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INTERNAL MIGRATION AND RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION AMONG VIETNAMESE CATHOLICS¹

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Abstract. Many studies have shown that the residence changes led to the parish's conversion, affecting the practicing of religious rituals. However, the relationship between internal migration and religious participation has remained a study gap in Vietnam which has witnessed many migration flows. Therefore, the present study will aim to 1) describe the characteristics of Catholic migrants and clarify the religious participation level of Catholic migrants; 2) define the religious participation level of Catholic migrants, and 3) analyze the challenges for migrants to maintain religious life at the destination. By collecting the quantitative and qualitative data, the research results indicated that the feminization of migration is typically in the Catholic community; the average age of Catholic migrants is young, and the marriage rate and technical qualification are relatively higher than migrants in Vietnam in general. Besides, Catholic migrants had difficulty participating in feasts that required regular participation because they faced challenges from changing social environments, attitudes of the religious community of the destination, and their religious self-identity.

Keywords: Catholic migrants, Catholicism, internal migration, religious participation, Vietnamese Catholics

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ВНУТРЕННЯЯ МИГРАЦИЯ И РЕЛИГИОЗНАЯ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ ВЬЕТНАМСКИХ КАТОЛИКОВ⁶

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Аннотация. Многие исследования показали, что смена места жительства привела к преобразованию прихода, что повлияло на отправление религиозных ритуалов. Однако взаимосвязь между внутренней миграцией и религиозным участием остаётся пробелом в исследованиях во Вьетнаме, который стал свидетелем многих миграционных потоков. Поэтому настоящее исследование направлено на 1) описание характеристик мигрантов-католиков и уточнение уровня их религиозной активности; 2) определение уровня религиозной активности католиков-мигрантов и 3) анализ трудностей, которые характерны для религиозной жизни мигрантов в месте прибытия. На основе количественных и качественных данных в ходе исследования удалось выявить, что для католической общины характерна феминизация миграции; средний возраст католиков-мигрантов невелик, а уровень брачности и трудовая квалификация относительно выше, чем у мигрантов во Вьетнаме в целом. Кроме того, католикам-мигрантам было трудно участвовать в праздниках, которые требовали регулярного присутствия, поскольку они сталкивались с проблемами, связанными с изменением социальной среды, отношениями религиозной общины места прибытия и их религиозной самоидентификацией.

Ключевые слова: католики-мигранты, католицизм, внутренняя миграция, религиозная деятельность, вьетнамские католики

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Introduction

In Vietnamese society, there was a distinction between Catholics, called 'giao dan' (people who follow Catholicism), and non-Catholics, called 'luong dan' (literally good people, but there is no unified understanding of this term. It is usually understood as Buddhist or non-religious people). The distinction was due to Catholicism as a foreign religion whose development was attached to

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colonization and wars. Besides, many Vietnamese Catholics thought Catholicism suffered the state's persecution for centuries [Hansen 2005: 311]. These historical issues led Vietnamese Catholics to have a strong sense of community. Catholics often settled in clusters to maintain community cohesion and later established parishes to carry out pastoral activities in their communities. These pastoral activities have provided spiritual care and mutual support for Catholics. Therefore, Catholics always find ways to connect with their co-religious by joining or building their parish or sub-parish wherever they migrate. In 1954, after the Geneva Accords temporarily separated Vietnam into two zones, an estimated 80 percent of the northern Catholic population moved to the South [Matthews 1992: 69]. Most Catholic migrants resettled separately from the 'native' southern population to maintain their internal unity and cohesion. However, its cohesion inhibited their integration with their southern neighbors [Hansen 2009b]. Although Catholicism has become the largest religion in Vietnam (5,9 million people, accounting for 44,6% of the total number of religious followers), according to the latest population census in 2019, Catholic migrants in urban areas are the minority which has about 32% of the Catholic population. They are a vulnerable group, facing many difficulties in adapting to the new life at the destination and maintaining their religious identity.

Concerning the relationship between religion and migrants' social integration, [Otiso 2020] realized that religion could influence social inclusion or exclusion depending on religion's position within the host society. Some researchers indicated that religion was considered a social resource for migrants [Andrew 2011; Cox 1983; Eppsteiner and Hagan 2016; Furseth 2008; William and Mola 2007] or a psychological and spiritual resource for migrants [Hagan in Saunders, Qasmiyeh, and Snyder 2016]. Religious participation also influenced forming social capital for marginal social groups such as migrants [Niu and Zhao 2018]. Moreover, migration could affect religious development. The increase in urban Catholics led to the newly established churches in Chinese cities for migrants to practice their religious activities [Huang 2014]. Migration also caused changes in religious practices practice [Abdurehim 2015; Eraliev 2018], and migrants' religious participation depended on their religiosity and the religious characteristics of the destination community [Eppsteiner and Hagan 2016; Tubergen and Sindradóttir 2011].

In Vietnam, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Vietnam (CBCV) established the Committee on the Pastoral Care of Migrants in 2007. After that, the 'Guidelines for Pastoral Care of the Migrants' was approved in 2017 to guide priests in practicing pastoral care for migrants. Today, all dioceses across the country have the Migration Pastoral Board, an association of fellow countrymen and migrant groups to gather and support migrants. The current situation of Catholic migrants and the Catholic Church's pastoral care for migrants in Vietnam raises questions about what caused Catholics to migrate to cities and, after migrating, how they maintained their religious life and what influenced their religious participation. Therefore, the present study explores why Catholics were migrating to urban areas, clarifies their religious participation, and the factors influencing migrants' religious participation at the destination.

Methods

The present study is based on a mixed method design, and the research protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the funding organization and followed the ethical standards of the Ethical Review Committee of VNU Ha Noi - University of Social Sciences and Humanities. In the fieldwork, each participant would sign a Vietnamese language informed consent and receive an incentive of VND 60,000 (USD 2,6) for a completed interview.

Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Bien Hoa City (belonging to Dong Nai province), which own distinguishing economic, social, and religious characteristics are survey settings. These provide a good context for exploring the relationship between internal migration and religion. Hanoi (capital city) and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) are the two most significant and dynamic cities that attract many migrants from rural areas in Vietnam. Besides, HCMC and Dong Nai (one of the famous destinations of Catholics who migrated from the North in 1954-1955 due to political reasons) are the two regions with the largest number of Catholics in Vietnam, while Hanoi has the highest percentage of Catholic adherents in the Northern Delta.

The quantitative data were collected by purposive sample because this type of sampling was suitable for exploring Vietnamese Catholic migrants, who were a minority group scattered in urban areas. Therefore, the research findings are confined to the survey sample, and the results can not be generalizable. This article extracted data from 856 respondents who migrated from one district to another or from other provinces/cities from the collected data for analysis.

In-depth interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data of the present study, including interviewing 21 Catholic migrants, Catholic nuns, and priests.

Results

Catholic Migrants' Demographic Characteristics

Sex of Catholic Migrants: The survey results show that women represented nearly 60% of the total number of Catholic migrants. The dominance of female migrants in the Catholic population was in the trend of feminization of migration in Vietnam, which was reported in the recent national surveys on migration.

Table 2. Sex structure of Catholic Migrants and Internal Migrants in Vietnam (2019) (%)

Catholic Migrants in the survey sample		Internal Migrants in Vietnam (2019)	
Male	Female	Male	Female
42.6	57.4	44.5	55.5

Source: The Population and Housing Census 2019: 28

Age of Catholic migrants: The study results indicated that the median age of Catholic migrants who migrated less than five years was 26, which was younger than national migrants in Vietnam (61.8% of migrants aged between 20 to 39, and the median age was 28 years old) [The Population and Housing Census 2019: 29].

Marital status of Catholic migrants: half of the respondents who migrated within five years were married. Its proportion was lower than that of married migrants in the national migration survey 2019. Meanwhile, the proportion of married people in the group of migrants who migrated over five years accounted for 82.1%, higher than that of non-migrants in the national migration survey.

Technical qualification of Catholic migrants: There was a significant difference in the technical qualification of Catholic migrants between migration in the last five years and migration over five years ($\chi^2_{(4;853)}=13,4; p<0,05$). The migration over five years group had a higher proportion of no technical qualifications. In comparison, nearly 30% of migrants in migration in the last five years group had a university and higher degree, higher than the rate among migration over five years group.

Table 3. Technical qualification of Catholic Migrants between two groups: Migration in the last five years and migration over five years (%)

	No technical qualification	Elementary	Intermediate	College	University and higher
Migration in the last 5 years	42.6	9.7	5.0	15.8	26.8
Migration over 5 years	50.7	13.1	4.9	9.9	21.4

Comparing the technical qualification between Catholic migrants and migrant laborers aged 15 and over in the national migration survey indicated that the Catholic migrants' technical qualifications tended to be higher than the general level of migrant labor in Vietnam. According to the Vietnam General Statistics Office (2020), 62.8% of migrants aged 15 and over had no technical qualification, higher than 1.47 times that of Catholic migrants.

Migration motivation

In the context of urbanization in Vietnam, migration among Catholic communities is also becoming more common. The present study indicates that 14 percent of the respondents said they had not changed their residence since they were 15 years old until the survey.

Table 4. Reasons for Catholics to move to the cities

Reasons for migration	Surveyed areas			Total
	Ha Noi (n=346)	HCMC (n=341)	Bien Hoa City (n=157)	
Seek a job	50.0%	46.6%	38.9%	46.6%
Go to study	27.2%	7.3%	7.6%	15.5%
Follow family	6.4%	19.6%	10.8%	12.6%
Marriage	7.2%	7.6%	26.8%	11.0%
Personal wishes	3.8%	14.7%	10.8%	9.5%
Start a new job and other reasons	4.6%	1.8%	4.5%	3.4%
Others	0.9%	2.3%	0.6%	1.4%

A Chi-square test revealed that the difference in reasons for migration among Catholic migrants at three survey sites were significant statistics. As shown in Table 4, job reasons were significant factors in changing residence among Catholic migrants. Other reasons, including study, family, and marriage, accounted for 15.5%, 12.6%, and 11.0% of the survey sample, respectively. Hanoi and HCMC had a larger population of Catholic migrants who migrated due to career reasons than Bien Hoa city. Hanoi also attracted more Catholics who migrated to study compared to the other two surveyed areas.

Religious participation

Religion participation is often measured based on the frequency of ritual attendance [Connor 2009; Hurh and Kim 2016; III and Zhou 2013]. According to the 1983 Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church, Catholics must participate in Mass, including Sundays and holy days of obligation. Besides, Eucharist and Reconciliation are two sacraments among Catholicism's seven sacraments requiring Catholics to practice frequently. Although there is no regulation on praying in the Catholic Canon Law, praying signifies the Catholics' faith. Thus, the present study measured migrants' religious participation through five indicators (each indicator has two marks: 1 point – practice feast right as the Canon Law regulations; 0 point – practice feast not suitable as the Canon Law regulations) as follows:

- Praying: at least one time per day was one point
- Attending Mass: at least one time a week was one point
- Attending holy days of obligation: full attendance was one point
- Receiving Eucharist and Reconciliation: at least one time a year was one point

In brief, the degree of Catholic migrants' religious participation would receive values from 0 to 5, reflecting the number of Catholic rituals performed fully following the Canon Law.

The survey results indicated that 15.4% of Catholic migrants practice the full range of religious services at their destination, while 84.6% do not practice fully (with scores 1-4). Catholic migrants usually maintained their religious participation at a level of 3/5 (with Religious participation Mode = Median religious participation = 3, Mean = 3.3 (SD = 1.01). As shown in Table 5, Eucharist and Reconciliation were two types of feasts in which Catholic migrants participated following the Canon Law. Nearly two-thirds of respondents said they attended holydays of obligations fully. 43.1% of respondents prayed everyday. Meanwhile, Sunday Mass, one of the most important and forced feasts in Catholic feasts, had the lowest attendance rate (29.6%).

Table 5. Frequency of practicing Catholic Feasts

Praying and Type of Feasts	Frequency	Percent
Praying every day	368	43.1
Sunday Mass	253	29.6
Holydays of obligation	556	65.1
Receiving the Eucharist	823	96.7
Receiving the Reconciliation	845	98.7

The qualitative results explained Catholic migrants' feast attendance: “*Since arriving here, I missed many feasts because of bread and butter, busy business. I felt my current faith was not as strong as when I lived with my parent. Now, no one cared about whether I attended feasts or not*” (Male, 35 years old).

Table 6. The level of religious participation of Catholic Migrants by type of migration

	Intra-city Migration		Migration from another city/province		T (847)	p
	Mean	Std.D	Mean	Std.D		
Level of religious participation	3.17	0.98	3.39	1.01	2.85	0.005

Intra-city Catholic migrants had a lower level of religious participation ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.98$) than migrants from another province/city ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.01$). Likewise, qualitative data showed that a group of Catholics who migrated from another city/province considered themselves more religious because they left parishes with higher religiosity. As one respondent put it, *"If you were high religiosity and always attended all feasts in your hometown when you moved to Hanoi, you would have a sense of fulfilling your duty. In general, if you were religious, you must find a church wherever you go"* (Male, 30 years old).

Table 7. Level of Religious participation in two groups of Catholic migrants: Migration over five years and migration in the last five years

	Migration over five years		Migration in the last five years		T (847)	p
	Mean	Std.D	Mean	Std.D		
Level of religious participation	3.26	0.97	3.41	1.05	2.05	0,04

There was a difference in religious participation between the two groups of Catholic migrants. The short-term migrants maintained their religious practices, while the perennial migrants' religious practices decreased. For this reason, A priest talked about this situation as follows: *"For many migrants, they migrated to Hanoi to find a job or studying, they had no home, no family, no one to manage, remind they were Catholics. Thus, they gradually neglected to go to the feasts"* (Priest, 45 years old, Hanoi).

Challenges to religious participation of Catholic migrants

As mentioned above, Catholic migrants tend to participate in non-regular feasts rather than regular rituals. The qualitative data revealed three challenges to the religious participation of Catholic migrants, including changing living environments, attitudes of the religious community at the destination, and their religious identity.

Changing living environments

Moving from rural to urban areas led to economic pressures on Catholics, such as freelance work without days off, work overload, and weekend work, which brought the primary income, etc. These pressures made many Catholic migrants unable to fulfill their religious duties. Some interviewees said that:

"Sometimes I could not go to church because of my busy work. I could not ask for time off from work to go to Sunday Mass, my salary would be deducted if I did that. It was very difficult to arrange the time to go to the church, I was often busy at the weekend" (Male, 30 years old)

"Due to livelihood or economic issues, migrants left their hometown to cities to live. Therefore, they often prioritized their work over going to the church" (Female, 50 years old).

Faced with the challenge of changing living environments, Catholic migrants tried to find ways to reduce the difficulties brought on by their circumstances by gathering together in an enabling environment. They connected to their co-religious by joining a Catholic group or finding the parish near their house.

Attitudes of the religious community at the destination

The qualitative data revealed a distinction between originated parishioners and migrated parishioners. The distinction limited the participation of Catholic migrants in certain types of rituals. A Catholic nun said, “*I had been working at Co Nhue Parish, an ancient village, for five years. I observed that the participation in certain church liturgies belonged to members of the long-standing lineages here. According to their custom, only indigenous parishioners could participate in book procession and ritual offerings on holy days. Besides, I observed some parishes and realized that most Parish Council members were indigenous people. After a long time, one migrant was elected to Parish Council*” (Catholic Sister, 42 years old). However, the quantitative results indicated that one-third of Catholic migrants said they felt not belong to the city and felt unconfident when participating in religious activities at the destination parish. When asking Catholic migrants about their experience of discrimination in the city, only 6.5% of respondents reported that they had been this experience.

Catholic migrants faced psychological barriers from their communities as a priest revealed that “*Catholic migrants' religious life was hard due to the prejudice and stigma of indigenous parishioners. Even priests sometimes encountered the same prejudice as those from the countryside who received the responsibility of taking care parish at the city*” (A priest, 50 years old). In general, attitudes of religious communities at the destination could influence migrants' religious life.

Self-identification of Catholic migrants

After migrating, Catholic migrants faced the problem of re-identifying their religious identity. Self-identity refers to the sense of Catholic migrants about which religious community (originated parish or destination parish) they belong. According to the Migration Pastoral Guide, “even if they have not yet applied for immigration, they still belong to the parish where they are residing” [Migration Pastoral Committee 2017: 14], and as said a priest, “Catholics who have lived in any parish for six months or more become parishioners of that parish.” (A priest, 50 years old). However, the qualitative data indicated a dilemma arose when Catholic migrants could not identify which parish (originated parish or current parish where they live) they belonged.

Short-term migrants or new migrants identified themselves as belonging to their originated parish and maintaining an anonymous religious life in the current parish. They defined the current parish as a temporary place of religious activities. The survey results showed that 28.5% of migrants returned to their originated parish to participate in religious activities, and 43.4% felt more connected with their home parish.

Their “anonymous” religious life greatly influenced their religious practice. Through the process of pastoral care for migrants, a priest commented: “In the past, when living in a homeland, Catholics almost knew each other. They went to church, it meant going to see each other. They were “identified” in their community. When the whole village went to Sunday Mass, there was no reason for them to stay at home, so they had to go. After migrating, they became “anonymous” Catholics. The parish did not know who I was, the neighbors did not know who I was... so the migrant's faith would become loose” (A priest, 50 years old).

Long-term migrants had much more complicated and even impossible to identify their identity. They often accepted to belong to both parishes: the originated parish and the current parish. Therefore they tried to fulfill their obligations in both parishes. They contributed and participated in regular religious activities in the local parish, while they also contributed to building up their homeland and returning to the homeland on important occasions. As a long-term migrant said,

“Sometimes I was afraid of joining the community here because my family would return to the homeland on important occasions. We were unable to participate in religious services here. I had to play double roles in my originated parish and current parish” (Female, 35 years old).

In brief, their identity as belonging to both places made migrant Catholics not fully integrate into the religious activities of their destination.

Discussion and conclusions

In the urbanization process in Vietnam, geographic displacement is a common social phenomenon and is also present in the Catholic community. Catholics move away from their old places to the cities for many reasons, such as livelihoods, studies, or changing life plans. Our research shows some characteristics of the Catholic migrant group as follows: 1) The feminization of migration is still typical even within the Catholic community; 2) The average age of Catholic migrants are young, showing the dynamism of young Catholics' life; 3) The marriage rate is also relatively high - showing a stable orientation of life after migration and living in a new place; 4) The technical qualification of the Catholic migrant community is relatively high compared to the common ground of internal migrants in Vietnam.

In the past, the historical migration of Catholics in 1954 from the North to the South was a community decision [Hansen 2009a; Nguyen 2014; 2015), not based on individual choices. It can be seen that Catholics who migrated in the past determined they were going to build a new settlement and create a new life. At that time, they had not thought of returning. Over the past 60 years, the displacement of residents has been a widespread phenomenon in the Catholic community. However, the reasons for current migration are related to personal decisions, particularly finding opportunities for personal development. These reasons are similar to GSO's findings of migration reasons, including employment, study, and family [Vietnam General Statistics Office 2020].

Several studies worldwide have shown that migrants' religious participation is influenced not only by their own religious characteristics but also by the religion of the destination community. The present study investigated the religious participation of Catholic migrants by surveying Catholics migrating to Hanoi, HCMC, and Bien Hoa. The results indicated that Catholic migrants had difficulty participating in feasts requiring regular participation, such as Sunday Mass. Trần Cao Khải [2020] believed that there are three main reasons for Catholics, in general, and migrants, in particular, to "neglect" their religious life: 1) the constraints of material life; 2) Many people maintain their religious life by participating some feasts following the Catholic Canon Law; 3) lack of pastoral caregivers for Catholic migrants. The survey data of this study seemed to support Tran Cao Khai's second argument about the cause of migrants neglecting their religious life.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis results showed that the religious participation of Catholic migrants was currently facing several challenges from changing social environments, attitudes of the religious community of the destination, and their religious self-identity. Although the quantitative data does not record the destination community's prejudice against Catholic migrants, the qualitative data show that the destination community's attitudes influence the religious practices of the Catholic migrant. In addition, the feeling of "anonymous" at the destination is a psychological barrier for Catholic migrants when integrating into religious life at the destination. According to [Bạch Vân and Minh Huy 2016], the changes in the living environment made the Catholic migrants feel life pressure and judged as “landless people” who made the city in chaos and brought a burden

on the city. These unconfident feelings of Catholic migrants led them hard to adapt to a new living environment.

Based on qualitative data, the present study has identified some challenging factors for the religious participation of Catholic migrants. However, more quantitative studies are needed to measure and evaluate the impact of these factors on the religious participation of Catholic migrants.

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