



Cao Dai Religion and Transnational Religious Innovation in Modern Vietnam: Conjugating Chinese Redemptive Societies and French Occultism

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Abstract

Caodaism, or Cao ĐàiĐaiĐạo Tam KỳPhổĐộ (the “third great way of salvation”), is the third religion of Vietnam with growing congregations in diasporic Vietnamese communities around the world. Caodaism is an indigenous religion of Vietnam that appeared in the 1920s under the French colonial presence. The founders are a group of both Vietnamese civil servants and Taoist masters. Before the impending end of the world, Caodaists have the responsibility to save humanity through conversion, encouraging Vietnamese patriotism and the overthrow of the French colonial rule. When we look at the broad picture of Caodaism – a mass-conversion religion appeared in Cochin China during the French colonial period – a question comes to mind: are we looking at a unique historical phenomenon or at one expression of a longer, less historically determined type of religious movement? The purpose of this lecture is to examine the categories of “occultist culture” and “redemptive societies” as objects of study and their usefulness for the study of Vietnamese religion, for the history of modern Vietnam, and for the sociology of religion in general.

Speaker's Profile



Dr Jeremy Jammes is a social anthropologist and has completed his PhD research on Caodaism in 2006. He has recently published the book *Les oracles du Cao Dai. Etude d'un mouvement religieux vietnamien et de ses réseaux* (Les Indes savantes, 2014). Between 2010 and 2014, he served in Bangkok as Deputy Director, Head of Publications, and Strategic adviser of the Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC, CNRS-MAEE), for which he has (co-) edited three regional outlooks on contemporary Southeast Asia geopolitics. He currently serves as Associate Professor of Social Anthropology at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam - Institute of Asian Studies.