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THE FORMALIZATION AND INTENSIFICATION OF RITUALS: THE CULT OF “108 EFFICACY AND HEROIC MARTYRS” IN VIETNAM

Abstract

The worship of “108 Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt (Efficacy and Heroic Martyrs)” of the Hainan Chinese had its primary form taken place long time ago in Hainan Island but was then standardized and formalized in Vietnam after one incident occurred on the central coast of the country. In 1851, a group of Hainanese merchants were unjustly killed offshore. In the same year, they were vindicated and ordained by King Tự Đức of the Nguyễn Vietnam. With imperial sanction, the worship easily transformed its sacred symbolisms, thus becoming a public cult and significant landmark of the Hainan Chinese communities in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. The cult followed the Hainanese merchants in spreading to Hainan Island of China. From the perspective of cultural studies, combined with historical research and fieldwork methods, the authors find out that this expansion is not spontaneous. Nonetheless, it contains the collective consciousness and rhetorical narratives of the Hainanese community. The worship of 108 Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt has to a certain extent become a symbol of the “going-upstream spirit” of the community, which covers hidden cultural and political discourse in a cross-border context.

Keywords: Vietnam, ethnic Hainan Chinese, 108 Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt, ritual formalization, self-deployed narrative

Introduction

The object of the study, “108 Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt” (108昭應英烈, eng. 108 Efficacy and Heroic Martyrs, hereafter: CUAL), began with an incident that occurred in

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the Quảng Ngãi offshore area in Central Vietnam nearly 170 years ago. The official history records of the Nguyễn Dynasty described as follows:

„In April 1851, pirates robbed many transport ships off the coast of Quảng Nam Province. The imperial and local fleets sent to defeat the pirates would be punished if they failed to stop piracy. The king appointed Tôn Thất SỰ and Phạm Xích to lead the Bắng Đòan fleet to fight against the pirates offshore of Quảng Nam.

[. . .] In May 1851, Tôn and Phạm defeated many pirate organizations in the area. After that, Tôn and Phạm met three ships in the waters of Quảng Ngãi. They suspected that the people on the three ships were pirates and immediately ordered artillery fire. One sank, one fled to the east, and the other was hit by the fire. All members on the ships, about 70-80 people, were killed. Tôn and Phạm reported to the court and demanded awards.

The king became suspicious and ordered officials to investigate the matter secretly. The results showed that on April 18, 1851, there were three strange ships mooring outside the Thị Nại Estuary. Tôn and Phạm ordered artillery fire. The strange ships fled to the east. Tôn and Phạm caught up with the ships. When inquiring, the people on board showed legal merchant cards issued by the Vietnamese agents. They said they were on the way to return to Hainan after doing business in Central Vietnam. Tôn and Phạm firmly did not believe them and ordered them to be killed. A total of 76 people were killed and thrown into the sea. [. . .] The king ordered the execution of Tôn, Phạm and other related personnel”³

The incident was then carved on two stone steles erected in front of the main hall of Chiêu Ứng Temple of the ethnic Hainan Chinese in Đà Nẵng.⁴ The content is as follows:

“On July 16, 1851 (the Year of the Pig), the imperial fleet Bắng Đòan was moored at Thị Nại Pier (Quy Nhơn City). Tôn Thất Thiệu and Phạm Xích were on their mission of patrolling and defeating the pirates from Huế capital down to Bình Định waters. The two captains got a message about three strange junk boats moored on Chiêm Dư Island of Quảng Ngãi Province. [. . .] Bắng Đòan fleet decided to shoot at the junk boats. The junk boats were burned down [. . .], and everyone on board was arrested. The boatmen claimed to be legitimate Chinese businessmen on Hainan Island. They were doing business in Central Vietnam and were about to return to Hainan. After searching, they found only valuable cargo on board, but no weapons. Although they knew that the boatmen were honest merchants, out of greed, Tôn ordered everyone to be killed, a total of 108 people.

On June 17th that year, officials of the Bắng Đòan fleet sent a report to the court

3 *Đại Nam Thực Lục Chính Biên* (Vol. VI, entry 1851), National Bureau of History of the Nguyễn Court 2007.

4 The temple was erected and operated by the local Hainan Chinese in Đà Nẵng City. By 2016, these two *steles* (stone slabs) have been put into storage for unknown reason.

describing their glorious deeds. But that night, in his dream, the Vietnamese King saw 108 people appear and cried that they had been unjustly killed. After waking up, King Tự Đức became very suspicious. He ordered the Ministry of Justice to investigate the matter. Investigations revealed that due to Ton and Pham's greed, these Hainese merchants were unfairly killed. The king was enraged and ordered the execution of Tôn and Phạm and expelled the others. Then, the king granted the official "Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt" to those unjustly killed at sea and ordered the Hainese locals in Vietnam to build altars to worship them.

Then, the king granted the imperial title "Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt/昭應英烈" to those unjustly killed at sea and ordered the local Hainese community to set up altars to worship them. It is said that 108 CUAL are very sacred, and they often rescue seafarers in distress. Since then, Hainese communities across Vietnam have built temples and held annual sacrifices on the sixth full moon of the lunar calendar".⁵

We conducted a field survey from the Central to the Southern parts of Vietnam and discovered that Hainan Chinese in Đà Nẵng, Hội An, Vạn Giã, Nha Trang, Ho Chi Minh City, Rạch Giá, Phú Quốc, etc. tell basically similar stories.⁶ A few small details may be added in some samples. For example, one account tells us that 108 CUAL appeared in King Tự Đức's dreams many times. Another account tells us that 107 people were killed and 1 of them survived, but does not explain how this person was saved from being killed. Especially in the Hainan Native Place Association in Rạch Giá City, we were told that the incident had occurred in the Cambodian Sea and the boatmen had been killed by pirates. We will discuss this detail again in the following section of this article. In Malaysia (Penang, Johor, Kuala Lumpur), Singapore, Southern Thailand, and Indonesia (Bali), we discovered two versions of stories circulating among the Hainese Chinese, one is similar to the carved version on the steles in Đà Nẵng, and the other simply matches the story of Xiongdi Gong on Hainan Island. Field investigations in Cambodia and the Philippines have not been conducted, therefore, the study does not cover these places.

Comparing the two above records, we learned the following points: (1) In the summer of 1851, three Hainese merchant ships were fired, and people on board were all killed; (2) They were legal merchants to trade in Central Vietnam and were about to return to Hainan; (3) After investigation, the officials appointed by the Nguyễn court found that they were not pirates, but still ordered the killing and robbery; (4) King Tự Đức became suspicious, ordering the secret investigation, then discovering the truth and ordering the the execution of guilty officials, and (5) The king granted the deceased an official title and allowed the Quảng Nam and Quảng Ngãi Hainan communities to establish altars to worship and pay regular sacrifices.

In addition to the incompatibility in the timing of the incident, there are two

⁵ Fieldwork Notes, 2017, 2018.

⁶ There is limited number of Hainan Chinese living in Northern Vietnam. So far, there is no record of the CUAL Cult and temple in that region.

significant differences between the two versions, namely: (1) The king's secret investigation released 76 victims at sea. Tôn and Phạm had estimated between 70 and 80 in their report. The number in the Hainan local stories is fixed at 108. It is worth noting that the numbers 70, 76 or 80 have no special notation, while 108 is a special symbol that contains the spirit of Chinese Confucianism: righteousness and heroism. The authors will discuss this number later, (2) In the official account, King Tự Đức ordered the Hainan communities in Quảng Nam and Quảng Ngãi to set up altars to worship the dead on the sea as a normal domestic cult, however, the folk accounts said that the king allowed the Hainan people throughout Vietnam to establish temples and worship them as a public cult. During the early Nguyễn Dynasty, the king's laws were very strict. There was no misunderstanding of the royal decree. Therefore, the worship of CUAL later developed into public cult and was further officially recognized.

In recent centuries, Chinese popular cults transmitted from southern China to Southeast Asia are diverse, such as Guandi (關帝, Chinese God of War), Tianhou (天后), Beidi (北帝, Northern Emperor), the earth god (土地神), the god of wealth (財神), etc., however, it is not common to see a "going upstream" cult which had been established or completed in Southeast Asia, sanctioned by an Southeast Asian emperor, and was reversely transmitted to China. In the past four hundred years, countless incidents of Chinese immigrants being massacred in various parts of Southeast Asia have occurred repeatedly, and the dead have been respected by the local Chinese community, however, only the CUAL Cult from Vietnam were officially recognized and spread.

Literature Review

For a long time, the study of Chinese immigrants, settlement, development, and their cultural/social issues in Vietnam and Southeast Asia has been one of the main issues in the regional and world academic circles⁷. Although the Chinese in Southeast Asia are composed of many local dialects categorized by local languages such as Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew (Chaozhou), Hakka, and Hainanese. Most of the works in this field utilize these dialect clusters when studying. Only a few people discussed the issues of each group separately. For example, Skinner⁸ conduct-

7 Such as: William Skinner, *Report on the Chinese in Southeast Asia*, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY., 1951; Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, Oxford University Press, London, 1965; *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, Peter Gosling and Linda Lim, (eds.), Vol. 2: Identity, Culture and Politics, Maruzen Asia, Singapore, 1983; *Ethnic Chinese as Southeast Asians*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Leo Suryadinata (ed.), Singapore, 1997; Gung-wu Wang, *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000; Chee-Beng Tan, *Chinese overseas comparative cultural studies*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2004; *The Chinese Diaspora in the Pacific 1500-1900*, Anthony Reid (ed.), Variorum, Ashgate, 2008; *Chinese Encounters in Southeast Asia: How People, Money, and Ideas from China are Changing a Region*, Pål Nyiri & Danielle Tan (eds.), University of Washington Press, Seattle, and London, 2017; *China's rise and the Chinese Overseas*, Bernard Wong & Chee-Beng Tan (eds), Routledge, London & New York, 2019.

8 William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY., 1950; William Skinner, *Leadership and Power in the Chinese Community in Thailand*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY., 1958.

ed research on the Chinese in Thailand, Freedman⁹ in Singapore, Omohundro¹⁰ in the Philippines, Fujiwara¹¹, Amer¹², Barrett¹³, and Wheeler¹⁴ et al. in Vietnam. Among the researchers working in the Chinese community in Vietnam, only three to four are focused on the Hainanese community, including Barrett (2012) who discussed the mobility and relationships among the pepper growers of the Hainanese ethnic group in the Hà Tiên area (Vietnam) under French rule at the beginning of the 20th century. Li Tana¹⁵ and Nola Cooke¹⁶ partially mentioned small Hainan traders and their long-distance dried fish trade between Hainan Island, Cà Mau (Vietnam) and Singapore in the 18th and 19th centuries. Grace¹⁷ investigated the local institutions, education, and Chinese language learning of Chinese (mainly Hainanese) on Phú Quốc Island in Vietnam; and Trần Thị Bích Thủy¹⁸ studied the current situation of the Cult of 108 CUAL among the Hainanese communities in Central and Southern Vietnam in her Master's thesis.

After visiting Southeast Asia, Chinese writer Shi Cangjin (2014, 92-101) used part of his/her article to describe the *status quo* of the Cult of CUAL in Malaysia and Southern Thailand, mainly listing the number and location of related temples and dates of establishment. Shi emphasized that 108 CUAL temples and ceremonial communities are mainly located in coastal areas, which were approached by premodern Hainanese merchants by boats. This description is in line with the statement of Li Tana¹⁹ and Nola Cooke,²⁰ involving long-distance coastal trade routes from Hainan Island to Singapore via Central and Southern Vietnam, the coast of Cambodia, Southern Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore during the 18th and 19th centuries.

It is important to mention that the pioneer of the worship of 108 CUAL originated from the folk culture of Hainan Island from a very early time. Its original form is called "Xiongdi Gong (兄弟公, the Brothers)" and is believed to have occurred in the Ming Dynasty (AD 1368-1644). Chinese researcher Li Qingxin discussed in detail

9 Maurice Freedman, *Chinese Family and Marriage in Singapore*, H/M/ Stationery Office, London, 1957.

10 John Omohundro, *Chinese Merchant Families in Iloilo = (Shang Chia): Commerce and Kin in a Central Philippine City*, Ateneo de Manila University Press, Quezon City, Metro Manila & Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio, 1981.

11 Fujiwara Riichiro, "Chính sách đối với dân Trung Hoa di cư của các triều đại Việt Nam (Policies towards Chinese Migrants of the Vietnamese Dynasties)", *Khảo cổ tập san*, No. 8, Archaeological Institute & Ministry of Culture, Education and Youth, Sài Gòn, 1974.

12 Ramases Amer, *The ethnic Chinese in Vietnam and Sino-Vietnamese Relations*, Forum, Kuala Lumpur, 1991.

13 Tracy Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia – The overseas Chinese in Indo-China*, I.B. Tauris, London & New York, 2012.

14 Charles Wheeler, *Interests, Institutions, and Identity: Strategic Adaptation and the Ethno-evolution of Minh Huong (Central Vietnam), 16th-19th centuries*, *Itinerario*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2015.

15 Tana Li, "The Late-Eighteenth- and Early-Nineteenth-Century Mekong Delta in the Regional Trade System", in: *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750–1880*, Nola Cooke and Li Tana (eds.), Rowman & Little Field Publishers, Inc., Singapore, 2004.

16 Nola Cooke, "Water World: Chinese and Vietnamese on the Riverine Water Frontier, from Ca Mau to Tonle Sap (c. 1850-1884)", in: *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750–1880*, Nola Cooke and Li Tana (eds.), Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.

17 Lay Grace, *The Hoa of Phu Quoc in Vietnam: Local Institutions, Education, and Studying Mandarin*, *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, Vol.6, No. 2, 2010, pp. 311-332.

18 Thủy Trần, "Tục thờ 108 vị Chiếu Ứng Anh Liệt của cộng đồng người Hoa Hải Nam ở Nam Bộ Việt Nam (The Cult of 108 Chiếu Ứng Anh Liệt of the Ethnic Hainan Chinese in South Vietnam)", MA Thesis, USSH, VNU-HCM, Ho Chi Minh City, 2016.

19 Tana Li, "The Late-Eighteenth- and Early-Nineteenth-Century Mekong Delta in the Regional Trade System" . . . p. 96.

20 *Ibidem*, pp. 139-156.

the origin and evolution of this folk worship of Hainan fishermen and merchants on the island. However, focusing on the Hainan culture on Hainan Island, the authors ignored the impact of the formalization and standardization process of this worship in Vietnam after the 1851 Incident and came to conclude that this is a large-scale worship distributed from Hainan Island to Southeast Asia. Similarly, Shi Cangjin quoted local stories in Hainan Island and told the story of 109 fishermen who went out to sea to fish, of which 108 were killed by pirates and only one was still alive.²¹ In this study, we prove the opposite direction, confirming that the worship of Xiongdi Gong was firstly a simple, unsystematic, and changeable folk cult originated in Hainan's fishermen and merchant communities,²² which was then "formalized/standardized" to be the official public Cult of 108 CUAL (昭應英烈) after the 1851 Incident in Vietnam, reversely spread to Hainan, and further distributed in many parts of Southeast Asia. This ritual formalization and intensification are used as a significant channel to hinder communal rhetoric narratives.

Today, the 108 CUAL temples or co-worship altars are seen in many places in Southeast Asia, e.g., Zhaoying Temple in Bali, Indonesia (built in 1888); Hainanese Zhaoying Temple in Bangrak, Bangkok (1871), Zhaoying Temple (1895), and Ciying Temple (date unknown) in Nakhon Si Thammarat, Zhaoying Temple in Samut Sakhon, and another Zhaoying Temple in Pattani, Thailand; local Hainanese temples in Penang, Kedah Perlis, Teluk Intan (Perak), Malacca, Ketam, Mersing (Johor), Terengganu, and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; the Hainan Native Place Temple in Raffles Place (1857) and Zhaoying Temple in Toa Payoh, Singapore (1940),²³ including Goddess Tianhou (天后), Goddess Shuiwei (水尾 Goddess of Water), and Goddess Yimei (懿美, also called Xian furen 洗夫人). The 108 CUAL Cult has been the identity marker of Hainan Chinese communities in Southeast Asia.

So far, the worship of 108 CUAL is not a special case of the formalization (officialization) of Chinese popular cults and rituals that took place outside China. In another research, the study of the Buddhist Sect of Minh Nguyệt cư sĩ lâm (明月居士林) of Chaozhou Chinese in Southern Vietnam and its relationship with Mingyue Shanshe (明月善社) in Guangdong (China) and Buddhism Sect of Shingonshu (真言宗) in Japan showed similar characteristics. The Cult of Songchan Master (宋禪祖師) was first formed in Guangdong China under a hybrid integration of Chinese Buddhism, Taoism, and Japanese Shingonshu. After spreading to southern Vietnam in 1945, it went through formalization processes and successfully registered a legal status with the Saigon Government in 1954,²⁴ and later became the official lay Buddhist Sect. From 1970 to 1980, the Chinese Vietnamese immigrants brought the sect to Cana-

21 Jin Shi, 马来西亚海南籍华人的民间信仰考察 (An Investigation of the Folk Beliefs of the Hainanese Chinese in Malaysia), 《世界宗教研究》 (*World Religion Studies*), 2014, pp. 97-98.

22 Qingxin Li, "海南兄弟公信仰及其在东南亚传播 (The Cult of Xiongdi Gong in Hainan and its Spread in Southeast Asia)", 2018, available at: https://www.sohu.com/a/251934588_556522 (accessed September 27, 2020).

23 Jin Shi, An Investigation of the Folk Beliefs of the Hainanese Chinese in Malaysia). . . *World Religion Studies*, 2014, p. 97.

24 One of the conditions for approval is that the sect must clearly define its religious nature; therefore, it has been registered as an Orthodox Buddhist Sect.

da, the United States, and Australia, making it a cross-border religious institution.²⁵

Similarly, the worship of 108 CUAL has long existed as a firm public cult among the Hainan Chinese in Southeast Asia and Hainan Island. What makes the cult unchanged after being formalized? What causes the cult to spread back to China? What does the formalization process of the CUAL Cult tell us? Has the religious reform instilled and enriched the social capital of the Hainanese community in contemporary Vietnamese society?

To answer these questions, the authors of this article use both historical research and fieldwork methods to point out and compare facts, and meanings, so that the hidden cultural and political discourses in the local Hainan Chinese community in Vietnam can be discovered. In addition, the study also discusses and analyzes the historical cross-border condition of the CUAL Cult in Vietnam, Southeast Asia, and China, emphasizing its deep-rooted existence and development through two waves of ritual formalization and intensification after the 1851 Incident.

In the absence of systematic research on the ethnic Hainanese in Vietnam, research on the worship of the 108 CUAL in this community should rely more on field investigations. This issue has been put in our research plan since 2015. We conducted several field trips in different coastal locations in Central and Southern Vietnam so that we can get in touch with the local Hainanese community. Thirty-eight in-depth interviews composed of random and semi-structural samples were conducted, half of which were interviews with community leaders and liturgical masters, the rest were with the masses such as local elites, shopkeepers, farmers, fishermen in Central and Southern Vietnam. In addition, we have gone to Bangkok (Thailand), Manila (Philippines), Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Kedah, and Ipoh (Malaysia), Bali and Tanjung Pinang (Indonesia), and some places in Southern Thailand for fieldwork investigation to locate the 108 CUAL-related worship and religious Hainanese communities. From the perspective of Southeast Asia, many findings are indeed useful to supplement the main argument of this research.

Religious Activities Dedicated to 108 CUAL

Temple and Religious Community Network

Among the 832,000 Chinese in Vietnam today, the Hainan Chinese has the least number, occupying about 4% of the total Chinese population.²⁶ They are mainly restaurant owners, service providers in urban areas, fishermen, and farmers in rural areas. Except for big cities such as Hochiminh City and Đà Nẵng, the ethnic Hainan Chinese mainly live in coastal towns and villages.

In addition to Guandi, Tianhou, and other Chinese marine protection gods, 108

25 Satohiro Serizawa, "Japanese Buddhism and Chinese Sub-ethnic Culture: Instances of a Chinese Buddhist Organization from Shantou to Vietnam", in: *After Migration and Religious Affiliation*, Tan Chee-Beng (ed.), World Scientific, 2015, pp. 311-327. See also: Nguyen Tho, Huynh Ba, *The Transmission and Adaptation of Ethnic Chinese Culture in Vietnam: Case Study of Minh Nguyệt Cu Si Lam*, *Research on Marine History*, Vol. 20, 2020.

26 Maw-Kuey Tsai, *Les Chinois au Sud-Vietnam* (The Chinese in South Vietnam), Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1968.

CUAL are recognized as fishermen's "marine protectors" in the local Hainan Chinese. They are honored with the royal title "Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt (昭應英烈)" or "Chiêu Ứng Công (昭應公)" (granted by King Tự Đức in 1851) and are worshipped in independent temples (called Chiêu Ứng Từ, 昭應祠, Zhaoying Temple) or are co-worshipped in temples of other gods by the Hainanese locals. Together with 108 CUAL, the Hainan Chinese also worship Yi-mei Goddess (懿美) and Shui-wei Goddess (水尾).

In Central Vietnam, 108 CUAL are worshiped as major deities in at least 8 major temples, i.e., in Huế, Hội An, Đà Nẵng, Tam Kỳ, Nha Trang, Vạn Giã, Phan Thiết. Among them, the temples in Hội An and Đà Nẵng are the two largest ones while the temple in Vạn Giã is closer to the community.²⁷ Besides, they are co-worshipped as subordinate deities in local Guandi (關帝) and Tianhou (天后) temples in many other coastal towns and cities. In Southern Vietnam, there are only two separate temples to worship 108 CUAL in Cà Mau City (Cà Mau Province) and Lấp Vò District (Đồng Tháp Province), while their altars can be found in local Chinese temples in Ho Chi Minh City, Vũng Tàu, Mỹ Tho, Rạch Giá, Kiên Lương, Hà Tiên, and Phú Quốc.²⁸ There is no hierarchical relationship between these temples. On the contrary, they have established and maintained horizontal and spontaneous connections with fellow Hainanese and other Chinese religious bodies. From June 14th to 16th of each lunar calendar, annual ceremonies commemorating 108 CUAL are held in major places.²⁹

Outside of Vietnam, the 108 CUAL temples are seen in western part of Hainan Island of China where they are called "108 Zhaoying Gong" or 108 Xiongdi Gong. In Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, 108 CUAL are subordinately annexed to local Guandi or Tianhou temples. In Thailand, more CUAL temples and co-worship altars are found in the southeastern coast of the country.³⁰

Main ritual activities

As mentioned above, the main ceremony is solemnized from June 14th to 16th in the lunar calendar every year. Preparations must be done in advance. Let us take the ceremony of Vạn Giã (Khánh Hòa Province) as a good example. The ceremony starts from 12:00 am of June 15. Ritual masters, community leaders, and young men performed the *rước thiết* ritual or Invitation Rite by setting an altar with the tablet of 108 CUAL at the seaside (in front of the temple), offering paper money, paper clothes, cooked foods, and other sacrifice items. The ceremonial master chants the oracle in the Hainan dialect, inviting 108 CUAL and other Hainanese who passed away at sea to join the grand rituals at the temple. During the seaside ceremony, sacrificed money and clothes are burned. After the ceremony, people bring the tab-

27 Hainan Chinese temples in Đà Nẵng, Hội An, Tam Kỳ also serve as the local "Hainanese Native Place Hall". The temple in Vạn Giã does not have this function.

28 See Hainanese Temple Executive Board, Quỳnh Phủ hội quán Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh (The Hainanese Association of Qiongfu in Ho Chi Minh City), Ho Chi Minh City, 2006.

29 Fieldwork Data, 2016, 2018.

30 Jin Shi, An Investigation of the Folk Beliefs of the Hainanese Chinese in Malaysia. . . p. 97.

lets back to the temple. The community stipulates that the person who brings the tablet back to the temple will be responsible for the daily sacrifice activities during the following ritual year.³¹

The main ceremony is held on the morning of June 15. The ritual performers include the following:

The liturgical master (the most important one).

Two side liturgical masters, one is responsible for the sacrificial activities on the altar of the god of wealth, the other is responsible for the altar of the deceased preceders.

An oral liturgical master reading out ritual activities and principles to guide the three above liturgical masters.

Major devotees: representatives of local Hainan community.

All the above men wear traditional Hainanese long dresses, and their actions and manners are solemnly performed. The main ritual is held in about 20-30 minutes, including 7 steps:

Step 1: After ringing the bells and beating of drums, four liturgical masters stand in front of the outdoor altar, making sacrifices for the space deities ("ngũ thổ long thần").

Step 2: The major master and two side masters return to the hall, bow three times, and offer incense.

Step 3: The major master performs sacrifice wine three times including foods.

Step 4: The major master reads three spells praying for peace and prosperity, then bows three times.

Step 5: 108 sets of paper clothes and paper banknotes are sacrificed. For those temples far away from the sea, this sacrifice can be performed by the sea.

Step 6: Three liturgical masters return to the main hall. All ceremonial masters and participants bow three times at the tablet of 108 CUAL and preceders.

Step 7: All participants perform the ritual of cutting the ribbon to end the ceremony.

Offering items include incense sticks, 108 sets of paper clothes, fruits, roast pork, three-sacrifice items such as crab, pork, egg, rice, porridge, tea, wine, and flowers. In the large-scale ceremony, the ritual organizers prepare at least 5 roasted pigs, including 3 roasted pigs dedicated to the 108 CUAL altar and 2 roasted pigs for the two side altars.³²

The community festival starts on June 16. Members of the local Hainan community and other participants attend communal gatherings and parties, sharing their life and business experience.

31 Verbally stated by Mr. D.N.N, a member of the executive board, June 21, 2015.

32 Verbally stated by P.C.N., Tam Kỳ, December 5, 2015.

Usually, the rituals held in 108 CUAL temples are larger in scale and attract more participants than the rituals held in the temples where the 108 CUAL are worshipped as subordinate deities, e.g., in local Guandi or Tianhou Temple.

Nowadays, thanks to convenient road traffic system and communication platforms, large-scale ceremonies are alternatively held in a temple in the same region every year. Hainan representatives and people from different communities in the region gather to participate in shared activities. The rest CUAL temples in the region set up small-scale sacrifice annually. Mr. B.A.Q. said: "In the past, the annual anniversary of 108 CUAL held at each local temple was regular, but a little lonely. Later, temple committees were linked together, and large-scale ceremonies have been alternatively held in different temples, making the activities more and more interesting".³³

On the day of the main ceremony, community representatives gather in large group to worship 108 CUAL, which is called *Đoàn bái* (collective sacrifice) ritual.³⁴ The "*Đoàn bái*" ritual is very good. It is an opportunity for Hainan compatriots to meet and share their feelings with each other".³⁵ In any case, the change of the anniversary has expanded the ritual space of Hainanese communities, which empower them socially and culturally.

The Multivocality of the 108 CUAL Ritual Space

Standardizing the Gods, Formalizing Ethnic Culture

In essence, the CUAL Cult has now become a public cult, but it is closely related to the domestic cult, i.e., the worship of ancestors and the public folk worship of lonely ghosts in Chinese culture. It is a product of deification and has been dramatically changing after 1851 Incident. In the period before 1851, Hainan fishermen, merchants, and immigrants to Southeast Asia maintained their spontaneous and unorganized worship of Xiongdi Gong – the collective worship of the lonely ghosts who have been killed at sea. The 1851 Incident became a turning point, pushing this worship to a new stage, i.e., the process of deification and formalization.

Robert Weller once said, "[M]ystification theories point out to an important pressure on Chinese religion to conform to the structure of power, and the traditional elite increased those pressures through the state cult."³⁶ Under the strong motive of consolidation and uprising, the Hainan Chinese in Vietnam utilized the royal decree of King Tự Đức in 1851 to deify the "108 lonely ghosts" into "108 martyrs/deities" and transform the folk worship into a structured and formalized one. In Chinese language, the term "108 Zhaoying Gong (一百零八位昭應公)" or "108 Zhaoy-

33 In-depth interview with B.A.Q. 56 years old, Vạn Giã, 2017.

34 The "*Đoàn bái* Ritual" is regularly held in all Chinese temples in the Hoi An area in the morning of the first day of the Lunar New Year (Fieldwork Data, 2017).

35 In-depth interview with T. B. L. 52 years old, Hoi An, 2019.

36 Robert Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion*, University of Washington Press, Macmillan, London & Seattle, 1987, p. 143.

ing Yinglie³⁷ (一百零八位昭應英烈)" means 108 efficacy heroes.

It is worth noting that the royal decree of King Tự Đức in 1851 allowed local Hainanese communities in Central Vietnam to build altars to honor and pay rituals to the victims of the 1851 Incident, however, the cult has been designedly modified and intensified into a complete public cult. While domestic cult "ideologizes ancestors into a model of kinship," directly reiterating family solidarity and filial piety,³⁸ the public cult carries common values shared by the entire community. If domestic cult and public cult are located at the poles of the family and the community, then the worship of preceders is located in between. Therefore, the 108 CUAL Cult covers the entire spectrum of family and community ritual spaces.

On the other hand, the worship of 108 CUAL has been formalized from the folk worship of lonely ghosts. Generally, the Chinese divide invisible forces into three main categories, namely gods, ghosts, and ancestors including deceased preceders. Accordingly, both gods and ancestors are worshiped regularly but ghosts are not. On the seventh full moon day of each year, people held the ceremony of "feeding the lonely ghost" and regard it as a symbol of humanity.³⁹ The transition from a folk cult to a formal cult is closely related to the so-called "standardization" mechanism, which is a common part of Chinese culture.

The "standardization" mechanism is a state-sanctioned form of Confucian orthopraxy. It screens, selects, and formalizes local cultural practices to adapt to Confucian orthodox concepts and carry state-recognized values. James Watson (1985), in his research on the Chinese goddess Tianhou in Southeastern China, concluded that the goddess originated from a naturally dead shaman woman, who was then deified as a protector deity by the folks and was primarily worshipped by local seafarers. Then, she was "standardized" to carry values recognized by the empire and was repeatedly granted the official titles of "Lady (夫人)," "the Heavenly Concubine (天妃)," and finally "the Heavenly Empress (天后). According to Watson, repeated ordinations made the goddess Tianhou a "tool" to help build the "unified culture" of the late Imperial China.

Based on Watson's concept, Sutton and others further discussed and modified the concept of "standardization" in the direction of analyzing the multi-layer discourse in each specific situation to see the movement, response, and narratives of grassroots communities. Therefore, the existence, evolution, and significance of religious practice are governed by temporary political views on the one hand, and on the other hand, it vividly reflects the symbolic power and desire of the community from the grassroots. The process of deification and formalization of the 108 CUAL Cult in this study is very consistent with Sutton's views, strongly expressing the active role of the community and their rhetoric narratives.⁴⁰

37 Chinese translation of the term "Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt" granted by Vietnamese King Tự Đức. Many temples in Hainan Island and South-east Asia adopted this name.

38 Robert Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion*. . . p. 24.

39 Ibidem, p. 113.

40 Donald Sutton, Introduction to the Special Issue: Ritual, Cultural Standardization, and Orthopraxy in China – Reconsidering James L. Watson's ideas, *Modern China*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2007, pp. 3-21.

It is said that, in multi-ethnic areas or remote areas, the characteristics of “Chineseness” have been strongly defined. The purpose is to draw the line of distinction between Chinese and non-Chinese. In other words, the so-called “Chineseness” will be emphasized when it encounters other cultures.⁴¹ In this case study, the local Hainanese community deals with the Vietnamese people and culture, which is actually very familiar with Chinese-styled “standardization” and Confucian values. Obviously, the local Chinese ritual space must be explained in each specific context and in the intertwined relationship between the various ethnic groups in Southeast Asia. Today, although this mechanism of late imperialism has long since ended, the “formalization” of culture has gradually become a “natural reflection and transformation” process.

The Hybridity of Various Components in the 108 CUAL Cult

The formalized Cult of 108 CUAL consists of three main parts: the folk Xiongdi Gong Cult, the uprising spirit of 108 righteous uprisers or heroes in *Shuihuzhuan*,⁴² and the royal decree of the Nguyễn Dynasty of Vietnam. As discussed by Li Qingxin (2018), the Xiongdi Gong Cult first took place on Hainan Island in the Ming Dynasty. Hainanese merchants and immigrants spread it to Vietnam before the 1851 Incident. Ancient traces of the old Xiongdi Gong Cult can now be found on Hainan Island, for example, at the Xiongdi Gong Temple in Anquan Village of Lingao District. Local history shows that these temples were originally built to worship those who lost their lives at sea, later renamed “108 Xiongdi Gong Temple,” and has commonly acknowledged by local fishermen and sea merchants.⁴³ The number “108” was then attached to the cult on this island after the 1851 Incident in Vietnam. Other local groups such as Cantonese, Hokkien, Chaozhou and Hakka Chinese in Vietnam and Southeast Asia may also have similar lonely ghost cults, but they have nothing to do with number 108. Many locals on Hainan Island now believe that they are the reincarnation of the 108 Uprising Heroes of *Shuihuzhuan*⁴⁴ who “rescue” victims offshore. If this number was attached to the Xiongdi Gong Cult before the 1851 Incident, then who did they oppose and why did they do that?

During our 2016 field trip, the authors uncovered a similar explanation about the significance of the number 108 in Rạch Giá City of Southern Vietnam. A member of the Hainanese Temple Executive Committee verbally stated and further em-

41 See: Ming-ke Wang, “From the Qiang Barbarians to Qiang Nationality: The Making of a New Chinese Boundary”, in: *Imagining China: Regional Division and National Unity*, Shu-min Huang, and Cheng-kuang Hsu (eds.), Institute of Ethnology, Taipei, 1999, pp. 43-80. Also see: Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2001; Donald Sutton, Introduction to the Special Issue: Ritual, Cultural Standardization, and Orthopraxy in China – Reconsidering James L. Watson’s ideas. . .

42 《水滸傳》, written by Shi Nayan (1296-1370?), is one of the four classic Chinese novels, focusing on 108 anti-imperial rebels, called “108 Liang Shanbo Uprising Heroes.”

43 Qingxin Li, 海南兄弟公信仰及其在东南亚传播 (*The Cult of Xiongdi Gong in Hainan and its Spread in Southeast Asia*), 2018, available at: https://www.sohu.com/a/251934588_556522 (accessed September 27, 2020).

44 Ibidem.

phasized the incarnation of 108 Liang Shanbo heroes in the Hainan communities, making the worship a reality.⁴⁵ He said: "They are extremely sacred and efficacious. Many victims of shipwreck and robbery were rescued."⁴⁶ In Cà Mau City, a Hainan merchant, Mr. NTD (60 years old, 2017), confirmed that only the Hainan Chinese worship 108 CUAL and his lineage fellows in Malaysia and Indonesia all worship them. Obviously, in our long-term field survey in 2014-2017, the authors did not hear any stories about 108 CUAL among the non-Hainanese Chinese in the whole region of the Lower Mekong Delta. The authors similarly have not seen this cult in non-Hainan Chinese temples all over Southeast Asia. Therefore, the cult is undoubtedly the shared symbol of the Hainan Chinese communities. Like other South Chinese dialect groups, Hainan Chinese is considered as a transnational community and has long-established connections and networks between Hainan Island and Southeast Asia.⁴⁷ As a shared symbol of the entire group, it conveys the psychological and cultural characteristics of the entire group population that can easily be propagated from Hainan Island to other Hainan Chinese communities in many countries in Southeast Asia and vice versa.

How many Hainan Chinese in Vietnam, Southeast Asia and Hainan Island believe in the "magic power" of 108 CUAL members at sea? As analyzed above, the belief on 108 CUAL is both a spiritual faith and socio-political symbol that is mutually interactive with one another, making the cult widespread among the Hainan Chinese communities inside and outside of Vietnam. Firstly, the transmission and formalization of the Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt Cult fulfill the actual spiritual demand of Hainanese seafarers. Mr. PCN (Tam Kỳ) said: "In the past, weather forecasting and sea rescue technology were backward, and Hainan seafarers left the safety of their lives to gods. The seamen told each other that 108 CUAL took turns to help those in distress."⁴⁸ In 2015, many members of the Hainan Native Place Association in Rạch Giá had told similar stories, emphasizing that all Hainanese seafarers must offer sacrifices to 108 CUAL before going to sea. Even though the Hainan Native Place Association in Rạch Giá is in the vicinity of the Tianhou Temple which is dedicated to the "standardized" sea protector, surprisingly, the local informants did not mention the power and merits of 108 CUAL in rescuing victims at sea. Instead, they believed that the Tianhou goddess is a common benevolent and/or custodial goddess in the local Chinese belief. Similarly, local Hainanese in Penang (Malaysia) had the same idea about 108 CUAL and Tianhou goddess. In addition, the 1851 Incident and the worship of the dead in the CUAL Cult seem to have faded, while its role as a marine protector cult has been emphasized. Secondly, the worship of 108 CUAL marks the

45 Fieldwork Data, 2016.

46 Interview with Mr. TMK, 63 years old, 2016.

47 Nola Cooke, "Water World: Chinese and Vietnamese on the Riverine Water Frontier, from Ca Mau to Tonle Sap (c. 1850-1884)", in: *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, Nola Cooke and Li Tana (eds.), Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD., 2004, pp. 139-156. See also Tracy Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia - the Overseas Chinese in Indo-China*, I.B. Tauris, London & New York, 2012.

48 Interview in 2016.

strengthening of group identity-making among Hainanese communities overseas, therefore, it carries social, cultural, and political values. Hainan Chinese in Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand tend to focus on the Hainanese-ness when talking about the cult.⁴⁹ While many Hainan community leaders in Vietnam stress on both this cult and the worship of the Yi-mei goddess and the Shui-wei goddess,⁵⁰ This socio-political discourse matches our discovery about the different roles of 108 CUAL and Tianhou goddess in our interviews in Rạch Giá City as mentioned above. However, Li and Yan's⁵¹ studies in Hainan Island did not clearly show the function of group identity-making of the 108 CUAL Cult, therefore, we narrow this cultural and socio-political discourse to the Hainanese Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. This matches the arguments of Wang,⁵² Hostetler,⁵³ and Sutton⁵⁴ that "Chineseness" will be emphasized when encountering other cultures. It is true that the Hainan Chinese ethnic identity is strongly exposed when contacting the local culture of Southeast Asia. This is how the 108 CUAL Cult was cultivated as an identity marker among the Hainan Chinese in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. The second half of this research will discuss ways in cultivating cultural and sociopolitical discourse in the cult.

It was King Tự Đức's imperial decree after the 1851 Incident that changed, standardized, formalized, and made the cult widely known in the entire Hainanese community in Vietnam. After King Tự Đức, King Duy Tân (1900-1945) again sanctioned and designated 108 CUAL as the intermediate-level protector deities. Therefore, the ordination of King Duy Tân acknowledged the number "108" and its symbolic meanings and officially recognized the deification of the victims of the 1851 Incident. This is an important milestone, marking the success of the Hainanese community in Vietnam in standardizing and officializing the Cult of 108 CUAL.

There is no detailed record about the cultural and political lives of the Hainan Chinese after the royal sanction. The French colonized Vietnam in 1860s and came back to attack the country in 1958. The 1885 Sino-French Treaty and many subsequent treaties drove the local Chinese in Vietnam back from their early Vietnamese citizenship, so they became "aliens" in the place where their ancestors had settled long ago. This is the "divide and rule" policy. However, as part of the compromise clauses in the 1885 and 1930 treaties, the local Chinese in Vietnam enjoyed a preferential policy allowing them to live, do business and pay taxes under the Banghui

49 Fieldwork, 2015, 2016, and 2017.

50 Fieldwork, 2016. See also Trần Thủy, "Tục thờ 108 vị Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt của cộng đồng người Hoa Hải Nam ở Nam Bộ Việt Nam (The cult of 108 Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt of the Ethnic Hainan Chinese in South Vietnam)", M.A. Thesis, USSH, VNU-HCM, Ho Chi Minh City, 2016.

51 Yujing Yan 严钰景: 南海兄弟庙寄魂五百年 (Xiongdi Temple in Hainan: 500 years of history), 2018, available at: http://m.xinhuanet.com/hq/2018-11/28/c_1123780763 (accessed September 20, 2020).

52 Ming-ke Wang, *From the Qiang Barbarians to Qiang Nationality*. . . pp. 43-80.

53 Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2001.

54 Donald Sutton, Introduction to the Special Issue: Ritual, Cultural Standardization, and Orthopraxy in China – Reconsidering James L. Watson's ideas. . . pp. 3-21.

(幫會, congregation)⁵⁵ but were not directly ruled by the French.⁵⁶ They even enjoyed a similar status with the French after the 1930 Treaty. Consequently, this priority policy brought benefits to the spread, development, and stability of Chinese folk religions including the Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt Cult. Between 1954 and 1975, the Chinese community and its ritual life were severely affected by the various naturalization policies of the Saigon Government in the south,⁵⁷ while their counterparts in the north enjoyed a freer life.⁵⁸ The informants of our research all said that the sacrificial activities of Chinese temples during the Vietnam War were still as solemn and intact as in the colonial period. The major changes occurred in the first two decades after the war, which will be discussed later in this paper.

In many parts of Southeast Asia and Hainan Island, the Cult of Xiongdi Gong might exist somewhere before the 1851 Incident, however, the officially sanctioned Cult of 108 CUAL from Central Vietnam was later adopted among the Hainanese communities in those places, such as Phan Thiết (1876), Rạch Giá, Ho Chi Minh City, Phú Quốc (during the 1880-1890 period) in Vietnam; Penang (1866) and Kuala Lumpur (1987) in Malaysia; Bali (1888) in Indonesia; and China's Qionghai in Hainan Island (1892).

So far, based on publications and field investigations, we have found that there are two simultaneous forms of cults in Southeast Asia (Xiongdi Gong and CUAL). Li Qingxin (2018) mentioned the annual sacrifice event of 108 CUAL observed in Bali, Indonesia during the day of the seventh full moon, which neatly matches the Ghost Festival (中元普渡) in Chinese folk culture. Obviously, the ceremony itself has the folk cultural characteristics and conveys the legacy of the Xiongdi Gong Cult. However, this temple was established after the 1851 Incident, and the cult is called "108 CUAL" instead of Xiongdi Gong. Therefore, there are currently two layers of the cult coexisting. The situation in Kuala Lumpur is quite different. The altar of 108 CUAL is a subsidiary part of the temple structure of a Tianhou Goddess Temple. We discovered that the worship of 108 CUAL is proposed in an orthodox way, which is completely consistent with the form of Tianhou goddess. A member of the cult committee told us the story of the 1851 Incident and claimed that the deified victims are representatives of all Hainanese men who have lost their lives at sea.⁵⁹ There is a similar situation

55 In many parts of Southeast Asia, Chinese immigrants have established *kongsi* (公司) to connect and aid their members. *Banghui* was very popular in Vietnam and Cambodia. See: Wang Gung-wu, *The Chinese Overseas: from Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000. See also: Tan Chee-Beng, *Chinese Overseas Comparative Cultural Studies*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2004.

56 Alain Marsot, *The Chinese Community in Vietnam under the French*, San Francisco: EM Text, 1993. See Charles Wheeler, *Interests, Institutions, and Identity: Strategic Adaptation and the Ethno-evolution of Minh Huong (Central Vietnam), 16th – 19th Centuries*, *Itinerario*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2015, pp. 141-166. See also Tracy Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia...*

57 Amer Ramses, *The Ethnic Chinese in Vietnam and Sino-Vietnamese Relations*, Forum, Kuala Lumpur, 1991. See also Tran Khanh, "Ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, and their Identity", in: *Ethnic Chinese as Southeast Asians*, L. Suryadinata (ed.), Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1997, pp. 267-289.

58 Amer Ramses, *The Ethnic Chinese in Vietnam and Sino-Vietnamese Relations...* See also Châu Hải, *Người Hoa Việt Nam và Đông Nam Á: hình ảnh hôm qua và vị thế hôm nay (Chinese in Vietnam and Southeast Asia: Yesterday's Image and Today's Position)*, Social Sciences, Hanoi, 2006.

59 Fieldwork Data, Kuala Lumpur, 2015.

in Penang, where the 108 martyrs/heroes and goddess Shuiwei or goddess of water are co-worshipped as the main deities of Tianhou.⁶⁰

Regarding the reverse transmission of 108 CUAL from Central Vietnam to Hainan Island, Mr. B.K.Đ. (Hội An) and Mr. D.N.N. (Vạn Giã) confirmed that they had communicated with representatives of the temple committee of the local 108 CUAL temples in Hainan Island. The two emphasized that the Hainanese have both cults, namely the Xiongdi Gong Cult and the 108 CUAL Cult.⁶¹

In fact, the evolution of the 108 CUAL Cult in its history is following a superscription process,⁶² where new values and symbolic meanings are continuously cultivated and superimposed on the cult to safeguard the interests of the community. Although the core values of the worship, i.e., righteousness, heroism still exist today, the cult has gradually spread to non-marine areas, such as commercial trade, service provision, and herbal medicine industry. Many people invest their mental and financial “capitals” (in Bourdieu 1958’s thoughts) in the annual ceremony at the temple to gain reputation, and more importantly, to establish and expand business networks, i.e., “social capital” among the citizens of the region.

Going Upstream

The formalization of the 108 CUAL Cult is an expression of the attitude of “going upstream” of the Hainan Chinese communities in Vietnam. Starting from the identity of the immigrant community, they took advantage of the royal recognition and royal title after the 1851 Incident to modify and standardize the cult’s faith and structure, thereby enhancing the social and political power of the whole community. Later, in terms of annual festivals, it changed from a single-temple model to a regional joint model as shown in the allied sacrifice ceremonies,⁶³ enabling the communities to unify, thereby consolidating, and strengthening traditions, racial identity, and social status. The joint festivals between CUAL temples or cross-regional faith alliances have not been recorded in historical texts so far. A Hainese senior in Vạn Giã said: “This [allied ritual] is newly established. They [temple leaders] try to get all the Hainanese Chinese together to help each other in business. In the past, temples separately held sacrificial ceremonies, but now we are united and organized in different places in turn. For example, this year we will hold it in Vạn Giã, next year we will hold it in Nha Trang, and then we return to Đà Nẵng or Tam Kỳ. The festival is bigger, the rituals are held more solemnly than before, and the fun is more.”⁶⁴

60 Hua Su and Han Liu, 馬來西亞：天后宮大觀 (*Malaysia: Introduction on Tian Hou Temples*), 2 Volumes, Selangor Tianhou Temple & Mazu Cultural Center Publishing, Kuala Lumpur.

61 Fieldwork data in Hội An & Vạn Giã, 2015.

62 The term “superscription” was suggested by Prasenjit Duara, 1988.

63 Normally, those temples in Central Vietnam take turns to hold allied ceremonies on years with major celebrations such as the year of the establishment of the temple through a three-year circle format.

64 Interview with Mr. NNB, 72 years old, Vạn Giã, 2016.

Mr. NNB stated that those strict rituals were held during the Vietnam War period. However, due to the nationalization of private property and the unfriendly policy towards the Chinese community in the country, the post-war period witnessed the "predicament" of the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam. The annual temple fairs in those years were small and relatively simple. Many other Chinese temples were "confiscated" to serve public administrative affairs, but fortunately, the Vạn Giã temple was not expropriated. Therefore, local villagers continued to hold regular annual ceremonies, but just on a smaller scale. Fortunately, the Đổi mới policy of 1986 opened new horizons for the recovery of all cultural institutions,⁶⁵ including local Chinese temples like the one in Vạn Giã. The ceremony has been restored and modified, as can be seen from the description at the top of this article. Especially the *rước thiết* ritual at the seaside, which was once labeled as "superstition" after the war, has now fully resumed, and further intensified. So, what makes the recent Hainan Chinese temple alliance and ritual intensification?

There has not been any clear reason pointed out so far among Vietnamese research scholars. However, the field work data of Vạn Giã, Ninh Hòa, Tam Kỳ, Đà Nẵng and the in-depth interviews conducted in Cà Mau and Rạch Giá show that this kind of temple alliance and ritual intensification among Hainanese are caused by three important factors, namely (1) the recovery of ethnic culture attributed to the Đổi mới Policy, (2) the rise of the Hainan Chinese economy in Vietnam, and (3) the rise of China and the strengthening of cross-border Hainanese networks. While the first factor is obvious in the recent Vietnamese context, we can testify to the last two factors in many Hainanese Chinese communities in South-Central Vietnam. Many informants in Tam Kỳ and Vạn Giã confirmed that the local Hainanese Chinese donate more funds to the temple used to organize festivals and temple maintenance and actively participate in temple festival activities to strengthen the business network and increase credibility. Overseas Hainanese who left Vietnam after the Vietnam War now also donate a lot of money to temple festivals.⁶⁶ In Cà Mau, the authors learned that the annual meeting of Hainanese from all over the world organized in different places such as Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, etc. attracts participation of many local Hainan Chinese in Vietnam while the wealth of Hainan Chinese business sector in Rạch Giá City was repeatedly emphasized by temple owners and local residents during our conversations in 2017. Local Banghuis are more active in promoting the unity of the Hainan Chinese communities and using their resources to develop their society. Is this recent development also an expression of the "going upstream" mentality?

65 Hy Lương, "Cải cách kinh tế và tăng cường lễ nghi tại hai làng ở miền Bắc Việt Nam (Economic Reform and Ritual Enhancement in Two Villages in Northern Vietnam (1980-1990))", in: *Những thách thức trên con đường cải cách Đông Dương (Challenges on the Path of Reform in Indo-China)*, Borje Ljunggren (ed.), National Politics Publishing House, Hanoi, 1994, pp. 437-481. See Endres Kirsten, Local Dynamics of Renegotiating Ritual Space in Northern Vietnam: The Case of the 'Dinh', *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2001, pp. 70-101. See also Endres Kirsten, Beautiful Customs, Worthy Traditions: Changing State Discourse on the Role of Vietnamese Culture, *Internationales Asienforum*, Vol. 33, No. 3-4, 2002, pp. 303-322.

66 Interview with Mr. PCN, 58 years old, Tam Kỳ Hainan Temple Executive Member, 2016.

At the national level, this is a form of bottom-up development of the Hainan Chinese community under the leadership of the Banghui. Historically, Chinese Banghuis in Vietnam were established since the 16th century. According to Đào Hùng, Banghuis at that time were organized in a relatively closed and isolated manner based on many complicated principles including political factors, culture, society, linguistic dialects, and religious elements.⁶⁷ King Minh Mạng abolished the local Chinese Banghuis in 1840. He forced local Chinese to establish residences and housing units like those of the local Vietnamese. During the French colonial period, due to the priority policy after the Treaty of France and the Qing Dynasty in 1885, the Chinese Banghui was able to resume and operate successfully until the mid-20th century. Later, the Saigon Government again banned Banghui institutions in the mid-1950s. Nowadays, in all major provinces and cities across the country, there are local Chinese associations composed of dialects, but they are not the original form of Banghui, so they have little impact on the political and social domains. The intra-regional alliance of the above-mentioned Hainanese Chinese ceremonies and ritual spaces is naturally not a replacement. Although it does not have much change or influence on politics and social status, it has great cultural values like intra-regional community integration, social communication, and cultural unification. To a certain extent, the ethnic Hainan Chinese are mentally “going upstream,” intending to enhance community resources and capabilities through ritual intensification and alliance. A similar situation exists in the Chaozhou community of Cà Mau City in Southern Vietnam, where the local Chaozhou community restructured its ritual space, thus making the ethnic culture more firmly integrated into the local Vietnamese Society, thereby enhancing community capacity. In another case study, the locals of Hakka Chinese in Bửu Long (Biên Hòa, Đồng Nai) are striving to standardize and formalize their ritual space for the same purpose.⁶⁸

Conflict Mediation and Imaginary Dialogue

Dialogue between races is very popular in world history. It is one of the most basic ways of communication that can bring peace and integrity. We apply Bakhtin to consider the ritual space and its ever-changing changes as a power-laden dialogue.⁶⁹ For a long time, many researchers at home and abroad have conducted research on contemporary Vietnam’s dialogue through ritual spaces, such as Endres,⁷⁰

67 Hùng Đào, *Người Trung Hoa lưu lạc (The Emigrant Chinese)*, Department of Culture & Communication, Quảng Nam – Đà Nẵng, 1987, p. 28. See: Châu Hải, *Các nhóm cộng đồng người Hoa ở Việt Nam (Chinese dialect groups in Southern Vietnam)*, Social Sciences, Hanoi, 1992; Trần Liên, *Văn hóa người Hoa ở Nam Bộ tín ngưỡng và tôn giáo (The Culture of Ethnic Chinese in Southern Vietnam: belief and religion)*, Social Sciences, Hanoi, 2005.

68 Tho Nguyen, Hang Nguyen, 雨下撥水」：越南金甌市潮州人天后信仰儀式之轉變與在地化 (Splashing Water under the Rain: Trend of Change and Localization of Tianhou Ritual in Ca Mau, Vietnam), *世界華人文化研究 (Chinese Cultural Studies)*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2018, pp. 33–44.

69 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, Caryl Emerson, and Michael Holquist (trans. & ed.), University of Texas Press, Austin, 1981.

70 Kirsten Endres, Local Dynamics of Renegotiating Ritual Space in Northern Vietnam: The Case of the Dinh, *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2001, pp. 70–101.

Luong,⁷¹ Long,⁷² etc. Therefore, the dialogue between the traditional concept of the moral community and the current party-state ideology in defining the future is one of the country's most concerning issues.⁷³

It is inferred that the recent shift of ritual space in the 108 CUAL Cult is rooted at least as much on the dialogic relation between the community and the state, as in the stronger integration of Vietnam into the global capitalist system which allows larger space for multivocality and hybridity in the entire society. As Luong emphasized, the increasing multivocality in ritual space nowadays corresponds to the resurging heteroglossia in the national discourse on the dialectics of historical transformation, modernization, and market development.⁷⁴

The 108 CUAL Cult is first a dialogic narrative of Hainanese locals towards the Nguyễn Vietnam during the late imperial period. As aforementioned, there were many ups and downs in the history of international relations between Vietnam and China,⁷⁵ and immigrant groups were the most vulnerable ones. In many cases, Banghuis and other community agencies could act as uprooted collective institutions to communicate with the state and its local authorities. Barretts proved that during the colonial period, the Chinese Vietnamese strived to protect their Banghuis as "solid forts" to protect the local Chinese from France's harsh colonial policies.⁷⁶ After the 1840s, the Banghuis were demolished and thus the collective voice of local Chinese was weakened. Local Chinese groups are looking for alternative channels to maintain dialogues with authorities. The formalized the 108 CUAL Cult is such a channel. With the recognition of the court and the award of official titles, the cult and its ritual community were protected, at least when dealing with state-run policies. Although the French supported the reconstruction of the Banghui organizations in the late 19th century, the system was further dismantled in the 1950s under the policies of the Saigon Government. Currently, under the pressure of internationalization and market economy, with the national policy of social integration among nations, Banghui is no longer available. Instead, there are alternative forms of spontaneous alliances, such as the temple and ritual alliance in this study.

71 Hy Luong, "Cải cách kinh tế và tăng cường lễ nghi tại hai làng ở miền Bắc Việt Nam, 1980-1990 (Economic Reform and Ritual Enhancement in Two Villages in Northern Vietnam, 1980-1990)", in: *Những thách thức trên con đường cải cách Đông Dương (Challenges on the Path of Reform in Indo-China)*, Borje Ljunggren (ed.), National Politics Publishing House, Hanoi, 1994, pp. 437-81; Lương Hy, The Restructuring of Vietnamese Nationalism, 1954-2006, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 3, 2007, pp. 439-53; Lương Hy, Trương Chi, "Thương thảo để tái lập và sáng tạo "truyền thống": Tiến trình tái cấu trúc lễ hội cộng đồng tại một làng Bắc bộ (Negotiation to Re-establish and to Invent Tradition: The Re-structuring of Community Festival in a North Vietnamese Village)", in: *Những thành tựu nghiên cứu bước đầu của Khoa Nhân học (Primary research achievements of the Department of Anthropology)*, Vietnam National University Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 2012, pp. 235-279.

72 Collin Long, Feudalism in the Service of the Revolution: Reclaiming Heritage in Hue, *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXV, 2003, pp. 535-558.

73 Kirsten Endres, Beautiful Customs, Worthy Traditions: Changing State Discourse on the Role of Vietnamese Culture, *Internationales Asienforum*, Vol. 33, No. 3-4, 2002, pp. 303-322.

74 Hy Luong, "The Marxist State and the Dialogic Restructuration of Culture in Rural Vietnam", in: *Indo-China: Cultural and Social Change*, David Elliot, H.V. Luong, B. Kiernan & T. Mahoney (eds.), Claremont-McKenna College, Claremont, 1994, p. 108.

75 Fujiwara Riichiro, *Chính sách đối với dân Trung Hoa di cư của các triều đại Việt Nam (Policies towards Chinese Migrants of the Vietnamese Dynasties)*, Khảo cổ tập san No. 8, Archaeological Institute & Ministry of Culture, Education and Youth, Sài Gòn, 1974, pp. 140-175.

76 Tracy Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia*. . . 2012.

At the local level, Hainanese, like other Chinese dialect groups, are facing the dilemma of identity and integration. In an important study on the transformation and localization of the Chinese community in southern Vietnam, Yuk Wah Chan (2017) cited the common slogan of the local Chinese, that is, 'Vietnam is my country land, China is my hometown.' In the past four decades of economic reform and development, the local Chinese communities are in a strong wave of social integration and cultural adaptation. On the one hand, they hope to attract many Vietnamese to participate in the annual festival because it is a vivid manifestation of inter-ethnic communication and social integration, but on the other hand, they encounter difficulty in answering the questions of who 108 CUAL are and why they are worshipped. Perhaps the story told by a member of a cult committee in Rạch Giá (Kiên Giang Province) is an example. "During the time of King Tự Đức, many Hainanese merchant ships from Hainan came to buy pepper in the Hà Tiên area [Vietnam] and Cambodia. That year, a cargo ship encountered pirates on its way back from Cambodia to Hainan, and all 108 people were killed. King Tự Đức became angry, sent troops to suppress the pirates, and ordained and offered title to 108 victims".⁷⁷

We understand that this is deliberately on-purpose disguise. When we further asked who the pirates were and when the incident occurred, the informer remained silent. In addition to this "pirate attack" story, we also found another version. Six of the thirty-eight samples told us that 108 CUAL came from the *Shuihuzhuan*, "our ancestors passed down the cult and we accepted it without a doubt", and "the King Tự Đức later sanctioned and awarded the title of '108 Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt'." There is not a single detail about the 1851 Incident in these conversations. The rest told the exact the historical story written on the mural painting in Hội An and on the steles in Đà Nẵng. We sent a local from a Chinese family to Khánh Hòa for validation with the same questionnaire. All the informants accurately told the historical story of the 1851 Incident, and no one mentioned the story of the pirate attack again. Obviously, the local Hainanese communities are striving to overcome the dilemma, thus creating multivocality and flexibility towards the explanation and interpretation of the 108 CUAL Cult at the grassroots level. People actively make their interpretations. Thus, they do not simply inherit an established code of meanings to ensure their interests.⁷⁸ Community's cultural traditions are created through real-life behaviors in a specific social environment and the mediation of conflicts between the parties involved in the life process.

The narrative diversity of the devotees of the 108 CUAL Cult is the main reason for the appearance of the multivocality of this cult in today's life. The ritual itself is an imaginary dialogue. Moreover, it is also a "platform" where the past is presented and rebuilt through dialogic relationships between the stakeholders. Understanding this cult and its historical development can help us understand the cultural temperament and aspirations of the local Chinese in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

77 Mr. L.K.H., 53 years old, in-depth interview conducted in 2016 in Rạch Giá.

78 Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebook*, International, New York, 1971, p. 327.

In general, the entire process of the formalization and intensification of the CUAL Cult can be summarized as follows:

Before 1851: the simple, unsystematic Xiongdi Gong Cult was brought from Hainan Island to Central coastline of Vietnam by Hainan Chinese fishermen and merchants.

In 1851: the outbreak of the 1851 Incident in which more than 70 Hainanese merchants were unjustly killed at sea. Vietnamese King ordered to investigate the incident, gave the victims justice, and sanctioned the royal tittle *Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt*. The Xiongdi Gong Cult was "standardized" or "formalized."

After 1851: The *Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt* Cult spread throughout Southeast Asia and returned to Hainan Island under the preferential policy provided by the French colonists to the local Chinese in Vietnam. Ritual dedicated to 108 CUAL Cult was modified and stabilized.

The period 1975 – 1986: Vietnam's nationalization of property in the south has caused the suspension of activities in local Chinese temples, and a lot of Chinese left Vietnam as boatmen on the sea.

After 1986: Vietnam's *Đổi mới* policy allows all communities to resume sacrificial activities. Hainan Chinese communities across Vietnam use domestic and foreign resources to consolidate the entire group culture by establishing temple alliances and ritual restorations.

From the event of 1851 to today, the various transformations of the *Chiêu Ứng Anh Liệt* Cult vividly express cultural and political discourses, which strongly emphasize justice mentality and upstream fluidity.

Conclusion

Ritual intensification and dialogic implementation through ritual space are becoming one of the popular channels in contemporary Vietnam, where power-laden narratives and multivocality are emphasized. The formation and evolution of the CUAL Cult of the ethnic Hainanese in Vietnam vividly express relatively complete "subterfuge"⁷⁹ to handle multiple purposes, including connecting and strengthening community networks, preserving ethnic culture, enhancing social integration, stimulating people's vitality and chivalry, and appreciating the mentality of Confucian righteousness and heroism. The combination of historical research and fieldwork methods have shown that the folk Cult of Xiongdi Gong brought from Hainan Island, the 1851 Incident and the Nguyễn Vietnam's recognition, and the symbolic number 108 carrying Confucian values have been purposefully used as sources to constitute the formalization and intensification of the CUAL Cult and its ritual space. The ancestors created a cult, however, people today read and practice their faith in their own way, always emphasizing the dialogues between the community and its past and present and future. Ritual space is a place for such dialogues.

79 Term used by Michael Szonyi, 1997, p. 129.

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ФОРМАЛИЗАЦИЈА И ИНТЕНЗИФИКАЦИЈА РИТУАЛА: КУЛТ „108 ХЕРОЈСКИХ МУЧЕНИКА“ У ВИЈЕТНАМУ

Сажетак

Обожаванье "108 херојских мученика" од стране хајнанских Кинеза у својој примарној форми постоји одавно, али је стандардизовано и формализовано у Вијетнаму тек након једног инцидента. Наиме, 1851. године група хајнанских трговаца је неправедно убијено на обалама Вијетнама. Због империјалних санкција, обожаванье је прво претворено у симболе а онда и јавни култ који је постао важан стуб заједнице хајнанских Кинеза у Вијетнаму и Југоисточној Азији. Из угла културолошких студија, и уз помоћ историјског и теренског истраживања, аутори сматрају да ширење овог култа није било спонтано. Али и поред тога, овај култ у себи садржи колективну свест и наративе хајнанске заједнице. Обожаванье култа "108 херојских мученика" је постало симбол духа заједнице, који у себи носи скривени културолошки и политички дискурс у регионалном контексту.

Кључне речи: Вијетнам, Етнички хајнански Кинези, култ 108 херојских мученика, формализација ритуала, наратив