

GODDESS BELIEFS IN CHINESE LING'NAN AREA

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Abstract

More than any other place in China, the area of Chinese Ling'nan (Kwantung, Kwangsi, and Hainan) is famous for its striking and densely concentrated goddess beliefs. Most of the popular goddess beliefs in this area originated from the long-lasting agrarian traditions of the ancient Hundred-Viet peoples during the pre-Chinese conquest. From 218 BC onwards, the Han Chinese came into the area with their mandarin ideology—Confucianism—causing serious attacks on the local cults. However, these beliefs were not abolished due to their concrete cultural and spiritual foundations, as well as the well-adjusted behavior of the Han Chinese migrants. Today, widespread migrations to Ling'nan, spurred on by economic pressures, show tendencies of serious change. Some cults have been abolished; others have faded.

This paper investigates how the goddess belief was formed in ancient Hundred-Viet society, how the Hundred-Viet resisted Confucianism to survive, and how they managed to localize the newly-arrived Han Chinese popular culture, their cultural traits, and their inherent relations with Southeast Asian cultures. It also argues why goddess belief survived well under political pressures during that particular period in China but began to fade under the current economic pressures.

1. Chinese Ling'nan area and goddess beliefs – the common issues:

a. Chinese Ling'nan area under geo-cultural viewpoint

Wu'ling Range (五岭山, or Five-Mountain Range), the extended part of the Himalayan mountains reaching the Pacific coast in the south of Hokkien and the north of Kwangtung, forms the natural walls that separate the whole region into two areas: *Ling'nan* (岭南, South of Wu'ling) and *Ling'bei* (岭北, North of Wu'ling).

The mountains contain of (1) **Da'you** (大庾岭), running from Kiangsi province to Kwangtung; (2) **Yue'cheng** (越城岭) and (3) **Ming'zhu** (萌渚岭), both from southern Hunan to Kwangsi; (4) **Du'pang** (都庞岭) and (5) **Qi'tian** (骑田岭), both from Hunan to Kwangtung [Le Van Sieu 1972: 184; Tran Dai Sy: vietnamsante.com; Zeng Mu'ye 2005: 1; Yuan Zhong'ren 1998: 3].

The pathway of Wu'ling Range is the natural border between Yangtzi River Delta and Ling'nan. There are two terms of “Ling'nan” to note, respectively (1) “Ling'nan” to show the entire land located in the south of Wu'ling, including South China and Southeast Asia; (2) “Ling'nan” to imply the southern part of the ancient Hundred-Viet (百越) cultural zone, consisting of the provinces of Kwangsi, Kwangtung, Hainan in China and North Vietnam. At this second meaning, we can divide Ling'nan into two sub-areas: Chinese Ling'nan and Vietnamese Ling'nan. This paper mainly mentions to Chinese area in comparison to Vietnamese Ling'nan and Southeast Asia. Regarding traditional culture, Hainan is assigned to Kwangtung region since this island just became a province few decades ago.

On geographical position, Chinese Ling'nan is found at the northern tropic line. The climate belongs to sub-tropical monsoon. Around the year, four seasons are obviously clear; the winter is not too cold, so agricultural activities such as traditional breeding and planting still remain. This is also what sets apart Ling'nan from other regions in China.

On the topography, the total area of Chinese Ling'nan can be classified into two main types: (1) mainly mountains and small-valley lowlands along the rivers in the west (Kwangsi); (2) alternately the mixture of lower mountains and coastal plains as "in the mountains there found the plains, and in the plains there found the mountains (山中有田, 田中有山)"-shaped in the east (Kwangtung). Rivers are densely-existing, most of which are of northwest-southeast and west-east directions. They mainly originate from the mountainous areas of the western Ling'nan and flow into the Pacific ocean at the estuaries of West River (西江, including Left River (左江), Right River (右江), Li River (漓江)..), Pearl River (珠江) etc.. Since the area is under tropical monsoon, the rainy season in Chinese Ling'nan lasts for 6 months with abundant

rainfalls; therefore, the coastal basin plains yearly assemble a large amount of alluvia, from which the rice agriculture has found it flourishing throughout out the fields.

Consequently, the natural conditions of Chinese Ling’nan has caused two different cultural types: (1) mountainous region with the cultural type of *traditional hunting-rooted and mountainous agrarian economy* in the west; and (2) “in the mountains found the plains, and in the plains found the mountains” region with the cultural type of *rice agrarian economy* in the east.

The traditional owners of the Chinese Ling’nan in ancient times were the Hundred-Viet race, including the sub-groups of *Au Viet* (Ou-yue=瓠越)⁽¹⁾, *Lac Viet* (Luo-yue=骆越)⁽²⁾ and *Nam Viet* (Nan-yue=南越)⁽³⁾ (specified in section 4). The Au Viet lived mostly in western Ling’nan (Kwangsi) and based on hunting, mountainous planting and valley-lowland farming economies. In the east, the Nam Viet residents relied mostly on agricultural life and are considered as experts in traditional handicrafts, pottery making, and offshore fishery. Besides concentrating densely in ancient North Vietnam, the Lac Viet also dispersed in the southeast coastal areas of Chinese Ling’nan, mostly lived on farming and fishing, though, they offered less contribution to Chinese Ling’nan culture.

Historical development of the sub-ethnic Hundred-Viet groups in Chinese Ling’nan was interrupted by the onslaught of the Han Chinese from the North of China. By BC 218, Emperor Qin of China launched the war to pacify Ling’nan. He completed his conquest in BC 214,

⁽¹⁾ **Au Viet:** an ancient sub-ethnic group of Hundred-Viet family residing mainly in the western Chinese Ling’nan (present Guangxi). In pre-Qin time, they mainly gathered into tribes, worshipped bronze drums and owned the ceramic pattern of Au Viet–style geometry (瓠越式几何印纹). Laterly, the Au Viet founded the Kingdom of Tay-Au (西瓠國). In BC 218, Chinese Qin troops got over the Wu-ling Range to invade Au Viet, were then defeated as described in *Huai Nan Zi* (淮南子, vol. 18: *Human Training* (人间训)) “dozens of thousands of Qin invaders were found dead”. Unfortunately, Au Viet king – Yi Hu Song (译吁宋) was killed [Jiang Bing’zhao .. 1998: 68; Zhang Sheng’zhen.. 2002: 70-75]

⁽²⁾ **Lac Viet:** an ancient sub-ethnic group of Hundred-Viet family living mainly on wet-rice plantings in the Red River Delta, Ma River Basin (Vietnam) and areas along the Gulf of Tonkin, Lei’zhou Peninsula, Hainan island (China). Ancient Lac Viet residents were considered as the owners of Dongson culture (BC 700-300), once respectedly founded the Kingdom of Van Lang (文郎國) ruled by Hung Kings and the Kingdom of Au Lac (瓠骆國) ruled by An Duong Vuong, and known as the ancestors of the modern Vietnamese people.

⁽³⁾ **Nam Viet:** an ancient sub-ethnic group of Hundred-Viet family living on wet-rice farming, fishery and hand-made industries (pottery, boat..) in the eastern coastal Chinese Ling’nan (now Guangdong) [Jiang Bing’zhao.. 1998: 61]. Before Qin’s conquest, the ancient Nam Viet once founded the Kingdoms of Fu-Luo (縛罗國), Bo-Lu (伯慮國), Hwan-Tou (驩頭國, also called Pan-Yu (番禺國)) in the Pearl River basin plain [Zeng Zhao’huan 1994: 37-38].

officially opening the stage of disputes and integration of Ling'nan into Chinese culture. Along with control of the land, several migration policies of Han people have been implemented. The Sinicization process started throughout the area. For some 2000 years, the formation and development of ethnic communities in Chinese Ling'nan have been deeply affected by such geographical, topographical, and socio-historical conditions.

On the basis of ancient Au Viet residents in mountainous area of Kwangsi, the Sinicization movements were not strong as wanted. As a result, the ancient Au Viet self-decomposed and mixed with the Han in different levels, then became the Kui-Liu group of Han Chinese (the mixed group formed by the Han Chinese from Hunan and the local Au Viet residents, presently dispersing in Kui'lin and Liu'zhou areas, assigned to be Southwestern Mandarin speakers) and other ethnic minorities such as the North Zhuang, the Kam, the Shui, etc. Meanwhile, this process in Kwangtung was pushed more powerfully and continuously, almost all local Nam Viet communities fully dissolved into the Han Chinese. However, under the impact of topographical conditions of mountains-mix-with-plains style, the Kwangtung area was thus divided into many different sub-regions with relatively different substances in ethnical, economic, cultural and linguistic characteristics.

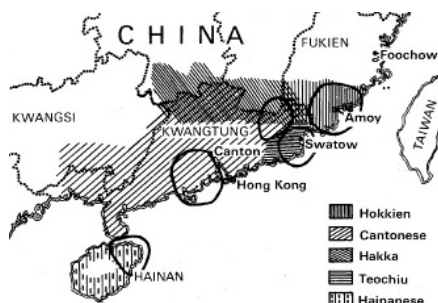
Specifically, the **Tsieu'chou** (潮州)⁽⁴⁾ in the most northeastern Kwangtung, the **Hakka** (客家) in the mountainous areas of the northern Kwangtung, the **Cantonese** (广府) in the Pearl River Delta and neighbouring areas; the **West Cantonese** (粤西)⁽⁵⁾ in the farthest area in southwestern Kwangtung; the floating **Tangka** (蛋家)⁽⁶⁾ in riverways along the eastern coast; and the **Hainanese** in Hainan island. When speaking local dialects, they cannot find them understood with each other, except the Tangka speaking Cantonese. Badly do they show the

⁽⁴⁾ The Han Chinese sub-group, speaking Tsieu-chou dialect, mainly reside in Han River basin in the northeastern Kwangtung (the cities of Tsieu-chou, Swatow, Shanwei v.v.), considered mostly close to the Minnanese in Amoy (South Hokkien). Tsieu-chou dialect is grouped into Minnanese language [Yuan Zhong'ren 1998: 18-19].

⁽⁵⁾ Residential component born from the mixture of ancient Lac Viet (Luo-yue), Nam Viet (Nan-yue) and newly-arriving Han people, mainly residing in the extreme southwestern region of Kwangtung and some areas bordering the Gulf of Tonkin in Kwangsi. In fact, the West Canton joins into the Cantonese (广府) because of Cantonese's much impact toward them. However, by examining in many cultural aspects, they still bear the unique characteristics so we arrange them a relatively separate group: the West Cantonese (粤西). Yuan Zhong'ren [1998: 20-21] and Wang Wen'guang, Li Xiao-bin [2007: 228] combined Lei'zhou peninsula and Hainan island to be Lei-Qiong region (雷琼区).

⁽⁶⁾ The ancient Hundred-Viet's descendants mainly living on fishing boats along the rivers, bearing their own culture and language (dialect) though being strongly affected by the Hokkiens and the Cantonese.

ethical prejudices towards each other, such as the Hakka and the Cantonese once joined the serious dispute “the West Kwangtung Affair”; between the Tsieu’chou and the Cantonese there exists a remarkable separation; the Cantonese spare a bias towards the West Cantonese and the Tangkas, etc. One can find it clearly, the special natural characteristic of "in the mountains there found the plains, in the plains there found the mountains" in eastern Ling’nan has stipulated the distribution of the Han communities; obviously it has also stipulated the cultural features of each group. The difference between them has a great influence on the traditional beliefs, especially goddess beliefs that I will discuss in the following sections.



*P.1. The map of scattering of Han groups in Ling’nan
[Mary F. Sommer Heidhues 1974: 2]*



P.2. Kwangsi: 1. Kui-Liu; 2. Cantonese 3. ethnic minorities



P.3. Kwangtung: 1. Tsieu’chou; 2. Hakka; 3. Cantonese; 4. West Cantonese

It should be emphasized that the river system in the region also plays an important role in the formation of the Han communities in Chinese Ling’nan. Firstly, the rivers imperceptibly separate the northern communities from the southern ones, even creating differences for the same group. For example, people in Dong’guan (东莞) in the north side of Pearl River speak a relatively different Cantonese dialect from the Cantonese speakers of Fo’shan (佛山) in the south of Pearl River, although they are all Cantonese speakers from the same delta. Secondly, the rivers are also seen as important traffic ways and significant trade flows between mountainous Kwangsi and coastal Kwangtung. Obviously they are also the important doorways of the Sinicization process in Western Ling’nan. As a result, the Cantonese from Pearl River Delta has rowed up the rivers to do their business, open new living areas and Sinicize the local residents both sides of the rivers. Gradually did they widespread their living in other Kwangsi lowlands [Yuan Zhong’ren 1998: 21-22]). As a result, most Han people in Kwangsi are the Cantonese. As a matter of course, they have received the new cultural factors from ethnic minorities (Zhuang, Kam, Yao, Hmong, etc.) at the new place during their way to

the west. A part of the floating residents in these rivers are also assigned to the other group - the Tangka [Huang Xin'mei 1990; Zhang Shou'qi 1991].

Simultaneously, the Tsieu'chou, the Hakka, and the Cantonese have reached Hainan island by oceanic ways and settled down in mixture with the local ethnic groups (the Li (黎族), the Hmong etc..). As a result, a new Han group has been formed, the Hainanese. However they own a complicated and unclear cultural tradition in comparison with other Han groups in Kwangtung [Han Qiang 2007: 17-22].

The overall of natural and social conditions of Chinese Ling'nan under the viewpoint of geo-cultural can be expressed by the following table:

(Table 1: Comparison of natural conditions and type of economic and cultural traditions Kwangtung and Kwangsi)

<i>Area</i>	Kwangsi	Kwangtung
<i>Location</i>	Inland (except the short coastal land bordering the Gulf of Tongkin)	Coastal
<i>Topography</i>	Mainly mountainous	"in the mountains there found the plains, in the plains there found the mountains" (“山中有田, 田中有山”)
<i>Ancient residents</i>	Au Viet (瓯越)	Nam Viet (南越)
<i>Ancient economic type</i>	Hunting, Mountainous planting	Wet-rice agriculture, handicrafts, fishery
<i>Sinicizationprocess</i>	Relatively weak and slow	Strong and quick
<i>Main present ethnic groups/communities</i>	Ethnic minorities + Han communities (Cantonese, Kui-Liu (桂柳))	Han communities: Tsieu'chou, Hakka, Cantonese, West Cantonese, Tangka, Hainanese etc.

b. Overview on the traditional goddess belief in Chinese Ling'nan

(1) Firstly, the concept "belief" used in the research must be clarified. Unlike official religions which were formed by the specific founders (Confucius, Lao-tzi, Buddha, Jesus, Zoroaster etc..) being worshipped in special religious structures (temple, pagoda, church, mosque etc), supported by religious laws and ranking system for their sustainable existence, the belief is simply the form of popular worship, deriving from the thought that all things have their own spirits and from the powerlessness of human being toward the immense nature. It can be said that at the previous days of human civilization, people with their limited understandings toward the nature and inability to manage the nature became to fear the unknowns, thence set up in

mind the worshipping ideas to the nature with the hope of being protected. This tradition, in particular, is said to be bolder the East, where most ancient residents considered the nature as of super class, as a great "mother", and hence looked forward to living in harmony with "mother". Some Western scholars address the folk beliefs as "popular religion". I prefer maintaining the term "belief".

In Asia-Pacific region, beliefs seem to have a larger role in almost all the cultures of ancient Southeast Asia⁽⁷⁾. In fact, beliefs profoundly influenced the spiritual life of ancient Hundred-Viet residents as well as of new-coming Han immigrants; it dominated in many aspects of socio-cultural life, such as customs, rituals, festivals, cast lots, primitive arts etc.. Through the study of traditional cultures, scientists have easily recognized that the ancient Viet inhabitants belong to Austro-asiatic race [Mei Tsu-lin, Jerry Norman 1976] which originated in ancient Southeast Asia and are said to possess polytheistic beliefs, especially goddess worships.

The concept of "goddess" here is used in the broad sense. Mai Ngoc Chuc [2005: 7-12] defines that "goddesses are not ghosts", can be divided into "natural goddesses" and "human goddesses". "Natural goddesses are usually the creators of the universe, of human beings. "Human goddesses", normally female heroes, contributed their much merits to popular people, such as heroic leaders in fighting against foreign invaders, founders of new careers, persons being well-known for their virginal morality etc..

Erich Newman [1963: 95] stated that "in the beginning, (the Great Goddess) was the Mother". He added "in primitive societies known to history, the male role in procreation was not realized" and "women were believed to conceive from the light of the Moon or from ancestral spirits". Obviously, goddesses are surely associated with the fertile role of women. In Asian tradition, some of goddesses are respectfully called the "Mother" (Great Goddess, Holy Mother). However, Ngo Duc Think [2004: 59] suggested "“Mothers” are goddesses, but not all goddesses are “Mothers”". So are they in Chinese community. In this paper, I mainly observe the "Mother" goddess (Great Goddesses). Popularly, they are thought to associate with the fertility, the protection, the blessing and the life - creating. As a result, "goddess" in this paper

⁽⁷⁾ Ancient Southeast Asia includes the present Southeast Asia, South Yangtzi River lands in China, Assam state in east India [Gordon T. Bowles 1977: 194-195].

is understood as all the goddesses appeared in the traditional beliefs of popular class in Chinese Ling'nan area. They are usually known as natural deities, ancestral mothers, deified heroic women, blessing goddesses, fertile goddesses and female fairies in local folk cultures etc..

Many Western scholars have said "Southeast Asia is the land of matriarchy" (le Pays du Matrircat) [Tran Ngoc Them 2004: 44]. This comment can be tested fully in the cultural beliefs of almost Southeast Asian cultures, from goddess Lieu Hanh, Hai Ba Trung, Ponagar in Vietnam to the goddess Hainuwele in Ceram islands of Indonesia, from the goddess Meser Nata, Nakta Dampracsá in Khmer culture [Vu Ngoc Khanh .. 2002: 12] to the goddess Nang Nak in Thai traditional belief [Phan Anh Tu 2007], etc..

Ancient Ling'nan, along with South Yangtzi Delta (江南), has been a part of ancient Southeast Asia [Nicholas Tarling 1992: 73]. It is the nature of femininity left by the ancient Hundred-Viet residents that contributed remarkably to new-coming Han's culture. The Han immigrants brought with them the male chauvinism to Ling'nan, however, they have accordingly adjusted themselves to fit the demands of the new living environments.

(2) No any other regions in China has such densely-spreading goddess beliefs as in Ling'nan and Hokkien [Eberhard Wolfram 1968]. For clearer identification, I base on three sorting criteria, scale and impact; origin; and personal background, to systemize the goddess beliefs in Chinese Ling'nan.

In consideration on the scale and impact, there are three main types found. The first is the inter-regional beliefs. Beside Buddhist Kuan'yin (观音) and Taoism-originated The Queen Mother of the West (西王母), the popular Mazu belief (妈祖) is a typical example. Mazu belief took formation in Meizhou Island (Hokkien) in the 10th century, then has spread very strongly along Ling'nan coastal areas, from Tsieu'chou, Cantonese, West Canton lands to Hainan island. One can find it in those places similarly in terms of religious characteristics and spiritual meanings as in its homeland of Hokkien.

Mazu's real name is Lin Mo (林默), also called Lin Mo'niang (林默娘), born on 23 March, AD 960 in Putian Prefecture (莆田) of Hokkien. She was famous for her filial piety. From the age of 16, Mazu used to

accompany her father in fishing offshore. One day, while sleeping, she dreamed and found his father and brother having troubles in the ocean. In the dream, she was trying to rescue them, unluckily, someone interrupted by waking her up. As a result, she did rescue her brother but not her father. She was beloved and admired; after the death in 987 at Mi Chau island, the local people founded a temple to worship her (recorded in *Tian'hou Notes* 天后志, *The Truth of Filial Lin Mo* 林孝女事实, *Records on the Goddess of Heaven* 天妃献圣录 [Zhu Tian'shun 1990: 86]). By 1086, the Southern Song dynasty officially applauded this belief, so that its impact has expanded rapidly soon then. At Yuan dynasty, Mazu was honoured the fame of Queen of Heaven (天妃, in 1278 by Kublai Khan) [Johnathan Chamberlain 1987: 92], then Qing Dynasty Empress of Heaven (Tin Hau, 天后, 1737) [Joseph A. Adler 2002: 104]. Since then, the belief took its penetration up to the lower Yang-tzi River Delta, Shandong Peninsula. From Ming dynasty, due to the demands of maritime trading expansions with Southeast Asia, the belief of Mazu was disseminated in Chinese Ling'nan, Taiwan and Southeast Asia. The English name of the special administrative zone Macau is said to be derived from the word "Mazu's Temple" (妈阁 = *Makak*). There are more than 450 districts, towns or cities in China having Mazu Temple built [baike.baidu.com]. The typical Mazu temples in Ling'nan locate in the Kowloon (Hong Kong), Macau (Macau), Guangzhou, Zhuhai etc. [Zhu Tian'shun; Cheng Manchao 1995: 104-110].

The second type is the sub-regional beliefs. While the South Hokkien and the Hakka region are known for Lin'shui Lady's worship (临水夫人), Caomu Lady⁽⁸⁾ (曹母娘娘), Shenghua Lady (圣化夫人 or Qi'gu七姑)⁽⁹⁾, the West Cantonese region and Hainan island are famous for the worship of Xian Lady (洗夫人), the upper and middle lands of West River (eastern Kwangsi, western Kwangtung) the belief of Dragon Mother (龙母); and the Kui-Liu region the belief of Liu Lady (刘三姐) etc.. These beliefs are said to originate in different socio-historical contexts; therefore, each shares almost no relationship to one another. It completely fits the feature of "mountains-mix-with-plains" in local topography.

Lin Shui Lady (临水夫人) (676-792), also known as Triple Goddesses (大奶夫人), Yi Shun Lady (顺懿夫人), had the real name of Chen Jing'gu (陈靖姑), born in Gu'tian area ⁽¹⁰⁾ (古田) in Hokkien. The legend said that Chen Lady aggregated in Non-Marriage Association (金兰会) with Lin Miao'niang (林纱娘) and Li San'niang (李三娘), all pursued Daoist schooling in remote mountains. They were famous for their blessings; therefore, they were called Triple Goddesses (三奶夫人) after death. The belief was expanded

⁽⁸⁾ Local goddess in Ying'de (英德县, in Shaoguan (韶关), Guangdong) with the unclear background.

⁽⁹⁾ The belief of Sheng'hua Lady is most concentrated in the county of Nanxiong in Northern Guangdong. The belief originated in Changting (Fujian), then was transmitted to be the goddess of Nanxiong [Tam Wai Lun 2004: 826].

⁽¹⁰⁾ There exists the idea that she was born in Fujian's provincial center of Fuzhou [www.tianyabook.com]

throughout the coastal zones and North Hokkien, then was accepted by the Minnanese (闽南, the Southern Hokkiens) and the Hakka groups in South Hokkien and Northeastern Kwangtung [zh.wikipedia.org]. In addition, this belief was also transmitted to Taiwan, typically in Tai'nan (台南) where she is worshipped together with Flower Lady (花婆) and 36 other ancestral goddesses (婆祖) [Vivienne Lo 1993: 69-96; www.210.60.224.16/blog].

Jin'hua Lady (金花夫人=Golden Flower Lady), also called Birth-Giving Lady (养育夫人), Flower-Transforming Lady (转花夫人), Children-Giving Lady (送子夫人), Red Flower Lady (红花夫人), Fetus-Protector (保胎夫人), is the goddess who “controls” the childbearing affairs in folk belief in some areas in Pearl River Delta. According to the present legend, she was the ancient shamanist in the city of Canton. There was a time, the wife of Canton's chief mandarin Chen Lian (陈廉) was found difficult to bear her child. She saw a fairy appeared in dream who advised her “to invite Jin'hua for help” in her dream. Jin'hua did her good work and became famous, therefore, no any man would dare to marry her. Jin'hua was so sad that she committed suicide. A dozen of days have gone, her body emerged in the pond and pervaded the fragrance. The belief of Jin'hua Lady has been formed and developed then. Like the others, the belief of Jin'hua Lady has been considered as a “miscellaneous belief” or “immoral cult” under the mandarins' eyes. It was destroyed cruelly, especially under Ming Jia-jing's reign. However, the belief found its way to maintain. In many aspects, Jin'hua proves to be similar to Mazu. The modern society witnesses the significant progress in childbearing cares, the spiritual role of Jin'hua Lady has been faded and finally incorporated into Mazu belief. Nowadays, in Mazu temple in Nan'hai district of Canton, Jin'hua Lady is worshipped in a smaller corner [Chen Ze'hong 2007: 381-382].

Xian Lady (洗夫人) was born in 520, died in 601 ⁽¹⁾, belonged to the Hundred-Viet race, living in Gao'liang District (高梁郡), presently known as Dian Town (电城), Dian'bai District (电白县) of Kwangtung. She was the leader of local Viet people through Liang Dynasty (502-557), Chen Dynasty (557-589) and Sui Dynasty (581 -618). She was famous for the talent of gathering and controlling the local residents in receiving and adjusting the harmonious life with new-coming Han culture (recorded in *Sui Book* (隋书)). Xian Lady was married to a Han madarin called Feng Bao (冯宝), the local governor. With excellent talent and outstanding intelligence, Xian Lady contributed significantly to the opening and development of the local region. After death, she was embellished to be a goddess, worshipped in large areas throughout southwestern Kwangtung and Hainan island. She was buried in the tomb behind her Great Temple in her homeland. According to the recent statistics, Dian'bai district governs more than 20 Xian Lady temples, Gao'zhou (高州) more than 60, Hua'zhou (化州) more than 20, Hainan island more than 50. In addition, the region Lian'jiang (廉江), Yang'jiang (阳江), Si'ping (四平), Wu'chuan (吴川), Lei'zhou peninsula (雷州) also constructed several Xian Lady temples. Xian Lady anniversary opens yearly from lunar January 17 to 22, known as the largest festival in Southwestern Kwangtung [Zhao Wu'ki, Li Xun'jue 2004].

⁽¹⁾ The authors Yu Tian'chi and Huang Jun'ping [1984] considered that Xian Lady was born in 522, died in 602.

Dragon Mother's real name is Wen Long'ji (温龙姬), said to belong to ethnic Au Viet (瓠越) of Hundred-Viet race, took upper West River area as homeland (presently Teng District (藤县) of Kwangsi). Her parents were unfortunately been killed by the flood. Dragon Mother was saved by an old fisherman named Liang San'gong (梁三公) in De'qing village. Dragon Mother was smart and filial. The legend said that thanks to raising 5 small dragons, she was called the Dragon Mother. Later, she merged the Au Viet tribes in upper and middle lands of West River to fight against Qin military. After death, she was honoured the respected goddess controlling the large areas of land belonging to middle and upper West River. There are typical Dragon Mother temples Yue'cheng (悦城), Zhao'qing (肇庆), Nan'hai (南海) in Kwangtung and Teng District (藤县) in Kwangsi. There has been a hypothesis considering Dragon Mother the "feminized image" of the ancient Au Viet King – Yi Hu Song, who was killed by Chinese Qin troops in BC 218 [Ou Yu'qing 2002; Chen Shao'ji 2004].

Liu Lady was an ethnic Zhuang woman in Kui-Liu region in Tang Dynasty. She was very smart, beautiful and especially good at singing, thus honoured the fairy singer. Liu Lady's songs were to praise works and loves. Some local lords (土司) got to be in irritating feeling, began to try to harm her. On the third of March of a lunar year, Liu climbed up the mountains to get woods, the local lords commanded his servants to break the stony cliffs, the mountain became decomposed, Liu was killed. People of later generations started opening the "singing festival" on the third of March of each lunar year to memorize her. The festival has still transmitted until today. The Zhuang in Liu'zhou area built up the temple to worship Liu Lady. Gradually Liu Lady has been understood as a fairy in the Zhuang's folk culture. The new-coming Han people have adopted the symbol of Liu and the belief.

Po'wang (Lady King 婆王), also known as Flower Lady (花婆) or Flower Goddess (花婆圣母), often appears in the traditional beliefs of Hundred Viet's descendant peoples or Hundred Viet – related peoples such as Zhuang, Yao, Dong etc.. According to the research by Dai Tran Sy [1992] the goddess Flower Lady is just Ba Trung (shortened from Two Trung Kings (二征王), including Trung Trac and Trung Nhi) in the traditional beliefs of Hundred-Viet inhabitants in North Vietnam and Kwangsi and Hunan in China in the early centuries AD. Two Trung Kings were two famous Vietnamese heroes who guided the Vietnamese to fight against Chinese penetrations in North Vietnam, Chinese Ling'nan and Hunan around AD 40. The revolution failed, two kings were killed. The temples have been built up in many places in North Vietnam (Vietnam), Kwangsi and Hunan (China) to worship them as to memorize their mercies [Phan Huy Le.. 1991: 175; Quoc Viet, Pham Tran Anh: taphopdongtam.org]

The third type focuses on the subordinate worships with single small-scaled impacts in Ling'nan. Specifically, Blue and White Snakes (青蛇-白蛇), Moon Lady (嫦娥) Keith G.

Stevens 2001: 55-56], Bai'ji Lady, Twelve Body-buiding Mothers (12 婆祖), Thirty- six goddesses (36 婆祖), Nu-wa (女娲), Wangmu Niang'niang (王母娘娘) [Keith G. Stevens 2001: 53-55], Bed Goddess (床前母) [Eberhard W. 1992], Snake Mother (蛇母), Tai-yin (太阴), Heaven Mother (天母娘娘), Taishan Goddess (泰山娘娘 or 碧霞元君) [Keith G. Stevens 2001: 58], Meng'po Goddess (孟婆, mainly worshipped in An'hui province), Ce Goddess (厕神 or 紫姑, Cantonese: 请蓝姑, Tsieu-chou: 蓝饭姑, 插箕姑), He Xian'gu (何仙姑), Qi Xian'nu (七仙女), Mago (麻姑) [Hellen Hye-Sook Hwang 2008: 10-32] etc.. General speaking, these worships originated from Taoist tradion or from folk culture but then maintained or became Taoist fairies/goddesses. Truthfully, these worships can be found in almost all regions of China. They do not reflect the typical characteristics of Ling'nan culture therefore they are out of researching sphere.

In consideration on origin, there are also four main sources found: (1) originated in Chinese Ling'nan, including Dragon Mother, Xian Lady, Cao'mu Lady, and goddesses appeared in traditional beliefs of Ling'nan ethnic minorities (Liu Lady, Flower Lady, etc.); (2) originated in the other regions in China, including Mazu and Lin'shui Lady from Hokkien, The Queen Mother of the West, Bixia Yuanjun, Moon Lady etc. from North China; (3) transmitted from Indian Buddhism (Kuan'yin); and (4) originated from North Vietnam (Hai Ba Trung).

In consideration on personal background, four typical groups can be identified: (1) *female heros* (Hai Ba Trung, Dragon Mother, Xian Lady); (2) *Humane and filial women* (also *shamanist*, such as Mazu, Lin'shui Lady, Jin'hua Lady, Liu Lady, etc.); (3) *the "goddesses" humanized and deified from the natural world* (Moon Lady, Blue and White Snakes, Snake Mother, etc.); and (4) *the "goddesses" transmitted from religions*, such as Kwan-yin (Avalokitesvara) of Buddhism, The Queen Mother of the West, He Xian'gu, etc. of Taoism.

(3) These worships co-exist in parallel with other religious institutions transmitted from Northern China such as Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Goddess beliefs share the confrontative relations with Confucianism, since Confucianism was selected as main ideology in Chinese feudal society [Li Su'ping 2004: 2]. Under Confucianism's viewpoint, even god worships were listed in the category of "miscellaneous worships" (淫祀) and needed to annul,

let alone the goddess beliefs. Regarding to female social roles, Confucianism advocates "*Only the women and small-minded men are out of being trained, they become cheeky if staying by side, angry if staying in distance* (唯女子与小人为难,养也!近之,则不孙;远之,则怨)" (论语). However, the goddess beliefs have still survived and developed well in Chinese Ling'nan during history because of these following reasons: (1) Confucianism transmitted in Ling'nan has been much "softened" by bearing the nature of femininity in Ling'nan cultural tradition; (2) Some central feudal dynasties took advantages of goddess beliefs to pacify and unify the Ling'nan local residents (¹²); (3) the control and influence of the central court in the Ling'nan were relatively softer than in other regions

In contrast with the Confucianism, the goddess beliefs share the co-existing relationships with Buddhism and Taoism. Lin'shui Lady belief in South Hokkien and Northeastern Kwangtung can be seen as the typical experience. Lin'shui Lady is also known as Three-Goddess Ladies, who are said to become fairies after pursuing Taoist practices. In Buddhism, the famous co-existing case of Mazu and Buddhist Kwanyin is so complete and popular that people fail to recognize. Thus, Mazu Temple is also Kwanyin temple, because both Mazu's and Kwanyin's statues can be found. In a certain extent, Kwanyin has been "degraded" into a popular goddess rather than vice versa.

In addition to the two single relationships above, all three traditions sometimes come to mix together, as in the case of in West River-based Dragon Mother belief. In the temple built in Yue'cheng town of Kwangtung, Kwanyin and Laotzi statues can be found together with Dragon Mother one. There is no any sign of Confucianism presented.

2. The processes of formation and development of goddess belief in Chinese Ling'nan

The history of formation and development of goddess beliefs in Chinese Ling'nan recorded many significant changes caused by both natural and social environments. In general situation,

(¹²) For example, the case of Dragon Mother belief in West River, the central feudal forces used to borrow its power to dominate Ling'nan [Jiang Ming'zhi 2003: 56]. In Mazu's belief, Yuan dynasty once honoured and recognized for the sake of making its tradition become the spiritual basis for food transports from Ling'nan to the North. In Ming time, Mazu belief was again honoured duo to the demands of expanding international maritime trades [Zhu Tian'shun].

there are three main steps classified, including (1) formation; Viet–Han (越-汉) cultural amalgamation; and contemporary changes.

a. Formation

The great majority of goddess beliefs originating or existing in Chinese Ling’nan have taken their source in ancient Hundred-Viet culture and been founded by the local Viet people. As mentioned above, the oldest owners of Chinese Lingnan were the southern branches of Hundred-Viet race, including Au Viet in Kwangsi, Nam Viet in Kwangtung and a part of Lac Viet residing dispersedly around Gulf of Tonkin, Lei’zhou peninsula and Hainan island. They were mainly traditional wet-rice farmers; therefore, strongly emphasized on the fertility ability. As a result, they showed certain respect toward the mothers, the women who were able to keep on in fertility. Such socio-historical background facilitated the important foundation, on which the goddess beliefs, one by one, have been shaped or transmitted and existed in Ling’nan.

The Ling’nan’s goddess beliefs have formed dispersedly in several sub-regions. The belief of Dragon Mother took shape very early in middle land of West River, around 2nd century BC. The belief of Hai Ba Trung (Two Trung Kings) formed in North Vietnam and in some ethnic minorities regions in Kwangsi (China) from the early centuries AD. The belief of Xian Lady appeared in the 6th century, founded by the mixed group of Nam Viet, Lac Viet and Han residents in southwestern Kwangtung. Similarly, Mazu belief originated in Mei’zhou island, where local Min’yueh (闽越, local Hokkiens) culture existed in a high level⁽¹³⁾. It needs to emphasize that most of the goddess beliefs existing in present Ling’nan were established in the backgrounds of touching and conflicting with Han culture when this new cultural system started penetrating in Ling’nan. For example, Dragon Mother belief took shaped in the context of Au Viet’s fighting against the Qin dynasty in the 3rd century BC; Xian Lady belief formed in the situation that Nam Viet culture were in strong struggle to survive from the impact of Han culture in the 6th century AD; Two Trung Kings belief appeared after the failure of the revolution guided by Two Trung Kings fighting against the Chinese invaders in the 1st century AD, etc..

⁽¹³⁾ Fujian area lately amalgamated into Chinese cultural system from the 3rd century AD. However, due to its mountainous topography, the process of Sinolization was implemented slowly; therefore, Fujian still reserves Man Viet culture at high level.

b. The amalgamation between Hundred-Viet and Han cultures

Any one studying on traditional goddess beliefs in Chinese Ling’nan can find it surprised to realize that although they have appeared in the context of cultural conflicts with new-coming Han culture, they still enjoy their intense vitality and has been spontaneously accepted by the Han immigrants. There are two reasons to explain this phenomenon. Firstly, no longer has the Han immigrants in Ling’nan kept in mind the passionate viewpoint towards their original mandarin culture in the North. Instead, they have changed themselves to suit the living conditions at the new place. Specifically, the typical “united in dispersal” face of Ling’nan topography has partly pushed the Han immigrants to admit the new traditions. Moreover, after the process of cultural amalgamation, no longer have the following generations of Ling’nan residents been the purified Han; conversely, they has been localized in Viet blood at a certain level. It is also one of the significant factors causing the dispersal of Ling’nan Chinese into different groups: Cantonese, Hakka, Tsieu’chou, West Cantonese, Hainanese, Kui-Liu, Tangka, etc.. The second reason comes from the impact of Chinese central government. It is relatively difficult to reach Ling’nan from the north, the transports have mainly replied on water ways, consequently, goddesses associated with rivers or ocean have been highly appreciated by many late dynasties: Yuan, Ming, Qing. Dragon Mother, Mazu are two examples of the case. In addition, some other regional and inter-regional goddesses have been also taken interest to serve the purpose of controlling the local followers.

Currently, the purified Viet inhabitants have disappeared in almost Ling’nan (except the Viet-rooted ethnic minorities of Zhuang, Kam..), which means that the cultural subject of goddess beliefs have been replaced by the Han. However, one can find that the change in the nature of the belief is not significant. In other words, the Viet-Han cultural amalgamation in the goddess beliefs took place in peace, the belief themselves have not disappeared but conversely maintained their strong development.

c. Contemporary changes

In turn, this step can be divided into two periods. They are the annihilation movement



P. 4. Mazu and Mazu Lord in Mazu temple at Tuo’cheng, He’chuan, He’yuan, Guangdong. Photo: Ching May Bo(2007) –Sun Yat-sen University

during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), and the present yang-based (阳性化) changes.

In 1949, the new China took shape. Chinese society transformed into the new and unpredictable tendencies. Chinese traditional ideology also changed remarkably. Ling'nan goddess beliefs was naturally affected. The tightened management from the central government as well as changes in thoughts of local residents has been seriously harmed the beliefs. The annihilation movement reached its peak during the ten-year-long Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The belief of Hai Ba Trung in Kwangsi and Hunan fully disappeared [Tran Dai Sy 1992]. Some other beliefs were weakened due to the purification process. Many temples were destroyed or use for other non-belief purposes. Thankfully, the quietly existing traditional beliefs found them in renaissance when The Cultural Revolution ended in late 1970s.

Similarly, the goddess beliefs gradually recovered soon thereafter. Chinese society started changing profoundly when the government decided to open the door for market-based economic development. A series of special economic zones established in Ling'nan such as Zhuhai, Shenzhen, Shantou. Other cities (Guangzhou, Hongkong) have also developed into a new astonishing rise. This situation has been urged the whole Chinese Ling'nan toward the great change. Millions of northern and western immigrants have been moving to Ling'nan (especially Kwangtung). These immigrants are of economic purposes, said to be totally different with the previous migrations over the past 2000 years. Along with the process of rapid economic development over the region, the central government tightens its management. This implies that after reform decided, Ling'nan society has transformed quickly towards more of "yang-based nature" (阳性化). At this time, the newly-rehabilitated goddess beliefs in Ling'nan has been gradually and deeply affected. The new conflicts mainly caused by different natures of different religious traditions (old and new) as well as the up-rising tendency of "yang-based" process keep emerging. The "femininity-based (or yin-based)" goddess beliefs in Ling'nan have to face the "masculinity-based (or yang-based)" cultural tradition from the North (Confucianism respected leads to male chauvinism, mobility-inclined or yang-based). These conflicts are on the rise, there requires prompt and reasonable adjustments. In my opinion, the process of resolving the current conflicts in Ling'nan goddess beliefs will take place in three different trends as followed:

(1) **Gods – goddesses may get balanced** in the internal system of goddess beliefs. This emerging trend gets started recently, and seems to be accepted. Mazu Temple in He'yuan (河源, Kwangtung) is a typical example. Beside the statue of Mazu, local residents also put the statue of Mazu Lord (Tian'hou Lord 天后公公, see picture 4). The followers find it unsurprised at this new arrangement.

(2) **Gods get to replace the goddess.** This will probably be the main trend in the future. This does not mean that some new god beliefs get emerged soon. It is the penetration and replacement of Taoism towards the goddess beliefs. North King (Bei'di = 北帝) shrines at Chang'zhou (长州, Kwangsi) is an instance. Being named North King Shrine, the worshipped object is truly a goddess. The temple was originally a goddess temple, it only got changed two decades ago.

(3) **Goddess get to strengthen their positions.** It is a possibility that after the serious struggle, some certain goddess beliefs will adjust to suit the new situations and continue to exist on more stable foundation. However, these beliefs need to change thoroughly to be qualified. They must be Sinicized completely, or must accept Taoist traditions at the higher level, even become a part of Daoist fairy system. It means that the beliefs must be subjects to sacrifice some typical regional features of Ling'nan culture, including increasing the “yang-based nature” (in case of complete Sinicization), or integrating into Taoism as well as losing the nature traditional beliefs (in case of being Taoisized). However, not all goddess beliefs can be involved in that process. In my opinion, perhaps Mazu and Xian Lady beliefs can continue to exist along with the inevitably significant changes in the nature and meaning of their own.

In addition, the attitude of the central government towards the existence and development of the goddess beliefs in Ling'nan is also an important factor to decide their survivals. In this transitional period, all state policies will cause the big fluctuations. Presently, the Ling'nan goddess beliefs have not yet been recognized officially by the central government [Donald E. MacInnis 1989: 45-49].

3. Cultural features of goddess beliefs in Chinese Ling'nan

As mentioned above, there is no other regions in China where goddess beliefs are in blossoming situations as in Ling'nan. The existence of these beliefs has created the prominent cultural features which could become some of the key identities of Ling'nan region. In general, there are five features described below:

Firstly and prominently, it is *the synthetization* (综合性), also *multi-source nature*.

It is the combination of many traditional Oriental beliefs and religions, particularly the ancestor worships, heroic worships and god/goddess worships. Dragon Mother, Xian Lady, Two Trung Kings beliefs are of this type. Dragon Mother was originally deified from an Au Viet King, Yi Hu Song, on the anti-Qin movements in the ancient time, laterly became A Mo (阿嬷= "Mother") of the whole community in the region. Currently many Chinese families, after having their children born, have brought them to Dragon Mother Temple to request becoming her "children" [Wu Zhao'qi, Li Xun'jue 2004: 56-70]. Similar activities can be found in Xian Lady homeland in southwest of Kwangtung.

It is also the the harmonization between local beliefs (goddess beliefs) and the religions of Buddhism and Taoism. The three different religious traditions share the common point of being foundation for local residents in their spiritual life. All three traditions are associated with folk culture. Enormously, they affect the normal lives of Ling'nan residents. In one other aspect, Confucianism in Ling'nan has become insipid, which helps offer convenient conditions to the coexistence and development of the trio of goddess beliefs, Buddhism and Taoism as counterbalances to Confucianism itself. The presence of Kwanyin, Laotzi and the other gods statues in the temples of Dragon Mother in Yue'cheng, Xian Lady in Gao'zhou, Mazu in Nanhai (Kwangtung) can support this argument. In addition, many Buddhist temples (as Ling'xiao temple in Zhao'qing) show the presences of local popular goddesses.

The coexisting traditions of North (Han's) and South (Viet's) also find their amalgamation in goddess beliefs. As analyzed in the previous part, almost all goddess beliefs in Ling'nan

originated locally, all passed the period of Viet-Han cultural harmonization in the context that Han culture brought to Ling'nan was far from madarin nature.

In addition, there are some specific mutual combinations found among the goddess beliefs, such as there are 12 body-building goddesses⁽¹⁴⁾ and 36 others worshipped in Lin'shui Lady Temple in Tainan (Taiwan) [<http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com>]; the unity of Mazu and Lin'shui Lady some areas in Kwangtung and Hokkien, the joint image of Mazu and Kwan'yn [Johnathan Chamberlain 1987: 93-95], etc..

On the symbolic meanings of the Ling'nan goddesses, one goddess is usually understood as a deity in charge of several functions. Particularly, Mazu is known as maritime goddess, transportation goddess, rain goddess, fertility goddess, health goddess, war goddess etc [Li Lu'lu 1995: 78-108; Cheng Man'chao 1995: 106].

It is truly the synthetization that helps Ling'nan goddess beliefs improve themselves in accordance with the historical, cultural conditions during the past to survive and develop.

Secondly, it is *the flexibility* (灵活性). Local Hundred-Viet cultures are said to belong to the agrarian cultural type; therefore, it obviously contains the flexibility [Tran Ngoc Them 2004]. This feature can be found in present Vietnamese culture and the others in Southeast Asia. Goddess beliefs derived in local Hundred-Viet cultures, obviously do they contain the flexibility. After the conquest, the Han immigrants in Ling'nan, as the prerequisite of new life in a new place also has become more flexible in their personality than the residents in the North. Therefore, the Han immigrants had to reconcile with the local Viet residents, all inherited and maintained the beliefs. In reality, in comparison with Confucianism, goddess beliefs gain more flexibility and openness to adopt the elements of Buddhism and Taoism. Goddess beliefs have easily accepted the new trends. Mazu belief can serve as an example. Mazu belief formed in Hokkien, it got integrated well with the local tradition in Ling'nan. Originally, Mazu was the goddess of maritime protection, then the worship was transmitted to inland areas, her meaning have expanded additionally. In coastal and river-based areas, Mazu has been a marine goddess. However, in the mainland, Mazu has been understood as blessing

⁽¹⁴⁾ These 12 body-building goddesses (in Vietnamese language: 12 bà mụ) also appear in 12-period-of-time-a-day belief in Oriental cultures.

or happiness holy symbol rather than a marine goddess. Mazu Temple in the city of Kui'lin in Kwangsi is of this change. It is flexibility which amalgamates the Buddhist Kwanyin with popular goddess and makes Kwanyin closer to the beliefs. In the present Ling'nan residents' eyes, the goddess is also a Buddhist Kwanyin and vice versa, both produce the same roles. As an other decisive point of the flexibility, the goddess beliefs themselves have not assigned by any dogmas, they are still popular beliefs and have not officially acknowledged by Chinese Central Government.

The dispersity (分散性) makes the third feature. Due to the above-mentioned topographical conditions, Ling'nan Han residents have been divided into many groups such as Kui-Liu, Cantonese, Tsieu'chou, Hakka, West Cantonese, Tangka, Hananese, etc.). Each region has got relatively different traditional beliefs, including the common beliefs (Mazu, Kwanyin) and their local ones. Xian Lady belief seems to be only popular in the southwestern regions of Kwangtung and Hainan island. Dragon Mother belief exists popularly only in the Cantonese communities along the West River system. Liu Lady belief only produces religious impact around Kui-Liu area (northern Kwangsi). Similarly, Cao'mu Lady is the spiritual product of Ying'de District (northern Kwangtung). Lin'shui Lady proves her best holiness in the Minanses and some Hakka areas. The Ling'nan goddess beliefs virtually share no or very vague relationship with each other. It is the dispersive situation of the topography and residential distribution which doesnot enable any local goddess beliefs to outreach its limited space and become the common beliefs for the whole Ling'nan. Instead, the belief of Mazu from Hokkien, thanks to its own flexible features and the advantage of being associated with the exploitation and development of Ling'nan, has got indirect state supports, gradually become the main belief in the crowded Pearl River Delta and the surrounding areas. Together with the different styles of culture and Chinese dialects, the dispersive situation of goddess beliefs have also urged the locality-building processes in the area. It has become the biggest obstacle to the process of unification in Ling'nan which facilitates the central government in implementing the tightly-controlled policies over the region.

The historicity (历史性) is the fourth feature. Goddess beliefs in Ling'nan were all born in the context of historical changes in the past, under the demands of equilibration between social and

spiritual life; therefore, the formation of these beliefs originally contains the historicity. The increasing penetrations of the Han immigrants were followed by the process of Sinicization which changed the cultural subjects of these beliefs from the local Hundred-Viet to the Hans. These changes left the significant impacts upon the beliefs. Additionally, the present enormous socio-economic changes in the region, once again, enhance the historicity of goddess beliefs. It can be said that each step of the development of goddess beliefs in Ling'nan are associated with a big change of the history.

The essentiality (统领性) serves the fifth feature. On the whole territory of mainland China, Ling'nan deserves the fame “the land of popular beliefs”, where goddess beliefs occupy the essential position. In particular in the traditional beliefs, only goddess beliefs can have set up their firm and independent footholds. It does not mean that Ling'nan Chinese residents don't worship popular gods. However, most of them are associated with Taoism, which North King (北帝), Community Patron God (城隍神), Kwan-kong (关公), Yu'Di (玉帝, the Jade Emperor of the Heaven), Wealth God, Earth God, honoured Taosits etc.. can be seen as typical instances. In Buddhism, Buddha takes the highest position, but the position has been moved to Kwanyin. Kwanyin produces the biggest Buddhist impacts, and at a certain aspect, Kwanyin has been “popularized as a goddess in popular beliefs”. This essentiality of goddess belief is obviously an effect of the local feminity-based agrarian cultural type. The essentiality of goddess beliefs reflect the existence of *yin* culture formed in Hundred-Viet time in Ling'nan. Consequently, Ling'nan appears to be a special cultural region in China. At this point, only Ling'nan shows its closest relationship with Southeast Asia. In regarding local marital customs, many evidences can be found. Until the later half of 20 century, there still existed the so-called “self-combing ladies” (自梳女)⁽¹⁵⁾ and “Virilocal residence-refusal” (不落夫家, matrilocy)⁽¹⁶⁾ widespreading in some areas such as Dong'guan, Fo'shan, Shun'de of Pearl River Delta . Among the many analyzed causes, the vestiges of feminity-based Viet culture serve the major position. In addition, the presence of many Gu'sao tombs (姑嫂坟=the tomb of the lady and

⁽¹⁵⁾ The old-fashioned custom “*Self-combing*” (自梳女) formed from long time ago. Many women conclusively refused to get married. They voluntarily joined to set up “marriage-refusal” societies. Jin'lan Soceity (金兰契) in Fo'shan (Kwangtung) was one of the best-known ones [Nguyen Ngoc Tho 2008: vanhoahoc.edu.vn].

⁽¹⁶⁾ The old custom “*virilocal residence - refusal*” (不落夫家, or matrolocy) allows the married woman to stay in her parent's house untill having the first child born. It can be presently found in cultures of some Hundred-Viet descendant nationalities such as Zhuang, Dong, Buyuei, Shui [Nguyen Ngoc Tho 2008: vanhoahoc.edu.vn].

her sister-in-law)⁽¹⁷⁾ somewhere in Pearl River Delta [Nguyen Ngoc Tho 2008] can be seen as significant evidence to argue on the importance on the role of women in Ling'nan society.

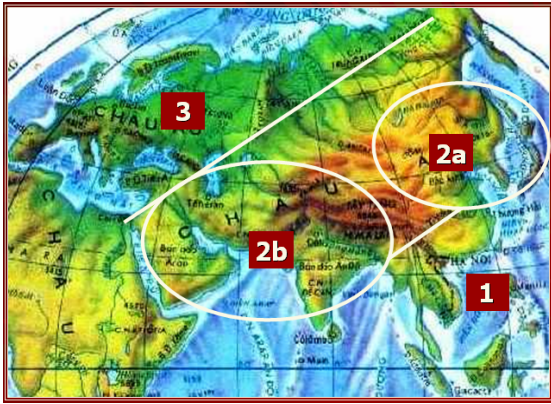
Last but not least, Ling'nan goddess beliefs contain *the popularity* (平民性). They were born in the common people, used as a kind of spiritual tool to supplement the Confucianism-based orthodox culture. Accordingly, all goddess beliefs imply the popularity. They have not lost under the orthodox culture's pressures, conversely produced certain influences toward the orthodox culture. Goddess temples have existed in parallel with the feudal governmental agencies, been gradually gained their recognition. Moreover, great number of local officials have also been the followers. On the other hand, the conferments of feudal dynasties could be seen as the concessions towards the power of goddess beliefs. Simultaneously, the conferments became the foundation to glue up the noble and popular classes together.

4. Chinese Ling'nan goddess beliefs in relations with the Vietnamese and Southeast Asian cultures

1. Vietnam and the rest Southeast Asia - the lands of the traditional developed goddess beliefs

a. By applying the typological-systematic method in researching culture, I divide world culture into two great systems – Oriental and Occidental cultures. From that basis, we continue basing on economic origins to distinguish two typical cultural types: *original Oriental agricultural culture* and *original Occidental nomadic culture*. In consideration of the generality, there are similarly two typical types *Oriental yin-based culture* (东方阴性文化, feminity-based culture) and *Occidental yang-based culture* (西方阳性文化 masculinity-based culture) found [Tran Ngoc Them 2008: vanhoahoc.edu.vn].

⁽¹⁷⁾ The Cantonese community in Pearl River Delta still transmit different versions of the legend *The tomb of the lady and her sister-in-law* (姑嫂坟=). Typically, the man called He Renjian in Song dynasty got married. His younger sister and his wife got very close relationship. After death, they were buried in the same tomb. Later, similar tombs have been built around the delta [Nguyen Ngoc Tho 2008: vanhoahoc.edu.vn].



Between the above-mentioned two main types, there still exists the third one: *transitionally intermediate cultural type* (中间类型), which contains all attributes of both main types. Particularly, in the Euro-asia continent, the ancient Southeast Asia (including modern Southeast Asia, Assam state of India, and South Yangtzi River lands in China) is the homeland of the typical agricultural type (*yin*-based, *tranquility*-based) while Europe the typical nomadic cultural type (*yang*-based, *mobility*-based). The entire areas from the Southwest Asia, India to Northeast Asia and Siberia belong to the intermediate cultural type [Tran Ngoc Them 2008: vanhoahoc.edu.vn].

Accordingly, ancient China belongs to Northeast Asia, hence its culture belongs to the transitional intermediate type. Both *yang*-based and *yin*-based cultural types are included. In addition, China took Confucianism as traditional official ideology, its culture *bends towards the yang-based type*. The author Bret Hinsch [1989: 47-82] demonstrated that North Chinese was once the land of goddess worships, however, later only Taoist and Taoism-related goddesses could find the ways to survive. South China, particularly, from South Yangtzi River land to Ling'nan area, was originally a part of ancient Southeast Asia, obviously belonged to the *yin*-based cultural type, however, after Chinese conquest, there has been the Sinicization process implemented, its *yin*-based nature has been damaged largely. Only Ling'nan area, thanks to its special natural and social conditions, still preserves the original *yin*-based nature at high level. It is necessary to point out, the south Yangtzi River Delta (including Dongting region 洞庭, Ngo-Viet region 吴越, Hokkien region 福建) have been fully integrated into Han culture; therefore, only the intermediate cultural type is found dominatedly. Han dialects

spoken from Dongting Lake to Yunnan areas are grouped into Southwestern Mandarin Chinese (西南官话). Meanwhile, the rest of ancient Southeast Asia (mostly present Southeast Asia) still maintains its yin-based cultural identities.

b. Located in the Southeast Asian mainland and bordered by China in the north, Vietnam, one of the typical Southeast Asian nations, enjoys the Southeast Asian wet-rice agricultural cultural basis [Tran Ngoc Them 2004]. Obviously, it shares all significant characteristics of the whole region. In the historical processes, Vietnamese culture has imported many foreign factors from India, China and the West, in which the impact of Chinese culture is the strongest. However, thank to the local densely yin-based nature, Vietnamese cultural identities have not been replaced by these foreign sources.

The Red River Delta is known as the cradle of Vietnamese culture. Its topography is relatively low and even, surrounded by high mountains and the Gulf of Tonkin. This natural background has created the close environment within the delta. Thank to this feature, there exists the highly unity in culture (in dealing with natural environment (natural disasters, social social unrests and foreign invasions) of the whole delta. The event of "Ma's immigration" (马留) at first period of Chinese domination time (1-2nd centuries AD) serves as an example. As Han Dynasty tried to Sinicize the locals, a large number of Han immigrants under the control of the Chinese conqueror Ma Yuan were sent to stay in Vietnam to turn us into Chinese. Conversely, they were all localized [Tran Ngoc Them 2004: 88-89].

Vietnamese people, now and then, are mainly agrarian residents much depending on rice-planting. The wishes of fertility (in human being, rice and plants) always stay in mind. Obviously, they do respect the *yin* nature. Moreover, the long-lasting rural lifestyle has made Vietnamese popular culture bended towards the *yin*-respected and *tranquility*-based natures [Tran Ngoc Them 2004].

Vietnam has been receiving Chinese culture for over 2000 years (both obligatorily and



P. 6: Goddess riding on a dragon in Vietnamese traditional sculpture [Tran Ngoc Them 2004]

voluntarily), however, only the mandarin classes of the society were deeply affected, particularly in the aspects of state organization and management, the writing system, the official selection examinations, etc.. The popular classes have been considered as the keepers of the original cultural identities. The study on the role of women in society can show the evidences. Under XV-century Le dynasty, while the central government strongly implemented the supporting policies towards the imported Confucianism to serve the state management, the popular classes still kept their tradition maintained, as described in the folk song "*Ba đồng một mớ đàn ông, mang bỏ vào lồng cho kiến nó tha. Ba trăm một mụ đàn bà, mua về mà trải chiếu hoa cho ngồi*" (*The group of men cost only three coins, after purchase, they can be put inside the cage to serve the ants. However, a woman worths three hundred coins, after purchase, she deserves to sit on the well-laid mattress*). Therefore, yin-based cultural tradition – the vital factor of Vietnamese culture, is still seen as the basic foundation of the present society.

There are hundreds of goddesses identified throughout the nation. According to the statistics done by Vu Ngoc Khanh, Mai Ngoc Chuc and Pham Hong Ha [2002], 362 goddesses are worshipped in the Red River Delta and Ma River Basin (Northern Central Land). The figure is much higher if all nationwide regions are investigated.

In Vietnam, goddesses are so powerful and popular that they are uniquely mentioned when people think about the popular beliefs. In consideration on scale of impact, they can be divided into two main groups: (1) *national goddesses* who cover greater impacts to the whole country (such as Hai Ba Trung, Lieu Hanh, Mau Thuong Thien (Heaven Goddess), Mau Thuong Ngan (Land Goddess), Mau Thoai (Water Goddess), Phap Van (Cloud Goddess), Phap Vu (Rain Goddess), Phap Loi (Thunder Goddess), Phap Dien (Lightning Goddess), Quan Am (Kwanyin), etc.); (2) *local goddesses* (Le Chan in Haiphong, Y Thien Y Yana Ponagar in Nha Trang, Ba Den in Tay Ninh, Ba Chua Xu in Mekong Delta etc.). In regarding to personal background, there are also two groups found: (1) *natural goddesses*, such as Au Co, Thien Y Yana Ponagar, Ba Chua Xu etc., and (2) *human goddesses*, such as Hai Ba Trung, Lieu Hanh, Ba Trieu, Y Lan etc.. General speaking, the goddess beliefs in Vietnam are relatively similar to the traditions of the other parts of Southeast Asia.

c. In Southeast Asia, yin-based agrarian cultural identities and rural living lifestyle have created similar conditions to promote the local goddess beliefs. They were generated on the basis of yin-based culture thousands of years ago, will continue to maintain and survive towards the future.

It was not incidental that many Western authors suggested "Southeast Asia is the land of matriarchy" [Tran Ngoc Them 2004]. The role of the mother in local agricultural fertility has created the concrete foundation. According to statistics printed in the book *Goddesses World Mythology* by Martha A. and Dorothy M.I. [1993: 479-497], there are 345 Southeast Asian goddesses listed. Typically, they are Annawan (Luzon), Bugan, Ligan (Ifugao), Hanan (Tagalog) the Philippines; Banana Maiden (Celebes), Dua Nggea (Flores), Hainuwele (Ceram), Dewi Sri, Rice Mother (Bali), Dewi Cri (Java, Bali), Ina (Maluku), Indara (Toraja), Jata (Bornéo) etc. in Indonesia; Djalai, Jalang, Klang, Simei, Kannagi in Malaysia; Daterata, Larai Majan, Ningsin Majan, Pheebie Yau in Burma; Nang Nag, Phosop Mae, Mae Phra Phloeng, Phra Naret in Thailand; Nang Tholani in Laos; Sah Ino Po, Po Yan Dari, Nata Meser, Nakta Dampraca in Cambodia, etc.. [Martha Ann .. 1993: 479-497; James J. Preston 1982]. Clearly, the diversity of ethnic cultures, the dispersals in natural and social conditions have all made Southeast Asia the rich land for goddess beliefs.

2. Comparison between goddess beliefs in Chinese Ling'nan and in Vietnam

In history, Chinese Ling'nan and North Vietnam (Vietnamese Ling'nan) share the same cultural cradle: the Hundred-Viet civilization. The Austroasiatic Hundred-Viet⁽¹⁸⁾ is an ancient agrarian community who are said to be the owners of geometric patterns on ceramics (几何印纹陶), houses on stilts (栏杆房子), hair-cutting and skin-tattooing customs (断发纹身), netel-nut eating (吃槟郎), dragon worshipping (崇龙) and bird worshipping (崇鸟), Viet-style axes (有段石斧, 有肩石斧) etc. [Chen Guo'qiang 1988; Yu Tian'chi.. 1988; Jeffrey Barlow 2005].

⁽¹⁸⁾ Some Chinese scholars in middle 20th century such as Luo Xiang'lin (罗香林) [1943], Xu Zong'shi (徐松石) [1954] affirmed the Han origin of ancient Hundred-Viet peoples, however, in late 20th century when the modern sciences of linguistics, genetics and archaeology have been greatly developed, the above-mentioned hypothesis has been completely disclaimed. As the present well-known understanding, the ancient Hundred-Viet were the Southern Mongoloids who spoke the languages of either Austroasiatic or Tai-Kadai [Li Hui 2002: 26-31; Mei Tsu-lin, Jerry Norman 1976; Luca Cavalli-Sforza.. 1994: 225, 234; Mark J. Alves [2000]; Henri Maspero [1912]; Benedict [1942: 576-601; 1975: 462] v.v..].

They used to live in a large scale of space from Yangtzi River Delta to the northern mainland Southeast Asia. In general, ancient Hundred-Viet community can be divided into many cultural areas, including (1) lower Yangtzi River; (2) Dongting Lake (middle Yangtzi River); (3) Hokkien, (4) Yunnan-Guizhou Highland, and (5) Ling'nan (including Chinese and Vietnamese Ling'nans) [Jiang Bing'zhao.. 1998: 1]. Accordingly, the formation and development of the Au Viet, Lac Viet and Nam Viet societies in ancient Ling'nan shared the common source of Hundred-Viet, and the same traditional cultural type. The research in genetics of Ling'nan residents by Li Hui [Li Hui 2002: 26-31] can strongly support this idea.

However, the level of internal unity of each sub-area is not the same due to different geographical characteristics, topographical conditions and socio-historical backgrounds (described in chapter 1).

The whole Ling'nan area has passed the common socio-historical process. At II century BC, the Qin-Han Chinese dynasties started implementing the Sinicization policy towards the whole Hundred-Viet land. It is the *unity* in natural conditions of Red River Delta and southernmost location that help North Vietnamese protect their culture from being Sinicized.

I start comparing the goddess beliefs in Chinese Ling'nan and Vietnamese Ling'nan from the aspect of cultural geography. As being analyzed above, topographical feature in Chinese Ling'nan helps divide it into two sub-areas: the *dispersed* western part (Kwangsi), and the *dispersed between the local unified* in eastern coast (Kwangtung) while North Vietnam in *high unity* nature. These natural features have been affecting the formation of cultural traditions as well as the cultural exchange processes in each locality, from which three styles of culture have formed, including:

Table 2: Comparison between Chinese Ling'nan and Vietnamese Ling'nan

	Chinese Ling'nan		Vietnamese Ling'nan
<i>Sub-area</i>	<i>Kwangsi</i>	<i>Kwangtung (Hainan island included)</i>	<i>North Vietnam</i>
<i>Ancient cultural subject</i>	Au Viet	Nam Viet	Lac Viet
<i>Modern cultural subject</i>	Han Chinese (Cantonese, Kui-Liu group) + ethnic minorities (Zhuang,	Han Chinese (Tsieu'chou, Hakka, Cantonese, West Canton, Hainanese) + ethnic minorities (Yao, She, Zhuang,	Viet and ethnic minorities in the North and Northern Central Land (Muong, Tho,

	Dong, Dai, Shui..)	Li, etc.)	etc.)
<i>Topographical feature</i>	<i>dispersity</i> (mountainous conditions)	<i>Internal unity among the dispersed areas</i> ("mountain-mix-with-plains" style)	<i>High unity</i> (large and closed river delta)
<i>Traditional economic type</i>	Hunting, mountainous planting	Agriculture, mountainous planting, handicrafts, fishery	Pure wet-rice agriculture
<i>Cultural attribute</i>	Yang-based (dispersal)	Relatively intermediate (dispersal between the unities)	Yin-based (unity)

One can see that the dispersed natural condition in western Chinese Ling'nan (Kwangsi) causes the complication in economic sources, including wet-rice planting in river valleys, mountainous planting, hunting, etc.. As a result, the social roles of men and women are somehow mutually associated and the whole society bends on the *yang* nature since masculine forces are needed in hunting, mountainous planting irrigation, community protection, warfares, etc.. Therefore, this area shows the extremely complicated situation in the popular beliefs. Both goddess and gods are worshipped. For example, Fu'xi (伏羲), Pan'hu (盘瓠), North King (北帝), White King (白帝天王), Kwan'kong (关公) etc. are coexisting with the goddesses Flower Lady (花婆), Liu Lady (刘三姐), Nu'wa (女娲), Mazu (妈祖), Dragon Mother (龙母) etc.. At a certain level, gods get rather higher positions than goddesses. The Han Chinese community in Kui-Liu area shows the Northern-like ways in belief since their ancestors mostly immigrated directly from the North through Hunan (湖南) and did not get much involved in Ling'nan goddess tradition. Laterly, they adopted the belief of Mazu from lower Pearl River land in Kwangtung. In the other hand, the Cantonese going up by the rivers from Kwangtung normally brought the goddess beliefs and maintained to serve their new life in Kwangsi.

Eastern Ling'nan (Kwangtung) with the topographical style of *internal unity among the dispersed areas* and its relatively agrarian economy has led to two major characteristics of popular beliefs, including (1) Bending on goddess worships; (2) each region getting its own features. The processes of Confucius transmissions in the region have been strong or weak depending on different dynasties, however, it has never been strong enough to replace completely the local goddess worships. As the result of the long-term conflicts, the orthodox Confucianism started accepting the coexistence of local goddess beliefs, as similar as it had done with Buddhism and Taoism nationwide.

In North Vietnam, the topographical feature *high unity* in accordance with the absolute rice agrarian tradition has created the tradition of goddess worships standing at the higher position in folk culture. During the exchange process with Chinese culture, Vietnam has simultaneously admitted Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, however, only Buddhism and Taoism could set up their firm foothold and produced certain positive impacts in popular culture.

3. Chinese Ling'nan's goddess beliefs in the cultural relations between China and Southeast Asia

The above analysis clearly shows that both China and Southeast Asia join the common cultural interference in popular beliefs which was created by history. If Chinese culture heightens Confucianism for it can help bring the social unification, Southeast Asia is known as the land of popular goddess beliefs. Between these two styles there exists a special cultural bridge containing both Chinese Confucianism and Southeast Asian goddess beliefs traditions. In China side, it is Ling'nan, and in Southeast Asia side, it is North Vietnam. Such complexion can be described in the following table:

Table 3: Comparison of Chinese and Southeast Asian cultures

	China		Southeast Asia	
<i>Region</i>	<i>China (except Ling'nan)</i>	<i>Chinese Ling'nan</i>	<i>North Vietnam</i>	<i>The rest of Southeast Asia</i>
<i>Character- istics of popular beliefs</i>	- Confucianism as the orthodox ideology; no stable position for popular beliefs. - Bending on gods, Taoism-associated.	- Co-existence between Confucianism and popular beliefs - Bending mainly on goddess beliefs	- Strong development of popular beliefs; Confucianism for subordinate position - Bending greatly on goddess beliefs	- The lands of goddess beliefs

Truthfully, the relationship between China and Southeast Asia in cultural traditions is generally complicated, however, it can be fully comprehended if being examined in the viewpoint of cultural typology. Accordingly, Chinese Ling'nan and Vietnam are exactly the lands of cultural interference – the cultural bridge to link both sides. Among all the aspects of social and spiritual lives, goddess beliefs can be seen as the most typical manifestation of cultural connection between China and Southeast Asia.

Conclusion

There are three main conclusions:

Chinese Ling'nan's goddess beliefs have mainly originated in the background of Hundred-Viet culture, have passed the phases of meeting, exchanges and conclusive conflicts with the Han Chinese culture, however, thanks to the special natural, social and historical conditions of Ling'nan, they has been adopted, maintained and developed firmly on the original cultural basis by the Chinese immigrants.

Chinese Ling'nan's goddess beliefs contain the characteristics of synthesization, flexibility, the dispersity, the historicity, the essentiality and the popularity, all of which reflect the powerful existence of Hundred-Viet-originated folk culture.

Together with Vietnam, Chinese Ling'nan area with the harmonization and co-existence between local Viet yin-based culture and Northern Han mandarin culture has really become an important cultural bridge for the processes of cultural and economic exchanges between Southeast and Northeast Asia.

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