

The Introduction and Development of Christianity in Vietnam during 17th and 18th Centuries: The Role of the Jesuit Missionaries

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During the 17th and 18th centuries, along with other missionary forces (the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, the Dominican Order, the Franciscan Order, etc.), the Society of Jesus significantly contributed to the presence of Christianity in Vietnam. Firstly, it is necessary to mention the pioneering role of the Jesuits in introducing Christianity to Cochinchina and Tonkin in the first half of the 17th century, laying the foundation for the birth of church organizations in these two areas by 1659. After that, missionary activities of the Society of Jesus in Vietnam encountered ups and downs due to the indigenous government's policy banning Christianity and conflicts and contradictions with the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris. However, even in such difficult circumstances, the role and influence of the Jesuits in Vietnam remain undiminished. In fact, with a large force of foreign and indigenous missionaries, the Society of Jesus still maintains activities in a large missionary area with many believers. This research aims to clarify the role of the Jesuits in preaching the Gospel in Vietnam during the 17th and 18th centuries by “restoring” “the panoramic picture” of the force of foreign Jesuit missionaries, the missionary areas, and the number of believers under their management. At the same time, compared with other missionary forces operating in this country in this period. The research results presented in the article will significantly contribute to the study of the history of Christianity in Vietnam during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Keywords: Vietnam, the Society of Jesus, missionary, Tonkin, Cochinchina, Christianity.

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Введение и распространение христианства во Вьетнаме в XVII и XVIII веках: Роль иезуитских миссионеров

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Распространение христианства во Вьетнаме так или иначе вписывается в общий процесс появления этой религии в Юго-Восточной Азии. Если бы не запрет христианства в Японии в 1614 г., трудно представить, как бы этот процесс пошел. На протяжении XVII и XVIII столетий, наряду с целым рядом миссионерских сообществ (Парижское общество заграничных миссий, Орден доминиканцев, Орден францисканцев и др.) свой внушительный вклад в появление христианства во Вьетнаме внесли и всемирно известные иезуиты. Прежде всего надо упомянуть их роль во внедрении христианства в древнейших центрах Вьетнама: Тонкине и Кохинкине в первой половине XVII в. Именно они заложили основу для зарождения церковных организаций в этих регионах (составлявших основную государственную территорию Вьетнама в его древней ипостаси) к 1659 г. В последствие деятельность иезуитов переживала подъемы и падения, в основном обусловленные политикой местных властей, временами запрещающих христианство, а также противостоянием с могущественным Парижским обществом заграничных миссий. Однако даже в таких сложных обстоятельствах значение и влияние иезуитов во Вьетнаме не уменьшались. Фактически, располагая многочисленным и подготовленным персоналом, иезуиты развивали большую прозелетическую активность в тех областях, где проживало много верующих христиан. Исследовательская задача данной статьи заключается прежде всего в том, чтобы прояснить роль иезуитов в распространении христианства во Вьетнаме XVII и XVIII столетий путем восстановления панорамной картины зарубежных миссионерских сил, миссионерских областей, количества верующих под их управлением. Для полноты данной картины применяется сравнительный метод: сопоставляется деятельность иезуитов и других миссионерских сил, действовавших в стране.

Ключевые слова: Вьетнам, Общество Иисуса, миссионерство, Тонкин, Кохинкина, христианство.

Introduction

In the second half of the 16th century, although the first contact between Christianity and the Vietnamese occurred, the results were not as good as Western missionaries had expected. During this period, the work of spreading the Gospel in areas within the territory of Vietnam today was mainly under the preside of the Franciscan Order and the Dominican Order¹. However, as chaplain priests on merchant or diplomatic missions ships of Spain and Portugal, the missionaries of these two religious orders are mainly responsible for caring for the spiritual life of merchants and crews on long voyages full of contingencies and dangers on the vast ocean. Therefore, even though they arrived in Vietnam, these missionaries did not pay much attention to planting the seeds of the Gospel in this coun-

¹ *Truong B. C. Lịch sử phát triển Công giáo ở Việt Nam, tập 1 [History of Catholic Development in Vietnam: in 2 vols. Vol. 1]. Hanoi, 2008. P. 26–37.*

try. Some intentions to evangelize the Vietnamese appeared at the end of the 16th century. However, because the missionaries' stay in this country was relatively short. Furthermore, they are not interested in understanding history and culture, especially the indigenous language. Therefore, the above plans failed².

However, in 1615, Jesuit missionaries first set foot in Vietnam³. That is the starting point for a new phase in introducing and developing Christianity in this country. The secret to the success of the Jesuit missionaries lies in their missionary approach of “adaptation to native culture”⁴. The core content of this missionary approach clearly shows that to conquer the faith of all social classes in Far Eastern countries, including Vietnam, missionaries have no more effective way than to pay attention to research about the history and culture of these nations, especially learning and fluently using the indigenous language. At the same time, the Jesuits saw it as the skeleton key to “Christianization” in these countries⁵. Jesuit missionaries operating in Vietnam during this period flexibly and creatively applied the above missionary approach. It is expressed through the proposal and application of many unique missionary methods such as “establishing relationships and attracting the upper classes to believe in Christianity”, “missionary academic”, “missionary bibliography” and “arguing and religious conversion of the leaders of indigenous denominations”⁶. That has caused the missionaries of this religious order to achieve promising results in preaching the Gospel. In just 50 years (1615–1665), it was the Jesuits, not any other missionary force, that introduced and developed Christianity in Cochinchina (1615) and Tonkin (1627). Not only that, Jesuit missionary Alexandre de Rhodes also initiated a mobilization in Rome in 1649–1653 on the issue of establishing a church organization in Vietnam. That was the direct agent leading to the birth of the two dioceses of Cochinchina and Tonkin (1659)⁷. Although later, the authority to manage these two dioceses was not given to the Jesuits, and their missionary activities in Vietnam also encountered many ups and downs and turbulence⁸, however, if considered comprehensively, it can be seen that the role and influence of the Jesuits on the introduction and development of Christianity in Vietnam in the 17th and 18th centuries is undeniable.

² *Borri C.* Relation de la nouvelle mission des pères de la compagnie de Jésus au royaume de la Cochinchine // *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hué*. 1931. Vol. 3-4 (Juillet–Déc). P. 337.

³ *Montézon F., Estève E., Rhodes A., Tissanier J., Saccano M.* Mission de la Cochinchine et du Tonkin avec gravure et carte géographique. Paris, 1858. P. 386.

⁴ *Truong A. T., Nguyen V. S.* A comparison of the missionary method and cultural integration of Jesuits: A study in China and Vietnam during the 16th and 17th centuries // *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Philosophy and Conflict Studies*. 2020. Vol. 36, issue 2. P. 408.

⁵ *Truong A. T.* Methods of Missionary Activity of the Jesuits in Vietnam in the 17th and 18th Centuries // *Vestnik Volgogradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Seriya 4. Istoriiia. Regionovedenie. Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*. 2023. Vol. 28, no. 2. P. 140.

⁶ *Ibid.* P. 136–146.

⁷ *Rooted in Hope: Festschrift in honor of Romen Malek S. V.D. on the occasion of his 65th birthday: in 2 vols.* Vol. 1. Eds B. Hoster, D. Kuhlmann, Z. Wesolowski. Oxon; New York, 2017. P. 255; *The New Westminster Dictionary of Church History: in 2 vols.* Vol. 1. Ed. by R. Benedetto. Louisville; London, 2008. P. 494.

⁸ *Truong A. T.* Conflicts among religious orders of Christianity: A study of Vietnam during the 17th and 18th centuries // *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Philosophy and Conflict Studies*. 2021. Vol. 37, issue 2. P. 370–373; *Chappoulie H.* Aux origines d'une église: Rome et les missions d'Indochine au XVII^e siècle: in 2 t. T. 1. Paris, 1943. P. 55–63, 261; *Truong B. C.* Lịch sử phát triển Công giáo ở Việt Nam, tập 1 [History of Catholic Development in Vietnam. Vol. 1]. P. 541; *O'Malley J. W.* The Jesuits: A History from Ignatius to the Present. Maryland, 2014. P. 80–86.

The force of foreign Jesuit missionaries

Although it was one of the countries within the management scope of the Diocese of Macao — the missionary center was established in 1576⁹ and placed under the patronage of Portugal. However, at the end of the 16th century, Vietnam still did not receive the attention of the Jesuit Superior here. During this period, the Jesuit missionaries were still busy with plans to conquer the faith in China and Japan. However, banning Christianity in Japan in 1614¹⁰ changed everything. At that time, Jesuit missionaries operating in the “land of the rising sun” were deported to Macao. Meanwhile, many Japanese believers were forced to take “religious asylum” from the persecution of the Shogunate government by boarding boats to leave Japan and go to Southeast Asian countries¹¹. One of the places most Japanese Christians chose was Cochinchina (Vietnam). Faced with that situation, the Jesuit Superior in Macao recognized the need to send Jesuit missionaries to this area to take care of the spiritual life of Japanese believers. To implement the above plan, on January 18, 1615, a corps of five Jesuit missionaries led by Francesco Buzomi arrived in Touron (Da Nang city)¹². This was the starting time for the presence of Jesuit missionaries in Vietnamese territory in the 17th and 18th centuries.

From the time the first Jesuit missionaries set foot in Vietnam (1615) until the Society of Jesus was dissolved worldwide (1773)¹³, 144 foreign Jesuit missionaries came to preach the Gospel in Vietnam¹⁴, which completely exceeds the number of missionaries from the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris (89 people)¹⁵, the Dominican Order (42 people)¹⁶, and the Augustine Order (13 people)¹⁷ operating in Vietnam in the 17th and 18th centuries, that shows the upper hand and influence of the Jesuits in this country. Based on the exploitation and synthesis of data from work *Mission de la Cochinchine et du Tonkin avec gravure et carte géographique*, a Figure shows the fluctuation in the number of Jesuit missionaries in Cochinchina and Tonkin from the year 1615 to 1773 was built. Through this, researchers can discover, analyze, and evaluate many different aspects of preaching the Gospel of Jesuits in the two missionary areas mentioned above during this period.

From the Figure above, it can be seen that, during a period of 158 years (1615–1773), there were 59 times that Jesuit missionaries set foot in the Cochinchina and Tonkin ar-

⁹ Moidrey J. *La hiérarchie catholique en Chine, en Corée et au Japon (1307–1914)*. Changhai, 1914. P.8.

¹⁰ Higashibaba I. *Christianity in Early Modern Japan: Kirishitan Belief and Practice*. Leiden; Boston; Köln, 2001. P.139.

¹¹ *Global History and New Polycentric Approaches: Europe, Asia and the Americas in a World Network System*. Eds M. P. Garcia, L. Sousa. Singapore, 2017. P.175–176.

¹² Do Q. C. *Lịch sử chữ Quốc ngữ (1620–1659)* [History of the Romanized Vietnamese Script (1620–1659)]. Saigon, 1972. P.21.

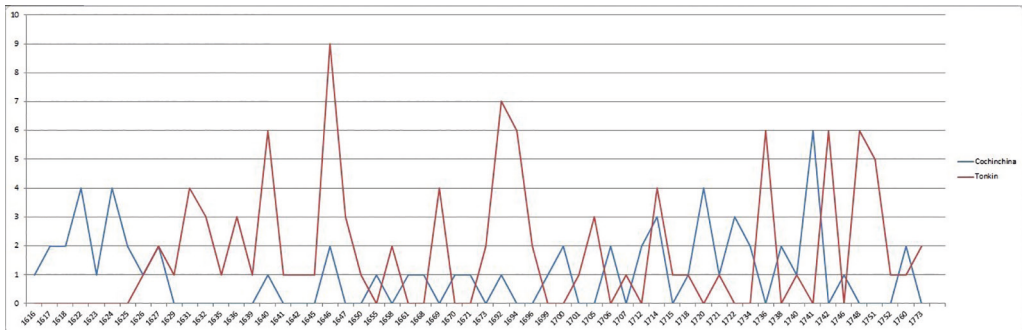
¹³ *Truong B. C. Lịch sử phát triển Công giáo ở Việt Nam, tập 1* [History of Catholic Development in Vietnam. Vol. 1]. P. 541; O'Malley J. W. *The Jesuits*. P.80–86.

¹⁴ Montézon F., Estève E., Rhodes A., Tissanier J., Saccano M. *Mission de la Cochinchine...* P.386–395.

¹⁵ *Truong B. C. Lịch sử phát triển Công giáo ở Việt Nam, tập 1* [History of Catholic Development in Vietnam. Vol. 1]. P.231–232, 282, 358, 431, 500; *Launay A. Histoire de La Mission de Cochinchine, 1658–1823*: in 3 t. T.3. Paris, 1925. P.8–12, 213–214; *Marillier A. Nos pères dans la foi. Notes sur le clergé catholique du Tonkin de 1666 à 1765*: in 3 t. T.2. Paris, 1995. P.71.

¹⁶ *Gispert M. Historia de las Misiones Dominicanas en Tungkin*. Avila, 1928. P.80–81, 84, 126, 134, 734–735; *Launay A. Histoire de la mission du Tonkin: Documents historiques I*. Paris, 1927. P.204, 213–214; *Marillier A. Nos pères dans la foi*. T.2. P.109, 112, 115–119; T.3. P.159, 165, 169.

¹⁷ *Marillier A. Nos pères dans la foi. Notes sur le clergé catholique du Tonkin de 1666 à 1765*. T.3. P.121.



Fluctuation in the quantity of foreign Jesuits in Cochinchina and Tonkin during the period 1615–1773

Source: Montézon F., Estève E., Rhodes A., Tissanier J., Saccano M. *Mission de la Cochinchine...* P.386–395.

eas to preach the Gospel¹⁸. Thus, on average, they come once every 2.7 years. However, it is worth mentioning that this did not happen regularly or continuously. There were even times when it was interrupted for quite a long time (periods 1629–1639 (10 years), 1747–1759 (12 years), 1761;1773 (12 years) in Cochinchina, period 1722–1734 (12 years) in Tonkin). In the documents of the Jesuit missionaries, there was no direct mention of the cause of this situation. However, from records of the ups and downs in the missionary situation in Vietnam during the periods mentioned above, it can be known that the drastic implementation of the policy of banning Christianity by the indigenous government at that time¹⁹ became one of the major obstacles preventing Jesuit missionaries from penetrating the interior of Vietnam. Furthermore, the lack of missionary human resources and the obstacles created by contradictions and conflicts with the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris²⁰ led to the Holy See's issuance of a recall (1680)²¹ or dissolution of the Society of Jesus (1773)²² in the 17th and 18th centuries, that caused severe difficulties for the Jesuit Superior in Macao in sending their missionaries to Tonkin and Cochinchina. The Figure also shows the difference in the number of Jesuit missionaries coming to Vietnam to preach the Gospel at different times. It is difficult for researchers to find too many times have 9 (1 time (1646): 1.69%), 7 (1 time (1692): 1.69%), 6 (6 times (1640, 1694, 1736, 1741, 1742, 1748): 10.16%), 5 (2 times (1615, 1751): 3.38%), or 4 (6 times (1622, 1624, 1631, 1669, 1714, 1720): 10.16%) missionaries came together to Cochinchina and Tonkin to spread the Gospel in the 1615–1773 period. Most of the remaining times ranged from 1 to 3 missionaries, of which the number of times only one missionary came to Vietnam to preach was a reasonably large proportion (32 times: 54.23%). In particular, when considering the fluctuation in the number of Jesuit missionaries coming to Cochinchina (blue

¹⁸ Montézon F., Estève E., Rhodes A., Tissanier J., Saccano M. *Mission de la Cochinchine...* P.386–395.

¹⁹ Gispert M. *Historia de las Misiones Dominicanas en Tungkin*. Avila, 1928. P.172, 179, 192–195, 197–200, 209–229, 260–285; Montézon F., Estève E., Rhodes A., Tissanier J., Saccano M. *Mission de la Cochinchine...* P.293–318, 403–404; *Nouvelles Lettres Édifiantes des Missions de la Chine et des Indes Orientales*: in 8 t. T.6. Paris, 1821. P.141, 251–252, 272–273, 317–320, 337–338; T.7. P.262–282; T.8. P.1–66; *Launay A. Histoire de La Mission de Cochinchine, 1658–1823*. T.3. P.240.

²⁰ Truong A. T. *Conflicts among religious orders of Christianity*. P.370–373.

²¹ Chappouliè H. *Aux origines d'une église*. T.1. P.55–63, 261.

²² Truong B. C. *Lịch sử phát triển Công giáo ở Việt Nam, tập 1* [History of Catholic Development in Vietnam. Vol. 1]. P.541; O'Malley J. W. *The Jesuits*. P.80–86.

line) and Tonkin (red line) shown in the Figure, scholars can also recognize the opposite in the Society of Jesus's missionary painting during the 17th and 18th centuries in these two areas. In the period 1615–1625, the number of Jesuit missionaries coming to Cochinchina was 21 people. During the same period, historical documents did not record any presence of missionaries of this religious order in Tonkin. The reason was that, at that time, the Jesuits were only interested in preaching the Gospel in Cochinchina and had no intentions or plans for expanding the missionary area. However, from 1626 to 1650, a wholly reversed situation was established. During this time, the Society of Jesus's missionary activities in Cochinchina became relatively quiet when, within 25 years, this area only welcomed 8 Jesuit missionaries. In contrast, this number in Tonkin was 38. Among them, 1646 was when the most significant number of Jesuit missionaries came to Tonkin during the 17th and 18th centuries. From 1655 to 1699, the number of times Jesuit missionaries arrived in the two missionary areas mentioned above was balanced (7 times). However, the number of missionaries still leaned to Tonkin, with 23 missionaries arriving in the area compared to 7 missionaries who set foot in Cochinchina. The above situation continued during the period 1700–1773. Even when the Society of Jesus was dissolved worldwide (1773), Cochinchina did not record any more cases of Jesuit missionaries sent from Macao. On the contrary, two Jesuit missionaries still arrived at Tonkin during the same period.

Regarding nationality, among the 144 foreign Jesuit missionaries operating in Vietnam in the period 1615–1773, there were 75 Portuguese (52.08%), 28 Italians (19.44%), 13 Germans (9.02%), 8 Japanese (5.55%), 6 French (4.16%), 3 Spanish (2.08%), 2 Polish (1.38%), 2 Chinese (1.38%). The missionary holds the nationality of Switzerland, Genoa, Illyrien, Hungary, Sarde, and Savoyard; each country has one person (0.69%), and there was one Western missionary of unknown nationality (0.69%)²³. Thus, it can be seen that the force of Jesuit missionaries operating in Vietnam during this period came from many different countries. Among them, the number of Portuguese missionaries was the largest, 2.67 times, 5.76 times, and 12.50 times higher than that of missionaries with Italian, German, and French nationality. The missionary work of the Jesuits in Vietnam in the 17th and 18th centuries was placed under the patronage of Portugal²⁴, so many missionaries of Portuguese nationality participated in this process, which is also completely understandable. In particular, the Society of Jesus's missionary work in Vietnam in the 17th and 18th centuries, in addition to missionary forces from European countries, also had Chinese and Japanese missionaries participate. This resulted from the process of training the indigenous missionary force of the Jesuits in these two countries.

Missionary areas

During the 17th and 18th centuries, whether during the period of laying the foundation for the process of introducing and developing Christianity in Vietnam (1615–1659) or during the period under the management of the Vicariate Apostolic appointed by the Holy See (from 1659 onwards), Jesuit missionaries always find ways to overcome difficul-

²³ Montézon F., Estève E., Rhodes A., Tissanier J., Saccano M. *Mission de la Cochinchine...* P. 386–395.

²⁴ Johansen B. E., Pritzker B. M. *Encyclopedia of American Indian History*. Vol. 1. Santa Barbara, 2008. P. 208; *The Spanish Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia*: in 2 vols. Vol. 2. Eds H. M. Tarver, E. Slape. California, 2016. P. 19–21; Truong A. T., Nguyen T. V. L. Trade Activities and the Spread of Christianity by Portugal: Port of Faifo (Vietnam) // *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. History*. 2022. Vol. 67, issue 1. P. 136–137.

ties and challenges stemming from the lack of missionary human resources, the native government's anti-Christianity policy, as well as contradictions and conflicts with the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris to try to maintain their presence in both the Cochinchina and Tonkin areas. Data from "Mission de la Cochinchine et du Tonkin avec gravure et carte géographique" shows that, of the 144 foreign Jesuits who served as missionaries in Vietnam from 1615 to 1773, there were 56 missionaries active in Cochinchina (38.88%), 78 missionaries work in Tonkin (54.16%), and ten missionaries have preached the Gospel in both areas (6.94%). The Society of Foreign Missions of Paris also did this. However, the number of missionaries who preach the Gospel in the two missionary areas mentioned above was much lower than the Society of Jesus (39 people in Tonkin and 50 people in Cochinchina)²⁵. As for the missionaries of the Dominican Order (42 people)²⁶ and Augustine Order (13 people)²⁷, they only operate in Tonkin. Therefore, it is natural that the scope of missionary space and influence of these two religious orders is not as great as that of the Society of Jesus.

So, in the 17th and 18th centuries, which localities in Cochinchina and Tonkin (Vietnam) were influenced by Jesuit missionaries? The scale of the missionary area of the Society of Jesus changed by stage. It depends on many factors, such as the attitude of the indigenous ruling class towards Christianity and the results of resolving the conflict over missionary areas between the Jesuits and The Society of Foreign Missions of Paris or the missionary human resources of the Society of Jesus presence in Vietnam at each specific time. For example, from 1615 to 1658, although it was the only missionary force to "cultivating" the "seeds" of Christianity in Vietnam, the lack of missionary human resources, along with obstacles arising from the indigenous government's policy of banning Christianity, did not allow the Jesuits to expand their Gospel preaching activities throughout the territory of Vietnam at that time, but only concentrated in a few localities such as Quang Binh (South of Gianh River), Quang Tri, Thua Thien-Hue, Da Nang, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen in the Cochinchina region (Central Vietnam) or Ha Noi, Bac Ninh, Nam Dinh, Ha Nam, Ninh Binh, Hai Duong, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh (North of Gianh River) in Tonkin area (Northern Vietnam)²⁸.

In 1659, the Holy See appointed two missionaries of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris — François Pallu and Lambert de la Motte, as the Vicariate Apostolic of Cochinchina and Tonkin²⁹. This was also the starting point that marked the outbreak of fierce contradictions and conflicts between the Society of Jesus and the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris surrounding the management rights of Gospel preaching activities and missionary areas³⁰. As for the Jesuit missionaries, when they were expelled from Tonkin (1663) and Cochinchina (1665), they sought to return to these two missionary areas soon

²⁵ *Truong B. C. Lịch sử phát triển Công giáo ở Việt Nam, tập 1* [History of Catholic Development in Vietnam. Vol. 1]. P. 231–232, 282, 358, 431, 500; *Launay A. Histoire de La Mission de Cochinchine, 1658–1823*. T. 3. P. 8–12, 213–214; *Marillier A. Nos pères dans la foi*. T. 2. P. 71.

²⁶ *Marillier A. Nos pères dans la foi*. T. 2. P. 109, 112, 115–119; T. 3. P. 159, 165, 169; *Gispert M. Historia de las Misiones Dominicanas en Tungkin*. Avila, 1928. P. 80–81, 84, 126, 134, 734–735; *Launay A. Histoire de la mission du Tonkin*. P. 204, 213–214.

²⁷ *Marillier A. Nos pères dans la foi*. T. 3. P. 121.

²⁸ *Truong B. C. Lịch sử phát triển Công giáo ở Việt Nam, tập 1* [History of Catholic Development in Vietnam. Vol. 1]. P. 179.

²⁹ *Rooted in Hope*. P. 255; *The New Westminster Dictionary of Church History*. Vol. 1. Ed. by R. Benedetto. Louisville-London, 2008. P. 494.

³⁰ *Truong A. T. Conflicts among religious orders of Christianity*. P. 370–373.

after³¹. As the missionary force that laid the foundation for the introduction and development of Christianity in Tonkin and Cochinchina in the first half of the 17th century, Jesuit missionaries quickly restarted pastoral work in all parishes that they contributed to building on these two lands. Even so, this advantage could not be maintained for long. The seemingly never-ending dispute between the Society of Jesus and the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris in 1669–1679³² caused the Holy See to intervene. As a result, a recall of all Jesuits from Vietnam was issued on May 20, 1680³³, ending the missionary work of this religious order in Cochinchina and Tonkin. Then, under the mobilization of many Christians in Cochinchina and Tonkin³⁴, the Holy See allowed Jesuit missionaries to return to Vietnam in 1688–1689. However, from then until the end of the 18th century, the Society of Jesus missionary area changed significantly compared to the previous period. In Cochinchina, there was no longer a drastic demand for managing all the parishes that the Jesuits established in Vietnam in 1615–1659. The missionaries of this religious order had to accept the fact that they only had full authority to manage missionary work in Quang Binh, Quang Tri, and Quang Ngai and were forced to share influence with other missionary forces (Franciscan Order, the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris) in Thua Thien-Hue, Quang Nam, and Dong Nai-Gia Dinh. In particular, by the middle of the 18th century (1747), Jesuit missionaries were utterly without from their traditional missionary areas, including Qui Nhon, Phu Yen, or the new lands explored by the Vietnamese, including Khanh Hoa, Phan Rang, Phan Ri, Binh Thuan. These missionary areas are all under the management of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris³⁵. Meanwhile, in Tonkin, the Jesuit missionaries have a rather uncompromising attitude, not accepting narrowing the scope of activities or making concessions to other missionary forces (the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, Dominican Order) preaching the Gospel in this area at that time. They believe any place in Tonkin with a parish established by Jesuit missionaries during 1627–1663 was their missionary area. Therefore, from the late 17th century to the first half of the 18th century, despite facing many difficulties in missionary human resources, the Jesuits still tried to establish and maintain the operation of 9 parishes, including Ke-cho, Ke-vo, Cao-mai, Ke-loi, Ke-tuom, Ke-roi, Ke-blou, Ke-mui and Bo-chinh³⁶, managing pastoral work over a wide geographical area includes today's North and North Central Vietnam. It was not until the end of the 18th century, when the Holy See issued the decree *Dominus ac Redemptor* dissolving the Society of Jesus worldwide (1773), that several missionaries of this religious order operating in Cochinchina and Tonkin or died of old age and weakness, or returned to Europe or joined other religious orders³⁷. Parishes of the

³¹ *Truong B. C. Lịch sử phát triển Công giáo ở Việt Nam, tập 1* [History of Catholic Development in Vietnam. Vol. 1]. P. 39–173; *Vu K. T. Les missions jésuites avant les Missions étrangères au Việt Nam, 1615–1665*. Paris, 1956. P. 478; *Launay A. Histoire de La Mission de Cochinchine, 1658–1823*. T. 1. P. 26–27.

³² *Chappoulie H. Aux origines d'une église*. T. 1. P. 261, 297; *Launay A. Histoire de La Mission de Cochinchine, 1658–1823*. T. 1. P. 123; *Truong B. C. Lịch sử phát triển Công giáo ở Việt Nam, tập 1* [History of Catholic Development in Vietnam. Vol. 1]. P. 513.

³³ *Chappoulie H. Aux origines d'une église*. T. 1. P. 55–63, 261.

³⁴ *Launay A. Histoire de la mission du Tonkin*. P. 352; *Chappoulie H. Aux origines d'une église*. T. 2. P. 134–136, 247.

³⁵ *Launay A. Histoire de La Mission de Cochinchine, 1658–1823*. T. 2. P. 64–65, 187–191.

³⁶ *Truong B. C. Lịch sử phát triển Công giáo ở Việt Nam, tập 1* [History of Catholic Development in Vietnam. Vol. 1]. P. 530–531.

³⁷ *Ibid.* P. 545; *Launay A. Histoire de La Mission de Cochinchine, 1658–1823*. T. 3. P. 29, 34–35.

Society of Jesus in these two missionary areas were gradually transferred to the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris and the Dominican Order.

Force of indigenous Christians

With a powerful force of missionaries and a large missionary area, did the Jesuit missionaries operating in Vietnam during the 17th and 18th centuries achieve satisfactory results in conquering the faith of the native population? Although there are no complete and continuous statistical tables with absolutely accurate data, through several reports by Jesuit missionaries as well as the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris — a missionary organization assigned by the Holy See to manage the work of spreading the Gospel in Vietnam since 1659, researchers can still imagine the essential contents of “the missionary picture” of the Jesuits in Cochinchina and Tonkin (Vietnam) during this period.

Based on the records of Alexandre de Rhodes and Gaspar Luis, two of many Jesuit missionaries who operated in Vietnam in the first half of the 17th century, it can be known that the missionaries of this religious order achieved some positive results in their missionary work for the Vietnamese when they first came to Cochinchina in 1615. At that time, missionary Francesco Buzomi baptized 310 Vietnamese in Touron (Da Nang city)³⁸. In Faifo (Hoi An city), missionary Pedro Marquez built a church and baptized 40 Vietnamese people in 1619. In 1621, 42 natives and 27 Japanese joined Christianity here³⁹. Meanwhile, missionaries Francesco Buzomi and Francisco de Pina attracted several people from the upper class (nobleman, mandarins, intellectuals, and their families) in Cochinchina society who believed in Christianity⁴⁰. At the same time, they also converted many believers of other religions (Taoism, Buddhism)⁴¹. During the years 1627–1629, Jesuit missionaries continued to achieve satisfactory results in “cultivating” the “seeds” of Christianity in Cochinchina by baptizing more than 2,000 Vietnamese in Sinoa (Hue city), Baoban (Quang Ngai province), Ranran (Phu Yen province) and Pulocambi (Binh Dinh province)⁴². That has caused the number of Christians in this area to increase quite rapidly. According to Alexandre de Rhodes’s estimate, it must have reached at least 12,000 to 15,000 people by 1639⁴³. From 1640 onwards, foreign Jesuits and indigenous catechists faced negative attitudes from the Cochinchina government. In that context, they still persevered in conquering the people’s faith here and brought the number of Christians in this area to about 50,000 or 60,000 by 1663⁴⁴. However, the prolonged fierceness in the policy of banning Christianity of the authorities in this missionary area caused the Jesuit missionaries’ results in conquering the Vietnamese’s faith to fluctuate like a “sinusoidal function graph continuously.” In 1664, the number of Christians decreased to only 5,000 people⁴⁵ because

³⁸ Rhodes A. *Divers Voyages et Missions*. Paris, 1653. P. 68.

³⁹ Luis G. *Histoire de ce qui s’est passé en Ethiopie, Malabar, Brasil, et les Indes Orientales*. Tirée des lettres écrites ès années 1620 jusques à 1624. Paris, 1628. P. 127–128.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* P. 128–129; Rhodes A. *Divers Voyages et Missions*. P. 74–75; *Truong A. T. Methods of Missionary Activity of the Jesuits in Vietnam in the 17th and 18th Centuries*. P. 139.

⁴¹ Bartoli D. *Dell’ historia della Compagnia di Giesu, la Cina*. Pt. 3. Rome, 1663. P. 751–755, 765–766.

⁴² Vu K. T. *Les missions jésuites avant les Missions étrangères au Viêt Nam, 1615–1665*. P. 269–270.

⁴³ Rhodes A. *Divers Voyages et Missions*. P. 118.

⁴⁴ Do Q. C. *Đông Tên trong xã hội Đại Việt 1615–1773* [The Society of Jesus in Dai Viet Society 1615–1773]. Hanoi, 2008. P. 198.

⁴⁵ Guennou J. *Les Missions Étrangères de Paris*. Paris, 1986. P. 128.

most rejected Christianity⁴⁶ in the face of government persecution. From then until the early 18th century, documents of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris recorded a return to growth in the total number of Christians in Cochinchina⁴⁷. However, no specific statistics existed for each religious order and missionary organization. It was not until 1747, based on the records of missionaries Guillaume Rivoal, Jakob Graff, and Felipe de la Concepcion, that researchers had a comparative view of the results of Gospel preaching between the Society of Jesus and other missionary forces operated in Cochinchina at that time.

The number of churches and believers of religious orders and missionary organizations operating in Cochinchina in 1747 (church/ believer)

Missionary areas	The Society of Jesus	The Society of Foreign Missions of Paris	Franciscan Order
Quang Tri, Quang Binh	47/3,788	0/0	0/0
Thua Thien-Hue	11/623	16/2,655	8/800
Quang Nam	15/597	27/2,435	7/720
Quang Ngai	20/1,535	0/0	0/0
Binh Dinh	0/0	13/853	14/1,770
Phu Yen	0/0	14/1,185	0/0
Khanh Hoa	0/0	15/1,395	0/0
Ninh Thuan-Binh Thuan	0/0	5/590	0/0
Dong Nai-Gia Dinh	11/2,670	1/200	46/5,500
<i>Total:</i>	<i>104/9,213</i>	<i>91/9,313</i>	<i>7/8,790</i>

Sources: *Launay A. Histoire de La Mission de Cochinchine, 1658–1823. T. 2. P. 6–65, 187–191; Do Q. C. Dòng Tên trong xã hội Đại Việt 1615–1773 [The Society of Jesus in Dai Viet Society 1615–1773]. P. 272–281.*

The above statistical table shows that in 1747, the missionary area of the Society of Jesus in Cochinchina was significantly narrowed. If in the period 1615–1665, this entire area was under the exclusive management of the Jesuit missionaries, then by the first half of the 18th century, this religious order only controlled the work of preaching the Gospel in Quang Binh, Quang Tri, and Quang Ngai. Meanwhile, they were forced to share missionary work with the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris and the Franciscan Order in Thua Thien-Hue, Quang Nam, Dong Nai-Gia Dinh and were utterly without in Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, and Ninh Thuan-Binh Thuan. However, the number of churches managed by the Jesuits in Cochinchina was greater than that of other missionary forces. In particular, this religious order's number of Christians was not inferior to that of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris and the Franciscan Order. It was not until the Jesuits were dissolved worldwide (1773) that the missionary areas of the Society of Jesus in Cochinchina and with that, a large force of Christians were gradually transferred for the missionaries of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris to manage.

⁴⁶ *Launay A. Histoire de La Mission de Cochinchine, 1658–1823. T. 1. P. 315.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid. T. 1. Paris, 1923. P. 510; T. 2. Paris, 1924. P. 334.*

In Tonkin, although Christianity was introduced to the area 12 years later than in Cochinchina, the Jesuits operating here achieved awe-inspiring results in spreading the Gospel from 1627 to 1663. In the book *Divers Voyages et Missions*, Alexandre de Rhodes said that in the first four years of arriving at Tonkin (1627–1630), he and Pedro Marquez baptized 6,700 Vietnamese⁴⁸. The number of believers continuously increased from 1630 to 1640, reaching 108,000 in 1641⁴⁹. But the peak of 1641 was quickly pushed down by the spectacular numbers of Christians at Tonkin in 1649 (190,000), 1658 (300,000), and especially 1663 (320,000)⁵⁰. From 1666 until the end of the 17th century, the missionaries of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris were present in Vietnam to manage missionary work under the appointment of the Holy See and the presence of the Dominican Order (1676). This forced the Jesuit missionaries to operate in parallel with the two missionary forces mentioned above in Tonkin. Although at that time, they no longer maintained the being the object of monolatry position as in the period 1615–1665, and the inevitable consequence of this problem was that the missionary areas were shared, nevertheless the pastoral work of the Jesuits at Tonkin still achieved positive results by maintaining activities in 7 parishes and managing 26,197 believers in 1699, significantly higher than the number of believers of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris (21,500) and Dominican Order (23,600)⁵¹. Not stopping there, in 1707, the number of parishes in Tonkin of the Jesuits increased to 9, and the number of believers reached 62,188. Five years later (1712), this number increased to 95,673 believers⁵². In particular, after the Tonkin government persecuted Christians in 1737, if the number of Christians in the entire Tonkin area was more than 250,000, the Jesuits alone managed more than 120,000, respectively 1.33 times, six times, and four times larger than the number of believers of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris (80,000), the Dominican Order (20,000), and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples of the Rome Holy See (30,000)⁵³. However, when the Jesuits were dissolved in 1773, missionary areas and a large force of believers of the Jesuits in Tonkin had the same fate as in Cochinchina: all were under the management of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris and the Dominican Order.

Conclusion

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the presence of Christianity in Vietnam recorded the contributions of many different religious orders and missionary organizations. Among them, it is impossible not to mention the role of the Jesuits. In 1615–1665, the Jesuits were the first missionary force to bring Christianity to Cochinchina and Tonkin (Vietnam). At the same time, they laid the foundation for the birth of church organizations in these two missionary areas. From 1665 to 1773, although no longer able to maintain a being

⁴⁸ Rhodes A. *Divers Voyages et Missions*. P.95.

⁴⁹ Cardim A. F. *Relation de la province du dv Japon*. A Tournay, 1645. P.76.

⁵⁰ Maracci J. *Relation de ce qui s'est passé dans les Indes orientales en ses trois provinces de Goa, de Malabar, du Japon, de la Chine*. Paris, 1651. P.91–94; Tissanier J. *Relation du voyage du P. Joseph Tissanier de la Compagnie de Jésus, depuis la France jusqu'au royaume de Tunquin: avec ce qui s'est passé de plus mémorable dans cette mission, durant les années 1658, 1659 & 1660*. Paris, 1663. P.177.

⁵¹ Launay A. *Histoire de la mission du Tonkin*. P.407–409.

⁵² Do Q. C. *Đông Tền trong xã hội Đại Việt 1615–1773* [The Society of Jesus in Dai Viet Society 1615–1773]. P.390–393.

⁵³ Montézon F., Estève E., Rhodes A., Tissanier J., Saccano M. *Mission de la Cochinchine...* P.326.

the object of monolatry role in spreading the Gospel in Vietnam, the Jesuit missionaries, along with other missionary forces, continuously made efforts to maintain and expand the influence of Christianity. That is expressed through the activities of a large and powerful force of foreign and native Jesuit missionaries, aiming to care for the spiritual life of a dense community of believers in a large missionary area in Cochinchina and Tonkin during this period. The comparative data on several aspects between the Society of Jesus and the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, the Dominican Order, the Franciscan Order, etc., presented in the content of the article partly shows the correlation and upper hand of this religious order compared to other missionary forces. However, if these results were only recorded by Jesuits, researchers will inevitably be skeptical about their truthfulness. Importantly, it was confirmed in several reports by missionaries from the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris — the missionary force at that time was in contradiction and conflict with the Jesuits over management rights and missionary areas in Vietnam. This gives researchers sufficient objective scientific basis to believe that the Jesuits have achieved impressive results, affirming their role and influence in preaching the Gospel in Vietnam in the 17th and 18th centuries.

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