

КУЛЬТУРА И СОЦИУМ

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MISSIONARY ACTIVITY AND CIVILIZATION OF WESTERN MISSIONARIES:
A CASE OF COCHINCHINA (VIETNAM)
DURING THE 16th AND 17th CENTURIES

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Abstract: *As in many other religions, missionary activity is seen by Catholics as a self-fulfilling mission, a sacred act to expand the scope of God's kingdom. The geographical discoveries, along with the progress of the maritime industry in the 15th–16th centuries, opened a great prospect for “spreading the Gospel” to faraway lands, including Cochinchina (Vietnam). Along with missionary activities, Western civilization also followed the missionaries, who introduced it into the indigenous social life, contributing to the creation of the West–East connection, and the world integration of this land. Based on the many sources, such as the memoirs and correspondence of the missionaries themselves in Cochinchina and the works on the Catholic history of some Vietnamese and foreign researchers, especially the latest studies of Vietnamese historians, the article focuses on studying about missionary activities along with the introduction of Western civilization by missionaries in Cochinchina from the 16th century to the 18th century. The results show that the activities of the missionaries under the encouragement policy of the Cochinchina government are the basic factors promoting the process of spreading Western civilized values in Vietnam. This is an inevitable result of the spread of Catholicism which is an important role in the cultural exchange between East and West in Cochinchina in the 16th and 17th centuries. The paper contributes to clarifying the history of the development of Catholic doctrine in Vietnam and affirm the merits of Western missionaries as a bridge to bring European scientific and technical knowledge to Cochinchina.*

Keywords: Catholics, Missionary, Western, Vietnam, Vietnamese script, Cochinchina, Jesuits.

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INTRODUCTION

The connection of the trade routes between Europe and the Eastern countries, which began around the 16th century, prompted the Catholic clergies to begin embarking on an extensive “gospel spreading” mission in new lands. Cochinchina which was the trading gateway of international merchant fleets at that time soon attracted the attention of Western missionaries¹. The mission

¹ The 16th and 17th centuries were a turbulent period of Vietnamese history. From 1527 to 1592, the Southern–Northern Dynasty war took place between the Mac family in Thang Long (North Dynasty) and the Le family in Thanh

of the Catholic missionaries was to expand “the kingdom of Christ” but to achieve this goal, the missionaries also had to associate missionary activities with the cultural and social activities of Cochinchina of that time. This process introduced Western civilization into the indigenous social life, contributing significantly to the creation of the West–East connection, and the world integration of this land.

Normally, Western missionaries came to China or Japan and, for many varied reasons, they came to Cochinchina. One of the important reasons was that, at this time in Cochinchina, under the rule of Nguyen lords, the Vietnamese had inherited the achievements of Champa ports of the ancient Champa and constructed Hoi An (Quang Nam) into a bustling international trading port city. It is the strong development of Hoi An port and the open policy of Nguyen lords that made this place a “fertile” land for missionaries. Christoforo Borri, one of the missionaries to Cochinchina [Borri, 1998, p. 21]², remarked that all Eastern countries considered Europeans as strangers, and of course, they hated them so much that when Europeans entered their territory. However, on the contrary, in Cochinchina, the locals were willing to approach the Europeans and invited the European missionaries to dine with them. In short, the people of Cochinchina were very social, polite, and friendly to Westerners. Borri wrote: “This happened to me and my colleagues when we first came to this country. People have regarded us as very close friends and as if people have known us for a long time. It is a very nice door open to the missionaries of Christ to preach the Gospel” [Borri, 1998, p. 27].

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES OF WESTERN CLERGIES IN COCHINCHINA DURING THE 16th–18th CENTURIES

Disregarding the previous random Christian missionaries who had visited Cochinchina, the new wave of evangelism in Cochinchina was promoted by clergies of various religious orders from the close of the 16th century to the beginning of the 17th century [George, 2017, p. 9]. At the beginning of this wave were the missionaries of the Spanish Franciscans, who came to Quang Nam in 1583, but did not enter into Cochinchina due to harsh weather conditions [Truong, 2008, p. 29; Barron, Borri, 2006, p. 138; Tang, 2016]³. In 1593, three Spanish Dominicans – Alfonso

Hoa (Southern Dynasty). In the 17th century, Vietnam continued to experience the Trinh-Nguyen war. Specifically, from 1627 to 1672, the Trinh family in the North and the Nguyen family in the South fought each other seven times but could not settle the dispute. After 46 years of constant fighting, both sides were exhausted in their manpower and properties, so they had to accept a truce, a long-term separation. Song Gianh, known as Linh Giang, became the boundary that divided Dai Viet into two areas: from Linh Giang to the South called Cochinchina, which was under the control of the Nguyen Lord, and from Linh Giang to the North called Tonkin, which was under the management of King Le Trinh’s administration. This situation lasted until the end of the 18th century when the Tay Son peasant movement broke out (1771), in turn destroying the Nguyen lordship in Cochinchina (1777) and Trinh Lord in Tonkin (1786) [Le, 2014, p. 291–352; Truong et al., 2006, p. 335–362].

² Christoforo Borri was born in Milan (Italy) in 1583, entered the Jesuit church (order) in 1601, traveled through India in 1615, and arrived in Cochinchina. He was in Cochinchina until 1622 and then returned to Macao. On May 24th, 1632, he died at a relative’s home. *The Land of Cochinchina* in 1621 was written in Italian and published in 1631. This book was translated into French, Latin, Dutch, German, and English during the years 1631–1633. Vietnamese version was translated by Hồng Nhuệ, Khắc Xuyên, and Nguyễn Nghị. According to Father Léopold Cadiere, Christoforo Borri was one of the first Europeans after Father Francois de Pina was in Cochinchina. He was diligently studying An Nam. His narrative shows that he had a very complete and wonderful knowledge of that era and the native language [Borri, 1998, p. 3–5].

³ Franciscans include those who followed St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1126). In 1583, a Spanish Franciscan mission was led by a missionary, Diego de San Jose o de Oropesa (?–1590), and seven other members including Bartolome Ruiz, Francisco de Montilla, Ortiz Cabezas, Cristobal Gomez, Diego Jimenez, Franssico de Vllarino, and Manuel de Santiago, from Manila (Philippines) to Vietnam and China. When they arrived in Tonkin, they were welcomed by King Mac Mau Hop (1562–1590). After that, they moved to Cochinchina. Due to the harsh weather

Ximénez, Diego Aduarte, and Huynh Juan Bautista Deza sailed three Spanish ships stopped at Cua Han (Da Nang) and Cachan (Ke Cham, Quang Nam) [Phan, 1967, p. 574; People's Committee of Quang Nam Province, 2016, p. 587]⁴. Priests Alfonso Ximénez and Diego Aduarte remained on the mission for a long time in both Quang Nam and Thuan Hoa. By the winter of 1595–1596, they had already left there⁵. While the Spanish Dominican missionaries were in Quang Nam, in 1595, two Portuguese Augustinians in Macau, Miguel dos Santos and Rafael da Madre de Deus, also came there in the hope of starting Christian missions in Cochinchina, Tonkin, and Siam. They were warmly welcomed by the authorities and the people of Cochinchina, helping them to set up a church (possibly at Cua Han). The work of the Augustinian monks at first was very agreeable, but they only stayed there until 1605 and then left because the monks opposed the government in Quang Nam that protected them [Tran, 2018(1), p. 217]⁶.

Around the beginning of 1598, on the invitation of Lord Nguyen, Father Rafael da Madre de Deus and his brother Mateus de S. José, a Portuguese Congregation monk, returned to Quang Nam. They were warmly welcomed by the head of Quang Nam's government at Sima, given by Paquirá [Luong, 2006, p. 33]⁷, for the "ambassador" function to be more liberal in preaching, building churches and baptizing those who volunteered. Due to the death of his brother, Mateus de S. José, it became difficult for Father Rafael da Madre de Deus to operate efficiently, and he left Quang Nam for Malacca in 1601 to search for an assistant, but he was taken prisoner by the Dutch in Singapore in 1604 and was killed in Malacca in 1606 [Pinto, 2012, p. 139–140]⁸. During the period between 1606 and 1612, another Portuguese Congregation monk, Fr. Jerónimo de Matos, also came from Macao to in Cochinchina for Christian missionary work. His work was noteworthy, with a church named St. Monica [Jacques, 2002, p. 209].

In general, until 1615, before the Jesuits appeared, clergies of the Franciscan, Dominican, and Augustinian orders of Spain and Portugal came to Quang Nam and then to Thuan Hoa, but the most concentrated area was the Ke Cham center. Despite many attempts, the clergies of these religious orders had not yet laid the groundwork to expand the spread of Catholicism in Cochinchina. Only after Japan implemented the policy of prohibition in 1614, expelling all the Western missionaries and Jesuits present in Vietnam, did the missionaries in Cochinchina started to gain more specific results [Bary, 2006, p. 130].

conditions, the boat could go into Cochinchina and took shelter at a border gate six miles away (Cua Han) for a while and then let the boat anchor down. In the end, a typhoon hit the Hainan island of China. Here, Diego de San Jose was imprisoned. Because of the intervention of Father Matheo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary, he was released. Diego de San Jose arrived in Macao, then returned to Manila in 1585. He died near Acapulco while returning to Spain in 1590 [Truong, 2008, p. 29; Tang, 2016, p. 130].

⁴ The name of Ke Cham in Vietnam historical sources and Western documents in the 17th–19th centuries was to locate the headquarters of Quang Nam. There were still many different opinions about the position of the current Cham. Some researchers believe that this was the palace of Thanh Chiem town, west of Hoi An today, but others disagree with this view [People's Committee of Quang Nam Province, 2016, p. 587].

⁵ Father Rafael da Madre de Deus (1571–1606) was an Augustinian missionary. He went to mission in Quang Nam around 1595–1605 [Jacques, 2012].

⁶ Before that, in 1572, the Portuguese Congregation of the East Indies built the first monastery in Goa (India). In 1587, Europeans came to Malacca (Malaysia) [Alberts, 2013, p. 30].

⁷ Sima by Paquirá was Tra Kieu Simhapura or the capital of the Avamarati state, one of the five states of the Champa kingdom. Today, this place is located in Duy Son commune, Duy Xuyen district, Quang Nam province (Vietnam) [Luong, 2016, p. 33].

⁸ After arresting Rafael da Madre de Deus, the Ha Lan people intended to use him to exchange prisoners. However, the Dutch feared Portugal's revenge for the arrest of their missionary. After a while, they allowed him to leave Malacca on a Japanese boat. However, a few days later, he was found dead on the beach on October 2nd, 1606. There are many theories about his death being caused by the Malay people, although the accuracy of this information is still controversial [Nguyen, 2019].

The Jesuits' agenda was missionary work in Vietnam under the administration of the Macao diocese⁹. When they arrived in Vietnam, the Jesuits established the first missionary activity in Cochinchina. On January 6th, 1615, the first three Jesuit priests to arrive in Cochinchina were Francesco Fuzomi¹⁰, Diego Carvalho¹¹, and António Dias¹². The three missionaries reached Cua Han on January 18th, 1615, after 12 days of sailing from Macao [Do, 1972, p. 24]. The work of these first three missionaries was the first step toward building residences, access to language, cultural understanding, and conducting missionary activities.

To begin with, Buzomi set up a temporary chapel at Cua Han and on the Easter Day in 1615, they celebrated baptism of 10 people, who were also the first Jesuits in Vietnam [Phan, 1998, p. 2]. Next, the missionaries went to Hoi An, then to Ke Cham, 7 km west of Hoi An, to build a chapel [Do, 2006, p. 23]. At the first contact, the missionaries received a warm welcome with a lot of help from the government of Cochinchina. Buzomi was granted a land by the court to build a cathedral. Construction was done quickly with the contribution of money and effort from everyone [Truong, 2008, p. 316].

Realizing the potential of Hoi An, Macao diocese continuously sent many Jesuit missionaries there, including the missionaries Francisco Barreto and Francisco de Pina (1617)¹³, Pedro Marquez and Christoforo Borri (1618), Giovanni de Leira (Italian), Romano Niti (Japanese), Emmanuel Borges and Emmanuel Fernandez (1622) [Nguyen, 2018, p. 107]. Taking advantage of the agreeableness of Nguyen lords in Cochinchina, from 1615 to 1625, Jesuit missionaries established three residences including Hoi An, Nuoc Man, and Thanh Chiem¹⁴. These three residences were the first Christian sites in Vietnam. On the July 5th, 1625, Jesuit missionaries in Cochinchina informed the

⁹ The Diocese of Macao was founded 1576. At the time of its founding, the diocese included China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam and almost the Far East. The diocese was responsible for providing materials and clergies for Christian missionaries in these areas [Tang, 2016, p. 30].

¹⁰ Francesco Buzomi (1575–1639), born in Italy, joined the Jesuits on September 2nd, 1592, boarded a ship to Goa in 1609, from there to Macao, in May 1615–1639, died in Macao in 1639 due to illness. Francesco Buzomi was considered the first foundation for Christianity in Cochinchina. He was born in 1576 in Naples (Italy) and served as a missionary in Japan and served as professor of theology in Macao before arriving in Cochinchina in 1615. For 24 years of operation in Cochinchina (1615–1639), his missionary career in the first 10 years (1615–1624) was relatively favorable, while 14 years later (1625–1639) were full of difficulties and challenges. In 1639, Lord Nguyen Phuc Lan (Cochinchina) asked him to go to Macao to take care of God for one thing. In the unfinished job, he became ill and died in Macao this year [Lach, Edwin, 1998, p. 237].

¹¹ Diego Carvalho (1578–1624), born in 1578 at Coïmbra (Portugal). Joining the Jesuits at the age of 19. In 1600 he went to Goa and the following year to Austria. Here he began learning Latin, philosophy and theology. In 1609 he came to Japan missionary until he was deported in November 1614. He stayed in Cochinchina for 1 year (1615–1616). Then he secretly entered into Japan, martyred in Sendai (Japan) on 22nd February 1624 [People's Committee of Quang Nam Province, 2016, p. 611].

¹² Antónia Dias (1585–?) who was born in Ega, Portugal and joined the Jesuits in Macao in 1607 and came into Cochinchina in 1615, until 1639 [Tran, 2018(2)].

¹³ Missionary Francisco De Pina was born in 1585 in Guarda city, in the Beira Alta region of Portugal. At the age of 20, he went to Macao to study and evangelize. He came to Cochinchina from 1617. At first, he came to Cochinchina, Francisco de Pina lived in Hoi An. In 1618, he joined two missionaries Francesco Buzomi and Cristoforo Borri to build a missionary base in Saltwater. Two years later (1620) he returned to Hoi An, then in 1623, he went to Thanh Chiem-Quang Nam palace to build the church's residence. On December 15th, 1625, while with a Vietnamese man sailing a boat to a Portuguese ship anchored off the coast of Quang Nam to get some supplies, when he came to the shore, his boat was flipped because of a sudden encounter. The windstorm caused him to drown. After that, the body was picked up and brought to Hoi An to be buried [People's Committee of Quang Nam Province, 2016, p. 295; Do, 1972, p. 26–27].

¹⁴ Hoi An's residence was founded in 1615, after the "ban" and expulsion of religious followers in Japan took place, Japanese parishioners fled to Vietnam and established Hoi An residence to evangelize. The residence of Nuoc Man was founded in 1618, in the beginning of the 17th century, Nuoc Man was the last land of Cochinchina, 10 km east of Quy Nhon citadel, today known as An Nhon. Thanh Chiem residence (Quang Nam Dinh, Dinhciam, Kecham) established in 1623, was a land located west of Hoi An, at the left bank of Thu Bon river, 7 km away from Hoi An as the capital of Quang Nam Palace [People's Committee of Quang Nam Province, 2016, p. 513].

Roman Jesuits that they had established the three residences, while two of these residences (Hoi An, Nuoc Man) had been completed according to the canon law, and in the third residence in the capital (i.e., Thanh Chiem town), three priests were temporarily staying; Fransico de Pina, a priest who spoke Vietnamese very well, was superior and professor of Vietnamese language, whereas Alexandre de Rhodes and Antoni de Fontes were members and students [Nguyen, 2018, p. 110].

Since 1625, Lord Nguyen began ordering deportations of clergies in Cochinchina and forbidding Christianity. Lord Nguyen said that based on the reports that the whole country was Catholic, soldiers followed the missionaries everywhere during their preaching trips and churches were built in every part of the kingdom. The king had become more suspicious and thought that he would no longer be able to manage his people as expected if everyone followed Catholicism [Launay, 1925, p. 27]. The prohibition of the Nguyen lords was described by Adrien Launay (1894) as follows:

“According to reports received, the king believed that the divine word that the Portuguese said was their religion, was just an excuse that missionaries used to incite people to rebel against the King and help the King of Portugal invade the kingdom of the monarch, once the number of Catholics outnumbered those of non-Catholics, thus allowing people to hate and alienate the divine religion and no longer love the Portuguese King. The King made the people be trampled on the cross that the king thought was the symbol of King of Portugal”.

However, in many cases, the ban of the Christian missionaries by Lord Nguyen was still arbitrary. Many injunctions lasted only a few months and were not strictly enforced [Do, 2007, p. 93], but this prohibition greatly affected missionary activities. After 1625, the number of missionaries that came to Vietnam became increasingly limited; during 14 years only four priests came to Cochinchina, two Japanese priests, Michael Machi and Matthias Machda (1626), and two Portugal priests from Macao, Benoit Mattos and Antoine Torres (1627). Among the priests who had been in Cochinchina earlier, Pina died, others had to return to Macao, and only Buzomi played a major role. From 1625 to 1639, the missionaries operated in complete stealth mainly in four areas, namely Thuan Hoa, Quang Nam, Quy Nhon, and Phu Yen. Although the missionaries were in difficult circumstances, they remained steadfast in their goal of spreading the Gospel. As a result, despite facing a strict ban from the government, in Cochinchina, the number of parishioners kept increasing. According to the reports of missioners, especially of Courtaulin, there were 6000 Catholics in the territory of Cochinchina at the end of 1680, plus two Vietnamese priests, two Jesuits, five French missionaries, and many teachers [Launay, 1894, p. 21].

By 1639, in Cochinchina, a number of missionary facilities were established and there were 10,000 followers. In 1660, there were 50,000 Catholics in Cochinchina [Do, 2007, p. 101]. Even some officials and noble Nguyen admired this religion. For instance, Minh Duc, the Thai king (i.e., Nguyen Thi Ngoc Lau), and the wife of Lord Nguyen Hoang became Catholics, and some mandarins helped to spread Christianity.

The mission of Jesuits led to the establishment of two dioceses. On September 9th, 1965, Pope Alexander VII signed the Order to establish the Apostolic Vicariate and the Diocese of the Apostolic Vicariate. Son source of Gianh river was chosen as the boundary between the two Dioceses. Father Pierre Lambert de La Motte was appointed as the Apostolic Vicar in Cochinchina [Phan et al., 2018, p. 17].

Thus, with the active process with the spirit of self-sacrifice for the Lord, of the missionaries from Portugal, Italy, and Japan in the 16th century and the 17th century, the land of Cochinchina received one more new religion – Catholicism. Though there have been many difficulties, challenges, and prohibitions, the undeniable presence of Catholics has diversified the religious forms in Vietnam. Over time, this religion has affirmed its position with great contributions to the development of the Vietnamese nation.

WESTERN CLERGIES OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND CIVILIZATION

With the policy of sending highly educated people so that they could answer questions that would be raised by the people of the Roman Pope in the early 16th century, most missionaries who came for missionary work in Cochinchina were those who were formally trained in seminaries and major seminaries. Many of them had substantial qualifications and made certain contributions in the transfer of culture and civilization to new lands. This was confirmed by many researchers: “In the rank of clergies there were people who only worked for faith and also contributed to spreading some Western techniques into Vietnam” [Pham, 2000, p. 56–60]. These missionaries were the first to introduce the progress of Western civilization to Vietnam.

By recognizing the influence of natural phenomena in Cochinchina society, at arrival to this territory, in order to attract the attention of the feudal government and the people, the Jesuits also used their knowledge to predict the exact times of lunar and solar eclipses, which astronomers and mathematicians could not predict correctly. This was clearly stated in the travel diary to Cochinchina of Christoforo Borri in 1621. Precisely because of the accurate predictions of lunar and solar eclipses, in the 17th century, Jesuits were highly respected in Cochinchina and were given many benefits, and considerable prestige for scholars and intellectuals was accorded in the country. The King’s mathematicians, as well as princes, sought them to be accepted as disciples. Thus, the reputation of priests spread everywhere [Borri, 2003, p. 570]. Even in the late 17th century, Minh Vuong¹⁵ retained Father Antonio de Arnedo as a mathematician, and Vo Vuong¹⁶ retained Father Neugebauer as a mathematician and astronomer [Maybon, 2011, p. 98].

As de Rhodes recorded, after he was expelled from Tonkin, when he came to Nghe An, he also spread astronomical knowledge to the governor of Nghe An Province by accurately predicting a natural phenomenon as an eclipse at that time. The accuracy of predicting this phenomenon caused him to win the governor’s sympathy. As a result, the provincial master not only defended missionaries against the detractors, but he also encouraged the acceptance of another message brought by the foreigners. The provincial owner declared – if these people know how to predict the secrets of the sky and stars with assurance and accuracy – that is something we do not know and overpower our ability – why should not we believe that they are right about understanding the Law of the God and the Earth and about the truths they are preaching to us [Maggs, 2000, p. 142].

Not only did missionaries preach, but Western missionaries were also physicians who played a key role in treating illnesses of the laity and a small part of the local population. According to Gaide’s records, as per Father Joseph Tessanier’s words, “In 1658, when I [pointed to Father Joseph Tèssanuer] to Tonkin, I saw villages had a Christian, who would choose some men to take care of the male patients and some women were virtuous to take care of women” [Gaide, 2001, p. 292–293]. A little earlier, in 1640, Father de Rhodes also said that among the good works that Marie Madeleine, the wife of the provincial governor, who was full of virtue, did in Phan ra province (Phan Rang), there was a good hospital that she set up to accept Christians and those who were prepared to be a Christian with a certain incurable disease. At the same time, many people with leprosy were accepted to baptize and purify their souls [Tran, Tran, 2017, p. 171]. Thus, Western missionaries have combined missionary works with charity work, by establishing hospitals, shelters, orphanages and many relief houses, as well as by giving or donating to help the poor victims. Although the purpose of these works was only to attract people’s sympathy for

¹⁵ Minh Vuong was the nickname of Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu (1675–1725). He was the sixth lord, ruling from 1691 to 1725. He was considered as one of the Lords who had great merit in economic development and Cochinchina society [Tran, Tran, 2017, p. 108].

¹⁶ Vo Vuong’s real name was Nguyen Phuc Khoat (1714–1765). He was the ninth of Nguyen lords in Cochinchina, ruling from 1738 to 1765 [Tran, Tran, 2017, p. 109].

the clergies and their religion, it was also this work that was one of the agents that brought the first germ of Western medicine to Vietnam.

Under Hien Vuong period¹⁷, people also saw a few Jesuits serving in the Royal court, and they made certain contributions to the treatment of Kings, mandarins, and people. Father Langlois was a Western physician who came to live and work in Hue in the late VII century¹⁸. When he came to Cochinchina to practice medicine, he was highly respected by the Royal court. The kings of Cochinchina had placed their trust about their health in Father Langlois and the second prince, who later succeeded the king, gave him a large parcel of land near the prince's palace. Since then, he used his knowledge to cure people [Gaide, 2001, p. 284]. After Father Langlois, priest Bénigne Vachet, the physician of Hien Vuong, was called to Hue after M. de Bérýthe moved to another place. In the years 1714–1726, Father Sanna Sandes and Father Sébastien Pirès lived in Cochinchina. Both men were granted the title of physician of the king during the Ming dynasty. When practicing medicine there, Father Sanna built a hospital in Hue to treat illnesses. Under Vo Vuong, there was a famous Jesuit priest, Father Siebert¹⁹, who treated illnesses among the people, and he was in Dai Viet from 1738 to 1745. In a letter written in Hue on the 6th of August 1741 to Countess Fugget de Wessembourg, after reporting on the audience's acceptance of the Vajra, Father Siebert said: "Saving the lives of orphans is our great scope of activity. I am taking care of 5 orphans, at the same time with 15 other children whose parents only invite me when they see them dying, I have saved these 15 children with effective drugs. I must also provide a large hospital with hundreds of poor patients to stay, eat and receive medicine" [Gaide, 2001, p. 287–288].

Father Siebert died in Hue in 1745, and his replacement was Father Slamenski, a priest of the German Missionary Society in Goa. Like other physicians of the same time, Father Slamenski was also granted the title of the King's personal physician. In a letter in July 1847, written in Hue to Father Ritter, there was much praise for Father Slamenski, as a very experienced person for the treatment of patients, dissecting, and preparing drugs [Gaide, 2001, p. 288]. Another priest who was also highly valued at the court after Father Siebert and Father Slamenski was Father Koffler. Priest Koffler played a significant role both politically and in terms of power at the Royal court. According to the report of Koffler, "the King is very fond of me, and this is also a common honor for physicians because physicians are being needed by everyone, and also for myself because more and more mandarins and women are more supportive" [Gaide, 2001, p. 289].

Thus, throughout the 16th to 18th centuries, Jesuit missionaries who played the role of physicians next to the princesses were pioneers who planted the seeds of Western medicine into Vietnam, such as the construction of hospitals, orphanages, and nursing homes and provided them with new medical materials. The introduction of such medical knowledge was seen only as a tool to support the spread and influence of Catholicism in Vietnam; recognizing this process, once again we can affirm the role of Jesuits. However, if it is reviewed objectively, this medical knowledge was spread by an unskilled team; we do not observe doctors who were trained in

¹⁷ Hien Vuong's full name was Nguyen Phuc Tan (1620–1687). He was the fourth Lord of Cochinchina. He ruled for 40 years from 1648 to 1687 [Tran, Tran, 2017, p. 110].

¹⁸ Father Lannglois was the first French physician to come to Hue in 1660 to evangelize and take care of patients, after spending a period of time in Thailand and Laos, where he built many hospitals and cures treat many patients. During his six-month stay at the Indian port of Surat, he learned the theory of internal and surgical science, how to make high-quality medicines, enema and other drugs. He was invited by the Lord Nguyen to Cochinchina and was known for his charitable and caring healing, the Lord also agreed to give Langlois a piece of land to build the hospital. Langlois died in the prison in Hue in 1700 [Gaide, 2001, p. 284].

¹⁹ Father P. Johann Siebert was born on May 28, 1708 at Iglau, one of the most famous missionaries in Cochinchina; the first missionary in China in 1738, he was sent to Cochinchina because the Lord here needed a European with experience in mathematics and medicine. He was a German monk who captured Vo Vuong's favor and was appointed to be a mandarin. In addition to his mission, he did many other jobs such as doctor, mathematician, physicist and physician for families in the Royal court [Gaide, 2001, p. 287–288].

an intensive way, and most of them were both priests and doctors. Entering the 19th century, especially in the second half of the 19th century, Western medicine was further propagated, but the role was transferred to the French.

Not only spreading Western civilization in the field of astronomy and medicine, but Western missionaries also brought to Vietnam a great achievement in culture, that is the creation of Vietnamese national language²⁰. When the missionaries came to Vietnam in the 17th century, Vietnamese people used Vietnamese in daily communication but still had to use Chinese characters in administrative documents as Nom was not favored by officials or intellectuals. For the mission to be effective, missionaries had to learn the native language and compose books in the local language to convey Christian thoughts. But learning Vietnamese was not easy. For the missionaries, Vietnamese was a language that sounded like a chirping bird with different tones²¹. Rabbi Giovanni Filippo de Marini (1608–1682), an Italian in Tonkin from 1647 to 1658, commented that for Vietnamese people, “speaking and singing are also one”²². Rhodes also noted that each sound had a different tone and meaning, so many people misunderstood what they wanted to say. To overcome this difficulty, the clergy tried to record Vietnamese in the Latin alphabet to make it more convenient to read and remember, which was the beginning of the birth of the Vietnamese script.

The process of forming the national language, from the inception to the completion, was a period of nearly two centuries with the contributions of many generations of European missionaries and Vietnamese priests. From the results of two seminars on the Vietnamese script in Binh Dinh and Quang Nam, Vietnamese researchers affirm that prior to Rhodes’ works, some Italian and Italian Jesuits used Latin words for recording Vietnamese, and the Vietnamese script was born with the efforts of Francisco de Pina (Portuguese), Cristoforo Borri (Italian), Gaspar de Amaral (Portuguese), and Antonio Barbosa (Portuguese) [Phan et al., 2018, p. 102]. In this work, there was also a positive and effective collaboration of many Vietnamese people, most of all Vietnamese teachers (assistants to European priests); so far, we do not know anything about their names.

Among the Jesuits, there was an excellent priest who played a significant role in creating the script, Francisco de Pina. He arrived in Cochinchina in 1617 and learned Vietnamese quite quickly. Pina was a Vietnamese teacher to two new missionaries, French Alexandre de Rhodes and the Portuguese Antonio de Fonte, who arrived in late 1624. During the missionary activities in Hoi An and Thanh Chiem from 1621 to 1625, Francisco de Pina compiled the first document on “The Latinization method of Vietnamese” and “The Vietnamese Grammar Book”. At Thanh Chiem Palace, Francisco de Pina established the first Western language school in Vietnam, training Portuguese interpreters to help missionaries in preaching and evangelism. It can be affirmed that Francisco de Pina is not only a pioneer in the development of the Vietnamese script in Cochinchina, Vietnam, but also the first person to use the phonetic language of Portuguese to create the Vietnamese script at Hoi An-Thanh Chiem port as the early “embryo” in the first decade

²⁰ Vietnamese script was the name of a writing system created by Jesuits to evangelize in Vietnam in the first half of the 17th century, based on the use of the Latin alphabet for phonetic transcription Vietnam. When its birth, the Vietnamese script was used mainly by missionaries to compile dictionaries, catechism books and write reports and letters. At the same time, the Vietnamese still mainly used Chinese characters and Nom characters. It was not until the end of the 19th century in the early 20th century, when the Western trending in Vietnam exploded, many Vietnamese script literary newspapers were born and this type of writing was popularly used by the people. In 1945, the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam decided to select Vietnamese script as the official writing system of Vietnam since then [Do, 1972, p. 217; People’s Committee of Binh Dinh Province, 2016, p. 507].

²¹ Rhodes noted that when he first arrived in Cochinchina, when I heard the natives talk to each other, especially women, he felt like he heard the birds singing and he was frustrated because he thought he could never learn this language [Rhodes, 1653, p. 81].

²² Giovanni Filippo de Marini (1608–1682) was an Italian Jesuit. He spent more than two decades in Asia, visiting India, China, Siam (Thailand). He worked as a preacher in Tonkin for 11 years [Alberts, 2013, p. 125].

of the 17th century before Alexandre de Rhodes arrived in Cochinchina at the end of 1624, but he also made a particularly important contribution to creatively lay a solid foundation for Alexandre de Rhodes to continue to develop and perfect the development of the Vietnamese script.

If Francisco de Pina was the father, then Alexandre de Rhodes was the man who developed the script²³. Alexandre de Rhodes arrived in Vietnam late but was the only missionary to spend a lot of time in both Tonkin and Cochinchina. He stayed in Cochinchina for 7 years and in Tonkin for 4 years. During his time in Vietnam, he was responsible for two works, “The Vietnamese-Portuguese- Latin Dictionary” and “The Catholic Catechism Book of Eight Days”. Of these works, “The Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin Dictionary” was a collective work of Jesuits; Rhodes was responsible for printing it in Rome, so the dictionary bears his name. The contribution of Rhodes was summed up by Gaspar d’Amaral²⁴ and *Dômcionário Anamita-Português-Latim* of Antonio Barbosa²⁵ with the Latin translation and introduction of Vietnamese language and grammar. Rhodes did not acknowledge himself as the author of this dictionary, even in the Joint Readers section; he explained clearly the process of making “The Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin Dictionary” using the works of other Fathers and the Order, especially that of Father Gaspar do Amaral and Antonio Barbosa [Rhodes, 1991]. Rhodes’s work marked the birth of Vietnamese script on basic aspects of phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary [Thompson, 1987, p. 173]. Father Thanh Lang, one of the three people who translated “The Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin Dictionary” (*Annam-Lusitanium-Latinum*), commented as follows:

“Alexandre de Rhodes is not the father of Vietnamese script... Hence, it is clear that Alexandre de Rhodes was not among the number of missionaries who created the Vietnamese script, but only a person with great merit in the Vietnamese language. Alexandre de Rhodes was later remembered by history, perhaps because he had a full text of the national language and that he left two books considered as the only documents on the Vietnamese script” [Tran, Thanh, and Hoang, 1998, p. 182].

It can be seen that, without the team of dedicated and creative European missionaries, the Vietnamese alphabet could not have been converted into the Latin alphabet with many of its advantages we have inherited as of now. The merit of the missionaries who created the national language is undeniable.

²³ Alexandre de Rhodes was born on March 15th, 1593 in Avignon in a Jewish family. In late 1612, he was accepted by the Jesuits to allow him to go on a mission in East Asia after three applications. On May 29th, 1623, Alexandre de Rhodes reached Macao. Initially he planned to go to Japan to mission, but his will was unsuccessful, so he was sent to Vietnam. He came to Cochinchina for the first time in December 1624 and to July 1626 returned to Macao to prepare to go to Tonkin, Vietnam. On March 19th, 1627, he arrived in Tonkin and in May 1630 was exiled from the area. From 1630 to 1640, he taught theology at the academy Madre de Deus. From 1640 to 1645 he returned to the mission in Cochinchina. In July 1645, he left Cochinchina to Macao and went to Europe. In 1654 he went to Persia and died at Isfahan on November 5th, 1660. Alexandre de Rhodes was considered one of the people who had great merits in creating the script [Do, 1972, p. 106].

²⁴ Gaspar d’Amaral, born in 1592, died in 1645 or 1646, was a Portuguese Jesuit, born in Corvaceira, the diocese of Viseu, Portugal. He entered the Jesuits in 1608, then was taught Latin in Braga, Coimbra and Évora. In 1623, he took the Jesuit mission to India and then through Macao. In November 1629, he arrived in Tonkin (Tonkin), Vietnam. During his seven-year missionary years (1629–1636), he baptized over 40,000 Tonkin people (Tonkin). Also in the process, he learned fluent Vietnamese. He was the author of *Diccionário anamita-português-latim*, later recognized by Alexander de Rhodes and based on the compilation of the Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin dictionary (*Dictionarium Annamiticum Lusitanum et Latinum*) in 1651 [Zwartjes, 2011, p. 291].

²⁵ Antonio Barbosa (1594–1647) who was born at Arrifana de Souza, Portugal and joined the Jesuits on March 13th, 1624. At the end of April 1636, he went to Tonkin (Tonkin), but returned to Macao in May 1642 for health reasons. In Macao, his health condition was also not better. In 1647, he travelled from Macao to Goa and died on the road before he could set foot in Goa. Antonio Barbosa was the editor of the Portuguese dictionary (*Diccionário Português – Anamita*). Later, Alexandre de Rhodes relied on it to compose his dictionary [Do, 1972, p. 89–91, Jacques, 2002, p. 38–39].

CONCLUSION

The period from the 16th to the 18th centuries witnessed fluctuations in Vietnamese history with fierce struggles between feudal forces in Cochinchina and Tonkin. During this political crisis, Western missionaries came to Vietnam. With the enthusiasm of the missionaries, combined with the remarkable progress of Western science and technology, in more than two centuries, the missionaries spread Catholicism in Vietnam. During this process, missionaries also became the factors and intermediary bridges spreading European scientific and technical knowledge to Vietnam. Despite many obstacles and sometimes temporary interruptions, the East–West contact through clergies at this stage had certain positive effects. These results point out that the end of the 19th century, under new conditions, European culture continued to take deeper roots into Vietnamese cultural and spiritual lives in many other ways that contributed to the creation of diverse values of Vietnamese people in contemporary society.

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