

THE NEW CANONICAL CODES

(TAN LUAT)

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Preface

All human beings have to recognise what is over our heads. The infinite space over our heads is Heaven / Troi. The Supreme Being who rules this infinite space is the Creator, ***Ngoc Hoang Thuong De*** (The Celestial Emperor), the Supreme Head of all the Universe and of the Cosmos.

Today, the Creator has come under the name of ***CAO-DAI TIEN-ONG DAI-BO-TAT-MA-HA-TAT***, to found in Vietnam, through miraculous spiritism, a true Religion of high moral value to save human beings from the reincarnation cycle. This Religion is called ***DAI-DAO TAM-KY PHO- DO*** (Great Way/Great Religion for the Third Amnesty/Salvation).

The Celestial Emperor, in his great love for human beings, comes at our salvation, He calls himself MASTER, and calls us DISCIPLES.

Consequently, we must respect and adore the Creator from the bottom of our heart; and must bring all our faith to His miraculous Religion.

The principle/aim of the Great Religion consists in synchronising the teachings of the three main Religions - Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism - into One. Therefore in following the Great Religion/Caodaism (*Dai-Dao*), we must observe the basic principles of the three Religions to cultivate (to improve and purify) ourselves by strictly following the three duties (*tam cang*) and the five essential virtues (*ngu thuong*) of Confucianism, the three obligations (*tam qui*) and five prohibitions (*ngu gioi*) of Buddhism, as well as the striving to unify the three jewels (*tam buu*) and the five elements (*ngu hanh*) of Taoism.

Whoever is able to fulfil the three teachings is ready to attain the level of the *Than* (Genie-Spirit), *Thanh* (Saints), *Tien* (Immortals, Archangels), and *Phat* (Buddhas).

Chapter I

HIERARCHY OF RELIGIOUS DIGNITARIES

Article 1: - The highest rank is the *Giao-Tong/Pope*, the eldest brother. He (*Giao-Tong*) has the right to represent God (*Thay*) to guide all the believers in the Spiritual Way (*Dao*) and in the Temporal Way (*Doi*). He has control over bodies, but no control over souls.

The *Giao-Tong/Pope* is allowed to communicate with the Thirty-Six Heavens, and Seventy-Two Planets to beg for the sanctification of the souls of all believers.

All the believers must obey Him (*Giao-Tong*).

Article 2: - Next, there are three *Chuong Phap/Legislative Cardinals* belonging to the three branches: *Nho/Confucianist*, *Thich/Buddhist*, *Dao/Taoist*.

The three Legislative Cardinals have the right to examine the religious laws before their promulgation, whether they come from the *Giao-Tong/Pope*, or are proposed by the *Dau-Su/Cardinals*. If the two groups are not in agreement, the Legislative Cardinals must submit the law to the *Ho-Phap* who will take it to the Sanctuary of the Divine Alliance (*Hiep-Thien-Dai*) where he will call on God for modifications to be made.

The three Legislative Cardinals have the right to check the prayer books and other works before they are distributed and propagated. If they find works which are harmful to good habits (traditional morals) they must forbid the publication.

Each *Chuong-Phap/Legislative Cardinal* has his particular seal. The three seals must appear together on each law to make each law applicable.

The *Chuong-Phap/Legislative Cardinals* must dissuade *Giao-Tong* and correct His mistakes. If they find his mistakes serious, they have the right to bring them to the Holy See as a lawsuit.

Article 3: - The three *Dau-Su/Cardinals* of the three branches have the right to direct the believers, spiritually and temporally.

They have the right to enact laws, but they must submit them for the approval of the *Giao-Tong/Pope*. They must respectfully obey the Pope's orders and instructions. If a law is contrary to the existing practices of the general group of believers/humanity, they (the three Cardinals) can demand its repeal.

If a law set down by the *Giao-Tong/Pope* is the subject of a unanimous rejection signed by the three Cardinals, it must be returned to the Pope, who will hand it back to the *Chuong-Phap/Legislative Cardinals* for reexamination.

The three *Dau-Su/Cardinals* are endowed with the three seals, one for each; for the validity and implementation of any document it must have the imprint of all three seals.

Article 4: - There are thirty-six *Phoi-Su/Archbishops* divided into three branches, twelve for each. There are three *Chanh-Phoi-Su/Principal Archbishop*.

The three Principal Archbishops can substitute the *Dau-Su/* Cardinals, but cannot ask for the repeal of the law.

Article 5: - There are seventy-two *Giao-Su/Bishops*, twenty-four for each branch. The *Giao-Su/Bishops* are responsible for the spiritual and temporal education of believers.

The *Giao-Su/Bishops* are to care for the believers the way Elder Brothers do for Younger Ones.

The *Giao-Su/Bishops* keep all records of the believers. They must be concerned about the marriage and death of each believer.

In large towns *Giao-Su/Bishops* have the right to preside over religious ceremonies the way that *Dau-Su/Cardinals* and *Phoi-Su/Archbishops* do.

The *Giao-Su/Bishops* have the right to present requests with the aim of suppressing or modifying laws which are harmful to the believers/humanity.

The *Giao-Su/Bishops* must be close and helpful to all believers as they are brothers/sisters in the same family.

Article 6: - The *Giao-Huu/Priests* have the mission of propagating the true God's Way/Religion. They have the right to request modification of the religious laws, and to preside over ritual ceremonies in the small province Oratories/Temples/*Thanh-That*. There are three thousand *Giao-Huu*, a thousand for each Branch. This number must be neither increased nor decreased.

Article 7: - The *Le-Sanh/Student Priests* are chosen from among the well behaved believers/sub-dignitaries to celebrate ceremonies. They have the right to preside over the ceremonies for the installation of an Altar in the home of every adept. To become dignitaries, it is necessary to occupy the rank of *Le-Sanh/Student Priest*.

Article 8: -

- The *Dau-Su/Cardinals* are promoted to the rank of *Chuong-Phap/Legislative Cardinals* by a vote among three of them.

- The *Phoi-Su/Archbishops* are promoted to the rank of *Dau-Su/Cardinal* by a vote among thirty-six of them.

- The *Giao-Su/Bishops* are promoted to the rank of *Phoi-Su/Archbishops* by a vote among seventy-two of them.

- The *Giao-Huu/Priests* are promoted to the rank of *Giao-Su/Bishops* by a vote among three thousand of them.

- The *Le-Sanh/Student-Priests* are promoted to the rank of *Giao-Huu/Priests* by a vote of all *Le-Sanh/Student-Priests*.

- *Chuong-Phap*/Legislative Cardinals and *Dau-Su*/Cardinals can be candidates for the Papal Throne/*Ngoi Giao-Tong*. They must be elected through the universal vote of the Adepts.

All the dignitaries must submit to this law election except in the case where the Supreme Being appears Himself through a spirit seance to choose His Elected One.

The above rules which are used to form the *Hoi-Thanh*/ Sacerdotal Council, are teachings from Divine/God's messages.

Chapter II

ON BELIEVERS (THOSE OBSERVING THE WAY)

Article 9: - Anyone who wishes to enter the Religion/Caodaism has to be introduced by two followers of outstanding moral rectitude to the head of the parish. The two respondents must take charge of the education of the new disciple and guide him/her in the path of ethics and morality

Article 10: - The local Temple (Holy House, *Thanh-That*) is then responsible for administering the oath-taking ceremony for the new disciple, who must be registered the same day and immediately swear an oath in front of the God's Altar in a *Thanh-That* (local Temple, Holy House).

The new believer must learn by heart the prayers and understand the religious laws promulgated by The Great Way (*Dai-Dao*).

Article 11: - The Head of the Parish or the representative dignitary must come and perform the initiation ceremony to bless the new disciple's home and to install God's Altar.

Article 12: - Once baptized (*nhap mon*), the new adherent is called a believer (*Tin Do*). The believers are classified into two categories:

1.- Those who live with their families (non-married and married persons) and earn their living as ordinary people. However they must observe a vegetarian diet for six or ten days a month, must follow the Five Prohibitions/*Ngu Gioi Cam*, and obey the Secular Laws/Rules of the Secular Life/*The-Luat* promulgated by the Great Way (*Dai-Dao*). These are called believers keeping the Way, belong to the lower category/secular order/*ha thua*.

2.- Those who observe a full-time vegetarian regime, free themselves from killing and follow the Four Commandments/*Tu Dai Dieu Qui* are classified in the higher category/superior order/*thuong thua*.

Article 13: - Among the lower category/*ha thua*, those who observe ten days or more of vegetarian diet (per month) will obtain the Mystery of the Deliverance/Absolution Ceremony/*Buu-Phap* (at the time of their death), and can be admitted into a meditation house/*tin-h-that* to receive and practise esoteric training/mystic meditation.

Article 14: - Dignitaries of the Religious Administration with the rank of Priest/*Giao-Huu* and above must be selected only from among believers in the higher category/*thuong thua*.

Article 15: - Those who belong to the higher category/*thuong thua* must grow a beard and long hair. They must wear simple dress of white cotton material only or the colour assigned to their branch. They must be frugal and never indulge in luxuries.

Chapter III

ESTABLISHMENT OF A PARISH

Article 16: - Any local area having more than 500 believers is authorized to establish a Parish/*Ho Dao* with a *Thanh-That* (Temple, Church, Holy House) which is led by the authority of a dignitary.

Article 17: - Parish/Parishes can be established only with the permission and authority of the *Giao-Tong/Pope*.

Article 18: - The parishioners must obey the order of the Dignitary, Head of the Parish, and strictly follow his guidance/teachings without offence.

Article 19: - Twice a month, the first and the fifteenth day of the lunar calendar, the believers must meet at the *Thanh-That* (Temple, Holy House) of the local area to attend the ceremony and listen to the teachings. Exception can be made for those with reasonable excuses.

Article 20: - The Dignitary who is Protector/Keeper of the *Thanh-That* (Holy House, Temple) must practice four daily ceremonies (daily services). The ceremonies must be celebrated on time at 6 a.m. (*Thoi Meo*), 12 p.m. (*Thoi Ngo*), 6 p.m. (*Thoi Dau*), and 12 a.m. (*Thoi Ty*).

The bell must be rung before beginning the ceremony. The believers may (or may not) take part in the ceremonies as they wish.

Chapter IV

THE FIVE PROHIBITIONS

Once converts of the Religion (baptized), believers must cultivate themselves by improving their behavior and observing five prohibitions:

- 1- Do Not Kill.** It is forbidden to kill living beings.
- 2- Do Not Steal.** It is forbidden to commit robbery, banditry, to pilfer, to take goods without authorization, to cheat, to borrow without returning, or to store stolen goods, to appropriate objects dropped in the street, to covet the goods of others, to wish ill to others for one's own interest, or cheat in gambling.
- 3- Do Not Commit Lewd Acts.** It is forbidden to commit adultery, to fall into debauchery, to encourage others to act immorally, to entertain immoral or indecent thoughts at the sight of beautiful persons, or to seduce by speech. (Relations between spouse are not considered to be lewd acts).
- 4- Do Not Indulge in the Use of Alcohol or a luxurious life style.** It is forbidden to abuse the drinking of alcohol and the eating of meat; over eating and drinking causes disorder of physical body and spirit and disturbing public tranquillity. It is also forbidden to expect or covet unusual drinks and rich foods.

- 5- Do Not Lie.** It is forbidden to use false words, to speak falsely, or to boast in order to deceive others. It is forbidden to expose another person's faults, to turn wrong into right and vice-versa; to malign, to defame, to talk ill about other people, to incite people to anger or hatred, or to bring matters to public trial; to swear or use vulgar language; to curse other people; to blaspheme religion; to renege on a promise.

Chapter V

THE FOUR GREAT COMMANDMENTS

The Caodaists must improve their behavior, and cultivate themselves by observing the four great commandments:

- 1-** Obey the teachings given by the superiors/higher ranks, listen openly to words and advice given by an inferior. Caodaists should use civility as the basis for dealing with others, recognising their own faults and repenting sincerely.
- 2-** Do not flaunt your talents or qualities in pride and haughtiness; be humble and efface yourself in the service of others. Caodaists should help and guide others into the God-Path. They should not be revengeful, nor should they hinder virtuous and wise persons.
- 3-** Be accurate in money matters; receipts and expenses must be clear. Do not borrow without paying back. Do not be impolite and discourteous to the higher ranks/superiors. Higher ranks, in teaching the lower ranks/inferiors, must do so with civility. Lower ranks, in advising or approaching the higher ranks, must not be lacking in deference and respect.
- 4-** Be sincere, consistent in both the presence and absence of others. Do not be respectful in the presence of individuals and then insult, condemn, or offend them in their absence. Do not remain aloof without trying to reconcile co-believers who do not agree with one another or are in conflict. Do not appropriate public materials for private use. Do not act out of personal interest to the detriment of public interest. Obey the Laws and Rules. Do not cling to your personal opinion and oppose the higher ranks/superiors, or be uncivil to the lower ranks. Do not use authority to repress the talents or abilities of others.

Chapter VI

ON EDUCATION

Article 23: - Schools will be organized in the Religion to give religious instruction and general education.

Article 24: - The pedagogy and the management of the school will follow special regulations.

Article 25: - Only believers who have a graduation certificate from the school can later qualify as candidates for the functions of dignitaries of the Religion.

Chapter VII

SANCTIONS

Article 26: - Believers who have committed minor misdemeanours (mistakes) will be judged by the Head of the Parish by way of counselling, warnings, and punishment by having the believer to kneel in front of God's Altar and recite the prayer of repentance.

Article 27: - Serious errors or recurrent mistakes will be referred to a Discipline Council (*Hoi Cong Dong*) for judging. The Discipline Council composed of a Cardinal (*Dau-Su*) or an Archbishop (*Phoi-Su*) of the Religious Branch to which the delinquent belongs, and two dignitaries of the two other Branches as assessors. This Council has the right to excommunicate the delinquent believer.

Article 28: - In the secular/temporal life, if there are disagreements and conflicts between/among the parishioners, they must be referred to the Head of the Parish for solution.

Article 29: - Dignitaries who commit infractions of the Laws and Regulations of the Religion must appear before the *Toa Tam Giao* (Court of the Three Religions) for judgment.

Article 30: - The *Toa Tam Giao* (Court of the Three Religions) comprises of the *Giao- Tong* (Pope) as President, the three *Chuong-Phap* (Legislative Cardinals) as assessors. The *Dau-Su* (Cardinal) of the Branch to which the delinquent belongs acts as prosecutor. A dignitary of *Hiep-Thien-Dai* (Legislative Body) acts as a defense lawyer.

Article 31: - This Court has the power to sanction demotion in rank or excommunication.

Chapter VIII

ON THE PROMULGATION OF THE LAW AND REGULATIONS

Article 32: - From the day of its promulgation, believers are given six months to conform to the provisions of the Code.

Exceptions:

- 1) Those who work at professions involving violation of the Code must change their profession within a year's time.
- 2) Dignitaries do not yet observe a full vegetarian diet have up to two years to train themselves to it and to conform to the rule.

Beside the codes which are already changed and improved by Divine Master/God and which believers must follow, former codes (old ones) are still in effect.

Secular Rules

(Laws for the Secular Life of the Faithful)

Those who are admitted to the Religion must follow the following secular rules:

Article 1: - Having studied the Religion / Way with the same Divine Master (God), the believers must considered themselves as children of the same father. They must love one another; maintain

good relations among themselves, help each other, treat each other honestly, mutually guide one another in both spiritual life (Religion Path) and temporal life (secular Path).

Article 2: - Once having entered to the Religion, one should forget previous hatreds. Believers must avoid acts of jealousy, of competition, of conflict and actions involving lawsuits. Mutual tolerance must be practiced in order to live in harmony and peace. If there is discord, the believers involved have to be open-minded and accept the reconciliation of the Head of the Parish.

Article 3: - The three duties (*tam cang*) and the the five essential virtues (*ngu thuong*) of Confucianism which are the fundamental rules of conduct for humankind must be observed. Men / Males must show filial piety, loyalty, politeness and courtesy, honesty and integrity. Women / Females must maintain their dependence on their father, husband and children; and they should be hardworking, show care for their appearance, speak well and have good manners.

Article 4: - In relating to the public the believers should practice and maintain an attitude of flexibility, honesty, respect, and modesty without condescension.

Article 5: - Among co-religionists, good relations must be promoted to strengthen the bonds of fraternity. Believers who belong to the secular order must remember funeral and wedding occasions.

Article 6: - Marriage is a very important act in life. One's spouse should be chosen from among one's co-religionists, except in the case when the future spouse agrees to convert.

Article 7: - Eight days before the date of wedding ceremony, the head of the groom's family must put a notice of the marriage at the *Thanh-That* (Holy House, Temple) to prevent any possible problems.

Article 8: - After the marriage ceremony (at home), the families of both groom and bride have to go to the *Thanh-That* (local Temple) to receive the Baptism of Marriage (marriage approval ceremony).

Article 9: - After this Code is published, it will be forbidden for the faithful to take concubine(s). In case of widowhood, remarriage is allowed. If the wife is sterile and without a child, the Divine Master allows the husband to marry a second wife. However it is only accepted when the first wife herself will be in charge of the wedding.

Article 10: - The couple is not allowed to get divorced, except in the case of adultery or the lack of filial piety to parents.

Article 11: - The newborn child should have a godmother and a godfather who will take care of him/her in case he/she becomes an orphan.

Article 12: - Preferably at the age of a month, or during the following months if necessary, the child should be brought to *Thanh-That* (Temple) to receive the Baptism (*Le Tam Thanh*) and to be registered in the birth records of the Religion.

Article 13: - Parents must send their children aged from six to twelve years old to school for general and religious education.

Article 14: - When a fellow believer passes away, the faithful of the Parish should come to help and comfort the family of the defunct.

Each parish should have its own cemetery.

Article 15: - The head of the parish, once he was requested by the mourning family, must call a meeting with other co-believers in the parish to hold the ceremonies for the Repose of the Soul of the defunct (*cau sieu*) in conformity with the *Tan-Luat* (New Canonical Codes). He will accompany the burial to the tomb.

Article 16: - Burials should not be expensive or lavish. Do not keep the body of the defunct for many days. Do not use vivid colours. The colour white should be used. Big banquets should not be given as it may diminish the austere, grave and sad character of the occasion.

Article 17: - For the offerings made to the defunct, do not use meat, one can bring more merit to his/her soul by offering vegetarian food. The rites and music are not forbidden, but the rites and music prescribed by the *Tan Luat* (New Canonical Codes) must be used.

Article 18: - The ceremonies for the Repose of the Soul of the defunct (prayers for the ascension of the spirit, *cau sieu cho vong linh*) which are *tuan cuu* (nine times, once every nine days), *tieu tuong* (281 days after the date of death, short mourning period), and *dai tuong* (581 days after the date of death, long mourning period) can be held at the local Temple. The believers, if invited, should come in to say their prayers.

Article 19: - If an unforeseen accident befalls an adherent, the co-believers of the parish must, according to their means, help and support him/her through the difficult period.

Article 20: - After the promulgation of this New Code, the believers should not engage in a job which involves the killing of animals, or a job contrary to good morals. They should not write or publish obscene novels, or sell any alcohol, spirits and opium.

If anyone has been doing those jobs, he/she should stop and find a different job.

Article 21: - The believers should dress simply and economically according to their situation. It is recommended to dress in cotton and avoid silk.

Article 22: - If a believer violates one or more of these codes, the other believers who know must try to advise the person and persuade him/her to repent. If he/she does not listen to the counsel given, the matter must be brought to the attention of the head of the parish who will find a solution.

Article 23: - If someone repeatedly violates or does not give up incorrigible behaviour and bad karmic deeds, the person concerned must be excommunicated. The other faithful must no longer consider him/her as a co-religionist.

Article 24: - *Hoi Cong Dong* (A Discipline Council) consists of a *Dau-Su* (Cardinal) as president, and two dignitaries of the two other branches as assessor. Is authorized to deliver the sentence of excommunication, if asked to do so by the head of a Parish. This order will be posted at the local Temple (*Thanh-That*) so that all the faithful will know about it.

The House of Meditation

(Cloister, *Tinh-That*)

The *Tinh-That* (The House of Meditation, Cloister) is a House of Calm where the believers can reside to receive esoteric training. Believers who would like to enter a House of Meditation/*Tinh That*, have to conform the following regulations:

- **Article 1:** The believers who have completely fulfilled their social obligations (the moral duties toward humanity), and have practised a full-time vegetarian diet for at least six months can be admitted to a *Tinh-That* (House of Meditation, Calm) to practise Meditation and Detachment.

- **Article 2:** Anyone who would like to enter a *Tinh-That* (House of Meditation) must be introduced by a more virtuous co-religionist and seconded by another co-religionist.

- **Article 3:** It is forbidden to have relations or written communication with people from the outside. Parents (close relatives) are accepted, once expressed approval is received from the Head of the *Tinh-That* (House of Meditation).

- **Article 4:** It is forbidden for persons from the outside to enter a *Tinh-That* (House of Meditation, Cloister), whether they be functionaries or Dignitaries of the Religion, co-religionists, or relatives of the cloistered person.

- **Article 5:** It is forbidden to talk with people from the outside, except with one's parents and one's own children, after the permission of the Head of the House has been granted.

- **Article 6:** After being admitted to a *Tinh-That* (House of Meditation, Cloister), the cloistered person has to abstain from chewing betel, and smoking, and can eat nothing in addition to his given meals.

- **Article 7:** In the House of Meditation (*Tinh-That*), one's spirit/soul must be maintained in calm, and one's conscience must be serene. All must live in peace and harmony with others and not speak loudly. One must be hard working and work well, helping and guiding each other in the path of Virtue.

- **Article 8:** Believers in a House of Meditation must obey the orders of the "Head of the House", and strictly follow the schedule for the cultivation of esoteric training.

- END -