

THE CHAM MUSLIM COMMUNITY'S EXPANSION OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY VIETNAM AND RELATED ISSUES

***Abstract:** One of the major features of the Cham Muslim community in Vietnam is its active relations with other Muslim communities in the world. The Muslims' international relations have even been ever diversified, enhanced, and expanded as Vietnam intensifies its integration with the world since 1986. On analyzing quantitative and qualitative data gathered during 2018-2019, this article provides new findings on international activities of the Cham Muslim community in Vietnam. The article focuses its analyses on two main types of international relations, including those that pursue religious purposes and those target secular purposes. The author also put forward for discussion some emerging issues in the state's management of religious activities among the Cham Muslim when their international ties are expanding.*

***Key words:** Islam; Muslim; Cham community; international relation; Việt Nam.*

Introduction

The Cham is a minor ethnic among 53 ethnic minorities in Vietnam. They live in communities which, though distinguished by religious traditions, are binded by close relations on the basic of ethnicity, language, culture, and economy. According to the

* Institute for Religious Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.
The article is a product of the State-sponsored project: *Vietnam Muslim Community at Present: Reality, Changes and Recommendations for Policy*, conducted by the Institute for Religious Studies at Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

national census on economic and social reality of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019 by the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, the Cham population was 178,948 amongst those: 87,838 were male; 91,110 were female; 46,573 households with average 4 people per household; 57.9% of households used internet. During 10 years between 2009 and 2019, the increase of population was calculated at 1.01 percent¹.

Also according to the aforementioned census, regarding education, the percentage of Cham who were older than 15 and able to read and write their own ethnic language was 18.7%. This was higher than any other ethnic minorities in Vietnam. The percentage Cham who were older than 15 and able to read and write the national language was very high, at 80.8%. Those who attended secondary level were 52.9% and tertiary level was 4.2%. Therefore, there were not many people who had graduate qualification. The Cham was one of three ethnic minorities that had lowest percentage of participation in labour force (75.1%), along with the Khmer and the Chinese Vietnamese. The census also revealed that the Cham belonged to the group of 5 ethnic minorities with lowest percentage of participation in simple jobs (agriculture, forestry, maritime product industry) at 49.7%, in comparison to other 52 ethnic minorities. This partly shows the diversification of work among the Cham in the current economic context.

In term of residence, the Cham in Vietnam mainly reside in Southern provinces of the Middle region, including Bình Định, Phú Yên, Khánh Hòa, Ninh Thuận, Bình Thuận, Bình Phước, Đồng Nai, Tây Ninh, An Giang and Hồ Chí Minh city. Besides, there are Cham living in some provinces of the Central Highlands or in other cities or provinces but with a very small quantity. The most crowded Cham Muslim communities in Vietnam can be found in Ninh Thuận, An Giang, and Hồ Chí Minh city.

In term of language, the Cham uses the Malay-Polynesian language system which can be found in island nations in Southeast

Asia and the Pacific region. Thus, the Cham can communicate at primary level with residents in Malaysia or Indonesia. Today, the majority of the Cham are able to speak Vietnamese as the national language.

Among Cham communities in Vietnam today, the Cham Muslim community both shares Cham distinguished features and has particular characteristics determined by the religious factor. Islam is a monotheistic religion, originated from Arabian peninsula. In Vietnam, most Muslims are the Cham. The Cham Muslim community holds various international relations.

This article analyzes the secondary source of data, which includes reports provided by the National Statistic Office of Vietnam, published research works on the Cham Muslim and the primary data gathered by the ministerial-sponsored research project *Cham Muslim community in contemporary Vietnam: Reality, changes, and recommendation for policy* hosted by the Institute for Religious Studies at Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences. It seeks to present and analyze Cham Muslim community's international relation on two main aspects including the religious and the secular.

1. International relations for religious purposes

These relations for religious purposes between in-land Muslim community with international Muslim communities have been more popular and prominent than relations for non-religious or secular purposes. Relations for the religious purposes can be observed through these three forms: *Study and exchanges on Islam; pilgrimage; and reception of charity.*

1.1. Study and exchanges on Islam

For the Cham Muslims, it is important for the Cham Muslimism to be able to read and understand Qur'an in Arab as the original language. But to possess this ability, it will always take a long time, beginning with the study of Arabian then the true meanings of

messages written in the Qur'an. A survey by Rie Nakamura in 2008 in Ninh Thuận province revealed that the Cham Muslims here had connection with Muslim communities all over the world, received donation from Muslim tourists and financial aids from international Islamic organizations. These international relations enhanced the teaching of English for Cham Muslim children. Also from the research by Nakamura, in the view of the Cham Muslims in Ninh Thuận, Cham Muslims in An Giang were more skillfull in performing rituals and reading the Qur'an. But the Cham Muslims in Ninh Thuận argued that if a Muslim could only read the Qur'an and not fully understand it and lacked of scientific knowledge, they could fall into superstition. Thus, the Cham Muslims in Ninh Thuận paid more attention to the education of Islam for their children². This observation could be relevant during 2000s. At the time when the Institute fore Religious studies conducted the surveys, Cham Muslims in An Giang showed their significant investment for their children in schoolings in general and in study of the Qur'an in particular.

For the study and exchanges on Islam, the most popular forms were studying oversea, taking part in Qur'an recitation contests, and participating in conferences or seminars hosted by international Islamic organizations. These activities take place around the year and rely on sponsorship by international partners. The An Giang province's 2017 report on state management on religious activities indicated that during the year, the Representative Board of Islam sent one member to attend the Young Muslim Female conference in Cambodia and 02 personells to participate Muslim festival Maulid Nabi Muhamad in Bangkok, Thailand. Also in this year, 02 Muslims were sent to the Qur'an recitation contests in Brunei while several Muslims went to Hongkong for religious exchange³.

In term of the study oversea for religious purpose, although we could not gather all data evenly, it could be said that this is a very dynamic area, well representing international relations of the Cham

Muslims in Vietnam today. Studying of Islamic doctrines are considered "learning of Islam". When we asked a man of the Representative Board of Islam Mosque in Chau Giang district in An Giang province, he told us that the Muslims maintained the rule of studying the Qur'an in its original language. Thus, going oversea for studying of Islam meant coming to nations where Islamic studies were teaching in Arabian. This younger generation are expected to replace the position of current Muslim leaders who are old and lacked of proper education of Islam. They will go back and teach the community of Arabian, master the ceremonies and communicate with international partners. Besides, when going oversea for study of Islam, they would often choose Islamic nations where they can easily find Halal foods, mosques for ritual performance daily, and supports from Muslims when needed.

Another important reason for choosing Islamic nations for studying Islam is that these nations have various types of sponsorships for the Muslims. Our surveys revealed that nations where the Cham Muslimism often choose to come for education including: Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Libya, Kuwait, Turkey, UAE, and Egypt. Studying oversea take places in many forms, from short courses in Islamic studies to graduate and post-graduate programs. At nationwide scale, by 2017, there had been 50 Cham Muslimism took the discipline of Islamic studies at Islamic university of Madinah in Saudi Arabia⁴.

According to the report by the Representative Board of Islam Mosque Nurul Ehsaan in Đồng Nai province, in 2019, there were 29 children sent to Malaysia for Islamic studies with shared costs between the Malaysian organizations and the Cham family. According to the Department for Religious Affairs under the Dong Nai provincial ministry of home affairs, by december 2019, 44 Cham Muslims had went oversea for education. Within those, 15 received sponsorships from domestic or international donors.

When going overseas to learn language, the Cham Muslim often choose Arabian and English. In Ninh Thuận, according to reports by the An Giang Representative Board of Muslim community, during 2012-2017, there were 5 students went to Malaysia for education, among those, two received full scholarship from IDB (Islamic Development Bank)⁵, two paid for themselves, one paid for his own expenditure for PhD program in Arabian studies. Besides, there were 4 students who went to Egypt for religious studies under the full scholarship program awarded by Egypt government. In Hồ Chí Minh city in 2017, there was a Muslim student who received a prestigious scholarship from Darul Qur'an university in Malaysia.

In our surveys, we asked the Cham Muslims about their recent trips to foreign countries. The findings showed 524 Muslims (which accounted for 35% of the participants in the survey) reported that in their family there were members who had went to a foreign country. We asked them about the purposes of the trips and hereunders are the notable results:

Table 1: Purposes of trips to foreign countries

Purposes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>The religiously-related purposes</i>		
Pilgrimage	168	31.9
Religious studies abroad	166	31.5
Participate in Qur'an recitation contests	2	0.4
<i>The secular/non-religious purposes</i>		
Work, trading	164	31.2
Residency	66	12.5
Tourism	56	10.7
Marriage	25	4.8
Family reunion/relatives visiting	19	3.6
Others	11	2.1

Source: Data from surveys of the IRS's research project, 2019.

As can be seen from the above table, the percentage of families that have members who went for pilgrimage is 31.9% and for study oversea is 31.5% (including study of Islamic doctrines and of secular disciplines). Few participants (0.4%) told us that there were members of their families going abroad to participate in the Qur'an recitation contests. This is however a quite popular religious exchange activity. The Covid-19 pandemic was the main reason for this sharp decrease in 2019.

Below are findings of the subjects that Cham Muslims chose as going abroad for education.

Table 2: Chosen subjects as going abroad for educational purpose

Subjects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Study of Islamic doctrines	124	74.7
Finance, banking, accounting, economics, trade,...	22	13.2
Study foreign language	13	7.8
Social sciences	7	4.2
Pedagogy	6	3.6
Natural sciences	5	3.0
Information technology	4	2.4
Others	6	1.6

Thus, those who travelled oversea for study of Islamic doctrines takes the highest percentage, at 74.7%. The second highest was those going oversea for qualifications in finances, banking, economics, trading, etc. at 13.2%. The rest subjects accounted for very low percentages. This suggests the imbalanced approach in choosing subjects in foreign educational institutions. The Cham Muslims as going abroad for educational purposes have not actually given priorities to subjects that enhance their livelihoods.

As examining correlations among participants in An Giang, Hồ Chí Minh city and Ninh Thuận about fields such as study oversea, pilgrimage, and work, we came up with these following results.

In regard to study oversea, families in Ninh Thuận take the highest percentage, at 39.1% in comparison to 32% of families in Hồ Chí Minh city and 27.7% in An Giang. As we mentioned above, most of the Muslims who go oversea for education actually just to study Islamic doctrines. But one can see from the findings is that the Cham Muslim community in Ninh Thuận pays more attention to study of Islam than other two localities. This can be explained as of the demand to enhance standardizing knowledge on Islam in Ninh Thuận where people received Islam later than An Giang and Hồ Chí Minh city.

In regard to work and trade oversea, we found that Cham Muslims in An Giang scored highest (31.7%), followed by Ninh Thuận (21%) and Hồ Chí Minh city (16%). Indeed, An Giang is bordered with Cambodia and the Cham Muslim community have regular trading activities (mainly street vending) with the Cham or the Khmer living in Cambodia. Meanwhile, in Ho Chi Minh city where the educational level is higher, the residents including the Cham Muslims, have more options in looking for local jobs.

Findings also show that annually, Muslims (clergies or normal believers) participate in international religious exchanges such as conferences, seminars or forums. For example, in 2018, the Representative Board of Muslim in Hồ Chí Minh city sent its representatives to join the delegates led by the Government Committee for Religious Affairs to participate the World Muslim Minorities Summit (Istanbul); the Ethnic minorities Conference in Dubai; or in the trip led by Hồ Chí Minh city to Cambodia. According to the 2019 annual report of the Representative Board of Muslim community in Hồ Chí Minh city, two Muslims were sent to participate the *Global Forum on Peace and Social Welfare Rahmat* organized by Dakwah HG in Malaysia.

We should also take into account international Muslim delegations that have paid a visit to domestic Islam representative boards. In 2018, community at mosque Nurul Ehsaan (Đồng Nai)

received several tens international delegations during Ramadan time and major events. Other localities received many visitors annually who came from Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, India, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Bangladesh.

Among international exchanging activities, we should also consider the participation in Qur'an recitation contests. This is a regular activity taking place among Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. The Cham Muslims in Vietnam are proud when their children participate in such event both inside the nation or in foreign countries. Cham Muslims in Vietnam often take part in this kind of contest in Malaysia. For example, in 2019, the Representative Board of Muslims in Hồ Chí Minh city sent two pupils to participate the Qur'an recitation contest in Malaysia.

1.2. Pilgrimage

Regarding pilgrimage, the Cham Muslim community in Hồ Chí Minh city take the highest percentage, followed by the community in Ninh Thuận then An Giang. Those Muslim living in Ho Chi Minh city also take the highest percentage among those who paid for themselves for pilgrimage. This can be explained by looking at the economic condition of the residents in these three localities. Those with better economic condition are more capable of covering all expenditure for pilgrimage and vice versa.

Pilgrimage represent characteristics of religious belief and ritual practice of Islam. Until present, pilgrimage to Mecca in person or in a group often take two main forms: 1) taking sponsorship and self-funded. The percentage of Muslims in Vietnam pay for themselves for pilgrimage is low since one has to spend from 4,500 USD to 5,000 USD for the whole trip. Only wealthy people can afford it. The rest mainly rely on international sponsorship.

In 2017, the Representative Board of Muslims in Hồ Chí Minh city received a slot for pilgrimage from the embassy of Saudi Arabia. The Board told us that this embassy sponsored 6 slots for

members of different Muslim communities in the nation. The Board also reported that in 2018, there were 82 Muslims funded for themselves for pilgrimage. In 2019, the number of self-funded pilgrims increased to 100. người. In An Giang in August 2018, according to information provided by the Representative Board of Muslims, the Muslim community received 5 slots for pilgrimage sponsored by the embassy of Saudi Arabia. That year, the embassy sponsored 20 slots for all Muslim communities in the nation. According to the Representative Board of Muslims in Ninh Thuan, during 2012-2017, the community received 50 slots for pilgrimage from Royal family of Saudi Arabia. 31 others received sponsorships from the Red Crescent organization. Besides, there were three pilgrims who paid for themselves.

According to the surveys conducted by the Institute for Religious Studies, among 1,259 participants, 238 (equivalent to 15.9%) reported that they had been on pilgrimage. Thus, the majority of Muslims were those who had never done the pilgrimage. Via in-depth interviews, we learnt that most Cham Muslims wished they could do the pilgrimage at least one time during their life. But only a few could do that since the expenditure for such as journey was largely out of their reach. Only rich people could fund themselves for pilgrimage.

1.3. Regarding reception of support through Islamic charity

First, it should be emphasized that charity in Islam is different with charity in other religions. For Muslims, doing charity works is just voluntary but also compulsory. A Muslim can choose to do charity work by directly giving a part of his or her incomes, or donate for a charity funding managed by an Islamic organization. This kind of organization will redistribute the aid to those in need.

In Vietnam, the Muslims in Vietnam mainly take two forms of charity, including financial aid and scholarship for educational purpose; and sponsorship for pilgrimage. For pilgrimage, we have discussed above.

Regarding Islamic scholarship for education, the popular form is sponsor a part or full program so a recipient can travel to another country to study Islamic doctrines or go to domestic university for a qualification in a secular field. Islamic Development Bank (IDB) is the prominent factor. In 2019, IDB granted full scholarship for two Muslim students to study at universities in Hồ Chí Minh city. During 2016-2017, IDB granted 5 scholarships for Muslim students. In Ninh Thuận, according to the Representative Board of Muslims in Ninh Thuận, from 2000 to 2016, around 200 Cham Muslims were granted scholarship by Malaysia University of Islamic International⁶.

Regarding taking Islamic charity, in 2018 according to the report by the Representative Board of Muslims in Hồ Chí Minh city, the community often received financial aid or items via diplomatic channel, i.e. foreign embassies located in Hồ Chí Minh city. In detail, in 2018, the Board received 261 millions from triệu đồng từ Kuwait general consulate at Hồ Chí Minh city and over 63 millions from UAE embassy in Hanoi to purchase food and distribute for Muslims during Ramadan.

In Ninh Thuận, according the report by the Representative Board, sources of sponsorship that the Islamic community received from foreign embassies based in Vietnam for Ramadan during 2012-2017 was 750 millions VND. The items received was equivalent to 86 millions VND. These were valuable support for the Cham Muslim communities given their difficult economic life.

Another form of financial aids is funding for building or renovating mosques. Most mosques in Vietnam were built thanked to international Islamic organizations. Only a few mosques were built by Cham Muslims themselves before 1975.

2. International relations for non-religious purposes

This type of international relation often includes visit relatives, tourism, marriage, and especially working oversea. Some related

data have been presented in Table 1. As can be seen from Table 1, the percentage of Cham Muslims going overseas to work was highest, at 31.2%. Those going overseas for other purposes as mentioned above take quite small percentages. However, though not for direct religious purpose, Cham Muslims prefer going to Islamic countries for working, studying, or getting married. For example, they tend to choose to work in countries where favourable conditions for Muslims to work are available. When going for holidays, they would often choose to visit Islamic countries. If it is for marriage, Cham Muslims would often choose to marry Cham Muslims living in other countries or Muslims who hold foreign passport. A woman in An Giang told us: “My daughter is waiting her 18th birthday to complete paper works to get married in France. Her fiancé also follows our religion [Islam]. He is a Vietnamese chồng nó là người gốc Việt. In the Cham community here, going to reside in other countries via marriage is not rare, but we Muslims prefer getting married to Muslims” (interview, female 60 year old, An Giang). Other Cham Muslims reported their family members got married to citizens in Cambodia, USA, Saudi Arabia, etc.

For non-religious purposes, economic activity is the most prominent. According to a Cham researcher, Champa kingdom where ancestors of Cham resided was an important node of the sea silk road. This means from early times, the Cham had international trading activities. Throughout history, the Cham had relations in terms of marriage and diplomacy with neighbouring countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia⁷. Particularly, economic activity of the Cham Muslim in Hồ Chí Minh city, the author indicates that since the Cham Muslim moved to reside in Saigon (now Hồ Chí Minh city) since 1960, they began to seek help from Indian, Malaysian or Arabian traders. During 2000s, Cham men often sold garments in Cambodia. There were around 50 Cham Muslims who received tertiary education thanks to scholarship awarded by Southeast Asian Islamic Association or Arabian countries. These forces are now working at international companies located in Vietnam⁸.

Unlike many ethnic minorities in Vietnam, the Cham live in strongly consolidated yet non-isolated communities. In contrast, the expansion in social interactions, collaboration or looking for job far from home are quite popular. In history, the Cham migrated many times to other territories and apart of them went back to their homeland. Today, for economic purpose, many Cham, mainly male, are regularly working far from home. They work as freelancers, street vendors, workers at industrial zones, or official staffs at foreign entrepreneurs. The mobility in economy is a typical feature among the Cham, as indicated by international researchers.

According to a research by Angie Ngọc Trần, the Cham migrate to other countries, specially Malay speaking countries, through different gates, including airport and land border. The research focuses on the Cham Muslim working in Malaysia. The article analyzes the gendered patterns and practises of the Cham Muslims and their relations with other ethnic groups (the Kinh and the Chinese Vietnamese) as they worked in Malaysia and came back home afterward. This research also indicated that Cham women as participated in labour market in Mekong delta mainly worked for industries of textile, food processing, electronic components assembling or housekeeper. Meanwhile, Cham men mostly worked as mechanics or technicians at companies; fishing; retailing; or seasonal employees. The research specially indicates the role of religion in relationships among the Cham Muslim during their history of migration. “Religious practices provide example of internal empowerment and personal growth” in the cases of employwers who “fought for prayer proviledges at work and religious studies abroad⁹.

Huynh Thanh Tien et. al. in their studies of regional integration of the Cham Muslim in the Mekong delta indicated that because of living close to the borders with the Cambodian, sharing religious practices and Cham language, the Cham in the South had close connection with world Muslim community, both in Southeast Asia

and in the Middle East. Inherited from previous generations, the Cham Muslims in the Mekong delta had more favourable conditions than their peers living in the Southern part of the Middle in terms of language, religion, geography and trading system to expand their international relations¹⁰. Their research suggested that the Cham's international connections were based on and developed from many characteristics accumulated for centuries.

In recent works published by Philip Taylor about the Cham, there are notable generations of their economic activities, especially their economics in motion. In 2007, the author published *Cham Muslims of the Mekong delta: Place and mobility in the cosmopolitan periphery*, in which the book describes history of residency and stories about the origins of the Cham Muslims in the Mekong delta river; analyses of religious practices, material life, and relations with the authorities in both Vietnam and Cambodia contexts. The book clarifies religious and ethnic differentiation of the Mekong delta and about the Cham's response to two opposing trends in their way of life: (i) local particularism and expansive cultural and material engagements with the outer world. In that context, there emerge the Cham Muslims' economic mode that is characterized by mobility¹¹. In practice, this mode is a typical characteristic of the Cham in comparison with other ethnic minorities who tend to hold on to their traditional places of residence.

According to information provided by the Department for religious affairs under the Đồng Nai provincial ministry of home affairs mentioned above, in 2019 there were 68 projects being invested by investors who came from Islamic nations. Among these projects, 59 were industrial zones (investors from Malaysia, Turkey, Indonesia, Brunei, Jordan) and 9 projects were non-industrial (investors from Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei). We, however, were unable to access information at deeper levels to see whether amongst workers hired by those projects there were

Vietnamese Muslims. But it could be said that the Cham Muslims would have advantages as applying for job at these places given their faith in Islam.

Hereunders are the findings from surveys conducted by the Institute for Religious Studies:

Table 3: Jobs as working oversea

Jobs	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agriculture /fishery	211	40.1
Housekeeper	70	22.2
Business, service providers, trading,...	65	20.6
Handicraft / Industry (assembling electronic components)	17	5.4
Religion	15	4.8
Sciences/ Experts	7	2.2
Other	8	2.5

As can be seen from the above table, jobs taken by Cham Muslims at highest percentage (40.1%) are in agriculture or fishery. There were quite a lot of Cham Muslims worked as housekeepers (22.2%) and the majority of them were women. Besides, upto 20.6% worked in business, services or trade. However, those working as traders in foreign countries were actually street vendors with small capital and low profits. Those working as workers at industrial zones accounted only for 5.4%. Those going oversea for study of religion (Islam) only took 4.8%. Very few worked as expatriats (2.2%).

It can be said that, in comparison with periods before Renovation, Cham Muslims' economic activities have been ever diversified and dynamic. Specially, more and more people are participating in non-traditional economic activities far from home

and even outside of the national borders. Accordingly, in many aspects, the Cham are not listed in the backward group among ethnic minorities in Vietnam. They are having more opportunities to level up their economic capacity in comparison with other ethnic minorities and with the Kinh of the majority.

3. Discussion and conclusion

The Cham Muslim community's outward relations, religious and cultural exchanges, and their reception of aids through charity have been intensified. What should be emphasized here is that the community have become more active in searching for relations with Islamic world. Partners or nations present in international exchanges of the Cham Muslim community are basically from Islamic nations or where Islam is the religion of the majority, especially Suni school. In recent times, the reception of international delegation for Dawah or of charitable aids is the rapidly expanding field.

Cham Muslim community's international relations in Vietnam, be it for religious or non-religious purposes, are mainly for domestic religious activities. Three trends can be observed in their relations including: *First*, increase in educational and exchanging activities about Islam. This directly enables individuals and then community to enrich and standardizing their knowledge of what actually are true with Islam and what are not. *Second*, it is the trend to intensify international relations for economic purposes, i.e in education or in search of job opportunities oversea. *Third*, it is the trend to intensify interactive activities with Cham communities or foreign Muslim communities via pilgrimage, tourism, marriage – those activities that only become more feasible thanks to Part-state's Open door and intensified international integration policies.

In that context, some issues are putting forth for the Cham Muslim's international relations: (i) International relation for religious purpose enable the Cham Muslim community to regularly level up, standardize and enrich their knowledge of Islamic

doctrines and to enhance their skills and experience to better govern their community, to train their clergy, and to expand their relations with Islamic communities all over the world. This is the inevitable trend; (ii) However, they need assistance and consultancy as expanding their international relations, especially to avoid having ties with unorthodox Islamic denominations whose motivation may not be purely religious. The state officials who assist them need to be well educated and trained. They need to understand the basic doctrine and regulations of Islam and the ability to communicate with the Cham Muslims; (iii) As diversifying international relations, the Cham Muslims will be more aware of their own cultural and Islamic identities. Consequently, two contradictory things happen. On the one hand, they will reinforce their faith and their connection with Islamic world. On the other hand, some Muslims may become less pious and convert to other religious belief; (iv) young generations as studying overseas will bring home new things they learn, including explanation of the doctrines, expression of the faith and ritual practices. But what they say and do with the faith may cause disagreement amongst the aged clergies who rely on the pre-1975 perception of the Qur'an. In that case, open dialogues between the old and the young generations are needed to overcome differences or even conflicts; (v) A common challenge put forth for an ethnic minority is that they need to rapidly develop so as to integrate into the greater community but they have also to maintain their own cultural identities. The Cham Muslims today can find advantages right in their Islamic identity, their ability of language, their experience in trading, their open mind and mobility, etc. These factors are important foundations for them to rise and improve their economic and political stance; (vi) Dynamics of international relations help the Cham Muslim to reinforce and develop their own community and invest for the younger generation. The increasing international visitors and tourists causes positive impacts on local economy; (vii), the increasing international relations is causing changes among Cham

community. In history, it was international relations had enabled foreign religious tradition to the Cham community (Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam).

In the last century, process related to ethnicity and religiosity had taken place, including Cham-ization of Islam and Islam-ization of Cham culture. Here we need to revisit the idea proposed by Setudeh-Nejad. He argues that the loyalty with Islam, even in its deviant form (Bani religious tradition) or in its right form, that of orthodox Islam, had always enabled the Cham to maintain a dynamic identity. This assisted them as identify their differences in culture in comparison with surrounding ethnics¹²; (viii) In his research on the Cham in Mekong delta, Philip Taylor indicated that in the current context, the Cham may simultaneously convey different identities: being Cham in terms of ethnicity, Khmer in terms of language, Malay in terms of descent, Muslim in term of religions, and Vietnamese in term of nationality¹³. Thus, depends on specific situation, an identity may be exhibited and used. Thus, the Cham may feel confused or stressful as finding ways to balance the blend of these multiple identities.

Finally, it is possible that as the Cham Islam become more integrated with the world, their ethnic awareness will be upheld rather than faded. More research will be needed to identify and analyze this prominent yet sometime underlying transformation.

Notes:

- 1 National Office of Statistics (2020), *Results of national census on economy and society of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019*, Thống kê publishing house, Hà Nội.
- 2 Rie Nakamura (2008), *The Cham Muslims in Ninh Thuan province, Vietnam*, CIAS discussion paper No.3: Islam at the margins: The Muslims of Indochina, p. 21.
- 3 Nguyễn Thị Xuân Lan (2018), *Results of state management of religious activities in 2017 in An Giang province*, Conference proceedings *Religious diversity in Southwest and policy recommendation*, An Giang, August 2018.

- 4 Recite from: Văn Món (2017), Cham Muslim's economy in Vietnam: Opportunities and Challenges in integration. In: Conference proceedings *Religion, economy and ASEAN*, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hà Nội, p.172.
- 5 IDB is a short form of Islamic Development Bank. This Islamic bank has many regular sponsorships for the Islamic community in Vietnam.
- 6 Recited from Văn Món (2017), *ibid.*, p.171.
- 7 Văn Món (2017), *ibid.*, p. 165.
- 8 Văn Món (2017), *ibid.*, p.168.
- 9 Angie Ngọc Trần (2016), Weaving Life Across Borders: The Cham Muslim Migrants Traversing Vietnam and Malaysia. In K. F. al., *International Migration in Southeast Asia, Asia in Transition 2*. Singapore: Springer Science+ Business Media Singapore, p.35.
- 10 Huynh Thanh Tien, Nguyen Huu Tri, Trinh Phuoc Nguyen (2018), Regional integration of Cham Muslims in the Mekong delta. Trong: the 6th Asian academic society international conference: A transformation community: Asia in Dynamism, Innovation and Globalization, pp.364-365.
- 11 Philip Taylor (2007), *Cham Muslims of the Mekong delta: Place and mobility in the cosmopolitan periphery*, NUS press (Singapore).
- 12 S. Setudeh-Nejad (2002). The Cham Muslims of Southeast Asia: A Historical Note, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 22(2), p. 454.
- 13 Philip Taylor (2007), *ibid.*, p.63.

References

1. Angie Ngọc Trần (2016), Weaving Life across Borders: The Cham Muslim Migrants Traversing Vietnam and Malaysia. In K. F. al., *International Migration in Southeast Asia, Asia in Transition 2*. Singapore: Springer Science+ Business Media Singapore.
2. Representative Board of Muslim community in Hồ Chí Minh city (2019), Report of activities in 2019 and orientations for the year 2020.
3. Date provided by Pew Forum in 2015, accessed: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/01/the-countries-with-the-10-largest-christian-populations-and-the-10-largest-muslim-populations/> date of access 22 June 2020.
4. Huynh Thanh Tien, Nguyen Huu Tri, Trinh Phuoc Nguyen (2018), Regional integration of Cham Muslims in the Mekong delta. Trong: the 6th Asian academic society international conference: A transformation community: Asia in Dynamism, Innovation and Globalization, tr.364-365.
5. Ken Miichi and Omar Farouk (2015), Conclusion. Trong: Ken Miichi and Omar Farouk (eds). *Southeast Asian Muslims in the Era of Globalization*, Palgrave Macmillan.

6. Nguyễn Thị Xuân Lan (2018), Results of state management of religious activities in 2017 in An Giang province, Conference proceedings *Religious diversity in Southwest and policy recommendation*, An Giang, August 2018.
7. Phan Văn Dóp and Nguyễn Thị Nhung (2006), *Cham Muslim Cộng đồng người Chăm Hồi giáo ở Nam Bộ trong quan hệ giới và phát triển*, Nxb. Nông nghiệp, Hà Nội.
8. Philip Taylor (2007), *Cham Muslims of the Mekong delta: Place and mobility in the cosmopolitan periphery*, NUS press (Singapore).
9. Rie Nakamura (2008), The Cham Muslims in Ninh Thuan province, Vietnam, CIAS discussion paper No.3: Islam at the margins: The Muslims of Indochina, p. 21.
- 10.S. Setudeh-Nejad (2002), The Cham Muslims of Southeast Asia: A Historical Note, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 22 (2).
11. Accessed at: <http://www.cema.gov.vn/ket-qua-dieu-tra-thuc-trang-kt-xh-53-dan-toc-thieu-so-nam-2015.htm> , date of access 22 June 2020.
12. Accessed at:
<https://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=512&idmid=5&ItemID=19446>, date of access 22 June 2020.
13. Văn Món (2017), Cham Muslim's economy in Vietnam: Opportunities and Challenges in integration. In: Conference proceedings *Religion, economy and ASEAN*, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hà Nội.