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BÁT-QUÁI-ĐÀI — HIỆP-THIÊN-ĐÀI — CỬU-TRÙNG-ĐÀI

Hộ-Pháp

CHUỖNG-QUẢN HIỆP-THIÊN-ĐÀI

**THE RELIGIOUS
CONSTITUTION OF CAODAISM**

Explained and Commented

By

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Translated

by

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PHÁT HÀNH TẠI HOA KỶ
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THE RELIGIOUS CONSTITUTION OF CAODAI

Explained and Commented by His Holyness

Ho Phap Pham Cong Tac

PREFACE

Since mystic miracles of the Tao possess divine regulations just as society has laws to control undue ambitions which exist everywhere and at all times and which would destroy even the beautiful harmony of nature, when founding Dai Dao Tam Ky Pho Do, God established a religious constitution and the new code, in order to maintain truth and justice in the Tao (Thien -Dao). In addition to the new laws, there were divine messages and religious teachings.

In order for this important great way to maintain its potential of religious mission for millennia, this book on Religious Constitution needs to be published again and again, forming the base for all disciples to follow in their practice of religion.

Although no legislature can be perfect, each should define at least the principles and general lines. For example, the law of fairness between men should have the principle "Do to others what you

want to be done to yourself." Another example is: "If you want freedom, give freedom to others."

Although it sounds so simple, there is no better explanation. Laws are necessary for the smooth functioning of society. They are no less important in religion because, without them, it would be difficult not to have disarray. And if there is disarray in religion, is there any ethic?

By establishing the legislation for the religion God establishes the authority for the religion. He who is willing to build up the religion naturally honors that authority.

This authority gives the Sacerdotal Council, which is the image of God on earth, the necessary power to function on behalf of God.

However, power in religion does differ from secular power because it relies on love, not on force.

Being based on divine reason and on justice, the legislation is naturally fair and absolutely without inequality for all disciples. In religion from the above to the below, from the young to the senior, there is established rule: the senior does not take over the young, and the young does not step on the senior. If the legislation is followed, the whole Sacerdotal Council is regulated smoothly, and the religious administration will progress along the natural law without problems.

The Sacerdotal Council is happy to republish this book on Religious Constitution, to distribute to all disciples so as each and everyone can benefit from the Just Law of God (Phap Ly Cong Binh Thien Dao) and hopes that from now on, none would be saying that they do not know the Religious Law and, therefore, have made mistakes.

Respectfully,

The Sacerdotal Council

THE CUU TRUNG DAI (The Nine Sphere Palace)

I- POWER OF THE GIAO TONG (POPE)

Divine text: The Giao Tong is your eldest brother.

Commentary: The Giao Tong represents the Master preserving religion on earth. He is the elder brother responsible for the guidance of all God's children, young and old, for their spiritual well-being.

Although the CaoDai church is formed of two temporal parts, the "Cuu Trung Dai" and the "Hiep Thien Dai", the Ho Phap, who is the chief of the Hiep Thien Dai, is of lesser power than the Giao Tong in the temporal aspect. However, they are both equal spiritually.

Divine text: The Giao Tong has the power to represent Me in the guidance of My children in their spiritual and temporal life.

Commentary: The Giao Tong has the same power as the Master in the teaching of virtue to all disciples. He cares for each and every one of them, guides them and helps them avoid any infraction of the divine law. He obliges them to conform strictly to the requirements of the New Code.

Thus, any disciple, whatever his ecclesiastic position may be, if he is in fault, should not receive indulgence and clemency from the Giao Tong. To protect a transgressor is to enable him to lose his spiritual position, provoke jealousy among disciples, and diminish the value of the Tao.

The Giao Tong must protect, support, or comfort the disciples who are suffer, and the dignitaries or members of the Sacerdotal Council who are under heavy abstinences. Holding the power of God, he has the duty, on behalf of God, of transforming lives of suffering into lives of happiness. Such is the ultimate mission of the Giao Tong.

Divine text: He has authority over bodies but not souls.

Commentary: The body is a part of the material dimension of life, which is the secular dimension. The soul is part of the spiritual dimension of life, which is the Tao, or the divine way. Earlier, the Master said: He has authority over guidance in both the spiritual and secular ways.

Thus the Master indicated clearly that it is his right to guide His children in the virtuous way that the Master Himself has established, and in the secular way that the Tao has created. However, although he has authority over the secular dimension, he has no authority over the spiritual dimension. One needs to distinguish between "way"

(manner or conduct of life) and "dimension" (the body or the soul itself) and not to confuse them.

Here are the Holy Messages from the Master when the Ho Phap asked Him regarding the power of the Giao Tong:

Question of the Ho Phap: According to the teachings of Catholicism, the Pope has full power on the bodies and the spirits. Because of this extensive power, Catholicism has much worldwide influence. If you were to remove the authority over souls today, I fear that the Giao Tong would not have enough authority to save humanity.

Answer of God (smiling): That was a mistake on My part. When I carried a physical body, I gave to an incarnated person the same authority on the spirits as Myself. He climbed on My throne, took over this Supreme Power, abused it and rendered man a slave of his own body.

Moreover, I did not realize that the precious power which I gave you because I loved you represented a double-edged sword which has generated disorders among you.

Today, I come not to revoke this power, but rather to destroy its deleterious effects. The best way to correct this situation is to divide this power so as to prevent a dictatorship.

He who holds secular and divine power at the same time will usually hold both legislative and executive authorities. When both powers belong to the same person, oppression is almost certain to result.

If I were to grant full secular and spiritual power to the Giao Tong, there would be no need for the Hiep Thien Dai. The Cuu Trung Dai represents the secular and the Hiep Thien Dai the spiritual.

Without the spiritual, the secular has no authority. Without the secular, the spiritual has no strength. Strength and authority are both necessary, and need to be united to recreate the world. It is a good way to unite all of you, so that you can help each other, and so that My divine teaching does not degenerate into profanity.

Divine text: He has the authority to communicate spiritually with the thirty-six Heavens, the three-thousand Worlds, the sixty-seven Earths, and the Ten Courts of Hell to ask for the salvation of your souls.

Commentary: When the Master says, "ask for salvation," he would clarify the statement by stating that the Giao Tong has only the authority to ask. The Bat Quai Dai (the Council of Gods) has the full authority to grant the salvation.

How can the Giao Tong communicate with the thirty-six Heavens, the three-thousand Worlds, the sixty-seven Earths and the Ten Courts of Hell?

He must go to the sanctuary of the Hiep Thien Dai and engage the miraculous power of spiritism. The following is an excerpt from the Legislative Codes (Phap Chanh Truyen) on the Hiep Thien Dai about that very subject: "Moreover, the Hiep Thien Dai is the place where the Giao Tong communicates with the thirty-six Heavens, the three-thousand Worlds, the sixty-seven Earths and the Ten Courts of Hell to ask for the salvation of the souls of humanity. Thus, from the esoteric point of view, the Giao Tong has no power.

Even his requests addressed to the Bat Quai Dai (Council of Gods) must pass through the Hiep Thien Dai. The Hiep Thien Dai is consequently the intermediary between the Giao Tong and the Superior Spirits: Than (Genies, Angels); Thanh (Saints); Tien (Immortals); Phat (Buddhas).

II- POWERS OF THE CHUONG PHAP (CENSOR CARDINALS)

Divine text: There are three Chuong Phap (Dharma Holders) for three branches: Taoist, Confucianist, and Buddhist.

Commentary: There is only one Chuong Phap per branch. The three branches differ from each other internally and externally. The doctrinal

principles are different. They are united only by the New Code. Thus the Master adds:

Divine text: Although the Laws and Principles of these three doctrines are different, I consider the mas one.

Commentary: Because He considers them as one single doctrine, the Master reveals Himself to humanity to establish the New Code (Tan Luat) as a way to adapt to human psychological and spiritual states. One should conform to this Code in religious practices to not encroach onto the divine laws, and thus enable one to attain one's own salvation, as well as that of others.

In the past, divine laws demanded that men elevate their personal virtue to the level of the Great Spirits (Angels, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas) for their salvation. Now, the Great Spirits elevate men's spirits toward a divine dimension, at the same level as the Master.

When humans were coerced by law into virtue, they found the way difficult. But now that the Great Spirits themselves help them, they may be virtuous more freely and more spontaneously, and thus the path to salvation becomes easier. This is natural.

Moreover, at the present time, we have passed the "Cycle of Progress" and attained the greatest dignity. The ancient laws no longer have enough moral authority to maintain faith. And when men lose

their faith, the tendency toward self destruction increases, with and disorder the inevitable consequence.

If the temporal depends on the spiritual, then conversely, the spiritual depends on the temporal. The New Code, established according to the Master's instructions, may be modified in the future to adapt to the ever evolving human mind.

The temporal and the spiritual must unite to guide humanity on the eternal way. For example, some may ask: "Why is the Master not using the ancient laws already established for the three existing religions?"

Why did he create the New Code, asking men to abandon the old for the new?" We would answer: "Precisely, the Master has given us a spiritual message: The Jade Court (The Court of Gods) has rejected the ancient laws and the Temple of Thunder (Celest Sanctuary) has destroyed the ancient principles. Thus, the ancient laws and principles have no longer applied.

Religious people who mistakenly believe that they must conform to these ancient laws and principles are actually in contradiction with the divine laws of Dai Dao Tam Ky Pho Do (the third revelation and universal salvation of the great way), which represent God in the administration of religion.

This is the reason that the Supreme Master has forbidden the five branches of the sect Ngoc (the way of Saints) from using the ancient laws to gain adherents. To observe the ancient laws is to transgress the divine laws. If one transgresses the divine laws, one cannot obtain one's salvation. " (Read the rest to better understand the resolution of the Master)

Divine text: Thus one becomes three and three is nothing else than one.

Commentary: Thus, the New Code is the synthesis of the three religions--which makes one embracing three, and the three old religions become one code, the New Code.

Divine text: The Chuong Phap have the right to examine laws of the religious code before their propagation, whether the proposed laws come from the Giao Tong, or are proposed by the Dau Su (Cardinals).

Commentary: At the Cuu Trung Dai (Nine Sphere Palace), the Giao Tong represents the divine spirits in the monitoring of religious practice. He has a legislative right, a supreme right which the Divine Spirits and God have granted to him.

The Dau Su (Cardinals) represent the mass of the faithful. They hold their authority from them. The Giao Tong and the Dau Su must always agree with each other to effectively unite in the task of

"Creation of the World," which consists in unifying God and Man.

The divine mission is often above the reach of men, and men often are in fact hostile to the divine mission. The Giao Tong might make laws above human capacity and the Dau Su might propose laws contrary to divine laws? They would then be in disagreement with each other.

Thus, without the Chuong Phap, who represent the Hiep Thien Dai in the heart of the Cuu Trung Dai and who play the role of mediator in reconciling them, the religion would lose its equilibrium and its order, which would create dissent and the formation of different sects.

Therefore, the Chuong Phap have the right to examine the religious laws before their propagation. The laws which do not bear the three seals of the Chuong Phap and which are not approved by the Hiep Thien Dai are not to be followed by the faithful. (1)

Divine text: If the two parties (The Giao Tong and the Chuong Phap) do not agree, they (the Chuong Phap) are to submit the laws to the Ho Phap, who will bring them to the Hiep Thien Dai, where he will invoke God for appropriate modifications of the laws, in part or in whole.

Commentary: If a law from the Giao Tong is contrary to human nature and the Dau Su think that

it is not applicable, the Dau Su will submit the law to the Chuong Phap to request a modification.

Similarly, if the Giao Tong receives a Law contrary to the divine laws from the Dau Su, he will return it to the Chuong Phap for reexamination. Neither side may abuse its power to reject a law and disrespect the other. One must be conciliating and let the Chuong Phap decide.

If the Chuong Phap's decision cannot make them agree, they will submit the case to the Ho Phap, who will implore God at the Hiep Thien Dai for a modification, or the Ho Phap, by reconciling the desires of the two parties, will propose a modification.

Divine text: Thus, they (the Chuong Phap) have the right to examining prayer books and other works before their propagation. If they find any works dangerous to morals, they should forbid their publication.

Commentary: To control religious writings before their propagation is to censure them before their publication. However, although the Chuong Phap have the right to censure and to forbid the publication of works susceptible to compromising good morals or contrary to religious laws, they must also, before authorizing or forbidding a publication, submit their decision for approval by the Hiep Thien Dai.

This applies not only to religious works published by the faithful, but also to those edited by those foreign to the religion. If they are a danger to morality, the Sacerdotal Council should help the Chuong Phap destroy them.

Divine text: All the faithful should contribute to the implementation of secular laws.

Commentary: If even the secular laws make man unhappy, the Chuong Phap should try to ameliorate them. The temporal power relies on the religion for its strength. This means that this power is strong only if the religion is itself strong. And compassion for humanity is possible only if the religion is strong. This is the reason why God adds:

Divine text: I advise all My children to unite their efforts for their support.

Divine text: Each Chuong Phap will have his own seal.

Commentary: The particular seal for the Chuong Phap of the Buddhist branch is the Bowl of Charity (for receiving offerings); for the Chuong Phap of the Taoist branch, the whisk of Purification; for the Chuong Phap of the Confucianist branch, the Book of Spring and Autumn (Virtue and Love).

Put together, these three symbols constitute the three Archaic Attributes (Co Phap) that the Ho Phap venerates and carries on his ceremonial mitre.

On the ceremonial mitre of the Giao Tong, there are three other Archaic Attributes represented:

1. The Fan of Exteriorisation (Long-Tu Phien, literally: The fan made of a dragon's beard)
2. The Sword of Elevation (Thu-Hung-Kiem, literally: double sword, representing male and female)
3. The Whisk of Sanctification (Phat Chu).

Those three attributes are Archaic Attributes of Thuong Pham and Thuong Sanh.

Divine text: The three seals must be present together on each code to make it valid for implementation.

Commentary: Any law or any text even approved by two out of three Chuong Phap may not be distributed. This means that the Giao Tong cannot approve it, and the Dau Su cannot implement it.

The Cuu Trung Dai is an administrative organization, but the Chuong Phap belong to the legislative power. They are thus the representative of the Hiep Thien Dai in the midst of the Cuu Trung Dai. This is a unique innovation of the religion.

(1) "Good!" This is the comment of Li Tai Pe's spirit, the spiritual Giao Tong of CaoDai.

III.- POWERS OF THE DAU SU (CARDINALS)

Divine text: The Dau Su have the right of administration over Gods disciples, spiritually and temporally.

Commentary: Here, The Master uses the words "spiritually" and "temporally" to define the powers of the Dau Su. The Dau Su have full power over the administrative function of the Cuu Trung Dai and over the legislative function of the Hiep Thien Dai. They thus have the right to represent the Giao Tong and the Ho Phap in front of the population.

Representing the Giao Tong and the Ho Phap, they depend at the same time on the Cuu Trung Dai and the Hiep Thien Dai That's why the Dau Su have to submit themselves to the authority of these two organizations in their functioning. They may not act on their own initiative without the instructions of the Giao Tong and the Ho Phap.

Divine text: They have the right to make new laws; however, they have to submit them to the "Giao Tong" for approval.

Commentary: The Dau Su have the right to make new laws for the administration of religion, adapting to people's aspirations and not contradicting the divine will. But, it often happens that what satisfies people's aspiration would contradict divine will.

That's why the Dau Su must submit their laws to the approval of the Giao Tong. The Giao Tong, representing the Master, will arrange things so as to avoid a conflict of humanity against divine will.

Divine text: These laws must be examined carefully to determine whether they really are useful to humanity.

Commentary: This sentence clearly indicates that if the Dau Su make laws, these laws must be useful to humanity. That's why the Master recommends that the Cuu Trung Dai and the Hiep Thien Dai must carefully watch: if there is no usefulness for humanity, the Dau Su should not make laws or should abolish them.

Divine text: The Giao Tong must give these laws to the Chuong Phap for examination before approving them.

Commentary: Even if these laws correspond to the Giao Tong's desires, he cannot approve them without submitting them to the Chuong Phap for examination.

Above, it was said that the laws which are not approved by all three Chuong Phap should not be distributed.

Thus, the Giao Tong and the Dau Su should not go with each other and commit an infraction of the constitutional laws. If they do not take into account

the examination done by the Chuong Phap, they would commit an infraction. No matter what the culprit's dignitary rank is, he will be judged by the Three Sect Court.

The Dau Su are to receive authorization from the Giao Tong before distribution of the laws, the Master says:

Divine text: They have to obey to the Giao Tong's orders exactly as if these laws come from the Giao Tong himself.

Commentary: The Dau Su obey only the orders of the Giao Tong, even that they represent the Hiep Thien Dai in the legislative point of view. Once a law is already examined by the Chuong Phap and has received approval from the Hiep Thien Dai, the order for distribution from the Hiep Thien Dai is understood.

Divine text: If a law is contrary to the activities and interests of the faithfuls, they (the Dau Su) can ask for cancellation.

Commentary: It does not pertain only to the present new code. Later, when the new code become old, the Dau Su still have the right to ask for cancellation of any law which is contrary to human function.

Divine text: I advise My children to love them and to help them.

Commentary: The Master advises all the Sacerdotal Council to take interest in the heavy duty of the Dau Su, to love them and help them in the accomplishment of their mission.

Divine text: I recommend to My children to implore them each time when there is an important issue.

Commentary: The Master recommends to the disciples, to all the faithfuls to implore the Dau Su when an issue needs to be taken care of because they totally represent the religion on this world.

Divine text: The three Branches are different, but the powers (of the Dau Su) are the same.

Commentary: The three Branches are: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. These three Branches differ from each other, but their powers are comparatively the same because they depend on the new code: one becomes three and three is nothing else than one.

Among the three Dau Su, there is no higher no lower (Good!) (1); their powers are equal. A law, whether it comes from the Giao Tong or from the assembly of faithfuls if it is adopted by the Chuong Phap and the Hiep Thien Dai, should be distributed even if it has the approval of only one Dau Su (Good!) (1).

Only in the event when all three Dau Su oppose would the law be returned to the Giao Tong who will submit it to the Chuong Phap for a reexamination (Good !) (1). That's why the Master says:

Divine text: If a law ordered by the Giao Tong is rejected unanimously by the three Dau Su, it should be returned to the Giao Tong who will pass it to the Chuong Phap for a reexamination.

Commentary: The Master has decided so: if the three Dau Su state in writing that they cannot obey, God is absolutely certain that the law is contrary to the interests of humanity.

However, it is important that the Dau Su bring evidence of the conflict between the law and the interest of humanity to justify their refusal to obey and their request for abolishment. If one among the three Dau Su thinks he can obey, one cannot proclaim that the law is adverse to the interest of humanity and if so, the law must be promulgated.

In view of such power, such restriction appears too severe, but the divine will demand that the three Dau Su form a single block (Good !) (1).

Divine text: They possess seals particular to each one of them; all documents, to be valid, must carry all three seals. (Obey!)

Commentary: The three seals represent Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. All orders to

be carried out should bear all three seals of the Dau Su. Before taking function, the Dau Su must say their oath in the Holy See promising to keep an impartial mind in the exercise of their duties, exactly like the dignitaries of the Hiep Thien Dai.

Unified Powers: After taking the oath, the Dau Su are ready to exercise at the same time the administrative and legislative powers. '

With those extended powers, the Dau Su possess enough means to prevent heresy from compromising the orthodox. In case of danger, when the three Chanh Phoi Su (Principal Archbishops) become powerless, the Dau Su are authorized to use those unified powers to direct the Sacerdotal Council. All the dignitaries of the Cuu Trung Dai and of the Hiep Thien Dai including the Giao Tong and the Ho Phap must abide by their authority. (Good!) (1)

(1) Good!: Comment of Li Tai Pe's spirit, the spiritual Giao Tong of CaoDai.

IV- POWERS OF THE CHANH PHOI SU (PRINCIPAL ARCHBISHOP)

Divine text: There are 12 Phoi Su (Archbishop) for each branch, for a total of 36; among whom, there are 3 Chanh Phoi Su (Principal Archbishops).

Commentary: The three Chanh Phoi Su are chosen from the three branches: Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. These three dignitaries not only manage for the 33 Phoi Su, but also represent the Dau Su and possess the same powers as the Dau Su.

They are also the representatives of the Sacerdotal Council of the Cuu Trung Dai, as well as all the faithful. They have full authority to execute the orders of the Dau Su. They have no authority to modify such orders on their own initiative. They are always to await the orders of the Dau Su. However, the Dau Su are not to usurp the authority of these three dignitaries. Such an act would constitute an abuse of authority, which is an infraction of the Constitution. (Good!) (1)

After the Supreme Being reveals new statutes of the Code, the Giao Tong then delegates the task of editing and organizing the Code provision to the Chanh Phoi Su, who then presents it to him. The new Code provision is then sent to the Chuong Phap for verification, and to the Hiep Thien Dai for

approval. Lastly, the Ho Phap brings it to the Cuu Trung Dai for its promulgation.

In addition, at the time of the presentation of the original Code by the three Chanh Phoi Su, the Ho Phap and the Thuong Pham evoked the Spiritual Giao Tong for any modifications (the 13th day of the 12th month of the year Binh Dan). He (the Spiritual Giao Tong) ordered the three Dau Su and the three Chuong Phap to occupy their respective thrones.

Then, he called the Chanh Phoi Su to celebrate their respective rites to them. Following this, he addressed the Chanh Phoi Su Thuong Tuong Thanh: "My dear friend, watch me work and imitate". He requested the Chanh Phoi Su join their 6 hands, without leaving any space, to present the code to the Dau Su. The Dau Su also united their 6 hands to present the code to the Chuong Phap. The Chuong Phap then also joined hands to present the code to the Spiritual Giao Tong.

At that time, the Spiritual Giao Tong told them to step up to the Sanctuary and elevate the code above the head of the Ho Phap and the Thuong Pham. He then lowered the basket with beak to let the code pass over himself.

(Good!) (I)

The Chuong Phap, after receiving the code, passed it over the heads of the statuettes of Khuong-Thai-Cong and Jesus Christ only. Later, the

Ho Phap questioned the Master about this procedure. The Master answered, smiling: "On the spiritual plane, the position of Li Tai Pe is still under that of Sakya Muni, Confucius and Lao Tse. If this were not so, the code would be passed above their heads, because it is divine law, My child!"

The New Code was deposed in front of the statuette of the Spiritual Giao Tong for one day and one night for examination. The following day, he manifested himself thru the basket with beak and complained: "The miraculous divine law of the religion contain many discrepancies."

He smiled and continued: "But not being able to perceive the mysteries, you will not be able to explain the discrepancies... Alas! Without this miraculous mystic mechanism, there would be no code, and without the code, there would be no religion."

He smiled and continued: "I have respectfully asked the Great Master to add essential mystic information to the code. You also must pray with me. At the end of this month, we will begin the prayers. You will recommend that the parish and the adepts pray fervently and join their prayers to mine to receive divine laws. The more esteemed the religion is, the more you are also. Be aware of your importance in the teaching of humanity. From now on, I will keep you in my care, and one day, if I must take strong disciplinary measures against you,

believe that it is to lift you up spiritually. I ask you not to become discouraged."

Thereafter, he ordered the Chuong Phap to return the code to the Hiep Thien Dai, and then ordered the Ho Phap and Thuong Pham to be on their thrones; the Ho Phap made his own mystic sign with his hand on the code as a sign of high protection, while the Thuong Pham covered the whole with his Fan "Long Tu Phien" (Fan of Exteriorisation, Symbol of spirituality).

Then, the Spiritual Giao Tong ordered the Chuong Phap thusly: "I give you one month to review the code."

The Chuong Phap examined the manuscript for one month and returned it to the Spiritual Giao Tong, Li-Tai-Pe, who asked the Dau Su to bring the code to the Hiep Thien Dai and, on his behalf, to submit to the Ho Phap for request of evocation of the Master. At the request of the Spiritual Giao Tong and of the Sacerdotal Council, our Divine Master came and gave different mystic procedures for the salvation of spirits to the Ho Phap by inspirational writing.

The Spiritual Giao Tong has recommended the Chanh Phoi Su Thuong Tuong Thanh to follow his example. This indicates that he has granted all necessary authority to the Chanh Phoi Su, and that by asking these dignitaries to join their 6 hands, his desire is that they remain united. The Dau Su and

the Chuong Phap do the same to symbolize the primordial unity, as is reflected in the spiritual message: "One becomes three and three is nothing else than one."

Finally, why does the Spiritual Giao Tong confide the revision of the new religious code to the Chanh Phoi Su? Will this reoccur later? It is said above that the Chanh Phoi Su represent the faithful at the Sacerdotal Council. Being the direct leaders of the faithful, they are themselves faithful. At the Bat Quai Dai (Council of Gods), the Celestial Spirits, from the Immortals to God, are classified as follows: the class of the pure ones; the Saints and the virtuous (the class of the purified ones); animals, vegetables and minerals (the class of the non-purified ones).

Thus, the superior spirits of the Bat Quai Dai have the duty to direct all the worlds, to communicate with spirits which develop in a state of materiality, and to teach the incarnated so that they may evolve to the rank of Saints. Those who are among the rank of Saints, attain self-realization; if reincarnation becomes necessary to them, they keep their holy virtues and continue to evolve towards perfection, pure and eternal, like the creator.

At the Hiep Thien Dai (The Heavenly Union Palace), the Ho Phap represents the Supreme Master and the Celestial Spirits in applying divine

justice and in protecting all living beings for their evolution to perfection. He not only uses his power to impose the law on the people, but also insures that their development is not halted by difficulties. To protect and to guard, it is necessary to have laws and rules.

With these laws and rules, he can maintain and guide all spirits onto the divine path, as the Divine Being directs the universe with His divine laws. Symbolizing the class of the pure ones, the Ho Phap confers to the Thuong Pham (Chief of Religious Affairs) the mission to form the religion in order to guide the spirits toward total perfection. In other words, his mission is to defend and protect the peace of dignitaries and the faithful in the peace of their spiritual ascension, following the example of the Great Spirits responsible of the harmony of the universe, who assist in the creation and multiplication of all beings.

The Chief of Religious Affairs is in communication with all the evolved spirits converted by the Thuong Sanh (Chief of Secular Affairs). He is spiritually in the rank of the Saints and is the Chief of Saints. The Chief of Secular Affairs presides over the secular lives of the faithful. All the converted spirits were saved through his efforts, regardless of their origin (divine or incarnated).

Because he was commanded to renovate the world and conduct humanity out of this "ocean of

suffering", the duty of the Chief of the Secular Affairs is to always assist the adepts, as well as the non-initiated, to bring them consolation at all levels, and the teaching of the holy doctrine. He symbolizes the temporal realm and is the Chief of all Adepts, and of the class of the non-purified. In the Cuu Trung Dai, the Dau Su correspond to the rank of "Dia Tien" (Earthly Immortals), The Chuong Phap correspond to the rank of "Nhon Tien" (Human Immortals), and the Giao Tong correspond to that of "Thien Tien" (Heavenly Immortals).

These ranks of Immortals are the three divine representatives of the three ancient religions, representing the class of the Buddhas (Tam Tran Oai Nghiem). Thus, their ranks correspond to the class of the perfects and pures of the Octagonal Divine Palace.

Within that hierarchy, the Giao Tong confers power to the Dau Su, who share it with the Chanh Phoi Su, to organize a religious constitution for the salvation of humanity, exactly as does the Ho Phap, who delegates his powers to the Chiefs of the Religious Affairs and the Secular Affairs (Thuong Pham and Thuong Sanh).

The Chanh Phoi Su and the Phoi Su correspond to the rank of "Thien Thanh" (Heavenly Saints); the Giao Su, to the rank of "Nhon Thanh" (Human Saints); the Giao Huu, to the rank of "Dia Thanh" (Earthly Saints); the Le Sanh, to the rank of "Thien

Than" (Angels or Heavenly Genies); the sub-dignitaries (Chanh Tri Su, Pho Tri Su and Thong Su), to the rank of Nhon Than (Human Genies); and the disciples, to the rank of Dia Than (Earthly Genies).

Thus, these Chanh Phoi Su symbolize the class of Saints of the Council of Gods (Bat Quai Dai) and have the mission to guide the religion.

Actually, the non-religious and the ignorant hold great power in the world and act against the truth of the orthodox. They abuse their materialistic power to destroy the good, tolerate the bad, induce humanity into error and lend themselves to carnal pleasure.

They respect neither Heaven nor Earth, and think only to their personal interests. They exploit people, do not believe in Karma Law, prefer material to spiritual things, aspire to vain honor, do not worry about their evolution and live like non-sentient beings: without knowing the purpose of their lives!

They are wicked and corrupting spirits and belong to the impure world! Our Divine Master told the faithful to make laws for themselves. The Chanh Phoi Su, their representatives, are naturally assigned to establish these laws. The administrative power belongs to the Dau Su, but the executive power resides in the Chanh Phoi Su. Without this clear division of power, the Dau Su may be tempted

to overstep their proper authority without respecting the power of the Giao Tong.

Moreover, the Dau Su and the Chuong Phap can both submit their candidacy at the election of a new Giao Tong. Therefore, the powers of the Dau Su should be limited precisely solely to leave the Chuong Phap a legitimate place in the election. Being the representatives of the faithful, the Chanh Phoi Su must strictly obey orders.

They may ask the Dau Su to make some amendment of law, but they may not propose new ones. Later, if our Master allows the disciples to make another new code, the Phoi Su would then reorganize, as has happened. Our Master has mentioned this in the following text:

Divine text: The Three Chanh Phoi Su may replace the Dau Su, but may not ask to abolish the laws.

Commentary: If the Chanh Phoi Su disobey divine orders by modifying the New Religious Code to their will they go violate divine will by making a saintly doctrine human. Humanity is incarnated; the Sacerdotal Council is Saintly.

For this reason, all proposals of humanity, represented by the Chanh Phoi Su, must be regulated and appropriately approved by the Sacerdotal Council. Otherwise, humanity would always follow the voice of rebels and would never be

able to reach the level of the saints! In order to assure the salvation of the spirit, our Master does not allow the Chanh Phoi Su to make laws. This is His miraculous way to prevent any degrading of the divine doctrine.

(I) Good! : Comment of Li Tai Pe's spirit, the spiritual Giao Tong of CaoDai.

V- POWERS OF THE PHOI SU (ARCHBISHOP)

Commentary: Phoi Su are under the control of the Chanh Phoi Su, and share equal authority with them in executing their commands. When ordered by the Chanh Phoi Su for a mission anywhere, they obey the Chanh Phoi Su. If they violate such orders, they will be judged at the Three Sect Court.

VI- POWERS OF THE GIAO SU (BISHOP)

Divine text: There are 72 Giao Su, divided into three Branches of 24 each.

Commentary: That number may not be increased nor decreased.

Divine text: They are responsible for the spiritual and temporal education of the disciples.

Commentary: Although they may replace the Dau Su and the Chanh Phoi Su to direct the temples

of the larger cities, they are devoted only to the education of the faithful by directing them in God's Way and in social life. This is not unusual, because all dignitaries of the Cuu Trung Dai, according to religious law, are to educate the disciples.

Because God called Himself our Master (or our Teacher), all the names of dignitaries demonstrate clearly their role as educators: Giao Huu (Priests), Giao Su (Bishops), Phoi Su (Archbishops), Dau Su (Cardinals), Giao Tong (Pope). In the designation of their roles, we consistently find the words "Giao" (Education) or "Su" (Teacher).

Since the dark ages, all religions have pursued the same goal as Confucius: "Thien mang chi vi tanh. Xuat tanh chi vi Dao. Tu Dao chi vi giao." ("The duty of each human being is to know himself, and then to know the Great Way, and to progress in the Way of the Perfection and attain Wisdom. This is the goal of Education.")

The Sacerdotal Council, in union with the divine will, pursues the same goal: to educate and help humanity to progress on the road of love (Charity).

Divine text: They protect and guide disciples, as if they were younger brothers or sisters.

Commentary: The Phoi Su devote themselves to the faithful of their parish as elder siblings to their younger. They visit them, help them, preserve harmony among them, share their sorrows and joys,

and in all ways consider them as their own younger siblings. That pleases our Master.

Divine text: They keep all registries of the disciples.

Commentary: Registries of birth, death, marriages, conversions or excommunications of disciples are maintained by the Giao Su. In the religion, they play the role of officers of the civil state. Their powers are thus determined; no dignitary may substitute for the Giao Su.

Divine text: They must provide help in case of marriage or death of "each disciple".

Commentary: By keeping registries much like a civil state, they may more easily help disciples in major events in their lives, such as marriage or death. Our Master trusts only in the Giao Su for the organization of these two ceremonies, which are important events in one's life.

They must arrange the ceremonies so that they conform to the customs of the people, without harming the religion, and always with the approval of the Sacerdotal Council. Our Divine Master says "each disciple." However, one must understand this phrase to indicate "each people" because customs differ with people and races.

Divine text: In the larger cities, the Giao Su have the right to preside over religious ceremonies, as do the Dau Su and the Phoi Su.

Commentary: Our Divine Master's reference to "larger cities" is to parishes placed under the apostolic direction of the Giao Su.

They preside over the large ceremonies for worship, just as the Dau Su and Phoi Su, but by complying to the instructions given by them or, in other words, by the Sacerdotal Council.

Divine text: They may address propositions to the Sacerdotal Council for the cancellation or modification of laws which may be harmful to the disciples.

Commentary: Ancient and new codes which may harm the disciples may be abolished or modified at the solicitation of the Giao Su.

Divine text: They have to be close to all disciples in order to help them as brothers and sisters. Obey!

Commentary: The Master has repeated about the role of the Giao Su to disciples as to brothers and sisters. He emphasizes this by saying "Obey!" Giao Su may replace the Dau Su and the Chanh Phoi Su to direct the temples of the larger cities and to preside the worshipping ceremonies. They have to obey the Phoi Su. They must not try to act by their

own except in the areas determined by the Master. If they violate the orders they will be judged at the Three Sect Court.

VII- POWERS OF THE GIAO HUU (PRIESTS)

Divine text: The Giao Huu have the mission to propagate the new religion.

Commentary: To propagate the new doctrine of God, the Giao Huu must have a solid education and a perfect comprehension of the doctrine. Thus, they must pass the apostolic course.

The promotion of the religion is a great, distinguished task. Without knowing in depth the goal and principles of the religion, they may induce the masses into error and violate divine will.

Moreover, the Giao Huu are true friends of people. They must be chosen among those with high standards of morals and virtue. They should be good examples to believers. People look at these examples to judge a religion.

The role of the Giao Huu in the new religion is thus very important. To remain worthy of their mission, these Giao Huu must know all religious doctrines.

Divine text: The Giao Huu may ask to modify laws.

Commentary: They have the right to solicit the Sacerdotal Council to modify laws. They will be called to propagate the Cao Dai doctrine to countries and people, whose customs may not allow them to easily adapt to the New Religion Code. If they do not possess this exceptional power, the Giao Huu will not be able to evangelize them.

Divine text: There will be 3,000 Giao Huu, 1,000 for each Branch. This number may not be changed.

Commentary: The meaning of this text is very clear. It is superfluous to explain it, but one should clarify that the class of Giao Huu belongs to all people of the world and not only to Viet Nam. Similarly, the throne of the Giao Tong is accessible to all, regardless of ethnic origin.

Divine text: They preside over the ritual ceremonies in the parishes of provinces.

Commentary: Provinces may be understood as small countries. Provinces and small countries should depend on large provinces and large countries just like the Giao Huu are dependent on the Giao Su. When the Giao Huu preside over a parish, they will conduct the ceremonies according to the directives outlined by the Giao Su exactly. In this respect, they always obey the orders of the Giao Su so as not to commit any violation of divine law.

Divine text: Solicitations from the Giao Huu must always be considered with care by the Giao Tong.

Commentary: The Giao Huu are close to the faithful; they are near the base of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and the Giao Tong is the summit of the hierarchy. How, then, can the Giao Tong hear the people without the intermediation of the Giao Huu?

The Supreme Being wants the Giao Tong to be always in contact with the faithful, thus He suggests that the Giao Tong always consider with care the solicitations from the Giao Huu. However, to maintain sacerdotal discipline, the Giao Huu must address their solicitations to the Giao Tong via the hierarchy.

Divine text: If there are difficult problems, the Giao Huu may be ordered to function as investigators.

Commentary: The disciples constitute the temporal mass: the people. To determine their degree of evolution, one has to be close to them. By frequenting them, the Giao Huu can determine their degree of harmony or disharmony.

Thus, when a disagreement happens either among the disciples, or among the co-religious and the laypersons, the Giao Huu are the best persons to conduct investigations. That is why I give those responsibilities only to the Giao Huu.

Divine text: They must have high standards of morals and virtue, because they are close to the people. Obey.

Commentary: This sentence was clearly explained. Just need to pay attention to the word "Obey!" of the Master.

VIII- POWERS OF THE LE SANH (STUDENT PRIEST)

Divine text: The Le Sanh are chosen among the Sub-Dignitaries, based on their good behavior, for the celebration of ritual ceremonies.

Commentary: The Le Sanh come from the most virtuous of the Sub-Dignitaries. They should always be worthy in their religious qualities and their education, for they are future Giao Huu. In order to be chosen, they must first graduate from the CaoDai religion school.

When the Giao Huu are absent, they replace them in the celebration of ritual ceremonies, following scrupulously the instructions and examples given for the fulfillment of these daily duty. They depend on the Giao Huu.

The role of the Le Sanh is similar to that of the "Brother" in Catholicism.

Divine text: They may preside at altar installation ceremonies at disciples' homes.

Commentary: The Le Sanh must always pay visits to the disciples, preside at the "ceremony of installation of the altar" at their homes and replace the Giao Huu in the teaching of rituals.

When the CaoDai teaching is propagated outside of Viet Nam, there will be many who will be unable to celebrate the ceremonies exactly as in Viet Nam. In such situations, the Le Sanh will visit the disciples and, depending on the circumstances, educate them, comfort them, guide them, and assure them of their progress in spiritual life, in God's Way and in social life. They do this in place of the Giao Huu.

Divine text: The Le Sanh are my youngest loves; do not offend them.

Commentary: This divine goodness is very touching. Knowing that the role of the Le Sanh demands a great deal of resignation and virtue, our Divine Teacher loves them much and warns the dignitaries from abusing their power and offending them.

Divine text: To become a dignitary, one must first be a Le Sanh. Exceptions are made for cases in which dignitaries are designated by the Divine Master directly.

Commentary: This passage is clear, an explanation is superfluous. One must only add that the Le Sanh are elected by the disciples or they must graduate from the CaoDai religion school.

These conditions are not required when our Divine Master Himself chooses dignitaries by means of the mediums of the Hiep Thien Dai.

IX- POWERS OF THE "CHANH TRI SU", RELIGIOUS CHIEF IN VILLAGES

Commentary: The "Chanh Tri Su" are SubDignitaries established by the Spiritual Giao Tong and working under the Le Sanh. They have the function of Chief of Divisions in the parish, a function given by the Giao Tong, and they are the elder brothers of the disciples of each village.

The following are the teachings of the Giao Tong on the important role of the Chanh Tri Su, when he asked the Ho Phap to grant the necessary power to them:

"The Chanh Tri Su represent me in the parish and play the role of an elder brothers for the disciples. My wish is to be present everywhere, from the horizons to the limits of the seas. I think you wish the same, don't you?"

In the world, the class of the ignorant overwhelms in number the class of the knowledgeable. Therefore, if we do not bring a carefully designed organization to our divine task, we will never be able to evangelize the masses. The closer we are to the masses, the more difficulties we will encounter. We must find ways to control these difficulties as they first occur.

For peace to reign, even in a small village, I beg you to delegate the legislative power to the Chanh Tri Su, so that we are represented everywhere, in the towns as in the countryside."

The Ho Phap executed this recommendation, having grasped the distinguished thought of the Giao Tong.

According to the instructions of the Giao Tong, the power of the Chanh Tri Su is defined as follows: The Chanh Tri Su are to protect and encourage the disciples placed under their supervision and come to their need. They consider these disciples as their younger siblings and always resolve their difficulties to their best interests. They facilitates the disciples' secular lives and have the right to use their legislative powers on them, while conforming to the orders from the Giao Huu, the Le Sanh and the chief of parish.

For those disciples who commit sins and do not correct themselves, despite many warnings from the

Chanh Tri Su, the latter may refer the case to the Giao Huu for more counseling. If the Giao Huu brings about no repentance from the recidivists, the Chanh Tri Su have the right to ask the Sacerdotal Council for excommunication or other punishment by addressing the report to the chief of parish.

These reports are done in duplicate, one copy to the Hiep Thien Dai and the other to the Cuu Trung Dai.

If the Cuu Trung Dai remains silent after considering the matter several times, the Chanh Tri Su may address the Hiep Thien Dai for a decision.

The Chanh Tri Su are not allowed to exercise their functions outside of their parishes. They are helped in his task by the Pho Tri Su (Subordinated Sub-dignitaries) who direct themselves to the varied areas of the parish.

The Pho Tri Su take turns to provide to the Chanh Tri Su 30 people devoted to community services each month or one person each day. These voluntary disciples receive orders from the Chanh Tri Su to visit daily with the disciples, to come to their aid, in case of sickness or poverty.

These noble acts of the Chanh Tri Su summarize the humanitarian goals of the religion in the social aspect, the beauty of the doctrine of the saints residing in the sincere mutual help that no good soul ever refuses.

The Spiritual Giao Tong adds: By doing so, you consider yourself as all belonging to the same family. Assist each other, share with each other your joys and sorrows, defend your common interests, stay always united in daily life, even in misery. Such is your honorable task.

The Chanh Tri Su are to give their oaths before the altar of the parish prior to assuming their functions. They must be impartial in every matter toward everyone, even toward their parents, family, and brothers and sisters.

The Chanh Tri Su are the Dau Su in miniature.

X- POWERS OF THE "PHO TRI SU", SUBORDINATE TO THE CHANH TRI SU

Commentary: The Pho Tri Su are Subordinated Sub-dignitaries created by the Spiritual Giao Tong. They assume the same functions as the Chanh Tri Su in religious districts designated by the latter. They have administrative but not legislative power. They are assigned to guide, teach and help the disciples. They are to bring them consolation but not judgment.

Alternating with the other Pho Tri Su, they must supply to the Chanh Tri Su 30 disciples devoted to community services each month. They assist the

Chanh Tri Su in his task and report to the latter all that happens in their district every day.

They also inform the Thong Su (other Subordinated Sub-dignitaries) of anything that could harm the religion, so that the Thong Su, through judicial power, may bring appropriate remedies.

All acts contrary to religious rules and all complaints with proof must be referred by the Pho Tri Su to the Thong Su for settlement.

It is forbidden to the Pho Tri Su to impede in the legislative power. The Pho Tri Su are the Giao Tong in miniature.

XI- POWERS OF THE "THONG SU" SUBORDINATED SUB - DIGNITARIES OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH.

Commentary: The Thong Su are subordinated subdignitaries created by the Ho Phap under the advice of the Spiritual Giao Tong.

The Thong Su are of the same rank as the Pho Tri Su; however, they hold legislative power, but not administrative power. They are subordinated subdignitaries of the Hiep Thien Dai, formed by the Ho Phap and placed under the control of the Chanh Tri Su.

Their role is to control the actions of the Pho Tri Su. They are responsible for reporting injustices, infractions to the rules, disobediences, and transgressions to the New Religious Code that occur in the apostolic district directed by the Pho Tri Su.

Although they work under the Chanh Tri Su, they have a duty to report mistakes made by them. If the Chanh Tri Su has been warned several times of a mistake and s/he continues to ignore the warning, the Thong Su will make a report to the Cuu Trung Dai. If the Cuu Trung Dai makes no decision on the case, they may address themselves directly to the Hiep Thien Dai to ask for justice.

The job of the Thong Su is to protect and support the miserable, defend the feeble (religious or not), bring assistance to the affected, poor, ill, handicapped, elderly, or the non-taxable (the non-taxable are handicapped who cannot work for their living). They refer these cases to the Pho Tri Su for protection and moral or pecuniary help.

In their task, in case of difficulties and urgencies, the Thong Su may ask all dignitaries they meet, no matter what their rank may be, for help and support.

Those disciples who are cited several times as recalcitrant, with proof of their infractions and proof that they refuse to help, or that they are disobeying religious rules, will be severely punished by the

Sacerdotal Council at the request of the Hiep Thien Dai.

Before they may exercise their authority, the Thong Su are sworn to their duties in front of the altar of the parish just as the Chanh Tri Su. The Thong Su are the Ho Phap in miniature.

Divine text: In your judgment, if any injustice yet persist, the new religion has not yet fulfilled its goal.

Commentary: In life, the lower class is often oppressed, so equality and justice disappear. Thus, the role of the Thong Su is very important.

RELIGIOUS DRESS OF THE DIGNITARIES OF THE MALE COLLEGE OF THE CUU TRUNG DAI

THE GIAO TONG'S VESTMENT

COMMENTARY: The Giao Tong's vestment consists of two ceremonial versions, one for the large ceremony and one for the small ceremony.

The ceremonial vestment for the large ceremony is made of white silk embroidered with gold lotuses from top to bottom and decorated on both sides with the three insignia: **LONG-TU-PHIEN** (the Fan of Exteriorization), **THU-HUNG-KIEM** (the Yin - Yang Sword), **PHAT-CHU** (the Whisk of Sanctification). These are the distinctive symbols of the Thuong Pham and the Thuong-Sanh, the Chiefs of the Religious Affairs and the Secular Affairs of the Hiep-Thien-Dai.

The Giao Tong also wears a large golden headdress with five levels, octagonal in shape, symbolizing the five religious branches. This headdress is closed in the middle and has a Swastika at the top; in the middle of the Swastika is the "**Divine Eye**" surrounded by a gold circle (Vong Minh Khi). On the front of the headdress are

embroidered the three distinctive insignia described above.

In his right hand the Giao Tong holds the papal staff, about 90 cm long, the upper end of which is decorated with a gold Swastika. In the middle of the Swastika is the "Divine Eye" surrounded by a gold circle.

The ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony is also made of white silk, embroidered in gold with eight trigrams: the trigram "**KHAM**" (Water) on the abdomen, "**CAN**" (Mountain) on the right arm, "**CHAN**" (Thunder) on the left arm, "**DOAI**" (Lake) on the right shoulder, "**TON**" (Wind) on the left shoulder, "**LY**" (Fire) over the heart, and "**KHON**" (Earth) on the back.

The Giao Tong wears the mitre "**HIEP-CHUONG**" (mitre for the chief of monks) made of white silk, 0.333m high, the top of which is divided into two points, linked both front and back by a fold (symbol of the union of the Yin and the Yang). This soft headdress is surrounded by a white silk cord, the ends of which are of different lengths. The longer end measures 0.3 meters in length and 0.03 meters in width. On the front of the headdress is embroidered the trigram "**CAN**" (Heaven).

The Giao Tong also wears Vo Uu shoes ("worry free" shoes) made of white silk, symbolizing the "Freedom From Worry". The two baptismal names of

the male and female dignitaries, "**Thanh Huong**" (Purity and Fragrance), are embroidered on the toes of the shoes. Thanh is the baptismal name of male dignitaries and Huong is the baptismal name of female dignitaries.

DRESS OF THE CHUONG-PHAP

(CENSOR CARDINAL)

COMMENTARY:

I- **The dress of the Chuong Phap of the Buddhist Branch** includes two ceremonial vestments, one for the large ceremony and one for the small ceremony.

The ceremonial vestment for the large ceremony consists of gold silk embroidered with the eight trigrams, as is the Giao Tong's vestment for the small ceremony. The Buddhist Chuong Phap wears over this the large red Buddhist cloak, called "**BANAP QUANG**" (cloak with a hundred squares, symbolizing the hundred aspects of patience). He wears the mitre of the Superior of the Bonzes (Hiep Chuong Hoa Thuong).

He holds the "**BINH-BAT-DU**" (the Bowl of Charity) in his right hand, and wears gold Vo Uu

shoes. The character "**THICH**" (Buddhism) is embroidered on the toes of the shoes.

The ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony is also made of gold silk, as is the vestment used in the large ceremony, but without a cloak, mitre or headdress. Instead, The Buddhist Chuong Phap wears a gold turban with nine successive layers in the form of the character "**NHUT**" (the numeral one, representing unity).

II- **The dress of the Chuong Phap of the Taoist Branch** consists of two ceremonial vestments, one for the large ceremony and one for the small ceremony.

The ceremonial vestment for the large ceremony is made of white silk. The "Divine Eye" is embroidered on the front of the chest and on the back, surrounded by a golden circle (Vong Minh Khi). The Taoist Chuong Phap wears the same mitre, the "Hiep Chuong," as found in the ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony of the Giao Tong. He holds the "**PHAT CHU**" (Whisk of Sanctification) in his right hand. He also wears white "**Vo Uu**" shoes (worry free shoes), with the character "**DAO**" (Taoism) embroidered on the toes of the shoes.

The ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony is white, as is the large ceremony. However, in the event of the small ceremony, the Taoist Chuong

Phap wears a white turban with nine successive layers in the form of the character "**NHUT**."

III- The dress of the Chuong Phap of the Confucianist Branch also consists of two ceremonial vestments, one for the large ceremony and one for the small ceremony.

The ceremonial vestment for the large ceremony is entirely red. The "**Divine Eye**," surrounded by a golden circle, is embroidered on the front of the chest and on the back. He wears the headdress of Confucius (Van Dang).

This is also red, and the "**Divine Eye**," surrounded by a gold circle with the Ursa Major Star (Bac Dau Tinh Quan) above, is embroidered on the front. He holds the Book "**Xuan Thu**" (Spring and Autumn). He wears "Vo Uu" shoes of the same color. The character "**NHO**" (Confucianism) is embroidered on the toes of the shoes.

The ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony is in red, as is the large ceremonial vestment. However, in the event of the small ceremony, the Confucianist Chuong Phap wears a red turban with nine successive layers in the form of the character "**NHUT**."

DRESS OF THE DAU SU (CARDINALS)

COMMENTARY: The dress of the Dau Su of the Buddhist branch consists of two ceremonial vestments, one for the large ceremony, and one for the small ceremony.

The ceremonial vestment for the large ceremony is made of gold silk. Six characters, **DAI DAO TAM KY PHO DO** (The third revelation of the Great way), surrounded with three mystic circles (vong Vo Vi) are embroidered on the front of the chest and on the back. These characters are arranged in circle, and in the middle the character "**THAI**" (Buddhism) is embroidered. There are nine ribbons attached to this vestment.

In addition, the Buddhist Dau Su wears a red Buddhist cloak, (Ba Nap Quang) similar to that worn by the Buddhist Chuong Phap. The Buddhist Dau Su also wears a gold Bat Quai Mao (a high yellow octagonal headdress), embroidered all the way around with eight trigrams. He wears black "Vo Uu" Shoes with the character "**THAI**" (Buddhism) embroidered on the toes of the shoes. The ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony is made of gold silk, like the one for the big ceremony, but without any cloak. There is no headdress, but instead a gold turban with successive nine layers in the form of the character "**Nhut**"

The dress of the Dau Su of the Taoist branch also consists of 2 ceremonial vestments, one for the large ceremony and one for the small ceremony.

The large ceremonial vestment is blue. Six characters **DAI DAO TAM KY PHO DO**, surrounded with three mystic circles (vong Vo Vi), are embroidered on the front of the chest and on the back. The character **"THUONG"** (Taoism) is embroidered in the center of the six embroidered characters DAI DAO TAM KY PHO DO. There are nine ribbons on this vestment.

The Taoist Dau Su wears a "BAT QUAI MAO" similar to that worn by the Dau Su of the Buddhist Branch, but it in blue.

He wears black "Vo Uu" shoes with the character **"THUONG"** (Taoism) embroidered on the toes of the shoes.

The ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony is made of blue silk, similar to that worn for the large ceremony, and he wears a blue turban with nine successive layers in the form of the character **"Nhut"**.

The dress of the Dau Su of the Confucianist Branch (NGOC) also consists of two ceremonial vestments, one for the large ceremony and one for the small ceremony.

The ceremonial vestment for the large ceremony, like that of the other Dau Su, is of red silk. The character **"NGOC"** (Confucianism) is embroidered in the center of six embroidered characters "DAI DAO TAM KY PHO DO." There are nine ribbons on this vestment.

He wears a **"BAT QUAI MAO"** similar to that worn by the Dau Su of the Taoist Branch, but it in red. He wears black Vo Uu shoes with the character **"NGOC"** (Confucianism) embroidered on the toes of the shoes.

The ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony is red, similar to that worn for one for the large ceremony. The Confucian Dau Su wears a red turban with successive nine layers in the form of the character **"NHUT"**.

DRESS OF THE CHANH PHOI SU AND PHOI SU

(PRINCIPAL ARCHBISHOP AND ARCHBISHOP)

COMMENTARY: There are two types of ceremonial vestments, as for the Dau Su, but the "Divine Eye," surrounded by a mystic circle (Vong Vo Vi), is embroidered on the chest and on the back. The Chanh Phoi Su wear nine ribbons, while the Phoi Su wear only three.

The Chanh Phoi Su of the Buddhist Branch wears a large "BA NAP QUANG," which is a large square red cloak, while the Phoi Su wears a small "BA NAP QUANG," a small cloak of the same color.

They both wear the "**BAT QUAI MAO**," like the Dau Su, but the color varies depending on the branch. They wear black "Vo Uu" shoes with no characters embroidered on the toes.

The dress for the small ceremony is similar to that for the big ceremony, but they also wear a turban with successive nine layers in the form of the character "**NHUT**," in the color according to each branch.

DRESS OF THE GIAO SU (BISHOPS)

COMMENTARY: The Giao Su also wear two ceremonial vestments, one for the large ceremony and one for the small ceremony.

The ceremonial vestment for the large ceremony is made of silk colored according to the branch. The "Divine Eye" surrounded by a mystic circle (Vong Vo Vi) on the chest and the back. The vestment also has three ribbons. The Giao Su wear a "**THIEN NGUON MAO**" (a rounded headdress, octagonal in shape). Its color varies according to the branch. The eight trigrams (BAT QUAI) around it are embroidered, and its peak is decorated with a

Diamond, the symbol of the purity of the divine doctrine.

The Giao Su do not wear shoes.

The ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony is similar to that of the large ceremony. They also wear a turban, the color of which varies according to each branch, with seven successive layers, arranged in the form of the character "**NHON**" (Humanity).

The Giao Su of the Buddhist branch wear a small "BA NAP QUANG" (a small square red cloak), and also the mitre of the Chief of monks "**HIEP CHUONG MAO**", embroidered with the "Divine Eye" on each side.

DRESS OF THE GIAO HUU (PRIESTS)

COMMENTARY: The Giao Huu have only one form of vestment made of silk, and the color varies according to each branch. There is no embroidery, and there are three ribbons.

They wear a "**NGUONG THIEN MAO**" (a round headdress with a flat top). Its color varies, according to each branch and it is 0.15m high, with the "Divine Eye" on the front, surrounded by three mystic circles (Vong Vo Vi). Priests do not wear a turban or shoes.

DRESS OF THE LE-SANH (STUDENT-PRIESTS)

COMMENTARY: The Le Sanh have only one form of vestment made of silk, as do the Giao Huu.

Their ceremonial vestment varies in color according to each branch. They wear a white "**KHOI KHOA MAO**" (the headdress of Confucian bachelors), with the "Divine Eye" on the front, surrounded by single golden circle (Vong minh khi). Le Sanh do not wear shoes.

DRESS OF THE "CHANH TRI SU"

COMMENTARY: The CHANH TRI SU wear a robe similar to that worn by the Le Sanh, but made of white calico. The waist is drawn in by a narrow belt of the same material five centimeters wide. The robe has an askew collar finished with a band of ribbon woven in gold thread.

A band of ribbon in three colors (yellow, blue, red) is worn on the left arm. This band is six centimeters wide and 10 centimeters long. They wear a black turban with seven successive layers, arranged in the form of the character "**NHON**" (Humanity).

Three distinctive signs embroidered on the front of the turban: "The Book of Spring and Autumn," the

Whisk of Sanctification, and the Bowl of Charity, as on the headdress of the ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony of the Ho Phap.

DRESS OF THE "PHO TRI SU"

COMMENTARY: The PHO TRI SU, like the CHANH TRI SU, wear a white robe with an askew collar finished with a band of ribbon woven in silver thread, with a single ribbon. They wear no belt. A band of ribbons in three colors (yellow, blue, red), three centimeters wide and five centimeters long is worn on the left arm.

They wear a black turban with seven successive layers, arranged in the form of the character "**NHON**" (Humanity).

DRESS OF THE "THONG SU"

COMMENTARY: The THONG SU wear a vestment of white calico, with no finished ribbon at the collar. The collar is embroidered on both sides with the three distinctive insignia, like those found on the turban of the CHANH TRI SU. They wear a narrow white belt five centimeters wide, made of white material.

They wear a black turban with seven successive layers, arranged in the form of the character

"NHON," like the one worn by the CHANH TRI SU, with the same insignia in the middle of the front.

DIGNITARIES OF THE FEMALE COLLEGE

(Extract from the holy messages of the Spiritual Giao Tong Ly Thai Bach)

The dignitaries of the female college are formed by the Spiritual Giao Tong Ly Thai Bach.

The HO PHAP recalls here what the Supreme Being said to the Principal Phoi Su HUONG THANH:

"I wanted to suppress the female college, but you are all My children, so I make no distinction between you. The females are to be as many as the males".

For this reason at the point when the Rules and Religious Laws were created, women were admitted to the sacerdotal hierarchy.

Is there some mystery between our Divine Master and the Council of Gods (NGOC HU CUNG) so that He has stated so and leaves to the Giao Tong the duty of forming the dignitaries of the female college?

Why does He not form them Himself?

Do women have difficulties in cultivating

themselves?

The spiritual message from CAO THUONG PHAM states that he had requested the Council of Gods to grant amnesty to the female college from being suppressed. The female college has therefore to pay attention to that and take care of themselves.

DIVINE TEXT: *Sacerdotal Council, listen to my instructions about the ceremonial vestment of the female college. From now on show great respect for these beautiful robes and treat them according to the hierarchy!*

COMMENTARY: The Giao Tong recommended all the Sacerdotal Council of the male college to pay attention to the beautiful robes of the dignitaries of the female college and to treat them according to the hierarchy. This means that he demands perfect discipline in the ranks of the dignitaries and that he, himself, has established separate laws for men and women both on the temporal and spiritual level.

The HO PHAP asked him about the power of the female dignitaries, he answered:

"The dignitaries whether male or female who are on the same level have the same powers. The Giao Huu of the male college must be placed under the orders of the Giao Su of the female college, just as the Giao Su of the male college obey the Phoi Su of the female college. Equality is for all, but powers differ according to the dignities of the sacerdotal

hierarchy.

DIVINE TEXT: *The dignitaries of the female college work under the command of the Dau Su of the female college. In her turn, she depends on the authority of the Giao Tong and of the Chuong Phap.*

COMMENTARY: From what has just been said we can clearly see that the divine constitution does not permit women to the positions of Chuong Phap or Giao Tong.

The Ho Phap objected to the Divine Master about this divine measure. The Latter answered in this way:

"Heaven and Earth possess two constitutive elements: the YIN and the YANG (Am-Duong). If the YANG dominates, everything lives; if the YIN rules, everything dies. Thanks to the preponderance of the YANG, the whole universe survives, and living beings develop. If a day came when the YANG disappeared and the YIN reigned, the universe would fall into decay and be destroyed! Men represent the YANG, and women, the YIN. If I allow the female college to hold the power of the Giao Tong in its hands, I will be sanctioning the triumph of the YIN over the YANG, so that the holy doctrine will be brought to nothing!"

The Ho-Phap insisted further: The female college cannot claim the rank of Giao Tong, but there is nothing wrong if the women become

Chuong Phap. Our Divine Master answered: "The role of the Chuong Phap is even more important, for they represent the divine law or Ho Phap to the Cuu Trung Dai. They are almost Giao Tong! I do not allow the dignitaries of the female college to be promoted to the office of Giao Tong. Why will I allow them to sit on the throne of the Ho-Phap? The law of God is thus set down! I beg you quite simply to love them and protect them.

POWERS OF THE FEMALE DAU SU (CARDINAL)

COMMENTARY: The "Female Dau Su" has the same power as the Dau Su, but her authority extends only as far as the female college without any involvement with the powers of the dignitaries of the male college. In their turn the latter must refrain from intruding on the power of the female college.

In any issues involving the dignitaries of the female college, the Giao Tong and the Ho-Phap contact only the "Female Dau Su" .

When asked by the Ho-Phap about the throne of the Female Dau Su, our Divine Master gave these instructions:

"The Holy See faces West, the direction of the "Cung Doai" (setting Sun), which is the "Cung Dao" (Place of religion). On My left is, the "Cung Can"

(Heaven), on My right, the "Cung Khon" (Earth). Theoretically the seven great dignitaries thrones (1) ought to be on My left, the "Cung Can" but as they symbolize the five religious branches,(2) must put their throne in the middle, the "Cung Doai" or "Cung Dao". So the throne of the female Dau Su must be placed on My right", the "Cung Khon".

What is the throne like? asked the Ho-Phap.

"Just like the throne of the "Quan-The-Am" (3) in the Truoc Tu Garden (Vuon Truoc Tu) of the South Sea (Nam-Hai). That is, it is a marble throne with two open lotus flowers as a footstool."

DIVINE TEXT: *The Female Dau Su (Nu Dau Su) must be chosen through an election according to the Rules and the Religious Laws of the Sacerdotal Council. She shall obey the orders of the Sacerdotal Council both spiritually and temporally.*

COMMENTARY: The Female Dau Su is to observe the New Religious Code in every detail both spiritually and temporally, and is to submit herself to the judgment of the Sacerdotal Council, just as the dignitaries of the male college do. In the same way, her election must follow the same rules.

In the exercise of her functions, she has the same power as the male Dau Su with no change. Executive power also belongs to the Female Phoi Su; she is not to infringe their power, for this would involve transgressing the divine law.

DIVINE TEXT: *The Female Dau Su has a ceremonial vestment similar to that worn by the male Dau Su.*

The white silk robe has nine ribbons and is embroidered with lotus flowers. The head-covering is a hood, just like the one worn by female bonzes, and is also made of white silk. The hood is overlaid with a golden headdress (Phuong Thien Mao) on the top of which is engraved the "Divine Eye" surrounded by a golden circle (Vong minh khi). This headdress also includes a white sheer stole which hangs down as far as the heels.

On her feet the Female Dau Su wears white Vo Uu shoes. On the toes they have the character "HUONG" (fragrance), the baptismal name of the dignitaries of the female college.

COMMENTARY: The ceremonial dress for the Female Dau Su is made of white silk, embroidered with lotus flowers just like the one worn by the Dau Su.

The robe has nine ribbons.

The headdress is a hood also made of white silk, like the one worn by the female bonzes, embroidered with lotus flowers. This hood is surrounded by a golden diadem which circles the head; above this diadem there is a cap also made of gold. On the middle of the front of the cap is

engraved the Divine Eye surrounded by a golden circle (Vong minh khi). The stole of the cap, made of white sheer, is to be 3.33 meters long, so each time that the Female Dau Su goes up to her throne, two female Le Sanh must hold up the stole to prevent it from dragging along the ground. To wear this religious headdress, the hair is to be dressed up to the top of the head.

Her feet are shoed with white Vo Uu shoes; on the toes is the character "HUONG", the baptismal name of the dignitaries of the female college.

The following is the meaning of the baptismal name of the dignitaries of the female college.

"Huong" means Fragrance.

This poem was given by our Divine Master:

Huong Tam Nhut Phien Can Can Khon
 Hue Duc Tu Chon Do Dan Hon
 Nhut Niem Quan-Am Thuy Bao Mang
 Thien Nien Dang Phai Thu Sanh Ton.

Translation:

"Fragrance of the Heart close to the Great Spirits

*Is wisdom and virtue which guide the spirit.
 Pray always to Quan-Am, Boddhisatva of women;
 Immortality will be ensured for you in heavenly
 life. "*

For the baptismal name of the dignitaries of the male college, our Divine Master gave another poem:

"Thanh Dao Tam Khai That Uc Nien
 Tho Nhu Dia Huyen Thanh Hoa Thien
 Vo Hu Qui Phuc Nhon Sanh Khi
 Tao Van Co Dan Chieu Phat Duyen"

Translation:

*"The Third Revelation of the "Thanh DAO" lasts
 for seven hundred thousand years*

*As long as the Earth and blooms as well as the
 Heaven,*

*It leads human beings back to the origin, the
 cosmic ether,*

And creates a guiding light to Nirvana.

In the reign of the Giao Tong Ly Thai Bach (Li Po), the male college takes the baptismal name "Thanh", and the female college the name "Huong".

With the accession of the next Giao Tong, the male college will take the name "Dao", and the female college the name "Tam". This will continue until there are no further names. Then our Divine Master will again be manifested to give other names. Because of these different baptismal names, the distinction can be made between dignitaries of different times.

If someone asks: "At the accession of a new Giao Tong, is the baptismal name of the dignitaries of the former time changed?"

We will answer: No, for the succeeding Giao Tong will also have the baptismal name of his predecessor. Only the dignitaries who are appointed while the new Giao Tong is in office will have the new baptismal names. Any who were appointed by the former Giao Tong will keep their own baptismal names.

If the second Giao Tong succeeds the Giao Tong Ly Thai Bach, the newly converted disciples will take the baptismal names of "Dao" or "Tam". Among these disciples even if someone is promoted through his predestination to the rank of Principal Phoi Su by our Divine Master (direct investiture), that person will have either the baptismal name

"Dao" or "Tam", like the new dignitaries; but those who are converted under the papacy of the first Giao Tong will always retain their baptismal name "Thanh" or "Huong" with no change at all.

(1) *The Giao Tong, the three Chuong Phap and the three Dau Su.*

(2) *Confucianism (Nhon-Dao); Geni-ism (Than Dao); Christianity and Islam (Thanh Dao); Taoism (Tien Dao); Buddhism (Phat Dao).*

(3) *A female saint who reached the rank of Buddha according to Buddhist history; or Goddess of Mercy (KUAN YIN).*

POWERS OF THE FEMALE PRINCIPAL PHOI SU AND THE FEMALE PHOI SU

COMMENTARY: These female dignitaries have the same functions as their colleagues in the male college, except that they are only concerned with the females.

DIVINE TEXT: *The ceremonial vestment for the Female Phoi Su is the same, but there is no "Phuong-Thien" head-covering.*

Their robes have three ribbons; on the front of

the chest is embroidered the "Divine Eye" surrounded by a golden circle (Vong minh khi).

COMMENTARY: The Female Principal Phoi Su wear a ceremonial vestment just like the one worn by the Female Dau Su. Their robes are made of white silk, and have nine ribbons and are embroidered with lotus flowers. On the front of the chest is embroidered the "Divine Eye" surrounded by a golden circle (Vong minh khi). Their heads are covered with "Ni-Kim-Co" (the hoods worn by female bonzes), but there is no head-covering like the "Phuong-Thien".

On their feet are Vo Uu shoes embroidered with their baptismal name on the toes.

The ceremonial vestment of the Female Phoi Su is the same; one point of difference is that the robe has only three ribbons.

POWERS OF THE FEMALE GIAO SU

COMMENTARY: These Female Giao Su have the same functions as the Giao Su of the male college, but they are concerned only with the females.

DIVINE TEXT: *The Giao Su of the female college wear robes made of white silk, with three ribbons,*

and with the white "Kim-Co" as their headdress. They do not wear shoes.

COMMENTARY: Their robes are made of simple white silk, without embroidery and with three ribbons. Their headdress is a "Ni-Kim-Co" (the type of hood worn by female bonzes) made of white silk, with an extra sheer stole which hangs down as far as the heels like the one worn by the Female Dau Su and the Female Phoi Su. They do not wear shoes.

POWERS OF THE FEMALE GIAO HUU

COMMENTARY: The Female Giao Huu have the same functions as the Giao Huu, but they are concerned only with the females.

DIVINE TEXT: *They wear a ceremonial vestment like the one worn by the Female Giao Su, with no headdress. A simple white lotus flower with the "Divine Eye" is pinned in their hair.*

COMMENTARY: The female Giao Huu have the same form of dress as the Female Giao Su. They have no headdress, but a white lotus with the "Divine Eye" in the center is pinned into their hair worn in a chignon.

POWERS OF THE FEMALE LE SANH

COMMENTARY: They have the same functions as the Le Sanh, but they are concerned only with the females.

DIVINE TEXT: *They wear a form of ceremonial vestment like the one worn by the female Giao Huu and they cover their head with a long veil knotted at the nape so that the two ends of unequal length hang down. A white lotus flower is pinned into their chignon.*

COMMENTARY: The female Le Sanh wear a form of ceremonial vestment just like the one worn by the female Giao Huu and they cover their heads with a long white gauze veil which is tied at the nape with a knot which has two ends of uneven length the longer of which reaches the middle of the thighs.

A white lotus flower is pinned into their chignon. There is no "Divine Eye" in the center of the lotus flower.

POWERS OF THE FEMALE CHANH TRI SU

COMMENTARY: The Chanh Tri Su of the female college have the same functions as the Chanh Tri Su of the male college, but they are concerned only with the females.

They wear a form of ceremonial vestment like the one worn by the female Le Sanh, but made of white calico. Their robes have a narrow belt 0.03m wide and the askew collar is finished with a band of ribbon woven in gold thread.

On the left arm there is a three-colored ribbon (yellow, blue and red), 6 cm wide and 10 cm long. They do not have any headcovering.

POWERS OF THE FEMALE PHO-TRI-SU

COMMENTARY: They have the same functions as the Pho-Tri-Su of the male college, but they are concerned only with the females.

They wear a ceremonial vestment like the one worn by the Chanh Tri Su of their college, except that askew collar is finished with a band of ribbon woven in silver thread. They do not have any belt or headdress. There is one ribbon on the back.

On the left arm there is a three-colored ribbon (yellow, blue and red), 3 centimeters wide and 5 centimeters long.

POWERS OF THE FEMALE THONG SU

They have the same functions as the Thong Su of the male college, but they are concerned only with the females.

They wear a form of ceremonial vestment in white calico. The askew collar is embroidered on both sides with the three distinctive insignia: the Charity Bowl (Binh Bat Du), the Whisk of Sanctification (Phat-Chu), the Book of Spring and Autumn (Xuan-Thu), just like the insignia embroidered on the headdress for the small ceremony of the Ho-Phap.

They wear a narrow belt around their waist. It is made of white calico and is 3 cm wide.

LAW FOR THE ELECTION OF THE DIGNITARIES OF THE CUU TRUNG DAI

(of the two colleges: male and female)

COMMENTARY: The dignitaries of the two Colleges of the Cuu- Trung-Dai are appointed to the Hiep-Thien-Dai (Heavenly Union Palace), either through examination, through designation by means of spiritism (direct investiture), or through an organized election. In order to avoid all fraud or partiality, the election should be organized in the

presence of the dignitaries of the Hiep-Thien-Dai. Additionally, the assistance of these dignitaries allows consultation with the Spiritual Giao Tong, Our Divine Master, to know whether those elected are worthy of their rank.

Thus, before official notification, all dignitaries must be presented for the approval of the Giao Tong, our Divine Master.

DIVINE TEXT: *The Dau Su are promoted to the rank of Chuong Phap through an election among the three Dau Su.*

COMMENTARY: The three Dau Su who stand for election as Chuong Phap must come before the Holy See, the Sacerdotal Council of the Cuu-Trung-Dai and of the Hiep-Thien-Dai for an election among themselves.

The laws and religious rules do not specify the way to elect Phoi Su to the rank of Chanh Phoi Su. The latter are chosen by the Giao Tong.

DIVINE TEXT: *The Phoi Su are promoted to the rank of Dau Su by an election among the thirty-six Phoi Su.*

COMMENTARY: For example, if there are two Dau Su to be appointed, the Phoi Su elected to this rank must gain votes equal to half of thirty-six, which is eighteen votes or more.

This election is carried out at the Holy See, before the Sacerdotal Council of the Cuu- Trung-Dai, and in the presence of the Hiep-Thien-Dai.

DIVINE TEXT: *The Giao Su are promoted to the rank of Phoi Su by an election among the seventy-two Giao Su.*

COMMENTARY: To be elected to the rank of Phoi Su, the Giao Su must have a majority of votes, as required by the ordinary rules.

The election is carried out at the Holy See before the Sacerdotal Council of the Cuu- Trung-Dai, and in the presence of the Hiep- Thien-Dai.

DIVINE TEXT: *The Giao Huu are elected to the rank of Giao Su by an election among the three thousand Giao Huu.*

COMMENTARY: To become Giao Su, Giao Huu must be elected by an election among the three thousand Giao Huu.

The election is carried out according to the ordinary rules at the Holy See before the Sacerdotal Council of the Cuu-Trung-Dai, and in the presence of the Hiep-Thien-Dai.

DIVINE TEXT: *The Le Sanh are elected to the rank of Giao Huu by an election among all the Le Sanh.*

COMMENTARY: To be a candidate for the rank of Giao Huu, the Le Sanh must be elected by the vote of all the Le Sanh (The number of Le Sanh is not defined).

The number of votes is calculated according to the ordinary rules. In the case of equal votes, the most meritorious candidates are chosen. The election is carried out at the Holy See before the Sacerdotal Council of the Cuu-Trung-Dai, and in the presence of the Hiep-Thien-Dai.

DIVINE TEXT: *Disciples who aspire to the rank of Le Sanh are elected by the vote of all the faithful, except when dignitaries are chosen by the Divine Master (direct investiture).*

COMMENTARY: Disciples promoted to the rank of Le Sanh must be chosen by the vote of all the others.

The number of votes is calculated according to the ordinary rules.

The election is carried out in the temples of the various parishes. After the vote, those elected must go to the Holy See for an examination. If they pass the examination, they will be appointed; if not, they are eliminated! (Good!) (1). When the Le Sanh are chosen by our Divine Master (direct investiture), they are exempt from election and testing.

When the Ho-Phap asked the Giao Tong Ly Thai Bach about voting for the Chanh-Tri-Su, Pho-Tri-Su and Thong-Su, he received the following answer:

"The Chanh-Tri-Su are elected by the vote of the Pho-Tri-Su and Thong-Su, according to the ordinary rules, at the local temple, before the head of the parish, and in the presence of the other Chanh-Tri-Su.

"The certificate of appointment for the Chanh-Tri-Su must be signed by the Giao Tong and the Ho-Phap.

"The Pho-Tri-Su are elected by the vote of all the followers of the parish, according to the ordinary rules, at the local temple, before the head of the parish, and in the presence of the Chanh-Tri-Su.

"The certificate of appointment for the Pho-Tri-Su must be signed by the Giao Tong.

"The certificate of appointment for the Thong-Su is signed by the Ho-Phap."

(l) Good: comment of Ly Thai Bach's spirit, the spiritual Giao Tong of CaoDai

THE GIAO TONG AND ELECTION

DIVINE TEXT: *Only Chuong Phap and Dau Su can be candidates to be Giao Tong. They are promoted to Giao Tong by an election of all followers, except when the Giao Tong is chosen by our Divine Master (direct investiture).*

COMMENTARY: Only the Chuong Phap and Dau Su may be candidates for the Giao Tong position. They are promoted by an election by the Sacerdotal Council of the Cuu-Trung-Dai and the Hiep-Thien-Dai and by all followers. The election is always attended by the members of the Cuu-Trung-Dai and the Hiep-Thien-Dai.

The number of votes is controlled at the Holy See by the Higher Council. This Council is to include:

1. From the Cuu-Trung-Dai, dignitaries from the rank of Dau Su and above; except the for candidates for the Giao Tong position.
2. From the Hiep Thien Dai, those beginning with Thuong-Pham and Thuong-Sanh and above. The result of the election is conveyed to all the followers. If there is an unjust outcome, the Sacerdotal Council is to organize another election.

When these votes are ratified by the Higher Council, the Sacerdotal Council organizes the great festival of the enthronement of the elected one.

All the dignitaries are to undergo this election law, except when they are chosen by our Divine Master (direct investiture).

THE "HIEP-THIEN-DAI" (THE HEAVENLY UNION PALACE)

In establishing the laws and rules of the Hiep Thien Dai, our Divine Master commanded: "Let all the disciples obey My will," thus indicating the importance of the Hiep Thien Dai. We will explain why it is important.

The mystery of creation inspires us to comprehend it on two levels: the attempt to know the visible and the attempt to penetrate the secret of the invisible. It is possible to know the visible, but it is difficult to penetrate the secret of the invisible. The visible is separated from the invisible by a mysterious veil, which, since the creation of the universe, has not been completely lifted, even by initiates who have attained the stage of wisdom.

Humanity alone holds in its hands a key to this: the key lies in the observation of the harmony

of the manifestations of these two levels of the universe, and then to realize the union of the visible and the invisible.

It is the will and design of the creator that the invisible and the visible must be mingled into a Unity. Heaven and Earth have the principles of Yin and Yang; all beings have physical reality and intelligence; and human beings have bodies and spirits. The vitality of created beings in the universe is always brought forth by the union of matter and spirit.

The spirits of minerals and vegetables, of animals and men, of Genies and Saints, and of Immortals and Buddhas, are different because of their individual degree of evolution: Thus, the exterior physical form of one does not look like another. Minerals are different from vegetables, vegetables from animals, animals from humans, humans from Genies, Genies from Saints, Saints from Immortals, Immortals from Buddhas, Buddhas from God. In other words, the difference between beings both temporally and spiritually is clearly defined. Matter depends on its essence, which gives it its exterior appearance. The undeniable proof of this is that human beings differ from each other in their physical appearance. Evil people have frequently appeared to be bizarre on the outside, while virtuous people have frequently had an angelic

appearance, and in this way people in the past evaluated others by their appearance.

The body, then, must be in harmony with the spirit, like Matter with Essence. Matter is visible and Essence is invisible; to form the union, the two must be in harmony, for the visible implies the invisible and vice versa.

Thus, the Cuu Trung Dai makes up the body of the Great Way for which the Hiep Thien Dai is the spirit. It has already been said that the Cuu Trung Dai is the temporal part of the Great Way, while the Hiep- Thien-Dai is the spiritual part, that is, the spirit. Now Matter can be defined, but Essence cannot. In the way of perfecting wisdom, not only may many evolved divine beings intentionally reincarnate into poor families, but also other lower divine beings can intentionally reach the highest spiritual level, thanks to the knowledge and application of this holy teaching.

In this way, the Spiritual Way is as boundless as the Great Way. This is the mystic side of CaoDai.

Disciples know that our Divine Master did not fully define the duties of Hiep-Thien-Dai dignitaries. This has caused some of the faithful to be confused about their hierarchy. In this way, our Divine Master makes it clear that all members of the Hiep-Thien-Dai have their own responsibility and must become worthy of the rank of office attributed

to each. The Cuu Trung Dai represents the temporal, the Hiep-Thien-Dai the spiritual. The spiritual must guide the temporal in order to establish a divine organization for saving humanity. The importance is that without the Hiep-Thien-Dai, CaoDai cannot exist. Heaven and Earth may pass away, but the Divine Way will not; humanity may be annihilated, but the Hiep-Thien-Dai will never be annihilated.

The Hiep-Thien-Dai has the spiritual mission of lifting this mysterious veil, so that the invisible and the visible can mingle into a Unity of harmony between the temporal and the spiritual. This is why our Divine Master has commanded that all the disciples obey His will.

Below are His teachings:

DIVINE TEXT: *The Hiep-Thien-Dai is the sacred place where God manifests Himself to give spiritual direction to the Great Way. As long as CaoDai endures, the Hiep-Thien-Dai will exist.*

COMMENTARY: The Divine Master is the unique creator, the supreme head of the universe and master of the invisible. Since He is the Master of the invisible, He is also the Master of the Great Way. Thus, where the Supreme Master manifests Himself, the Great Way is found.

The Hiep-Thien-Dai is the dwelling place where our Divine Master manifests Himself, and holds the

Spiritual Power of the Great Way. As long as the Great Way lasts, the seat of our Divine Master exists; otherwise the world would end. Since the Great Way is eternal, the Hiep-Thien-Dai must equally be eternal.

DIVINE TEXT: *The five branches of the Great Way are made ordinary by the incarnate believers who day by day move further from the truth, completely perverting the significance of the holy doctrine. For this reason I have resolved to come and teach My children personally, not entrusting the teaching of My holy doctrine any longer to incarnate beings.*

COMMENTARY: This text is clear. Our Divine Master has stated simply that the holy doctrine has in the past been profaned by the same incarnate beings who were given the task of spreading it. With time, faith lessens, human ambitions become stronger than ever, and the holy doctrine is perverted to adapt to their material desires. This is how the divine doctrine gradually changed into human doctrine.

Today, the Divine Master has resolved to come Himself to teach His disciples. He no longer wishes to entrust the holy mission to human beings.

On this point, if someone asks: "The Divine Master has said that He no longer entrusts to humans the task of guiding His disciples in the Great

Way. Why does He confide it to the dignitaries of the Cuu-Trung-Dai and of the Hiep-Thien-Dai, who are just as human?" A passage from the speech of the Ho -Phap read at the Holy See on the fourteenth day of the second month of the year Mau Thin (1928) gives an explanation for this observation:

"The Divine Master is coming to assemble all the foreordained missionaries whom He sent into this world to form His holy image, which is The Sacerdotal Council, so that He Himself need not become incarnate for this Third Revelation. The Sacerdotal Council consists of two bodies in this world:

1- The Cuu-Trung-Dai (Nine Sphere Palace), representing the material body of the Great Way, and

2- The Hiep-Thien-Dai (Heavenly Union Palace), representing the semi-spiritual body of the Great Way, which is half material, half spiritual.

Finally, the third invisible body is the Bat Quai Dai (the Council of the Great Spirits), which is the spirit of the Great Way."

As quoted above, our Divine Master is the Supreme Being of the spiritual, and He is also the Master of the Bat Quai Dai. Since He is the Master of the Bat Quai Dai, He is the spirit of the Great Way. Now the union of the body with the spirit can occur only through the mediation of the perispirit

(Chon than). In order to be enlightened, a body must have a spirit or, in other words, the Cuu-Trung-Dai, in order to reach the Nirvana, must have the Hiep-Thien-Dai. Put another way, "The Eternal Omnipotent has said that He no longer entrusts His holy mission to the incarnate ones. Why then does He need the Hiep-Thien-Dai, which is also incarnate? Without the Hiep-Thien-Dai, would He not be able, by His own power, to form the Great Way?

Our answer would be as follows:

"The Eternal is the Absolute Master of the spiritual world. He has given humanity enough intelligence to be the master of the corporal world and to reign over other living beings. To harmonize the universe, God and humanity, or the two masters, must be united in perfect agreement: humanity depends on God, but God too must depend on the potentiality of humanity to bring all His creatures towards the good and the beautiful.

Humanity is placed under the spiritual power of God, who determines its destiny according to the Karma Law. But Humanity has only one power, the power of self-mastery and of self-cultivation to attain supreme wisdom in the Great Way and thus unification with the Omnipotent. This power of self-mastery has been granted by the Supreme Being to all His creatures and cannot, as a result, be suppressed, or otherwise there would be no divine

justice. Since Good is rewarded and Evil is punished, all children of God must be allowed to have the freedom to choose their own way.

Hell and Heaven are respectively the symbols of perdition and eternity. Hell is reserved for cruel spirits, just as Heaven for good spirits: this is the way of divine justice. Nothing forces us into Hell or Heaven. Both ways are open to us: we may choose to make ourselves worthy or to destroy ourselves. Divine beings can only provide us with their loving, clear-sighted guidance.

If by His power and His miraculous manifestations, our Master strengthened the faith of all His creatures, then the whole of Humanity would certainly abandon Evil and would do Good.

However, divine justice would be one-sided, since our Master would raise all spirits to Heaven and would close the gate of Hell. On what basis then could divine justice be upheld? What purpose would Karma and the law of reincarnation serve?"

Moreover, our Master and the Divine Spirits have neither body nor words. How can they communicate with the visible world?

The Cuu-Trung-Dai and the Hiep-Thien-Dai merely form organizations to assist the Supreme Being and the Great Spirits to found the Great Way and to guide humanity.

The law of reincarnation is the divine mechanism, which allows spirits to expiate their faults and to progress along the road of evolution. If this mechanism were to be suppressed, where would be the foundation for holy doctrine?

Humanity consists of incarnated spirits, evil spirits and divine spirits forming different degrees in the evolution. If our Divine Master were to use His miraculous power to assist all those spirits to reach Heaven in one reincarnation, what merit would there be for a spiritual hierarchy?

As it is already written, the Hiep-Thien-Dai is the perispirit of CaoDai, the Cuu-Trung-Dai makes up its body and the Bat Quai Dai represents its spirit. The union of the spirit and the body occurs only through the mediation of the perispirit, which is half temporal and half spiritual. It acts as link to unite the spirit and the body exactly as the Great Way receives the holy virtues from the superior spirits for their transmission to humanity.

Humanity is united with God, just as the Cuu-Trung-Dai is united with the Bat Quai Dai.

The Bat Quai Dai is the spirit of the Great Way, placed under the aegis of our Divine Master. It is natural that the body should be guided by the spirit to maintain its activity: Now as the spirit of the Great Way is formed by our Divine Master, the knowledge of the holy doctrine depends not on the visible world,

but on the Omnipotence and Wisdom of God. This is why our Divine Master said that He no longer entrusts the teaching of the holy doctrine to human beings.

DIVINE TEXT: *Moreover, the Hiep-Thien-Dai is the mystical place where the Giao Tong comes and communicates with the Thirty-Six Heavens, the Three-Thousand Worlds, the Sixty-Seven Planets and the Ten Courts of Hell to plead for the salvation of humanity.*

COMMENTARY: This text is already explained in the chapter on the attributions of the Giao Tong.

DIVINE TEXT: *You already know the spiritual powers of the Hiep-Thien-Dai. I now speak to you about its temporal powers.*

COMMENTARY: From the spiritual point of view, the Hiep-Thien-Dai acts as mediation between the Giao Tong and the superior spirits. They are unifying links between the Cuu-Trung-Dai, which is entrusted with the conversion of spirits, and the Bat Quai Dai, which is concerned with the salvation of spirits. The Hiep-Thien-Dai is also the place where all the spirits of the universe are united. This is the spiritual mission of the Hiep-Thien-Dai.

As far as temporal powers are concerned, the dignitaries of the Hiep-Thien-Dai are entrusted with the maintenance and application of the religious

rules and laws so that they can supervise the progress of the adepts in the Great Way, transforming the cycle of destruction into the cycle of conservation (1), and so that they can assist humanity in bringing the era of peace into reality and in escaping the era of destruction.

DIVINE TEXT: *The Hiep-Thien-Dai is placed under the authority of the Ho-Phap (Head of the legislative body). He is assisted by the Thuong Sanh (Director in secular affairs) and by the Thuong Pham (Director in spiritual affairs). The Ho Phap is concerned with the law and with justice.*

COMMENTARY: Just as the Cuu-Trung-Dai is placed under the authority of the Giao Tong, and the Bat Quai Dai under the power of God, the Hiep-Thien-Dai is placed under the authority of the Ho-Phap. Who is the Ho-Phap? From the spiritual point of view, the Great Way has its divine laws, just as from the temporal point of view, humanity has its laws and justice. The Ho-Phap is concerned with divine law and temporal law and justice. He has the authority to judge and to ask for compensation or for punishment of all dignitaries and followers. One who receives temporal punishment may avoid spiritual punishment. All followers, in order to reach their spiritual positions, must follow religious laws and cultivate themselves. The Ho-Phap enforces divine law and justice to guide all spirits to the Bat Quai Dai for the union with Genies, Saints,

Immortals and Buddhas. He presides at all the sessions of the high court. Under the Ho Phap there are four zodiacal dignitaries, as follows:

The Tiep Phap (Juridical Legislator),
 The Khai Phap (Juridical Reformer),
 The Hien Phap (Juridical Renovator), and
 The Bao Phap (Juridical Conservator).

These four zodiacal dignitaries have the same authority as the Ho-Phap when they represent him in his mission. Besides this general duty, each of them has his own specific duty.

The Tiep Phap (Juridical Legislator) receives all laws and regulations. He receives and examines all protests and claims. If there are cases not worthy to be judged, he will dismiss them or return them to the Cuu-Trung-Dai. If they are worthy to be judged, he will pass them to the Khai Phap. The Khai Phap (Juridical Reformer), upon receiving laws and regulations and all other protests and claims of the Cuu-Trung-Dai from the Tiep Phap, will examine and study them in detail. If there are cases which involve judgment, the Khai Phap must ask the Cuu Trung Dai to delay their decision for a period of no longer than a fortnight, and notify the Ho-Phap. The latter will convoke the Hiep-Thien-Dai dignitaries. At this meeting the Khai Phap will present the cases in detail for the Hiep-Thien-Dai to make decisions.

If the decision is to modify any law or regulation or is to indict, the Khai Phap must pass the case to the Hien Phap (Juridical Renovator).

The Hien Phap, after receiving these documents, is to carry out a careful investigation in order to gather all the evidence related to these matters and to submit it all to the Bao Phap (Juridical Conservator). The Hien Phap is forbidden to communicate either with the Hien Dao (Religious Renovator) or with the Hien The (Temporal Renovator). All matters once surrendered to the Hien Phap become secret, even to the dignitaries of the Hiep-Thien-Dai.

In turn, the Bao Phap keeps the files which are handed over under seal of secrecy, and after much deliberation, proposes all the penalties and sentences to the Ho-Phap for his judgments.

The Bao Phap is the director of the offices of the Ho-Phap.

DIVINE TEXT: *The Ho-Phap is concerned with the conservation and application of the religious laws and rules, temporally and spiritually. Every transgression of the law must be brought to the awareness of the Hiep-Thien-Dai.*

COMMENTARY: In summary, the Ho-Phap is the sovereign-protector of religious justice to prevent the Great Way from being changed to a lesser, human way. He is concerned with the conservation

of the holy doctrine to help humanity to follow the Great Way. Every transgression of law on the part of the Cuu-Trung-Dai or of the Hiep-Thien-Dai must be severely punished.

For that reason, the Supreme Being requires the Ho-Phap and his four zodiacal dignitaries (Chi Phap) to swear to be impartial during the exercise of their functions.

(1) The cycle of creation, destruction and conservation has already been explained in the chapter on the powers of the dignitaries of the Cuu-Trung-Dai. The Cuu-Trung-Dai has its religious tribunal, just as the Bat Quai Dai has its spiritual tribunal. If someone who is accused finds the verdict pronounced by the Cuu-Trung-Dai unjust, such a person may make appeal to the Hiep-Thien-Dai. If he is still not satisfied, he makes a further appeal to the tribunal which is under the control of the Bat Quai Dai (this is rare). As for the formation of the tribunal of the Cuu-Trung-Dai or the procedure of appealing to the spiritual tribunal, this is the legislative power of the Ho-Phap.

WHO IS THUONG PHAM?

DIRECTOR IN SPIRITUAL AFFAIRS

Thuong Pham is the representative of the Ho-Phap, he depends on the Ho-Phap in all his mission.

All children of God converted to the Great Way have their spiritual dignity. To guide evolved souls to move through the various stages of perfection to attain supreme wisdom is the aim of the amnesty of God.

Thanks to Thuong Pham, all the spirits either divine or incarnated may make their spiritual ascent in peace and tranquility. Thuong Pham is the one who keeps them alert to any transgression of the divine law, watches over their spiritual ranks, and insists that they submit to priestly discipline. In a word, the Thuong Pham helps the Cuu-Trung-Dai dignitaries progress in peace and concordance while closing behind them the door of regression.

All dignitaries depend on the Thuong Pham for being promoted or demoted. He considers the religious laws to defend all dignitaries and adepts; he prevents all perversion of the divine rules, and helps all initiates to attain their utmost positions.

He is simultaneously the president of the hall of defense, and protector (lawyer) of all disciples.

DIVINE TEXT: *The Thuong Pham is the Director in Spiritual affairs. Under his command he has four*

Zodiacal Dignitaries:

The Tiep Dao (Religious Legislator)

The Khai alo (Religious Reformer)

The Hien Dao (Religious Renovator)

The Bao ao (Religious Conservator)

He is concerned with the meditation cells (Tinh That) and the temples; he supervises all disciples and defends them against abuses of authorities.

COMMENTARY: All meditation cells depend on the power of the Thuong Pham. He is entrusted with the defense of the adepts against all abuse of power. He appoints dignitaries to provincial parishes according to their talents.

The Thuong Pham symbolizes the Great Way (the Dao). Wherever the Great Way exists, there Thuong Pham is found.

In terms of his office he is ranked with the Censor Cardinal, and embodies the Cuu- Trung-Dai to the Hiep Thien-Dai. This means that he exercises administrative power in the Hiep- Thien-Dai, a body which is essentially legislative.

The four zodiacal dignitaries of the spiritual affairs have the same power as the Thuong Pham when they represent him, but they have distinct areas of concern.

The Tiep Dao (Religious Legislator) receives

and examines all protests and claims about justice. If there are cases worth a defense, he passes them on to the Khai Dao (Religious Reformer).

Once in receipt of the documents passed to him by the Tiep Dao, The Khai Dao must study them in every detail. Where there are issues which involve the intervention of the hall of defense, the Khai Dao must first ask the Cuu- Trung Dai to delay the decision for a period of no longer than a fortnight, and secondly inform the Ho-Phap who convokes the Hiep-Thien-Dai for this purpose.

If the cases are worth the defense, the Khai Dao is to provide detailed explanations about the issues in question. Only with the approval of the Hiep-Thien-Dai, he is to convey all the documents to the Hien Dao (Religious Renovator).

In order to carry out his role, the Hien Dao is to try to reach a profound, complete understanding of the issues involved, and he conveys all of this to the Bao Dao (Religious Conservator). The Hien Dao is forbidden to communicate with the Hien Phap (Juridical Renovator) and the Hien The (Temporal Renovator). Once they are placed in the hands of the Hien Dao, all matters become secret, even when the Hiep- Thien-Dai dignitaries are concerned.

In his turn, the Bao Dao preserves the same secrecy, and after familiarizing himself thoroughly with the contents of the files sent to him, makes a

draft of all the required conclusions based on religious laws in order to present them to the Thuong Pham who has the responsibility of defending the issue. The Bao Dao is the director of the offices of the Thuong Pham.

The Thuong Pham and his four Zodiacal Dignitaries must swear an oath of impartiality during the exercise of their functions.

WHO IS THE THUONG SANH?

DIRECTOR IN SECULAR AFFAIRS

Materials have their own life just as vegetables do, and animals and birds, and humans. They are all creatures of God which include DIVINE spirits, which are in the process of evolution, incarnated spirits, and devilish spirits. Divine spirits have existed since the creation of the universe.

Incarnated spirits are in the process of evolution, which have moved from the stage of vegetable and animal beings to reach the level of humanity. Devilish spirits are divine and incarnated spirits, which become involved in a path of vice and plunge into the state of demons because of their evil actions.

Among all these creatures; the human beings occupy the highest rank, and, what is more, from the temporal point of view humans are the most

evolved. In creating the third amnesty, the aim of our Divine Master is to lead all spirits, divine, incarnated, and devilish to the rank of human beings. The divine spirits experiencing their purgatory, the devilish spirits repenting of their evil actions, and the incarnated spirits progressing in their evolution, must be converted by the Thuong Sanh. He is the master of the secular affairs. He has control of all the secular laws and rules to guide all living beings into the gate of the Great Way.

He may present a formal complaint before the religious court against all those dignitaries who impede the faithfuls as they move along the Great Way, and he may ask for sanctions against them. He is the president of the hall of accusation.

DIVINE TEXT: *The Thuong Sanh is concerned with the temporal life of the Great Way.*

COMMENTARY: Under his command he has four Zodiacal Dignitaries:

The Tiep The (Temporal Legislator)

The Khai The (Temporal Reformer)

The Hien The (Temporal Renovator)

The Bao The (Temporal Conservator)

Everything which involved the temporal life of the Great Way is the concern of the Thuong Sanh. His four Zodiacal Dignitaries have the same function as he does when they represent him to fulfill their

temporal mission, but they have distinct area of concern.

The Tiep The (Temporal Legislator) receives all suggestions about temporal rules, and all complaints against the dignitaries, whatever the rank of those accused; he is to convey these complaints to the Khai The (Temporal Reformer).

The Khai The tries to discover the cause of all these complaints, and if the charges brought have a significant base, first he is to notify the Cuu- Trung-Dai of the importance of the affairs, and secondly he is to inform the Ho-Phap who convokes the Hiep-Thien-Dai for the decision. Upon the approval of the Hiep-Thien-Dai the Khai The will convey all documents to the Hien The (Temporal Renovator).

In his turn, the Hien The opens a complete investigation to see all the witnesses and proofs involved with the accusations, and directs the whole matter to the Bao The (Temporal Conservator) with a detailed report. The Hien The is forbidden to communicate with the Hien Phap (Juridical Renovator) and/ or the Hien Dao (Religious Renovator). Once they have been put into the hands of Hien The, all affairs become secret, even to the Hiep-Thien-Dai.

The Bao The is the Director of the offices of the Thuong Sanh.

The Thuong Sanh symbolizes the temporal

realm, that is to say, of humanity. Thus wherever the symbol of humanity is found, Thuong Sanh must be there.

He has the right to control the dignitaries in their public relations, their virtues and their duty, and he may ask for the dismissal of any who fail to match the loftiness of their apostolic mission. In rank, he is on the same level as the Censor Cardinal (Chuong Phap) of the Cuu-Trung-Dai.

The Hiep-Thien-Dai has the legislative power, but the Thuong Sanh fills an administrative role. Therefore, the Thuong Sanh is embodiment of the Cuu-Trung-Dai at the Hiep-Thien-Dai.

Thuong Sanh and his four zodiacal dignitaries of the temporal affairs must swear an oath of impartiality during the exercise of their functions.

Aside from the dignitaries whose powers are decided by the Supreme Master, there are other members of the Hiep Thien-Dai who are under the authority of the Ho-Phap, such as the "Bao Van Phap Quan" (Conservator of Arts and Literature), the "Bao Sanh Quan" (Conservator of Public Relief), the "Bao Hoc Quan" (Conservator of Education). Other positions of the academy are not yet established. The Ho-Phap is expecting the filling of those positions.

DIVINE TEXT: *I advise you to maintain your impartiality in your functions. Do not forget that*

anyone who has great power has a heavy burden of responsibility.

COMMENTARY: This admonition from our Divine Master is the basis for the Pope Li-Tai-Pe's requirement that all the dignitaries of the Hiep-Thien-Dai should swear an oath of impartiality during the exercise of the duties. And to indicate the greatness of their power, the Pope gives to each of them a belt of command. Wherever they may be, when they wear this belt to carry out their duties, dignitaries and adepts must obey them in every detail. On receipt of legislative power from the Hiep-Thien-Dai, all dignitaries must likewise swear an oath of impartiality. The "Bao Van Phap Quan" (Conservator of Arts and Literature) must also swear an oath.

CEREMONIAL DRESS OF THE HIEP THIEN DAI DIGNITARIES (HEAVENLY UNION PALACE)

THE CEREMONIAL DRESS OF THE HO PHAP

COMMENTARY: The ceremonial dress of the Ho Phap includes 2 ceremonial vestments, one for the big ceremony and one for the small ceremony.

For the big ceremony, the Ho Phap dresses in a uniform like an old style marshal. He wears a high gold headdress (Kim Khoi), the top of which ends in a shape of "Tam Son" (Three Mountains) and looks like a trident, as a symbol of his power of command over the Three Heavens of the West of the Nirvana (Tay Phuong CUC LAC).

Over his armour he wears an apron, which allows the left side of his armour to be exposed. On the side of Thuong Pham (spiritual side), his right hand holds the staff "Giang Ma Xu". (Rule over Evil), which symbolizes the temporal controlling the spiritual, while on the side of Thuong Sanh (temporal side) his left hand holds the string of beads called "Tu Bi" (Mercy) which symbolizes the spiritual controlling the temporal. This means that the Ho Phap holds the power over both spiritual and temporal affairs. Around his waist is the three colored belt of command (yellow, sky blue, and red) which symbolizes his great power over the union of the three ancient doctrines and over the temporal procedures and the mystic procedures. Its knot lies right in the middle of the abdomen.

For the small ceremony, the ceremonial vestment is made of yellow silk (the symbol of Buddhism). He wears a headcovering called "Hon Nguon Mao" (cosmo-genesis or world creation) which is 10 cm high. On the front of this headdress, the three signs of the three ancient doctrines are

embroidered: the "Binh Bat Du" (Charity Bowl of Sakya Muni), the "Phat Chu" (Whisk of Purification), and the Book "Xuan Thu" (Spring and Autumn). Above these three signs is the character "Phap".

On his feet are the "Vo Uu" shoes. They are white and the character "Phap" is also on the toes. Around his waist is the three colored belt of command just like the one worn with the ceremonial vestment for the big ceremony.

The Ho Phap wears the ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony when he presides over the religious tribunal, and wears ceremonial vestment for the big ceremony only when he is to sit on his throne.

THE CEREMONIAL DRESS OF THE THUONG PHAM, DIRECTOR IN SPIRITUAL AFFAIRS

COMMENTARY: The Thung Pham also has 2 ceremonial vestments, one for the big ceremony and one for the small ceremony.

The ceremonial vestment for the big ceremony is made of white silk, and over it is worn a sky blue

chasuble which has an edging of silver-white thread. On his feet are the Vo Uu shoes.

They are white and the character "Dao" (Spiritual) is on the toes.

Around his waist is the belt of command, like the one worn by the Ho Phap, with the knot on the right side. His right hand holds the "Long Tu Phien" (Fan of Exteriorisation) made from thirty-six linked white crane feathers. At the top of this Fan is the "Phat Chu" (the Whisk of Sanctification).

When considered mystically, the "Long Tu Phien" has the spiritual power to bring forth completely the spirits who are released from the flesh, and to send them to the thirty-six heavens of Nirvana.

In his left hand he holds the string of beads called "Tu Bi" which symbolizes the presentation of the Great Way to the Ho Phap.

The ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony is also made of white silk, with the belt of command similar to the one in the ceremonial vestment for the big ceremony. The headdress is a "Hon Nguon Mao" in white, like the one worn by the Ho Phap. On the front of headdress is embroidered the Fan called "Long Tu Phien" which the character "Dao" (Spiritual) above it. The Thuong Pham wears the ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony when he goes before the religious tribunal and wears the

ceremonial vestment for the big ceremony when he is to sit on his throne.

THE CEREMONIAL DRESS OF THE THUONG SANH, DIRECTOR IN SECULAR AFFAIRS

COMMENTARY: The Thuong Sanh also has 2 ceremonial vestments, one for the big ceremony and one for the small ceremony.

The ceremonial vestment for the big ceremony looks like the one worn by the Thuong Pham. On his head, he wears the "Thanh Can" (headdress made of sky blue silk which covers the head), and around his waist is a band of red silk called "Than Thong" (knowledge of spirituality).

Like the Ho Phap and Thuong Pham, he wears the belt of command around his waist with its knot on the left. The "Thu Hung Kiem" (Sword of Elevation) is at his back, and it symbolizes the presentation of the temporal realm to the Ho Phap, and his left hand holds the string of beads called "Tu Bi" which symbolizes the offering of the Great Way to humanity.

He wears white Vo Uu shoes with the character "The" (Temporal) on the toes.

The ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony is like the one worn by the Thuong Pham, except that on the front of the headdress are embroidered the "Thu Hung Kiem" and the "Phat Chu" with the character "The" above them. Around his waist is the tricolored belt of command.

The Thuong Sanh wears the ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony when he goes before the religious tribunal and wears the ceremonial vestment for the big ceremony when he is to sit on his throne.

THE CEREMONIAL DRESS OF THE "THAP NHI THOI QUAN", THE TWELVE ZODIACAL DIGNITARIES

The twelve Zodiacal dignitaries of the Hiep Thien Dai also have 2 ceremonial vestments, one for the big ceremony and one for the small ceremony.

COMMENTARY: The ceremonial vestment for the big ceremony is made of white silk with an askew collar edged with silver-white thread. On their heads they wear the white silk mitre of the bonze superiors. Around his waist they wear the tricolored belt of command, with its knot in the middle, on the right or on the left, depending on the branches Phap, Dao or The that they belong respectively to.

They all wear white Vo Uu shoes.

The ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony is likewise made of white silk. They all wear the belt of command. Their headdress are like the one worn by Ho Phap, Thuong Pham, and Thuong Sanh respectively embroidered with the . characters "Phap", "Dao", or "The", depending on their functions. They wear white V o Uu shoes.

The twelve zodiacal dignitaries wear the ceremonial vestment for the small ceremony when they carry out their functions, and the ceremonial vestment for the big ceremony in major ceremonies.

THE CEREMONIAL DRESS OF THE "BAO VAN PHAP QUAN", CONSERVATOR OF ARTS AND LITERATURE

COMMENTARY: The ceremonial vestment worn by the "Bao Van Phap Quan" is made of white silk. On his head he wears the "Nhut Nguyet Mao" (1) which is like the one worn by the zodiacal dignitaries of the Hiep Thien Dai, and has a five-petalled lotus flower on each side. On each lotus flower the "Divine Eye" is embroidered. In front of the fold right in the center, the headdress is decorated with another lotus flower, but this one does not have the

Divine Eye. The headdress has three lotus flowers in all.

Around his waist he wears "Bach Tuyet Than Quang" (2) which is 3.33 m long and .333 m wide. This belt is knotted at the front in the form of a five-petalled lotus. On his feet are white Vo Uu shoes with a small lotus flower on the toes.

THE CEREMONIAL DRESS OF THE "BAO SANH QUAN": PROTECTOR OF PUBLIC RELIEF

COMMENTARY: The ceremonial vestment for the Bao Sanh Quan is made of white silk. On his head he wears the "Nhut Nguyet Mao" like the one worn by the zodiacal dignitaries. On the front of this headdress, 3 to 4 cm high at the point, is embroidered the "Divine Eye". This is also embroidered on each side, so that there are three embroideries of the Divine Eye on this headdress.

A white silk belt is knotted around this headdress. Two meters long and 8 cm wide, it is called Tien Bang (Belt of the Saints), and the two ends fall over the shoulders and allow the "Divine Eye" to be seen in between.

Around the waist is worn a "Song Quang Than Thong" (3) that is a white silk belt which forms two

mystic circles on the thighs. On his feet he wears white Vo Uu shoes.

(1) According to the spirit messages received on March 13, 1931, the explanation for this headdress is as follows: "The circle which rests on the head represents the sun, while the shape of the crescent symbolizes the moon. So this headdress is called "Nhut Nguyet Mao" (Nhut: sun, Nguyet: moon, Mao: headdress).

(2) Bach Tuyet Than Quang (Light of the snow pure spirit). Belt made of very fine gauze

(3) Song Quang Than Thong: Double luminous ray of the perispirit and of the spirit.