

An Influence of Foreign Culture: Hoi An and Christianity in Cochinchina in the 17th Century

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Received: October 15, 2021

Revised: November 17, 2021

Accepted: December 20, 2021

Abstract

This article aims at attesting that Hoi An was one of the first Christian majority cities of Cochinchina in the 17th century. Emerging as the most hustling and bustling commercial port in Cochinchina, Hoi An easily got exposed to new culture from merchants and foreign missionaries, including Spanish, French, Portuguese, Chinese, and Japanese. The debacle of baptismation in East Asian countries led to the resettlement of foreign missionaries in Hoi An port. They eagerly evangelised and christianised various laypeople in this town. Moreover, the open-minded policy of Nguyen Lords encouraged Western merchants to forge trade relations and allowed missionaries to act without restrictions in their country in the first period. Thus, the first laypeople appeared in Hoi An under the guardian of Jesuit missionaries. Hoi An Christians were committed to practising their new faith in their new chapels. They complied with the Bible and taught it to other believers. Also, they were the first people that learned Latinised words which were the creation of friars. This contributed to hastening acculturation between Christianity and local

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culture. Consequently, Christianity widely spread southward and became a dominant faith in Cochinchina.

Keywords: Vietnam, Hoi An, Christianity, Foreign Culture, Cochinchina

Introduction

Hoi An port originated from the Sahuynh civilisation and the development of the Champa Kingdom. In various materials, this town called by different names including Faifo, Haipho, or 海浦. In the 15th century, the decline of Champa Kingdom and the southward expansion of Vietnamese people triggered the establishment of the Dien Ban district (including Hoi An), which was merged into Quang Nam in 1605 (Historical Academy of Nguyen Dynasty, 2019, p. 333). Local people deeply absorbed sea-based experiences of Cham people and preserved Hoi An as a critical seaport of Cochinchina.² Hoi An reached its peak during the 17th and 18th centuries. As Le Quy Don (2018, p. 67) describes this town, “all the merchandises are here; hundreds of big cargo ships cannot transport them all at the same time.” A handful of evidence, such as *Les Portugais sur les cotes du Vietnam et du Champa* by Manguin (1974), gestures toward the appearance of this seaport in the international routes taken by Western merchants. Hoi An port plays an essential role in the trade network in Southeast Asia. To take advantage of this benefit, various

² There is another term of this region. It is “Dang Trong” (Đàng Trong). This word is a Vietnamised historical term implying the territory under the ruling of Nguyen Lords. Meanwhile, the term “Cochinchina” originated from Western traders and missionaries in the middle of the 16 century to call the territory going along from Thuan Hoa to its southern extremity. In the middle of the 19th century, the French administratively named “Cochinchine” which had appeared in the notion of Westerner for the Mekong Delta only.

Western missionaries from Spain, France and Portugal introduced new faith to local people and westernised the indigenous culture in Cochinchina. Particularly, Portuguese missionaries are first comers who enthusiastically promulgated their faith and culture to Hoi An local people. This article closely examines the role of the first missionaries in Hoi An and proves that Hoi An Port is the first Christian dominant city in Vietnam. It also investigates the role of Hoi An in spreading Christianity nationwide and building the first congregations in Cochinchina.

Literature Review

This research paper is not novel due to the fact that Hoi An and Christianity is a well-discovered topic among various historians, religious dignitaries, and anthropologists. Initially, Bishop Nguyen Hong released a book titled *Lịch sử truyền giáo ở Việt Nam [History of Missionaries in Vietnam]* in 1959. The author provided some accurate proof of the early missionary in Cochinchina and narrated the voyage of Spanish and Portuguese missionaries in the early incarnation of the Vietnam Catholic Church. Hoi An is the first place for missionaries to approach Cochinchina (Hong, 1959). Then, Phan Phan Huon published his book *Việt Nam giáo sử [Christian History of Vietnam]* in Saigon in 1965. The sixth and twelfth chapters of this book comprehensively describe foreign missionaries' endeavour in Cochinchina through objective evidence. Phan proved some remarkable achievements of Christianity in Cochinchina through the establishment of local cloisters and the birth of Christian intellectuals in this region (Huon, 1965). Bui Duc Sinh published *Lịch sử giáo hội công giáo [History of Catholic Churches]* in 1972. In this book, Bui delivered an overview of the development process of Christianity in the world. The second volume of this work referred to Cochinchina missionaries

and narrated a challenging period for friars and bishops in establishing parishes and baptise indigenous people (Sinh, 1972). In light of this reference, it is evident that there was an expansion of the Christian community in this country.

Hoi An, Latinised language and Christianity have a strong correlation in Vietnamese history, and Vietnamese researchers made an attempt to recognise the key role of Western missionaries in promoting new faith and latinising the Vietnamese language. Nguyen Quoc Hung published *Phố Cổ Hội An và Việc Giao Lưu Văn Hóa ở Việt Nam [Hoi An Ancient Town and Cultural Exchange in Vietnam]* in 2003. This book is considered novel research concerning the role of culture in Hoi An. This town eyewitnessed a cultural diversity due to the attendance of the Chinese, Japanese, Westerners, and other ethnic groups. However, it is minimal for the author only to approach the role of Chinese culture in this land (Hung, 2003). Then, Nguyen Chi Trung released *Cư dân Fajfo-Hội An trong lịch sử [Hoi An People in History]* which generalised the evolution of the Christianity community from 1615 to the early 20th century. Trung provided an introductory remark that families and villages play a vital role in maintaining Christians' religious practice, and this belief significantly contributes to diversifying the local culture of Hoi An (Trung, 2010, pp. 300-305). Despite the brevity of the topic, it can be considered novel research about Christians in Hoi An in the period of the 16th and 17th centuries. Moreover, Trieu Huy Ha released *Dấu ấn và vai trò của văn hóa Kito giáo ở Hội An thế kỷ XVI [The Relic and Role of Christian Culture in the 16th Century in Hoi An]* in *the Journal of Past and Present*, in 2019. The author argues that Hoi An is the first landmark of Christianity in Cochinchina, and this region experienced a considerable transformation of both material and spiritual life among the native

people in Hoi An. This opinion outrightly refuted the statement that Buddhism was a predominant religion in Cochinchina. In essence, this region was under the benefaction of Nguyen Lords in lieu of a decisive influence on all inhabitants of Cochinchina (Huy, 2019).

Likewise, Hoi An is well known due to the creation of Latinised Vietnamese scripts in the 17th century. Do Quang Chinh is the leading author who provides actual proof about the establishment of this language in three main bases: Hoi An, Thanh Chiem, and Nuoc Man. In *Lịch sử Chữ Quốc Ngữ (1620-1659) [History of the Latinised Vietnamese Script 1620-1659]*, Do Quang Chinh lists special scripts of the language via handwritings of Jesuit missionaries and examines the influence of early modern Vietnamese language to currently spoken language in Vietnam nowadays (Chinh, 2008). The topics about Latinised scripts and the role of Jesuit missionaries worth noting in 2019. There are a number of international conferences taking place in Vietnam this year. Specifically, the conference of 100 years of Chu Quoc Ngu in Vietnam held in Danang in late 2019 aimed at elucidating the role of Hoi An and Latinised scripts in central Vietnam during the 16th and 17th centuries (Roland, 2019, pp. 33-39; Morgado, 2019, pp. 77-99). All authors provided objective evidence and analysis to attest that Hoi An is where the Latinised language modern Vietnamese language created. They also assumed that Hoi An local people made a considerable contribution to a new diffusion of Western culture to their country.

Moreover, Hoi An and the influence of Jesuit Christianity in this region have got scholarly attention internationally. At first, Li Tana conveyed her excellent discovery about Cochinchina under Nguyen rule on *Nguyen Cochinchina, Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Tana, 1998). Despite the political turbulence of

Vietnamese history, the book provides readers with a bountiful source regarding the multi-faceted issues of Dang Trong and Hoi An in an international maritime route for Western merchants. This work contributes to raising awareness of undiscovered parts in the pre-modern history of Vietnam. The second and the fifth chapters of this book are pivotal in exemplifying the role of Vietnamese Christianity and their spiritual life in the early history of Cochinchina. Meanwhile, Charles Wheeler revealed some reliable evidence in the dissertation entitled *Cross-Cultural Trade and Trans-Regional Networks in the Port of Hoi An: Maritime Vietnam in the Early Modern Era*. This thesis puts stress on the role of Hoi An - an international commercial centre in Southeast Asia from the 17th century to the late 19th century. Also, the author refers to Hoi An society in the third chapter, yet without mentioning the role of missionaries and local Christians (Wheeler, 2001, pp. 131-159). Kawamoto Kuniye (1993, pp. 159-170). assumes that Japanese traders forged commercial relations with Nguyen Lords and Cochinchina. Thereby, the first Japanese Christian traders became the pioneer in this relationship, referred to in “The international outlook of the Quang Nam (Nguyen) regime as revealed in Gaiban Tsuusho,” as the Ancient Town of Hoi An.

Apart from that, the previous work of Jacques (2002) studies the influence of Latinised scripts and Portuguese missionaries’ role in Vietnamese culture. He states that Pina was a pioneer in creating the national Vietnamese language, and his contribution helped local people speak a much more convenient language compared to their ancient script, which is heavily influenced by Chinese. The role of Pina and then Pigneau de Behaine triggered a considerable renovation in modern Vietnamese culture (Jacques, 2002). Recently, Nguyen Thi Vinh Linh and Nguyen Van Sang published an article entitled *The Portuguese Influence*

in Hoi An (Vietnam) in Comparison with Malacca (Malaysia) and Ayutthaya (Thailand) during the 16th and the 17th Century in the *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. This paper puts stress on the role of the Portuguese in the development of the economy and religions in some key cities in Southeast Asia. Linh and Sang (2020) reveals that Portuguese people directly intervened into Christian diffusion in Hoi An and helped this religion be widely spread in other regions of Dang Trong. Thanks to the role of the Portuguese, the first Christian community was shortly established and developed in Hoi An in the 16th and 17th centuries (Linh & Sang, 2020). However, this paper does not generally focus on the establishment of a Christian congregation and its cultural effects in Hoi An but pays attention to other aspects of Christianity in Hoi An.

Generally, there is a growing interest in researching the role of Christianity in Vietnam in the 16th and 17th century but its remains a dearth of deep academic work to elucidate all aspects of Christianity in Hoi An town which is deemed to the most hustling and bustling commerical town of Cochinchina. It is argued how the Christian community was established in Hoi An? How did Christians practice their religion? Are they avant-gardes of Viet-West acculturation in Vietnamese history? Thus, this research paper primarily relies on various primary and secondary sources of materials in order to answer those research questions and claim the role of Jesuit Christianity in Hoi An town.

Materials and Methods

Primary sources

Source materials play a vital role in finding reliable evidence of history. The sporadic handwriting of missionaries, including Pina, Buzomi, Borri, Rhodes, Louis, Fontes from 1533 to the late 17th century, contributed

to being critical sources for this topic. More specifically, Cristoforo Borri on Cochinchina is the earliest writing about Vietnam and Asian history. He voyaged to Cochinchina in 1618 and promulgated the doctrine of Christianity with Francisco de Pina and Francesco Buzomi (Chinh, 2008, p. 26). He resided in Hoi An from 1618 to 1622. After his long journey, he released *Relatione della nuova missione delli P.P. della Compagnia di Gesù al Regno della Cocinchina* [Report of the New Mission of the P.P. of the Society of Jesus to the Kingdom of Cochinchina]. His book consists of two chapters. The first chapter takes a broad view of Tonkin and Cochinchina. The other chapter puts stress on the spiritual life of the Cochinchina people (Christoforo, 1631). This book plays a critical role in objectively clarifying the fact of religions in Cochinchina and the involvement of Christianity in this country. Besides, *Lettere annue del Giappone, China, Goa, et Ethiopia. Scritte. Al M.R.P. generale della Compagnia di Giesù. Da Padri dell'istessa Compagnia ne gli anni 1615. 1616. 1617. 1618. 1619.* [Annual Letters of Japan, China, Goa, and Ethiopia. Written. At the M.R.P. General of the Company of Jesus. From the Fathers of the Same Company in the Years 1615. 1616. 1617. 1618. 1619] provided a piece of key evidence to clarify the first period of missionaries in Cochinchina and Hoi An (Muzio, Lorenzo, & Jesuits, 1621).

Besides, Alexandre de Rhodes released *Divers Voyages et missions* [Voyages and Missionary]. This book has just been translated into the Vietnamese language for reference. Rhodes narrated his arduous voyage to Asia to bring Good News (*Tin Mừng*) and baptise indigenous people. In the second chapter of his autobiography, he mentioned prohibitive edicts of the Kings of Cochinchina and his illegal intervention of demarcation for his mission. The work was completed in 1651, and Rhodes received some money from the Holy Ministry, transferring the

original copy to a Chinese assistant. This person brought the copy from Macao to Italy for printing in 1652. These trustworthy sources helped the author enact an indication of the Cochinchina people's spiritual life (Rhodes, 2021).

Research methods

This research paper employs the theory of Acculturation in dealing with all research questions of the topic. Redfield, Linton & Herskovits (1936) argue that Acculturation is the process of cultural change that occurs when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into prolonged, continuous, first-hand contact with each other. Meanwhile, Lesser supposed that "acculturation may be taken to refer to the ways in which some cultural aspect is taken into a culture and adjusted and fitted to it. This implies some relative cultural equality between the giving and receiving cultures. Then, he buttressed this argument that "In acculturation, the cultural groups involved are in an essentially reciprocal relationship. Both give and take (Melville, 1938, p. 7)." This theory is beneficial to examine the influences of Christianity in Hoi An and a corollary after the clash between foreign culture and local culture.

This research paper mainly applies a qualitative method to analysing the development process of Christian culture and its favourable influences in Hoi An and Cochinchina. Accordingly, the author applied the narrative research approach of the qualitative method while collecting existing data in texts, messages, diaries of missionaries throughout their voyage to Dang Trong to closely examine some prominent contributions to the rise of Christianity in Hoi An town. Personal diaries of foreign friars including Borri, Buzomi, Rhodes, made a significant contribution to clarifying the cultural exchange between an foreign and local culture Hoi An. This source provided us with trustworthy stories

of Cochinchinese's life and culture. Based on primary sources, all explanations in this paper become reliable to verify that Hoi An is a town where Christian culture significantly intervenes in the material and spiritual life of indigenous people.

Besides, this article also employs the method of historical criticism, which seeks an accurate understanding of historical events by recanting all dogmatic opinions and re-perceiving history via new historical evidence. In this case study, it helps investigate the considerable inspiration of Christianity in Hoi An. Previously, historians gave a few biased viewpoints to assess the role of this religion in Cochinchina and Hoi An. Hung (1992) in *Một số vấn đề lịch sử thiên chúa giáo ở Việt Nam*, [*Some Historical Issues of Vietnamese Catholicism*] argued that “The expansion of Christianity may be an unexpected mumps in Vietnam in a comparison of the human body.” Văn Thân, a Vietnamese historian, outrightly criticised that “Call God in praying; it is a blunder. They (missionaries) were teaching without respecting Kings and mandarins. It is despising (Toan, 2008).” These prejudiced opinion intentionally underestimated various positive facets of Christianity in Vietnam and attribute it to an invasive tool. As a result, historical criticism is an optimal technique to denounce those opinions and recognise the role of Christianity for Hoi An town as well as its contribution to Vietnamese culture.

Results and Discussion

Christianity and the development of first Christian groups and congregations

The missionary of Cochinchina originated in the middle of the 16th century and circa the 1550s. According to historical evidence, a European named Duarte Coelho pinned a Holy Cross in Cham island. He probed

and discovered this land for missionaries. Father Georges de la Motte and Luis de Fonseca lingered in Quang Nam, but they gained an infertile outcome (Hong, 1959, p. 39). Then, Auguätinö Rafael Madre de Dios was the following person who inspired the soul of God to locals, and thus, he christianised a woman and her daughter, whose name respectively Gioanna and Phanxica in Thanh Chiem Palace (Huon, 1965, p. 34). It is indicated that Western missionaries could benefit from the ideal port city like Hoi An because this seaport gathered numerous multi-Western traders coming from Spanish, France, England, and Dutch. These people had an identical belief in Gods, so missionaries were effortless to approach indigenous people and patronise their merchants in spiritual life.

The initial stage of the first Vietnamese Christians is during the period of 1615-1620, and it is generally agreed that the starting point of Christianity in Cochinchina was 1615. Particularly, in 1614, Emperor Daifusanna initiated harsh persecution toward Japanese Christians and expelled all missionaries so that they had to abscond in Macau, and then some missionaries came to Faifo (Hoi An), Cochinchina. Danang is considered the first place of Christianisation, and Hoi An is considered the newest centre of Christianity diffusion in Cochinchina society. Japanese Christians became fundamental traders and triggered a cultural influence in local values. Alexandre De Rhodes depicted this event in his diary:

“There are numerous Japanese Christians evacuating in Hoi An to shun interdicts of Emperor Daifusanna. They flocked to move during vegan seasons, confessed to Japanese-speaking Fathers, and board simple boats. They vindicated that they went aboard for trade (Muzio, Lorenzo, & Jesuits, 1621, pp. 4-5; Rhodes, 2021, p. 99).”

Also, it is described in *the History of Japanese Christians* that the trade relations between Japanese traders and Cochinchina was improving, thanks to the role of Japanese traders. They mainly resided in Touron (Danang) and Faifo (Hoi An), so a Jesuit missionary named Diego Carvalho and Francesco Buzomi have been anchoring there and taking care of Japanese Christians since January 1615 (Jennes, 2008, pp. 235-236). Japanese people are the first foreigners going hand in hand with Western missionaries to promulgate new beliefs to local people in Hoi An. Borri depicted the great desire of Japanese Christians in Hoi An in his writing:

“Many co-religionists came to Cochinchina due to religious rituals and spiritual rewarding because Japanese Christians had to abscond from the interdict of Japanese Emperor. Thus they could not practice their belief and confess in usual. Because of the lack of official and public missionaries, while they found out that there were some Japanese-speaking friars and two Japanese co-religionists in Hoi An, they decided to voyage to Cochinchina annually and lingered there within three months for merchants. They went to church every day, liked eye witnessing rituals on weekends as well as main rituals of their religion for pious Christians. They would rather die than return to the secular life. They emulated for local Christians to show their great reverence and loving for God (Christoforo, 1631, p. 11).”

According to some Vietnamese historians, many Vietnamese Christians were baptised by the Spanish prior to the replacement of Franciscans. In a record of Borri, Buzomi, Carvalho, and Dias came to Danang in 1615. On Easter in 1615, they baptised 10 Vietnamese laities in

chapels erected to protect Japanese Christians and Western merchants in Hoi An port (Hong, 1959, p. 60; Rhodes, 2021, p. 81). The tolerance of local mandarin helped expand the regions of Christianity to Quy Nhon and Quang Nam (Diocesan History Compiling Board, 2017, p. 44). However, missionaries faced hardship because of the Lord's restriction and the commoners' opposition in the first three years of religious activities. Do Quang Chinh (2006, p. 60) unveils that a main headquarter (Residentia) in Hoi An was unestablishable, even the locals created a wave of outcry and burned a chapel of missionaries off in the Han estuary in 1617. According to *Missione di Cocincina*, Hoi An was a congregation that was under the patronage of Buzomi. In another report of year 1620, Hoi An was mentioned as one of the leading missionary bases in Cochinchina by Priest João Rodrigues Girão (Muzio, Lorenzo, & Jesuits, 1621, pp. 392-401). Buzomi assumed that Hoi An people were very open-minded in receiving a new belief (Hong, 1959, p. 58). This was a benefit for missionaries in Cochinchina, while Father Borri appreciated Vietnamese's etiquette:

“People in many countries in East Asia disdained Westerners and supposed that we are ruthless. However, people in Cochinchina flocked to me, conversed with me, and treated me for a meal. In general, they behaved very politely, informally. It originated from a well-civilised culture (Christoforo, 1631, p. 87).”

Despite the initial opposition, Lord Nguyen Phuc Nguyen started to show his decorum in welcoming the Japanese diaspora and maintaining their faith and free trade in Hoi An. More pragmatically, Nguyen Lords assumed that they could benefit from the commercial advantages of foreign traders. Thus, the King applied an easy-going policy for Christians in the first period of missionaries. Evidently, Lord ordered

to hang a metal board in Hoi An, stating that he made rooms for Portuguese live and act in freedom in Hoi An. Anyone who intended to make trouble with them would be rigorously punished (Thong, 2020, p. 11). By virtue of this policy, local Christians in Hoi An built the first church in Han estuary and Hoi An- Thanh Chiem. Consequently, there were three congregations in Hoi An, joined by Japanese, Chinese, and Vietnamese people. In 1675, Father Conrtalin built a new church in Hoi An (Hong, 1959):

“Louis Chevreuil, Lambret la Motte, Luy Laneun were the first French missionaries that came to Hoi An. At the end of the 18th century, the number of Christians in Hoi An reduced significantly due to the civil war and the prohibitive decree of Nguyễn lords. Additionally, from 1615 to 1634, Father Buzomi courageously and persistently propagated “Good news” (Tin mung). At least, there were 12,000 Christians in the centre at that time. Then, both Spanish and French Fathers continued to boost their enlightenment evolution in Cochinchina (Brief history of Vietnam’s congregations, n.d.).”

The interdicts and oppositions could not hamper the development of Christianity in Hoi An town in the 17th century. Father Hainques baptised 2440 laities, Ignace Baudet and Marquez baptised 3920 laities from 1669 to 1670 in Hoi An (Launay, 1924a, p. 53). It is implied that the development of Christianity in Hoi An reached its peak in the 17th century, because Franciscan missionaries got access in this region and caused an unexpected confusion in religious rituals as well as the religious restrictions of successive Nguyen Lords in Cochinchina.

Generally, the number of local Christians in Hoi An continuously increased in the 16th and 17th centuries. First, it is recognisable that

Japanese Christian traders played a key role in promoting the new religion to local people in Hoi An. Next, the appearance of Western missionaries, Borri, Alexandre Rhodes, and new Spanish and Portuguese missionaries contributed to evangelising a vast number of laypeople in Hoi An, and these new Christians contributed to spreading new beliefs in Hoi An and other regions of Cochinchina. Hoi An and Nuoc Man (Quy Nhon) were the first centre of Christianity in Cochinchina and Christianity also indirectly consolidated different groups of the diaspora to reclaim undiscovered territories of Cochinchina from the 17th to the 19th century. Unfortunately, the alteration of the international maritime route caused Hoi An's decline in its prosperity and the temporary impairment of the Christianity centre in Cochinchina. John White, an American naval lieutenant, illustrated in 1823 that Hoi An became a desolate place, due to the devastation of the Civil war between Nguyen lords and Tay Son rebellion. Hoi An was known as the gathering place for Portuguese traders and Japanese, yet it became "fallen into poverty and decay, and seldom or never visited but by the craft of the country" and only few simple boats of Tonkin traders anchored there (White, 1823, p. 78). Although Hoi An lost its role in trade network, it is needed to recognise as one of the first place of ecclesiastical network with Malacca (Malaysia) and Ayutthaya (Thailand). As for Cochinchina, Christianity in Hoi An fundamentally set a social framework for the new Vietnamese Christians community. This historical proof states that the origin of Vietnamese Christians was not only the Tonkin diaspora but also the local Christians.

Christianity and the creation of the Latinised script

Christianity is a religious production of Western culture, and this is the first time, Vietnamese people could approach this religion in their country through the role of missionaries in the 17th century.

First-hand contact was established between local people and foreign friars, so Hoi An people are considered the first Christians who fully absorbed new beliefs in their spiritual life. However, this process is two-sided because Western missionaries had an opportunity to have a greater understanding of Vietnamese customs and culture by learning the local language. These first missionaries contributed to latinising the Nom language of Vietnamese people to form a new script system of this language. Several Vietnamese historians overhauled the role of Latinised writings due to a void in researching the evolution of national language. It is argued that Hoi An or Nuoc Man (Quy Nhon) is the provenance of the national language. While this issue has been rising among pundits, some researchers assume that Nuoc Man (Residentia di Pulocambi) was the origin of the national Vietnamese language because the book entitled “Cochinchina” in 1621 published in 1631. However, Chinh cited important evidence that Jesuits missionaries including Pedro Marques, Joseph, Paulus Saito, Francisco de Pina compiled a book written in the local language *Catechism* in an attempt to instill philosophies of Gods in Hoi An in 1620 (Chinh, 2008, p. 27). Chinh presumed that this book had not been released, and the authors handwrote it to distribute it to local Christians. Thanks to this dedication, local Christians in Hoi An were probably the first to understand and absorb new doctrinal instructions and rituals of Christianity. In a letter written on December 1621, Gaspar Luis stated that the *Catechism* in Cochinchina brought great advantages for both children and the elder. This also helped Japanese believers in persuading their [Vietnamese] wives who had previously been married without permission [in religion] (Luis, 1931, pp. 127-128). Christians usually brought necklaces to differentiate between Christians and non-Christian persons. They carried these belongings during the time of reading doctrine (Can, 2008, p. 42).

Based on archival letters in Do Quang Chinh's collection and the diary of Alexandre Rhodes, Father Francois de Pina is the promulgator of the modern Vietnamese language. While Father Fernandez and Buzomi found it very difficult to understand the Vietnamese language Father Pina effortlessly understood all things the locals said (Rhodes, 2021, p. 85). Francesco de Pina came to Hoi An in 1627, although he moved to Nuoc Man (Quy Nhon), he still returned to Hoi An to baptise local people. Pina quickly adopted the local lifestyle and understood dialect by virtue of his perseverance in learning the local language (Jacques, 2002, p. 27). He was devoted to learning Nom script and approached laities quickly. In 1624, Alexandre de Rhodes and Gaspar Louis, Antonio de Fontes came to Thanh Chiem, and Rhodes and Fontes learned the Vietnamese language under the training of Pina. Thanh Chiem palace, which was located 10 kilometres away from Hoi An, chose to teach vernacular for his co-religionists from Portuguese, Spain, and Italy because Hoi An contained various ethnic groups as a diversity of languages and cultures. Roland Jacques also stated that there was the handwriting of Pina archived in the Ajuda Library in Madrid (Spain) referred to Kacham (Thanh Chiem), which he stated it was an ideal place to learn the Vietnamese language (Jacques, 2002, pp. 24-25). Thus it is inferred that Thanh Chiem became one of the birthplaces of the modern Vietnamese language.

To emulate Father Pina, other missionaries were fully cognisant of the local language's importance and endeavoured to learn the local language. According to Rhodes, he met an intelligent son, and this boy helped him approach Nom language and understand the local culture. Rhodes supposed that God offered him a four-month phase to catch the dialect partially.

“The person who helped me a lot was a boy from this country. In three weeks, he taught me the different accents of the language and reading. The boy did not understand my language, and I did not know his voice, but he had the intelligence to know what I meant. Furthermore, he learned our letters (i.e., the European one) for three weeks, writing and learning another altar (in Latin). I was amazed at the boy’s intelligence and solid memory. Since then, he has worked as a teacher to help the fathers. (...), he loved me so much that he wanted to take my name for him, that is, RAPHAËL RHODES (Rhodes, 2021, p. 86)”

Previously, numerous scholars claim that Rhodes was the vanguard to create the modern Vietnamese language, because he published the Viet-Portuguese-Latin dictionary in 1624. However, the writings of Rhodes in his diary proved that Father Francesco de Pina was a creator of the early-modern Vietnamese language. Latinised scripts helped missionaries easily convey their lessons to laities and convince them to be christianised. According to Roland Jacques, Portuguese intelligentsia standardised their national language. The achievement of Duarte Nunes de Leao and his work “Orthographia de lingua portugesa,” which was released in 1576, set a firm foundation for Pina and other linguists. The pronunciation richness of the Portuguese language, especially with its vowels, required unprecedented solutions, leaving much experience for its successors in finding compatible symbols to record. Portuguese is considered the only language which has several similarities to the early Vietnamese language (Jacques, 2002, pp. 56-59). It is stated that Pina made a bridge for Western culture to approach Vietnamese people, and the first people who adapted to this language were local missionaries.

Latinised Vietnamese script became a verbal transport between Western Fathers and local promulgators to widely baptise and propagate the new faith. Although the development of Latinised language was still limited in the 17th century, the French missionaries in the 18th century made an effort to peruse this script and pervade it in Vietnamese society.

Christianity and new liturgical worshipping

Cochinchina was supposed that it was under the heavy influence of Chinese culture and Tonkin culture. Rhodes commented that the religion of Cochinese was analogous to Chinese religions. They were very pious and conformed to the fundamentals of Confucianism. Tonkin and Cochinchina mutually shared their values in constitutions and local customs. Both countries had intelligentsia, and this group benefited from Emperor's mandarin-ranking (Rhodes, 2021, p. 76). Thereby, the emergence of Christianity led the Cochinese to a new faith that partially contradicted their previous faith. However, new local Christians showed their enthusiasm for this religion, which was beyond the expectation of Western missionaries. It is understandable that Vietnamese people are very open-minded to recognise new beliefs. Historically, Mahayana Buddhism and Confucianism were widely diffused under a ten-century Chinese ruling. When the Vietnamese recovered their independence, all Emperors made an attempt to maintain a three-religion harmonisation, consisting of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, while all villages in Vietnam still protected traditional Vietnamese belief. Ngo, Dinh, Early Le, Ly, and Tran dynasties dignified Buddhism and considered it as the nucleus of harmonisation, while Later Le started appreciating the role of Confucianism to build a solid monarchy and reorganise the state. However, obviously, there were no religious conflicts in Vietnamese history (Xuan, 2012, pp. 2-65). The approach of Christianity resulted in

a new acculturation process in local spiritual life in the 17th century. Arends-Toth and Vande Vijver generalised three periods of the Acculturation Process. In the first phase, acculturation conditions contain five characteristics. Specifically, social groups maintain their own original culture and all relations in inter-group. Then, this group is likely to adopt a new culture and make it appropriate to their culture while preserving heritage culture. Finally, all people accepted new cultural traits and new skills, behaviours, and performances, which have both traditional culture and new-perceived culture (Arends-Tóth, Vijver, & Poortinga, 2006, p. 7). In this case study, Hoi An people are likely to have their own initial beliefs prior to being evangelised by foreign friars. There is strong evidence that Hoi An people got ready to receive the Baptism and became Christians, and those groups established first congregations and practised the religion from the past to the present while they continuously maintained their belief in God and combined this belief with traditional ancestor worshipping of the Vietnamese. Despite being a foreign culture, Vietnamese people in Hoi An easily absorbed new doctrines of Christianity under the guidance of foreign friars, and Hoi An people became the first Christians in Cochinchina.

Every Christians in Cochinchina eyewitnessed the new ritual of Baptism and its impact on their spiritual life due to the survival of God as a supernatural force. In one article, Schuhammer (1951) exemplifies the role of rhythms in their effort:

“Vietnamese people have a learn-and-sing habit, so poems and songs appeared quickly. Sings and plays were made and mostly on Christmas occasions. In those days, many Christians and pagans flocked to chapels. In the South, bishops did it in Hoi An in 1647 (Schuhammer, 1951).”

Cochinchinese Christians were highly pious, because they ultimately gave their full credence to the patronage of God. Rhodes mentioned in his diary the whole-hearted Christians paying tribute to God during his voyage in Cochinchina in the 1620s.

“Local Christians regard Friars as an impersonation of God and showed their respectful conformity to all errands. They always sobbed every time we raised Holy Cross. They never forget the occasions of rituals, albeit they lived very far from the chapel. Every fifteen days, they went to church for confession and religious participation. They came in the previous day and returned home the following day, subsequent to all rites, very late. They lingered in the church from twilight to nightfall. They usually kneeled and were very humble. I could not keep my tears when seeing them (Rhodes, 2021, p. 113).”

The miracle of Christianity seduced a vast number of local people in Hoi An. This writing of Rhodes reveals that this religion widely pervaded in the busiest town of Cochinchina. In the context of the new political situation, Christianity contributed to stimulating the spiritual life of indigenous people in the new land. Rhodes also appreciated the zealotness of local people to Gods and missionaries. He narrates that Christians in Hoi An never left their altar and always wore holy-cross bracelets and necklaces (Rhodes, 2021, p. 113). Besides, Huon (1965) describes some characteristics of Baptism and regular rituals of Christians in a parish. Every Sunday, Christians go to church for their rituals. There are three times a day for practitioners: morning, afternoon, and evening. When the ceremonial time starts, a friar will read a letter in the Latinised language. He read the Catholic calendar for Christians, so that they knew

meatless and vegan days. Reading Bibles were done at churches on weekdays: Soul prayer every Monday evening, Holy Cross prayer every Friday morning, and Mother Mary every Saturday morning. All Christians strictly adhered to the Friars' regulations (Huon, 1965, p. 170). Cochinchina Christians were rumoured to sing chants during their rituals (Friars, 1832, p. 70). This evidence attests that the ceremonials of Christians were well-organised, regardless of the situation of a brutal war. The role of friars and churches contributed to appeasing the anxiety of war, poverty, and harsh conditions in Christians' deep-rooted conscience.

It is indicated that the Christian culture easily penetrated the Cochinchinese's awareness. How did they learn it? In an attempt to convey the doctrine of the Bible to local people, missionaries tried to adopt the Nom language and created short rhymes, verses, and songs for local children. Additionally, it is undeniable that local friars and Christian intellectuals partook in evangelisation and spreading the soul of Christianity to local laypeople and Christians. Rhodes trained ten local friars and narrated that these people came to the church, along with Hoi An's Christians. They all held white candles, prostrated in front of God's altar, and proclaimed an oath for church. They would not spouse with anyone and replace foreign missionaries in evangelisation in their country (Rhodes, 2021, p. 166). Besides, another case of João Kettâm (João Vuang) exemplified the strong influence of Christianity in Hoi An. He accompanied Father Manuel Fernandez to win people's hearts to God, and wrote various writings regarding biographies of Father Constantini le Grand, Barlaam, and Josaphat. 15 Nom books released to narrate the legend of St. Inhatio de Loyola, Francis Xavier, Dominico, and Catherine. These works enchanted various mandarins and commoners at that time (Launay, 1924b, pp. 510-520; Manuel, 1700, pp. 187-218). Before his

death, he resided in Cacham (Thanh Chiem), and various Christians requested him to baptise and teach their children. They admired his leniency and virtue (Manuel, 1700, pp. 187-188). It implied that indigenous Christians contributed to spreading the positive values of Catholicism and encouraged Cochinchinese hearts and minds to go forward with God.

Moreover, Christians in Hoi An exhibited their enthusiasm to Catholic festivals. Christmas is a key occasion when they congregated in their chapels to join Father's lessons and special rituals. Manuel Ferreira, a Jesuit missionary, described a Christmas festival in Hoi An in 1674:

“From all over the province, a vast number of Christians flocked to watch the manger so that the house could not accommodate all of them. Dusk to dawn, I sat listening to the co-religionist's confession, but only a tenth of the parishioners had enough time to shrive. Those who linger were able to confess after the ceremony. To make a fun ceremony, I gave the parishioners a quiz with a prize for whoever could find the answer. This is the first time in this province, so no one has found the answer. The puzzle was a picture showing a character wearing a two-colour shirt: black and white, holding the sun in one hand and the moon in the other, as if he were controlling day and night. In light of being a child of time and his speed, he has a pair of wings. Twelve animals are designating the names of 12 hours in a day surrounding him, according to the custom of the Northerners (time gradually: tiger, time: dragon...). Underneath the picture is written vernacular. That word includes the meaning of the puzzle. In the puzzle,

there are several verses that I have composed, alluding to different days of the week: 6 days during which God created the world and the 7th day, the day God rested; two days have been extended in this world, the first by the invocation of Joshua and the second by the invocation of Saint Francis Xavier; The most terrible day in the world is judgment day and the last day is Christmas Eve. Then a few verses about the most important days for the church and other days sanctified by the Lord's redemption and the miracle of faith. I teach these issues to the laity and advise them to take them for joy and doctrine. And here comes the end of Christmas (Friars, 1832, p. 85)

There is no denying that local congregations were shortly established in Hoi An and were in solidarity with most Christians in Hoi An. Source materials unveil that seafarers in Hoi An always paid their tribute to Mother Mary in all their voyages. A report in 1619 cited that Hoi An Christians prayed for Mother Mary and called her “Our Lady of Good Voyage.”

“Co-religionists in Hoi An highly respected the picture of Mother Mary blessed for a good voyage. She was considered a patron saint. Francisco Vieira took care of this diocese, and the picture was sent from Macau. All of local Christians put this picture on their altar with their whole-hearted soul of reverence (Thong, 2020).”

According to Thong (2020), this custom originated from marine rituals of Portugal and Spain, yet this rite was probably congruous with Vietnamese seafarers, because they got accustomed to Vietnamese maritime culture. For centuries, Vietnamese fishers worshipped ancestors for a safe voyage and fruitful outcome when returning. Thus,

Christian seafarers quickly adapted to the new faith, and they believed in the existence of Mother Mary that patronised and protected them from disasters and unexpected contretemps in their voyage.

Conclusion

To sum up, this paper has argued that Hoi An was a multi-cultural centre of Cochinchina in the 17th century. The appearance of foreigners, including traders and missionaries contributing to diversifying the local culture of Hoi An and primarily, the religious asylum of Japanese Christians and Jesuit missionaries was the starting point to link Hoi An to missionaries of Christianity. The paper fundamentally relied on the valuable source of missionaries' records in order to draw a conclusion to Christianity's role in Hoi An in the 17th century.

First, Jesuit missionaries pushed a head to local people in recognising a new belief and appealing to laypeople's heart. The booming of the population of Hoi An Christians implied that Christianity increased its importance in claiming the position of a new belief in spiritual life of the Vietnamese. Meanwhile, Christianity's tolerance satisfied the open-minded thoughts of the Vietnamese to quickly apply God's doctrines to local culture and enhance the solidarity of the local in Hoi An notwithstanding the rigorous interdicts of Nguyen Lords.

Besides, this paper shows that Hoi An is one of the first sites of Cochinchina where approach Western culture and early cultural exchange between West and East in Vietnamese history. Christianity and Jesuit missionaries played an integral role in creating new scripts of the Vietnamese language and the contribution of Pina as the first father is irrefutable. Pina released the first Catechism in 1620 in Hoi An and then Hoi An- Thanh Chiem base became the creative place of Latinised

language, because Pina directly tutored other missionaries with dialect, and those friars became successors that continuously and deeply spread Christianity by new language scripts to laypeople. It led to the numeral development of local friars and a quick increase of local Christians. Also, Christianity of first comers harmoniously combined with indigenous knowledge to set a healthy position in Hoi An society. All rituals of Christianity cultivated the spiritual life of local people and educated their behaviours based on their staunch souls to God. Jesuit missionaries did not impose local people to subrogate their ancestors while paying tribute to God and ancestry. It is thus undeniable that Christianity played a role in enhancing the solidarity of various groups in Dang Trong in its primitive history.

Last but not least, it is crucial that researching Christianity in Dang Trong from the 16th to the 18th centuries needs approaching different aspects of this religion's contribution and recognising the role of Christianity in the Vietnamese's southern reclamation. Despite experiencing a hard time due to the interdicts of Nguyen lords, Christianity continuously developed and expanded congregations in other regions of Dang Trong. Thus, further researches, which strictly depend on source materials of missionaries are needed in order to complete a history of Christianity in spiritual life of the Vietnamese people in this period.

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