

The Spreading of Caodaism to Taiwan: Man's Will versus Divine Will

Tuan Em Nguyen

Nguyen Tuan Em (MA) is an official representative of Vietnamese Caodaism in Taipei, Taiwan where he was appointed Head of a newly founded Cao Đài Congregation. He was in charge of CaodaiTV, producing media products about religious activities of Cao Đài in Vietnam during 2018 and 2019. Tuan Em is now working as a Part-time Lecturer at Tamkang University, Taiwan where he received his second Master's degree in social studies. As an emerging Cao Đài scholar, he actively participates in international conferences and publishes his papers on Caodaism. His research interests also include Folk Religions, New Religious Movements, and Spiritism.



JDTREA 2022,1(2): 115-132

Original Articles

Correspondence to

Tuan Em Nguyen

Cao Đài Congregation, Taipei

elmernguyen1@gmail.com

ORCID

[https://orcid.org/ 0000-0002-9319-9340](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9319-9340)



Journal of Daesoon Thought and the Religions of East Asia Vol. 1. Issue 2 (March 2022): 115–132
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<https://doi.org/10.25050/JDTREA.2022.1.2.115>

Day of submission: 2022. 01. 15.

Completion of review: 2022. 02. 15.

Final decision for acceptance: 2022. 03. 20.

P-ISSN: 2799-3949

E-ISSN: 2799-4252

Abstract

Caodaism officially came into existence in 1926 in Southern Vietnam and soon became a spiritual phenomenon, in the sense of spiritual and social influence. Despite being sandwiched between political forces and ruling governments, Caodaism steadily grew far beyond its national boundary. After 95 years, Caodaism eventually reached Taiwan when a new small Cao Đài Congregation, approved by top Cao Đài Dignitaries in Vietnam, was established in Zhongli District, Taoyuan City by a group identifying as 'Vietnamese New Immigrants' in Taiwan. This article traced this religious organization's doctrine, philosophy, prophecy and relevant socio-cultural factors and found that (1) Caodaists see the successful spreading of Caodaism to Taiwan as having been prophesied long ago; (2) Caodaists believe that any human efforts by Cao Đài missionaries to spread Caodaism overseas without approval from Divinities could end up in failure; and (3) the similarities in social, cultural, and religious practices between the peoples of Vietnam and Taiwan lay a strong foundation for Caodaism to further develop in Taiwan.

Keywords: Caodaism; Spiritism; Prophecy; Missionary; Mission; Man's Will; Divine Will

Introduction

Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ (The Great Way of the Third Universal Salvation, 大道三期普度), commonly called Caodaism (Đạo Cao Đài, 道高臺), was officially established in a solemn inauguration ceremony held at Từ Lâm Buddhist Pagoda in the village of Gò Kén in Tây Ninh Province, approximately 99km to the North West of Saigon (the present-day Ho Chi Minh City).

From a very tiny number of 247 Cao Đài believers named on a list sent along with the 'Declaration of the Founding of the Cao Dai Religion' to the French Governor of Cochinchina on October 7, 1926, Caodaism has currently grown to become the third largest religious organization in Vietnam, comprising approximately five million believers throughout Vietnam and overseas in locations such as Cambodia, the US, Australia, Canada, France and most recently Taiwan. Among those overseas locations, Taiwan has interestingly been noticed to be the first nation in Asia where Caodaism could officially establish a Cao Đài Congregation.¹

To this point, several questions are coming up: How do Caodaists view the divine prearrangement of their religion?; How were its previous propagation missions conducted?; Why was Taiwan specifically chosen for propagation instead of other countries in Asia?; Why did Caodaists wait for almost a century before opening a Cao Đài Worship Site² in Taiwan despite Cao Đài being reasonably well-known in the West?, and Do Caodaists consider the spreading of Caodaism to Taiwan to simply be the result of intentional human effort or to be a destined prearrangement by God?

In order to answer all of these questions in a systematic way, this article will first briefly examine some mysterious prophecies about the coming age of the Third Amnesty of God in the name of Cao Đài. Then, the article will analyze how Caodaism was missioned in its early days before investigating early attempts to introduce Caodaism to the Han Chinese people outside of Vietnam based on historical facts and Divine teachings. Finally, the article will elaborate on the establishment of a Cao Dai Congregation in Taiwan and expectations for its future development.

Prophecies about Caodaism

Alleged Prophecies from the Buddhist Canon Predicting the Third Universal Salvation

The fact Caodaism came into existence in 1926 in Vietnam was believed by Caodaists to be neither an accidental incident nor an intentional human action, but the culmination of Divine Will as had been prophesied long before the Third Amnesty of God was revealed. This is seen as having resulted in the establishment of a new religion that aims to bring about Justice and Universal Love (Công Bình – Bác Ái) to all human beings and living beings.

In one spirit-séance in Cần Giuộc District, Chợ Lớn Province (present-day Ho Chi Minh City) on 5 June 1926, the Caoadaists believe that Sakyamuni Buddha as Đức Cao Đài (德³高臺literally, ‘Lord of the High Tower,’ this Supreme God is also known as the Jade Emperor, Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế, 玉皇上帝) taught that after Hui Neng, the sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism, passed away, the teaching of Buddhism was no longer available because its original doctrine had been denatured. Therefore, Sakyamuni Buddha, through a divine message, revealed that it was now time for the Third Universal Salvation in order to “not only save all living beings but also other higher spirits such as Genies, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas who had to reincarnate to this world to complete their missions” (Hum and Hong 2015). The Caoadaists hold a belief that all of this had long been prophesied in the Buddhist Canon but due to unawareness, human beings did not make the effort to discover it.

Prophecy from Daoism’s Tranquility Scriptures

It is documented that there was a verse written in the Tranquility Scriptures (Thanh Tĩnh Kinh 清靜經), handed down from generation to generation of Daoist followers, prophesying that those who accumulated enough good deeds would be shown the way to self-salvation and that those who are destined by God should rush to spread the news of the Third Amnesty of God (Rạng 1970). This scripture specifically wrote the four words ‘Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ’⁴ (Third Amnesty of God), which went on to become the official name of the present-day Caoadaism.

Another signal of the coming of Caoadaism in Vietnam is that in the sixteenth century in China, there was a form of syncretistic religion called ‘Three in One Religion (sānyī jiào, 三一教)’ which was founded by Lin Zhao’en (林兆恩). This Three in One Religion attempted to unite the elements of the three Great Teachings: Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism (Katz 1999). Historically, this syncretistic religion could be a fertile seedbed for the appearance of Caoadaism in Vietnam in the early twentieth century because this ‘Three in One Religion’ also practiced the spirit-writing and was spread to South Asian countries during the massive migrations of Han Chinese people towards the South during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Thanh 2009, Smith 2009).

When this Three in One Religion was brought into Vietnam, its name was changed into ‘Wise Master Religion’ (明師道 Minh Sư Đạo). It was reported that the Wise Master Religion followers frequently chanted the two Vietnamese verses “Cao như Bắc khuyết nhân chiêm ngưỡng – Đài tại Nam phương Đạo thống truyền” (literally translated into English: As high as the North Star for human beings to appreciate – At the Palace in the South, the Way will dominate). When the first word ‘Cao (高)’ in the first verse goes with the first word ‘Đài (臺)’ in the second verse, the two words would make the proper name “Cao Đài (高臺),” which went on to become the name that the Jade Emperor used

to establish Caodaism during the Third Amnesty (Rạng 1970). According to Rạng (1970), there were many other prophecies from scriptures of different religious groups and other great prophets such as the Vietnamese poet-laureate and prophet, Nguyễn Bình Khiêm (1491–1585), about the coming of Caodaism in the future. This poet-laureate is also considered as one of the three saints in Caodaism.

In addition, it is documented in the Collection Book of Caodaist Divine Messages that in a spirit-séance on 20 February 1926, aiming to teach the Great Way to HIS first few disciples, God, the Father, emphasized that, “For whatever happens, you (children) must remember that I Myself am in it” (Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển 1972).⁵ It could be inferred from this teaching that all incidents in life, including the appearance of different faiths or religions, occur because God wants them to be that way.

From the Caodaist perspective, devotees believe that all of the above-mentioned prophecies about the coming of Caodaism unfolded due to Divine Will rather than human will. Graeme Lang (2004), in his research on Caodaism also claimed; “Religions do not emerge fully-formed from the mind of a single person.” Furthermore, Caodaists hold that through the Cao Dai Doctrine and Spiritual messages, it is reasonable to assume that Caodaism did not emerge from human will but from the Divine Will (Hum and Hong 2015).

Caodaists believe that God’s divine messages had been announced by many great prophets in ancient times and in a multitude of different locations. Nevertheless, because of their unawareness or ignorance, human beings did not realize these messages until the Christmas Eve of 1925 in a spirit-séance conducted in Saigon. A ‘Great Spirit’ was reported to have finally revealed HIMSELF as the “Supreme Being” known as “Cao Đài.” He taught the Truth to the Vietnamese people, and this resulted in the official inauguration of Caodaism a year later. In Vietnamese, HE taught his first disciples:

“Rejoice this day. It is the anniversary of my coming to Europe to teach my doctrine. I am happy to see you. Oh my disciples full of respect and love to me. This house will have all my blessings. Manifestations of my power will inspire even greater respect and love in my regard . . .” (Gobron 1949)

The Caodaists hold a belief that the Jade Emperor used HIS superpower through HIS Messengers at different times and locations to announce the true coming of the Third Amnesty. Therefore, it is understood that all previous signals revealing the coming of Caodaism as an embodiment in the Third Amnesty of God were spread throughout the Buddhist Canon, Daoist Scriptures, teachings of other prophets, folk verses chanted by the Daoist followers, and the teachings of other religious groups because God had quietly and gradually prepared HIS third Universal Salvation (Caodaism in this case) to rescue HIS children.

Early Cao Đài Missions and Development

Propagation missions had taken place rather early; even before the official inauguration of Caodaism in 1926. It was reported by Caodaists that from the very first days of attaining contact with Divine spirits through spirit-writing, first disciples of the Supreme God, Đức Cao Đài, following HIS teachings, scattered to different locations in Southern Vietnam to convince destined people about the superpower of a Great Spirit and about the Truth to be revealed soon.

Paul Bowers, in his paper "Paul and Religious Propaganda in the First Century", wrote, "Not all religious expansion is intentional...where expansion is desired and intended, it is not at all always deliberately attempted..." (Bowers 1980). It could be assumed from this statement that there are still a few deliberate and intentional religious expansions, and Caodaism is one of those few. The Cao Đài religious propagation missions were documented to be initially intentional because both visible Cao Đài leaders and believers, instinctually made great efforts to spread the news of the Third Amnesty under the teachings of Đức Cao Đài.

It was noted that the Cao Đài missions took many different forms ranging from mouth-to-mouth to showcasing the Holy Spiritual Messages to interested people, to preaching the teachings of Đức Cao Đài, to introducing the worship practice in Caodaism, to doing charity works and to demonstrating miracles in spirit-séances.

It is reported that in a few missions, there were spirit-séances in which, the Caodaists believe, Đức Cao Đài or other Deities came to teach the Great Way, which convinced a large number of people to convert to Caodaism. These spirit-séances continued to be held more and more often, first at individuals' homes and then, in larger gatherings in Saigon enrolling hundreds of new adherents at each séance (Gobron 1949).

In a spirit-séance on the 15 September 1926, it was reported that the Jade Emperor (another name by which God is known in Caodaism), instructed HIS Disciples⁶ to open a Cao Đài Temple in Central Vietnam. HE communicated this via four verses that read:

"From now on, MY children are no longer divided into three
I have come to unite you under one roof
To Spread the Way to South, North, and then abroad
The Owner of the Truth is only ME"⁷

The Caodaists interpreted these verses that the Three Teachings: Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism were, since 1926, no longer separated because God HIMSELF had come in this Third Amnesty to reunite them. Therefore, Đức Cao Đài instructed HIS disciples to spread this Truth to the mass, first within the country from South to North and then to overseas to remind everyone that God is the only Creator of this Universe.

Subsequently, soon after the official inauguration of Caodaism in 1926, the Cao Đài missions expanded to reach all of the Eastern and Western provinces in Southern Vietnam and other provinces in Central Vietnam. Within two months after the inauguration, an impressive number of over 20,000 people were converted to Caodaism (Blagov 2016), and a considerable number of Cambodian Khmer people came across the border to enroll in the new religion (Tam 2016).

In addition, it is believed that under the instruction of Đức Cao Đài through a spirit-séance in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 5 June 1927, the Cao Đài Leaders established the ‘Sacerdotal Council of Cao Đài Overseas Missionary’ (Hội Thánh Ngoại Giáo, 會聖外教) to specifically take care of overseas missions. The Caodaists also learnt from this spirit-writing session that in the invisible world, Victor Hugo – one of the three saints in Caodaism, was appointed to be the Superintendent of this ‘Sacerdotal Council of Cao Đài Overseas Missionary’ while in this secular world, this Sacerdotal Council was under the leadership of the Supreme Leader Hộ Pháp (護法). In addition, it was reported that Đức Cao Đài prophesied to HIS disciples that although Caodaism started in Vietnam, it would later spread throughout the world (Tam 2016, 29).

Within 4 years after its official inauguration ceremony, there were approximately one million people following Caodaism (Perrin 2011). Commenting on the significant success of Caodaism in attracting a large number of believers within a short period of time, from a more political view, Stephanie Perrin remarked:

“Colonial oppression and disenchantment with traditional religious practices provided favourable circumstances for the Caodai to appeal to both the rural peasantry and the urban elite, creating an unprecedented union between the disparate classes” (Perrin 2011, 121).

Perrin also claimed that Southern Vietnam (Cochinchina) at this time was under the French colonizers and the people, especially peasants, were suffering the most in society. Caodaism, as a political movement disguised as a religious organization through its charity works and mental therapy, could thereby recruit a large number of followers.

Nevertheless, from the cultural and religious perspective, Gobron (1949) assumed that the new form of worship did not contain anything contrary to the principles of religions already practiced in the country, and this convinced the masses to convert to Caodaism. This assumption was more reasonable in the case of Cao Dai Religion. It has been noticed that Southern Vietnam was a new land chosen to be the settlement of Indian, Chinese, and later French immigrants together with massive waves of migration from North Vietnam. This transformed Southern Vietnam into a multicultural region that displayed a mixture of numerous religious and spiritual forms including Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and indigenous practices (Pham 2007).

Therefore, the pluralism of worshipping Buddha, Lao Tse, Confucius, Guangong, Jesus Christ, Holy Mother Goddess, and other divinities enabled Caodaism to attract a large number of believers. That Vietnamese people easily found their beliefs reflected in Caodaism led this religion to experience rapid growth.

For Caodaists, even if the development of Caodaism could be attributed to political, cultural, or religious factors, it would not undermine Divine Will. This is because the Divine Messages the Caodaists received through spirit-writing revealed that God, HIMSELF, came to establish Caodaism in the Third Universal Salvation to rescue HIS children and thus, HE would know what to do for HIS teachings to be spread to the destined people. After 95 years of numerous historical, social, and political changes in Vietnam, the number of Cao Đài believers has steadily climbed up to 5 million within and beyond the nation. This leaves Caodaists even more convinced of the prophecy by Đức Cao Đài that although Caodaism originated in Vietnam, it shall flourish throughout the world.

Prophecies and Initial Attempts to Introduce Caodaism to Chinese Han People

Through the Divine messages the Caodaists received in spirit-seances, they believe that the Jade Emperor and other deities have come to teach the Great Way and established the Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ (Caodaism, The Great Dao of the Third Universal Salvation). The Cao Đài Scriptures, the *Constitution of Caodaism* (Pháp Chánh Truyền, 法正傳), Canonical Codes (Tân Luật, 新律), rituals, religious documents, and mission plans were all claimed Divinely bestowed.

According to Caodaists, these Divine teachings are the core guidance for their religious life. Answer to questions such as where they should go, who they should preach Caodaism to, and other related matters rely on these teachings. Therefore, the propagation of Caodaism to other regions within Vietnam and to the outside world from the early days of establishment until the present day have always been carried out in a way that ensured missions would not go against Divine teachings.

With regard to the preaching of Caodaism to the Han Chinese people, the Caodaists basically followed the two following prophecies, the first of which is said to have come from the Jade Emperor and the second of which is attributed to Sun Yat Sen (Tôn Sơn Chơn Nhơn, 中山真人 The Perfected Person Trung Sơn).⁸

First Prophecy:

In a sermon given at a Midnight Ceremony in the Tay Ninh Holy See on 30 June 1948, the Supreme Leader Ho Pháp reminded the Cao Đài followers of a prophecy

regarding the future overseas missions that he received from Đức Cao Đài in a spirit-séance in 1927 in the Cao Đài Temple in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. In Vietnamese, Đức Cao Đài prophesied, “One day, the Han Chinese will wholeheartedly worship Caodaism while the American people will take the responsibility for spreading Caodaism to the world.”⁹(Ban Đạo Sử 1973)

Second Prophecy:

In a spirit-séance on 30 December 1936 at Hộ Pháp Đường (Residence of Hộ Pháp) within the compound of the Tây Ninh Holy See in Tây Ninh Province, it was believed that the spirit of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, as the Perfected Person Trung Sơn, left a spiritual message emphasizing that the time had not yet come for propagating Caodaism to China. He reasoned that the French Government (in Indochina) did not truly want to assist Caodaists and would arrest those Cao Đài Leaders if they went to China. He also reminded that Caodaists had to wait patiently until a new stable world order had been settled by the United States and Japan before carrying out missions to China because this was the destiny which had been predetermined by the Divine (Hong 2012).

Initial Cao Đài Missions to the Han Chinese People

Within Vietnam, since the early days of its establishment, it was reported that there was a large number of Chinese Vietnamese people living or doing business in Chợ Lớn, Saigon who had converted to Caodaism. This included those who followed the Minh Sư Đạo (formerly the ‘Three in One Religion’ that had been brought into Vietnam by the Chinese migrants). There was a Cao Đài Congregation called ‘Đường Nhơn,’ comprising entirely of ethnic Chinese Caodaists. This Congregation still exists in Tây Ninh Province. Also, a large number of other Chinese Vietnamese people who follow Caodaism are living in the Mekong Delta, but there are no official statistics on this group.

Outside of Vietnam, there could have been several individual cases of introducing Caodaism to Chinese people over the past few decades. However, these cases have never been officially reported to the Sacerdotal Council (Hội Thánh Cao Đài Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh, 會聖高臺座聖西寧) in Vietnam or documented. Therefore, the information about initial attempts to spread Caodaism to China is very limited. However, the following two reported missions are exceptions to that trend:

First mission (5 December 1938 – 30 October 1939)

On 5 December 1938, it was documented that Bishop Thượng Bửu Thanh and his secretary, Nguyễn Kim Sa, decided to take the train from Hà Nội, Northern Vietnam to Yunnan (雲南), China to introduce Caodaism to local Chinese people there.

Nevertheless, it was reported that this mission went on without any official approval or decision from either the Sacerdotal Council of Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See or the Sacerdotal Council of Cao Dai Overseas Missionary. The two pioneers were reported to have temporarily opened a Cao Đài representative office in Yunnan and started to introduce Caodaism to locals. However, their adventure soon ended less than year after they had left Hà Nội (Duyên 2012).

According to the Caodaists, the failure of this first ever attempt to spread Caodaism to the Han Chinese people could be explained by two main reasons. The first one is quite practical. With little money donated by some Cao Đài believers in Hà Nội, the Bishop and his secretary struggled to make a living in their new residence, and this meant having to look for jobs to survive. Subsequently, there was not much time left to introduce Caodaism to others. Another obstacle facing the two was that neither of them spoke Chinese. Therefore, they had to hire an interpreter to communicate with locals as they introduced Caodaism. Other problems arose due to China having a large number of dialects. Therefore, their efforts to introduce Caodaism to the Han Chinese people was not as productive as they had hoped.

It was also reported that even though they eventually found and received assistance from a Vietnamese national who had lived and worked in Yunnan long before their arrival, the job of spreading Caodaism still proved overwhelming. It was explained that during a period of less than a year the two pioneers stayed in Yunnan, the Bishop went back to Vietnam three times. It was reported that he stayed in Yunnan for a total of 134 days, and that he converted a total of 45 local people to Caodaism. However, the precise information about those 45 Chinese people remains unclear. Firstly, it is unknown whether or not the Bishop succeeded in establishing a Cao Dai Congregation in Yunnan. Secondly, it is unclear whether or not the converted Chinese Caodaists continued to follow Caodaism after the Bishop returned to Vietnam on October 30th 1939.

The second reason offered for his failure is more spiritual in nature, but the Caodaists believe it nevertheless. In a spirit-séance on 20 February 1926, Đức Cao Đài had already taught HIS disciples:

“I have one thing to tell you which is that you [children] should always wait for my order! Never let your individual opinion to judge anything. Your roles and duties have been predetermined by ME, but the time has not come yet. Obey my teachings!”¹⁰

In addition, in a sermon on 3 August 1948 at the Cao Đài Tây Ninh Holy See, the Supreme Leader Hộ Pháp preached that the Sacerdotal Council is the visible representative board of the Jade Emperor in this world. On HIS behalf, the Sacerdotal

Council administrates the religion and guides HIS children to reunite with HIM. Then, the Supreme Leader emphasized, any decision from the Sacerdotal Council is considered to be a decision from the Divine (Ban Đạo Sử 1973). Therefore, the fact that the Bishop Thượng Bầy Thanh went to China according to his individual decision and without having received any official approval from the Sacerdotal Council, meant he acted against Divine Will.

Second mission (29 August 1954 – 12 October 1954)

On 29 August 1954, the visible Supreme Leader of Caodaism – Hộ Pháp and four assistants departed to Taiwan to officially conduct a mission of introducing Caodaism to the Han Chinese.

According to the diary written by Mr. Bùi Quang Cao, a secretary of the Supreme Leader, the Cao Đài Delegation, invited and sponsored by the R.O.C government, had several bilateral meetings and discussions about the political, social, and religious topics with the R.O.C President Chang Kai-Shek, Vice President Chen Cheng, top leaders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Businesses, and other religious leaders.

In addition, the delegation visited museums, factories, and cultural and religious sites throughout Taiwan. This included sites in Taipei, Taichung, Tainan, and Kaohsiung. Also, the Supreme Leader Hộ Pháp took an interval of 11 days to fly to South Korea and Japan to discuss solutions for peace in Vietnam and the region. At his time, he also spoke about the ideal of a universal world as understood in Caodaist doctrines (Cao 1954).

On 12 October 1954, the visible Supreme Leader of Caodaism and his delegation went back to Vietnam, after spending 42 days in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. By the end of this mission to Taiwan, the Supreme Leader Hộ Pháp said that he also wanted to establish a Cao Dai Representative Office in Taiwan as he had previously done in Paris.

Nevertheless, his wish could not come true because after He returned to Vietnam, the crisis of the Vietnam War escalated continually until 1975. Then, over the next twenty years, the social and political changes in Vietnam practically put an end to the missionary activities of Caodaism. Fortunately, since 1997, the government of Vietnam gradually gave authority and Cao Đài religious facilities back to the Sacerdotal Council to continue managing and developing the religious organization. Since 2010, the Sacerdotal Council has started to resume their propagation missions, and this has opened a new chapter in the history of Caodaism.¹¹

The Taiwan Taipei-based Cao Đài Congregation

The first ever overseas Cao Đài mission after Vietnam applied the open-door policy occurred in May 2013 when the Sacerdotal Council went to visit Oomoto in Japan. Since that time onward, international religious relations between Caodaism and

other religious organizations have been established. Examples of religions that have interreligious exchanges with Cao Đài include Oomoto in Japan, Daesoon Jinrihoe in South Korea, Weixin Shenjiao and Daoyuan in Taiwan, Daoyuan in Singapore and Malaysia, and Buddhism in Thailand. In addition, religious exchange visitations have also become more frequent (Thanh, Thanh, and Thanh 2013).

The Sacerdotal Council continued their missions to Taiwan twice in July 2013 and then, in June 2018. The first visit was to take part in the 64th Anniversary of Daoyuan Headquarters in Taiwan and to establish an international relationship with Yiguandao in Taiwan. The second visit was to attend the Unveiling Ceremony of The Golden Mega-Statue of Guiguzi Wang Chan Laozu and to participate in the CESNUR 2018 Conference held at I Ching University, Weixin College in Nantou, Taiwan. Also, during this second visit, the leaders of Vietnamese Caodaism, Taiwanese Weixing Shengjiao, and South Korean Daesoon Jinrihoe signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) together to establish the Association of East Asian New Religions (Em 2018).

Caodaists believe that fortifying religious relationships between Caodaism and religions such as Daoyuan, Yiguandao, and Weixin Shengjiao, and especially the abovementioned signing of MOU, represented a turning point in the history of Cao Đài Overseas missions. These were all actions that officially laid the initial groundwork to introduce Caodaism to the Han Chinese (Thanh and Thanh 2015).

Most recently, on 8 June 2020, the Sacerdotal Council of Cao Đài Tây Ninh Holy See in Vietnam officially established a Cao Đài Congregation in Taipei so that this Congregation, on behalf of the Sacerdotal Council, could continue to tighten the Caodaism's relationships with Taiwanese religious organizations and simultaneously develop Caodaism in Taiwan (Canh 2020).

The Congregation has, after six months, gathered approximately 30 Cao Đài followers living in different districts in Taipei, New Taipei, Zhongli, and Taichung to practice Cao Đài ritual ceremonies as well as to plan for an official Cao Đài Temple in Taiwan. These followers were Cao Đài devotees in Vietnam who went on to marry to Taiwanese men, and now have become 'New Immigrants' in Taiwan. Given their solid understanding of both Vietnamese culture and Taiwanese culture, these Cao Đài 'New Immigrants' will be a major force for the future development of Caodaism in Taiwan.

Currently, it would likely be hard to imagine the Han Chinese people (Han Chinese in Taiwan in this case) wholeheartedly worshipping as Caodaists as stated in the abovementioned prophecy. Nevertheless, the prospect for Caodaism in Taiwan appear quite promising. There are around 300 thousand Vietnamese people living, studying, and working in Taiwan, and a considerable number of this Vietnamese community are Cao Đài believers. It is highly possible for the Cao Đài Congregation in Taipei to expand in the future thanks to this community. Also, the second generation of the Taiwanese-Vietnamese interracial marriages will have better opportunities to observe and learn more about the Vietnamese religious tradition that their parents follow.

When introducing Caodaism, it is recommended that Vietnamese cultures be introduced first because the traditional cultures of Vietnam are embedded in Caodaism (Thanh and Dung 2020). It is interesting that the religious cultures and practices of the Vietnamese and Taiwanese people share a great deal of similarities. Therefore, the doctrine of uniting the Three Great Teachings: Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, and the combination of the five branches of the Great Way in Caodaism will enable this home-grown, Vietnamese religion to lend itself naturally to the spiritual lives of Taiwanese people.

Conclusion

From the Caodaists' perspective, the appearance of Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ (Caodaism) was not an accidental incident but had long been prophesied and signaled by the Divinities at different times and different locations. Cao Đài is the symbolic name of the Jade Emperor who was revealed in the Orient during this third universal salvation. Through Spirit-writing, Đức Cao Đài, HIMSELF, is believed to come to teach HIS beloved children about the TRUTH as a spiritual shelter for them to live in peace and harmony and as a Great WAY for them to reunite with HIM.

For Caodaists, it could be assumed that the prophecies from Đức Cao Đài and other deities have gradually come true. The reality of this religious organization's expansion has demonstrated that Caodaism has been flourishing from Northern to Southern Vietnam and has become more and more popular with other people outside of this nation. Through the teachings of the divinities, Caodaists believe that the present-day development of Caodaism did not occur due to human effort, but instead, it was invisibly driven by the Divine Will.

After several achievements in overseas missions during the last ten years, Caodaists are now even more convinced of God's prophecy that "One day, the Chinese people will wholeheartedly worship Caodaism while the American people will take the responsibility for spreading Caodaism to the world."

A mystery remains as to whether or not it is again the Divine Will to have such a perfect pre-arrangement for Caodaism to be present in Taiwan after 95 years since its establishment. However, the fact that the world today is witnessing a strong alliance between the United States and Japan which creates a power balance between the West and the East meant to bring about a stable new world order, has convinced Caodaists of the truth of the prophesy attributed to Dr. Sun Yat Sen, the Perfected Person Trung Sơn, in 1938, one year before the Second World War.

In the present day, travelling from one country to another has become much easier. Globalization and seamless communication have brought peoples from every corner of the world closer to each other, and people have more intense cultural interactions. All of this makes it easier for them to accept new or different spiritual beliefs. And thus,

Caodaists sense that now is the divinely approved time for Caodaists to spread ‘Universal Love and Justice (Bác Ái – Công Bình, 博愛 – 公平),’ the message of God in the Third Amnesty of God to other peoples in the world; both in general and to the Han Chinese in Taiwan in particular.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

Note

- ¹ I excluded Cambodia because Caodaism already existed in this country in the early days of establishment during the colonial period when the three countries in Indochina: Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were colonized by the French; In Japan, it was documented that there was one Vietnamese national (Thượng Hòa Thanh) honorably appointed to be the representative of Caodaism (at the rank of Student-Priest) in 1954 by the Supreme Leader Hộ Pháp, and then one Japanese national (Thái Nagafuchi Thanh) was appointed to be the next representative of Caodaism in Japan, replacing Thượng Hòa Thanh in a spiritist séance on 12 December 1968. Nevertheless, these two representatives of Caodaism did not set up any official Cao Đài Worship Site in Japan. Now, there is very little information or official document written on these two representatives of Caodaism in Japan during that time. Thanh at el, “Đạo Cao Đài...”, 2015.
- ² The temporary Cao Dai Worship Site is located at 4th Floor, No. 4, Lane 21, Xinglong 6th Street, Zhongli District, Taoyuan City, Taiwan
- ³ ‘Đức, 德’ is used as an honorific in Vietnamese
- ⁴ Original text: “Công đầy quả đủ sẽ được linh thọ đơn thơ (tức là kinh dạy cách luyện). Người có mạng Trời khá truyền đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ”. The last four words of this prophecy “Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ” perfectly match the official name of Caodaism or “Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ.” Rang, *Đại Đạo Sử Cương*, 1970, p. 20.
- ⁵ Original message: “...Chi chi cũng phải nhớ quyết rằng có Thầy trong đó...”. Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển, 1972, p. 7
- ⁶ This spirit-séance was held at the private home of Mr. Hồ Quang Châu and Phan Thị Lan. The Jade Emperor (Đức Cao Đài) instructed Mr. Hồ Quang Châu to go to Central Vietnam to preach Caodaism to the people in this region, emphasizing that, “I gave you this heavy but important duty to spread Caodaism in Central Vietnam. Remember to behave”. Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển, 1972, p.76
- ⁷ Original Message: “Từ đây nòi giống chằng chia ba - Thấy hiệp các con lại một nhà- Nam, Bắc cùng rồi ra ngoại quốc - Chủ quyền chon đạo một mình ta”. *Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển*, 1972, p.76
- ⁸ Sun Yat Sen (1866 – 1925) was the Leader of the Chinese Revolution in 1911. Later on, through spirit-writing, He was believed to reveal himself as a Saint in Caodaism.
- ⁹ Original message: “Một ngày kia, Trung Hoa sẽ thờ Đạo đạo đế, còn nước Mỹ sẽ lãnh trách nhiệm đi truyền giáo toàn cầu”.
- ¹⁰ Original Message: “Thầy dặn các con một điều, nhứt nhứt đều đợi lệnh Thầy, chằng nên lấy tứ riêng mà phán đoán chi hết. Phận sự và trách nhiệm các con, Thầy đã được trước, song giờ ngày chưa đến, phải tuân lời Thầy nghe!”. *Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển*, 1972, p. 7

- 11 The first thing the Sacerdotal Council did was to cooperate with the Cao Đài people living in the United States who wanted to return and assist the Sacerdotal Council to develop Caodaism. Accordingly, Priest Trần Quang Cảnh was appointed to be the President of the Cao Đài Overseas Missionary, in charge of overseas missions. With the assistance of Priest Trần Quang Cảnh, the Sacerdotal Council could tighten international relationships with other religious organizations, for example Daesoon Jinrihoe in South Korea, Oomoto in Japan, Weixin Shengjiao, Daoyuan, Yiguandao in Taiwan and went on missions in Asia and then France, Austria, Italy, Vatican ect., and supported different universities to incorporate Caodaism into their teaching programs, for example in the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh, the University of Vienna in Austria, the Missouri University and the Kansas University in the US ect. In addition, big media companies such as AP, National Geographic, ARTE, Arab, New York Times etc., have made documentaries on Caodaism.

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