

TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS SPACES IN HANOI IN THE CONTEXT OF URBANIZATION

***Abstract:** Located in the Red river delta, Hanoi is the place that hosts a wide range of structures built to worship supernatural forces. These structures are called sacred spaces or religious spaces by the academia. International and national scientists have recently increased the study of religion through its tangible and material manifestation. The notable points in these research works are that through doing research on religious spaces one can accumulate various valuable information about, thus enriching common knowledge of, religious life. At the same time, in the social context conditioned by globalization of culture, modernization and urbanization, the religious life is experiencing changes. Religious spaces tend to change accordingly. In urbanizing Hanoi, what are typical activities that transform the religious spaces? What are the consequences of this transformation? What are main actors playing the key role in that process? This article contributes to clarification of these issues.*

***Key words:** Transformation; reconfiguration; religious space; Hanoi; urbanization*

Introduction

Hanoi is now the place which witnesses the ever rapid urbanization in its history¹. The number of core urban areas increased from 5 in 1945 to 30 in 2008 when Hanoi expanded its

*. Ph.D, Institute for Religious Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences. This article is a product of the ministry-levelled project *Religious spaces in the context of urbanization: The case of Hanoi* under the administration of the Institute for Religious Studies. Manuscript received: 8th September 2020; Decision to publish: 21st September 2020.

territory. The geographical expansion of Hanoi, now on the total area of 3.344,7 square kms, has been a response towards urbanization of the capital region. This process comes with major changes in urban population, culture, ways of life and economic activities. Among observable changes in this capital city, there are notable changes in the religious life. Research works about religion in Hanoi often focus on changing trends in religious beliefs, ritual practices, quantity and quality of religious adherents, forms of religious communities or the interactions between the religious institution and the non-religious or secular institutions such as the political, the economical and the legal, etc. However, investigations on material manifestation of religious beliefs such as places for worship, religious symbols and objects and their transformation through time and in association with religious changes are rare.

Basing on theoretical grounds on religious space and reproduction of religious space, in combination with data collected from field work during 2019-2020, this article seeks to identify and analyze interfering activities that transform religious spaces in Hanoi since Renovation under the impacts and conditions of urbanization. In this article, concepts such as “religious spaces” and/or “sacred spaces” are used interchangeably, both refer to material manifestation of beliefs in the power of supernatural forces. They are physical structures built up by human beings in certain places to worship these entities. The article focuses its analyses on the wide range of spaces of both institutional and non-institutional religions in contemporary Hanoi, thus including Christian churches, Buddhist pagodas, Islamic mosque and worshipping structures of indigenous religions and folk beliefs such as church of Caodaiism, communal house, temples, and shrines.

Religious spaces under the pressure of urbanization

What kind of challenges and opportunities for religious spaces brought by the powerful progress of urbanization? There are a number of research works in Vietnam touch upon this issue. In a research project on social and cultural changes of the villages being upgraded to districts in Hanoi, changes in these communities are summarized

as: the emphasis on individual's way of life; the individual freedom arises as communal linkages decreases; the rise in the number of the rich people; the rise of clash in ways of life between the local residents and non-local migrants. The problem is then the increasing impacts of "forced urbanization" when people are not well prepared for in almost every aspect². Specially, as doing field works, the author discovered many ways that sacred spaces in villages had been renovated, removed, or modified. Degraded Buddhist pagodas were demolished so the new one can be built up meanwhile true ancient pagodas are disappearing. The problem indicated here is that the competition to construct larger and more splendid worshipping spaces puts an end to the invaluable originality of old-age structures. The direct threat from urbanization toward the sacred spaces is the scarcity of land and this causes land of the religious sites is being occupied for pursuing secular ends. Besides, sacred spaces are being turned into the place for "trading through spiritual activities"; sacred spaces are being misused; the tendency to restore the core parts of the site without the care for the surrounding settings³.

Religious spaces in Hanoi are thought to have been transformed to be suitable with the new situation characterized by urbanization. Such transformation can be observed in how religious spaces are being re-adjusted, especially to shrunken in size and scope. This happens to both religious spaces of the community and of the family. It can also be seen through the arising function of tourism that is now expected from religious sites⁴. This direct in the transformation of religious spaces also causes impact on religious activities.

Yet it is misleading to state that transformation of religious contradicts the people's expectation and desire. For example, in Dục Nội village of Đông Anh district, a research project shows that transformation of sacred space took place according to such trends as: desacralization (because of state policies; urbanization; increased pressure of population over land; economic development and social integration); the resurrection of sacred space (refurbishment of Buddhist pagodas, communal house, the construction of new house

for worshipping ancestor of the bloodline); the expansion of various sacred spaces⁵. Despite the fact that the sacred spaces of the village have been experiencing multiple-dimensional transformation, the author argues that the transformation basically meet the expectation of the villagers, specially the old-aged ones⁶.

Review of rare research works above regarding changes in religious spaces suggest that these spaces in Hanoi are being transformed in various ways, responding to various needs, and representing different voices. What can be learnt here is that there is a special feature of modernization and urbanization in the specific case of Vietnam: the recognition of the religious element. In that context, religious spaces have not only been persevered, renovated but also diversified. Urbanization in Asia recognizes traces of different cultural identities contributed by different ethnics. The exhibition traditional elements in parallel with modern elements contributes significantly to the particular attraction of sacred spaces here.

Transformation of religious spaces in Hanoi since Renovation

Throughout history, Hanoi has had very high density of religious spaces. Further, there are not only religious spaces belong to the household or community but also to the nation. Over a millennia, Hanoi as the national center for politics, economics and culture, houses a variety of beliefs in the supernatural in association with ritual practices and spaces built up for those practices. The beliefs in various forms of the supernatural are manifested in polytheism as a traditional way of viewing the world. People living Hanoi of the Red river delta, since the Thăng Long citadel was established until the modern times, have been influenced by the Three teachings (Tam giáo), nurtured indigenous religious beliefs (worship ancestor, souls of the dead, natural gods, persons with great contribution for the community and the nation), while continuously received religions from foreign cultures (Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, etc.). The diversity of religious beliefs is resulted in the diversity and diversification of religious spaces. In Hanoi before 1986, there existed religious spaces that are popular in the Red river delta such as pagoda, communal

houses, temples, shrines... Moreover, there are religious spaces which are rarely found in other provinces of the delta such as the mosque of Islam, the temple of The Southern Buddhist Association of the Enlighten masters (Phật đường Nam tông Minh sư đạo), and the churches of Caodaism. Spaces of the folk religion in Hanoi are showing the tendency of integration of various sacred entities into one place thus contribute to the openness and syncretism of religious spaces in this city.

Religious spaces in Hanoi can be identified via examining the the existence and display of religious symbols (statues and objects), ritual practices, indoctrination, education and training for the professional, and the general religious activities of the members of the religious community. In regard to classification of religious spaces, one could base on such criteria as location, types, age or the subjects of creation.

In recent decades, most public religious spaces in Hanoi experience transformation at different levels. Such process is the result of a wide range of human interfering activities. This research generalizes those activities into these following trends.

Restoration of old-aged religious spaces

This is a very popular activity in the Red river delta, especially in Hanoi. The restoration of religious spaces here means the rebuilding of worshipping places, such as Buddhism pagoda, communal houses, shrines, house for worshipping ancestors which once existed but have been eradicated because of natural or human activities, or fallen into unusable conditions. The restoration work take place in two main directions: restoration to the original form and restoration with modification. In practices, the former often faces great obstacles because of the lack of reliable references, not to mention the difficulties in techniques and materials and arising expectations from worshipping places. Hence restoration with modification is more popular.

For religious spaces that have been classified as heritages with significant historical, cultural and architectural values, the state will take responsibilities. In that case, mostly local people only participate in the process as representatives in the Board of heritage management

or watchers as restoration work take places. The state, with powerful financial resources, the ability to hire professional consultancies and architectures, and well-prepared plans often makes the public feel pleased as restoring religious spaces. For example, the restoration of the Temple of Literature site (Văn miếu Quốc tử giám), known the center of Confucianism, since the modern times has gone through many projects of restoration and maintenance. Built since 1070, the complex including the core component (house for worshipping Confucius and his disciples and houses of steles for honoring successful students) and subordinate components (Văn lake and Giám garden) were preserved and maintained through feudal dynasties. In 1947, the French troops destroyed the core components. Since 1990, under the Ministry of Culture and Information's direction, many projects have been implemented to restore and maintained to restore and maintain different parts of the whole site. In 1994, houses of steles were renovated and in 1999, the core components were rebuilt. At the present, other parts are being restored, such as Văn lake and Kim Châu island (in the middle of the lake). In any way, the restoration of the site has got many favourable conditions since it is classified as Special National Heritage monument. The restoration of the site typically represents the effort to restore its to the original form.

Restoration with modification is more popular, however. In the Renovation context, people begin to restore their sacred spaces mainly base on their collective memories or on any evidences remained in the forms of stone steles, royal appointment of deities, biography of deities or the left-over of the monument on the ground. For example, since 1990s, Hanoi began restoration of the three temples for Tản Viên (god of the Tản Viên mountain), including: the Upper temple, the Middle temple and the Lower temple, all located on the Ba Vi range. These three temples existed before but were all under bad conditions. In 2011, the Hanoi's People Committee organized the Opening event for the restoration project. According to information from an officials from the Hanoi Department for Culture and Sports, this project is a typical case of how financial resources have been socially mobilized. VINACONEX, a commercial construction

company was among the main sponsors and also the contractor of the project. The Middle temple, for example, was built on the area of 11.500 square meters with main components such as the temple for the God of the Tản Viên mountain, the temple for Mother goddesses, the shrine for White Tiger, gate, house for burning of votive objects, water closet systems, gardens, and roads. The temples were built with frames made from steel and concrete and woods. Besides, main pillars were painted with industrial paints so they looked like real woods. The total investment for the construction was over 30 billions VND (1,500,000 US dollars). The three temples are now classified as National heritages⁷. According to local people, these temples were all built with larger sizes in comparison to their status before, with more components and the use of modern construction materials. Therefore, this restoration was actually building a brand new spaces rather than restoration something to its original forms.

Another case of restoration of religious spaces is the reconstruction of Đường Yên communal house in Đông Anh district. According to villager's memories, the communal house was built since late 18th century, under the late Lê dynasty. When Land reform movement took place, it was turned into the store house managing by the local authority's Co-operative. Then the communal house was entirely demolished to replace with a village primary school in 1975. In 2004, the village school was moved to other area of the village. The local people took this opportunity to reclaim their sacred space. They raised their voice by logging their petition to the authority in asking for permission to rebuild the communal house on the exact position before. After almost two years for resolving problems in relations to policy and paper procedures, the local authorities gave permission of building to villagers. In 2008, with funding and labour contributed by the villagers, the brand new communal house was built up. The construction of this village communal house came along with the restored village traditional festival⁸.

Another example is about the reconstruction of the shrine for Lord Linh Lang. In 2012, the shrine was rebuilt on its previous ground by

the local authority and people of Đặng Xá ward (Gia Lâm district) with sponsorship from Viglacera company. Villagers told us that the new shrine was bigger than the original one. Beside, in the past, it was located by the boundary of the village and not much cared by the villagers. Now it was at the center of the new urban area and receives attention by many people, including those living in the Đặng Xá apartments. This is the example of the harmonious combination among urbanization, preservation and restoration of a religious space.

Yet restoration is complicated risky since the original structure can be terribly damaged during the work or the newly rebuilt structure is not acceptable according to normal standard. An example for this is the restoration of the temple for Goddess of Tamarind in Phương Cách village (Quốc Oai district). In the villagers' memories, on the peak of the Kỳ Lân mountain, there existed a temple with a stone statue that represented the Goddess's appearance. It was built before the 18th century. The temple was destroyed when the French troops came to mine the stone. However, the ground and altar of the temple were remained. In 2004, the villagers rebuilt the temple on the mountain without the local authority's approval. The local authorities decided that the temple was "illegally built" then pulled it down. In return, by late 2005, the authorities built a new temple at the foot of the mountain and put in there a new statue of the Goddess. However, the villagers were so frustrated with the new temple and statue because they could find nothing that resonated their memories of their Goddess⁹. More importantly, the sacredness of the temple, according to their view, was dependent on its original position, that was on the top of the mountain, not at its foot. This example shows that if a new religious space is built with alien features to the local people's memories and imagination, it will not be accepted. Without agreement between the authorities and the people, a newly built religious space may stand "lifelessly" and make no sense.

In 2019, villagers in Lương Xá village (Ứng Hòa district) dismantled the village's 300-years-old village communal house

without the authorities' permission. They built the new one with modern construction materials. Old architectural components at the high values of arts were taken down, made redundant and replaced by brand new components. The process of reconstruction had no approval by the authorities, no surveillance by the technical experts and followed no proper procedure in preservation of precious components belonging to old-aged monuments. The reconstruction was stopped by the city authorities when it went a half way through. Then related parties, including the authorities and the villagers met and discussed possible resolutions. Indeed, the villagers said they were not totally wrong as implementing the reconstruction project because the old-aged communal house had long been in worse condition and about to collapse at any time. Meanwhile, the demand of performing rituals to the village tutelary deities and to organize the village festival went in recent years. The local authorities, meanwhile, explained that nothing they could do since the communal house had not been officially classified yet. Without official recognition by the state, no maintenance work was allowed to implement.

There are underground sacred spaces that have been discovered during urbanization. For example, during the construction of the Kim Liên - Ô Chợ Dừa road in the inner city, at the Tây Sơn junction, remains of an ancient structure were found under the ground. Social researchers gave a hypothesis that it could be the Esplanade to the Earth, a large out-door altar built up by kings of the feudal times to worship the God of the earth. Whatever it was, it seemed that a sacred space was uncovered yet the authorities decided to remain the structure where it was then covered it by cement and concrete. The main reason was that the city authorities had not plan to do with the ruins and they had no maintain the progress of road construction.

In reality, restoration often takes place with religious spaces that have not been classified as cultural monuments by the state. People's activities of restoration are diverse yet depend on the ability of the ability to mobilize financial resources and in hiring the skillful builders. These activities also take different directions. Basically,

when the local people seek to restore their sacred spaces, they focus on making their sacred spaces larger in size and scope, more shiny and durable than before. Financial resources mobilized are often well managed and spent with transparency. The whole process of construction is often carefully watched. This comes from the belief that the spirits will punish anyone who corrupts the community's property and financial resources. Restoration of sacred space is serious considered responsibility, duty and for community's interests thus often finished with desirable results.

There are, however, concerning trends in restoration. *First*, it is the tendency to clone architecture and decoration. This is often resulted in the formation of many similar structures and unintentionally erase local and/or historical particularity of architecture of the original sacred space. *Second*, people tend to make their religious spaces latter larger in size than the original. This means there is a competition in making sacred space more attractive and impressive. *Third*, that is the tendency to utilize modern materials and technology in building and decorating religious spaces. Further, modern lighting systems with colorful bulbs are installed. Consequently, religious spaces become shiny and splendid yet to many people look “lifeless soulless”.

Generally speaking, restoration of religious spaces, seen as sacred spaces, is on high demand and a wide movement in Hanoi. In this city which has been expanded since 2008, there are many villages with sacred spaces belonging to both folk religion and the institutionalized religions. For various reasons, many religious spaces have disappeared and now their restoration is important to the villagers. Participation into this process, for many villagers, is an act that brings meanings to their individual life and benefits their relatives and younger generations.

Renovation of religious spaces

Renovating pre-existing religious spaces is the most popular activity. This includes both the maintainance, repair and upgrade the spaces. Upgrade here means both the increase in terms of size, scope,

durability and quality of objects and decoration plus the expansion of the whole site with the construction of peripheral components such as guest houses, store house, guard unit, car parks, garden, roads, fence, water closets and lighting system.

The state's heritagization of religious spaces has turned many spaces into classified cultural or historical monuments. According to a report by the Hanoi Department for Culture and Sports, 2,225 out of 5,922 monuments are in the status of degradation. Among these, there are 279 monuments in dangerous conditions and must be renovated. For this reality, Hanoi issued the Decision No. 6269/QĐ-UBND dated 16/11/2017 regarding provision of financial support for localities to repair and maintain 50 classified degraded monuments. The amount of money was more than 2 US millions. The report also reveals that in 2016, 2017 and 2018, the number of monuments received money for maintainance were 170, 102, and 47 respectively. In these three years, there were 319 classified monuments were maintained¹⁰. This shows that Hanoi is quite active in preservation and maintainance of monuments in which the majority is religious sites.

For Catholicism in Hanoi, there are many churches that have been maintained and renovated in recent years. The renovation of Catholic sacred spaces can be clearly seen via the creation of functional components to meet the need of protection and development of the faith. Generally speaking, for Catholicism here, the renovation of religious spaces focuses on the construction of house for religious services. This is the place built for multiple religious activities next to the church.

For Buddhism, the construction of supplementary components is quite common. It is often found that village Buddhist pagoda are old and lack of monk-in-charge. Once a monk or a nun is assigned the administrative job there, sooner or later he or she will call for sponsorship and implement maintainance or upgrade the village pagoda. A series of activities will take place, such as building of the gate, redecorate the altars, repaint the statues (with gold), make bronze bells, build spaces for worshipping mother goddesses, construct

houses for monks and nuns and rooms for preparing offerings. Whenever extra money is accumulated, they will purchase surrounding lands to expand the whole site. There are cases that the construction of supplementary components is irrelevant because they overwhelm the original monument. For example, in 2015, Hương Nghiễm double-storey house for dharma was built in side the Hương pagoda site. Although this is the supplementary component including dining room, sleeping room, water closet, its height and scope negatively affect the landscape of the site.

For the folk religion, maintainance and renovation take place in various aspects and levels with participation of different actors. Communal houses, temples and shrines are repaired, restored, and beautified. Further, the main trend is that communities try to expand the site to any possible directions and rework the surrounding landscape.

One kind of new sacred space, often built within existing religious spaces, is the altar or chamber of worship for national heroes of the modern times. The altar for Hồ Chí Minh inside Buddhist pagoda or communal houses has been quite popular in Hanoi in recent decades. On this altar, his image or statue is placed along with incense stick holder, and fresh flowers and fruits as offerings. This kind of worshipping space for Hồ Chí Minh can even been found in some offices of state organs in Hanoi. Besides, there are spots for worshipping war martyrs integrated inside a pagoda or communal houses' space. Typical examples are houses of worship for war martyrs at Bồ Đề pagoda (Gia Lâm district) or at Thịnh Liệt communal house (Hoàng Mai district).

For state's recognized and classified religious spaces, the maintainance and renovation often take two directions. The first come with the special treatment by the state. For the spaces that have been classified as Special National Monument, the state takes full responsibilities and control of the maintainance and renovation. By 2018, there were 16 sites classified as National Special Monument. Among these 15 are religious sites.

The second direction is set for sites under second class, that is of National Monument and Provincial Monument. For these class, local people can participate in maintenance and renovation of the site either by donating money, labour or becoming members of the Management Board of monument. The route to “heritagization” religious sites by the state promotes reputation for these spaces and enables the reception of a part of, not full, financial support for any projects of maintenance or renovation.

For unclassified religious sites, the maintenance or renovation depends on the local community’s financial capacity and volunteers. Thus, people cannot assure the quality of work. In this case, there appear cases that religious spaces are distorted, falsely modified, devalued, or put in danger of destruction.

Creation of new religious spaces

Newly created religious spaces here mean the spaces only appear in recent decades. They are either new in terms of year of construction, or in details in architecture, the use of modern materials and the techniques of construction. In Hanoi, there also appear new religious spaces associated with new objects of worship. These can be divided into two types. The first are new religious spaces but take the form of traditional sacred spaces. These include churches, pagodas, communal houses, temples, shrines that have just been built in recent decades.

New Buddhist pagodas appeared in Hanoi in great number, especially at the celebration of 1,000 years of Thăng Long - Hà Nội. Yên Phú (Khánh Hưng Tự) pagoda in Thanh Trì is an example. This is the pagoda with long history yet only some tombs of monks were left while all other structures had disappeared. In local villagers' memories, during 1930s, it was a pagoda that faced west. In 2011, the new pagoda was built with sheer size, multiple rooms and faced new direction. Everything was made from concrete and steel with cover painted like wood color. Similar cases can be found throughout Hanoi.

In Hanoi, there are many Catholic churches that are newly built. In 10 churches we went to investigate, 9 are built recently. Most of these churches are built on pre-existing ground of degraded

churches. Yet the building of these new churches often come along with the building of extra new components or renovation while restoration of the original version did not take place. Churches such as Hoàng Thôn (Từ Liêm district), Đồng Trì (Thanh Trì district), Cổ Nhuế (Bắc Từ Liêm district) have been renovated from the original version, now with double storey and combined European and Asian architectural details.

It could be said that religious spaces in Hanoi are being renewed in terms of architecture and appearance. This suggests that internal shifts of religious beliefs and practices can now be observed externally.

Spaces recently built with modern outlook but still serve the need to to perform religious rituals are something new in Hanoi. These are structures built to commemorate national heroes, including temples, commemorative houses, monuments and war martyr cemetery. Besides, there appear new religious spaces that are built and integrated into secular spaces.

In recent years, throughout the nation, there emerge many commemorative dedicated to national hero of the modern times, such as Hồ Chí Minh¹¹. In Hanoi, the temple for Hồ Chí Minh was accomplished in 1999 on Ba Vì mountain (Ba Vì district) and Commemorative house for Hồ Chí Minh built in 2015 at K9 Revolutionary site (Sơn Tây district) are typical cases. Both were built with the traditional form of temple with altar inside. Rituals take place quite regularly at these places. On the National independence day, national leaders often come and perform rituals.

In recent decades since Renovation, there appear new monuments, too. For example, the monument of king Quang Trung in Hai Bà Trưng district (1990), king Lý Thái Tổ in Hoàn Kiếm district (2004), Saint Gióng (Sóc Sơn district), Empress Ý Lan in Gia Lâm district (2010), etc. These are monuments built with secular purpose, that is to commemorate those who contributed significantly to national independence. However, these can be considered sacred spaces as well since rituals of sacralization were held there. Further, rituals with offerings are regularly performed at these spaces around the year.

These spaces are characterized by openness, easy accessibility, highly symbolized, and designed with modern look.

There are new religious spaces built by entrepreneurs whose business is construction of new urban residential areas. These are structures with the form of a temple or Buddhist pagoda built inside those residential areas. For example, on the roof of the Nam Xa La apartment building (Hà Đông district), *Nam Xa La pagoda* was built with altar for Buddha inside. Another case is the Hòa Bình Green City high-rised apartments (Hai Bà Trưng district). On the top of the twin towers, two Buddhist pagoda were built. In the commercial advertisement for this building, these “spiritual pagoda” are the unique feature of the residential area. It is said that people who purchase apartment here would be “free from fear” since they “live under Buddha’s feet”.

In another cases, inside the Imperial complex (Thanh Xuân district), a temple for earth god was build on the ground next to the main buildings. This is a part of the original design so that residents can perform rituals to the earth god who is believed to guard the whole area. At the entrance of the D2 Giảng Võ apartment building (Ba Đình district), one can see a small altar designated for worshipping earth god next to the main entrance. These spaces are different in design and decoration.

In the case of Protestantism in Hanoi, for many groups, followers do not need a real, physical church. Any place, like a hired flat or a private can be called the place to worship God. Their religious spaces are therefore flexible, temporal, mobile. In recent years in Hanoi, there appear in large number of rehabilitation center set up and operated by evangelical churches. These centers’ main method in rehabilitating the drug addicts is studying the Bible. Aquila Rehabilitation Center of the Vietnam Full Gospel Church is a typical case. Here, various religious activities take place, such as praying in groups, Bible teaching, meditating, etc. The point is that looking from outside, these centers are all looked like modern residential area. This is to say that sacred spaces of Protestantism can take any forms, and most of them in Hanoi, look like modern buildings.

Newly built religious spaces and religious spaces set up inside modern residential areas are something new, only observed in Hanoi in recent decades. Besides, only in this time do people see religious spaces built up on a very high position, like on the top of apartment building, or downsized to fit in narrowed living spaces in inner city. These kind of new religious spaces challenge the authorities in granting construction permission and legalization of their existence because the owners often register these structures as spaces built up for secular purposes.

Conclusion

Each religious space in Hanoi plays a certain role in transmitting and manifesting meanings, values and timeless symbols of the cultural identities of communities in the Red river delta. Each space holds and continues to transmit lively collective memories relating to beliefs in the sacred and to the community's traditional world views. These spaces, constituted by both physical heritages inherited from previous generations and by structures newly built for worshipping purposes, have really experienced profound changes since Hanoi entered the Renovation era. Residents in Hanoi - the leading city in terms of modernization, urbanization and international integration - are increasing interfering activities into religious spaces thus transforming them.

Analyses in this research have shown that these transformative activities are caused by involvement of different actors, including the state and the entrepreneurs and the religious people, who seek to obtain different purposes. The former focus on secular purposes such as realization of political agenda or pursuing economic profit. The state, for example, reaffirms its leadership through selection, heritagization, and renovation of religious spaces which are considered being rich in historical and cultural values. Meanwhile, the entrepreneurs sees their opportunities to make money through promotion of tourism. Yet for latter, including the religious organizations, communities or individuals, their involvement in transformation of religious spaces is mainly to satisfy their religious needs. In rapidly urbanizing Hanoi, there were and will be contestations and conflicts between these main factors as both

engaging in transformation of religious spaces because it is a powerful process. It creates tremendous pressure on the preservation and protection of land once reserved for religious purpose, belonged to the community, yet now subjected to turn into lands for apartment buildings, company, supermarket, restaurant or shop for non-religious purposes. At the same time, to meet the needs of the increasing urban population, the expansion of city rings number 1, 2 and 3 along with upgrading infrastructures causes impacts on preservation of status – quo of a number of religious spaces. One of the consequences of the building of a city with modern design is that religious spaces have to change to become adaptive to the new landscape.

Transformation of spaces belonging to different religious traditions in Hanoi results in the broader process that can be called *reconfiguration of religious spaces*. At this unfolding process, the overall religious space in Hanoi is readjusted, rearranged and modified so as to be more adaptive to new social context. On the one hand, religious spaces increase in quantity and become more diverse in architectural forms. Spaces serving ritual practices and religious activities are being restored, maintained, expanded and upgraded so as to enhance their durability, beauty, accessibility and capacity of hosting larger groups. On the other hand, new constructed spaces for religious activities emerge. This reconfiguration follows the trend to make religious spaces more flexible, multi-functional, and more suitable with architecture and planning of contemporary urban living space. Lying underneath such creative and adaptive transformation are real efforts in obtaining social acceptance and further legitimacy for existence of old and new religious spaces.

Thus, for Hanoi, urbanization has generated both opportunities and challenges for religious spaces. Urbanization, comes with improvement of financial capacity, in many ways enables the state or the non-state actors to spend more for restoration, renovation or new creation of sacred spaces. However, it can in many ways undermines old-aged sacred spaces' originality and true beauties through intensive activities of transformation and reconfiguration./.

Notes:

- 1 Trần Thị Hồng Yến (2013), *Social and cultural changes in villages in Hanoi during urbanization*, National Politics publishing house, Hà Nội, p. 282.
- 2 Trần Thị Hồng Yến (2013). *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.
- 3 Trần Thị Hồng Yến (2013). *Ibid.*, pp.219-227.
- 4 Trần Trung Chính (2016). "Age of the city – Age of religious space", *Người đô thị (the Urban residents)*, accessed: <https://nguoidothi.net.vn/tuoi-do-thi-tuoi-cua-khong-gian-ton-giao-6246.html>, date of access: 22 April 2020.
- 5 Nguyễn Công Thảo (2020), *Looking for city within villages: Old people's narratives*, Social sciences publishing house, pp.232-250.
- 6 Nguyễn Công Thảo (2020). *Ibid.*, p.318.
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- 8 See: Lê Thị Phương (2020), Restoration of religious monument and festival: "Re-invention of tradition" and building of cultural identities through the case of Đường Yên village (Xuân Nộn, Đông Anh, Hà Nội), conference proceedings *Transformation of traditional religious spaces in the Red river delta and arising issues*, Institute for Religious Studies, Hanoi.
- 9 See: Nguyễn Ngọc Mai (2020), Transformation of traditional religious space and consequences: the case study of the temple for Goddess of Tamarind in Phương Cách (Quốc Oai, Hanoi), conference proceedings *Transformation of traditional religious spaces in the Red river delta and arising issues*, Institute for Religious Studies, Hanoi.
- 10 Hanoi Department for Culture and Sports (2019), Report on the task of management, preservation, maintainance, restoration and promotion of historical-cultural institutions in the city from 2016 to present", Hanoi, 18 May 2019.
- 11 See: Olga Dror (2020), Controversies over Monuments Commemorating Hồ Chí Minh in Vietnam, *Perspective*, ISEAS, No.43, 2020.

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