

# **Impacts of Migration in Religious Activities in Rural Areas: The Case of Cosdon Monastery, Phuoc Long District, Bac Lieu Province**

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## **Abstract**

Industrialization leads to population growth and urbanization in urban areas. The formation of industrial zones requires large amount of labor for production in those places. In addition, agricultural earnings cannot guarantee the livelihood of farmers in rural areas today. It causes farmers have to look for a job with a stable income enough to support their family; it is also the desire to change their own destiny. A wave of farmers thus leaving their villages to look for work in developing urban areas, where large industrial zones are located, is taking place strongly in rural areas. The wave has simultaneously created an imbalance in productive labor, affecting many aspects of local social activities, especially the practice of traditional cultural and religious values of the local community. Facing that situation, the monasteries have therefore had to change their way they organized, their own religious ceremonies and festivals, so that those migrant farmers are able to participate with their families and communities. This paper will discuss the impacts of the migration of the Khmer community, and the adaptation in organizing religious ceremonies and festivals at Cosdon Monastery 1. It can be considered as a typical example of the impact of migration on social activities in rural areas today.

**Keywords: Emigration, Khmer Community, Rural Areas, Cosdon Monastery**

## Introduction

Today, with the shrinking agricultural land fund, low-income productivity in agricultural production, low consumption prices of agricultural products, natural disasters, etc., the economic life of Khmer people in particular and farmers in rural areas in general still face many difficulties. Therefore, farmers have to find another livelihood solution to improve their lives, they look to cities with industrial zones to work in order to increase their income and improve their economic life. There are households with only a few members who are the main workers who have to leave the family, there are households that migrate the whole family to a new land to live and work, creating an "empty" house scene or the elderly and children stay in the homeland. Therefore, how will this migration affect local community activities, especially in religious activities, community festivals ... religious establishments have had alternative solutions. How to adapt to this problem? In this article, we will present the above-mentioned main issues related to the Khmer community at Cosdon Monastery.

## Content

### Theoretical basis and research methods

#### The concept and definition of migration

In the census of Vietnam, the migration is defined as the movement of people from one administrative unit to another, that is, to another commune, district, city or another province for a certain period.

#### Types of migration

Types of migration according to the 2009 census of the General Statistics Office of Vietnam have the following types of migrants and non-migrants

- Inter-regional migration: includes people aged 5 years and over who are living in Vietnam and 5 years ago before the time of the survey who lived in an area different from the one in which they currently reside.
- Inter-provincial migration: includes people aged 5 years and over who are living in Vietnam and 5 years ago before the time of the survey who lived in a province other than the province where they currently reside.
- Inter-district migration: includes people aged 5 years and over who, 5 years ago before the time of the survey, lived in the same province but in a different district than the district they currently reside in.
- Intra-district migration: includes people aged 5 years and older who are 5 years ago before the

time of the survey, lived in the same district but in a different commune/ward than the one, they currently reside in.

- Non-migrants include people aged 5 years and over and 5 years before the time of the census lived in the same commune as their current place of permanent residence (no inter-commune migration).

### Research Methods

In the article, We use research historical method to ensure the chronology (historical period), comprehensiveness (synchrony), detail and specificity of the issue of religious activities of the country. Khmer people of Cosdon Monastery. In addition, we also conduct a number of related methods such as statistics, analysis, comparison, comparison... to draw research results.

### Overview of Cosdon Monastery

Cosdon Monastery was established on February 5th, Year of the Rabbit, Buddhist Calendar 2447, Solar Calendar 1903 on the land with an area of 50,000m<sup>2</sup> donated by the family of the landlord in Binh Bao Hamlet, Vinh Phu Tay Commune Phuoc Long District, Bac Lieu Province today. Currently led by Venerable Thach Duong Trung, in charge of the position of abbot. In the history of formation and development of Cosdon Monastery associated with the ups and downs of the country, but the monks, together with the Monastery Guarding Board and Buddhists have overcome all difficulties to preserve the Three Jewels characteristic of the Khmer people in the South.

The Sima Ceremony on the 25th day of the first month of the Year of the Goat is on March 15, 2015, the Buddhist calendar 2558. In the joy of Buddhists near and far. Traditional festivals of the nation and community festivals are often held at Cosdon monastery. Like all other Khmer monastery in Bac Lieu in particular and the South in general, Cosdon Monastery has played a great role in organizing national and religious festivals for the Khmer here:

- Bon Meak Buchea (Shanga Day, Sangha Assembly, and Catechesis Ceremony) usually takes place in the last week of February or early March of the solar calendar, according to the Khmer calendar, it will be held on the full moon of the third lunar month. At Cosdon monastery, it will be held on the full moon day of the first lunar month according to the Vietnamese calendar. This festival is rooted in Buddhism.
- Buddha's Birthday (Visak Buchea Day)

The ceremony on the 15th day of the fourth lunar month, about mid-May of the solar calendar, this is a ceremony according to the Buddhist tradition,

called the ceremony of the three unions v2 related to 03 major events: Birth, Enlightenment and Parnirvana "Bodhisattva" Birth, Enlightenment and Buddha's Nirvana, Buddhist world called that day "Triple Union", Vaisakha holiday.

- Vassa day

The word Vassa comes from the Pali language. Vassa means rain, rainy season. From June 16 to September 15 of the lunar calendar, every year is the time to enter summer. The Buddha allowed the monks to enter summer for 3 months; the monks will focus this time on practicing the Way, especially practicing Meditation, practicing the Eightfold Path, the path to liberation.

- Kathina robe offering ceremony

Kathina robe offering ceremony (offering robes) with item d9ihc1 offering robes and other items to the monks after 03 months of settling down, usually takes place within 1 month from September 16 lunar calendar to the full moon day of the 10th lunar month. This is a ceremony according to the Buddhist tradition - the coming-off ceremony on the 15th day of the 9th lunar month (Bon difference Vassa).

- Chol Chhnam Thmay Festival (New Year)  
Chol Chhnam Thmay Festival usually takes place from April 13 or 14 to April 15 or 16 of the solar calendar. This is a festival rooted in Khmer tradition.

- Ceremony of Ancestor Worshipping Cult (Bon Sen Dolta)

Sen Dolta means to express the gratitude of the descendants of the next generation to the deceased. Including family members and people with meritorious services to the nation and the country. The ceremony takes place every year, usually the end of September, the beginning of October of the solar calendar (the end of August of the lunar calendar).

- Moon worshipping ceremony (Bon Thvai Pres Khe)

This festival aims to show people's hearts and gratitude for natural phenomena, after each crop is harvested. One of those festivals, we can tell first is the Thai Pres Khe ceremony (the ceremony to worship the moon), there is a place called the Oc Om Boc festival (the cop feeding ceremony) and the place where the Bon Loi Pros tip is held (the ceremony to give the cop) in the countryside).

- Ceremony of praying for peace (Bon Kom Sal Sroc).

After the crop is harvested and harvested, about one to two months in the dry season (before and

after the Chol chnam thmay festival), Khmer people have the custom of holding a Ceremony for Peace. The purpose of the festival is to celebrate and have fun due to the good harvest, and at the same time, pray for the peace of the village, a happy life, a peaceful country, and a better New Year's crop.

## **Some changes in religious activities of the Khmer community due to the influence of immigration at Cosdon Monastery.**

Author Nguyen Manh Cuong said that when he was born, Khmer people were automatically considered as Buddhist followers. Khmer people in the South from childhood have been educated by their parents to live according to the philosophy and lifestyle of Buddhism, so Khmer children receive their fathers, and live their lives in faith according to Buddhist philosophy. Previously, every Khmer son had to go to the Monastery to study for a certain period. Cultivation before or after depends on each person's circumstances, long or short cultivation time is dependent, at least a month, anyone who wants to practice for a lifetime can. This practice is not considered a duty or a duty but an honor. The ultimate goal of the Khmer's monasticism is not to become a Buddha, but to become a person of good character, quality and morality. This custom is no longer maintained. There are monasteries that do not have people coming to practice all year. Most Khmer men no longer go to Monastery's to study. Cosdon Monastery about 5 years ago, no one came to the monastery, because their families went to work far away, the children moved with their families to study at schools near their parents' workplace, separate from the monastery because of their work. That is no longer eager to practice in the monastery.

The conversion of a part of the Khmer is a trend that occurs due to the increasingly open social space of the individual. This creates conditions for individuals not only to receive traditional religious values but also to receive other religious values suitable to the psychology and preferences of each person. However, it is also impossible not to pay attention to the trend of conversion due to being manipulated, influenced, or for immediate economic benefits... At Cosdon monastery, Khmer people convert due to immediate economic benefits because there are poor households with difficulties, because members of working age have to be away from home, the elderly in the locality need economic support from which they have to convert.

There can be many factors affecting the religious practice of the Khmer community at Cosdon Monastery, but one of the most influential factors is the change in living environment and the

separation of the individual from the community. Especially living far from the monastery. The alternating living among the Viet, the Chinese Vietnamese and the Khmer ethnic groups; the marriage between Khmer people with Viet or Chinese Vietnamese people has changed the cultural life of traditional Khmer families. In areas where there are no followers of Theravada Buddhism. Previously, a member of the Khmer community, living in a family with Khmer parents, Theravada Buddhism was a factor that covered all aspects of family life. However, nowadays for many Khmer people, especially Khmer people in families with only one Khmer mother or father, or Khmer people living in a community with a majority of Viet people, the cultural interference has had a great impact. To the religious practice of the Khmer. The influence of religion through the family and community is reduced so that the guiding principle of a Khmer member's life is no longer the principle of Theravada Buddhism, so religion also has little influence on an individual's life. It is the change in family lifestyle and the loosening of ties with the community that have reduced religious practice in the Khmer community.

### **Some measures to limit changes in religious activities of the Khmer community at Cosdon Monastery**

The Monastery has mobilized families with children of primary school or junior high school age to send them into the Monastery so that the Monastery can feed them, educate them and let them leave home to sow a predestined relationship during the summer break. If they wish to have a longer monastic period, the Monastery will send them to the monasteries in the city center to study culture, learn catechism, learn Khmer script, even vocational training. For households who work far away from their homeland, but the elderly remain in the locality, the Monastery mobilizes sponsors for monthly support to prevent conversion by economic manipulation. Regarding the practice of festivals, community religious activities, the Monastery has changed the time to organize the festival in order for compatriots to work far away to attend fully and regularly. For example: Like the ceremony. We choose the time to hold the meeting from April 30 to May 1 every year so that the relatives who work far away have many days to think and attend in large numbers; The Kathina robe offering ceremony we chose to hold on Saturdays and Sundays, sent invitations to all households in Cosdon, but far from home, so that they could proactively ask permission from agencies and organizations. Organizations, companies to think about returning to their hometown to participate in festivals with monastery... Besides arranging a reasonable time so that the countryside can attend, the time to organize

the ceremonies is also somewhat simple but not lost the value and main content of the ceremony.

## **Conclusion**

In today's era, immigration for the purpose of economic development to increase income is an indispensable condition. Khmer people in the South in general and at Cosdon Monastery in particular are all affected by this migration for their livelihood and family. However, the emigration of the Khmer community has the most profound impact on religious activities, especially changes in religious activities because Khmer people are born as Buddhists by default. Therefore the abbots must have orientations and approaches to solve this problem as soon as possible. It can be said that immigration is a typical example of the changes in religious activities of Khmer people in the South that are taking place on many different levels and aspects. The changes and changes in these aspects are not on the same scale and are more or less related to each other.

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