



The Changes in the Religious and Belief Life of Vietnamese People in the Current Period: From Practice to Policy

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Article History

Received: 29.09.2022

Accepted: 07.11.2022

Published: 13.11.2022

Abstract: The cause of national renewal under the Communist Party of Vietnam's leadership has been over three decades. Among the great and historically significant victories of the doi moi cause, it is impossible not to mention the victories in theoretical thinking and religious policies of the Party and the State of Vietnam. This study focuses on analyzing and explaining the changes in the religious and religious life of Vietnamese people today; the process of renewing awareness to reforming religious policies of the Party and the State of Vietnam; several discussion issues that need further clarification on Vietnam's beliefs and religion policy in the period of international integration; at the same time, propose several solutions to improve the policy of belief and religion; correct orientation of Vietnamese people's belief and religious activities in the process of Vietnam's international integration.

Keywords: The changes, the religious and belief life, practice, policies, Vietnam today.

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INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is a multi-faith and multi-religious country [1-3]. According to incomplete statistics, Vietnam has about 95% of the population with religious and religious life (among thousands of beliefs, the most popular are ancestor worship and Mother Goddess worship) [3-5]. Up to now, the country has about 45,000 belief establishments, of which there are more than 2,900 relics associated with belief and religious establishments, a number of which are recognized by UNESCO as a world heritage [6]. Every year, Vietnam has nearly 13,000 festivals, including 5 types: folk festivals, revolutionary history festivals, religious festivals, festivals imported from abroad, cultural - sports, and industry festivals [6].

Particularly in religion, Vietnam has more than 26.5 million followers (accounting for 27% of the population), and 43 organizations of 16 religions

are recognized or certified by the state for operation registration. The whole country currently has more than 57.4 thousand dignitaries, over 147,000 positions, and more than 29.6 thousand places of worship. The number of followers of the current religions is about: Buddhism: 15.1 million; Catholic: 7.1 million; Cao Dai: 1.1 million; Protestant: 1 million; Islam: 80,000; Hoa Hao Buddhism: 1.3 million, the rest are other religions (Pure Land Buddhist Association, Four An An Hieu Nghia, Brahmin, Buu Son Ky Huong, Minh Su Dao, Minh Ly Dao, etc.) [6].

During the struggle for power in the two resistance wars, in the construction of socialism, and in the current renovation period, with the right and flexible policies, our Party has attracted and gathered many people. patriotic religious groups participated, contributing to the glorious miracles in the nation's history [7, 8].

Citation: Tran Thi Thao Hien (2022). The Changes in the Religious and Belief Life of Vietnamese People in the Current Period: From Practice to Policy. *Glob Acad J Humanit Soc Sci*; Vol-4, Iss-6 pp- 199-206.

In that process, the Party's religious policy has made many strides, especially from the 90s of the twentieth century onwards. With that innovation, religious life in Vietnam has become more and more stable, with many bright spots [9, 10]. However, hostile forces are always looking for ways to destroy our country's revolution by taking advantage of religion. Researching the process of awareness and development of the Party's thinking on religion also contributes to defeating the enemy's plots against the Vietnamese revolution.

After 36 years of national renewal, the Party and the State of Vietnam have inherited, developed, and supplemented views on religion derived from Vietnamese revolutionary practice, the international context, and theoretical development. Marxist; In the process of renewing views and awareness towards religion, religious policies and religious work are constantly improving, people of all religions are an essential resource in the cause of national construction and defense.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Actual Situation of Beliefs and Religious Activities of Vietnamese People

Vietnam is a multi-faith and multi-religious country. According to incomplete statistics, Vietnam has about 95% of the population having a religious life (among thousands of beliefs, the most popular beliefs are ancestor worship and Mother Goddess worship). Up to now, the whole country has about 45,000 belief establishments, of which there are more than 2,900 relics associated with belief and religious establishments, some relics recognized by UNESCO as world heritages [6].

Vietnam has nearly 13,000 festivals, including 5 types: folk festivals, historical-revolutionary festivals, religious festivals, festivals imported from abroad, cultural sports, and industry festivals. Particularly in religion, Vietnam has more than 26.5 million followers (accounting for 27% of the population), and 43 organizations of 16 religions are recognized or certified by the state for operation registration. The whole country currently has more than 57.4 thousand dignitaries, over 147,000 positions, and more than 29.6 thousand places of worship. The number of followers of the current religions is about: Buddhism: 15.1 million; Catholic: 7.1 million; Cao Dai: 1.1 million; Protestant: 1 million; Islam: 80,000; Hoa Hao Buddhism: 1.3 million, the rest are other religions (Pure Land Buddhist Association, Four Kinds of Hieu Nghia, Brahmin, Buu Son Ky Huong, Minh Master Dao, Minh Ly Dao, etc.) [6].

With the right religious policy, respecting and ensuring everyone's right to freedom of belief

and religion, the right to follow or not to follow a religion, and equality before the law [11], Vietnam has achieved many achievements in ensuring everyone's right to freedom of religion, the number of dignitaries and positions [12], and worship establishments are increasing; the large scale of belief and religious activities [13]; authorities at all levels ensure security and order, fire prevention, food hygiene and safety for religious activities attended by a large number of people and foreign tourists, etc. [14, 15]. Specifically, people of faith and followers of religions are free to express their faith at home, at a place of worship, or at a group site registered with the government.

Religious organizations may operate in accordance with their charters and regulations, and are provided with favorable conditions for printing and distributing religious scriptures and books; upgrading and building new worship facilities; expanding the scale and form of living; strengthening and expanding international activities... The recognition of religious organizations in accordance with the law has received the approval and support of the people and the appreciation of the international community.

For example, in Muong Nhe district, Dien Bien province, where the majority of H'Mong are Protestants, in the past 4 years alone, 70 Protestant groups have been granted registration for living, while 16 are not yet registered. registration granted. Giang Hong Sinh (H'Mong ethnic group, Sima 2 village, Chung Chai commune) in charge of evangelization of the Protestant group site in Muong Nhe district, Dien Bien province said: "These four years are much different from the previous six years. Religious activities are facilitated, and people have a basis to concentrate. Before, when they were not registered, parishioners mainly lived at home. The country grants a living permit and is free to evangelize the laity" [7]. Also according to Mr. Giang Hong Sinh, every Sunday of regular activities, in a spacious and spacious wooden house, relatives together exchange economic ways such as planting fruit trees, raising cattle, and even hygiene measures in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic; together happily singing hymns, listening to sermons on godly devotion, patriotism, love for people, law observance, etc. [15, 16].

As for religious groups that have not been recognized by the organization or have not been granted operation registration, the local authorities still guarantee freedom of religious activities for believers at home, and meeting points. registered with the authority or legal place as prescribed by Law [15, 17]. Currently, there are hundreds of group sites that have been granted registration for

concentrated religious activities, including groups of foreigners [6, 18].

As of 2020, the Central Highlands region currently has about 580,000 Protestant followers of 33 Protestant organizations, denominations, and groups living in 311 branches, 183 churches, and more than 1,700 group points approved by local authorities. grant registration for concentrated religious activities. In the northern mountainous region, there are about 250,000 Protestants living in 14 branches and more than 1,600 group points, of which the local government has granted registration for concentrated religious activities to nearly 800 group points [7, 8].

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Son, Chief of the Standing Office of the Government's Steering Committee on Human Rights, emphasized that Vietnam passed the Law on Belief and Religion on November 18, 2016. The law has had a positive impact on belief and religious life in Vietnam, creating a solid legal corridor to ensure the exercise of people's right to freedom of belief and religion [3, 17]. Their religious activities are also very convenient [9, 19]. If before, the time of concentrated activities of Protestant groups must be from 20-25 years or more, now, it only takes 5 years of continuous and regular activities, plus a number of other conditions to be posted. sign. And thanks to solidarity, there is no religious conflict in Vietnam. Religions live in harmony and stick together with the nation. Dignitaries, and followers of religions actively participate in social movements, charity, hunger eradication, and poverty reduction, making practical contributions to the development of the country.

According to the statistics of the Government Committee for Religion [6, 7], the policies of the State of Vietnam also promote good cultural and moral values and the resources of religion for the process of land development. country. In recent years, religious organizations have actively participated in socializing activities in health, education, and humanitarian charity, making significant contributions to social security work, reducing the burden on the State [6, 20], specifically: Establishing over 450 medical facilities; nearly 1,300 schools, preschool classes, over 50 vocational training institutions; 800 social protection facilities take care of orphans, disabled children, lonely elderly, mental patients, HIV/AIDS. In addition, religious organizations have accompanied the Government in the prevention of COVID-19 through material donations (money and in-kind) with a total value of tens of billions of dong. Typically: The Vietnam Buddhist Sangha supports the Central Committee of the Vietnam Fatherland Front 5 negative pressure rooms for the treatment of COVID-

19, worth 3.5 billion VND; the Social Charity Committee, Bishops' Conference of Vietnam to support the epidemic area of Vinh Phuc province with masks, hand sanitizer, vitamin C; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Days donated 50,000 masks worth 300 million VND, etc [7, 21].

Guidelines and Policies of the Communist Party of Vietnam Towards Beliefs and Religions

In 1986, Vietnam began to carry out the renovation of the country. By 1990, the Communist Party of Vietnam had a change in its policy towards religion through Resolution No. 24-NQ/TW, dated October 16, 1990, of the Politburo of the Party Central Committee (the VI term). "On strengthening religious work in the new situation". After 13 years of implementing the policy of changing lips towards religion, summarizing practice, and considering emerging issues, in the context of many important changes in the domestic and world context, on March 12th- In 2003, the Party Central Committee (IX term) issued Resolution No. 25-NQ/TW on religious work. The document has become the foundation of the policy of the Party and the State of Vietnam towards religion in the doi moi period. The ideas of Resolution 25 are expressed through the following main contents:

Religious activities and religious work in the new period must aim to strengthen the unity of people of all religions in the great national unity bloc, bring into play the synergy of the whole nation, and successfully realize the cause. Industrialization and modernization of the country, firmly building and defending the Fatherland [22-24].

Belief and religion are the spiritual needs of a part of the people who are and will exist with the nation in the process of building socialism in Vietnam. Religious compatriots are part of the great national unity bloc [25, 26]. Consistently implementing the policy of respecting and ensuring the right to freedom of belief, to follow or not to follow a religion, and the right to normal religious activities in accordance with the law. Religions operate within the framework of the law and are equal before the law.

The Party and State of Vietnam consistently implement the policy of great national unity without discriminating on grounds of belief or religion. Uniting compatriots of different religions; unite religious compatriots and non-religious compatriots. Great national unity with the goal of a rich people, a strong country, and a just, democratic and civilized society is the common ground to unite people of all religions with a common cause. All citizens, regardless of creed or religion, have the right and obligation to build and defend the Fatherland [22, 25, 26]. Encourage the compatriots to uphold the

patriotic spirit, the sense of defending the independence and reunification of the Fatherland; through the good implementation of socio-economic, security, and defense policies, ensuring the material and spiritual interests of the people in general, including people of all religions [19].

Preserve and promote the positive values of the tradition of ancestor worship and honor those who have made meritorious services to the Fatherland and the people [27, 28]. Discrimination against citizens for reasons of belief or religion is strictly prohibited. At the same time, it is strictly forbidden to take advantage of beliefs and religions to conduct superstitious activities, operate contrary to the law and policies of the State, incite division of the people, divide ethnic groups, cause trouble, and infringe upon the State's policies national security [29].

Religious work is the responsibility of the whole political system, related to many areas of social life and many levels and branches for the spiritual and material life of tens of millions of followers, dignitaries, and monks of different religions, distributed in all regions, regions, and localities throughout the country.

All believers have the right to freely practice their religion at home and at lawful places of worship according to the provisions of law [1, 11]. Religious organizations recognized by the State may operate under the law and are protected by law, conduct religious activities, open schools to train dignitaries and monks, publish scriptures, and preserve and repair, build their own religious worship facilities in accordance with the provisions of law [3, 17, 21]. Evangelization, as well as all other religious activities, must comply with the Constitution and the law; must not take advantage of religion to propagate false religions, conduct superstitious activities, and must not force people to convert to or abandon religion [25, 26].

The document of the 10th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (April 2006) continues to affirm: "Religious compatriots are an important part of the great national unity bloc [28]. Consistently implementing the policy of respecting and ensuring citizens' right to freedom of belief, following or not the following religion, and the right to normal religious activities according to the law, religious people and non-religious compatriots, life, good religion" [30, 31]. Legitimate religious organizations operate according to the law and are protected by law. materials and culture of people of all religions Strengthening the training and retraining of religious cadres Struggling to prevent superstitious activities and acts of taking advantage

of beliefs and religious teacher harming the common interests of the country, violating the right to religious freedom of citizens" [31].

In the document of the 13th National Congress of Deputies (January 2021), for the first time, our Party directly mentioned the contents of religion and religious work in a comprehensive and focused manner with a large volume compared to previous congresses. Of the 10 documents presented in 02 volumes of the document, there are 04 documents that directly address the content related to religion, which emphasizes: "Promoting positive and humane factors in religions, beliefs. Criticize and prevent negative, superstitious and superstitious expressions"; "Mobilizing, uniting and gathering religious organizations, dignitaries and believers to live a "good life and a good religion" to make active contributions to the cause of national construction and defense. To ensure that religious organizations operate according to the law and their charters and charters are recognized by the State. Promote cultural values, good ethics, and resources of religions for the development of the country. Resolutely fight and strictly handle those who take advantage of religion to oppose the Party, State, and the socialist regime; divide and destroy religious unity and great national unity" [32].

Some Issues to Discuss

We have made great strides in institutionalizing the rights to freedom of religion and belief of the masses and the activities of religious organizations. It is also the first time since 1991 that our State has shown its determination to build a socialist rule of law state in the field of religious management by issuing a series of regulations, decrees, directives, announcements, and announcements. private, etc. [6, 33] and the highest peak so far is the Law on Belief and Religion [35]. It can be said that these series of legal documents have vividly demonstrated the innovation in thinking about religious policy. Some points can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, the relationship between the State and religions, rather, religious organizations (Church, Congregation, Board of Trustees, Parish Council...) has been fundamentally improved in the direction of legislation. A model of a secular Marxist state, essentially an atheistic secular state designed by President Ho Chi Minh from Decree 234 (1955), is now evident. This model proved to be suitable for religious life in Vietnam, was welcomed by many religious people and the general public, and was initially recognized by the world. On all three stages of following the religion, practicing and managing the way has been institutionalized and is basically consistent with reality.

Second, the relationship between "religious activities" and "religious work" is also better resolved. This relationship is not simple because "religious activities" are the vital interests of religious subjects, while "religious work" is a matter of state management.

Our state clearly understands past experiences, when the interaction between the two subjects "religious activities" and "religious work" took place at times unfavorable, leading to conflicts and mutual annihilation.[7, 8, 16]. Here, Ho Chi Minh's thoughts as well as our Party's views on the exploitation of similarities and social consensus are of great significance. The direction of "Keeping the independence and unification of the Fatherland for the rich people, strong country, fair, democratic and civilized society" is still a beacon of light for religious work [16, 17].

Third, apply the experience of national and international history to the Law on Religion, to institutionalize the rights and obligations of the whole people, first of all, the religious community is more and more appropriate. This is also a new feature in the current religious policy of our State, directly creating an atmosphere of excitement among dignitaries and followers of religions [18, 9].

In recent years, not only for Catholics and Buddhists - the major religions with special positions in the religious system of our country, our Party and State have had the right policies, but with many For other religions, we also have flexible policies in line with reality [6]: with Cao Dai Dao, it has recognized the legal status of 9 sectarian organizations; With Hoa Hao Buddhism, there were also bold decisions to recognize the organizational model of the Board of Directors (Central - All-Catholic and grassroots levels) [19, 20]. It is the same with Islam. In particular, our Party and State have made bold and continuous decisions to fundamentally solve the "Protestant problem" in recent years in our country. It is the policy of gradually "normalizing" the Protestant problem in Vietnam.

It can be said that the renewal of thinking on the religious policy of our Party and State in recent years has brought great results in making a decisive contribution to creating social stability and a picture of religious activities. Buddhism in Vietnam has more and more bright spots. However, in the coming years and for a long time, hostile forces will always find ways to take advantage of religious issues to oppose the Vietnamese revolution. But it can be said that the trend of Vietnamese religion accompanying the nation and socialism is irreversible.

Some Recommendations

In order to continue to renew our thinking about religion and religious work, we have a number of issues below:

We have recognized that religion is still a social reality, and it can even go hand in hand with the nation and with socialism. Our theoretical thinking must take another important step, another "breakthrough" thesis that, in order for religion to be able to adapt to socialism, it must give it capacity and authority. legal personnel) to participate more actively in a number of appropriate social fields, contribute to the construction and development of the country, and satisfy the legitimate needs of religious life - needs in line with the "Rich people, strong country, fair, democratic and civilized society".

Religion in our country today has been undergoing changes and profound and new impacts in all aspects. In order to continue to renew thinking on religious issues, it is necessary to adapt more to this. It is necessary to overcome the "nineteenth and early twentieth century" religious view in which religion and politics are often identified. Thinking about religion today needs to be more open, toward the humanistic, cultural, and spiritual aspects of people. Moreover, it is necessary to see the new movements of religion in the context of globalization, first of all, the change of the religious system, in which there have appeared new and unprecedented types of religions. "marginal religion", "individual religion", "religion of parallel beliefs", etc.

With the major religions that have become traditional, we also need to study new and progressive theological trends, exploit their positive aspects, and at the same time limit to eliminate the tendency to take advantage of religion. hostile political intrigues: encouraging secularization goes hand in hand with vigilance against de-secularism.

Better settle the relationship between the State and the churches. Over the past years, we have made many achievements in this regard, because our Party soon thoroughly grasped Ho Chi Minh's thought, firmly grasped the national characteristics and national factors of the Vietnamese revolution, avoiding the part of the Vietnamese revolution. major errors and omissions of the leftist tendency on religious issues in the international communist and workers' movements.

Especially since 1990, for the first time, our Party has shifted the religious issue from the category of internal affairs to the category of mass mobilization work, creating a new situation that has been well received by people of all religions and

created an atmosphere the atmosphere is more exciting and favorable for State relations with religious organizations.

The key issue for continuing religious innovation is to put this relationship in question of the rule of law. Along with the renewal of thinking and perception, it is necessary to continue to perfect the law on religion, to implement more effectively the reform guidelines and policies of the Party and State [19, 24].

Continuing to innovate on religious law, in our opinion, in the immediate future, it is necessary to focus on the following two points:

Firstly, it is necessary to further perfect the secular state model and promote its effectiveness.

In the immediate future, it is necessary to aim at both goals of the institutionalization: while continuing to improve the legal entity for "recognized" religions, and at the same time gradually solving the "respect for religions" clause. other", that is, taking into account the recognition of legal status for the remaining religions, etc. [24] Furthermore, in addition to institutionalizing religious freedom rights for citizens and religious organizations, there should be clearer provisions on the legal responsibilities of religious organizations and individuals religion.

Second, it is necessary to improve the law on religious individuals. Even though the Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions has been established, it is an important step forward, it cannot be said that this complex fundamental problem has been solved. - The recognition of religious legal status - especially for a multi-religious country like ours - has many social and legal meanings. Through the past two political riots in the Central Highlands (February 2001 and April 2004) related to "Protestant issues", it shows which locality does a good job of "juridical person" that is the main factor. taking advantage of the problem of Protestantism ("Dega Protestant"), there is no land for development.

Better deal with international relations of religions. In the context of "religious globalization", the international element is bolder and more diverse (removing old boundaries and creating new ones). Moreover, the religion of our country since 1975, the international factor has become more prominent among the Vietnamese (there are about 50,000 Buddhist followers abroad with over 200 temples, about the same number of Catholics with dozens of newspapers, publishers, etc.). First of all, it is necessary to solve important issues such as diplomatic relations with the Vatican, international Protestant organizations, and the integration of

Muslim countries in Southeast Asia (ASEAN) with Buddhism. neighboring countries and overseas Vietnamese religious communities.

The training and retraining of staff engaged in religious research, teaching, and management need to be further strengthened and synchronized, and open. At the same time, pay attention to the area of training of religious managers [21, 22]. It is necessary to invest and pay more attention to basic research on Religion, the History of Religion as well as issues of religious law and State management of religion [24]. Because only good basic research can have a solid scientific basis for continuing innovation in religious policy. There is a need for more appropriate policies to publish information related to religious issues, especially international academic activities on religion.

CONCLUSION

Changes in belief and religious life and new perceptions of religion and religious policies of the Communist Party of Vietnam today continue to be supplemented and developed on the basis of respecting the right to freedom of belief. , the religion of the citizen; is the spiritual need of a part of the people and the core of religious work is mass mobilization; is the responsibility of the whole political system. With these important views, the religious life in Vietnam is increasingly stable, and religious compatriots raise their common sense in the work of building and defending the socialist country.

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