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## METHODS OF MISSIONARY ACTIVITY OF THE JESUITS IN VIETNAM IN THE 17<sup>th</sup> AND 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES

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**Abstract. Introduction.** The purpose of this study is to reproduce precisely and accurately the process of conquering the faith of various social strata in Vietnam by analyzing the missionary methods of evangelization applied by Jesuit missionaries operating in Vietnam in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. *Methods and materials.* The author used the original historical materials recorded by Western missionaries working in Vietnam during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and research works by Vietnamese and international scholars related directly or indirectly to the missionary methods of Jesuits in Vietnam of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The author combines the historical and logical method with other research methods (systemic approach, analysis, synthesis, comparison, etc.). *Analysis.* In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, to conquer the faith of the people in Tonkin and Cochinchina (Vietnam), Jesuit missionaries adopted several measures such as establishing relationships and attracting the upper classes to the Christianity, “missionary academic”, “missionary bibliography”, disputes and religious conversion of the leaders of indigenous denominations, etc. These measures have been more or less effective and allow Jesuit missionaries to introduce and develop the Christianity in Vietnam during this period. *Results.* The research results presented in the article will contribute to the study of the history of Christianity and missionary activities of the Jesuits in Vietnam in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Key words:** Vietnam, Tonkin, Cochinchina, Society of Jesus, missionary, Christianity.

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## МЕТОДЫ МИССИОНЕРСКОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ ИЕЗУИТОВ ВО ВЬЕТНАМЕ В XVII И XVIII ВЕКАХ

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**Аннотация. Введение.** Цель данного исследования – точное воспроизведение процесса «завоевания веры» различных социальных слоев во Вьетнаме посредством изучения методов евангелизации, применявшихся миссионерами-иезуитами, действовавшими во Вьетнаме в XVII и XVIII веках. *Методы и материалы.* В статье использованы оригинальные исторические материалы, составленные западными миссионерами, работавшими во Вьетнаме в XVII–XVIII вв., и исследования вьетнамских и зарубежных ученых, прямо или косвенно связанные с изучением миссионерских методов, применявшихся миссионерами-иезуитами во Вьетнаме в данный период. Для завершения изучения данного вопроса автор сочетает историко-генетический метод с общенаучными методами исследования (системный подход, анализ, синтез, сравнение и др.). *Анализ.* В XVII и XVIII вв., чтобы «завоевать веру» людей в Тонкине и Кохинхине (Вьетнам), миссионеры-иезуиты приняли ряд миссионерских мер, таких как установление отношений и привлечение высших классов к вере в христианство, «миссионерский академический» метод, «миссионерская литература», споры и религиозное обращение лидеров традиционных конфессий и т. д. Фактически эти меры были достаточно эффективными и позволяли миссионерам-иезуитам внедрять и развивать христианство во Вьетнаме в этот период.

*Результаты.* С целью точного воспроизведения процесса «завоевания веры» различных социальных слоев во Вьетнаме автором охарактеризованы миссионерские методы, используемые миссионерами-иезуитами, и дана оценка результатам их применения. Выводы, представленные в статье, будут способствовать изучению истории христианства и миссионерской деятельности иезуитов во Вьетнаме в XVII и XVIII веках.

**Ключевые слова:** Вьетнам, Тонкин, Кохинхина, Общество Иисуса, миссионер, христианство.

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**Introduction.** In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Christianity was introduced and developed in Vietnam (including Cochinchina and Tonkin areas<sup>1</sup>). This process was associated with the role of various missionary forces. Among them, the Society of Jesus was one of the most typical forces [43, p. 826]. In fact, during the period 1615–1665, the Society of Jesus played a decisive role in evangelization and laid the first bricks, contributing to the construction of the dioceses in Tonkin and Cochinchina at a later stage. But from the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the right to manage missionary work in Vietnam was no longer in the hands of the Society of Jesus. Then the missionaries of this religious order at Tonkin and Cochinchina also encountered many difficulties and challenges, sometimes even wholly interrupted<sup>2</sup>. However, those obstacles did not prevent the Jesuits from realizing their aspirations to expand the influence of Christianity to all classes in Vietnamese society. During this period, their evangelization still achieved great results [17, p. 409; 15, pp. 120, 201; 16, pp. 64–65, 355; 21, pp. 386–395], which deserves to be recognized solemnly in the history of the Catholic Church in Vietnam. So, what factors helped Jesuit missionaries achieve success in missionary work in Vietnam in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries? Researchers can give many answers to this question when approached from different angles, aspects, and perspectives. In which, proposing and applying flexibly and creatively appropriate evangelization methods of the Jesuits operated in Vietnam during this period were also one of the contents that need research to help deeply explain the problem posed above.

**Methods and materials.** During the study of this issue, the original historical materials (works, letters, reports, diaries, etc.) were recorded by Western missionaries, referring directly or indirectly to the missionary methods of Jesuit missionaries in Vietnam during the 17<sup>th</sup> and

18<sup>th</sup> centuries. These documents existed in two forms. Firstly, they were published in Europe as separate and typical works such as *Relation de la nouvelle mission des pères de la compagnie de Jésus au royaume de la Cochinchine* [5] by Cristoforo Borri, *Relation de la province du dv Japon* [6] by Antonio Francisco Cardim, *Histoire du Royaume de Tunquin* [30] and *Divers Voyages et Missions* [29] by Alexandre de Rhodes, etc. Secondly, they were selected, edited, translated and published in a number of works such as *Bibliothèque des écrivains de la Compagnie de Jésus: ou Notices bibliographiques* [1] by Augustin Backer, *Dell' historia della Compagnia di Giesv, la Cina* [3] by Daniello Bartoli, *Aux origines d'une église: Rome et les missions d'Indochine au XVIIe siècle* [7] by Henri Chappoulié, *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800* [8] by Joseph Dehergne, *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions Étrangères: Mémoires de la Chine* [12] by Jean Baptiste du Halde, *Histoire de La Mission de Cochinchine (tome 1, 2)* [15; 16] and *Histoire de la mission du Tonkin: Documents historiques I* [17] by Adrien Launay, etc. The above-mentioned documents played an important role and helped restore the missionary methods of Jesuit missionaries in Vietnam during this period accurately and objectively. In addition, the academic achievements on issues related to the history of Christianity's introduction and development in the Vietnam and Asia of Vietnamese researchers [9; 22; 38–41; 44] and scholars around the world [1; 2; 21; 24; 32; 34; 35; 43; 46], has also provided a necessary background for the author to conduct research on missionary methods of Jesuit missionaries in Vietnam during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The author combines two main research methods of History Science (historical and logical methods) with other research methods (systemic approach, analysis, synthesis, comparison, etc.) to complete the study of this issue.

**Analysis.** Based on researching original historical material sources, including works, letters, reports, diaries, etc., of Jesuit missionaries who operated in Vietnam in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as the academic achievements of Vietnamese and international scholars, it could be realized that the Jesuit missionaries in the process of preaching the Gospel in Vietnam applied some of the following methods of evangelization.

**1. Establishing relationships and attracting the upper classes believe in Christianity.** In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuits began to preach the Gospel in Cochinchina and Tonkin (Vietnam). In the process, they realized that one of the most effective ways to quickly “Christianization” these areas was by establishing relationships and attracting kings, nobles, mandarins, and native intellectuals who believed in Christianity. For once the faith of these forces was conquered, with their political power and economic status; they were fully qualified, capable and reputable to make people in their kingdom convert to Christianity. And that was the ultimate goal that the Jesuits aspired to achieve.

To establish a relationship with the rulers of Vietnam at that time and to seek opportunities to remain for a long time and carry out missionary work, one of the methods commonly used by Jesuits was to follow Portuguese traders to the political center of these regions to secure audience with indigenous rulers and offer them gifts. Through the records of some Jesuit missionaries present in Vietnam in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it can be known that at that time, the types of products used by missionaries of this religious order as gifts included watches, Western science books [30, pp. 152-155], pearls and gold [31, pp. 111-113]. These gifts were a means of communicating, by the missionaries with contemporary rulers. The measure of “offer gifts” helped Jesuit missionaries to receive sympathy from the indigenous rulers many times [41, pp. 43-44, 101; 29, pp. 121, 153, 168-169; 30, pp. 152-155; 31, pp. 111-113]. They were allowed to stay in the mission land, and that also meant that an opportunity to “cultivate” “Christian seeds” in Vietnam was created.

In fact, approaching and establishing relations with the Vietnamese rulers brought many benefits to the Jesuits. Through it, they received favorable conditions to expand the influence of

Christianity in this country. In Cochinchina, when Italian Jesuit Francesco Buzomi arrived in the area in 1615, he made a good impression on the indigenous rulers with the gifts he offered [41, p. 43]. Thanks to that, Francesco Buzomi was granted a plot of land in Quang Nam by the Cochinchina government to build a cathedral. Construction was also performed quickly with the support of money and effort from many Vietnamese. In particular, the most typical was the contribution of a lady, whose Holy name was Jeanne – Sister of this area’s governor [3, p. 619]. Not only that, but the Nguyen Lord’s government also granted this Jesuit missionary a nice and clean house to take shelter in during his mission here [5, p. 341]. In 1618, when Francesco Buzomi and other Jesuits arrived in Pulocambi (Binh Dinh province), he received tremendous and enthusiastic help from the local governor [29, p. 69; 5, pp. 348-353]. In 1640, Alexandre de Rhodes returned to Cochinchina as a missionary in the context of the regional government strictly enforcing a policy of prohibiting Christianity. Therefore, this Jesuit missionary had to adopt the measure of “offer gifts” to establish a relationship with the mandarin to manage the Japanese community in Faifo (Hoi An city, Quang Nam province). Then, under the guidance and dedicated help of this mandarin, Alexandre de Rhodes had an audience with Nguyen Lord in the capital Sinoa (Hue city) [29, p. 121] to seek opportunities to stay and evangelize in the Cochinchina area.

Meanwhile, in Tonkin, establishing a relationship between the Jesuits and the indigenous rulers also achieved certain successes. In 1627, when arriving at Cua Bang (Thanh Hoa province), missionaries Alexandre de Rhodes and Pedro Marques had an audience with Trinh Lord. They presented to Trinh Lord a Western clock and a mathematic book of Euclid written in Chinese characters. Trinh Lord showed interest in these gifts, especially the watch, so he agreed to let the two missionaries stay in his kingdom [30, pp. 152-155]. Not only that, during the missionary period in the capital Ke Cho (from July to November 1627), they received the help of a mandarin named Mau Tai and were granted a new house by the Trinh Lord’s government to make a place of residence and preaching [30, pp. 162, 174]. This contributed to the evangelization work in this area of Alexandre de

Rhodes and Pedro Marques achieving positive results [6, p. 70; 29, p. 115; 30, pp. 191, 209]. The relationship between the Jesuits and the Tonkin government became even more intimate when in 1647, because of love and esteem for missionary Felix Morelli, Trinh Lord accepted him as his adopted son [30, p. 321; 21, pp. 382-383]. And with that, Trinh Lord also planned to grant a village for this Jesuit missionary. According to the Jesuit missionaries present at Tonkin at that time, the excellent relationship between Trinh Lord and missionary Felix Morelli was a valuable guarantee for the stability and peace of the Tonkin church [44, p. 369].

In the process of approaching the Vietnamese ruling force, although the Jesuits could not attract the top leaders in the indigenous government (Le King, Trinh Lord in Tonkin, and Nguyen Lord in Cochinchina) to enter religion, however, they achieved certain successes in conquering the faith of a part of aristocrats, mandarins and intellectuals in Vietnamese society at that time. From studying the material sources recorded by some Jesuit missionaries operating in Vietnam in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it can be known that the missionary work for the upper class in Tonkin society of missionaries of this religious order achieved positive results. In *Histoire du Royaume de Tunquin*, missionary Alexandre de Rhodes said, in 1627–1628, he baptized a sister of Trinh Lord with the holy name Catarina [6, p. 87; 30, pp. 164-165]. She was an ardent Catholic who made many significant contributions to the Jesuit mission in this area in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century [30, pp. 164-165]. In addition, Rhodes also succeeded in attracting a doctor and a bachelor in Tonkin to believe in Christianity [30, pp. 170-171]. That shows, although at that time, conquering the faith of the indigenous Confucian intelligentsia was difficult and fully challenging work, that doesn't mean the Jesuits could not do it. In addition, Alexandre de Rhodes also mentioned that two high-ranking mandarins in the Tonkin government became Christians. With their authority, these two mandarins protected the Jesuits from the onslaught of anti-Christianity forces. They became two solid pillars of the Tonkin church at that time [6, p. 70; 30, pp. 206-208]. In a letter written on March 25, 1637, missionary Felix Morelli also said that every year in Tonkin, there were a few mandarins who

entered religion. In just three months of evangelization here, he baptized two indigenous mandarins [44, pp. 359-361]. Later, from 1658 to 1663, in the process of preaching the Gospel in this area, the missionary Joseph Tissanier also recorded the case of some ladies of royal lineage such as Jeanne, Blanche, Pie, Colombe, Saule, and many women with noble status in the court of Tonkin received baptism from Jesuit missionaries [37, pp. 177-180]. This religion also has an excellent attraction for Vietnamese mandarins, when in 1663, in Tonkin, there were more than 20 mandarins and their wives who converted to Christianity. According to missionary Joseph Tissanier, their conversion to Christianity was incredibly beneficial to attracting and converting the pagan [37, p. 341]. Meanwhile, right after arriving in Cochinchina, Jesuit missionaries operating in this area were also clearly identified; one of the first social forces that they need to conquer the faith were those in the royal family of Nguyen Lord, the mandarins at the central court, and local and their families. Therefore, when the government had a moderate attitude toward Christianity, Jesuit missionaries often promoted missionary activities in the major political centers of Cochinchina to seek opportunities to approach and convert religion for aristocrats and mandarins and, through them, entice others to join Christianity. In 1620, in Pulucambi (Binh Dinh province), missionary Francesco Buzomi baptized an ambassador of Cochinchina in Cambodia with his wife and 25 concubines [19, p. 138]. In a letter written on December 17, 1621, the missionary Gaspar Luis mentioned the success of missionary Francisco de Pina when attracting a noble lady in Quang Nam and her brother (former a mandarin working in this area) with 35 others to enter religion [19, pp. 128-129]. Because of Vietnamese fluency, Francisco de Pina quickly established relationships and attracted many mandarins and intellectuals in Quang Nam to follow the religion [41, p. 47]. In the middle of 1625, when Francisco de Pina came to the capital Sinoa (Hue city) missionary, he baptized a lady of royal lineage with the holy name of Maria Madalena. She became one of the essential pillars of the Cochinchina church at that time. With her morality and prestige, Maria Madalena has attracted many others to believe in Christianity [29, pp. 74-75]. Thus, the contents presented above were convincing

evidence to prove the Jesuit missionaries in Cochinchina applied a unique missionary method successfully in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which was to establish relationships and attract the upper class to believe in Christianity.

2. *“Missionary academic”*. “Missionary academic” was a missionary method applied by Jesuit missionaries during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in some countries in the Far East, including Vietnam. The core content of this method was that the Jesuits used the achievements of Western science and technology to attract attention and establish good relations with the classes of the indigenous society (kings, nobles, mandarins, intellectuals, and people) [2, p. 157], especially the ruling class, to seek opportunities to preach the Gospel to the forces mentioned above. On that basis, the Jesuits hoped through their political status, and economic power to influence “Christianization” in these countries.

In applying the method of “missionary academic”, the Jesuits operating in Vietnam in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries focused on several scientific and technical fields that Westerners had the advantage over the Vietnamese. Among them, astronomy was considered one of the most representative fields. The Jesuit missionaries chose astronomy because they recognized the Vietnamese rulers’ attitude of attaching importance to astronomical research work [5, p. 373] and the psychology of “deification” and “spiritualization” of astronomical phenomena of Vietnamese people<sup>3</sup>. In particular, errors arising in the process of surveying solar and lunar eclipses by indigenous astronomers [5, pp. 373-374] working at the astronomical research agency of Nguyen Lord (Cochinchina) and Trinh Lord (Tonkin)<sup>4</sup> at that time, created an excellent opportunity for the Jesuits to demonstrate the superiority and accuracy of Western astronomy compared to the traditional Vietnamese astronomical which was deeply influenced by China. Jesuit missionaries proactively used Western astronomy as one of the most effective ways to approach and establish relationships with the Vietnamese authorities to seek opportunities to long-stay and expand the spread of Christianity in this country.

In fact, Western astronomy made its way into Vietnam in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> through two ways. Firstly, Jesuit missionaries “explicitly discussed and

explained the knowledge of Western astronomy to the rulers of Vietnam” [40, p. 483]. In works and reports on the mission situation in Tonkin, Jesuit missionaries Giuliano Baldinotti (Italian) and Alexandre de Rhodes (French) said, during 1626–1627, they had “once conversed with Trinh Lord and some Tonkin mandarins about the solar eclipse, lunar eclipse as well as about the movement of stars in the sky” [40, p. 483]. Secondly, Jesuit missionaries “on many occasions, calculated the imminent solar and lunar eclipses and outlined them in drawings informing the king and local officials, and also debated several issues related to these phenomena with Vietnamese astronomers” [40, p. 483]. In their works and reports, the Jesuits did not specifically mention the number of Vietnamese who believed in Christianity after approaching and receiving Western astronomy knowledge from them. However, the accurate calculation and prediction of astronomical phenomena by the Jesuits certainly received the appreciation and admiration of the Vietnamese rulers at that time [30, pp. 195, 237-238; 5, p. 381; 19, pp. 122-123]. That helped the Jesuits establish a relationship with the local authorities and, to a certain extent, positively influenced their missionary work in this country.

Besides astronomy, medicine was also a field that shows the effectiveness of applying the Jesuits’ “missionary academic” method. When coming to Vietnam to preach the Gospel, Jesuit missionaries realized that the most crucial purpose was to attract social forces in this country to follow Christianity, meaning conquering the “soul” of the native people. One effective way to achieve this was to heal the physical pains caused by various diseases in Vietnamese people, including the rulers and ordinary people. The Jesuit missionaries clearly understood that when people had serious illnesses that threatened their lives, it was also the easiest time for the missionaries to conquer the patients’ faith. Because when they are saved by scientific therapies (surgery, taking Western medicine, etc.) and sometimes by spiritual and religious methods (using the cross, the statue of Christ, the statue of Blessed Mother, rosary, holy water, etc.) [30, pp. 182, 184; 29, pp. 96-98, 102, 157] of Jesuit missionaries, gratitude and admiration for healing capacity of the missionaries would be an essential factor that made them turn to and accept the Christianity. Based on such awareness, the Jesuits sought to bring Western

medicine into the Vietnamese monarchies' courts, especially in Cochinchina. From the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, seven Jesuit missionaries assumed the position of the royal physician in Nguyen Lord's government [32, pp. 32-33; 21, pp. 387-389; 11, pp. 189-190, 193-196; 8, pp. 63-64, 137-138, 239-240, 247, 254-255]. In fact, health care and medical examination and treatment for Vietnamese kings, aristocrats, and mandarins by the Jesuits could not make these forces believe in Christianity. However, it contributed to establishing a close relationship between the missionaries and the indigenous rulers, thereby positively impacting the missionary process of the Jesuits in Vietnam at that time. Meanwhile, medical examination and treatment activities for the people of the Jesuits, especially for the poor in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries [21, pp. 267-269; 11, p. 194], brought certain effects to the missionary work. Some indigenous people converted to the religion after being treated by the missionaries of this religious order for serious diseases [21, p. 269; 29, pp. 97-98, 140]. These showed the certain success of the Jesuits in Vietnam in applying the "missionary academic" method to the field of medicine during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**3. "Missionary bibliography".** Besides "missionary academic", Jesuit missionaries operating in Vietnam in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries also applied another unique missionary method: "missionary bibliography". The core content of this method was that Jesuit missionaries compiled or translated Western bibliographies into indigenous languages to serve their missionary process [34, p. 22; 46, pp. 2-8]. In Vietnam, the application of this missionary method by Jesuit missionaries mainly manifests in the two following fields.

The first was the field of language. In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when arriving in Vietnam to preach the Gospel, based on grasping the line of "adaptation to the indigenous culture" proposed by missionary Alessandro Valignano, the Jesuits clearly recognized the importance of understanding historical and cultural values, manners and customs, especially the study and mastery of the indigenous language for missionary success. At the same time, they considered it was a magic key to expand the door and "Christianization" of this country. Based on such

awareness, Jesuit missionaries operating in Vietnam at that time were not only interested in accumulating for themselves an abundant quantity of Vietnamese to serve their preaching, but they also carried out "Latinization" of this language and especially compiled dictionaries to serve the learning of the indigenous language of the missionaries of this religious order as well as to help the Vietnamese learn Western languages [28, Ad Lectorem]. This work was started by Jesuit missionary Gaspar do Amaral. During the period 1631–1638, while evangelizing at Tonkin, he compiled the dictionary "Diccionario Anamita-Português-Latim" [1, p. 121; 20, pp. 331-332; 35, p. 548]. Later, Gaspar do Amaral's colleague, Antonio Barbosa, during the missionary process in this area from 1636 to 1642, compiled the dictionary "Diccionario Português-Anamita" [20, pp. 214-215; 35, p. 548]. Based on the reference to the two dictionaries above, from 1636 to 1645, Alexandre de Rhodes completed the dictionary "Dictionarium Annamiticum Lusitanum et Latinum". In 1651, this dictionary was published in Rome [36, p. 54]. The event was a significant turning point in the development of the Vietnamese script – A type of script created by Jesuit missionaries operated in Vietnam in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century "based on the use of the Latin alphabet for phonetic transcription of Vietnamese" [39, p. 411]. Simultaneously, it was also clear proof of the success of applying the "missionary bibliography" method of the Jesuits at that time.

The second was the fields of the biblical, theology, history, and Christian rituals. "In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century during Vietnam's mission, Jesuit missionaries brought and used two books in Chinese characters by missionaries Matteo Ricci and Michele Ruggieri compiled in China, it was Tianzhu shi yi (天主實義) and Tianzhu shengjiao shilu (天主聖教實錄)" [39, pp. 410-411]. However, these were books only for the Confucian intelligentsia. It only introduced an overview of Christianity and did not intensive in issues that most Christians need to know to serve their religious activities. Therefore, in 1620, Jesuit missionaries working in Faifo (Hoi An city, Quang Nam province)<sup>5</sup> compiled a catechism in Cochinchina script, i.e. the Nom script – "A kind of figurative writing created by Vietnamese people based on the use of Chinese characters to write Chinese-Vietnamese words as well as

Vietnamese pure words” [39, p. 411]. This catechism was so popular among the Catholic community of Cochinchina that both adults and children memorized it [19, pp. 127-128]. Later, to expand the influence of Christianity on all classes of Vietnamese society, especially the intelligentsia, the Jesuits used indigenous language to compile and translate several books of biblical, theology, history, and Christian rituals. In the period 1636-1645, missionary Alexandre de Rhodes used the Vietnamese script and Latin script to write the catechism book “*Catechismvs pro ijs, qui volunt suscipere baptismvm in octo dies diuisus*”, which was used to serve the work of catechesis of Jesuit missionaries and the indigenous catechists [10, p. 86]. This catechism was published in Rome by the Congregation for the Mission of the Holy See in 1651 [38, p. 58]. Meanwhile, from 1631 to 1640, when carrying out missionary work at Tonkin, Jesuit missionary Girolamo Majorica used the Nom script to compile and translate many books related to Christianity [37, p. 180; 9, pp. 160-161, 458; 25, pp. 38-54; 13; 45, pp. 23-39]. However, learning and proficiently using the Nom script for Girolamo Majorica was not an easy task then. Therefore, to complete the compilation and translation of Christian books from Western languages into Vietnamese (the Nom script), Girolamo Majorica needed the help of Vietnamese catechists and intellectuals [9, pp. 160-161, 458; 25, pp. 62-64, 68; 23, p. 40]. Besides compiling and translating catechism, the books of theology, history and Christian rituals from Western languages into Vietnamese, during the missionary process in localities in Tonkin and Cochinchina (Vietnam), through their fervent parishioners, the Jesuit missionaries also reproduced these documents with a relatively large number to serve the teaching and learning of catechism, the bible of the indigenous catechists and the parishioners [6, p. 108; 30, pp. 138-140, 236]. That was also another manifestation of applying the “missionary bibliography” method by the Jesuit missionaries in evangelization in Vietnam in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

**4. *Arguing and religious conversion of the leaders of indigenous denominations.*** When evangelizing in Vietnam, the Jesuit missionaries realized that this was a nation with a long-standing culture with the existence of many Eastern religions such as Confucianism, Taoism,

Buddhism, etc., and other indigenous beliefs [9, p. 49]. In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Christianity’s presence and growing influence has become a concern for other religions – Forces that had dominated the spiritual life of indigenous people for a long time before. Therefore, the arising of contradictions and conflicts between Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Christianity were inevitable.

However, those contradictions and conflicts are resolved in civilized instead of barbaric methods: Religious debates. In these public debates, the Jesuits were not proactively provocateurs. They recognized the enormous pressures that indigenous religions created for them and the disastrous consequences for evangelization if they fail in these debates. However, the Jesuits also saw a beautiful prospect about an opportunity to evangelize nothing better if they won. Because through that, the Jesuits would show the preeminence of Christianity compared to other religions of the Vietnamese people, making more people aware of Christianity, thereby seeking opportunities to promote evangelization to the class of the ruling, mandarins, intellectuals, and the people of this land. In fact, in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Jesuits operating in Cochinchina and Tonkin successfully applied this method. In the work Dell’ *Historia della Compagnia di Giesv, La Cina*, the Jesuit historian Bartoli said that, from 1618, when he started working in Pulocambi (Binh Dinh province), missionary Francesco Buzomi – the initiator of the missionary work of the Jesuits in Cochinchina debated about religion and theology with a prominent Taoist priest in the area, named Tu Bin [3, pp. 751-753]. This debate has attracted the attention from local mandarins, Confucian intellectuals, Buddhist monks, Taoist priests, and disciples, especially the majority of the indigenous people. With faith in God’s help and the correctness of the truth, missionary Francesco Buzomi rejected all the fallacious arguments by Tu Bin. This Taoist priest was embarrassed and had to withdraw disgracefully. After this event, the indigenous people became more and more sympathetic to the Jesuits and Catholics. In 1621, missionary Francesco Buzomi baptized 172 people [22, p. 71]. Also, at Pulocambi, Bartoli mentioned a religious and theological debate between a Buddhist monk and missionary

Francesco Buzomi. After this debate, the failed result made the Buddhist monk to reconsider his religious arguments. Realizing the truth from the Catholic doctrine, he converted religion and was baptized with the Holy name Damiano [3, pp. 753, 765-766]. Since then, he enthusiastically preached the Gospel to the people in this area. He also built a new church. The Gospel gradually spread throughout the Cochinchina area, and the number of parishioners also increased [22, p. 76].

Just as in Cochinchina, debates between Jesuits and indigenous religious leaders also took place in Tonkin. In *Histoire du Royaume de Tunquin*, Alexandre de Rhodes recorded one of these debates. From April to June 1627, while operating in An Vuc village (Thanh Hoa province), Alexandre de Rhodes and Pedro Marquez were provoked to argue about the religious issue by the Buddhist monks. The Buddhist monks proved angry when they saw that many famous monks and followers had abandoned their religion and come to Christianity. Two Jesuit missionaries accepted the challenge. However, while the two missionaries presented faith, especially the principle of God's creation of all things, at the same time explicitly explaining these things in Vietnamese, on the contrary, the monks deliberately shouted, harassed, and demanded to read a piece of paper full of insults and slander against Christianity. Not achieving the goal, the Buddhist monks became angry, insulted the two missionaries, and threatened to use force. Fortunately, that did not happen because of the appearance of a eunuch in Trinh Lord's palace. In front of the eunuch, the Buddhist monks dared not to do extreme actions. The two missionaries were free to interpret the contents of the Christian doctrine of the creation of the world with convincing arguments. Not wanting to lose face in front of the people, the Buddhist monks gradually withdrew into a state of mind with anger and hatred [30, pp. 146-147].

Besides arguing with indigenous denominations on matters of religion and theology, the Jesuits also clearly realized the significant influence of the Buddhist monks and Taoist priests on the people, especially on the followers of those religions. Therefore, once the Jesuits could convert this force, there would be an excellent opportunity to attract many followers of those religions and people to believe in Christianity. Based on such

awareness, during the operation in Vietnam in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuits also applied the above method and obtained specific results. In the work *Dell' Historia della Compagnia di Giesu, La Cina*, the Jesuit historian Bartoli said that from 1618 to 1620, when missioning in Pulocambi (Cochinchina), missionary Buzomi baptized three Buddhist monks, and one of these monks attracted more than 50 Buddhists to believe in Christianity [3, pp. 751-755, 764-765]. Meanwhile, from April to June 1627, when evangelizing in Thanh Hoa (Tonkin), missionaries Alexandre de Rhodes and Pedro Marquez baptized a famous Buddhist monk in this area with the Holy name Ioachim. With his prestige and piety, he attracted many Buddhist monks and Buddhists, both men and women, to believe in Christianity. Moreover, he was also very enthusiastic in helping the Jesuit missionaries reproduced the prayers and contributed assets to build a large church in this area [30, pp. 138-140]. In *Histoire du Royaume de Tunquin*, missionary Alexandre de Rhodes also recorded the case of a Taoist priest in Tonkin, previously formerly hated Christianity, who took the time to study this religious doctrine. Finally, indigenous catechists baptized him and his family members in 1630–1631 [30, pp. 269-270]. Thus, the evidence mentioned above has to some extent helped the researchers realized the success of the Jesuits in the process of conquering the faith of the force's leaders of Buddhism, Taoism, and followers of this religion in Vietnam during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

**Results.** In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Jesuit missionaries came into the history of Vietnamese Christianity as the first force to “cultivate” “Christian seeds” on the “S” shaped land (1615–1665). Then, they also made significant contributions to the development of Christianity in this country (1665–1773). One of the reasons for the Jesuit missionaries' success was that they have proposed and applied flexibly and creatively appropriate evangelization methods. In fact, during this period, to attract different classes in Vietnamese society, from kings, aristocrats, mandarins, Confucian intellectuals, Taoist priests, and Buddhist monks to the people who believed in Christianity, Jesuit missionaries used some methods of evangelization. Among them, some methods were applied not only by Jesuit missionaries but also by missionaries of other religious orders such as



establishing relationships and attracting the upper classes to believe in Christianity or “missionary academic.” However, there were also methods of evangelization that were “unique product” of the Jesuits, such as arguing and religious conversion of the leaders of indigenous denominations. Especially, “compared to other religious orders, the most prominent characteristic of the Jesuit missionaries was the belief in the importance of education. Before traveling to distant lands to carry out evangelization, Jesuits often embarked on a systematic, professional, and formal educational process for over ten years. Accordingly, they not only had to study theology but also had to choose among types of natural science knowledge” [40, p. 472]. This advantage has helped the Jesuits to become one of the vanguard forces and most successful in applying the method of “missionary academic” and “missionary bibliography” in the Far East in general and in Vietnam in particular during this period. Studying missionary methods of Jesuit missionaries operating in Vietnam in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, scholars also recognize the discontinuity in applying some missionary methods. There were methods of evangelization frequently mentioned in documents of the Jesuits and played an important role in evangelizing missionaries of this religious order in the period 1615–1665 (arguing and religious conversion of the leaders of indigenous denominations, “missionary bibliography” or establishing relationships and attract the upper classes believe in Christianity); in later stage, it was less applied, or its role was no longer as prominent as before though. However, there were also missionary methods applied continuously and throughout by Jesuit missionaries in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (“missionary academic”). Moreover, the Jesuits also relied on the characteristics of social forces, the political situation, and the Vietnamese rulers’ policies towards Christianity at specific periods to propose and apply appropriate evangelistic methods. This has also contributed to the success of Jesuit missionaries in evangelization in Vietnam during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were turbulent periods in Vietnamese history. From 1627 to 1672, the

Trinh family in the North and the Nguyen family in the South fought each other seven times but failed to end. After 46 years of constant fighting, both sides exhausted their human resources and properties, so they had to accept a truce and a long division. Gianh River, historically known as Linh Giang, became the boundary dividing Dai Viet country into two regions: from Linh Giang to the South called Dang Trong (Cochinchina) under the administration of Nguyen Lord, and from Linh Giang to the North was called Dang Ngoai (Tonkin) under the administration of Le King Trinh Lord. This situation lasted until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the Tay Son peasant movement broke out (1771), which in turn destroyed the force of Nguyen Lord in Cochinchina (1777) and Trinh Lord in Tonkin (1786) [42, pp. 335-362; 18, pp. 291-352].

<sup>2</sup> On September 9, 1659, Pope Alexander VII issued Decree Super Cathedram on establishing the first two Apostolic Vicariates in Vietnam. He entrusted the management of these two dioceses to the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris. Since then, the contradictions and conflicts between the Society of Jesus and the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris have become critical. In 1680, the Holy See ordered the Jesuit Superior to recall missionaries from Tonkin and Cochinchina to solve this problem. In particular, in 1773, when the Jesuits were dissolved worldwide, their missionary work in many countries, including Vietnam, also ended [14, p. 255; 4, p. 494; 7, pp. 55-63, 261; 41, p. 541; 24, pp. 80-86].

<sup>3</sup> In a letter written by a Jesuit missionary in Tonkin, Vietnam to missionary Cibot in Beijing, China (unknown at the time), it was clearly stated that Tonkin people adored the sky, moon, and stars. Once the lunar eclipse appeared, people assumed that a dragon was fighting the moon and wanted to annex it. Therefore, they had to immediately gather to save the moon. When the lunar eclipse was over, they returned home with satisfaction as if they had just defeated a great war. That was mentioned in a report about Cochinchina by Cristoforo Borri [12, pp. 203-207; 5, pp. 373-375].

<sup>4</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the astronomical and calendar research agency in the government of Le King Trinh Lord in Tonkin was called Tu Thien Giam (Directorate of Astronomy and Calendar), while called Chiem Hau Ty (Office of Imperial Observatory) in the government of Nguyen Lord in Cochinchina. In 1657, Zhu Shunshui 朱舜水, an exiled mandarin of the Ming Dynasty, in Annan gongyi jishi (安南供役紀事: Chronicle of service in Annam) refers to the fact that he met a mandarin of Zhi li ju (治曆局: Calendar Bureau) of Nguyen Lord in Ngoai Dinh Sa (Quang Tri Province). Calendar Bureau mentioned by Zhu Shunshui was probably the Office of Imperial Observatory mentioned by Vietnamese historical records [26, pp. 545-546, 591; 27, p. 97; 33, p. 21].

<sup>5</sup> In 1620, there were four Jesuit missionaries in Faifo, including Pedro Maquez, Joseph, Paulus Saito, and Francisco de Pina. In which, Francisco de Pina was more fluent in Vietnamese than the other three missionaries [10, pp. 22-23].

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