

FOLK BELIEFS IN ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN HA GIANG PROVINCE IN THE CURRENT INTEGRATION CONTEXT

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Folk beliefs of ethnic minorities in Vietnam in general and folk beliefs of ethnic minorities in Ha Giang province in particular are extremely diverse and rich. Folk beliefs are cultural and spiritual activities, indispensable spiritual food of the majority of ethnic groups. The application process needs to identify, besides positive values, folk beliefs also have certain limitations, especially idealism, superstition. Therefore, when applying folk beliefs, it is necessary to consider and select the factors that are suitable not only for ethnic minorities, but also in accordance with the Party's viewpoint in the spirit of Resolution No. 33-NQ/TW dated June 9th, 2014 of the 11th Party Central Committee on building and developing culture and people to meet the requirements of sustainable development of the country. Only then will we ensure the successful implementation of the matter of orienting a healthy cultural and spiritual life in the process of building Vietnamese people in the current integration context for all ethnic groups in general and other ethnic groups in Ha Giang province in particular.

Keywords: *Folk beliefs; Community of ethnic minorities; Ha Giang province; Integration and development.*

1. Introduction

Ha Giang is a mountainous province, border with China, to be the residence of many ethnic minorities for a long time. Over thousands of years of history, the lives of the people here have been influenced by many types of beliefs. In recent years, with economic development, socio-political stability, religious activities in general and folk beliefs in particular in Ha Giang province are quite developed, many religious festivals have been restored and maintained regularly, community religious activities have attracted more and more people to participate. Those religious activities have had a positive impact on all aspects of social life, but they also inevitably have negative effects.

Being well aware of the impact of folk beliefs on economic, political, cultural, social, security and defense development; party committees and authorities from the province to the grassroots have actively grasped the operation situation of various types of folk beliefs, strengthen leadership, implement orientations and management measures in order to promote the positive role, minimize the negative impacts of folk belief activities in the lives of ethnic groups in the Ha Giang province.

2. Research overview

Until now, research works related to folk

beliefs in ethnic minority communities have attracted many authors and scientists, including a number of research works such as: Luong Dan, "Ha Giang always ensures the implementation of the policy of religion and freedom of belief", Ha Giang electronic newspaper, February 12th, 2023; Lan Huong, "Beauty in traditional folk festivals in Ha Giang province", Ha Giang province's web portal, February 22nd, 2011; Le Van Loi (Editor), "Solving ethnic and religious issues in Vietnam in the current period", Publishing House of Political Theory, Hanoi, 2018; Hoang Thi Lan, Cao Phan Giang, "Religious life and beliefs of ethnic minorities in Vietnam today", Electronic Journal of Political Theory, August 21st, 2020; Nguyen Ngoc Mai, "Transformation of traditional religion in ethnic minorities in the mountainous areas of northern Vietnam today", Journal of Religious Research, No. 9/2014; Nguyen Van Minh, "New religious phenomena in ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands today", Journal of Social Sciences, No. 4/2016; Lam Trang, "Ha Giang province focuses on preserving traditional cultural values", Communist electronic Journal, December 27th, 2022... The above researches have mentioned a lot about the folk beliefs of the ethnic minorities in Vietnam in general and folk beliefs of ethnic minorities in Ha Giang province in particular are valuable documents

for the author to inherit, perfect and supplement the author's research content.

3. Research Methods

In this article, the author uses some basic methods such as: Methods of collecting primary and secondary documents; the method of synthesis and analysis is based on available documents related to folk beliefs in ethnic minority communities to clarify the content of this research.

4. Research results

4.1. General overview of folk beliefs of ethnic minorities

Folk beliefs are one of the important elements of spiritual culture, formed along with the history of nations. In the historical process of ethnic groups, from the beginning to the present, people have to go through harsh struggles for survival, especially the natural transformation, which is not always successful. Therefore, belief was born to compensate for faith, spiritual strength for people hoping for help from some supernatural force, as a spiritual fulcrum.

In the life of ethnic minority communities today, folk beliefs are an important cultural activity, associated with activities of each individual, family, community and society. It is not only spiritual activities but also includes many cultural activities imbued with ethnic identity such as: festivals of ethnic groups (in the festival there are festivals with activities of fun, singing, arts, sports...); Then dance of the Tay ethnic group (a spiritual dance), Worshiping ceremony of the forest gods of the Tay, Nung, Pu Peo and Co Lao ethnic groups (along with the ritual worshipping the gods, there are also activities to plant trees and dissemination of forest protection conventions)...

Folk beliefs of the ethnic groups of Ha Giang province mainly have the following types: Ancestor worship, mother worship, job ancestor worship and agricultural beliefs. Within each ethnic group, these types of beliefs have similarities and differences, mainly in the object of worship and the form of ritual organization. Folk beliefs have many profound human values and there is a strong influence on many areas of social life, from ethics, personal lifestyle, to family - clan - community relations and life cycle-related issues such as: birth, marriage, funeral... are influenced by beliefs and becoming national customs. From its value and influence, progressive folk beliefs have been making important contributions to the development of society.

4.2. Some folk beliefs of ethnic minorities in Ha Giang province

With the characteristics of a ethnic mountainous

province, bordering with China, Ha Giang province has 19 ethnic minorities living, in which there are 16 ethnic groups with long living origins, therefore, the types of folk religious activities are very diverse. However, in this article, only focus on presenting some representative, typical and popular beliefs among the ethnic groups in the province, which are valuable in building the Vietnamese people in the period of development and integration, specifically as follows:

Ancestor Worship: It is a type of belief that is widely practiced in most ethnic groups.

In a broad sense, ancestor worship is not only worshipping those who have contributed to the deceased's sustenance, that is, those with the same bloodline, but also to worship those who have contributed to the village community and the country. With the principle of "drinking water, remembering the source", families, clans and ethnic communities all worship their grandparents, ancestors, people who have contributed to the village, to express their gratitude. At the same time, pray for help and protection... Each ethnic group has different rituals of worshipping ancestors, but in terms of time, there are similarities, most ethnic groups worship their ancestors on the occasion of the Lunar New Year, the full moon of 7th lunar month... However, each ethnic group has time to determine which is the most important worshipping occasion of the year, for example: the Tay, Nung, Dao ethnic groups... then on the Lunar New Year; La Chi ethnic group on the full moon of the 7th lunar month; A part of the Mong ethnic group worship on New Year's Eve... The activities of worshipping ancestors contain profound human values, with each ethnic group having its own meanings and imbued with its own cultural identity. For ethnic groups that do not keep records of genealogies (the Mong ethnic group), each occasion of sacrifice is a time for the elderly to review their family history so that their descendants can remember the legend of the clan formation process, experience historical events, how many generations have there been so far, what ancestors are there in each life,... Ancestral belief activities are also an opportunity for the people to practice and pass on customs and practices to their descendants in their clans and ethnic communities.

God-worshipping beliefs: Stemming from the concept of animism, most ethnic groups follow polytheistic beliefs, the people worship a lot of gods. For ethnic groups of Ha Giang province, worshipping forest gods is the most popular. The villages of the Tay, Nung, Co Lao, and Pu Peo ethnic groups all have sacred forest areas. It is an old forest with many old trees and to be located in the watershed area. Each village has its own conventions and

taboos to protect the sacred forest and there is its own sacrifice day. The Tay and Nung ethnic groups often worship Dong Than (the forest god) on the full moon of the 7th lunar month; Pu Peo ethnic group again worship the forest on the 6th day of the 6th lunar month; Co Lao people worship the forest god twice a year on the 3rd and 9th day of the lunar calendar... In the worship of gods, ethnic groups also worship the god Thanh Hoang, who openly broke stones and established villages, typically the character Hoang Van Thung (i.e. Hoang Van Dong) who is considered the ancestor of the La Chi ethnic group and some ethnic groups in 2 western districts of Ha Giang province (Hoang Su Phi and Xin Man). The worshipping ceremony of Hoang Van Thung takes place on the occasion of the 7th lunar month every year (called Tet or Cu Te Festival in La Chi). Thus, the belief in god worship not only contributes to educating people to protect and preserve the ecological environment, but also a way for the people to maintain traditional cultural activities.

Mother Goddess Worship: Stories about the three saints include: Mother Goddess Lieu Hanh, Mother Goddess Thuong Ngan, Mother Goddess Thoai are handed down in folklore quite abundantly. In Ha Giang province, there is a Mother Temple, the gods worshiped in the Temple are also the above 3 Mother saints. The belief in Mother Goddess worship reflects the cultural history of ethnic groups who are agricultural residents who grow wet rice, at the same time affirms the important position of women in the family and society. The symbols of the worshiped Mothers carry a resilient will, with synergy in the cause of national building and national defense of our nation. On the other hand, ethnic groups always keep in mind that children receive blessings from their mothers, so there is a saying “Mother’s blessing”. Therefore, the belief in Mother Goddesses has contributed to educating people, and especially women, to live in a good direction, so that future children or grandchildren can enjoy blessings, or meet retribution according to the law of cause and effect from the mother herself. Moreover, the mother-worshipping belief also teaches that children must be filial with the saying “Worshipping mother with one heart, respecting Father, fulfilling filial piety is the son’s religion”.

Belief in worshipping the professional ancestor: With the self-sufficient production method, in addition to agricultural production, ethnic groups often have traditional crafts and occupations to serve the needs of health care and spirituality such as: Carpenter; metal forging; making incense and paper; profession of medicine, profession of worship... For all practitioners, they must worship the professional ancestors. To worship the

professional ancestors, families must set up a place of worship and organize sacrifices according to custom, express gratitude to the teacher and pray to the profession ancestors for a favorable job. Among the ethnic groups, the majority of people who work as shamans will also work as physicians. When doing the profession, they must strictly comply with the regulations of the professional ancestors, especially for the profession of shaman and physician, in the case of the Mong, Dao, and Tay ethnic groups... before and after going to worship, the monks must perform a ceremony to ask for permission and report to the professional ancestors at the place of worship.

The professional ancestor worship is one of the types of beliefs with values of moral education and respect for the religion of the nations. Among the types of professional ancestor worship, the shaman profession is also valuable in teaching the language, voice, writing of the nation, typically the Nom script of the Dao and Tay ethnic groups... For Ha Giang province, the application of professional ancestor worship beliefs has been fully exploited since the establishment of the Folk Artisan Association in most communes and towns in the province. The association has gathered many artisans of different ethnic groups, set out operating regulations with binding provisions on benefits, as well as the rights and obligations of members. To propagate and mobilize all ethnic groups to implement the guidelines, policies of the Party and the laws of the State, especially the implementation of village conventions effectively.

Agricultural Beliefs: It is the type of spiritual activity practiced most often by ethnic groups and on the largest scale. In a year, most ethnic groups have to organize at least 2 times of worship, including the harvest ceremony and the new rice ceremony. For the Tay and Nung ethnic groups, at the beginning of spring, the people organize a festival to go down to the field (Long Tong). The purpose of the festival is to pray to the gods to bless the good rain and wind, avoiding pests and diseases, there is a good and bountiful harvest. During the ceremony, people will distribute plant varieties such as rice, corn, cotton,... to families (symbolic) with the meaning: Those seeds have been blessed by the gods, so they will give a high productivity. The festival part organizes folk games, ethnic sports... showing the talents, health and ingenuity of people. During the harvest festival, the villagers will be reminded by the village head when to open the spring (the day they can go to work in the fields and upland fields), typically in the Dao ethnic group, on this holiday, the village head also popularizes specific conventions such as not to cut down forests, break bamboo shoots, have to

plant trees,... any violators will be fined according to regulations. For the new rice offering ceremony (of rice-growing residents such as Tay, Nung ethnic groups... usually in the fall), the new corn offering ceremony (of the Mong, Co Lao ethnic groups... usually in the summer), this festival has a smaller scale than the harvest festival, usually only held in each family. The people take the newly harvested products and process them as offerings. For rice, they make thick cakes, sticky rice, five-color sticky rice; corn, then make cornbread or choose the big ones to boil to offer to the ancestors who have supported a bountiful harvest. Through the practice of agricultural religious rituals, educating people to always be industrious, diligent, exercise health, love labor. In addition, agricultural beliefs also uphold the spirit of solidarity and join hands to protect the ecological environment for the survival of the nation.

5. Discussion

Folk beliefs are cultural and spiritual activities, indispensable spiritual food of the majority of ethnic minorities in general and ethnic minorities in Ha Giang province in particular. To exploit folk beliefs in ethnic minority communities in Ha Giang province to build Vietnamese people in the period of integration and development, from the perspective of the state management agency in charge of ethnic affairs, the article discusses a number of issues that need attention as follows:

Firstly, belief, religion and ethnicity are very sensitive issues, so the advocacy process needs to be cautious. The application or elimination of elements in each type of belief needs to create consensus from the people as well as ensure the interests of management agencies, avoiding excessive revival or exclusion that hurts national spiritual beliefs, may lead to violations of the people's freedom rights of belief, to be an opportunity for hostile forces to take advantage of and undermining the great national unity bloc.

Secondly, promoting research activities in social sciences in general, anthropology/ethnography, beliefs and religions in particular, in order to provide theoretical and practical basis, so that the management agencies have a solid basis in proposing ethnic-religious policies suitable to ethnic minority areas, effectively serving the implementation of political tasks of the locality in the ethnic minority areas.

Thirdly, improving the investment efficiency of programs and projects for ethnic minorities and mountainous areas, helping people to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty, get richer, improve their level of cultural enjoyment, improve people's intellectual level and access to technology science,

information technology,... in order to strengthen the people's confidence in the Party and State, avoid taking advantage of ethnic and religious issues and plot "peaceful evolution" by hostile forces, divide the great unity bloc of nations.

Fourthly, the process of orienting spiritual life for ethnic minorities must always be recognized in the movement of society. Currently, in addition to traditional beliefs, among ethnic minorities, appearing new religions such as Protestantism, heresy San Su ke to, illegal organization Duong Van Minh,... Therefore, with the parts of the compatriots, they properly fulfill the obligations of believers and civic responsibilities. As for the organizations that entice people to follow the religion against the law, they need to be strictly handled.

6. Conclusion

Folk beliefs of ethnic minorities are a very important part of traditional culture, reflecting the rich spiritual life of ethnic minority communities. In recent years, along with the guidelines and policies of the Party and State, activities of culture, beliefs and festivals of ethnic minorities have been paid attention to, restored and promoted strongly. However, a very big problem at present in many localities throughout the country in general and Ha Giang province in particular is that the restoration of religious and festive activities of the people is not taking place properly, making religious activities and festivals have been administrativeized, only interested in restoring and exploiting it to serve the purpose of tourism development, but losing the soul and sacredness of religious activities, folk beliefs, festival. In the new context of the nation and the times, along with the process of cultural exchange and acculturation, many cultural values of the ethnic groups have been interwoven, acclimatized and absorbed into each other. This process has made religious activities, folk beliefs of ethnic communities added more richer and more diverse new elements. Besides that positive side, many negative factors also arise in the religious activities of the people. Some religious activities imbued with traditional cultural characteristics of the nation have not been cared for, maintained or restored, but instead are the lack of selective adaptation of religious activities alien to traditional culture. Many values in the community's religious activities are gradually lost, deformed, gradually lost the national cultural identity. It can be said that this fact has been posing many problems that need to be addressed not only for religious affairs, at the same time also for the process of preserving and promoting traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities in general and Ha Giang province in particular in the current integration context.

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TÍN NGƯỠNG DÂN GIAN TRONG CỘNG ĐỒNG CÁC TỘC NGƯỜI THIỂU SỐ TRÊN ĐỊA BÀN TỈNH HÀ GIANG TRONG BỐI CẢNH HỘI NHẬP HIỆN NAY

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Tín ngưỡng dân gian của đồng bào dân tộc thiểu số Việt Nam nói chung và tín ngưỡng dân gian của đồng bào các dân tộc thiểu số tỉnh Hà Giang nói riêng là hết sức đa dạng, phong phú. Tín ngưỡng dân gian là sinh hoạt văn hóa tâm linh, môn ăn tinh thần không thể thiếu của cộng đồng các dân tộc. Trong quá trình vận dụng cần xác định, ngoài các giá trị tích cực, tín ngưỡng dân gian còn có những mặt tồn tại, hạn chế, đặc biệt là tính duy tâm, mê tín, dị đoan... Chính vì vậy, khi vận dụng tín ngưỡng dân gian cần có sự cân nhắc, chọn lọc để tìm ra các yếu tố phù hợp không chỉ với đồng bào dân tộc thiểu số mà phải đúng quan điểm của Đảng theo tinh thần Nghị quyết số 33-NQ/TW ngày 09/06/2014 của Ban Chấp hành Trung ương Đảng khóa XI về xây dựng và phát triển văn hóa, con người đáp ứng yêu cầu phát triển bền vững đất nước. Có như vậy, chúng ta mới đảm bảo thực hiện thành công bài toán định hướng đời sống văn hóa tâm linh lành mạnh trong quá trình xây dựng con người Việt Nam trong bối cảnh hội nhập hiện nay đối với đồng bào các dân tộc nói chung và đồng bào các dân tộc trên địa bàn tỉnh Hà Giang nói riêng.

Từ khóa: Tín ngưỡng dân gian; Cộng đồng các dân tộc thiểu số; Tỉnh Hà Giang; Hội nhập và phát triển.