

## Caodaism

Third Amnesty of God or Đại-Đạo Tam-Kỳ Phổ-Độ, also known as Caodaism or Caodai Religion, is an endogenous religion founded in South Vietnam in 1926 by God through spiritist séances via trained individuals. God had established the Religious Constitution and the New Code for the Caodai religion and all Caodaist adepts must respect and obey them. However, the Vietnamese Communist Party has forced Caodaist disciples to follow its policies and to abandon the Religious Constitution established by God and laws and traditional rituals of the Sacerdotal Council of the Caodai Tayninh Holy See in effect prior to April 1975. Caodaism calls for unity, love, justice, peace, freedom, democracy and respects for all faiths.

Prior to the fall of the Republic of Vietnam in April 1975, all religious activities of Caodaism were managed by three Councils: Popular Council, Sacerdotal Council and Superior Council. They had the power to make or modify religious laws/rules, and the combined power of the three Councils was equal to God's power. All laws/rules must be ratified by the three Councils, who then submitted them to the Supreme Being for final approval. All positions of Caodaist dignitaries must be approved by God and Divine Spirits through spiritist séances.

In 1979, the Communist regime disbanded the Sacerdotal Council of the Caodai Tayninh Holy See; dissolved all Caodai Religious Administrations from the central to local levels; and established the Governance Council (Hoi Dong Chuong Quan) under the government's control. Forty of the 46 religious real estates of Tayninh Holy See were confiscated. The government then established the Caodai the Governance Council and appointed Communist Party members to run it. The new Governance Council modified Caodai's canonical laws and traditional rituals, control all religious activities, photocopies of religious materials...

### **Phu My, Binh Dinh - September 2012**

At 8am on September 16th, some 30 members of the local office of the Pro-government Caodai Governance Council, which was setup by the Government, attempted to take over Phu My Temple in Binh Dinh Province, which still belonged to the independent Caodai Church. They were accompanied by agents of the local Government and Public Security Police of Phu My, Binh Dinh and hired thugs. They found in the temple some ten members of an independent Caodai sect, who refused to acknowledge the said pro-government Caodai Governance Council and wanted to maintain the traditional rituals in worshipping. Several of the attackers poured gasoline on a young Caodaist and were about to set him alight when another attacker intervened. The attackers eventually took over the temple.

### **Go Cong Tay, Tien Giang – July 2013**

On July 3, 2013, about twenty (20) Caodai followers and independent clergy members who conserve their traditional worshipping practices of the pre-April 1975 period gathered for a religious ceremony at the Long Bình Caodai Temple, Gò Công Tây District, Tien Giang Province. This temple was among the few still administered by independent Caodai followers. With the support of the Public Security Police and “thugs,” members of the local office of the pro-government Caodai Governance Council used a truck to knock down the front gate of the temple. They then used batons, clubs and rocks to assault the faithful who defended their temple. The attackers took over the temple.

### **Bau Nang, Tay Ninh September 2013**

On Sept. 12, 2013, Caodai followers and clergy members gathered for a ceremony to establish an altar at the home of Ms. Ta Thi Thu Nga at ap Ninh An, xa Bau Nang, huyen Duong Minh Chau, Tinh Tay Ninh following their religious tradition but in defiance of the People’s Committee’s ban. They were beaten up by hundreds of “thugs” in the presence of the public security police who surrounded Ms. Ta Thi Thu Nga’s home.

### **Chau Thanh, Vinh Long – November 2013**

On 03 November, 2013, a ceremony was held at the home of Sub-dignitary Nguyen Kim Lan, 191/8A, Lo Ren Street, Block 1, Ward 4, Vinh Long City, to commemorate the passing away of Student Priest Thai Kim Thanh, the late Chief of Religious District of Chau Thanh, Vinh Long. This was the ninth such annual commemoration, in accordance to the tradition of the Vietnamese people, which has been kept through the ages, in the memory of ancestors and also to honor those who contributed to society or religion as well as those who served humanity -- a tradition that all Vietnamese people know about and respect. However, officials of the government, the public security police of Ward 4, and the police of the City of Vinh Long came in a large contingent. They disrupted the memorial service because, citing Decree 92, it had not been pre-approved by the local government.

### **Vinh Long City, Vinh Long – January 2014**

Caodai clergy members and followers held a memorial service for Mrs. Ngo Thi Thanh Dao, 42 years old (at the time of her death), on January 5, 2014 at the house of Mr. (Subordinated Subdignitary or Thong Su) Le Ngoc Thuan, Mrs. Thanh’s younger brother-in-law. Mrs. Ngo was the sister-in-law of Mr. Le. She suffered terminal breast cancer and passed away on November 22, 2013. The police soon showed up and disbanded the mourners, citing Decree 92. The same police interference took place at the follow-up memorial service on January 14, 2014.

### **Vinh Long City, Vinh Long -- June 2014**

At 8:00 am on 5th of June 2014, the independent Caodai practitioners were peacefully gathering at the home of Sub-dignitary Nguyen Kim Lan in Vinh Long City, Vinh Long Province, Vietnam to listen to Sub-dignitary Hua Phi. Soon government officials and police agents showed up along with members of the pro-government Governance Council. They demanded that the meeting must be pre-approved by the government. As the Caodaists objected to this unlawful demand, the police showed a letter from the head of the government-controlled Governance Council to excommunicate Sub-dignitary Hua Phi.

### **Lam Dong – July 2014**

Invited to a meeting of the Inter-Faith Council of Vietnam and twenty Civil Society Associations to be held on 4th of July, 2014 at Lien Tri Pagoda, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam. At 11:30 pm on 3rd of July, 2014 when Sub-dignitary Hua Phi had just left his home at Bong Lai Hamlet, Hiep Thanh Village, Duc Trong District, Lam Dong Province, Central Vietnam, for about 700 meters, when the traffic police blocked his car to verify his car ownership and driver license; they took them both. They then called in almost 20 people including traffic police, public security agents and officers of hamlet, of village, of district and of province to keep Sub-dignitary Hua Phi by all means from leaving the town for the meeting. The police then summoned Mr. Phi to their station for questioning.

### **References**

Caodaiism – An endogenous religion, a distinct culture, October 2013

Caodai – Phu My Incident Report – September 2012

Caodai – Bau Nang Incident – September 2013

Caodai – Chau Thanh Incident Report – November 2013

Caodai – Vinh Long Incident Report – January 2014

Caodai – Vinh Long Incident Report – Jun 2014

Caodai – Lam Dong Incident Report – Jul 2014

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