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GODDESS BELIEFS IN THE CHINESE
LINGNAN AREA

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GODDESS BELIEFS IN CHINESE LING'NAN AREA

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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, Five-Mountain Range), the prolonged part of Himalayan mountains reaching the Pacific coast in the south of Hokkien and the north of Kwangtung, forms the natural walls to decompose 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 include **Da'you** (大庾岭), **Yue'cheng** (越城岭), **Ming'zhu** (萌渚岭), **Du'pang** (都庞岭) and **Qi'tian** (骑田岭) [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 borders 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 (mainland) 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 Ling'nan in comparison to Vietnamese counterpart as a part of 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 locates right 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, planting still remain. This is also a highlight difference of Ling'nan comparing with 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, 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 the ancient time belongs to Southern Mongoloid 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 mostly lived in western Ling'nan (Kwangsi) and based on hunting, mountainous planting and valley-lowland farming economies. In the east, the Nam Viet residents essentially relied on agricultural life and are considered as experts in traditional handicrafts, pottery making, and off-shore fishery. Beside 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 Hundred-Viet groups in Chinese Ling'nan was deadly interrupted by the penetrations of the Han Chinese from the North of China. By BC 218, Emperor Qin of China launched the wars to pacify Ling'nan, then completely conquered in BC 214, officially opened the stage of disputes and integration of Ling'nan into China. Along with

⁽¹⁾ **Au Viet:** mainly gathered into tribes, worshipped bronze drums and owned the ceramic pattern of Au Viet-style geometry (瓠越式几何印纹) in ancient Kwangtung. 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:** lived mainly on rice plantings in the Red River Delta, Ma River Basin (Vietnam) and areas along the Gulf of Tonkin, Lei'zhou Peninsula, Hainan island (China). They were the owners of Dongson culture (BC 500-300), 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 considered as the ancestors of the modern Vietnamese people.

⁽³⁾ **Nam Viet:** resided on 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 (伯虑國), Hwan-Tou (驩頭國, also called Pan-Yu (番禺國)) in the Pearl River basin plains [Zeng Zhao'huan 1994: 37-38].

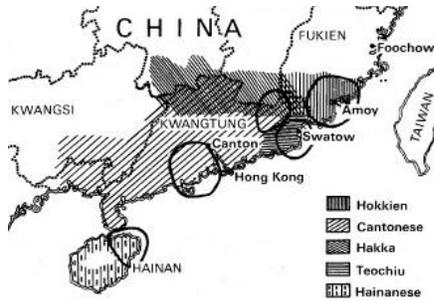
the control of the land, several Han migration and Sinicization policies have been implemented. During 2000 years then, the formation and development of ethnic communities in Ling'nan have been deeply affected by such geographical, topographical and socio-historical conditions.

On the basis of ancient Au Viet residents in mountainous Kwangsi, the Sinicization movements were not strong as wanted. As a result, the Au Viet self-decomposed and mixed with the Han at different levels, became the Kui-Liu group of Han Chinese (the mixed group Han Chinese from Hunan and the local Au Viet, assigned to be Southwestern Madarin 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 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⁾, the **Hakka** (客家), the **Cantonese** (广府); the **West Cantonese** ⁽⁵⁾ (粤西); the floating **Tangka** (蛋家)⁽⁶⁾; and the **Hainanese**. When speaking local dialects, they cannot find them understood with each other, except the Tangkas currently speaking Cantonese. Badly do they show the ethical prejudices towards each other, such as the Hakka and the Cantonese once joined the serious dispute "the Punti-Hakka Wars"; 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. Clearly, the special natural characteristic of "in the mountains there found the plains, in the plains there found the mountains" in Kwangtung has stipulated the distribution of the Han communities; obviously also stipulated the cultural features of each group. The difference between them has a great influence on popular culture, especially goddess beliefs that I will discuss in the following sections.

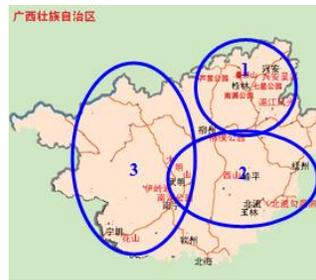
⁽⁴⁾ The Han Chinese sub-group, speaking Tsieu-chou dialect, mainly reside in Han River basin in the northeastern Kwangtung (the cities of Tsieu-chou, Swatow, Shanwei v.v.), considered mostly close to the Minnanese in Amoy (South Hokkien). Tsieu-chou dialect is grouped into Minnanese language [Yuan Zhong'ren 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. Yuan Zhong'ren [1998: 20-21] and Wang Wen'guang, Li Xiao-bin [2007: 228] combined Lei'zhou peninsula and Hainan 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.



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 rivers 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 to the southern ones, even create the difference within the same group. For example, people in Dong'guan (东莞) in north Pearl River speak a relatively different dialectic Cantonese from the Fo'shan (佛山) speakers in south Pearl River although they are all Cantonese. 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 Kwangsi. As a result, the Cantonese from Pearl River Delta has rowed up the rivers to do their business, opened new living areas and Sinicized the local residents both sides. Gradually did they widespread Sinicization in other Kwangsi lowlands [Yuan Zhong'ren 1998: 21-22]). Nowaday, most Han people in Kwangsi are the Cantonese. The floating residents in these rivers have become the Tangkas [Huang Xin'mei 1990; Zhang Shou'qi 1991].

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

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

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

(1) Firstly, 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 systems for sustainable existence, the popular belief (or popular religion) is simply the form of popular worship, deriving from polytheistic traditions. It can be said that at the previous days of human civilization, people with their limited understandings toward the nature and the 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 the great "mother".

In Asia–Pacific region, beliefs seem to have the larger roles in almost all of ancient Southeast Asia cultures ⁽⁷⁾. They profoundly influenced the spiritual life of ancient Hundred-Viet peoples as well as of new-coming Han immigrants; they dominated in many aspects of socio-cultural life from customs, rituals, festivals, cast lots to primitive arts etc.. Through the study of traditional cultures, scientists have easily recognized that the ancient Viet inhabitants belong to Southern Mongoloid 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 merits to popular people, such as heroic leaders, founders of new careers, persons 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 culture. In this paper, I mainly observe the “Mother” goddess (Great Goddesses), usually known as natural deities, ancestral mothers, deified heroic women, blessing goddesses, fertile goddesses and female fairies in Ling’nan folk

⁽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].

cultures. Popularly, they are thought to associate with the fertility, the protection, the blessing and the life - creating.

Many Western scholars have said "Southeast Asia is the land of matriarchy" (le Pays du Matricat) [Tran Ngoc Them 2004: 44]. This comment can be tested fully in the cultural beliefs of Southeast Asian cultures, from goddess Lieu Hanh, Hai Ba Trung, Ponagar in Vietnam to Hainuwele in Ceram islands of Indonesia, from Meser Nata, Nakta Dampracs in Khmer culture [Vu Ngoc Khanh .. 2002: 12] to Nang Nak in Thai tradition [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, 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)⁽⁸⁾ 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 local Hokkien, then has spread widely along Ling'nan coastal areas, from Tsieu'chou, Cantonese, West Canton lands to Hainan island. One can find this belief in those places similar as in its homeland.

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

⁽⁸⁾ According to Eberhard W. [1968], Kwanyin was once the male Buddhist, first became female in South China in 8th century.

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].

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⁽⁹⁾ (曹母娘娘), Shenghua Lady (圣化夫人 or Qi'gu 七姑)⁽¹⁰⁾, 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 which 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 ⁽¹¹⁾ (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 the famous for their blessings; therefore, they were called Triple Goddesses (三奶夫人) after death. The belief was expanded throughout the coastal zones and North Hokkien, then was accepted by the Minnanese (闽南, the Southern Hokkiens), Taiwanese [Vivienne Lo 1993: 69-96] and some Hakkas in South Hokkien and Northeastern Kwangtung [zh.wikipedia.org].

Jin'hua Lady (金花夫人, Golden Flower Lady), also called Birth-Giving Lady (养育夫人, 送子夫人), Flower-Transforming Lady (转花夫人), 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 of Pearl River Delta. Orally, she was the ancient shamans in Canton. Once, the wife of Canton's mandarin Chen Lian (陈濂) was found difficult in child-bearing. A fairy appeared in dream advised her "to invite Jin'hua for help". Jin'hua did her good work and became famous, therefore, no man would dare to marry her. Jin'hua was so sad, consequently committed suicide. A dozen of day later, her body emerged in the pond and pervaded the fragrance. The belief of Jin'hua Lady was formed. Like the others, the belief was considered as the "miscellaneous belief" or "immoral cult" under the mandarins' eyes. It was destroyed cruelly, especially under Ming Jia-jing's reign. However, it still found the way to survive. In many aspects, Jin'hua proves to be similar to Mazu. Due to modern progress in childbearing cares, the role of Jin'hua Lady has been faded and finally incorporated into Mazu, as her status is found in a smaller corner of Mazu temple in Nanhai [Chen Ze'hong 2007: 381-382].

⁽⁹⁾ Local goddess in Ying'de (英德县, in Shaoguan (韶关), Guangdong) with the unclear background.

⁽¹⁰⁾ The belief of Sheng'hua Lady is most concentrated in the county of Nanxiong in Northern Guangdong. It originated in Changting (Fujian), then was transmitted to be the goddess of Nanxiong [Tam Wai Lun 2004: 826].

⁽¹¹⁾ There exists the idea that she was born in Fujian's provincial center of Fuzhou [www.tianyabook.com]

Xian Lady (洗夫人) was born in 520, died in 601 ⁽¹²⁾, a Hundred-Viet woman, living in Gao'liang (高梁郡), presently Dian'bai (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), 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)). She married with a Han madarin called Feng Bao (冯宝), the local governor. Xian Lady contributed significantly to the development of the local region. After death, she was embellished to be a goddess, worshipped in large areas throughout southwestern Kwangtung and Hainan island [Zhao Wu'ki, Li Xun'jue 2004].

Dragon Mother's real name is Wen Long'ji (温龙姬), said to belong to ethnic Au Viet (瓯越) 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 thus called the Dragon Mother. Later, she merged the Au Viet tribes in upper and middle lands of West River to fight against Qin invaders. After death, she was honoured the respected goddess controlling the large areas of lands belonging to middle and upper West River. 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 poeple to break the stony cliffs, Liu was killed. People then opened the “singing festival” on the third of March of each lunar year to memorize her. The Zhuang in Liu'zhou built up the temple to worship her. 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 such as Zhuang, Yao, Kam etc.. According to the research of Dai Tran Sy [1992] the goddess Flower Lady is just the unified image of Two Trung Kings (Hai Ba Trung 二征王) in the traditional beliefs of Hundred-Viet inhabitants in North Vietnam, and in Kwangsi, Hunan of China in history. Two Trung Kings were two famous Vietnamese heros 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 to worship them as to memorize their mercies [Phan Huy Le.. 1991: 175; Quoc Viet: 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), Bai'ji Lady, Twelve Body-buiding Mothers (12 婆祖), Thirty- six goddesses (36 婆祖), Nu-wa (女娲),

⁽¹²⁾ The authors Yu Tian'chi and Huang Jun'ping [1984] considered that Xian Lady was born in 522, died in 602.

Wangmu Niang'niang (王母娘娘), Bed Goddess (床前母), 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), Meng'po Goddess (孟婆, mainly in An'hui), 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) [Eberhard W. 1992; Keith G. Stevens 2001: 58; Hellen 2008: 10-32] etc.. General speaking, these worships originated from Taoist tradition or from folk culture but then maintained or became Taoist fairies/goddesses. Truthfully, these worships can be found in almost all regions of China so they do not reflect the typical characteristics of Ling'nan culture.

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 of Ling'nan ethnic minorities (Liu Lady, Flower Lady, etc.); (2) originated in the other regions in China, including Mazu, Sheng'hua Lady and Lin'shui Lady (from Hokkien), The Queen Mother of the West, Bixia Yuanjun, Moon Lady etc. ; (3) transmitted from Indian Buddhism (Kuan'ying); and (4) originated from North Vietnam (Two Trung Kings).

In consideration on personal background, four typical groups can be identified: (1) *female heroes* (Hai Ba Trung, Dragon Mother, Xian Lady); (2) *Humane and filial women* (also *shamans*, 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 societies [Li Su'ping 2004: 2]. Under Confucianists' viewpoint, even god worships were listed in the category of "miscellaneous worships" (淫祀) and needed to annul. 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 residents⁽¹³⁾; (3) the control and influence of the central court were relatively softer than in other regions

In contrast with the Confucianism, the goddess beliefs share the co-existing relationships with Buddhism and Taoism. For instance, Lin'shui Lady (Triple Ladies) 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, since both statues can be found. In a certain extent, Kwanyin has been "degraded" into a popular goddess rather than vice versa.

In addition, all three traditions sometimes come to mix together, as in the case of Dragon Mother belief. In the temple in Yue'cheng of Kwangtung, Kwanyin and Laotzi statues can be found together with Dragon Mother. 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, 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, Nam Viet and a part of Lac Viet. They were mainly traditional agrarian farmers; therefore, strongly emphasized on the fertility ability. As a result, they showed certain respect toward the role of the women. 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. It needs to emphasize that most of the goddess beliefs existing in present Ling'nan were established in the

⁽¹³⁾ 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].

backgrounds of touching and conflicting with newly arrived Han culture. The belief of Dragon Mother belief took shape in the context of local Au Viet's fighting against the Qin dynasty in the 3rd century BC while Two Trung Kings formed in Vietnamese and other Lingnanese traditions for their heroic spirits, and Xian Lady was deified from the background that the local Viet culture found the way to survive toward the Sinicization. Similarly, Mazu belief originated in Mei'zhou island, where local Min'yueh (闽越, local Hokkiens) culture existed in a high level⁽¹⁴⁾.

b. The amalgamation between Hundred-Viet and Han cultures

Any one studying on traditional goddess beliefs in Chinese Ling'nan can find it surprising to realize that although they have appeared in the contexts of cultural conflicts, 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 adjusted themselves to suit the living conditions in Ling'nan. Specifically, the typical "united in dispersal" style of Ling'nan topography has partly pushed the Han immigrants to admit the new traditions. 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.. Moreover, after the process of cultural amalgamation, no longer have the later generations of Ling'nanese residents been the purified Han; conversely, they have been localized in Hundred-Viet blood at a certain level. 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 relied 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 Hundred-Viet inhabitants have disappeared in almost Ling'nan (except the Hundred Viet-rooted ethnic minorities of Zhuang, Kam, Shui..), so the cultural subject of goddess beliefs have been replaced by the Han Ling'nanese. However, one can find

⁽¹⁴⁾ Fujian area lately amalgamated into Chinese cultural system from the 3rd century AD. However, due to its mountainous topography, the process of Sinicization was implemented slowly; therefore, Fujian still reserves Man Viet culture at high level.

that the change in the nature of the belief is not significant. In other words, the Hundred 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 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



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

beliefs. The annihilation movement reached its peak during the ten-year-long Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The belief of Two Trung King 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 commuters 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 "feminity-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 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 goddesses.** This will probably be the main trend in the future. This doesnot 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) serves as an instance. Being named North King Shrine, the worshipped object is truly a goddess. It was originally a goddess temple, the change took place only two decades ago.

(3) **Goddesses get to strengthen their positions.** It is a possibility that after the serious struggles, some certain goddess beliefs will adjust to suit the new situations and continue to exist on more stable foundation. 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 features, including increasing the "yang-based nature" (in case of complete Sinicization), or integrating into Taoism as well as losing the nature of traditional beliefs (in case of joining Taoism). However, not all goddess beliefs can be involed in such process. 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 the 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 [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 the great 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 Kwangtung.

It is also the the harmonization between local beliefs (goddess beliefs) and the religions of Buddhism and Taoism (stated above). 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 statues of Kwanyin, Laotzi and the other gods in Dragon Mother temple in Yuecheng, Xian Lady temple in Gao'zhou, Mazu temple in Nanhai (Kwangtung) can support this argument. Otherwise, many Kwanyin temples (as Ling'xiao temple in Zhao'qing) show the presences of popular goddesses.

The coexiting traditions of North (Han's) and South (Hundred 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 Hundred 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⁽¹⁵⁾ and 36 others worshipped in Lin'shui Lady Temple in Tainan (Taiwan) [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'yin [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 syncretization that helps Ling'nan goddess beliefs improve themselves in accordance with the historical, cultural conditions during the past centuries to survive.

- 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 their homeland. 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. In the other hand, goddess beliefs have easily accepted the new internal changes. Mazu belief can serve as an example. Mazu belief formed in Hokkien, it got integrated well with the local tradition in Ling'nan. Originally, in coastal and river-based areas, she is a marine goddess, but in the further mainland, she has become a blessing or happiness holy symbol such as the temple in Kui'lin (Kwangsi). It is flexibility which amalgamates the Buddhist Kwanyin with popular goddess and makes her closer to the goddesses, both produce the same roles.

- *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 tradition, including the common beliefs (Mazu, Kwanyin) and their

⁽¹⁵⁾ These 12 body-building goddesses (in Vietnamese language: 12 bà mụ) also appear in 12-period-of-time-a-day belief in Oriental cultures.

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. Similarly, Cao'mu Lady is the spiritual product of Ying'de District of Kwangtung. Lin'shui Lady proves her best holiness in the Minnanses 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 does not 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 state 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 caused the change in the cultural subjects from the local Hundred-Viet to the Hans. 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 has been “popularized as a goddess in popular beliefs”. This essentiality of goddess belief is obviously an effect of the local femininity-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)⁽¹⁶⁾ and “Virilocal residence-refusal” (不落夫家, matrilocy) ⁽¹⁷⁾ widespreading in some areas such as Dong’guan, Fo’shan, Shun’de of Pearl River Delta. Among the many analyzed causes, the vestiges of femininity-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 her sister-in-law)⁽¹⁸⁾ 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

⁽¹⁶⁾ 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 Society (金兰契) in Fo’shan (Kwangtung) was one of the best-known ones [Nguyen Ngoc Tho 2008: vanhoahoc.edu.vn].

⁽¹⁷⁾ The old custom “*virilocal residence - refusal*” (不落夫家, or matrilocy) 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].

⁽¹⁸⁾ 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].

1. Vietnam and the rest Southeast Asia - the lands of the traditional 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].



P. 5. The old World's cultural regions

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 in which 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, laterly only Taoist and Taoism-related goddesses could find the ways to survive. South China, particularly, from South Yangtzi River, was originally a part of ancient Southeast Asia, obviously belonged to the yin-based cultural type, however, after Chinese conquest, due to the Sinicization processes, 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. Meanwhile, the rest of ancient Southeast Asia still maintains its yin-based cultural identities.

b. Located in the Southeast Asian mainland and bordered by China in the north, Vietnam enjoys the Southeast Asian rice agricultural cultural basis [Tran Ngoc Them 2004]. 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]. Obviously, it shares all significant characteristics of the whole region: *yin*-based culture [Niel L. Jamieson 1993]. 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.



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

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.

c. In Southeast Asia, *yin*-based agrarian cultural identities and rural living lifestyle have created similar conditions to promote the local goddess beliefs. They was 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 are listed. Typically, they are Annawan (Luzon), Bugan, Lingan (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, Pheebee 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 Dampracs 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⁽¹⁹⁾ 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]. In Ling'nan they were Au Viet, Lac Viet and Nam Viet [Jiang Bing'zhao.. 1998: 1]. Accordingly, the formation and development of these societies shared the common racial cradle. 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* Kwangsi, and the *dispersed between the local unified* in Kwangtung, while North Vietnam in *high unity* nature. These natural

⁽¹⁹⁾ 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..].

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:

	Chinese Ling'nan		Vietnamese Ling'nan
<i>Sub-area</i>	<i>Kwangsi</i>	<i>Kwangtung</i> (<i>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, Dong, Dai, Shui..)	Han Chinese (Tsieu'chou, Hakka, Cantonese, West Canton, Hainanese) + ethnic minorities (Yao, She, Zhuang, Li, etc.)	Viet and ethnic minorities in the North and Northern Central Land (Muong, Tho, etc.)
<i>Topograpgical 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)

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:

	China		Southeast Asia	
<i>Region</i>	<i>China</i> (<i>except Ling'nan</i>)	<i>Chinese Ling'nan</i>	<i>North Vietnam</i>	<i>The rest of Southeast Asia</i>
<i>Characteristics 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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