maitreya Buddha.

¹⁶² The Nine-Level Tower (lit) the Caodaist Executive Organization.

¹⁶³ The Caodaist Charity Organization.

¹⁶⁴ Peri-spirit.

¹⁶⁵ The energy of Later Heaven.

¹⁶⁶ Joy, anger, love, hatred, sorrow, satisfaction and desire.

¹⁶⁷ The desires to satisfy your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, mind and body.

¹⁶⁸ A length of time which is used in Caodaism. According to His Holiness Hộ Pháp, it is equivalent to 12,000 years.

¹⁶⁹ The First Cycle.

¹⁷⁰ The Cycle of Creation.

¹⁷¹ Another name for God by Taoism.

¹⁷² The Mid Cycle.

¹⁷³ The Cycle of Progress.

¹⁷⁴ The Last Cycle.

¹⁷⁵ The Cycle of Reservation.

¹⁷⁶ A length of time used by Caodaism. A *chuyển* includes three *ngươn* or 36,000 years.

The three Nguơn in the Third Chuyễn in the 68th planet

<i>Nguơn</i>	<i>Humans</i>	<i>Society</i>	<i>Salvation</i>	<i>Time</i>
Thượng Nguơn	Moral Kind	Peaceful Harmonious	The First General Salvation	Past
Trung Nguơn	Rather immoral Rather warlike	Unfair War	The Second General Salvation	Past
Hạ Nguơn	Very aggressive Cunning	Destructive Deadly	The Third General Salvation	Present
Nguơn Thánh Đức	Moral again Kind again			Future

2. Practicing religion in Cửu Trùng Đài

The believers who join Cửu Trùng Đài become Caodaist dignitaries. They do religious work to both serve people and earn a higher heavenly status. Being Caodaist dignitaries, they, as well as all Caodaist believers, have to perform the Tam Lập¹⁷⁷: Lập Công, Lập Đức, and Lập Ngôn.¹⁷⁸ That way is called taking the way of the Cửu Thiên Khai Hoá¹⁷⁹ to earn the heavenly positions of Địa Thần, Nhơn Thần, Thiên Thần, Địa Thánh, Nhơn Thánh, Thiên thánh, Địa Tiên, Nhơn Tiên, Thiên Tiên.¹⁸⁰

Lập Ngôn

They should preach Caodaism to others, preferably through the media.

Lập Công

¹⁷⁷ Three good deeds.

¹⁷⁸ Practicing Caodaism, doing charity work and preaching.

¹⁷⁹ Cửu Thiên - nine heavens. Khai Hoá - teaching, educating.

¹⁸⁰ Earth Deity, Human Deity, Heaven Deity, Earth Saint, Human Saint, Heaven Saint, Earth Immortal, Human Immortal and Heaven Immortal.

They should fulfill their religious responsibilities. For example, they should do any assigned religious work in their local Caodaist temples, one of which is they should perform the daily four rites (at noon, at midnight, at 6 am and at 6 pm).

In addition, being Caodaist dignitaries, they have to take care of other believers in their assigned village or town, helping them in their religious and social life.

As mentioned before, God has held a Trường Thi Công Quả¹⁸¹, which is Caodaism, in these 68 planets for the Third Amnesty. To earn the positions of Deities, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas, everyone must do as much religious work as they can.¹⁸² In this competition, the Chairman of the examiners' board is Đức Di Lạc Vương Phật¹⁸³. Interestingly, one of the divine examiners is Ma Vương¹⁸⁴, who is in charge of challenging the candidates for the divine positions in Heaven.

*Vô ma khảo bất thành Đại Đạo,
Đạo bất khảo bất thành Phật.
Without Satan's challenges, you cannot get enlightenment.
Religious challenges are a must for those who want to become Buddhas.*

« Children, you should know that you cannot get enlightenment until you do enough religious work and fulfill your personal responsibilities. Thus, preaching to others is the only way for you to get enlightenment. There are numerous ways to do so, just take the suitable one, so you may achieve the highest level for less religious work. »¹⁸⁵

Lập Đức

They should do charity work by making donations. In Caodaism, there is an organization called Hội Thánh Phước Thiện¹⁸⁶, where believers can do charity work, climbing the Thập Nhị Đẳng Cấp Thiêng Liêng¹⁸⁷ hierarchy.

4. Practicing religion in Cơ Quan Phước Thiện

In addition to Cửu Trùng Đài, any Caodaist believers can do charity work by joining the Cơ Quan Phước Thiện, which has a hierarchy called Thập Nhị Đẳng Cấp Thiêng Liêng. In this hierarchy, there are twelve ranks including

¹⁸¹ The Religious Work Competition.

¹⁸² "To earn the positions of Deity, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas doing religious work is a must." *The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 1 and 2.*

¹⁸³ Maitreya Buddha.

¹⁸⁴ Also Qui Vương, Chúa Qui, Kim Quang Sứ - Satan.

¹⁸⁵ The Collection of Divine Messages.

¹⁸⁶ Hội Thánh - The Sacerdotal Council. Phước Thiện - Charity.

¹⁸⁷ The Twelve Divine Ranks.

Minh Đức, Tân Dân, Thính Thiện, Hành Thiện, Giáo Thiện, Chí Thiện, Đạo Nhơn, Chơn Nhơn, Hiền Nhơn, Thánh Nhơn, Tiên Tử, Phật Tử.¹⁸⁸

This organization is responsible for “easing people’s suffering by feeding them, especially the disabled and the underprivileged”¹⁸⁹. Its purpose is expressed through the couplets:

福德天頒萬物眾生離苦劫
善緣地貯十方諸佛合元人
Phước đức Thiên ban vạn vật chúng sanh ly khổ kiếp,
Thiện duyên địa trữ thập phương chư Phật hiệp nguyên nhân¹⁹⁰.

福德修心樂道和人尋地利
善慈定性安貧合眾識天時
Phước đức tu tâm lạc đạo hòa nhơn tâm địa lợi,
Thiện từ định tánh an bần hiệp chúng thức Thiên thời¹⁹¹.

In short, to earn a divine position in heaven, you have to practice religion and fulfilling your personal responsibilities is a prerequisite.

« *Though being a Đại La Thiên Đế incarnating on earth, you still find it hard to return to your heavenly status unless you practice religion.* »¹⁹²

*Rằng ở đời thì Nhơn đạo trọn,
Trọn rồi, Thiên đạo mới hoàn toàn.
Only when you have already fulfilled your personal responsibilities
Can you practice esotericism successfully?*

4. Caodaist Esoteric Practice

According to His Holiness Hộ Pháp, you can enter the Tịnh Thất¹⁹³ for esoteric practice after completing your duty in Cửu Trùng Đài or Phước Thiện. This practice is called hiệp Tam Bửu.¹⁹⁴ For those who find this kind of practice uncomfortable or too difficult, however, they can safely earn a divine status in

¹⁸⁸

1. Minh Đức - Virtuous Person.
2. Tân Dân - New Person.
3. Thính Thiện - Ethic Learner.
4. Hành Thiện - Ethic Practitioners.
5. Giáo Thiện - Ethic Teacher.
6. Chí Thiện - Really Ethical Person.
7. Đạo Nhơn - Religious Person.
8. Chơn Nhơn - Enlightened Person.
9. Hiền Nhơn - Sage.
10. Thánh Nhơn - Saint.
11. Tiên Tử - Immortal.
12. Phật Tử - Buddha.

¹⁸⁹ Divine message by His Holiness Cao Thượng Phẩm.

¹⁹⁰ God grants divine favor to all living beings so that they can be freed from suffering.

Earth gives good opportunities, all the Buddhas help collect the Nguyên Nhân.

¹⁹¹ Practicing religion by making donations, being satisfied and getting along well with people are seeking the favorable terrain. Being religious for good karma, living a poor life happily and uniting with others are following God’s will.

¹⁹² The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 1.

¹⁹³ Meditation House.

¹⁹⁴ Combination of the Three Treasures.

heaven by practicing in Cửu Trùng Đài or Phước Thiện because of God's great favor in the Third Salvation.

Tinh converted into Khí

The Caodaist esoteric practice includes three steps: Tinh converted into Khí, Khí converted into Thần and Thần returning to Hư.¹⁹⁵ In the first step, the esoteric practitioner chooses what food to eat in order to:

- Purify his Tinh;
- Convert Tinh to Chơn Khí, which nourishes the Chơn Thần.

1. Tinh, Chơn Khí, Chơn Thần

Tinh is the essence created from food by the human body. In a human body, there is the process of changing from the Tinh to the Hậu Thiên Chơn Khí¹⁹⁶, which cover and nourish the Tiên Thiên Chơn Thần¹⁹⁷.

A Caodaist esoteric practitioner chooses to have a completely vegetarian diet to have pure Tinh because the pure Tinh will change to pure Chơn Khí.

Tinh

At first, the human digestive organs make the Chơn Tinh from the food eaten. Then Chơn Tinh is transferred to nourish, repair and maintain other organs. Besides, it is also burned by the Hoả Tinh and converted to Chơn Khí. *“Hoả Tinh is the heat from Dương Quang, which converts Chơn Tinh to Chơn Khí.”*¹⁹⁸ Chơn Khí combines with Chơn Thần to make the Đệ Nhị Xác Thân¹⁹⁹. Therefore, the impure Tinh can contaminate the Chơn Thần. For example, drinking lots of alcohol, you will get drunk, so you are not conscious enough or your Chơn Thần is contaminated. That is why an esoteric practitioner has to practice full vegetarianism.

Chơn Khí

Chơn Khí, along with the Chơn Thần and blood, travels all over the body. Therefore, it becomes:

- The intermediary between your Chơn Thần and Chơn Linh²⁰⁰;

¹⁹⁵ Tinh Khí Thần - body, mind, soul.

¹⁹⁶ Hậu Thiên - Later Heaven. Chơn Khí - energy.

¹⁹⁷ Tiên Thiên - Earlier Heaven. Chơn Thần - peri- spirit.

¹⁹⁸ Luật Tam Thể. Page 27.

¹⁹⁹ The second body - the peri-spirit. (The first body is the physical one and the third body is the soul.)

²⁰⁰ Luật Tam Thể. Page 19.

- The ties for binding your Chơn Thần to your body, which is called “bảy dây oan nghiệt²⁰¹” or thất phách²⁰². It is via these seven ties that your body requests your Chơn Thần to satisfy its worldly desires. If the Chơn Thần agrees, it might commit some moral crime. These ties themselves are the ones that prevent a person’s Chơn Thần from leaving his body after he dies.

Chơn Khí can be seen by the person who has Divine Eyes as a bright aura (for the Saints), pink aura (for good people) and purple aura (for bad people). You yourself can also realize whether you have enough Chơn Khí or not. You will feel sick, weaken and jittery like when you are too hungry or captive. Having eaten, you will feel alright because now you have enough Chơn Khí.

Chơn Thần

Chơn Thần is covered and nourished by Chơn Khí, so it is impure if the food provided is contaminated. To meet God, your Chơn Thần has to be absolutely pure. “Such a Chơn Thần can come to Me”²⁰³. Besides, it will not be struck and destroyed by lightning while entering the universe²⁰⁴. On the other hand, an impure one has to reincarnate. Again, vegetarianism is a must for those who want to have an absolutely pure Chơn Thần.

2. Vegetarianism²⁰⁵

Vegetarian food for Caodaist believers should include vegetables, grains, and fruits. It helps Caodaists:

- Follow the first precept “Do not kill”;
- Change Hậu Thiên to Tiên Thiên;
- Can ascend easily;
- Avoid bad karma and reincarnation.

Also, meat from animals can contain fear, hatred, unhappiness, cruelty, and anger when they are killed. Eating it, you will have the same bad emotions. Besides, animal meat results in sickness such as stomach ulcers, hypertension, heart disease, etc. In reality, vegetarians are usually kinder than meat-eaters.

Following the precepts

²⁰¹ The ties that are the results from the bad karma from previous lives.

²⁰² The seven invisible ties made of Chơn Khí.

²⁰³ The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 1 page 6.

²⁰⁴ Chơn Thần, which is still material, has to enter the Khí Tiên Thiên, where there is always electricity. It should be absolutely pure so that it is lighter than air in order to travel in the space.

²⁰⁵ As for vegetarianism please read Âm Dương Âm Thực by the same author. Printed by Thánh Thất Seattle, 2016.

Thanks to vegetarianism, human beings can control their thất tình lục dục²⁰⁶. Therefore, they will not break the five precepts. For example, they will neither engage in improper sexual conduct nor steal.

Changing the Tính Hậu Thiên into Tiên Thiên

Khí Tiên Thiên (the real Yang and Yin), which had existed before the universe was created, is extremely light and pure.

Khí Hậu Thiên or Chơn Khí, which comes from the air and food, is responsible for protecting and feed Khí Tiên Thiên. Whether Chơn Khí is pure or contaminated depends on what kind of food a person has.

God said: *“Make use of your physical body and change its nguồn tinh (qi and blood) into the nguồn khí. As a result, the Tính Hậu Thiên becomes the Tính Tiên Thiên. Training the nguồn khí is making the nguồn thần more intelligent.”*²⁰⁷

The reason why that change should be made is both khí are gaseous, which are active based on the principle “*đồng khí tương cầu*”, meaning two gases of the same characteristics can unite. For the khí Hậu Thiên to unite with the khí Tiên Thiên, you should purify it while you are still alive by having vegetarian meals.

*“Vegetarianism is good for Tiên Thiên while the meat is good for Hậu Thiên.”*²⁰⁸

*“Therefore, I make you practice full vegetarianism before entering the meditation house.”*²⁰⁹

After death consequence

While ascending through heavenly levels, the Chơn Thần²¹⁰ is like a vehicle that carries the Chơn Linh²¹¹. The speed of ascending is higher if the Chơn Thần is more purified. Vegetarianism brings about a lighter Chơn Thần who can ascend faster, avoiding another incarnation.

Bát Nương²¹² said, *“To escape the Âm Quang²¹³, you need to have vegetarian meals. That is why God requires you to practice vegetarianism.”*

The peri spirit of a vegetarian is light, brilliant and it can easily fly out of the atmosphere.

Avoiding reincarnation

Vegetables and grains are the food God grants to humanity. Vegetarianism is what God prefers to develop mercy, control bad behaviors,

²⁰⁶ Thất tình - seven emotions. Lục dục - six desires.

²⁰⁷ The Collection of Divine Messages. Page 20.

²⁰⁸ The Collection of Divine Messages. Page 46.

²⁰⁹ The Collection of Divine Messages. Page 27.

²¹⁰ The peri spirit.

²¹¹ The souls.

²¹² The Eighth Female Buddha.

²¹³ Âm - yin. Quang - light. This place is similar to Hell.

avoid bad karma, and follow the five precepts, especially the first one: “Do not kill.”²¹⁴ It is fair that you live on vegetables and grains then you die and your body nurtures them.

3. Meat-eating

Animal-based food provides humans with contaminated Tinh. Contaminated Tinh gives contaminated Khí, which covers and feeds Chơn Thân. Consequently, you have a contaminated Chơn Thân.

While you are alive

According to Caodaism, the animal instincts inside a meat eater is a big obstacle on the way of practicing religion²¹⁵. It is extremely easy for that person to commit a crime or break religious law.

Too much Khí Hậu Thiên

Animal-based food creates lots of contaminated Khí Hậu Thiên, which pollutes the Chơn Thân. As a result, Chơn Thân becomes too dumb to resist worldly temptations.

Committing a crime

The flesh of animals is generally impure because it contains the animals' anger when they are killed. That impurity becomes toxic substances in the cells. Additionally, meat is harder for digestion than vegetables and grains.²¹⁶

Caodaist Law

That is why Caodaist Law prohibits killing²¹⁷ or using the meat for offerings.²¹⁸ The believers whose jobs are relevant to killing animals or selling alcohol and drugs have to change their jobs.²¹⁹

The believers who practice vegetarianism 10 days a month and above are permitted to enter the meditation house. In the meditation house, however, they have to practice full vegetarianism.

After death

After death, there are no more worldly temptations from human desires and emotions, but the meat-eaters' Chơn Thân are still impure because of the

²¹⁴ HT Lê Văn Thềm, Bí pháp dâng tam bửu, bí pháp giải thoát, Ban Thể Đạo Hải Ngoại, Hoa Kỳ, 2013, tr.31.

²¹⁵ “Physically, a human is still an animal who must eat to live.” The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 1.

²¹⁶ According to scientists, fruits stay in your stomach 20 minutes, grains 2 hours and meat 4-6 hours.

²¹⁷ Tân Luật, Đạo Pháp, chương IV, Điều thứ hai mươi mốt.

²¹⁸ Thể Luật, Điều thứ mười bảy: Trong việc cúng tế vong linh không nên dùng hi sanh, dùng toàn đồ chay...

²¹⁹ Thể Luật, Điều thứ hai mươi: Người bôn đạo chẳng nên chuyên nghề giết làm cho sát sanh hại vật... không được buôn bán các thứ rượu mạnh và a phiến.

contamination from meat-eating. Those Chơn Thần have difficulty leaving the physical bodies to enter heaven, so God has granted the sacrament called Phép Đọan Căn²²⁰ to help them.

Unable to enter heaven

The meat-eaters have impure physical bodies and Chơn Thần, so their souls have difficulty entering heaven. God said, *“Children if you practice esotericism without vegetarianism, your Chơn Thần will be so polluted by Khí Hậu Thiên that you cannot enter heaven.”*²²¹

Unable to escape the cycle of reincarnation

God said, *“How can you recover if you get enlightened while doing the esoteric practice without vegetarianism? If you get enlightened that way, you will be struck by lightning while flying in the air because your contaminated Chơn Thần is still electrically conductive. You might be intelligent enough to hide somewhere as a Nhân Tiên²²², but your earthly exile has not been finished.”*

²²⁰ Phép - sacrament. Đọan căn - cut off bad karma.

²²¹ The Collection of Divine Messages. Volume 1 p46.

²²² Nhân - human. Tiên - immortal.

Khí harmonizes with Thần

“Khí hiệp Thần” means the Khí Hậu Thiên²²³ or Chơn Khí will harmonize with the Khí Tiên Thiên²²⁴ or Chơn Thần if it is as pure and light as Khí Hư Vô²²⁵. The term “harmonize” describes the heavy contaminated Khí Hậu Thiên changes into the light pure Khí Tiên Thiên. His Holiness Hộ Pháp said, “*Converting Khí into Thần is the phase in which you make yourself more virtuous, control your bad behaviors, and promote noble thoughts. That will purify your Khí. When that Khí moderately circulates in your body, you can easily follow God’s teachings and feel peaceful and wise.*”

1. The harmonization of the khí

During esoteric practice, the practitioner should understand the condition for the two khí to harmonize with each other and know what Khí Hậu Thiên is. Khí of the same characteristics will find and harmonize with each other.

The two khí can harmonize with each other on the condition that they are equally pure/contaminated or have the same electronic waves. For example, for the contaminated Hậu Thiên Chơn Khí to harmonize with the pure Khí Tiên Thiên, you need to adjust the frequency of the Chơn Khí by purification so that it vibrates with the same frequency as that of the pure Khí Tiên Thiên. The practice is similar to that of a tuner. Therefore, the phase of “Khí harmonizes with Thần” is the hardest because the practitioner himself/herself has to purify his/her Khí Hậu Thiên related to the Chơn Thần or Khí. The Chơn Thần should be as pure as when it was in the Thái Hư to harmonize with Thần in accordance with the principle “*Đồng khí tương cầu.*”²²⁶ Similarly, His Holiness Cao Thượng Phẩm said about the Long Tu Phiến²²⁷, “How to turn on and turn off of the Long Tu Phiến is always in accordance with the rule “*Đồng khí tương cầu.*”, that is the Long Tu Phiến attracts and takes the moral Chơn Thần to the Cực Lạc Thế Giới²²⁸ while it pushes back the impure Chơn Thần. That Chơn Thần gradually moves to the dark U Minh.²²⁹

Khí Hậu Thiên made by the seven human feelings and six desires.

²²³ Khí - qi, energy. Hậu Thiên - later heaven.

²²⁴ Khí - qi, energy. Tiên Thiên - earlier heaven.

²²⁵ Khí - qi, energy. Hư Vô - nothingness.

²²⁶ Khí of the same characteristics will find and harmonize with each other.

²²⁷ Long tu - dragon beard. Phiến - fan.

²²⁸ Nirvana.

²²⁹ Hell.

The seven feelings and six desires create the two Yin Yang Khí Hậu Thiên that naturally hide in human internal organs²³⁰. The Khí caused by six desires can be seen on the body and the Khí caused by seven feelings through the unusual changes in human thoughts. These two Khí are the two obstacles so hard for religious practitioners to overcome.

The influence of the six desires on the body

The six desires cause the Hậu Thiên Yin Khí to nurture and rouse the body. Thus, the signs from this relationship can be seen in the body. For example, the greedy will put on weight or the sex maniacs and drinkers look pale and thin.

The influence of the seven feelings on the mind

The seven feelings cause the Hậu Thiên Yang Khí that frequently vibrates together with the Khí Tiên Thiên Chơn Thần via an intermediate called Ngũ Thân²³¹. Without any control, this Khí will be overactive, disturbing the Chơn Thần. Mental signs can be seen such as a person who is overjoyed can go insane and a worrier can become mentally ill. Such bad influences can prevent an esoteric practitioner from getting enlightened.

Comment [1]:

2. The source of the seven feelings and six desires

According to His Holiness Cao Thượng Phẩm, everyone has seven feelings and six desires, which caused by the internal organs. Their boss, however, is the Chơn Thần.²³²

Ngũ hành²³³

Everything in the universe can live and reproduce thanks to the Tiên Thiên Ngũ Hành and Hậu Thiên Ngũ Hành. The Hậu Thiên Ngũ Hành are the visible forms of the Tiên Thiên Ngũ Hành. Entering a physical body the Tiên Thiên Ngũ Hành convert into the material Hậu Thiên Ngũ Hành, which cause the seven human feelings and the six human desires.

Ngũ hành Tiên Thiên

The peri spirit or Chơn Thần already contains:

1. Tinh Tiên Thiên of the Ngươn Chất²³⁴ from the Kim Bồn²³⁵ for Đức Diêu Trì²³⁶ to create the human forms.

²³⁰ Luật tam thể. P20

²³¹ Ngũ Thân là :Thức Thân (tim), Ý (tì), Phách (phế), Chí (thận), Hồn (can).

²³² Luật Tam Thể. P20.

²³³ The five elements.

²³⁴ The Primeval Substance.

²³⁵ The Golden Vessel.

2. Khí Tiên Thiên or Khí Sanh Quang, which is the life source.
3. Ngũ Hành Tiên Thiên.

In the Ngũ Hành Tiên Thiên, there are Ngũ Nguơn Hữu Danh or Ngũ Khí Tiên Thiên.²³⁷

Ngươn Tinh from thuy in the kidney.

Ngươn Tánh from mợc in the liver.

Ngươn Khí from thỏ in the spleen.

Ngươn Thần from hoả in the heart.

Ngươn Tinh from kim in the lungs.

Ngũ hành Hậu Thiên

Ngũ Hành Hậu Thiên is the visible forms of the Ngũ Hành Tiên Thiên. After fertilization, the Chơn Thần enters the body and the Ngũ Hành Tiên Thiên convert into the material Ngũ Hành Hậu Thiên, which are the heart, spleen, lungs, kidney and liver. In each organ, the Ngũ Nguơn Hữu Danh also change into Ngũ Nguơn Hữu Chất. Ngũ Nguơn Hữu Chất enter the Ngũ Hành Hậu Thiên to create Ngũ Thức or Ngũ Thần, which are Thức Thần in the heart (fire), Vọng Ý in the spleen (ground), Quĩ Phách in the lungs (metal), Chí in the kidney (water) and Du Hồn in the liver (wood).²³⁸

Thất tình lục dục

Entering the Cửu Trùng Đài²³⁹, you can see the statue of the Seven-Headed Serpent and the dragon that spits six sparks. The former represents the seven human feelings and the latter six desires.

The seven feelings are joy, anger, love, hatred, sorrow, satisfaction and desire.

The six desires associated with the six sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind) are the desires for beauty, melodious sounds, fragrance, good taste, smooth touch, and good thoughts.

In the internal organs, there is an invisible system including:

- The six desires (the Hậu Thiên Yin Khí of the organs)
- The seven feelings (the Hậu Thiên Yang Khí of the organs)
- Ngũ Thần or Khí Tiên Thiên directly related to the Chơn Thần.

The Chơn Thần is the director of this system and all actions of the seven feelings, the six desires and the Ngũ Thần or Ngũ Thức.

Each organ connects a Thần, a feeling and a desire as described in the following chart.

²³⁶ God the Mother, Mother Goddess.

²³⁷ Ngũ hành Tiên Thiên create ngũ khí, that is yellow, azure, white, red, black.

²³⁸ Ngũ Khí Tiên Thiên, which includes metal, wood, water, fire and earth, creates Ngũ Hành Hậu Thiên : Black Khí creates water. Red khí creates fire. Azure khí creates wood. White khí creates metal. Yellow khí creates earth.

²³⁹ the Nine-Level Tower.

The relationship between the five human internal organs and other invisible factors

<i>Five elements</i>	<i>Five internal organs</i>	<i>Five Thần</i>	<i>Seven emotions</i>	<i>Six desires</i>
Fire (red)	Heart (tongue)	Perception	Joy and satisfaction	Desire for good taste
Earth (yellow)	Spleen (mouth)	Thinking	Love and hatred (worry)	Desires for smooth touch and good thoughts
Metal (white)	Lungs (nose)	Peri spirit	Sorrow	Desire for good smell
Water (black)	Kidney (ears)	Will	Desire (fear)	Desires for good sounds
Wood (azure)	Liver (face)	Soul	Anger	Desire for beauty

How to communicate with the world

Those invisible factors communicate with the world through five doors or the forms of Ngũ Hành: the eyes are the doors of the liver, the tongue is the door of the heart, the mouth is the door of the spleen, the nose is the door of the lungs and the ears are the doors of the kidney.²⁴⁰ Through these doors, the Khí Hậu Thiên of the seven feelings and six desires become active and excite the Khí Tiên Thiên Ngũ Thần. The Chơn Thần, however, can decide to either control or ignore those activities.

How seven feelings and six desires become active?

They become active when the internal organs are exposed to the surroundings through the “doors” or when the person's thoughts trigger those emotions.

Take a box of matches, the box is like the body with five “doors” of the internal organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, and thinking) and the matches are like everything around (colors, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, and thoughts). Striking a match, you light a fire. It is like you feel good when you listen to your favorite music then you have a desire for more.

Although you are not exposed to the surroundings, you can always think of everything, which triggers your emotions and desires. In addition, a lack of nutrition also causes the Hypothalamus to give signals that your body needs it. For example, if your body needs water or food, you feel hungry or thirsty though you do not see water or food. Hence, emotions and desires are instinct

²⁴⁰ Those five doors are proven by the diagnosis of Chinese medicine. The red tip of a tongue signals heart disease. An old man with loss of hearing signals his kidney problems. Cold wind causes sneezing and runny nose. A person with a liver problem can have eye problems. A problem with the spleen is shown by mouth sores.

and they (also called Khí Hậu Thiên) are very necessary for feeding and exciting your physical body. Desires are the signals of physical life, but too much desire will seriously contaminate your mind. That is why Caodaist teachings advise believers to control their six desires.

3. The physical body and the six desires

First, you should notice the six desires pollute the physical body and prevent your souls from ascending after death.

The six desires and the seven emotions become active when your body is exposed to the surroundings. They activate the system of Tâm, Tánh and Xác phàm. Your thoughts from the Tâm are transferred to the Tánh or Chơn Thần, which gives orders for the physical body to carry out.

Thoughts (Tâm, Chơn Linh) → actions (Tánh, Chơn Thần) → agent (Xác phàm).

During the process, if the Tánh or the boss lets the emotions and desires go to the extremes, the physical body can be polluted, the individual can break the Tân Luật²⁴¹ and the Chơn Thần becomes impure.

The six desires support the physical body

To clarify this point, the desires for good tastes and the five senses of taste²⁴² can be a good example.

Sometimes you crave something. That creates a desire for some taste, which signals a lack of some substance in your body. For example, you crave sweet food and feel exhausted after thinking hard or worrying so much. A sweet cake will help recover yourself. The sweet cake increases the Khí Hậu Thiên to support the Khí Tiên Thiên or Ý.²⁴³

Another example is you crave salty food because of a low level of salt in your blood. You may have walked or played the sport in the blazing hot sun. That signals a lack of salt and salty lemon juice will help. Why does Caodaism advise its believers to control their six desires despite their importance?

The impure khí from the six desires

²⁴¹ the New Law or Caodaist Law.

²⁴² bitter, sweet, spicy, salty and sour flavors.

²⁴³ Thoughts.

When the six desires become active, they trigger the Ngũ Thần and the three forms of each individual: the Tâm (soul), the Tánh (peri spirit) and the physical body. The Tâm creates thoughts, which affect Tánh. Tánh regulates desires according to ethics.

Take the box of matches mentioned above, it can give moderate light and fire to help, but it can also destroy everything if going to the extremes. The latter represents the impure Khí from the six desires.

The signals of impurity

A person with a strong desire for sexual intercourse looks very pale, for sweet and fatty food becomes grossly fat and for the bitter taste in coffee or tea has a heart problem, etc.

The invisible impurity in khí

Those who like partying can show their impurity through the color of their aura.²⁴⁴ Wicked people, meat-eaters and drunkards will be seen with a dark purple aura.

The impurity according to religion

All extreme desires make people commit a crime. The Chơn Thần is responsible for those impurities, so Chơn Thần has to reincarnate for compensations.

Caodaism advise believers to always control their desires. A strong desire for beauty can lead to fornication, for melodious sounds can lead to impolite words, for good smells can lead to sexual desire and fornication, for good senses of taste can lead to killing animals for food, for smooth touch can lead to sexual desire and fornication and for good opinions can lead to evil plots.

4. Chơn Thần and the seven emotions

Chơn Thần²⁴⁵, which is created by Phật Mẫu²⁴⁶, is half Yang and half Yin, so it can be either pure or impure. Listening to the Chơn Linh's advice and controlling the emotions and desires, Chơn Thần becomes pure, or, conversely, it becomes impure.

²⁴⁴ A person with the divine eye or a kirlian camera can see those colors.

²⁴⁵ Peri spirit.

²⁴⁶ The Mother Goddess.

The seven emotions include love, hatred, joy, anger, sorrow, satisfaction and desire. Each of them goes with corresponding internal organs. Joy goes with the heart, love, and hatred with the spleen, anger with the liver, sorrow with the lungs and desire with the kidney.

The similarities between the seven feelings and the six desires are they naturally hide in the internal organs, influence the Ngũ Thần and activate the Tâm and Tánh.

Oppositely, their differences are the desires tend to support the physical body. If abused, they become impure and leave polluting marks, which prevent Chơn Thần from ascending to heaven. Unlike the desires, the emotions go with the Tiên Thiên Ngũ Thần²⁴⁷, pollute the Chơn Thần and leave the impure marks in Thần.

The moderate emotions become good agents for the development of the internal organs while the extreme ones become contaminated agents for the Chơn Thần. Those extremes are advised to be controlled carefully.

Moderate emotions

Inactive emotions hiding in internal organs are called Trung²⁴⁸. Active and moderate emotions are called Hoà²⁴⁹. Trung Hoà is the ideal state of a human and the universe. “*Đạo of the universe is nothing but the term Trung Hoà.*”²⁵⁰ Moderate emotions are good, for instance, a piece of good news can excite and cheer you up.

Extreme emotions

Chơn Thần, the boss of emotions, is responsible for any crime you have committed. When emotions go to the extremes, they become evils that obscure the Tâm and the signs can be displayed as follows:

In anger, you feel a blush rise on your face and your limbs shake. Anger is one of the three toxins²⁵¹ and the ten evils²⁵². Too much anger makes you silly and prevents your religious practice. “*A moment of anger burns and melts your Kim Đon.*”²⁵³ That is why God always advises you to manage your anger.

Too much sorrow shrinks and lowers the Khí of the lungs. Your face becomes too pale, your hands are too cold, you can hardly breathe.

²⁴⁷ Thúc Thần in the heart, Ý in the spleen, Phách in the lungs, Chí in the kidney, Hồn in the liver.

²⁴⁸ Average.

²⁴⁹ Harmony.

²⁵⁰ The Collection of Divine Messages. P 152.

²⁵¹ Greed, anger, stupidity.

²⁵² Killing, stealing and robbing, engaging in improper sexual conduct, lying, saying dirty words, encouraging hostility, speaking ill of someone, being greedy, being angry and being stupid.

²⁵³ Kim - golden, precious. Đon - pill, medicine. The religious achievement attained by a Taoist is considered a precious pill. The Collection of Divine Messages. P36.

Too much joy disperses the Khí of the heart. You become so crazy that you dance and talk nonsense.

Being too worried or loving someone too much, you feel too bored to do anything because the Khí of the spleen is damaged.

Fear damages the Khí of the kidney. In the long term, you are more likely to have mental diseases.

In short, extreme emotions can obscure the Thần, so you will follow the animal instincts of the body. They will become the evils who lead you in the wrong way. Consequently, you can cause bad karma and have to reincarnate for compensation for good. Caodaist advice is a believer should “*Tu Tâm luyện Tánh.*”²⁵⁴ or to manage those emotions and desires to prevent the extreme ones from damaging his Thần.

5. Tâm Tánh

Tâm

Tâm (also called the Nguơn Thần, Chơn Linh or Tiểu Linh Quang) comes from God or Đại Linh Quang. Tâm is responsible for teaching Tánh, which is the Chơn Thần created by God the Mother. Thanks to the Chơn Thần, a human can reincarnate in the world.

Tánh

According to His Holiness Hộ Pháp, *Tánh is our second component. The first component is Tâm or Chơn Linh and the third one is our physical animal-like body.*²⁵⁵ Therefore, those three components influence and support one another. Caodaism always advises its believers to let their Tâm teach their Tánh. Finally, they can attain enlightenment.

How the system works

How do the Tâm and Tánh work? Let us have a look at how the desires and emotions act and whether or not a person practices religion.

Desires and emotions become active in two stages:

- The beginning stage: when the outlets of the five internal organs are open, so the things around are realized by consciousness leading to emotions and desires.

- The action stage: then the person begins to have an idea and act accordingly.

²⁵⁴ “Improve the Tâm and train the Tánh.”

²⁵⁵ Sermon of His Holiness Hộ Pháp.

A man, John Doe, for example, sees a woman. Thanks to his eyes, he knows the woman is pretty (or ugly). After that, he wants (or does not want) to have sex with her.

Reactions

If the man is a good religious practitioner

He can distinguish between right and wrong, so his Tâm can control his Tánh. He still keeps calm. As a result, his Tánh follows his Tâm or God's will and he will not behave badly.

If the man is a bad religious practitioner

His Tâm lets his Tánh follow the worldly desires, that is trying to have sexual intercourse with the woman. If the woman does not agree, he tries to behave badly, even commit a crime. This is when evil overcomes conscience, ruining the merits the religious practitioner has made for years. The man is tricked into committing a crime by Satan.

To remind all Caodaists, there is the statue of His Holiness Hộ Pháp controlling the seven-headed serpent in Hiệp Thiên Đài and divine messages showing that one must practice Caodaism to the highest level. Without perfect practice, practitioners get nowhere!

6. Advice on how to improving Tâm and training Tánh

Kinh Khai Cửu²⁵⁶ vividly expresses the principle tu Tâm dưỡng Tánh (improve your soul and train your peri spirit) by describing a person as a ship traveling on a sea of suffering. To arrive at the harbor Thiên (heaven), you have to cut off your emotions and close your desires. The emotions and desires are like the wind, which can become a storm and sink the ship. For example, extreme anger makes you get such bad karmas that you have to reincarnate for compensation. Divine beings always advise Caodaist believers not to let that wind become a storm.

Divine beings' advice

Đức Phật Mẫu (the Divine Mother) says, “*Children, whether you are dignitaries of Hiệp Thiên²⁵⁷ or Cửu Trùng²⁵⁸, you should try to uphold your Tâm for your merits.*”

²⁵⁶ The Commencement Prayers for a Caodaist funeral.

²⁵⁷ The Caodaist Judiciary Body.

*Gắng sức trau dồi một chữ Tâm.
Đạo đời muôn việc khỏi sai lầm.
Tâm thành ắt đoạt đường tu vững,
Tâm chánh mới mong mỗi Đạo tâm.
Try to improve your Tâm
So that you will not make any mistakes.
Successfully cultivating your Tâm,
You can successfully get enlightenment.*

Advice from Caodaist doctrine

Human emotions and desires that instinctively exist in the five internal organs cannot be eradicated if you are alive. Consequently, Caodaist practitioners should take advice from Caodaist doctrine to convert them into noble emotions. For example, you should become angry because you do not have more merits or you can keep the five precepts. The evil six desires will become the lục thông²⁵⁹ if successfully managed. There are two ways to manage them:

- Understand how they work then force them to follow God's will.
- Lead them into serving people by creating more merits.

How to manage emotions and desires

You should prevent them from going to the extremes by three following techniques:

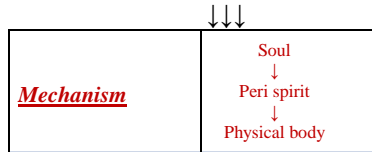
- Chanting prayers. The Khí from the sounds calms the Khí Tiên Thiên down. As a result, desires and emotions become mild winds blowing over the water surface.
- Meditating. The practitioner sits still and breathes moderately. In Caodaism practitioners have to enter Tịnh Thất (meditation house) for an elaborate practice.
- Practicing vegetarianism. This calms the body down and reduces desires.

²⁵⁸ The Caodaist Administrative Body.

²⁵⁹ (ṣaḍ abhijñāḥ) - six supernatural powers attained by the Buddha.

Extreme emotions and desires pollute Tâm and Tánh

Organs	Heart	Spleen	Lungs	Kidneys	Liver
Outlets <i>Six causes</i> ↓	Tongue	Mouth, body	Nose	Ears	Eyes
Six stimuli ↓	Taste	Touch, thought	Smell	Sound	Color
Six knowledge ↓	Tasting	Thinking, touching	Smelling	Hearing	Sight
Six desires ↓	Desire for good taste	Desire for smooth touch and good idea	Desire for good smell	Desire for melodious sound	Desire for beautiful colors
Seven emotions ↓	Joy and satisfaction	Love, hatred	Sorrow	Fear	Angry



↓↓↓

	Seven emotions	Six desires
Physical contamination	Invisible signals in Thần	Specific signals in body
Invisible contamination	Khí Tiên Thiên Ngũ Thần is disturbed	Khí Hậu Thiên is disturbed
Religious contamination	Not allowed to enter heaven because of polluted Chơn Thần	Not allowed to come to God because of polluted body

The significance of earthly life for Caodaists

Earthly life	Technique for practicing Caodaism	Result
Practicing Nhơn Đạo and Thiên Đạo for the privilege of the Great Amnesty.	Practicing Tam lập to attain enlightenment on earth.	Attaining high statuses in heaven
Practicing vegetarianism for a pure Chơn Thần managing emotions and desires	Purifying Chơn Thần for the privilege of crossing the Cửu Trùng Thiên	Ngũ Thần concentrates at Chơn Thần; Pure Chơn Thần help Chơn Linh climb through all levels in heaven

Chapter 9

Death

According to Caodaism, only the material corps die while the Chơn Thần (peri spirits) either reincarnates or helps the Chơn Linh (souls) return to its origin to unite with Đại Linh Quang (God).

Those who really die are the ones committing a serious crime. They become the ghosts who will be destroyed.

1. The death of the physical body

According to Caodaist divine messages, the physical body is dead because it belongs to the material world, which changes according to God's law. His Holiness Cao Thượng Phẩm says, "When the body dies, its Yin Yang electricity, together with the Chơn Thần, is emitted. If the body is pure enough, the Yang Khí and the Chơn Thần return to heaven from the Nê Hườn Cung.²⁶⁰ For an impure body, the Yin Khí and the Chơn Thần descend from the toe tips to become materials ready for more incarnations."²⁶¹

In the earthly world

After the body is dead, Caodaist funerary rituals including performing sacraments and chanting prayers are conducted.

Funerary sacraments

In the period of grand amnesty, taking orders from God, His Holiness Hộ Pháp shows the assigned Caodaist dignitaries seven sacraments²⁶² to save people both physically and spiritually. Those believers who have taken the oath ritual and practiced vegetarianism at least 10 days a month receive the sacraments such as Phép Độ Hồn, Phép Tận Độ, Kinh Cứu, Tiểu Tường và Đại Tường.²⁶³

For example, in the ritual of Phép Độ Hồn, the dignitary, first, performs the Sacrament of Phép Xác (purification) after the prayer Cầu Siêu and Khi Đã Chết Rồi are chanted. Second, he performs the sacrament of Đoạn Căn (cutting off 7 bad ties). This releases the Chơn Thần and Chơn Linh from the physical

²⁶⁰ A mysterious place between the top of the skull and the brain.

²⁶¹ Luật Tam Thế, Page 20.

²⁶² Phép Tâm Thánh, Phép Giải Oan, Phép Hôn Phối, Phép Giải bệnh, Phép Xác, Phép Đoạn Căn, Phép Độ Thăng.

²⁶³ The sacrament of transporting the soul, the sacrament of complete transport, the posthumous prayers, the lesser celebration and the larger celebration.

body to ascend to heaven.²⁶⁴ Finally, he performs the sacrament of *Độ Thăng* (help ascend) to send the soul to heaven.²⁶⁵

Chanting prayers

To help souls ascend to heaven, Caodaist believers should chant:

*Kinh Tận Độ Vong Linh*²⁶⁶ to free the dead quickly from suffering.

Kinh Cầu Hồn Khi Hấp Hối (requiem for dying people) to tell the dead decisively leave the earthly world and avoid going to hell.²⁶⁷

Kinh Cầu Siêu (request for amnesty) to beg the divine beings to save the dead.

Kinh Khi Đã Chết Rồi (after death) for the death to leave the earthly world.

Kinh Đưa Linh Cữu (carrying the coffin to a cemetery) to beg the local genii to help to separate the soul from the corpse.

Kinh Hạ Huyệt (lowering the coffin down the grave).

Kinh Tuần Cửu (funerary prayers) to help the dead cross nine heavens and *Kinh Tiểu Tường* and *Đại Tường* to help the dead enter the realm of Buddha.

In heaven

In the *Vườn Ngạn Uyển* (divine garden) in the first heaven, a withered flower represents death on earth. This garden is owned by *Đức Phật Mẫu* (Divine Mother). There are twelve kinds of flowers. Each flower represents life on earth. It blooms as a person is born and withers as he dies.

*Vườn Ngạn Uyển sanh hoa đã héo
Khối hình hài đã chịu rã tan*²⁶⁸.

A flower has withered in the *Vườn Ngạn Uyển*,
That is a person died on earth.

Where the corpse goes?

After death, the corpse, which is composed of earthly materials, decomposes according to God's law. It will then turn to earth and become the elements of another body.

*Nhục thể thổ sanh hoàn tại thổ*²⁶⁹.

*The body made of earth then will return to earth.
(The couplets on the Prajna Boat)*

*Khối vật chất vô hồn viết từ,
Đất biến hình tự thử qui căn.*

*Without a soul, the material mass is called a corpse
It is made of earth, so it will return to earth.
(Kinh Tản Liệm)*

²⁶⁴ Without this sacrament, the *Chon Thần* and *Chon Linh* cannot ascend until the corpse is completely decomposes.

²⁶⁵ *Bảo Đạo Hồ Tấn Khoa* said the Sacrament of *Độ Thăng* helps the dignitaries' souls enter the *Bát Quái Đài* more easily.

²⁶⁶ For those who practice vegetarianism at least 10 days a month.

²⁶⁷ *Hiền Tài Nguyễn Long Thành* said the Eighth Female Buddha uses the term *Côi Âm Quang* (Yin Light) instead of the conventional term *Địa Ngục*, *Diêm Đỉnh*, *Phong Đô*, *Địa Phủ*, *Ám Ty*, *Thập Điện Diêm Vương*, etc.

²⁶⁸ *Kinh Độ Nhứt Cửu*

²⁶⁹ Câu đối trên thuyền *Bát Nhã* do Ngài *Bảo Pháp Nguyễn Trung Hậu* sáng tác và được *Đức Lý Giáo Tông* giảng cơ chính văn: *Vạn sự viết vô, nhục thể thổ sanh hoàn tại thổ.*

*Hồn Trời hóa trở về Thiên cảnh,
Xác đất sanh đến linh phục hồi²⁷⁰.
The soul will return to heaven
The corpse will return to earth
(Kinh Tản Liệm)*

In short, Caodaism defines death by the separation of the Chơn Thần (peri spirit) and the Chơn Linh (soul) from the physical body. Chơn Thần and Chơn Linh will either reincarnate on earth or go to heaven.

2. The real dead

The earthly world is considered an environment of a challenge to souls. It is arranged by God for souls to evolve to higher levels. Evils also have miracles to tempt souls into committing a crime and become the real dead. There are two kinds of them.

Those who lose the Chơn dương²⁷¹

The wicked will lose the Chơn Dương. They then have only a false body of thuần âm²⁷² and will become the real deal. They are like the spoiled seeds, so they never develop into a plant. They will become ghosts who wait for destruction. They cannot reincarnate.

In the period of grand amnesty, the incomplete religious practitioner who has committed crime is allowed to enter the Âm Quang²⁷³, where they can practice religion. If truly repenting, they are allowed to reincarnate to pay off the bad karma. In the Âm Quang, the Buddhas and Immortals come to comfort and teach the sinners. Đức Địa Tạng Vương Bồ Tát²⁷⁴ is in charge of the male sinners and Thất Nương Diêu Trì Cung²⁷⁵ the female sinners.

Punishment

Those who seriously break the divine law and who do not keep the entry oath²⁷⁶ will be severely punished. The punishments include Thiên Tru Địa Lục and Đọa Tam Đồ Bất Năng Thoát Tục.

Thiên tru Địa lục²⁷⁷

Those who commit a serious crime will get killed. It is the same as the Ngũ Lô Tru Diệt (killed by lightning). Sinners' Chơn Thần is struck by

²⁷⁰ Kinh Tản Liệm

²⁷¹ Chơn - real. Dương - Yang.

²⁷² thuần - complete. Âm - Yin.

²⁷³ Âm Quang - Yin Light, the Dark. The new name for hell.

²⁷⁴ Ksitigarbha.

²⁷⁵ The Seventh Female Buddha.

²⁷⁶ The ritual for Caodaist beginners, including an oath.

²⁷⁷ Thiên - heaven. Địa - earth. Tru = lục - kill.

lightning and turn to the primeval substances obtained by Diêu Trì Cung. Their Chơn Linh has to wander until another grand amnesty when the Divine Mother grants them a new Chơn Thần for another reincarnation.

3. Ascending and descending

After a divine judgment, the Chơn Thần and Chơn Linh can either descend or ascend.

The enlightened people will ascend

Those who get enlightened on earth can ascend to heaven or eternal life. His Holiness Hộ Pháp said, “*Those who follow Caodaist teachings and practice vegetarianism at least 10 days a month can be taught the Caodaist esoteric practice and their Chơn Thần ascend.*” And “*Those who get enlightened can return to the former divine statuses only after a reincarnation.*”

Descending

The two main reasons for descending are:

- Because of failing to get enlightened, a soul has to reincarnate on earth to pay off the karmic debts or to evolve.
- Losing the Vạn Cửu Nang.

Reincarnation

Since the Chơn Thần is related to the physical body, only Chơn Thần has to reincarnate. Reincarnation is the opportunity for Chơn Thần to practice religion and evolve to a higher level of intelligence and morality until it reaches the perfect point, uniting with God.

Losing the Vạn Cửu Nang²⁷⁸

Since earliest humans were stupid, cruel and barbarous, Đức Phật Mẫu (the Divine Mother) was ordered by God to send 10.000.000 original souls to the earth for incarnation. Their duty was to teach the evolving souls and to perfect themselves for higher divine statuses. The original souls were noble, intelligent and moral at first. Most of them, however, were gradually contaminated by earthly temptations. They forgot what their duty was and committed lots of crimes, so they were punished with reincarnation again and again. Most of them were tempted by Quỷ Vương (Satan) into losing the Vạn Cửu Nang granted by Đức Phật Mẫu when they had left heaven. For love, God holds amnesties to lead them back.

*Linh căn ngày đó xuống trần ai,
Cái cái vui mừng nhập mẫu thai.
Vì mất bửu nang, mê nghiệp hải,*

²⁷⁸ According to Khai Pháp Trần Duy Nghĩa, when souls incarnate, Đức Diêu Trì Kim Mẫu gives them a bag called Vạn Cửu Nang and says they cannot return to Her if losing a thing inside.

*Làm sao tình đặng trở hồi lai.
The original souls ascended to the earth
They were so happy to be born as humans.
Then they lost the precious bags and love the earthly joys
They don't know how to wake up and return*

Conclusion for Page three.

In the earthly world, birth and death are the law. You only temporarily live with a false body, that is the physical body. Thanks to that false body, your Chơn Thần, and Chơn Linh practice religion, learn and evolve.

After death, the physical body decomposes while the Chơn Thần and Chơn Linh return to God in heaven. So, death is the transformation from materials to invisible forms through three phases:

- Phase one. Your Chơn Thần and Chơn Linh go to the earthly world from heaven or from Khí Tiên Thiên to Khí Hậu Thiên.
- Phase two. Your Chơn Thần, Chơn Linh and physical body live together in the world, trying to find the way back to heaven.
- Phase three. Your Chơn Thần and Chơn Linh return to heaven or pure Khí Tiên Thiên from the polluted Khí Hậu Thiên. That is why self-purification is a must for religious practitioners on earth.

Page four

How to liberate yourself?

where to go after death?
What will be?

It is usually claimed:

*Lai như lưu thủy hê, thế như phong;
Bất tri hà xứ lai hê, hà sở chung.*

Born to be a stream flowing so fast
Where to come or where to go is unknown

Then asked

Where to go after death? God answers your soul will come to Tòa Phán Xét²⁷⁹ in Trung Giới to know whether you ascend or descend. (Chapter 10).

What will be? What is the final purpose for humans? If ascending, your three treasures will unite while crossing Cửu Trùng Thiên (chapter 11) and travel back to your origin, that is God. (chapter 12).

²⁷⁹ The Court of Judgement.

To the Trung Giới

Comment [2]:
Begin here

When the physical body becomes useless, the Chơn Linh and Chơn Thần leave for the Trung Giới²⁸⁰ to the Tòa Phán Xét²⁸¹, where: «The absolutely perfect divine beings in Ngọc Hư Cung report all your good and bad deeds to Tòa Phán Xét ».

1. Some explanations for the invisible realm

Before following the Chơn Hồn to the invisible realm, it is necessary to explain something according to the Divine Messages and the Caodaist Prayers such as the view of heaven, the body of a religious practitioner, the speed of the Chơn Thần and the realms which are not visited.

The view of heaven

His Holiness Cao Thượng Phẩm explained that the invisible realm is only khí điện quang.²⁸² The palaces and temples are in the forms of light and halos.

*Hào quang chiếu chín tầng mây bạc,
Tây Phương cõi Phật chói lòa.
Hào quang chiếu diệu Cao Đài
Halos shine the nine silver clouds
The West of Buddha is so bright
The halos shine Cao Đài*

In a seance on the first day of the first lunar month, the Year of Tiger (1926), Bạch Ngọc Kinh, where God dwells, is described as an eternally changing aura.

*Chư thần chói mắt màu thường đổi,
Liệt thánh kinh tâm phép vẫn cao,
All the genies are dazzled by the constantly changing colors.
All of the Saints are scared by the miracles.*

Forms in heaven

Heaven is invisible. Humans, as well as divine beings, have two forms: the Chơn Thần and Chơn Linh, both of which are called Chơn Hồn (souls). They all are light or electricity.

Languages are thoughts

There are no sounds in heaven, so souls communicate by thoughts. That is why Caodaists chant prayers. The miraculous vibrations of the sounds and the thoughts of the practitioners can convey their wishes to divine beings in heaven.

²⁸⁰ The realm between the earthly world and heaven.

²⁸¹ The divine court.

²⁸² Khí - gas. Điện - electricity. Quang - light.

His Holiness Hộ Pháp said, “There are countless souls in heaven. The language used there is thinking to convey ideas to each other. What you think is what you get.”

The speed of Chơn Thần

Chơn Thần travels as fast as light.

*Nặng lại nặng như kinh kinh,
Mau như điện chiếu, nhẹ thành bóng mây.
Easily traveling around
As fast as electricity and as light as a cloud*

2. To the Tòa Phán Xét²⁸³

Thanks to the funerary sacraments like Phép Xác, Phép Giải Oan and Phép Đoạn Căn, the Chơn Thần leaves the physical body and together with the Chơn Linh travel to the Trung Giới, waiting to go to Tòa Phán Xét. After the judgment, they will either ascend or descend.

Descending: rebirth

Committing crime or having bad karma, the Chơn Thần has to reincarnate on earth. The Caodaists who break Caodaist law will go to Âm Quang to practice Caodaism again.

Ascending

In the Third Salvation, God allows:

- Caodaist practitioners who have got enlightened on earth in only one life to return to the realm of Buddha in Hư Vô Thiên.
- Caodaist practitioners who have fulfilled their religious responsibilities²⁸⁴ to return to God.

3. Two ways of ascending

Chơn Thần will ascend after nine days in trường đình²⁸⁵. The divine status attained will decide how the Chơn Thần ascend. Chơn Thần can go straight to the assigned level or climb those levels one by one.

Going straight to the status attained

²⁸³ The Divine Tribunal.

²⁸⁴ Practicing vegetarianism at least 10 days a month, keeping the entry oath and have enough merits.

²⁸⁵ Trường đình - the rest stop. Caodaists consider the funeral house a place where you say good bye to the dead.

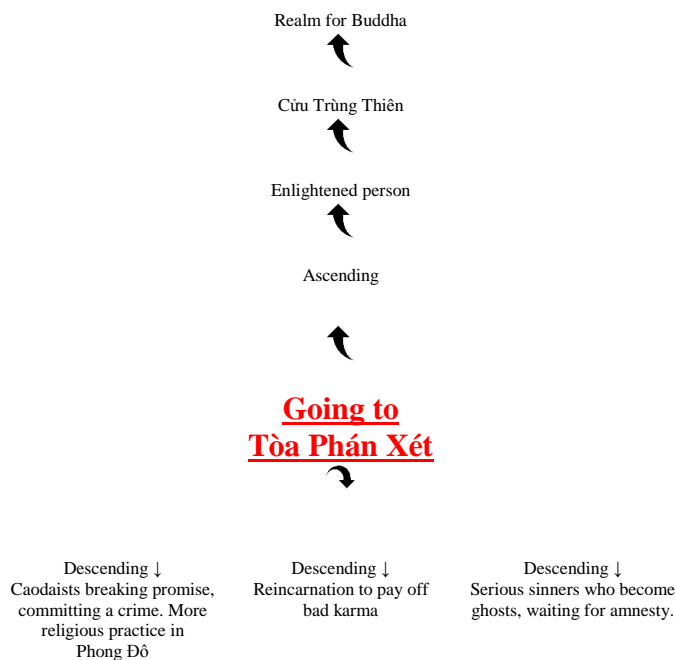
Having practiced Caodaism and fulfilled the human responsibilities, a Caodaist can attain status on earth. Each earthly status is equivalent to divine status in one of the nine heavens. Therefore, his Chơn Thần will go straight to the corresponding heaven. For example, a Caodaist dignitary at the level of Immortal will go to heaven for Immortals, which is the Hư Vô Thiên. In addition, the rituals of Tuần Cửu and the sacrament Phép Độ Thăng are not performed.

In the assigned level, the Chơn Thần keep on practicing Caodaism with the help of the Female Buddhas in order to climb to higher levels. Without any progress, one must reincarnate on earth.

Climbing the levels one by one

If keeping the entry oath and practicing vegetarianism at least 10 days a month, you will be taught how to practice religion according to the level you have reached.

The decision of Tòa Phán Xét



Chapter 11

Ascending the Cử Trùng Thiên²⁸⁶

After reaching the Trung Giới, souls enter the Thượng Giới and ascending the Cử Trùng Thiên to combine the Tam Bửu²⁸⁷. On the way, souls need the following helps to get the superpower to ascend the levels:

The help from esotericism.

Kinh Tuân Cử, Tiểu Tường, and Đại Tường²⁸⁸ is the Caodaist esotericism to help souls ascend the levels. In this Third Salvation, God has closed Hell and cleared the way of Cử Thiên Khai Hoá²⁸⁹. His Holiness Lý Giáo Tông said, “*Esoterically, heavenly beings will convert ... you can convert successfully.*”

Chanting Kinh Tuân Cử

The Caodaist dignitaries will show believers how to chant the Kinh Tuân Cử, which changes the Tâm so that it can ascend those levels, combining the three treasures and avoiding reincarnation.

The help from divine beings.

On those levels, Cử Vị Tiên Nương Diêu Trì Cung²⁹⁰ and other divine beings give sermons and guide souls through the heavenly levels.

*Ngó Cực Lạc theo hườn Xá Lợi,
Cử Trùng Thiên mở lối qui nguyên.
Look at the direction of Nirvana and Buddha,
Cử Trùng Thiên is now clear for you to return.*

Those divine beings will help the Tam Bửu blend in with the energy of the levels according to the rule “*đồng thanh tương ứng, đồng khí tương cầu*”²⁹¹. As a result, all types of souls can get enlightenment in only one life to return to God.

The reason why souls need help is that the nine heavenly levels and the Chơn Thần are gaseous. The higher the level, the lighter the gas with more

²⁸⁶ The Nine-Level Heaven.

²⁸⁷ The three treasures: body, mind and soul.

²⁸⁸ The Prayers of the Caodaist Postmortem Rituals.

²⁸⁹ Cử Thiên - nine heavens; Khai Hoá - educating.

²⁹⁰ The Nine Female Buddhas.

²⁹¹ Similar things can go together.

Yang light. The Chơn Thần is still a bit impure, so it needs helps from Kinh Tuân Cửu and the divine beings.

To understand the process of combination of the Tam Bửu on the way, you need to understand the Kinh Tuân Cửu, which depicts the transformation of souls from Genii, Saints to Immortals in this way.

1. The technique of perception

It is extremely difficult to depict the way to the invisible world because of no specific documents that elaborate on it. There is only the information in Kinh Tuân Cửu, Tiểu Trường, Đại trường and some Divine Messages. For understandable explanations, it is described in earthly languages to be chanted by believers. The literal meanings of a language can only give images resembling the earthly scenery, not the nature of heaven, that is Đạo.

From those pieces of information, I depict and explain the divine path by a technique of perception, from which the practice of combining the three treasures during the process of ascending the Cửu Trùng Thiên.

The origin and the meanings of the prayers

The prayers are all granted by the divine beings from those heavenly levels, not by any human beings. For instance, the Seventh Prayer is granted by the Seventh Female Buddha, who is in charge of leading the souls from the Kim Thiên²⁹² to the Hạo Nhiên Thiên²⁹³.

The prayers are chanted to help a soul ascend the nine heavens to return to God.

Understanding the languages in the prayers.

The Kinh Tuân Cửu, Tiểu Trường, Đại Trường each depicts the temples, houses, and palaces in each level. The divine beings use earthly languages to convey their ideas so that believers can gradually be enlightened the divine language or Đạo. However, how can an ordinary person, without divine thinking and eyes, visualize the divine scenery by reading the prayers?

How His Holiness Hộ Pháp answer.

To witness the scenery in heaven, humans should attain the divine eyes by doing esoteric practice or are granted the privilege to do so by God like His Holiness Hộ Pháp. His Holiness Hộ Pháp said, “*What heaven is like is equivalent to what Tâm is. No one knows what it is like. If you get enlightened, leave your physical body and meet the divine beings, you will see it is unlike what you expected.*”

²⁹² Kim - metal, gold. Thiên - Heaven. (The sixth heaven).

²⁹³ The Immense Heaven or Seventh Heaven.

Reading the sermons by His Holiness Hộ Pháp, you can then understand the scenery in heaven, which is described in the Kinh Tuần Cứu as the magical halos, depending on how much enlightened a soul gets. The soul now is also a beam of light that blends in with the halos in that heaven. For example, in Cứu Trùng Thiên there are three forms of souls: genii, saints and immortals. Souls entering the eighth heaven called Phi Tướng Thiên will see the Cung Tận Thức, Cung Diệt Bửu, etc. This is what His Holiness Hộ Pháp saw and told believers in His sermons. “*Having entered the Tòa Tam Giáo Bát Quái Đài, you can see a bright halo. It then disappears and you see The Scale of Justice that also disappears after that. You can see yourself and your whole past life.*”

His Holiness Hộ Pháp depicts Ngọc Hư Cung, “*What a beautiful world it is! There are lots of bright halos whose colors magically changes swiftly. Your Chơn Thần has to change to those colors in order to join Ngọc Hư Cung. Otherwise, you are expelled immediately. Thought, not speech, is the only method of communication there.*”

His Holiness Hộ Pháp depicts Bạch Ngọc Kinh, “*The brilliant colors always change and it is covered by a thoại khí²⁹⁴. It operates like a living animal, changing its colors. I don’t know how to describe it!*”

The similar terms are used to describe it in Caodaist Prayers.

*Kinh Bạch Ngọc muôn lần điện chiếu
Kinh Bạch Ngọc is brightly shone by electricity*

*Năng lại năng như kinh kinh,
Mau như điện chiếu, nhẹ nhàng bóng mây.
The soul travels around so easily
As fast as lightning and as light as a cloud*

Perception through the metaphors

First, it is necessary to define some terminology.

Cung: a large building. For example, Cung Tuyệt Khổ - sorrow eliminating building

Đài: a high building. For example, Đài Nghiệt Cảnh - bad karma tower.

According to Mr. Hà Ngọc Duyên²⁹⁵, Cung is the metaphor for the inner Tâm. For instance, Cung Lập Khuyết means looking at yourself to see the imperfections. Cung Ngọc Diệt Hình means looking at yourself to eradicate materialistic things. Điện and Đài are the metaphors for the outer Tâm. Đài Nghiệt Cảnh and Đài Chiếu Giám reflect your good and bad karma. Đài Huệ Hương purifies your Chơn Thần. Linh Tiêu Điện means Tâm has an easy life.

²⁹⁴ Thoại - excellent. Khí - gas.

²⁹⁵ Bản tin Đại Đạo, số:15/79, Maryland, Tr.76-96

According to Bát Nương²⁹⁶, those halos in Heaven represents the vô hình sắc tướng²⁹⁷ versus the vô hình vô tướng²⁹⁸ of the Dương Quang²⁹⁹ or God. “*The Hu Vô*³⁰⁰ is invisible compared to the material world, but visible compared to the formless Dương Quang.”³⁰¹

The status of Tâm on each level of heaven

The heavenly levels are considered a ladder for souls to climb. The rungs are the spaces of different light waves according to the waves of Genii, Saints, Immortals or Buddhas. Your religious practice changes the light waves of your Chơn Thần, so you can climb that ladder. How fast you can climb depends on how pure your Chơn Thần is. That is why on each level Chơn Linh helped by the divine beings purifies your Chơn Thần like what is said through the metaphors.

Cửu Trùng Thiên³⁰² symbolizes the three statuses of Genii, Saints, and Immortals. It is shown by the Cửu Trùng Đài³⁰³ or Cửu Thiên Khai Hoá on the earthly world. That is displayed in the following list.

The equivalent statuses

<i>Caodaist Executive Dignitaries</i>	<i>Divine Beings</i>	<i>Nine Heavens</i>
Believers	Địa thần - Earthly Genii	First Heaven
Petty Caodaist Dignitaries	Nhơn thần - Human Genii	Second Heaven
Lễ sanh - Student	Thiên thần - Heavenly Genii	Azure Heaven
Giáo hữu - Religious Associate	Địa thánh - Earthly Saints	Yellow Heaven
Giáo sư - Teacher	Nhơn thánh - Human Saints	Red Heaven
Chánh phối sư, Phối sư - Master.	Thiên thánh - Heavenly Saints	Metallic Heaven
Đầu sư - Master Chief	Địa tiên - Earthly Immortals	Super Heaven
Chương pháp - Dharma Master	Nhơn tiên - Human Immortals	Beyond Thought Heaven
Giáo Tông - Caodai Head.	Thiên tiên - Heavenly Immortals	Creation Heaven

Thanks to those metaphors, I understand that a Chơn Thần climbing the divine ladder will no longer be tempted by the physical body into doing something wrong. Chơn Thần now listens to the soul for self-improvement and self-purification to fulfill its duty, which is transporting the Chơn Linh high up to the next levels. There is a female Buddha to guide souls on each level and divine beings to teach how to combine the Tam Bửu³⁰⁴ and avoid reincarnation.

²⁹⁶ The Eighth Female Buddha. Luật Tam Thế page 44.

²⁹⁷ vô hình - invisible. Sắc tướng - forms.

²⁹⁸ vô hình - invisible. Vô tướng - formless.

²⁹⁹ Dương - Yang. Quang - light.

³⁰⁰ Nothingness.

³⁰¹ Luật Tam Thế. Page 44.

³⁰² The Nine Heavens.

³⁰³ The Executive Body of Caodaism.

³⁰⁴ Three treasures: body, mind and soul.

2. Images of the stages in combining Tam Bửu

The above technique allows me to depict the journey a Chon Hôn takes through the levels in heaven.

From the first to the third level: as a Genie

Changed to fit the status of genie on the first three levels, you realize the physical body has died (withered flower) and you are about to go to heaven (eating divine peaches). You know that you are at the same level as Ông Hiền (meeting the Seven Sages). This stage is described by the metaphors in the prayers:

The first level

The soul goes to the Ngạn Uyển³⁰⁵, watching his “flower” become withered. That means the physical body has died and he is no more tied down by the seven karmic strings. The Nhứt Nương³⁰⁶ helps the soul calm down.

*Khá tỉnh thức tiền duyên nhớ lại,
Đoạn cho rồi oan trái buổi sanh.
Wake up, remember your previous life
And pay off the bad karmic debts*

She also tells the soul that there is no need to worry about earthly temptations like thập ác³⁰⁷ or lục trần³⁰⁸:

*Vườn Ngạn Uyển sanh hoa đã héo,
Khối hình hài đã chịu rã tan
Bảy dây oan nghiệt hết ràng³⁰⁹.
A flower in the Ngạn Uyển has withered
The body begins to decompose
You are no longer tied down by the seven evil strings*

The second level

The soul is granted divine peaches in the longevity party. The metaphor here is he is about to leave for heaven.

*Tây Vương Mẫu vườn Đào³¹⁰ ướm chín,
Chén trường sanh có linh ngự ban³¹¹.
The West Queen's peaches are almost ripe.
They and the longevity wine are granted.*

The third level or the Azure Heaven

³⁰⁵ Ngạn - the bank of the sea of sorrow. Uyển - garden. Ngạn Uyển is the garden in heaven. The First Female Buddha under the Divine Mother is in charge of it. In Ngạn Uyển there are 12 different types of flowers representing the 12 zodiac signs. A flower stands for a person. It becomes withered when that person dies and blooms when he reincarnates. It is beautiful if that person is good and ugly if he is immoral, according to the First Female Buddha.

³⁰⁶ the First Female Buddha.

³⁰⁷ The ten evils: killing, stealing, engaging in improper sexual conduct, lying, saying dirty words, encouraging hostility, speaking ill of, being greedy, being angry, being stupid.

³⁰⁸ The six earthly things: beauty, melodious sounds, sweet smell, good taste, gentle touch, good idea.

³⁰⁹ Kinh Đệ Nhứt Cửu

³¹⁰ Vườn Đào Tiên do Phật Mẫu chường quán, có 3600 cây đào, dùng trái Đào Tiên để làm phần thưởng

³¹¹ Kinh Đệ Nhị Cửu

The light on this level is azure. The soul will see The Bamboo Grove Seven Sages, who have become the Seven Immortals in the Thiên Thai Cave. On the Island of Bồng Lai, the soul's emotions and feelings will be washed off, that is the soul is now a sage ready to ascend to the level for immortals.

*Cõi Thanh Thiên lên miền Bồng đảo,
Động Thiên Thai Bảy Lão đón đường³¹².
From the Azure Heaven, you go up to the Bồng Đảo
And are received by the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove at Thiên Thai Cave.*

From the fourth to the sixth levels: as a Saint

When the soul enters the level for Saints, he sees the inner and outer worlds of Tâm via the divine palaces and the monuments.

All the divine buildings are metaphors.

Cung Lập Khuyết - seeing the imperfections.

Cung Tuyệt Khổ - cutting off the earthly sorrow.

Cung Ngọc Diệt Hình - eliminating all visible forms.

Cung Vạn Pháp - being in a meditation house to see the past bad karma.

Đài Nghiệt Cảnh or Đài Chiếu Giám - identifying your good or bad deeds in a previous life.

Đài Huệ Hương - eliminating all impurity.

The Fourth Level or the Yellow Heaven

The light on this level is yellow. Lôi Thần³¹³ will eradicate the soul's evil air and impure light with his divine rod. The soul then goes to Cung Tuyệt Khổ to meet Huyền Thiên Quân³¹⁴, that is cutting all the earthly sorrow.

The Fifth Level or the Red Heaven

The light on this level is red. The soul climbs to the Đài Chiếu Giám, whose mirror shows what he has done in his former life.

*Đài Chiếu Giám Cảnh Minh nhẹ bước,
Xem rõ ràng tội phước căn sinh³¹⁵.
Entering the Đài Chiếu Giám Cảnh Minh,
You can see your past achievements or crimes.*

Then the soul enters Cung Ngọc Diệt Hình to eradicate all the material forms. The soul reads the Vô Tự Kinh³¹⁶ to know his former incarnations and current status.

The Sixth Level or the Metallic Heaven

The soul now enters Cung Vạn Pháp, which is a meditation house containing the dharma of all religions, to know his former divine status.

³¹² Kinh Đệ Tam Cửu

³¹³ The Thunder God.

³¹⁴ God's another incarnation.

³¹⁵ Kinh Đệ Ngũ Cửu

³¹⁶ The Wordless Book of Prayers.

Cung Lập Khuyết is the metaphor for getting the imperfections. Đài Huệ Hương implies the soul's impurity is washed off.

*Vào Cung Vạn Pháp xem qua,
Cung Lập Khuyết tìm duyên định ngữ;
Dem Chơn Thần đến tận Đài Huệ Hương.
Looking around in the Cung Vạn Pháp,
The soul finds out his former status
Then goes to Đài Huệ Hương.*

From the Seven to Ninth Level: as an Immortal.

As an Immortal, the soul then goes to Cung Chương Pháp, where he studies the law of the universe and gets enlightened. After that he goes to Cung Tận Thức, where he realizes the magical power of the universe, so he sees the Kim Mao Hẩu, a lion-like animal representing the power of the soul in heaven. Then he goes to Tịch San³¹⁷, Niết Bàn³¹⁸.

The soul also goes to Cung Diệt Bửu to see the real values of earthly treasures so that he can give them up.

In Cung Bắc Đẩu, the soul reads his past and future lives from the Book of Thiên Tào and learns the heavenly etiquette.

In Cung Tri Giác, he knows how to combine the Tam Bửu³¹⁹ and ready to achieve Buddhahood.

He also meets Chuẩn Đề Bồ Tát³²⁰ and Phổ Hiền Bồ Tát³²¹, that is, he is at the same level as those Bodhisattva.

The Seventh Level or the Heaven of Hạo Nhiên³²²

He sees Chuẩn Đề Bồ Tát and Phổ Hiền Bồ Tát unlock the Kim Cô³²³. That means the soul is shown how to ascend to Cung Chương Pháp, which takes care of the law of the universe.

The Eighth Level or the Heaven of Phi Tướng³²⁴

On this level, the soul is far away from the impure earthly world. He enjoys listening to the bell and drinking the divine wine. The sorrow he had in the previous incarnation is eradicated by the Nước Cam Lộ³²⁵. He goes to Cung Tận Thức and sees the Kim Mao Hẩu with the superpower of religious practitioners. In Cung Diệt Bửu, he sees earthly properties and gives them up. He sees Từ Hàng Bồ Tát.

³¹⁷ Mount Tịch.

³¹⁸ Nirvana.

³¹⁹ Three Treasures: body, mind and soul.

³²⁰ a Goddess bodhisattva and an incarnation of Cundī Dhāraṇī.

³²¹ Samantabhadra, Universal Worthy, is a bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism.

³²² Hạo 昊 immense, nhiên 燃 burning. The immense heaven.

³²³ When Chơn Thần descends to the earth, the Nê hoàn cung is locked by an invisible Kim Cô (golden circle)

³²⁴ Beyond thought Heaven. (Lit)

³²⁵ Holy Water.

The Ninth Level or the Heaven of Creation³²⁶

According to Kinh Tuần Cửu, after 81 days, the soul ascends to this level. In the Cung Tri Giác, he knows how to combine the Tam Bửu, gets enlightened and prepares to the level for Buddhas.

*Cung Tri Giác, trụ tinh thần,
Hườn hư mẫu nhiệm thoát trần đăng Tiên³²⁷.
Meditating in Cung Tri Giác,
The soul returns to nothingness and goes to heaven.*

Then the soul is permitted to enter the Điều Trì Cung to see God the Mother, granted some divine wine, allowed to know his own destiny in Cung Bắc Đẩu, taught the heavenly etiquette and admitted to Linh Tiêu Điện to kowtow to God.

On the ninth level, Tinh, Khí, and Thân³²⁸ are safe and sound, that is being combined.

*Đã qua chín tầng Trời đến vị,
Thần đặng an, Tinh, Khí cũng an.³²⁹
Passing nine levels in heaven,
Your soul, body, and mind are safe.*

From now on, the soul is ready for the process of “Thần hườn hư”³³⁰, going to the world of Buddha with the help of Caodaist prayers chanted by other believers. Finally, he is about to take the path of “hư hườn vô”³³¹, that is going to the nature of “emptiness” of God for higher divine status.

³²⁶ On this level God the Mother, on behalf of God, creates everything in the universe.

³²⁷ Kinh Đệ Cửu Cửu

³²⁸ Body, mind and soul.

³²⁹ Kinh khai cứu Tiểu Trường và Đại Trường

³³⁰ Soul turns to nothingness.

³³¹ Nothingness turns to void.

To be freed

In the third grand amnesty, God clears the way to Cực Lạc Thế Giới for enlightened people to return.

*Đóng địa ngục, mở tầng Thiên,
Khai đường Cực Lạc, dẫn miền Tây Phương³³².
Hell has been closed and heaven opened.
The way to Nirvana has been cleared.*

Therefore, after the Nine Heavens, the Tam Bửu have been united and the soul begins the way of “Thần hườn hư” or “the soul turns to nothingness” to go to the world of Buddha.

Having passed the three levels of the world of Buddha, the soul enters the final process that is “hư hườn vô” or “nothingness turns to void”. The soul now unites with the nature of nothingness of God in the Tam Thập Lục Thiên³³³. After that, he continues his religious practice until he can get to Bạch Ngọc Kinh³³⁴. When the soul becomes Đại Hồn³³⁵ or heavenly soul, you will unite with the Đại Linh Quang. Caodaism calls this process “Hiệp một cùng Thầy.”³³⁶

1. Entering the world of Buddhas: *Thần hườn Hư*³³⁷

After the Nine Levels of Heaven, the soul’s bad karma in previous lives has been eradicated. The Tam Bửu have been united.

*Đã qua chín tầng Trời đến vị,
Thần đặng an, Tinh, Khí cũng an.³³⁸
Passing nine levels in heaven,
Your soul, body, and mind are safe.*

200 days after the Tuần Cửu, the ritual of Tiểu Tường helps the soul go to the Tenth Level or the Nothingness Heaven, which is the world of Buddhas. In this world, you are not affected by earthly emotions like greed, anger, stupidity, love, hatred, etc.

300 days after the Tiểu Tường, the ritual of Đại Tường helps the soul go to the Eleventh Level or Hội Ngươn Thiên and the Twelfth Level or Hồn Ngươn Thiên under Đức Di Lạc Phật Vương³³⁹ for the Hội Long Hoa³⁴⁰.

³³² Kinh giải oan

³³³ 36 Heavens.

³³⁴ Passing the Tam Thiên Thế Giới, you reach the Tứ Đại Bộ Châu. After Tứ Đại Bộ Châu, you can enter the Tam Thập Lục Thiên. In Tam Thập Lục Thiên you have to reincarnate for more religious practice before going to the Bạch Ngọc Kinh, which Buddhism calls Nirvana.

³³⁵ Great Soul.

³³⁶ Uniting with the Master or uniting with God.

³³⁷ Soul turns to nothingness.

³³⁸ Kinh khai cửu Tiểu Tường và Đại Tường

³³⁹ Maitreya-Buddha.

Prayer for Tiểu Trường³⁴¹

Getting to the world for Buddhas is when Thân³⁴² turns to Hư³⁴³ or attaining enlightenment. The soul enters Nirvana, which is below Tam Thập Lục Thiên (36 Heavens). Therefore, the prayer for Tiểu Trường only mentions the outer world of Tâm.

The metaphors in the Prayer for Tiểu Trường

Meeting Phật Nhiên Đăng³⁴⁴ and Phật A Di Đà³⁴⁵ in Lôi Âm Tự³⁴⁶ means the soul is now completely happy to be taught Buddhism.

Ngọc Hư Cung - the nothingness of Tâm is represented by the fact that the soul sees the dharma in Ngọc Hư Cung.

Thiên kiều³⁴⁷ means the soul finds the way to return to God.

At Bộ Công, where your religious work is recorded for the Long Hoa Hội.

The Holy Water in Ao Thất Bửu³⁴⁸ will eradicate the soul's bad karma and impurity and gives absolute intelligence.

*Ao Thất Bửu gọi mình sạch tục³⁴⁹
Your earthly impurity is eliminated in Ao Thất Bửu*

Images depicted in the Prayer

On the Tenth Level or the Hư Vô Thiên³⁵⁰ governed by Đức Phật Nhiên Đăng, the soul sees the Ngọc Hư Cung, steps on the Thiên Kiều, goes to Tây Qui, enters the Lôi Âm Tự, kowtows to the Phật A Di Đà and looks in the Bộ Công to know how much religious work he has. Then he is washed with the holy water in the Ao Thất Bửu before ascending to the next level.

Prayers for Đại Trường³⁵¹

Chanting the prayers for Đại Trường, which is granted by Phật Thích Ca³⁵², helps the soul move up to the Eleventh Level or Hội Ngươn Thiên and the Twelfth Level or Hồn Ngươn Thiên. Those heavens are managed by Đức Di Lạc Vương Phật, who is also the Judge in Hội Long Hoa.

It is important that there are no metaphors in the Prayers for Đại Trường. What Đức Di Lạc will do in the world is mentioned carefully here. He will

³⁴⁰ the Dragon Flower Competition. (The Judgement Day)

³⁴¹ The Cao daist Ritual held 281 days after a death.

³⁴² Soul.

³⁴³ Nothingness.

³⁴⁴ Dipankara Buddha or Lamp Bearer Buddha.

³⁴⁵ Amita Buddha or the Buddha of Endless Light.

³⁴⁶ Lôi Âm - thunder. Chùa - pagoda. It is located in the capital of Cực Lạc Thế Giới, where Đức Phật Thích Ca and Đức A-Di-Đà-Phật dwell.

³⁴⁷ the Divine Bridge in heaven.

³⁴⁸ the pond made from seven types of jewels.

³⁴⁹ Prayers for Tiểu Trường

³⁵⁰ the Heaven of Nothingness.

³⁵¹ A Cao daist ritual held 581 days after a person's death.

³⁵² Shakyamuni Buddha, also Siddhārtha Gautama, Shakyamuni, or simply the Buddha, is considered the founder of Buddhism.

incarnate to modify all the past religious teachings, unite all the religions on earth and establish a new ethical era.

*Tái sanh sửa đổi chơn truyền;
Thâu các đạo hữu hình làm một³⁵³.
Born to modify all the religious teachings,
He also unites all the worldly religions.*

He also presides the Hội Long Hoa and decides who will become the new Immortals and Buddhas.

*Hội Long Hoa tuyển phong Phật vị.
Trường thi Tiên Phật đựt kiếp khiên³⁵⁴.
In Hội Long Hoa, he will ordain new Buddhas.
That is a competition to challenge Immortals and Buddhas.*

This will be the time for everyone to be saved and for Hell to be closed.

*Khai cơ tận độ Cứu tuyền diệt vong.
Everyone will be saved and Hell will be closed.*

So far the soul has experienced four statuses: Genii, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas. On the way, he has passed Tam Thiên Thế Giới and Tứ Đại Bộ Châu and is ready to travel to Tam Thập Lục Thiên.

2. The path of *Hư hườn Vô*³⁵⁵

Finally, it comes to the process of Hư hườn Vô, when the Huyền Quan Nhứt Khiếu³⁵⁶ leaves. According to Đức Hộ Pháp, attaining Nothingness is getting enlightened. Hư hườn vô is when the religious practitioner has only Đạo Tâm or love, joy, and satisfaction. He has attained nothingness (no fame, benefit or power). He is now completely free. He becomes absolutely selfless and enters the nature «*Nothingness*» of God. Đạo is formless. Đạo is no nothing. The Master is nobody. The cycle of rebirth has been stopped like what is written in the Kinh Xuất Hội³⁵⁷:

*Đạo hư vô, Sư hư vô,
Reo chuông thoát tục, phát cờ tuyệt sinh.
Đạo is Nothingness and Master is nobody.
It's time to be freed from the earthly world and the cycle of birth.*

According to Caodaist Divine Messages, souls now enter the purest and highest level in the universe, which is the Tam Thập Lục Thiên. Each heaven is governed by a Thiên Tào³⁵⁸. This is the center of the universe. Bạch Ngọc Kinh

³⁵³ Kinh Đại Tường

³⁵⁴ NT

³⁵⁵ Hư - nothingness. Vô - void. Hườn - turn to. Nothingness turns to void (?)

³⁵⁶ the Divine Eyes.

³⁵⁷ Prayers after a meeting.

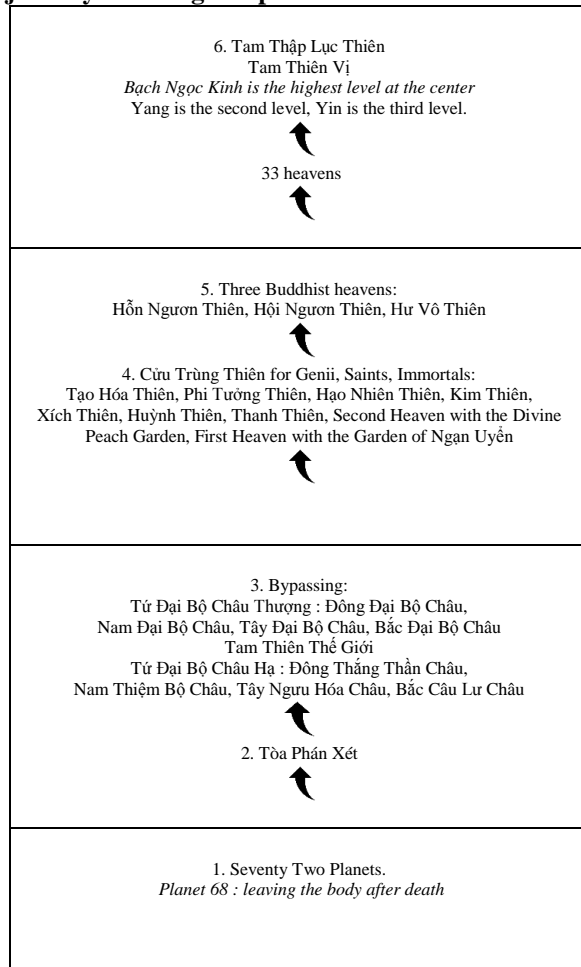
³⁵⁸ An organization under God.

is at the highest level or the Thái Cực³⁵⁹, the center of the 36 heavens. The second highest is Ngôi Dương (Yang) and the third-highest is Ngôi Âm (Yin), both of which represent the Lưỡng Nghi³⁶⁰.

Thái Cực and Lưỡng Nghi unite to form what is called Tam Thiên Vị³⁶¹. Below is 33 heavens, so there are 36 heavens totally. A Thiên Đế, a Divine King who is God's incarnation, reigns each of those 33 heavens.

Having entered the Tam Thập Lục Thiên, souls keep practicing religion to enter the Bát Quái³⁶², the Tứ Tượng³⁶³, the Lưỡng Nghi and finally the Thái Cực or Bạch Ngọc Kinh. At last, souls unite with the Đại Linh Quang³⁶⁴ to “Unite with God”. That is also the conclusion of this book.

The return journey of a religious practitioner



Lạp Chúc Nguyễn Huy

³⁵⁹ the Absolute.
³⁶⁰ the Two Forms i.e. Yin and Yang.
³⁶¹ the Trinity.
³⁶² Ba Gúa.
³⁶³ the Four Phenomena.
³⁶⁴ the Grand Mass of Light or God.