

Recognition of Religious Organizations - A Comparative Approach: The Case of Vietnam

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ABSTRACT: The paper firstly discusses the three basic models of recognition of religious organizations in the world history, and then gives some insightful remarks. Here the author emphasizes that over recent decades, recognition of religious organizations remains a universal process of religious law being done in many countries and regions. Finally, he presents the case of Vietnam - where a secular state has been established since 1955 – which is now effectively adopting the second model of “recognition by registration”.

Introduction

The recognition of religious groups, in other word, the approval of their legal status, is one of the most universal and fundamental issues in the process of making religious law. This issue directly relates to the determination of a secular state model, which seems to be a very challenging problem to many nations due to the gap between perception and legal execution¹.

The complicity of the issue lies firstly in the reality of world religious life where patterns and methods to recognize religious groups differ enormously from each other. According to E. Cabarrus and L. Leon Christians, there are at least three basic modes: The first is to recognize them as independent entities on the basis of consitutional stipulations such as in Belgium and Germany. The second is to recognize their legal statuses on a contractual basic, where all sides are parties to a religious contract and its institutions. The third, within the framework of state law, a religious group can be recognized once it finishes the registration process with the authority on the basic of a fundamental condition: any religious group that wishes to be recognized must act according to the national laws².

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Secondly, a “religious group” is always a basic subject of relationship between the state and a religious community. Yet, a “religious group” is not a homogeneous entity. It often exists in two forms: a Church or a Sect (denomination). In Asian societies, it is very complicated and difficult to make a difference between a “church” and a “sect”.

What is more, the recognition of religious organizations faces with many legislative conceptions, such as the relationship between the *physical natural person* and the *juridical (legal) person*. These are the two basic subjects rights normally protected by the state, in terms of rights of individuals and of social associations recognized by the law. These subjects of rights, in the current situation of religious legislation in East and Southeast Asia, very often do not go along with each other, thus creating difficulties for a satisfactory solution of issues related to the person and juridical person of religious entities.

Moreover, there are several kinds of juridical persons. Religious groups, according to common rules, are mainly related to private law. Their category mainly consists of societies, such as civil society, trading society and associations, which are essentially non-profit and engaged in cultural, religious and charity activities.

With the different religious associations and congregations, the problem seems to be more complicated. In France, under the Law of 1901, religious congregations are under more strict control than industrial – commercial associations.

What has been discussed is a number of basic issues serving as a theoretical framework. Looking at the reality of religious group recognition in Vietnam since the August Revolution of 1945 when the new Vietnamese state was established and using a comparative approach, this paper wishes to make clear a very significant stage in the evolution of religious law in Vietnam and its problems.

Models of Recognition of Religious Organizations

Through personal studies on the process of religious organization recognition in many countries and regions, just as the overview by E. Caparros and L. Leon Christians, several forms can be generalized, as follows:

1. Constitutional recognition of the autonomy of religious organizations

Again, we will look at the cases of Belgium and Germany. There, the State does not interfere in the internal affairs of any religion, but autonomy does not mean that all *juridical persons* are the same. The Catholic Church, for instance, while executing Law on Separation between the Church and the State, maintains its *juridical person* status according to the public law whereas other religious communities enjoy their *juridical*

person status according to the Civil Law. This model, however, seems to have little effect on Asian nations' religious life.

2. Recognition through international concordat

It can be said that recognition by concordat³ is an important contribution by European religious legislation to the solution of problems related to Christianity. Until recent decades, this model is still effective with a series of documents signed between the Vatican and such countries as Italy, Spain, Portugal, Poland, etc.

In a broader context, experiences from the concordat model are also helpful in coordination for legislative adjustment relating to religious matters. The influence of Buddhism in Thailand is a common example. Of course, the contractual way only plays an extremely important role when a nation firmly preserves its secular character. In a country where a religion is officially established as state religion, canon laws tend to be incorporated into state law and practised by state Courts themselves⁴, creating greatly varying impacts.

At present, for many countries, implementation of the concordatory principle is linked to the issue of recognition of the legal person status of the Catholic Church, especially in the ordainment and assignment of bishops, organization of dioceses, and salary for the clergy. In my opinion, to a certain extent, the concordat model remains helpful in maintaining and promoting the diplomatic and religious relationships between Vietnam and the Vatican via appropriate applications from both sides.

3. Recognition by registration: a popular, appropriate and practical model

It is common knowledge that the relationship between the State and Churches depends mainly on 3 fields: First, recognition of the juridical person of religious organizations; Second, use of religious assets for religious and social purposes; and third, presence of religious hierarchies in State public authority.

In the recognition of religious groups, as discussed above, consitutional or concordatory models are mainly suitable to European and American societies.

Recognition via registration seems suitable in the first palce to every nation with a civil law system. The British – American common law system itself implies the way for a religion to obtain legal person. A religion has the right not only to be registered, i.e. to enjoy judiciary surveillance, but also to obtain the public formalization of its existence.

The complicacy of the registration process lies in the fact that each religious group is a complex entity, especially with traditional religions.

From another angle, having been registered, religious organizations in modern societies are considered humanitarian groups (entitled to certain tax exemption or reduction), although not every religious activity is non-profit. On the other hand, gradually religious organizations have been treated like other social associations, at least since the beginning of the XXth century.

However, the process of “registration” and “recognition” has never been so simple, and most typical was the recognition of religious associations in France during the first half of the XXth century.

The following facts from the practice of recognition of religious groups via registration in some European and Asian countries will be used for comparative assessment and experience.

Sets of law used for comparison:

a. Bulgaria’s Religious Denomination Law, approved by Parliament on December 20th, 2002, published in the Bulgarian Official Gazette No. 120, December 29th, 2002, hereinafter referred to as T.L1.

b. Poland’s Law Regarding the Guarantees of Freedom of Conscience and Belief, or T.L2

c. The Russian Federation’s Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Denomination (amended), 2000, or T.L 3

d. Japan’s Religious Juridical Person Law, in EHz Law Bulletin Series, Vol. III, cal 1976⁵.

The practice of law in Thailand, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Australia and France will also be taken into consideration in the analysis (mostly on the basis of the work by E. Caparros and L. Léon Christians (ed), or T.L 4). Recently promulgated religious laws in Serbia, the Ukraine and Lithuania are also taken into account.

Much attention is also paid to the newly published massive work⁶ by Tore Lindholm, W. Cole Durham, Jr and Bahia G. Tahzib-lie (ed), of which the third part discusses *Freedom of religion or belief and the State*, or T.L 5.

Through the above-cited documents, the following remarks are drawn upon the process of recognition via the “Registration model”:

Firstly, except for nations adopting the model of neutrally secularity meaning that the State does not “recognize” any religion and that every religion has to observe equally the principle of secularity before the state, the nations following strictly the principle of religious pluralism recognize religious groups via the registration model.

In the United States, according to official 2002 statistics, there were up to 220 recognized churches and sects and other 1,200 denominations, among them 73 major

groups topped by the Roman Catholic Church with 19.672 churches and 62.4 millions followers⁷. In Japan, according to the 2004 Year book, the Shinto system alone had 76 denominations with 73 having registered for juridical person status (in Meiji times, the figure was 13).

Thus, recognition via registration in these countries is done at both the macro (a common “Church”) and micro levels (religious groups with a particular system, including associations engaged in religious and social activities). There is no mention of conditions for registration in either case (size, followers, date of appearance), except for two basic issues namely finances and religious juridical persons with annual incomes.

Secondly, for countries adopting the first model of secular state (with a dominant religion) or the second model (with selective recognition of certain religions and respect for the rest), the trend has been toward improvement. Poland’s Law regarding the Guarantees of freedom of conscience and belief in Articles 30 and 31, provides for “The right to establish a religious organization, or “registration”, to be guided by and submitted to the Ministry of Religion, or Registration Authority with a declaration on the establishment of the organization and an application form, the virtually only requirement being “There should be at least 100 Polish citizens fully capable of legal obligations” (T.L. 2). In Lithuania the number required only no less than 15.

In Bulgaria, while the past and present role of the Orthodox Church is officially asserted as “a legal entity”, there are fairly broad stipulations for other religions to apply for registration (mainly on the basis of lawful possession of religious facilities in keeping with the law on land development and legislation on construction (Article 12). “The registration of more than one lawful entity for headquarters shall be prohibited” (Article 15); “all religious organizations shall communicate with the authorities via the Bulgarian language”(Article 11, T.L. 1).

The Russian Federation’s religious law emphasizes the condition that “local religious organizations have at least 15 years of lawful operation in Russian Federation’s territory as of the date of application with registration agencies (Article 8). Besides, there are regulations for “local religious organizations” (with 10 local residents not younger than 18 years of age) and “Central religious organizations” (with no less than 3 local religious organizations), and these are the main bases for the registration of religious organizations (Article 9, T.L. 3).

As we have suggested above, France has a long history with abundant experience in this field. According to B.B Gaudemet, from the end of the XVIIIth century to the middle of the XXth century, the French legal system switched from “aggressive secularism” to “positive neutral secularism”⁸. Many documents issued unilaterally by the State (from 1790 to 1808) were for systematic discrimination against and persecution of

Catholicism. The State exercised control and power, and “recognized four religions” (Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism and Augustan Confession). But then, after France severed diplomatic relations with the Vatican (1804) and practiced the principle of the separation between the Church and the State (1905), the “four recognized religions” disappeared along with related financial support. Only after the Second World War, and when under the new Constitution, France became a secular Republic, was the problem solved according to the present model.

Thirdly, there are also differences among countries about conditions and modalities on registration for a religion’s legal person. Many countries take this as a national issue (Poland, Italy and Germany), while others (Bulgaria, for example) consider involving provincial or city councils. Others still assign registration competence to national administrative or judiciary institutions, e.g. Court of Justice (Bulgaria), Ministry of Religion (Poland), Parliament (Lithuania).

On conditions for registration, there are differences, too, among different countries, where the main material assets, personnel and financial capacity. Besides, “package” recognition or “individual” recognition of each religious group in the society or the religious community also constitutes a problem conducive to differences in religious legislation among countries over the world.

Fourthly, recognition of a religious organization - by registration, in this case – often gives rise to a quite complicated legal problem: does this mean simultaneous recognition of both subjects of right, namely the *physical person* and *juridical person*?

Obviously, the issue of religious juridical person is closely linked to the administration and assets of religions as well as their other economic social and cultural interests. That is why in many countries, apart from the aspects described above, there is also a role for the Civil Code to play, and recognition does not imply juridical person status. In religious laws of many countries, religious organizations are thus recognized as “lawful entities under Chapter... Article... of the Civil Code”.

There are studies that expand the problem very interestingly. Firstly, isn’t it necessary to expand recognition of juridical person status for religious organizations to inter-state law? Secondly, coordination between state legal documents and application of religious law (as non - state law) when there appear conflicts, especially over assets, as has been experimented by Canadian courts⁹.

4. Some remarks

a. Over recent decades, *recognition of religious organization remains a universal process of religious law making* in many countries and regions. It is challenging not only for countries choosing the first or third model, but also for those adopting the second secular

model. For many countries, “respect for other religions” is not easily practicable especially in the context of religious globalization, where the religious system in every country tends to develop toward pluralism.

In particular, the problem of minor religious groups has been ever more challenging to religious law systems in all countries. For instance, in a Southeast Asian nation the Baptist community may be minor but a broader look would find Protestantism the denomination in such nation such as the U.S. In another example, the Mormons (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) are “minor” but, with their total number of over 5 million they rank 5th in the US (after the Catholics, The Baptists, Methodists and The Church of God in Christ, and interestingly, before the Judaists).

In their recent work *Defining Religion*, W. Cole Durham and Elizabeth A. Sewell put forward the theory of “limited concession” for cases when the State has to define religions. More specifically, according to the theory, if a group considers itself a religion, or has religious activities or signs, the state’s responsibility to respect and protect religions requires an assumption to support the affirmative of the religious character of that ground or those activities or signs. This assumption should be very powerful and practically important¹⁰.

Anyway, *the second model*, for selective recognition of religious groups, is still applied in many countries, despite criticism as to its limitations in practising the rule of neutrality of the State in relation to religions. Of course, the choice of models is a country’s internal affair. And yet there is another fundamental principle of international law to be taken into consideration: non – interference in each other’s internal affairs!

b. Recognition of religions depends not only on the choice of *secular state model*, but also on the cultural and religious traditions of each nation¹¹. It is, however, necessary to note that the relationship between the religious phenomena and state laws as well as religious laws is changing constantly. This can be seen in the rather radical changes in such state opting for the concordatory way as Spain, Poland and Italy. Besides, the powerful developments in the civilization, culture and society also result in changes in the way the state looks at religious realities.

Many changes occurred to what is called “secular conservatives” have resulted in more and more open and practical recognition of religious organizations. Yet, at the same time, with the promotion of legislation on religious juridical person along with many related measures, which better protect religious activities, the state has gained more advantages in the “peaceful co-existence”. This situation on one hand, does not require the state to recognize all religious organizations or phenomena. On the other hand, it implies that State laws should incorporate respect for religious organizations, sometimes

this goes beyond national law systems and involves the international private law system as well.

c. On registration procedures, there are *three basic factors*: Conditions for registration, registration packet, and competence for registration approval. Of these factors, most important is the Registration packet. In general, all nations emphasize the charter or statutes of the applicant; besides information about its founder, list of citizens members of the organization, locating of its headquarters and its financial capacity is also required.

Many countries pay particular attention to the condition that a religious organization should have independent assets (real estate, movable property, sources of income including donations and grants from the state (see T.L.1, T.L. 3). On the other hand, most states reserve preferential taxation for religious group such as tax exemption or reduction, when they actually operate on a non - profit basis (see T.L.1; T.L.2). Generally speaking, registration procedures tend to become more simple, more convenient to both the state and religions, and better highlight the state's secular and neutral characters. This helps expand the citizens' right to religious and spiritual freedom, while ensuring state ministration.

d. In the recognition of religious organizations, as aspect that deserves attention is the international relations of religious individuals and groups. It could be said that international relations represent a characteristic of major religions, especially in the present context of international integration and globalization.

Religious law in many countries are paying ever greater attention to this issue, under the following shared principle: facilitate the international integration of domestic religions in keeping with the trend for religious globalization, while upholding the principle of maintaining national sovereignty and security in the international relations of religious individual and organizations.

The Case of Vietnam

1. In early legal normative documents issued by the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, founded right after the victory of the August Revolution (1945), there were decrees related to the religious issue. For example:

- The Decree on the Right of Freedom of Belief (Viet Nam Dan quoc Cong bao or Vietnamese Official Gazette, No. 1, October 6th 1945).

- The Decree No. 65, November 23rd 1945 on Protection of Historical and Religious Relics (Viet Nam Dan quoc Cong bao, March 2nd, 1946).

- The Decree No. 22, December 10th 1945 stipulating for New Year holidays and historical and religious anniversaries.

Regarding recognition of religious organizations, there are newly-discovered materials related to the Ho Chi Minh Government's recognition of establishments belonging to the Tonkin (Northern Vietnam) Buddhist Sangha and the Vietnam Catholic Church.

In September and early October 1945, President Ho Chi Minh personally invited and received at the Presidential Palace dignitaries from the Buddhist Catholic and Protestant churches.

The French war of reconquest naturally slowed down the process of recognition of religious organizations. It could be said, however, that the Ho Chi Minh Government was able to rally prominent religious personalities and organizations in Vietnam, contributing to forging national unity.

2. Mention should be made of Bao Dai (1913-1997), the last king in Vietnam's feudal system, when the history of religious law in Vietnam is under discussion¹².

On August 6th, 1950, Bao Dai issued Royal Edict No. 10 on religious organizations (in areas temporarily under French occupation) with the following main contents:

“Article: 1. Except for Catholicism, all other religious organizations should be considered as social, sport, cultural or entertainment associations.

Article: 7: The Government shall not license specific juridical person status for those religious organizations.

Article: 10 and 12: The administrative personnel shall exercise unlimited control over religious activities.

Article: 14 and 28: Limits shall be imposed on the asset ownership right of religions (except for the Paris Oversea Mission (MEP)).

It should be noted that the Decree of February 21st 1933, issued pursuant to the Indochinese Governor General's Decree of April 8th 1933 on associations in Cochinchina (Southern Vietnam) and French possessions such as Hanoi, Hai Phong and Da Nang, applied only to non - religious associations which enjoyed only a very limited juridical person status (See Couzinet. *Le régime des associations en Indochine*, Revue Indochinoise, No. IV, 1937, in French).

The Royal Edict No 10 issued by Bao Dai was a typical example of discrimination in the recognition of religious groups in Vietnam, which was among the reasons for the collapse of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime in latter years, as some scholars put it¹³.

In the movement of Buddhists against the Ngo Dinh Diem regime in Southern cities, there was a demand for a specific regulation on religious associations, abrogation of the harsh stipulations of Royal Edict No. 10 on non – Catholic religious organizations and a new regulation with more equalities for religious associations (see the Joint Communique

of June 16th, 1963 issued in Saigon by the Interministerial Committee and the Vietnam general Buddhist association¹⁴).

3. In the South, under the second Republic headed by Nguyen Van Thieu, there were improvements in the recognition of religious organizations.

Since 1964, many religious organizations were granted juridical person status through specific decrees:

- The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (Decree N^o. 158 of April 14th, 1964 and the Decree December 14th ratifying this Church's Charter).

- The Vietnam General Buddhist Association (Decree N^o. 1/64 of December 8th 1964).

- The Hoa Hao Buddhist Church (Decree N^o. 1/1965 of July 12th 1965).

- The Dai dao Tam ky Pho do (or Cao Dai church), Decree N^o 3/1965 of July 12th 1965.

The Ngo Dinh Diem regime made a mistake in relying on Bao Dai Royal Epict N^o 10 to set up a model that considered Catholicism a dominant religion in Vietnam while discriminating against other religions, including Protestantism. This offended the very basic principle of Vietnamese religious life.

Even though the Nguyen Van Thieu regime tried to bring remedies the problems seem to remain.

4. It can be said that with the Decree No. 234 – SL of June 14th 1955 signed by President Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi on behalf of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam the foundation was laid for the establishment of a secular state in Vietnam. The option was for the second model: selective recognition of certain religions and respect for the rest. This model proves suitable to the religious life as well as political, social and cultural conditions of Vietnam.

As for recognition of *juridical person status*, the realities in religious life in Vietnam since 1955 have shown that registration of religious organizations is the most appropriate method conducive to the building of a secular state.

From 1955 to June 18th, 2004 when the Ordinance on Belief and Religion was promulgated, 15 religious organizations had their legal person status recognized, e.g:

- Decision No. 83/BT of the Council of Ministers permitting the establishment of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, December 29th, 1981.

- Decision on recognition of the legal person status of the Protestan Church of Vietnam (Northern) in 1957 and Decision on recognition of the legal person status of the Protestant Church of Vietnam (Southern) in 2001.

- As for Caodaism, from 1996 to 2003, 9 denominations were recognized, beginning with the Tay Ninh denomination¹⁵.

It is known that countries opting for the second model, i.e. “selective recognition of certain religions” often owe a legal “debt” namely “respect for other religions”. Especially, for nations with a rich and diversified religious system such as Vietnam, examination of “minor religious groups” has become ever more pressing¹⁶. “Minor religious groups” is a term used in religious sociology. For religious law, it represents the “other religions” to which secular states choosing the second model should pay attention¹⁷.

An important improvement in the evolution of religious legislation in Vietnam can be seen in the Ordinance on Belief and Religion promulgated by the President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and especially, the Instruction No. 1 of the Prime Minister on some tasks regarding Protestantism (February 4th, 2005)¹⁷. The Instruction not only deals with “tasks regarding Protestantism, but opens a new stage of in Vietnamese religious legislation, that of recognition of the juridical person status of “minor religious groups”, those “other religions” that the secular state should “respect”¹⁸.

REFERENCES:

¹. Researching on 100 years of building the secular state in the France, J. Baubérot proposes 4 “feasible” models: Firstly: “Ethnic – religious”; Secondly: “civic religion”; Thirdly: “priority for religious pluralism”; and Fourthly: “laïcité” (see: J. Bauberot. *Laïcité et secularisation dans crise de la modernité en Europe la documentation Française*, No. 273, 10, 1945. Meanwhile, Francis Messner summarizes these three following models: 1. Concordance (concordataire) for nations where religions are dominant; 2. This model is for the religious pluralism which the state recognizes some selective religions and respects the others; 3. Laïcité: the state recognizes no religions and every religion has to practise the “secular principle” before the state (see B. Basdevant – Gaudemet et Francis Messner. *Les origines historiques du Statut des Confessions religieuse dans les pays de l’ Union européenne*, Puf, Paris, 1999; Francis Messner, P. H. Prélôt, J. M Woehrling. *Traité de droit français des religions*, Ed. Litec, Paris, 2003.

². E. Caparros L. Léon Chistians. *La religion en droit comparé à l’ aube du XXIe siècle*, ed. Bruylaut, Bruxelles, 2000.

³. In December 9th, 1905 when the France declared the “Law on Separation between the Church and the State” (Loi la Séparation dé Églises et de l’Etat), the concordatory model was dismissed via Article No. 44 along with regulations signed before by the Pop and the French government.

⁴. The Thai Constitution in 1997, at the Article No. 8, defined Buddhism the national religion and required that the King of Thailand must be a Buddhist follower. See S.Sucharitkul. *Thailand and Buddhist Law*, in *La religion en droit compré à l’aube du XXI, Siècle*, ibid. Many European nations (such as Egypt, 1975) in their constitutions still considered the Orthodox church the “prevailing religion” and saw the selective acquirement of canons into the state law only as the “bilateral pollination”.

⁵. See the Vietnamese version translated from Japanese by Nguyen Ngoc Nghiep Ed. Pham Hong Thai. *Religious life in contemporary Japan*. Hanoi, Social Sciences Publishing House: 195-251.

⁶. See: *Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Deskbook*, Martiuis Nijhoff Publishes, Netherland, 2004.

⁷. Statistical Abstract of the U.S, 2001. *Revue Internationale*, No. Février, 2002. In the year 2003, the number of Catholic believers in the U.S is 65.2 millions (accounted for around 25% of the population). If we compare with Protestant denominations, the number of follower is at the second. Only the Baptist in 2001 had nearly 34 millions followers (17% population). See: Time Almanac 2005, p. 366.

⁸. B. Basdevant-Gaudemet. *Droit et religions en France* or E. Caparros. *Rapport Général*, in *La religion en droit comparé à l'aube*, ibid.

⁹. A.VM. Struycken. *Le droit religieux et son application par les juridictions civiles et religieuses coexistence interrelations influences réciproques aux Pays-Bas* in *La religion en droit comparé à l'aube*, ibid.

¹⁰. W.Cole Durham and Elizabeth A. Sewell. *Definition of Religion*: 158 (the draft).

¹¹. Articles No. 7 and 10 in the Decree on Management and Protection on religious activities in Lao People's Democratic Republic (2002) define: The registration for a religious organization and religious management under the authority of the Lao's Central Front for National Building.

¹². In August 30th, 1945, the King Bao Dai abdicated with a famous saying: "I'd rather be a citizen of an independent country than a king of a oppressed country". He agreed to be supervisor for the Ho Chi Minh Government in the beginning of the year 1946. Then he fled to Hongkong. In 1949, he became the "head of state", fighting against the Ho Chi Minh Government.

¹³. When the French withdrawn from the South of Vietnam in April 1956 and when Ngo Dinh Diem became the "President of Republic of Vietnam (in the South)" in October 26th, 1956, Bao Dai had to go and live in exile in France. However, the Royal Epict No. 10 was still applied in the South of Vietnam in the First Republic headed by Ngo Dinh Diem.

¹⁴. Tue Si. *Viet Nam tranh dau su (The history of fighting in Vietnam)*, Saigon 1964 or Vu Van Mau, ibid, pp. 372-373.

¹⁵. See: *Documents on organization and leadership of religious organizations in Vietnam*, the Religion Publishing House, 2003. The author has stated very clearly about this viewpoint, such as in: *From renovation in awareness to renovation in religious policies*, the Journal of Religious Works (No. 1, August 2005); Need a more commitment in renovating religious policies, Laodong (Labour) newspaper, February 21st and 22nd, 2006 or in the People Daily, No. 3, 2006.

¹⁶. See more in Rudiuski and Shapio. *Freedom of religion: International Conventions and National Laws*, in the Journal of State and Law, No. 5, 1992 (Russian).

¹⁷. The Government Committee for Religious Affairs. *Vietnamese Legal Documents on Belief and Religion*, the Religion Publishing House, Hanoi 2005.

¹⁸. After the Instruction No. 01 (2005), the Vietnamese Government offer policy for many religious sects such as Tinh Do Cu si Phat hoi, Tu An Hieu Nghia, Buu Son Ky Huong, Bahaiism and some Protestant branches such as: Co doc truyen giao, Co doc Phuc lam, Baptist, etc to be able to register their religious activities. The government step by step recognize those organizations according to the Ordinance on Belief and Religion and the Instructions to apply the Ordinance (see more in the article by Ngo Yen Thi, the head of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs. *Religious Policy in the tenth Vietnamese Communist Party Congress's Documents*, the Journal of Religious Works, July, 2006).