

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology  
of Egypt / Egyptology

RELIGIOUS POLICY AND FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY AT  
VIETNAM

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**Nguyen Van Dao<sup>1</sup>, Vu Hong Van<sup>2\*</sup>; Religious Policy and Freedom of Religious Activity at Vietnam-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(9). ISSN 1567-214x**  
**Keywords: Religious policy, religious activities, innovation period, Communist Party, Vietnam**

**ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on analyzing religious policy and religious activities in Vietnam since "Innovation" (1986). This study shows that there has been a fundamental change in the state's policy towards religions, the state creates all conditions for religions to operate in accordance with the law, associate religion with the daily life of the people. This study also analyzes religious trends in Vietnam in the new period, such as the trend of the secularization of religion, the trend of religious modernization, emerging religious phenomena, religious ways newly formed and characterized of new some religious phenomena. The author then asserted the need for both theoretical and practical research on religious trends and policies in the new situation, the positive and negative factors of religious trends, the need continue to amend and amend religious policies, contributing to improving the policies of the Communist Party and the State of Vietnam on religion, ensuring democracy and equality in religious activities in Vietnam.

## 1. Introduction

Innovation is a revolutionary choice for Vietnam's development goals that began in 1986, which is an important turning point in Vietnam's development process. After 30 years of overcoming great challenges and difficulties, conducting renovation in all aspects: politics, economy, society, etc. up to now, Vietnam has sufficient grounds to affirm that It is the right choice, which has put Vietnam in a new trajectory of development in terms of quality, in line with the trend of the times and with the wishes of the people. Responding to the people's deepening and self-renewal of innovation, the country's ability to effectively access and integrate into the life of the international community with great and comprehensive results. The face of innovation is clear and convincing evidence of the historical necessity of the innovation process in Vietnam. In the process of innovation, many of Vietnam's policies have been adjusted to suit the new situation of the country and the rapid changes of the world in the context of globalization, one of the most important policies change and gradually improve is a religious policy. At the same time, before the impact of globalization has appeared many new religious trends in Vietnam.

In all of these versions, there are those variants that regard the process as a quite recent development and others that locate its beginnings decades and sometimes centuries in the past. There are also differences of opinion as to whether the process is generally good or mostly bad. Much of the literature is in fact quite critical, seeing the global as a kind of homogenizing imposition on the local, a development in which the strong, overtly or insidiously, presume their ways upon the comparatively weak, dominating or excluding the latter (Murray, 2006). A further approach to globalization, however, looks at this contrast of the global and the local differently, laying less stress on homogenizing economic and political institutions that impose themselves from above and rather more on local and global movements (Gowan, 1999). Networks and international organizations that also contribute to making the world more of a single place, sometimes parallel to the more hegemonic institutions, sometimes in consonance with them, sometimes even in express opposition them (Wolf, 2004).

The dialogical approaches to globalization, in conjunction with those that stress globalization from below, are of special significance when it comes to the topic of religion (Peter, 2005). Many people believe that religion is a sensitive issue and often overlooked, rarely mentioned (Scholte, 2000; Thompson & Woodward, 2000). By far the greatest portion of the by now a vast literature on globalization completely or almost completely ignores religion, the partial exception being the attention that Islam cist political extremism receives (Peter, 2005). Consideration of the relation between religion and globalization involves two basic possibilities. There are, on the one hand, religious responses to globalization and religious interpretations of globalization. These are, as it were, part of doing religion in a globalizing context. On the other hand, there are those analyses of globalization that seek to understand the role of religion in globalization and the effects of globalization on religion (Peter, 2005).

Facing such an inevitable trend, every country, whether high or low, has to integrate and find its own place in the inevitable flow of history (Hau, 2006). For Vietnam, due to its characteristics in the East-West exchange area, besides the two great civilizations are India and China, the process of exchanging and receiving international influence takes place early and has the specific characteristics in the process of international integration (Hung, 2004). Currently, Vietnam is subject to significant impacts of globalization on all aspects of social life, including religious life. In fact, the movement, transformation, and development of religious life in Vietnam are closely linked with the movement and development of social, closely linked to the trend of globalization. In the context of many changes, Vietnam's religious policies had to be changed to suit the new situation while still maintaining political stability and social order.

The study of the impact of globalization on religion and the changes in Vietnam's policies in recent years is a difficult and difficult task to determine accurately. However, the results that this article brings will partly shed light on the religious trends in Vietnam before the impact of globalization and the changes in religious policy of the Vietnamese state in the new situation.

## **2. Literature Review**

Vietnam is a country with many beliefs and religions coexisting for a long time in the history of the nation. Although the faith, doctrine, and worship of people of different religions have similarities in national spirit, patriotic traditions, cultural traditions and always accompany the nation in the past revolution of national liberation as well as in the current cause of national construction and defense. Therefore, in the process of leading the revolution, our Party and the State of Vietnam have always affirmed the consistent policy and policy of respecting and ensuring the right to freedom of belief, religion, and freedom of religious beliefs ethnic minorities (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2001, 2006, 2011 & 2016). Resolution of the XI Congress of the Party (2011) affirmed: "Respect and ensure the people's right to freedom of belief, religion and no religious beliefs in accordance with the law". Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (2013), Article 24 stipulates "1. Everyone has the right to freedom of belief, religion, following, or not following any religion, etc. 2. The State respects and protects the right to freedom of belief and religion. 3. No one may violate the freedom of belief or religion or take advantage of beliefs or religions to violate the law". This is a very important legal basis for our people to exercise equal rights in the policy of religious freedom according to the principles: equality of beliefs, equality of rights and obligations (religious obligations, civil service), and legal equality.

Not only stopping at perfecting the legal system, but the Government of Vietnam has also concretized and brought these regulations into reality. Up to now, according to statistics (Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2019), the country has 12 religions with 38 state-recognized religious organizations operating within the legal framework (2 times higher than 2006),

with more than 100,000 dignitaries and monks, nearly 26,000 worshipping facilities, and over 30 million followers, accounting for one-third of the country's population. In which, Buddhism 14 million, Christians 6,1 million, Protestants 1.5 million, CaoDai nearly 3.55 million, HoaHao Buddhism 1.56 million, Pure Land Buddhists 1.54 million, TuAnHieuNghia 79,000 and Islam 68,000, etc. Particularly in the Central Highlands, in 1975 there were only 50,000 people/200 villages, Protestant villages, up to now, more than 550,000 people/185,000 villages and villages. In addition, the study and formation of religions have also developed rapidly. From only 23 Buddhist colleges and secondary schools (1993), up to now, the country has 4 Buddhist institutes and 49 Buddhist colleges, intermediate and primary schools; the Catholic Church has 6 major seminaries with thousands of seminarians, etc. Not only that, but the State has also facilitated hundreds of monks to study and improve abroad and many have become a doctor of Buddhism. The printing and publishing of scriptures are of interest to the State. Most religious organizations have newspapers, magazines, and newsletters, meeting the requirements of religious activities. The Religious publishing house alone is licensed to publish more than 1,000 religious publications each year. Every year, there are about 8,600 religious and belief festivals held at different scales nationwide; in which, the major events of all religions are facilitated by the authorities at all levels to organize and the leaders of the Party, State, and localities are interested, encouraged and congratulated (Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2019).

In 2012, the 25th Anniversary Ceremony of the Establishment of the Vietnam Buddhism Church was held with the participation of thousands of monks and nuns, Buddhists in the country and over 2,100 dignitaries and devotees from many countries and regions territory. In addition, the external relations of religions are also facilitated and expanded by the State, especially relations with religious organizations in Southeast Asia, Western Europe, and the Vatican. stretching, contributing to making international friends better understand the policy of freedom of belief and religion of the Party and State as well as the situation of freedom of beliefs and religions of Vietnam.

The above-mentioned figures are vivid evidence refuting distorting claims and fabrications about the religious situation in Vietnam. Try asking that, if Vietnam discriminates against religion, limits and suppresses religion, violates freedom of belief and religion like the claims that the hostile forces often claim, then the religious organizations in Vietnam. Can Nam Lieu locate and develop stably as at present; the religious picture in Vietnam cannot be that rich or diverse? Mr. Jonhen, the traveling ambassador in charge of American religious freedom who came to Vietnam once had to say, "Vietnam has made remarkable progress in promoting religious freedom". Sharing this view, US Senator Jim Oep - Chairman of East Asia - Asia - Pacific Subcommittee under the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee during the recent meeting with Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung evaluated: although still there are also personal views on a few specific things related to religious freedom in

Vietnam, there is no denying the progress made in religious freedom that Vietnam has made, especially from 1991 to present, etc.

It should be seen that belief, religion is a cultural, ideological issue, its movement and development associated with socio-economic development conditions, history, ideology, culture of each nation, nation, so it is not possible to copy the religious “standard” of the country, this nation for another nation, and even more cannot be imposed according to the subjective will of a certain subject from the outside. Moreover, the religious organization is still essentially a social organization, including many believers of different ages, levels, backgrounds, etc. operating and existing within the legal framework certain; therefore, it is also a normal thing for some religious believers to violate the law to be dealt with on the path of development. However, it is unacceptable to take advantage of that to falsely accuse the government of religious persecution as it is for Vietnam. Even in Western countries, considered the “most democratic countries”, sects operating against the law are also severely punished, is it an act of persecution of religion?

### **3. Research Content**

#### **3.1. Religious Policy of Vietnam**

Over 30 years of renovation, along with the changes of many religious policies and policies of Vietnam, they have been adjusted to suit the new situation of the country and the world (Van, 2019). The exchange and interference between nations and ethnic groups facilitate the formation of diverse religions in Vietnam with the interwoven existence of traditional, endogenous and exogenous religions (Thang, 2018). Religious beliefs also change (Van, 2019); the phenomenon of transition from polytheistic beliefs to monotheism or from traditional and endogenous religions to exogenous religions (Hung, 2004). Along with the change of beliefs, the religious practices in Vietnam also have many changes under the impact of globalization (Hau, 2006). The development of social networking sites not only helps people connect with each other anytime, anywhere, making the world more flat and virtual, including religious spiritual life (Thompson, 2000). Internet and information technology have become the most effective means for religions to introduce, disseminate and promote images, to the spiritual life of the people. In this context, there have been changes in Vietnam’s religious policy as well. After more than 30 years conducting the renovation of the country, the Party and the State of Vietnam constantly renewed awareness of religion and state management in the field of religion and belief (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016). This is the foundation to formulate guidelines and policies, create favorable conditions for religious activities and beliefs of the people who have religious and improve the efficiency of state management in this field.

The Politburo’s Resolution 24 (1990) “On strengthening religious affairs in the new situation” for the first time affirmed new perspectives on religion and beliefs: i) religion is still a problem that is long term; ii) beliefs and religions are the spiritual needs of a part of the people; iii) religious morality has many

things to do with the building of a new society. From here, the state management in the field of religion and belief is also oriented: i) both pay attention to solving the religious needs of the masses in a timely manner, and promptly fight against the abuse of religion; ii) the core content of religious work is the mobilization of the masses; iii) religious work is the responsibility of the entire political system.

In the next directives and resolutions, the Party's theoretical thinking on religious issues continues to be supplemented and completed: Politburo's Directive 37 (1998) clearly stated: "Cultural values, good religious morality is respected and encouraged to be promoted". Resolution of the 5th Conference of the 8th Central Executive Committee (1998) on "Building an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with national identity", encourages the idea of fairness, charity, good, etc. in religion. In particular, Resolution No. 25 of the 7th Central Committee Conference of the Communist Party's 11th Congress (2003) summarized and developed the Party's theoretical thinking on issues of religion and religious affairs in the period degree of socialism in our country. Accordingly, new awareness on religious issues during the transition to socialism focused on the following main contents:

Firstly, acknowledge the existence of religion during the transition to socialism. This is a particularly important issue, clearly expressing the Party's views on religious issues during the transition to socialism. From the viewpoint of "religion is a long-standing issue" to Resolution 25, the Party has more clearly affirmed, "religion is and will remain with the nation in the process of moving up socialism." This, on the one hand, concretizes the "long-lasting" view of religion, but develops and clarifies the relationship between religion and nationalism and socialism in Vietnam; on the other hand, overcomes subjective ideology, idealism, which religion will quickly disappear in the process of building socialism.

Secondly, religion and beliefs are the spiritual needs of a part of the people (Communist Party of Vietnam 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016). This view is particularly important in renewing the Party's theoretical thinking on religion (Hung, 2004). In the past, religion had only limited access from philosophical and political ideologies, with the classical definition "religion is the opium of the people" (Mark, 1970, p. 224); beliefs are often associated with customs, superstitions, etc. now, religious beliefs have been recognized as a part of national history, culture and morality and moreover, it is the social entity that has the ability to consolidate the community and stabilize social order and safety (Communist Party of Vietnam 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016). This new perspective lays the foundations for the management of the authorities and socio-political organizations, showing interest and to ensure the close interests of the people of all religions in satisfying their needs of a healthy and legitimate religious life, similar to the guarantee of other human rights such as food, clothing, and shelter, residence, human rights, democracy, etc.

Thirdly, acknowledge and encourage the promotion values of religion in the building of a new society. The religion in the process of existence and development always reveals both positive and negative sides (Hung, 2004). Previously, due to the need for the revolution to focus on the task of national liberation in the condition that hostile forces took advantage of religion to oppose the revolution, we often emphasized the negative aspect of religion, such as cynical ideology, lulls people (Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2012). According to the Party's innovative viewpoint (2011 and 2016), besides the limitations that need to be overcome, it is necessary to respect and promote the positive values of religion, including the positive aspects of morality and religious culture (Hun, 2004). Religion has the function of regulating human social behavior, directing people to the foot, the good and the beautiful (Van, 2020). Believers of religion with the belief in the supreme and eternal life after death, fear of punishment or "retribution" for committing crimes or do evil should often have good acts of moral conduct (Hung, 2004). Doctrine and canonically of the religion, has created ethical norms leading people to do good deeds, to avoid evil, to cultivate virtue in order to be liberated (Buddhism), to go to heaven (Christianity, Islam). Religions not only "sanctify" moral norms, but also create social opinion to adjust the behavior of believers towards good and eliminate evil (Nicos, 2012). Thus, religious morality contributes to the regulation of human social behavior. The reality shows that, in places of religious stability, with a large number of followers, the social evils are less, the order is more stable and the moral lifestyle is more orderly (Hung, 2004).

Fourthly, preserve and promote the positive values of the ancestor worship tradition, honoring those who have contributed to the Fatherland and the people (Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2018). This view is completely new and creative in our Party's theoretical thinking on the issue of belief and religion (Thang, 2018; Van, et al, 2020). For the first time, the connotation of religion is officially mentioned in the Party's document (2001). In the minds of Vietnamese people, worshipping ancestors, honoring people with meritorious services to the people, with water is not only a form of belief but also a morality of "drinking water to remember the source" of the nation (Anh, 2005; Van, 2017 and 2019). The Party's recognition of the good values of the ancestor worship tradition, honoring the people with meritorious services to the Fatherland and the people is very important, contributing to orienting the religions and beliefs in the field. On the other hand, promote the positive values of the ancestor worship tradition, are also important factors to meet the needs of the spiritual, spiritual and psychological life of the people (Hung, 2004). Besides promoting the positive values of the ancestor worship tradition, honoring those who have meritorious services to the people and the country, the Party (2006, 2011 and 2016) also pointed out that we must respect the law and prohibit discrimination against citizens for religious reasons; It is strictly forbidden to abuse beliefs and religions to operate in contravention of the law and State policies, to instigate division of people, national division, disruption, and national security.

The reality shows that the renewal of the Party's thinking on religion and belief has created the foundation for creating guidelines, policies and laws of the State, creating favorable conditions for religious activities religious, beliefs the effectiveness of state management in this area (Hau, 2006; Thang, 2018; Van, 2020). The new laws and decrees on religious beliefs promulgated in 2016 2017, 2018 and 2019 are great steps in the legalization of religious issues in the new situation. However, there are still many unresolved issues that require the formulation of policies and laws on beliefs and religions that need to be supplemented and perfected by all levels and branches in the coming time.

### **3.2. The Emergence of the New Religious Phenomenon**

In the Northern Uplands of Vietnam, mainly converted from religious traditional polytheism to Catholicism. In particular, the conversion to Catholicism took place from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the formation of Catholicism and Muong communities in province: Thanh Hoa, Ninh Binh, Hoa Binh and Mong people in Sapa (Lao Cai), Yen Bai (Hung, 2004). However, Catholicism development has been slow, after more than 100 years of missionary work, in the northern mountainous region only 45,488 ethnic minorities have been Catholicism people (Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2003). While the conversion to Protestantism was later, but there was a spectacular development, especially since the renovation to date. This event started in 1986 when some Mong people in Tuyen Quang province listened to FEBC (Far East Broadcasting Company) from Manila (Philippines) and the enticement of some local subjects was Protestantism under the name VangChu (Hau, 2006). From then on, Protestantism - VangChu quickly spread to other areas of the Hmong people and the Dao people (under the name of Thin Hung) in the northern mountainous provinces, creating a strong movement of faith conversion. By 2015, there were 181,615 ethnic minority people in 927 villages and 13 northern mountainous provinces, who followed Protestantism, not counting over 62,000 Hmong who was Protestantism migrants to the Central Highlands, to Laos and China (Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2015). The Northern Uplands became the region with the second-largest number of Protestantism in the country after the Central Highlands. Notably, it also converted to Christian tendencies, but a part of Mong people did not follow Protestantism or Catholicism but chose "the third way", combining Protestantism thought with traditional beliefs to create a strange religion: the religion of DuongVanMinh (Loi, 2019). There is a part converted to Buddhism, but not many (Thang, 2016). At the same time, the phenomenon of conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism and vice versa (Loi, 2019), especially the conversion in Protestantism denominations, is quite common in the Northern mountainous provinces.

In the Central Highlands, the conversion and conversion took place earlier, following many different trends (Thang, 2016). Firstly, from the traditional religion to Catholicism, it took place at the earliest, first in the North Central Highlands (KonTum province), at the end of the nineteenth century and the



early twentieth century, popularly Bana and XuDang Catholicism. Since 1990, Catholicism has flourished, spreading to many ethnic groups, becoming the religion with the largest number of followers in the Central Highlands (Central Population and Housing Census Steering Committee, 2019). Second, from religion, traditional beliefs converted to Protestantism in the 30s of the twentieth century, thriving in the period of 1954-1975, specially developed massively after 1990. The Central Highlands became the area with the highest number of Protestantism (51.17%) in the country (Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2015). Third, from Catholicism to Protestantism in the early 2000, when Protestantism was recognized and promoted missions to ethnic minority areas in the Central Highlands (Thang, 2016). Fourth, from traditional beliefs to Buddhism, in the 1990s, up to now, there are 20,000 ethnic minority Buddhists (Loi, 2019). Fifth, from Catholicism and Protestantism to new religious phenomena. Sixth, conversion within Protestantism, from one sect to another, is common (Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2019).

In addition, the religious conversion also took place in the Kinh people community following many trends, especially the shift to new religious phenomena, in the Northern Plains and Midlands (Loi, 2019). Not only people who follow traditional beliefs turn to religion, but also Khmer people follow Theravada Buddhism in the Southwest of Vietnam; Cham people, Bani people, Muslims people, and Brahmins people also have converted to Catholicism or Protestantism (Thang, 2016).

The conversion of religious beliefs has led to the formation of new religious phenomena (strange religion) both in the Kinh people community and ethnic minorities. Among the Kinh people, they are concentrated mainly in the Northern Plains and Midlands; most of them arose within the country, relying on folk beliefs in harmony with Buddhism (Hau, 2006). And in ethnic minority areas following a Christian tendency: DuongVanMinh, Amiara, PoKhapBrau (from Protestantism), CanhTan and HaMon (from Catholicism). The emergence of new religious phenomena has changed the appearance of religion in our country, at the same time posing many problems for state management (Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2019).

The religious onversion also led to the formation of new religious-ethnic communities. These are ethnic communities who follow the same religion, united by religion, governed by religious doctrine and law (Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2018). Ethnic religious community is strongly expressed in taking religious beliefs as a cohesive element of ethnic groups (Hung, 2004). There, religious factors dominated ethnic factors, religious institutions were often integrated into social institutions (Loi, 2019). The formation of religious-ethnic groups has changed many traditional values of these communities, notably the position and role of the village elders, the village chiefs, the clan heads have been replaced by religious leaders, such as group leader, missionary, pastor (Protestantism).

### 3.3. Modernization of Religion

Religion is a reflection of social existence (Marx, 1970). The religious world is only a reflection of the real world (Hung, 2004). When the economic base of society is changed, sooner or later, religion changes as well (Marx, 1970). For each religion, “the same religion but adapting to each of the different stages of economic development of the people who believe in it, religion changes the nature of its content” (Marx, 1970, p.273).

Modernization is a historical process that started in Europe, started with the industrial revolution, then spread to other areas and became the world’s trend (Bernstein, 1971). In order to adapt to the process of modernization, religions have changed (Murray, 2006). The first to mention is the appearance of Protestantism. With the renewal of doctrine, ritual, organization, more flexibility in law, the existence and rapid development of Protestantism have proved it is a religion suitable for the development of modern capitalism. And in that flow, other religions also have changes to conform. Modernizing the internal relationships on the content of doctrine and its explanation, on canonical provisions, on the form of ritual and ritual practice, on the organizational structure and activities of Church. Modernizing external relations of social doctrine and relations, religious attitudes to social issues, relations with other religions and non-religious people, etc.

Modernizing the facilities for evangelization, mode of mission and religion management in Vietnam, before the modernization of the world’s religions and its impact, and before the changes of economic life and social life in the country, religions have different reactions: gradually modernize with different levels to suit the era. Religious modernization in Vietnam is not only different in content, method, and level of modernization, but also in different regions, localities, even among believers, even though they are one religion. In each religion, the modernization process may take place sooner or later differently, but it is most concentrated and noticeable in recent decades when the country has moved from a centralized economy of subsidized bureaucracy to the background of the market economy (Thang, 2016).

What is noticeable in the change of religions towards modernization, in the period of the market economy is the application of religions by the achievements of modern science and technology, including some theories science and a number of scientific means for missionary work (Hau, 2006). Some religious dignitaries use the advantage of new theories to support their religious theory or sought to explain new religious perspectives in accordance with modern science (Thang, 2016). Many modern technologies such as electric lamps of all kinds, loudspeakers, amplifiers, televisions, videos, projectors, computers, etc. are used to promote the effectiveness of evangelizing and directorate religion.

Thus, it can be said that the issue of religious modernization is the reaction of religion to the changes of the times (Loi, 2019). It is not until the present period that the modernization of religion takes place, but before that, each religion has

appeared changes to adapt to the changes of the times, whether it may be sooner or later differently. The impact of the market economy and globalization only makes the process of modernization in each religion faster (Hau, 2006). In particular, modern technical means used by religions to promote their effectiveness in evangelization and management religion have become an integral part of the religious modernization process in Vietnam.

### **3.4. The Secularisation of Religion**

The concept of “secularization” has been mentioned by many researchers as a movement of thought, affecting and influencing many aspects of the lives of spiritual practitioners. Recently, secularization has been rekindled by many debates regarding sociological theories of religion and the economics of religion. Bryjak and Soroka (1994) claim that the secularisation, resulting from the growing rationality and increasing concern of prosperity within society, reflects the diminishing importance of religion in daily life. How can this decline of religion in society be measured? Since it is historically founded, secularisation generally is viewed from the perspective of the churches (Ester et al., 1993).

It can be said that the secularization of religion is closely linked to the development and progress of human society (Bryjak and Soroka, 1994) and today this is the dominant trend that dominates the world religious life as well as in Vietnam (Hau, 2006, Van, 2019). Basically, the contents of the secularization trend are agreed by scientists at the following basic points: These are the acts of the entry of all religions by participating in non-religious secular activities (society, ethics, education, health, etc) (Bryjak and Soroka, 1994), in order to contribute to the rescue of fellow human beings, the secularization trend is also manifested in the struggle of a progressive part of each religion that wants to eliminate obsolete points in the doctrine, the rigors in canon law, the desire to progress towards the solidarity between religious and non-religious believers, the secularization trend is also common in industrialized countries, especially the in urban dwellers and young people, the role of religion is diminished (Dobbelaere, 1981). The determination of one’s life is mainly based on his own life, no, or less dependent on the supernatural, the secular trend is also manifested in the way people seem to leave certain religions (Hau, 2006).

Here, the secularization is understood in the sense of mundane life (Hau, 2006). If the above-mentioned content is understood as the content of secularization, in the religious life in Vietnam, the secularization or incarnation trend has been taking place for a long time but it has only clearly manifested in recent years (Hau, 2006). However, due to specific historical conditions, plus being in the state of socio-economic transformation, the trend of the secularization of Vietnam is also different from other countries, especially compared to other countries.

If the trend of secularization in the West, the people less and less often go to church at church, even though they believe that there is God (Bryjak & Soroka,

1994), there is a Supreme one who still recognizes themselves as some religious believer (Dobbelaere, 1981). In Vietnam, the number of believers taking part in religious activities in places of worship is increasing (Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2019). According to the annual Government Committee for Religious Affairs statistics, the number of religious believers visiting religious establishments such as Pagoda of Buddhism, churches of Catholicism and Protestants, mosques of Islam and Cao Dai on important religious holidays very crowded.

The trend of secularization in religions in Vietnam is also reflected in the religions besides practicing the religion, they also do the work of life, which is participating in social activities: politics, medicine, education, poverty reduction, etc in all religions such as Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, CaoDai, HoaHao Buddhism, Islam, etc. (Van, etal, 2020).

Thus, secularization is the introduction of religion into daily life, truly demonstrating the spirit of attachment to the human life of religious institutions, turning hard dry, focusing only on the personal liberation of religion into vivid lessons that can be applied to building a society lenient, friendly, kindness, etc (Hung, 2004; Van, 2019). With the trend of the secularization of religion in the above point of view, in addition to the effort towards a life of liberation for spiritual practitioners, has completely abandoned the secular life dedicated to spiritual practice. Religious activities also focus on the issues of social life, express the doctrinal spirit of the religions, stick with people and people, accompany the country; promote the patriotic tradition and the spirit of building the country, creating a great mass to unite the entire people, expanding the fields of social activities and humanitarian charity such as raising orphans, participating helping the disabled, providing relief to flood victims, constructing charity houses; participating in projects to enhance the responsiveness of religions in HIV/AIDS prevention activities, etc. On days of the nCovid 19 pandemics spreading, causing serious damage to the country, many Buddhist temples became an isolated place for people coming back from an infected area.

#### **4. Discussion**

In fact, religion is a complicated and sensitive social phenomenon and it must be handled very carefully (Van, 2019). Currently, the intellectual level of a part of religious people as well as of non-religious people is still low, especially in law enforcement (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016). Moreover, reactionary forces always take advantage of religious activities to oppose the Communist Party and the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2011 & 2016). Therefore, the good implementation of state management for religious activities is both to ensure the people's right to freedom of belief, follow or not follow the religion of the people, and to fight against manifestations of benefits use the religion of hostile forces. Legal provisions for religious activities are normal and necessary that every State must set out (National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2016).

Religion policies and laws of Vietnam are institutionalized from the Party's religious point of view and line. The building and increasingly perfecting policies and laws on the religion of our State take place in parallel with the Party's renewal of awareness on religious issues National (Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2016).

Decree No. 59/HDBT of March 21, 1991, of the Council of Ministers stipulating religious activities is considered as an opening legal document of our State on religious work in the period of renewal and sources and institutionalization in the spirit of innovation in religious work are identified in the Party's Resolution 24-ND/TW.

The Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (1992 & 2013) also clearly added: "Vietnamese citizens have the right to freedom of belief, religion, following or not following any religion. All religions are equal in front of the law. The places of worship of all beliefs and religions are protected by law. No one can violate the freedom of belief or religion or take advantage of beliefs and religions to violate the law and the State's policies".

In 1993, the Government issued a Decree related to the tasks, powers, organizational structure and operation of the Government Committee for Religions - the agency with the greatest importance in terms of state management over religion. . After that, many other documents on religious work were also issued, such as Decree 26/1999/ND-CP dated 19/4/1999 of the Government on religious activities; Decision No. 125/2003 dated 18/6/2003 on approving the action program of the Government to implement the Resolution of 7 Central Conference, IX session on religion work. In particular, on June 18, 2004, the Standing Committee of the National Assembly (term IX) passed the Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions and the President signed a decree of publication (2004). In addition to the separate documents on religion mentioned above, in the recent reform years, the National Assembly and the Government have also amended and issued many legal documents with contents related to religion.

Through the State's documents and laws on religion, we can generalize the current religious policy system with the following basic contents:

Exercise citizens' right to freedom of belief, religion, and non-beliefs. All religions operate within the legal framework and are equal before the law.

Unite people according to different religions; to unite people who follow religion and people who do not follow the religion.

In essence, religious work is mass mobilization.

To increase investment in and implement socio-economic development programs in areas of religious people.

Regularly vigilance and timely struggle to prevent conspiracies and acts of taking advantage of religion against the revolutionary cause of the people. To

expand foreign affairs in the religious domain according to the State's general regimes and policies on international relations.

The above contents show that our State's system of policies and laws on religion has been increasingly strengthened and improved. That shows the determination of the State to step by step institutionalize and concretize the people's right to freedom of belief, religion, and religious activities. At the same time, it also continued to affirm the consistency in the Party's undertakings and lines and the State's policies and laws on religious work in the "Innovation" period.

## **5. Conclusion**

Vietnam is a multi-religious and belief nation. Vietnamese people have a long tradition of religious activities. All ethnic groups in the Vietnamese ethnic community have their own beliefs attached to their economic and spiritual life. The change of religious life in Vietnam in the renovation period mentioned above is primarily due to the impact of the change on the economic, cultural and social life of the renovation of economic development. In the context of globalization, market expansion, exchange and international integration of Vietnam. On the other hand, the change is due to the policy of renewing the religious affairs of Vietnam more and more open. At the same time, it is a consequence of the restoration and increases in the need for the religious-spiritual life after years of repression by the war, now entering a period of renewal, opening up conditions to rise and develop.

Religion will last for a long time (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2006, 2011 & 2016) because religious needs reflect the legitimate right and freedom of people towards true, good and good values (Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2019). In fact, many religions have accompanied and actively participated in building and developing society. Religious activities are not far from reality and gradually become secular through many charitable activities - humanitarian, social security, social protection, etc. contributing to the sustainable development of the country. In this situation, it is necessary to have a new perspective as well as appropriate policies and laws in order to properly address the guarantee of freedom of belief and religion and at the same time prevent negative aspects to religion, truly are the resources for the country's sustainable development.

Today, religious believers have complete freedom in performing religious activities, expressing and practicing their religious faith. Religious dignitaries and priests are free to practice religious activities according to canon law. The ordination, appointment, and transfer of dignitaries is done in accordance with church regulations. Religious organizations that have been recognized as a legal entity over the years have experienced an increase in the number of church facilities, believers, and religious dignitaries, on new construction or restoration of institutions worship facilities, the guarantee of scriptures, religious activities according to the charter, rules and doctrines, canon law. Dignitaries and monks can take part in studying and training in the country and

abroad or participate in religious activities abroad. Many foreign religious organizations have come to exchange with Vietnamese religious organizations.

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\*. Article History: Received on 25, March 2020, Revised on 29, September 2020, Accepted on November 02, 2020.

†. Article History: Received on 25, March 2020, Revised on 29, September 2020, Accepted on November 02, 2020.