

BOOKS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES LIBRARY REVIEW

ĐỖ QUANG HÙNG. The religious issues in Vietnam's revolution – theory and practice. H. National Political Publishing House, 2007, 562 pp, Vb 45395.

Based on the research outcomes of a ministerial-level project titled “Fifty-five years of the lines and policies on religion of the Party and State of Vietnam (1945-2000)”, the original, archival documents as well as legal documents passed by the Party, the State and relevant agencies pertaining to the religious issues, and having studied selected religious publications imported into Vietnam (mainly in French, Russian and Chinese), Doctor Do Quang Hung synthesized and published a book titled “*Religious issues in Vietnam's revolution – theory and practice*”, attempting to systemize major lines in theory and practice in the religious work undertaken by the Party and State of Vietnam, from 1920 up to present.

The book composes in four parts (consisting of 15 chapters), reviewing the influence of the system of doctrines on religion in Marxism – Leninism, of the Communist International, the Communist Parties of the Soviet Union, France and China, from 1920-1930 up to the eve of 1990; conceptualizing the history of awareness on religion of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the formulation and development of a viewpoints system by the Communist Party of Vietnam pre- and post-period of renewing the lines and policies on

religion; clearly defining the formulation and development of the religious policies in Vietnam, especially in respect of state management; and, drawing up major features in implementing the religious policies in practice of religions in the national democratic revolution and the socialist revolution.

HIỀN LY

NGUYỄN VĂN BÍCH. Agriculture, Countryside in Vietnam after 20 years of renewal – the past and present (referential book). H. National Political Publishing House, 2007, 583 pp, Vb 45391.

Facing the new developmental demand in line with the industrialization, modernization and deepening integration into the world's economy, the question is how to continue renewing agricultural governance, bring our country's agriculture into more comprehensive and sustainable development.

Based on the chorology of the country's historic milestones in order to analyze, construe the guidelines, lines and policies of the Party and State equivalent to the individual periods of development of agriculture, rural economy and Vietnamese working class, the book contextually looks back the agricultural and rural situation, in which peasants are the actors, the statistical data through different historical periods in the formulation and development of the

country's agricultural economy under the leadership of the Party. The book sets light on various theoretical and practical issues in agriculture, rural development, the industrial relations and management mechanism. Especially, the book's author indicated the context of the country's economy development in general, the agricultural and rural development in particular.

Having gone through the book, readers would have a better understanding of farmers, land and rural issues in our country, from the time when the farmers had to live under the dominatory arch of the colonialists, feudalists in the early 20th century till the founding of the Party and during the country's revolutionary course as well as the continued development today.

The book has four major parts.

The first part: Agriculture, countryside under the colonial domination and semi-feudalism (1901-1945);

The second part: Agriculture, countryside in Vietnam from the birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam till the liberation of the South, reunification of the country 1945-1975);

The third part: Agriculture, countryside in Vietnam after the liberation of the South, reunification of the country – the country entered into the period of building infrastructure – techniques of socialism (1976-1986); and

The fourth part: Agriculture, countryside in Vietnam in the 20-year renewal period (1986-2006)

KHÁNH VÂN

LÊ THI. Life and variability in Vietnamese marriage and family today. H.: Social Sciences Publishing House, 2006, 359 p., Vb 45325.

In the new situation, with the enhanced international integration in virtually all fields, such as external relations, economic, cultural, etc. of the country over the last period, apart from learning international economic, political, cultural achievements which are very useful, enabling us to advance the materialization of the goal of building a strong country with prosperous people, a just, democratic and civilized society, economic, cultural and social variables have impacted and affected the life of citizens, members of Vietnamese families in different aspects. Those variables are both positive and negative, affecting Vietnamese marriage and family situation, the life of members of families. Such impacts are of particular concern in the context of building a Vietnamese family culture, in which autonomous rights of the members, equality, democracy and justice in the family ties are promoted. The book is a collection of research articles of the author, a pinpoint to the practical life of Vietnamese families today, as well as variability in Vietnamese marriage and family.

The book consists of three chapters.

Chapter 1 focuses on “behavioral culture and organization of family life”. It discusses three following contents: behavior in family and social communication; young couple families and concept of freedom and

responsibility; and, life organization and promotion of family advocacy;

Chapter 2 sets light on “issues in the immediate time for Vietnamese families today”, such as sex relationships and generation gaps; links between an individual, family and society; family and social issues; and

Chapter 3 analyzes “Vietnamese marriage and family facing the contemporary variables”. It underlines the impact of population variability on marriage and family; family ethics, family teachings, family rituals in the period of industrialization and modernization; Vietnamese marriage and family and variable trend in the 21st century.

KHÁNH VÂN

TRƯỜNG MINH HẰNG. **Handcraft-villages of North Vietnam**. H.: Fine Arts Publishing House, 2006, Vv 7566.

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4. Wood trade (carpentry, carving, inlaying)

La Xuyên wood sculpture village

Situated in Sơn Nam – an ancient cultural zone, La Xuyên (Yên Ninh, Hà Nam) has long been known for carving, especially on such commodities as sindora trestle-beds, tea chests, and pagoda cabinets.

Notably, villages producing these sorts of goods basically share things in common, from the manipulation process to the techniques in forming shapes, creating decorative designs, and utilizing

topics. However, connoisseurs are still able to distinguish a La Xuyen product from those of other villages, based on the differences in some plastic skills and methods.

Formalistically, the designs of La Xuyen sindora trestle-beds and tea chests are always bursting with vitality and flexibility. Layer by layer, the decorative patterns are integrated in the polymorph of space light, evoking a feeling of liveliness. La Xuyen artisans are also well-known for their ability to carve foliage and tree patterns. Therefore, these themes are commonly applied to such parts as trestle-beds’ dais, teachests’ pedestals, etc. In the intricacies of La Xuyên traditional carved goods there is a sense of magnitude of design.

Chuyên Mỹ nacre inlaying village

Chuyên Mỹ nacre inlaying first appeared more than 700 years ago in Phú Xuyên, Hà Tây. It was the entrancement of Mr. Trương Công Thành, the forefather of the nacre inlaying trade in Chuyên Mỹ, and his sense of creativity passed down from the ancestors that brought oyster shells to *hoành phi* (horizontal lacquered board engraved with Chinese characters), *câu đối* (parallel sentences), sindora trestle-beds, tea-chests, pagoda cabinets, and so on, thereby forming the art of nacre inlaying as it exists today.

Nature has favorably provided the craft with a diversified palette of colors. Whether in the dark or under the sunlight, the nacre still shines resplendently over the dark brown sindora wood or the shiny black color of lacquer. At each looking angle, one

seems to see a different color, always splendid and simple.

From past to present, Chuyên Mỹ traditional products include jars, trays, boxes, caskets, and so on, inlaid with nacre patterns. At the present, nacre inlaying is an invaluable craft appreciated by both foreigner and Vietnamese alike.

Phù Khê wood carving village

Carpentry first appeared in Phù Khê (Tiên Sơn, Bắc Ninh) a very long time ago, in the Lý Dynasty, when pagodas were being constructed all over Vietnam (thanks to the Buddhism rehabilitation and strengthening movement led by the State). Phù Khê artisans have been widely known all over Kinh Bắc area for house building, statue sculpting, relieve carving, etc. Legend has it that the most striking of Bắc Ninh's structures – like the Dâu Pagoda, Dạm Pagoda, Đình Bảng Communal House, and so on – were undertaken by Phù Khê artisans.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Phù Khê started to export a number of worshipping objects and fine arts goods to Japan, Holland and China via commercial intermediaries. In the nineteenth century, Phù Khê artisans shifted to producing household goods. Phù Khê carved products are known to be simple, light, and decorative. If La Xuyên (Ý Yên, Hà Nam) has a good reputation for carving foliage and trees, Phù Khê excels in carving animals, especially the dragon, which is considered to be a highly artistic motif. Recently, Phù Khê artisans have

acquired many exporting contracts. Phù Khê fine arts products are boarded on ships and carried to many countries in Eastern Europe, North America, and even the islands in the Southern Pacific Ocean.

Chàng Sơn carpentry village

Chàng Sơn, previously known as Chàng Thôn (Thạch Thất, Hà Tây), was known all over the Đoài area as a village with numerous traditional handicrafts. Chàng Sơn could be summarized as a region “of large population, of little harvesting soil, and of hundreds of crafts”. Carpentry is recognized as the most age-old craft with the highest number of artisans. It is also the trade that brings fame and is the main source of income for the whole village.

Chàng Sơn carpentry exists in a wide variety of forms, from house-building woodwork and household furniture to carved products (trestle-beds, tea-chests, pagoda cabinets, decorative relieves, to name but a few) and wooden statues (including worshipping statues, fine arts statues and puppet statues). This diversity in forms is a strength that enables Chàng Sơn artisans to fulfill many all –in contracts of great religious structures.

Chàng Sơn artisans, despite attaching their lives to a region of large population, few fields, and uncomfortable transports, still manage to maintain and develop the ancestral craft. With their talents and diligence, the artisans have made Chàng Sơn a prosperous village throughout the past centuries.

5. Lacquering trade

An overview of the traditional lacquering trade in Vietnam

The technique of using the sap of wax trees, also as *son ta*, to cover wood, pottery, knitted bamboo, etc. has been adopted not only in Vietnam but also in China and Japan. The technique is used with the purpose of enhancing the endurance and tightness as well as the beauty of the products. In Vietnam, lacquering has been widely used for quite some time. Lacquered products are favored not just by the feudal aristocrats but by the commoners as well. In the Lý Dynasty, when Thăng Long imperial city was under construction, the State allowed the building of many splendid red-lacquered palaces. In the records of the Lê and Nguyễn Dynasties, the wax-tree, a kind of tree grown in present Phú

Thọ and Vĩnh Phúc midlands, was also mentioned in great detail. When lacquering flourished to the point that lacquered goods were considered equally valuable to pearls, tortoise shells, and rhino horns, lacquering started to be applied to public structures.

In the late sixteenth century, in Nam Ngự Precinct (current Cửa Nam Street, Hanoi), there existed many shops specializing in lacquered goods. Most of the artisans there come from Chuôn Che, Đồng Vàng, Bồ Khê (Phú Xuyên, Hà Tây) and Hạ Thái (Thường Tín, Hà Tây). Hà Tây was viewed as a land of talents, and a variety of jobs. It is also considered an ancestral land of lacquering trade, and Bình Vọng village (Thường Tín districts) is one of the cradles of Hà Tây lacquering.

(to be continued)