

THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY IN CONTEMPORARY VIETNAM: MAIN FEATURES AND CURRENT ISSUES

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Abstract

It is believed that Islam was first introduced to the Chắm community around the eleventh century. Despite vicissitudes of the Champa kingdom's history, this religion has remained and thrived in Vietnam until today. Specifically, Islam can only be found in a part of the Chắm – an ethnic minority. Currently, the population of the Islamic community has reached about 40,000 and been distributed unevenly in 12 provinces and cities from the Central region to the Southern region. Based on the analysis of data gathered from survey and fieldworks conducted during 2019-2020 across the country where the Muslim Chắm community present, this article presents an overview of the Islamic community in contemporary Vietnam. Main features generalized and analyzed here includes population, distribution, and relationships of the Muslim community with the broader society and with international partners. It also identifies emerging problems putting forwards for this community at the present. We would argue that recent and notable changes of the Muslim community have revealed its efforts of adaptation toward the current social context characterized by modernity, secularization, urbanization and world integration.

Keywords: *Islam; Vietnamese Muslim community; ethnic Chắm; International relationships*

MASYARAKAT ISLAM DI VIETNAM KONTEMPORER: FITUR UTAMA DAN MASALAH SAAT INI

Abstrak

Islam pertama kali diperkenalkan ke masyarakat Chắm sekitar abad ke sebelas. Terlepas dari perubahan sejarah kerajaan Champa, agama ini tetap ada dan berkembang di Vietnam hingga hari ini. Secara khusus, di Vietnam Islam hanya terdapat pada masyarakat Chắm – sebuah etnis minoritas. Saat ini populasi umat Islam mencapai sekitar 40.000 jiwa dan tersebar di 12 provinsi dan kota dari wilayah Tengah hingga wilayah Selatan. Berdasarkan analisis data yang dikumpulkan dari survei dan kunjungan lapangan yang dilakukan selama 2019-2020 di seluruh wilayah yang terdapat komunitas Muslim Chắm, artikel ini menyajikan gambaran umum masyarakat Islam di Vietnam kontemporer. Fitur utama yang digeneralisasi dan dianalisis di sini meliputi populasi, distribusi, dan hubungan komunitas Muslim dengan masyarakat luas serta dengan mitra internasional mereka. Kajian ini juga mengidentifikasi masalah yang mengemuka pada komunitas Muslim Chắm saat ini. Kami berpendapat bahwa perubahan-perubahan terkini dan penting dari komunitas Muslim tersebut adalah adanya upaya adaptasi mereka terhadap

konteks sosial saat ini yang dicirikan oleh modernitas, sekularisasi, urbanisasi, dan integrasi dunia..

Kata Kunci: *Islam; Masyarakat Muslim Vietnam; etnik Chăm; Hubungan internasional*

Introduction

Vietnamese Muslims living in close-knit communities that can be found in different localities in Vietnam. The body of literature on Islamic studies in Vietnam is growing fast in recent three decades, recognizing significant contributions by researchers who are insiders and outsiders to this community. Yet such research projects often focus on a specific theme or location thus limited in provision of the wider and inclusive awareness of the entire Muslim community in Vietnam. This research seeks to present a general and up-to-dated picture of the Muslim community in Vietnam according to the most recent and extensive survey data and fieldworks conducted by the Institute of Religious Studies at Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences. This article is based on the results of field research in 2019 and 2020 conducted among Muslim communities (abbreviated the

Muslim community) across the country. The concept of “Muslim community in Vietnam” in this article refers to the all fractions of Muslims residing in different provinces and cities. In Vietnam, a local Muslim community is also a local residential community which is bonded by various factors such as family, clan, livelihood, migration, and religious faith. In fact, when one mentions about the Muslim community in Vietnam, he or she is speaking about the Chăm Muslim community that follow Islam. The reason is that over 95% of Muslims in Vietnam are the Chăm people while the rest 5% includes the Kinh, the Khmer, the Indian, Malaysian, Indonesian, and some foreigners who stay temporarily in Vietnam.

There is not a single organization that represents all Muslims in Vietnam to date. Muslim fractions across the country are organized in the form of local

representative boards. Currently, there are four boards, including the Representative Board of the Muslim Community in An Giang province, the Representative Board of the Muslim Community in Hồ Chí Minh city; the Representative Board of the Muslim Community in Tây Ninh Province and the Representative Board of the Muslim Community in Ninh Thuận Province. These boards are operating independently from each other.

There is a large literature of Chăm Muslim studies in Vietnamese and foreign language. Recent studies focus on emerging issues faced by this religious community, such as translocal and transnational trading activities (Philip Taylor (2006, 2007); migration and labor abroad (Angie Ngọc Trần 2016); regional integration Huynh Thanh Tien et.al 2018); opportunities and challenges in international relations (Hoàng Văn Chung 2021); organization of community (Lê Nguyễn Châu 2018; Phan Văn Dỗp and Vương Hoàng Trù 2011); formation and development (Phú Văn Hãn 2001); changing daily social life (Lê Nhấm 2003, Bá Trung

Phụ 2005); innovation in in faiths and ritual practices (Chu Văn Tuấn 2019, 2020).

In fact, the dispersion of Muslims as mentioned above and the significant changes among this Muslim community since 1986 (beginning of Renovation in economic model) challenges academia who seek to depict Islam in Vietnam. Published research works have often specified on certain aspects of religious belief, practices and culture or a location where Muslims reside. Some concerning questions have arisen, including: what are sharing features of Muslim community in Vietnam? What is the situation of this community's interactions with other communities inside and outside the country and with various religious and secular institutions? And what are issues are putting forwards to this community as national and international relations have been boosted since Renovation? This article seeks to set light on these questions.

Methodology

To provide a comprehensive and up-to-date understandings of the Muslim community in Vietnam, we conducted sociological surveys using questionnaires and collected qualitative data from in-depth interviews with representatives and members of this community during fieldworks in 2020-2022. Field research was conducted in 12 provinces and cities where the Muslim permanently reside including Ninh Thuận, Bình Thuận, Hồ Chí Minh City, Đồng Nai, Bình Dương, Tây Ninh, Bình Phước, An Giang, Kiên Giang, Long An, Tiền Giang, Trà Vinh to explore their religious and socio-economic life. 1500 quantitative samples for Muslims and about 100 in-depth interviews were conducted for dignitaries, Muslims, and state officials who are in charge of religious management in those localities. Participants in the surveys and interviews were selected randomly. Respondents were instructed to fill out the questionnaires themselves while assistance was only provided when needed. Pseudo names are used in this study for ethical reasons.

The Formation and Growth of the Muslim Community in Vietnam

The formation and expansion of the Muslim community in Vietnam is a long process through many different stages, associated with the progress of the Champa Kingdom. First, it was the introduction of Islam into the Chăm community in the early time. There are currently different opinions about the time when Islam arrived in Vietnam. Some researchers maintain that Islam was introduced into the Chăm community since the 11th century while others argue that this happened about 1-2 centuries later (Phan Văn Döpf and Vương Hoàng Trù 2011; Nguyễn Bình 2014, 103). This first introduction and reception of Islam resulted in the formation of Bà ni religion which is in nature the very strong indigenization of Islam. At the present, the population that practise this religious tradition is around 40,000 members. Beside Allah, they also worship their own gods who have natural or human origins. Thus community is not recognized by Islamic nations in the world.

Yet the story of Islam in Vietnam was continued. Because of political changes and the Champa kingdom ceased to exist, since the eighteenth century, a part of the Chăm fled to Cambodia and some other Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Many Chăm immigrants adopted Islam during this time. In the middle of the eighteenth century, these migrants followed Nguyễn Lords to come back to Vietnam and settled in Châu Đốc (An Giang province) and Tây Ninh province. By the end of the twentieth century, some Chăm Muslim families moved from An Giang to Saigon (now Hồ Chí Minh city). The Muslim communities in the South were gradually formed and they exist until today (Phan Văn Dỗp and Vương Hoàng Trù 2011, 226-227). Thus, the new Muslim community in Vietnam was formed from the Chăm Islam community in An Giang, Tây Ninh, and Hồ Chí Minh City then spread to other provinces and cities including Đồng Nai, Bình Dương, Bình Phước, Long An, Tiền Giang, Kiên Giang, Trà Vinh, Ninh Thuận, Bình Thuận. The Chăm

Muslim community in Hồ Chí Minh City was established in the early years of the twentieth century. Currently, this community has about 10,000 members and is scattered in a number of districts such as districts No.1, No.3, No.4, No.5, No.6, No.8, No.10, No.11, Phú Nhuận, and Thủ Đức (Trương Quang Đạt, Nguyễn Ngọc Trường Xuân 2017, 108). The Muslim community of Bình Phước was established after 1975 by migrated Muslims from Tây Ninh, An Giang, and Đồng Nai (Chu Văn Tuấn 2020, 44). The Chăm Muslim community of Ninh Thuận was formed in the 1960s of the twentieth century. These were converts from the followers of Bà ni religion (Chu Văn Tuấn 2019, 71). Muslim communities in other localities such as Bình Dương, Long An, Tiền Giang, Trà Vinh, Kiên Giang, etc., were mostly established in the early and mid-twentieth century.

The formation of these communities was based on different political and social-economic conditions and circumstances. Most important driving factors were livelihood and religion as a rational

choice. However, the formation of Muslim communities did not happen smoothly. Some Muslim fractions encountered reactions thus having conflicts with surrounding communities. For example, the Muslim community in Ninh Thuận had conflicts with the Chăm Bà ni community, also called as Chăm Awal when Islam was first introduced into this province in the later part of the 20th century (Chu Văn Tuấn 2019, 71).

However, the majority of Muslims in Vietnam are Chăm people who share historical and cultural origin. This community is quite unified, stable, and cohesive. Currently, the Muslim community in Vietnam has more than 30,000 members, 46 mosques (masjid), and 20 small-sized mosques. They are scattered unevenly through the central and southern regions. In details, there are 4,219 members, 6 mosques, 1 small-sized mosque (called surau) in Tây Ninh; 665 members and 2 mosques in Binh Phuoc; 15,000 members and 12 mosques, 16 small-sized mosques in An Giang; about 10,000 members, 16 mosques, and 1 small-sized

mosque in Hồ Chí Minh City; 2,695 members, 2 mosques, 2 small-sized mosques in Đồng Nai; 700 members and 1 mosque in Bình Dương; 2,800 members and 4 mosques in Ninh Thuận; 80 members and 1 mosque in Long An; 300 members in Trà Vinh (most of them are and some are Khmer, Kinh, Indian, and Chinese) 1 mosque and 1 small-sized mosque; 10 members and 1 mosque in Tiền Giang; 500 members in Kiên Giang and no mosque. There are about 40.000 Muslims across the nation. There is a very small Muslim community in Hanoi which has a mosque at Hàng Lược street. According to these data, the largest community is located in An Giang and the smallest one can be found in Tiền Giang. In some localities, the Muslim community has both large and small mosques while many other only has the large one.

Main features of the Muslim community in Vietnam today

Ethnicity

When referring to the Muslim community in Vietnam, people immediately think of the Chăm Muslim community because this

religious community is mainly constituted by the Chẵm ethnic group. There are Muslims from other ethnic groups such as the Indian, the Javanese (also known as “Chà vậ” in Vietnamese, including the Indonesian and the Malaysian) and the Kinh (Phú Văn Hả̃n 2001, 46). The Muslim community in Hanoi consists of the Kinh, the Chẵm and the foreign Muslims who temporarily reside in this city.

Currently, there are 2 mosques serving 600 Indian and Malaysian originated Muslims in Hồ Chí Minh city. In Trà Vinh, there are 300 Muslims among them 20 are the Kinh, 20 are the Khmer people, 04 are the Indian, and some Chinese. In Long An, there are 80 Muslims with nearly 60 Kinh people. The rest is consisted of Indian and Malaysian Muslims.¹ They are descendants of Indians and Malaysians who were originally Muslims, had been living in Vietnam for a long time. These groups had contributed significantly for the building of mosques in Vietnam. For the Kinh, the Khmer, and the Chinese

Muslims, most of them are men or women who married to Chẵm Muslims.

Educational level

The results of sociological studies showed that out of 1500 respondents, 800 people have primary education, accounted for 53,3%; 718 people have secondary education, accounted for 41,2%; only 5.5% (82 people) have vocational or higher education (see table below). The data is quite similar in comparison to the survey results of the Faculty of Anthropology, University of Social Sciences and Humanities of Hồ Chí Minh City in 2014. It can be said that most Muslims in Vietnam have primary and secondary education while those who have tertiary or post-graduate degrees take a relatively small percentage.

Table 1: Educational level of Muslims

<i>Educational level</i>	<i>Frequency (people)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Primary school	800	53,3
secondary school	718	41,2

¹ Currently, these people have Vietnamese nationality.

Vocational education, tertiary degrees	82	5,5
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(Source: Survey conducted by the Institute for Religious Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences in 2019, 2020)

According to our research, the cause of this situation is that Muslims in Vietnam pay more attention to learning the religious doctrines. Many parents only want their children finish primary school or high school. Once the children have learned how to read and write they are free to look for job or get married. Many Muslim families prefer sending their children to advanced schools in Islamic teachings.

Livelihoods

Wars, frequent migrations, religious beliefs, and customs have been the most important factors that characterize the livelihoods of Muslims. The majority of Muslims in Vietnam, regardless of location, mainly make a living by farming, fishing, trading, or working as freelancers. Muslims usually do small businesses or provide free-lanced labor in the city. For rural

and mountainous areas, they often work on farms or fishery. For example, the majority of Muslims in Tây Ninh province live by farming, animal husbandry (cow, goat), fishing, rubber scraping, doing a small business, etc. (Chu Văn Tuấn 2020, 42). The Muslim community in Ninh Thuận is mainly cultivate on agricultural land and make traditional medicines. Few young people work in industrial zones (Chu Văn Tuấn 2019, 76). The Chăm Muslims in Hồ Chí Minh City mainly do small business like running small groceries stores. Previously they traded rice, wood, cloth by boats along the rivers. Today, they mainly trade cloth and clothes in cities. In addition, many Chăm people participate in street vendors. They do free-lanced jobs such as tricycle drivers, motorbike drivers, shippers (Phan Văn Dỗp and Vương Hoàng Trù 2011,121-122).

According to our survey results, the main types of jobs for Muslims today are doing business and trading (20,4%), farming (17,2%), free-lance workers (16,2%) and working as a housewife (14,9%). Other types of jobs such as

workers, craftsmen, state officials account for less than 10%. The selection of these jobs is related to the religious, cultural characteristics of this community. See the table below:

Table 2: Occupation of Muslims in Vietnam today

<i>Occupations</i>	<i>Frequency (people)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Doing business	305	20,4
Farmer/fisherman	258	17,2
Free-lance worker	242	16,2
Housewife	223	14,9
Worker	68	4,5
Craftsman	51	3,4
State officials	36	2,4
Religious teacher (Islam)	31	2,1
Retired person	91	6,1
Student	85	5,7
Unemployed	70	4,7
Other	38	2,5

(Source: Suvey conducted by the Institute for Religious Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences in 2019, 2020)

As can be seen religious factor play an important role in orientation of job of Muslims in Vietnam today. The peculiarity of

the religious activities of Islam is that a believer must pray 5 times a day and on the Friday noon, and a whole month when the fasting Ramadan on due every year. They also have to follow strict rules in eating Halal foods only. Because of those religious reasons, Muslims in Vietnam often choose free-lanced jobs, small businesses, jobs near their home, near mosques that are convenient for religious practices. Religious practices of Islam are the highest priority that deeply affect all Muslims' daily activities.

Therefore, the income level of Muslims is mostly average. There is a low percentage of families with high income. According to the survey results, families with high income accounted for 10,7%, with average income accounted for 73,8%, and with low income accounted for 15,5%. It should be noted that the majority of surveyed families tended to be modest in their assessment of income, therefore the actual proportion of families with high level of income may be higher than the data.

Table 3: Muslims self-assessment of their family's level of income

<i>Self-assessment</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Wealthy	160	10,7
Average	1107	73,8
Poor	232	15,5

(Source: Survey conducted by the Institute for Religious Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences in 2019, 2020)

In recent years, along with the economic and social development of the country, the living conditions of the Chăm community in general and the Chăm Muslim community in particular have been improved. In some localities such as An Giang, Hồ Chí Minh City, Ninh Thuận, etc., Muslim household average income has increased (Lê Nguyên Châu 2018, 135). There have been almost no poor family according to national criteria.

Relationships of the Muslim community in Vietnam today

Factors such as history, language, culture, religion, business ties, geographical location have enabled Muslims in Vietnam to build and maintain a close relationship with the regional and

international Muslim communities. Regarding language, a researcher has indicated that “Muslims in Vietnam have close relations with Melayu language speakers in Southeast Asia since many Muslim intellectuals have learned Melayu language and used Jawi scripts. This is Arabic scripts used by the Melayu people in Malaysia and Indonesia to create their own scripts. Based on this, Chăm Muslims built Chăm Melayu scripts which was popular among the Cham Muslims in the South. Thus, many Chăm Muslims in Vietnam can read the Qur’an and the Jawi of Malaysia and Indonesia” (Phú Văn Hãn 2001, 47).

Regarding religion, all Muslim communities across the country have relationships with Islamic world. The Tây Ninh Muslim community has a quite close relationship with the Muslim community in Cambodia. Besides, many international Muslim delegations from Malaysia, Arabia, India, etc. come to visit the community every year (Chu Văn Tuấn 2020, 43). The Chăm Islam community of Binh Phuoc also has a good relationship with the Chăm

Islamic community in Cambodia. The Chăm Muslim community of Ninh Thuận has international ties with a number of countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, etc.

One of the doctrinal exchanges among Muslim communities is “Dawah”. Dawah means “to remind” in Arabic. Its aim is “to remind fellow believers to fulfill their Islamic obligations and faith”. Dawah activities have only been possible in Vietnam since 1990 when Vietnam opened up for international integration. In recent years, more and more international delegations from Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia have come to Vietnam to do Dawah duties (Phan Văn Dớp and Vương Hoàng Trù 2011, 362). In addition, Vietnamese delegates have been actively in participating Qur’an recitation contests held in some neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia. Besides, Vietnamese Muslims intensify their participation in international conferences, seminars, doctrinal exchanges, and teachings.

In addition to Dawah activities, international Muslim communities often come to provide support and help for national Muslim communities in forms of charity, tourism, funding for the construction of mosques and establishments, sponsoring pilgrimage to Mecca or scholarships for studying abroad, Islamic studies courses, etc. Many Muslim delegations have come to Vietnam to provide financial aids for construction of clean water systems, houses for the poor, auxiliary structures for mosques, and key collective ceremonies around the year such as circumcision for children, Ramadan, etc. More Vietnamese Muslims are able to do pilgrimage to Mecca thanks for full or partial sponsorship by international Islamic organizations or individuals.

In other aspects, the relationship between the Muslim community in Vietnam and the Muslim communities in the world is also reflected in family relations. For example, there is a Chăm Muslim community who resided in Cambodia and a part of it moved to

Vietnam during the Southwest border war. Therefore, these communities still maintain close relationships. They regularly visit their relatives via attend weddings, funerals, and doing business or trading. The Muslim community in Vietnam also has a relationship with Chăm relatives, friends, spouse who migrated to other countries before 1975 such as the United States of America and France.

According to the survey results by the Institute for Religious Studies, out of 1500 Muslim respondents, 716 people (accounting for 47,8%) answered that they have relationships with the oversea Chăm Muslims and Muslim foreigners, 269 respondents (accounting for 17,9%) while a small number said that they have no relationship with foreigners (see Table 4).

Table 4: Vietnamese Muslim's Relationships

<i>Types of relationships</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
with Muslim Chăm in other countries	469	31,3

with non-Muslim Chăm in other countries	472	31,5
with Muslims of other ethnicities	741	49,4
with non-Muslim of other ethnicities	1077	71,8
with foreign Muslims	247	16,5
with non-Muslim people	81	5,4
No relationship with the aforementioned people	269	17,9

(Source: Survey conducted by the Institute for Religious Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences in 2019, 2020)

There is always a reciprocal relationship among the Muslim communities across the country in many aspects such as relatives, marriage, business, and religious ties. According to the survey data, 1324 Muslims (accounting for 88,3%) answered that they have a marriage relationship with their peers; 1337 Muslims (accounting for 89,1%) said that they have business relationships with other Muslim communities (see Table 5). Indeed, most Chăm Muslims marry people of the same religion or

ethnicity. The percentage of Chăm Muslims who marry non-Muslims or people of other ethnicities is very low.

Religious relationship plays a crucial role in life of the Muslim communities. This is the factor that governs other relationships. As mentioned above, there is Dawah activity in Muslim life. This activity is not conducted by foreign Muslim delegations but also by Muslim communities themselves in various provinces and cities. During the field research in Tây Ninh at the end of 2019, we met a Muslim group from Long Khánh, Đồng Nai who came to Tây Ninh for exchanging religious activities, including Dawah. In other provinces and cities, there are often groups of Muslims from other provinces and cities come to visit and do pilgrimages at mosques. Besides, the celebration of Islamic holidays is also an opportunity for Muslims throughout the country to exchange and collaborate.

Religious faith strengthens Chăm Muslim communities' cohesion. Islam requires believers to regularly practice their faith and

strictly observe the Muslim lifestyle. Mosques are a place for gatherings. They are actually the center of religious life of community. Muslim communities have many things to share, including history, cultural and religious practices and ethnicity.

The Muslim community in Vietnam has enjoyed a close and harmonious relationship with other ethnic, and religious communities, as well as maintaining a good relationship with the government. The data of Table 4 showed that 1077 Muslim respondents (accounting for 71,8%) said that they have relationships with non-Muslims in the forms of marriage or doing business. 1122 Muslim respondents (accounting for 74,8%) reported that they enjoy a harmonious relationship with other non-Islamic communities. The following table provides further information:

Table 5: Relationships of the Chăm Muslim community with other communities

<i>Types of Relationship and self-assessment</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
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Marital	1324	88,3
Doing business and trading	1337	89,1
Enjoying solidarity and living in harmony with other communities	1122	74,8
Having religious conflicts with other communities	53	3,5
Having conflicts in cultural activities, lifestyles with other communities	79	5,3
Having no relations with other communities	16	1,1
Not given	36	2,4
Other	2	0,1

(Source: Survey by the Institute for Religious Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences in 2019, 2020)

The Chăm Muslims are expanding and diversifying their relationships nationally and internationally. Two main directions are recognized, including their quest for improvement in economic life and the demand to be more connected with the Islamic world. While new opportunities are being opened up for the Muslim, challenges are also present such as internal conflicts that may threaten community's cohesion and cultural and ethnic identities may be undermined if conflicts occur.

Emerging Issues among the Muslim community in Vietnam today

In the new context, the Muslim community are facing issues that represent their difficulties in balancing preservation of ethnic and religious identities and development. One of the burning issues is that less Chăm Muslims are interested in learning their traditional scripts and language (see Trương Quang Đạt and Nguyễn Ngọc Trường Xuân 2017, 119). In fact, the majority of Chăm Muslims can still speak Chăm language but the usage of Chăm scripts among the Muslim community decreasing. Many of them now cannot read and write the Chăm scripts. The younger generation prefers speaking official language (Vietnamese) even at home. Another issue is that members of Muslim community in Vietnam still have a low educational level in comparison to that of the majority of the national population. This situation causes hinderance for their ability in competition at the national and international job market, the improvement of household income, living

conditions, and social status. There is an issue with Muslims' need to perform rituals daily once they have to be somewhere far away from their home villages or wards. Indeed, Muslims in Vietnam are not treated fairly at working place or public spaces. Muslim employees are not given space and time to perform rituals daily at schools, universities, factories, offices, etc. To fit in a non-Islamic working environment, Muslims often have to obey secular working rules. They have no choice but perform their rituals at off-working time. Thus, a part of Muslim population chooses to do low-paid job such as farming and raising cattle. In return, they can live closely to mosques and easily fulfill their religious duty of the day. But working on farm will not help them to quickly improve their economic situation. Finally, regional and international integration are giving very good opportunities for the development of the Muslim community. They are able to mobilize and articulate resources necessary for doing business, improving education, and building social capital. However,

international exchanges also propose challenges for the preservation and representation of cultural, ethnic and religious identities. They may realize that they themselves are holding many different identities including ethnic, language, religious and nationality at the same time (see Taylor 2007, 63). As they have to negotiate these identities at different and specific socio-cultural contexts, some may be successful while other may experience how their identities are undermined (Hoàng Văn Chung 2021).

Conclusion

In Vietnam, the majority of Muslims are the Chăm and this situation will not easily change in near future. Ethnicity and religion are two main factors that build up and maintain cohesion and unity for this Muslim community despite of political and social changes through times. At the present, the impacts of market-driven socio-economic development and international integration have caused profound changes for Muslim community in Vietnam, as can be seen in

significant improvement of household income, education, ethnic progress, and cultural and social capital. However, as national and international integrations are enhanced, the Chăm are facing real challenges in preservation of their cultural and religious identities.

Further, Muslims are leaving homeland to find better education, then jobs in domestic cities and industrial zones, and in other countries as well. Joining the workforce at regional and global scale will equip them with valuable knowledge, skills, social capital plus political views. The community is thus being at important process of reconfiguration whereby secular and religious elements are negotiating and finding ways to co-exist and thrive. In that context, the state should timely build and fine tune policies to better assist this community in the quest for wealth, existential security, and transmission of religious and ethnic heritages to the next generations.

Biography

1. Chu Văn Tuấn, Associate Professor, PhD., is a researcher in Religious Studies, currently the

Director of the Institute for Religious Studies under Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences. His main research interests are religious philosophy, Buddhism and Islam in Vietnam. He has published a number articles such as "A philosophical assessment of the changing trends of Buddhism in contemporary Vietnam", *European Scientific Language Journal* (2020); *Reality of the Cham Muslim in Tay Ninh and Binh Phuoc at the present*, *Religious Studies*, No.9, (2019); and a number of books in Vietnamese.

2. Hoàng Văn Chung, PhD., is a researcher in Sociology, currently working at the Institute for Religious Studies under Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences. Chung has focused his investigation on religious diversity, folk religion's sacred spaces, and state-religion relationship in Vietnam. His major publications include *New Religions and State's Response to Religious Diversification in Contemporary Vietnam* (Springer 2017), a book chapter entitled "The double-layered religious diversification in post-Renovation Vietnam" in *Religious Diversity in Asia* (Brill 2019), and a number of articles and edited books in Vietnamese.

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