

BOOK REVIEWS*Some Religions in Vietnam*

Author: **Nguyễn Thanh Xuân**, Religious Publishing House, Hanoi 2005.

Despite of the fact that enduring wars caused great loss to the research materials on religion in Vietnam and in-depth research in religion in Vietnam is just at the beginning, “Some religions in Vietnam” is an useful material for anyone who is concerned with religion matter in Vietnam and for those who are dealing with religious affairs. The author spends 450 pages introducing about six major religions in Vietnam: Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islamism, Caodaism and Hòa Hảo Buddhism. Each is systematically presented from historical establishment, development to teachings, bibles; from canons, rituals to organisational framework and hierarchy. To religions originated from out side of the country, the author arranges one section for an overview about the history of its mission in Vietnam which is one of the advantages of the book.

Yet Nguyễn Thanh Xuân goes further by summarising basic dogma of each religion along with comparison to help the audience make difference among various religions, especially their denominations. Thus even experts on religion would find it interesting reading on pages where the author compares similarities and differences among ten official branches of Buddhism Mahayana and Theravada (pp 65-67), between Catholicism and Orthodox (p. 153) and especially 21 different points between Catholicism and Protestantism (pp. 227-241).

He also discusses clearly on confused words regarding Christianity in Vietnam in page 113 and, at the same time, show the audience basic differences among Protestant denominations or Caodaism’s various branches. Audiences will also be very excited reading the book since they can find useful knowledge. I, however, wish that the author could have more pages introducing Confucianism and Taoism regardless controversial opinions agreeing that they are truly religions or not because these faiths leaves profound influences on Vietnamese culture and society.

If each religion’s contribution to Vietnamese history and to the people is also presented in the book, audience would learn more about Renewal process in Vietnamese Party’s thoughts on the religious issue.

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