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The Presence of Dominican Missionaries in Vietnam from the 16th to the 18th Centuries

Prisotnost dominikanskih misijonarjev v Vietnamu med 16. in 18. stoletjem

Abstract: The article focuses on research to clarify the missionary activities of Dominican missionaries in Vietnam, from the first contact period (1550–1628) to the period of return to Vietnam and the gradual establishment of their position in the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin (1676–1796). During that process, the Dominican Order also achieved many remarkable results in training indigenous missionaries and conquering the faith of the Vietnamese, contributing with other missionary forces to introduce and develop Christianity in Vietnamese society during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. The research on this issue was carried out based on exploiting original materials recorded by Dominican missionaries and other missionary forces and currently archived at the Congregation for the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. In addition, the academic achievements of Vietnamese and international scholars directly or indirectly related to the article's content also become one of two essential reference sources. The article's author combines two main research methods of Historical Science (historical and logical) with other research methods such as analysis, synthesis, statistics, comparison, etc. The article will significantly contribute to the study of the history of the introduction and development of Christianity in Vietnam, as well as the role of the Dominican Order in this process during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries.

Keywords: Dominican Order, Vietnam, Eastern Tonkin, missionary, diocese

Povzetek: Prispevek se posveča raziskavi, ki razjasnjuje misijonsko delovanje dominikanskih misijonarjev v Vietnamu – od obdobja prvih stikov (1550–1628) do obdobja vrnitve v Vietnam in postopnega utrjevanja njihovega položaja v škofiji Vzhodni Tonkin (1676–1796). V tem procesu je dominikanski red dosegel tudi številne izjemne rezultate pri usposabljanju domačih misijonarjev in spreobračanju Vietnamcev, s čimer je skupaj z drugimi misijonarskimi močmi prispeval k uvedbi in razvoju krščanstva v vietnamski družbi od 16. do 18. stoletja. Raziskava je bila izvedena na podlagi izvirnih besedil, ki so jih napisali dominikanski in drugi misijonarji in jih trenutno hrani Kongregacija za širjenje vere. Še

eden od bistvenih referenčnih virov so akademski dosežki vietnamskih in mednarodnih znanstvenikov, ki so neposredno ali posredno povezani z vsebino prispevka. Avtor dve glavni raziskovalni metodi zgodovinske znanosti (zgodovinsko in logično) povezuje z drugimi raziskovalnimi metodami, kot so analiza, sinteza, statistika, primerjava itd. Prispevek bo pomembno prispeval k študiju zgodovine uvajanja in razvoja krščanstva v Vietnamu ter vloge dominikanskega reda v tem procesu v 16., 17. in 18. stoletju.

Ključne besede: dominikanski red, Vietnam, Vzhodni Tonkin, misijonar, škofija

1. Introduction

Since the 16th century, the maritime route through the Cape of Good Hope, connecting Europe with the Far East, has been established.¹ This was also the time that marked the beginning of the breakout in commercial and missionary activities of Western countries in this region. Among them, Portugal and Spain are the two pioneer countries. For the Portuguese, along with the process of establishing commercial firms over a large geographical area from South Asia to Northeast Asia, to expand and strengthen their influence through conquering the faith of the people of Asian countries, they successively established dioceses in Goa (1534) (Neill 2004, 117; Portugal Conselho Ultramarino 1867, 455), Malacca (1558) (Portugal Conselho Ultramarino 1867, 455; Associação Marítima e Colonial 1843, 314) and Macao (1576) (De Moidrey 1914, 8). On the Spanish side, they approached the Philippines by force to compete with Portugal's commercial and missionary privileges in the Far East and established the Diocese of Manila in 1579 (Villarrol 2005, 78; Teixeira 2004, 27). Thus, by the 16th century, missionary centers had emerged in various locations in the Far East. This was where missionaries from different religious orders (Dominican Order, Franciscan Order, The Society of Jesus) frequented and operated under the patronage of two countries, Portugal and Spain.

Meanwhile, in Vietnam, the situation of dismemberment and division resulting from the power struggle between the Mac family in Thang Long (Northern Dynasty) and the Le family in Thanh Hoa (Southern Dynasty) in the 16th century (Chapuis 1995, 113–119; Taylor 2013, 224–257), as well as the Trinh-Nguyen conflict during the 17th and 18th centuries (Anh Thuan 2022, 22–37), led these monarchies to repeatedly call for or clearly express their desire to implicate Western missionaries to come and carry on missionary work (Du Caillaud 1915, 17–18; 20–21, 30; 36–38; Bernard 1935, 397–399). Because they believed that the presence of missionaries in the area they governed was the most reliable guarantee

¹ This research was written as a result of the ministerial-level research project: “Quá trình du nhập văn hoá phương Tây vào Việt Nam và Nhật Bản thế kỷ XVI–XVIII [The process of introducing Western culture into Vietnam and Japan in the 16th–18th centuries]” (research project number: B2024.DNA.15), carried out from funding sources issued by Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo Việt Nam [The Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam].

for Western merchant ships to visit regularly (Hồng 1959, 22) and trade goods, especially weapons, thereby helping them to strengthen their economic and military power in confrontations with political opponents. This created an extremely favorable premise for missionaries from different religious orders of Christianity, including the Dominican order, to be present in Vietnam and spread Christianity among the Vietnamese in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries.

2. Dominican Order and Vietnam: Contacts from the Late 16th Century to the Early 17th Century

Since the 16th century, along with the process of promoting trade and the expansion of Portugal and Spain in the Far East, dioceses receiving patronage from these two countries were established in Goa (1534), Malacca (1558), Macao (1576), and Manila (1579). That was the organizational premise for religious orders of Christianity, in general, and the Dominican order, in particular, preaching the Gospel in many countries in this region. Among them, Vietnam was no exception.

No.	Time	Quantity	Name of the Missionary	Patronage Country	Area
1	1550	01	Gaspar da Cruz	Portugal	Southern Vietnam
2	1586	02	Luis Fonséca		Central Vietnam
			Grégoire de la Motte		
3	1588	02	Juan Maldonat	Spain	Southern Vietnam
			Pedro de la Bastida		
			Alonso Jimenéz		Central Vietnam
4	1596	03	Diego Aduarte		
			Juan Bautista Deza		
5	1599	02	Juan Maldonado		Southern Vietnam
			Pedro de Bastida		
			Inigo de Santa Maria		Southern Vietnam
6	1603	03	Jerónimo de Belén		
			Alonso Collar		
7	1628	05	Bautista de Morales and four other missionaries		Southern Vietnam

Table 1: *Missionaries of the Dominican Order came to Vietnam during the period 1550–1628. (Phát Huần 1965, 44; Louvet 1885, 226; Hồng 1959, 39; Gispert 1928, 13; Bá Càn 2008, 27; Du Caillaud 1915, 169–170; 176; 191; 198–199; Aduarte 1963, 189–195; 211–219; 726–728; 732–737; Loureiro 2005, 193–222; Đức Sinh 1975, 90–98)*

From the statistical table, it can be seen that, during the 78 years (1550–728), missionaries of the Dominican Order went via different lands in the territory of present-day Vietnam seven times. Like that, on average, they come once every 11 years. However, it is worth mentioning that this does not happen regularly, frequently, or continuously. Even at times, it was interrupted for quite a long time. For example, if we count from the time Gaspar da Cruz² – the first missionary of the

² Gaspar da Cruz was born around 1520 and was a Portuguese missionary of the Dominican Order. In 1548, he set out for India to preach. In 1550, he set foot in the southern region of present-day Vietnam

Dominican Order, arrived in Can Cao (Ha Tien, in present-day Southern Vietnam) in 1550, it was 36 years later (1586) that the following two missionaries of this religious order, Luis Fonséca, and Grégoire de la Motte, were present in the Central region of Vietnam. The above situation continued in 1604–1627, when, for 23 years, no historical documents recorded the presence of missionaries of the Dominican Order in Vietnam. Meanwhile, with 18 missionaries of the Dominican Order who set foot in Vietnam during the period 1550–1628, this is not a very impressive number. 1628 is recorded as the year with the most missionaries of the Dominican Order coming to Vietnam, but this number was at most five people. The other times it ranged from two (1586, 1588, 1599) to three people (1596, 1603). There was even a time when only one missionary came to preach (1550).

Regarding the patronage country, in the period 1550–1586, three missionaries of the Dominican Order came to Vietnam, Gaspar da Cruz, Luis Fonséca, and Grégoire de la Motte, all originated from and were under the management of the Malacca diocese – a missionary center founded and sponsored by Portugal. However, from 1588 onwards, in the context of the declining position of the Portuguese in Southeast Asia (Đức Sinh 1975, 61), Portuguese Dominican missionaries were gradually replaced by Spanish Dominican missionaries sent by the Diocese of Manila.

Regarding the area of operation, at the end of the 16th century, Northern Vietnam was the area where missionaries of the Franciscan Order frequently visited to preach the Gospel (Du Caillaud 1915, 55; Hồng 1959, 33; Gispert 1928, 14–15; Bonifacy 1930, 8). On the contrary, the missionaries of the Dominican Order mainly operate in the Central and Southern regions of Vietnam nowadays. Specifically, during the period 1550–1628, missionaries of the Dominican Order passed through the Southern region five times and went to the Central region twice. If the Southern region of Vietnam nowadays has many opportunities to welcome missionaries of the Dominican Order, it was because the monarchical governments in Chenla [真臘: Cambodia] from the late 16th century to the early 17th century continuously contacted the Spanish and called on missionaries from the Philippines to come to this country to operate. They wanted to enlist the help of the Spanish to resolve internal conflicts and contradictions in this country, consolidate power, and fight against foreign aggression (Đức Sinh 1975, 90; 94). At that time, the fastest and most convenient way for missionaries to travel from Manila to Cambodia was to follow merchant ships of Spanish merchants or diplomatic corps of this country up the Cuu Long River (the name of the Mekong River flowing through the southern region of Vietnam). That has made the footsteps of the missionaries of this religious order many times leave their mark many times on the Southern region of Vietnam nowadays. Meanwhile, preaching the Gospel in Central Vietnam, an area that began to have a large Vietnamese population at the end of the 16th century, was also within the goals of missionaries of the Dominican Order. That explained their presence in this land in 1586 and 1596.

before arriving at Lampaccao – a small island in Guangzhou [廣州] Bay in 1556. He probably returned to Europe in 1565 and died in Setúbal in 1570 of the epidemic diseases (Russell Wood 1998, 92; Borao 2009, 2–3; Bá Cấn 2008, 26).

So, how did the activities of Dominican missionaries in different areas of Vietnam occur from the late 16th century to the early 17th century? During this period, the missionaries of the Dominican Order did not achieve any success in preaching the Gospel to the Vietnamese in present-day Southern Vietnam. Although, since the first half of the 17th century, Vietnamese have settled and lived in this area (Quang Ngoc 2017, 77–96), at that time, the goal of Dominican missionaries was to operate in the territory of present-day Cambodia at the call of the monarchical governments of this country. Therefore, they only passed through the southern region of Vietnam without stopping to preach there.

Meanwhile, during the contacts to evangelize the Vietnamese in Central Vietnam at the end of the 16th century, there were times when the Dominican missionaries established good relations with the Vietnamese authorities³. However, in the end, the work of “cultivating” the “seeds” of Christianity in Central Vietnam by this religious order missionaries still did not achieve positive results. This was because, at that time, the missionary activities of the Dominican missionaries were not well organized. The number of missionaries of this religious order sent to Vietnam by the dioceses of Goa, Malacca, or Manila during 1550–1628 was not too large. Missionary activity was also not maintained continuously. Besides, at that time, the Dominican missionaries did not put the goal of conquering the faith of the Vietnamese first. Still, they only focused on spreading the Gospel to the people of Cambodia. In addition, Christtopho Borri – a missionary of the Society of Jesus who operated in Vietnam from 1618 to 1621, also pointed to another reason. In the work *Relation de la nouvelle mission des pères de la compagnie de Jésus au royaume de la Cochinchine*, he said that from the end of the 16th century to the beginning of the 17th century, Dominican missionaries from the dioceses of Goa, Malacca or Manila came to Vietnam on the merchant ships or the ships of diplomatic delegations of Portuguese and Spanish as chaplains. Their primary purpose is to take care of the spiritual life (celebrating mass, conferring sacraments, etc.) for merchants or officers and soldiers of these two countries during their stay in Vietnam, usually about three to four months. Because the Dominican Order’s chaplains had no other responsibilities than serving the Portuguese or Spanish, they were not very interested in evangelizing the natives. Therefore, they also have not yet realized the urgency and importance of learning and understanding the language and culture of the natives to bring the light of the Gospel to the Vietnamese. The solution of using indigenous interpreters to preach the Gospel to the Vietnamese was once used by some Dominican missionaries, but it was also ineffective (Borri 1931, 337). Even so, the presence and initial contacts between the missionaries of this religious order and the Vietnamese from the second

³ On June 24, 1596, three missionaries, Alonso Jimenez, Diego Aduarte, and Juan Bautista Deza, arrived at the Cachan estuary (Danang city). After more than two months in Cachan, on August 28 of the same year, one of these three missionaries, Diego Aduarte, arrived at the capital city of Sinoa (present-day Hue city) to establish relations with the Nguyen Lord government. Here, he was warmly welcomed by the viceroy – son of Lord Nguyen Hoang. The viceroy of Cochichina gave Diego Aduarte many gifts, warmly invited him to stay in the capital, Sinoa, and promised to build him a chapel (Du Caillaud 1915, 169–170; 176; 191; 198–199).

half of the 16th century to the first half of the 17th century laid a solid foundation for the development of the evangelizing activity of the Dominican Order in Vietnam in the later period.

3. The Dominican Order Returned to Vietnam and Developed a Missionary Career from 1676 to the End of the 18th Century

After some contacts but did not achieve ideal missionary results in 1550–1628, historical materials did not record any further presence of Dominican missionaries in Vietnam until before 1676. Meanwhile, in the first half of the 17th century, with the thorough and creative application of the missionary approach of “adaptation to indigenous culture” (Anh Thuan and Van Sang 2020, 412), missionaries of the Society of Jesus achieved excellent results in spreading the Gospel in Cochinchina and Tonkin (Vietnam). On that basis, realizing the need to build a tight organizational structure to manage missionary work in these areas effectively, Alexandre de Rhodes – a French missionary of the Society of Jesus – mobilized the Holy See to establish dioceses in Vietnam. On September 9, 1659, Pope Alexander VII issued the *Super Cathedram* decree, establishing the dioceses of Tonkin and Cochinchina, and appointed François Pallu⁴ and Lambert de la Motte⁵ – two missionaries of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, as bishops (Hoster, Kuhlmann and Wesolowski 2017, 255; Benedetto 2008, 494). Thus, although the missionaries of the Society of Jesus were the force that laid the foundation for the introduction of Christianity to Vietnam during the first half of the 17th century, from 1659 onwards, the management of missionary work in this country was assigned to the missionaries of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris. After that, the rapid development of Christianity in Tonkin (Launay 1927, 93–94; 143–144; 147–149) continued to pose urgent requirements for the organization and management of this diocese. Faced with that situation, in 1679, the Holy See approved the division of the Tonkin diocese into two new dioceses: Eastern Tonkin (Diocese of Hai Phong, Diocese of Bui Chu, Diocese of Thai Binh, Diocese of Bac Ninh, and Diocese of Lang Son nowadays) and Western Tonkin (Archdiocese of Ha Noi, Diocese

⁴ François Pallu (1626–1684) was a French missionary from the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris who greatly influenced Christianity in China and Vietnam during the second half of the 17th century. In 1658, he was appointed by the Holy See as Vicar apostolic of Tonkin, managing missionary work in Tonkin (Vietnam), Laos, and five provinces in the Southwest of China. In 1680, when the Diocese of Fujian [福建] (the Diocese of Fuzhou [福州] nowadays) was established, he was appointed by the Holy See as Apostolic Administrator, managing the missionary work of nine provinces and islands in Southern China. On October 29, 1684, he died in Fujian [福建], China (Lach and Van Kley 1993, 231; 262; De Moidrey 1914, 71–72; Baudiment 2006, 532).

⁵ Lambert de la Motte was a missionary of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris. He was born on January 16, 1624 in Lisieux, France. In 1655, he was ordained a priest. On July 29, 1658, he was appointed Titular Bishop of Berytus and Vicar Apostolic of Cochinchina. During his management of missionary activities in Cochinchina, he only visited this missionary area twice (the first time from September 1671 to March 1672 and the second time from July 1675 to May 1676), and most of the remaining time, he worked in Ayutthaya and died here in 1679 (Gauchat 1935, 114).

Time	Quantity	Name of the missionary	Position	Nationality	Missionary organization	Missionary area		
1676	02	Juan de Santa Cruz	Bishop (1716–1721)	Spanish	Diocese of Manila	Eastern Tonkin		
		Juan de Arjona	Priest					
1677	01	Dionisio Morales						
1681	01	Raymundo Lezoli	Bishop (1698–1706)	Italian	The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith			
1693	02	Antonio Beriain	Priest	Spanish	Diocese of Manila			
		Tomas Gorrichategu						
1696	02	Pedro de Santa Teresa (Bustamanta)						
		Francisco Lopez						
1701	02	Tomas Sestri	Coadjutor Bishop (1718), Bishop (1721–1737)	Italian	The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith			
		Bartolome Subuquillo	Priest	Spanish	Diocese of Manila			
1715	02	Eleuterio Guelda						
		Juan Ventura Diaz						
1718	02	José Valerio						
		Alonso Gomez de Santo Tomas						
1719	02	Juan Vereá						
		Juan Pozuelo						
1732	02	Pedro Ponsgrau						
		Mateo Alonso Liciania						
1735	02	Francisco Gil de Federich						
		Luis Espinosa						
1738	01	Juan Maldonado						
1751	02	Santiago Hernandez	Bishop (1757-1777)	Spanish	Diocese of Manila			
		Emmanuel Martin	Priest					
1755	02	Manuel Esteban						
		Beneto Llobressols						
1759	01	Domingo Pujol						
1763	05	Vicente Ausina						
		Manuel Obélar	Bishop (1779–1789)					
		José Benito	Priest					
		Pedro Díez Agnado						
1770	04	Feliciano Alonso	Bishop (1790–1799)					
		José Lavilla	Priest					
		Jacinto Castaneda						
		Domingo de San Vicente						
1790	04	Francisco Costes						
		Ignacio Delgado						
		Domingo Henares						
		Joaquin Gatillepa						
1796	03	Mateo Vidal						
		Juan Barranco						
		Jose Amandi						
		Vicente Bombin						

Table 2: *The missionaries of the Dominican Order operated in Vietnam from 1676 to 1796. (Gispert 1928, 80–81; 84; 126; 134; 734–735; Launay 1927, 204; 213–214; Marillier 1995a, 109; 112; 115–119; Marillier 1995b, 159; 165; 169)*

of Hung Hoa, Diocese of Phat Diem, Diocese of Thanh Hoa, and Diocese of Vinh nowadays) (Launay 1927, 221–222), under the management of two missionaries, François Deydier⁶ and Jacques de Bourges⁷, both of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris. At that time, facing a severe shortage of missionary human resources as well as fierce disputes with Portuguese Jesuit missionaries, these two bishops thought of inviting missionaries from other religious orders, including the Dominican Order, to Vietnam in general and Tonkin in particular, to strengthen forces and promote missionary work in this area. That explains the return of Dominican missionaries to Vietnam at the end of the 17th century.

From the above statistical table, it can be known that, during the 120 years (1676–1796), Dominican missionaries came to Vietnam 19 times to preach the Gospel. Like that, on average, they come once every six years. This figure is a significant decrease compared to 1550–1628 (an average of more than 11 years). Although the number of times Dominican missionaries came to Vietnam to evangelize from 1676 to 1796 (19 times) was 2.7 times more than the period of 1550–1628 (seven times), that does not mean that this work was carried out more regularly and continuously than before. If we count from the time the Dominican missionaries returned to Vietnam in 1676 until the end of the 18th century, the interruption in sending missionaries of this religious order to the Eastern Tonkin region to spread the Gospel, with a period of more than ten years, appeared three times (1720–1731: 12 years, 1739–1750: 12 years, 1771–1789: 19 years). In the materials of the Dominican missionaries, there is no direct mention of the cause of this situation. However, from the records of the ups and downs in the missionary situation in Vietnam in the above periods, it can be known that the drastic implementation of the policy of banning Christianity by the indigenous government at that time (Gispert 1928, 172; 179; 192–195; 197–200; 209–229; 260–265; 266–285; Montézon et al. 1858, 293–312; 313–318; 403–404; *Nouvelles Lettres Édifiantes des missions de la Chine et des Indes Orientales* 1821, 141; 251–252; 272–273; 317–320; 337–338; Launay 1925, 240; *Nouvelles Lettres Édifiantes des missions de la Chine et des Indes Orientales* 1823b, 1–66) became one of the major obstacles preventing Dominican missionaries from penetrating the interior of Vietnam. Furthermore, in the 18th century, Dominican missionaries under the

⁶ François Deydier was a missionary of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris. He was born on September 28, 1634 in Toulon, France. In November 1660, he was ordained a priest. In August 1662, he went to Siam with Bishop Lambert de la Motte. Here, he began to learn Vietnamese, and on June 22, 1666, he left Siam to work in Tonkin. On November 25, 1678, he was appointed by the Holy See as Titular Bishop of Ascalon and Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin. He held this position until his death on July 1, 1693 (Bá Cấn 2008, 373–374; Ritzler and Sefrin 1952, 100).

⁷ Jacques de Bourges was a priest of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris. He was born in 1630 in Paris. In 1662, he went to Siam with Bishop Lambert de la Motte. However, in 1663, he returned to Europe. In 1669, he returned to Siam with three missionaries (initially, there were six missionaries; however, during the journey from Europe to Siam, three died on the way). Also, this year, he accompanied the inspection delegation of the Tonkin diocese led by Bishop Lambert de la Motte and began his missionary work in this area. On November 25, 1679, he was appointed Titular Bishop of Auzia and Vicar Apostolic of Western Tonkin. He took on the task of managing missionary work in the Diocese of Western Tonkin until 1712, when he was expelled. He returned to Siam and died there on August 9, 1714 (Launay 1927, 80–83; Ritzler and Sefrin 1952, 106).

administration of the Diocese of Manila established and expanded missionary activities in many different countries and territories in the Far East, including Vietnam. Therefore, at specific times, a shortage of missionary human resources to send to these places was inevitable.

Regarding the missionary area, from 1676 to 1697, when came to Tonkin to spread the Gospel at the invitation of the bishops of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, who governed the dioceses of Eastern Tonkin and Western Tonkin at that time, the Dominican missionaries mainly operated in locations belonging to the diocese of Eastern Tonkin, designated by these bishops (Gispert 1928, 84). In 1698, with the Holy See's decision to appoint Dominican missionary Raymundo Lezoli as Bishop of the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin (Bá Cầm 2008, 442; Gispert 1928, 134), this diocese officially came under the administration of the Dominican Order. Therefore, from 1698 onwards, all missionaries of this religious order came here to carry out pastoral work, which is also completely understandable.

Regarding the number of missionaries, nationality, and patronage organizations, 42 Dominican missionaries were operating in Vietnam during the period 1676–1796. Among them, 40 Spanish priests were sent by the Diocese of Manila, accounting for an overwhelming proportion (95.24%) compared to two Italian priests under the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (4.76%). That shows the superiority and dominance of the Spanish Dominican Order over missionary work in Eastern Tonkin (Vietnam) during this period. Even so, until 1757 – the time when the Spanish Dominican missionary Santiago Hernandez⁸ was appointed by the Holy See as bishop of the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin, opening the period of the Spanish Dominicans' monopoly on missionary work in this area, the Holy See had twice assigned the management of missionary work in this diocese to the Italian Dominican missionary Raymundo Lezoli⁹ in the period 1698–1706 and Tomas Sestri¹⁰ from 1721 to 1737. During the period 1737–1757, the position of bishop of the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin even slipped out of the hands of Dominican missionaries, whether of Italian or Spanish nationality and was given by the Holy See to missionary Hilario a Jesu Costa¹¹ of the Order of Saint Augusti-

⁸ Santiago Hernandez was a Spanish Dominican missionary, born in 1723 in Melgar del Arriba. In 1757, he was appointed by the Holy See as Titular Bishop of Hierocaesarea and Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin. He served as the administrator of this diocese for 21 years and died on February 6, 1777 (Ritzler and Sefrin 1958, 235; 455; Gispert 1928, 285–286).

⁹ Raimondo Lezzoli was an Italian Dominican missionary born in 1655 in Milan. In 1698, he was appointed by the Holy See as Titular Bishop of Olena and Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin. He took on the task of governing this diocese for 11 years and died in Luc Thuy (Nam Dinh province) in the diocese of Eastern Tonkin on January 18, 1706 (Ritzler and Sefrin 1952, 295; Gispert 1928, 137).

¹⁰ Tomas Sestri was an Italian Dominican missionary born in 1664 in Sestri Ponente, Italy. In 1692, he was ordained a priest. In 1716, he was appointed by the Holy See as Titular Bishop of Nyssa and Coadjutor Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin. In 1721, he officially became the Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin. He took on governing this diocese for 17 years and died in Luc Thuy (Nam Dinh province) in the diocese of Eastern Tonkin in August 1737 (Ritzler and Sefrin 1952, 295; Gispert 1928, 200).

¹¹ Hilario a Jesu Costa was an Italian Order of Saint Augustine missionary, born in 1696 in Pessinetto. The Holy See appointed him as Titular Bishop of Corycus and Coadjutor Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin in 1735. In 1737, he officially became Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin. He took on governing this diocese for 18 years and died in the diocese of Eastern Tonkin on March 31, 1754 (Ritzler and Sefrin 1958, 184; 455).

ne. So, what is the reason for explaining this situation? In fact, from the end of the 17th century to the beginning of the 18th century, the Holy See realized the problem of a “national mission” (Launay 1923, 522–523) taking place in the Far East in general and Vietnam in particular. Accordingly, “that meant that each religious order received a great deal of support in many ways, especially financial matters from a Western country (either Portugal, France, or Spain), and in return, they had to carry out missionary work under the direction and for the interests of that country” (Anh Thuan 2021a, 376; Anh Thuan 2021b, 65). Therefore, to prevent the French intention to monopolize missionary work in Tonkin (Vietnam)¹², the Holy See appointed a Dominican missionary as the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin bishop to replace the French missionaries of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris. Even so, the Holy See still feared that the intention to monopolize the missionary work in Eastern Tonkin (Vietnam) from the French would shift to the Spanish shortly. So, although the Spanish Dominican missionaries of the Diocese of Manila, most notably Juan de Santa Cruz¹³, had been present in Eastern Tonkin since 1676. However, when appointing the bishop of this diocese in 1698, the Holy See chose an Italian Dominican priest (Raymundo Lezoli). The Holy See’s hesitation in entrusting the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin to Spanish Dominican missionaries continued after that, leading to the appointment of another Italian Dominican missionary (Tomas Sestri) as bishop of this mission area from 1721 to 1737. In particular, from 1737 to 1757, because it did not want to give exclusive leadership of the missionary work to Dominican missionaries of Italian or Spanish nationality, the Holy See decided to appoint the Italian priest Hilario Costa of the Order of Saint Augustine as bishop of the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin. The appointment of Italian bishops of the Dominican Order or the Order of Saint Augustine to govern the Eastern Tonkin missionary area – where Spanish Dominican priests had devoted much effort to exploring and building – caused the conflict between them and the Italian bishops to become more intense, especially when Bishop Hilario Costa managed the missionary work in this diocese (1737–1754) (Gispert 1928, 189–191; 200; *Marillier* 1995a, 106; 108; 126–127; 166; Bá Cấn 2008, 454; 462–465, 468–473). The above situation only really ended in 1757, when the Holy See decided to hand over Eastern Tonkin to the Spanish Dominican missionaries for long-term management by appointing Spanish priest Santiago Hernandez of this religious order as bishop, and at the same time ordered the priests of the Order of Saint Augustine to leave this missionary area (Gispert 1928, 251–255). From then on, the Spanish Dominican missionaries completely controlled the missionary work in Eastern Tonkin.

¹² The French have carried out a canvass to have a missionary of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris continue to be appointed as bishop of the Eastern Tonkin diocese or to request that Eastern Tonkin and Western Tonkin be placed under the management of a single missionary of this missionary organization (Bá Cấn 2008, 442).

¹³ Juan de Santa Cruz was a Spanish Dominican missionary born in San Martín de Valvení in 1645. In 1666, he joined the Dominican Order. In 1716, he was appointed Titular Bishop of Hemeria and Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin. He took on the task of governing this diocese for six years and died in Trung Linh (Nam Dinh province) of the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin on August 14, 1721 (Ritzler and Sefrin 1952, 221; Gispert 1928, 163; 165; 171).

Like the missionaries of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, when they returned to Tonkin (Vietnam) to spread the Gospel in the second half of the 17th century, Dominican missionaries recognized the importance of indigenous missionary forces. They were the ones who would take care of the spiritual and religious life of the parishioners and carry out other pastoral work during the absence of Dominican missionaries in the Eastern Tonkin region. Dominican missionaries also clearly saw the advantages of the indigenous missionary force, as they not only did not encounter language barriers but also had a deep understanding of the indigenous people's culture, customs, and habits (Anh Thuan 2021c, 116). Therefore, while preaching the Gospel in Eastern Tonkin, Dominican missionaries also paid much attention to the training of Vietnamese priests.

Year of Ordination to the Priesthood	Quantity	Name of the Vietnamese Priest	Place of Ordination to the Priesthood
1739	02	Pie Tháp (Thập)	Diocese of Eastern Tonkin
		Dominique Minh	
1742	02	Michel Huynh	
1745	01	Joseph Đính	
1746	01	Joseph Chiêu	
1748	02	Nicolas Diên	Diocese of Manila
		Anrê Khôi	
1750	02	Paulus Huyền	Diocese of Eastern Tonkin
		Luca Hoa	
		Inhatio Nhuận	
1754	02	Vicente Liêm	Diocese of Manila
		Juan Huy de los Santos	
1757	03	Tomas Chấn	Diocese of Macao
		Augustin Y	
		Miguel de Santo Domingo	
1758	01	Tomas Hoàng (Huân)	
		Domingo Doá	
1759	04	P. Fr. Domingo Diêng	Diocese of Eastern Tonkin
		Domingo Lai	
		Pablo Lương (Thụ)	
1765	03	Juan Khoan	
		Nicolas Liên	
		Pablo Tri	
1777	01	Tomas Chén	
1778	03	José Vinh	
		Micae Thiên	
		Pedro Thuyền	
1784	03	José Trạch	
		Nicolás Uyển	
		Pedro Phương	
1792	03	Tomas Sen	
		Domingo Lương de San Pedro	
		Domingo Trình	
1793	01	Luis Nhường	
1794	01	Cosma Ất	
1795	01	Domingo Thanh	
1796	01	Domingo Diêng	

Table 3: Vietnamese priests of the Dominican Order operated in the diocese of Eastern Tonkin during the period 1739–1796. (Marillier 1995a, 65–67; 1995b, 108; 115; 123; 127; 142; 165; 168; Gispert 1928, 740–741; Bá Cấn 2008, 458; 475)

From comparing and collating many different sources of materials, it can be seen that the training activities of indigenous priests of the Society of Jesus (Marillier 1995a, 55; 57–58) or the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris (Anh Thuan 2021c, 120–122) in different missionary areas in Vietnam were carried out from the end of the 17th century. On the contrary, for Dominican priests in Eastern Tonkin, this work officially started in the first half of the 18th century (1739). However, this does not mean that the results of training indigenous priests by Dominican missionaries are utterly inferior to those of other missionary forces. From 1719 to 1795, Dominican missionaries conducted 19 times priestly ordinations for 37 Vietnamese. Thus, the results achieved by the Dominican missionaries in Eastern Tonkin in training indigenous missionaries were nearly twice as many as those of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris in Cochinchina (19 people in the period 1668–1796) (Anh Thuan 2021c, 120–121), 1.4 times as many as the number of indigenous priests trained by the Society of Jesus in the period 1684–1766 (26 people) (Montézón et al. 1858, 303–304; Marillier 1995a, 46–49; 51; 57–58; 60–61; 1995b, 37; 115; 131; 133; 136; 139; 142; 151; 166; *Nouvelles Lettres Édifiantes des Missions de la Chine et des Indes Orientales* 1821, 160), and only less than the results of training indigenous priests of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris in Tonkin (95 people in the period 1668–1766) (Anh Thuan 2021c, 121–124). In particular, with 19 times priestly ordinations for indigenous catechists over 56 years (1739–1795) (an average of about three years/time), it can be seen that this work was carried out quite regularly by Dominican missionaries in Eastern Tonkin and rarely interrupted for an extended period. There are many reasons for the positive results above. Firstly, after taking over the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin, the Dominican missionaries paid great attention to building and maintaining the activities of seminaries in several locations in this missionary area, such as Kien Lao, Trung Linh, Luc Thuy, etc. (Hữu Trọng 1959, 249–251). These seminaries provided a rich source of seminarians. On that basis, Dominican missionaries will select outstanding people to be ordained priests. Secondly, the ordination of priests for natives could only be done by bishops. During the period 1739–1795, the almost continuous presence of the bishops of the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin in this missionary area (Hilario Costa: 1737–1757, Santiago Hernandez: 1763–1777, Manuel Obellar¹⁴: 1779–1789; Feliciano Alonso¹⁵: 1790–1799) despite the difficulties and dangers brought about by the baning Christianity policy of the Vietnamese monarchy authorities (Gispert 1928, 172; 179; 192–195; 197–200; 209–229; 260–265; 266–285; Montézón et al. 1858, 293–312; 313–318; 403–404; *Nouvelles Lettres Édifiantes des Missions de la Chine et des Indes Orientales* 1821, 141; 251–252;

¹⁴ Manuel Obellar was a Spanish Dominican missionary born in Donado in 1734. In 1758, he joined the Dominican Order. In 1778, he was appointed Titular Bishop of Ruspae and Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin. He took on governing this diocese for 12 years and died in the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin on September 7, 1789 (Ritzler and Sefrin 1958, 361; 455).

¹⁵ Feliciano Alonso was a Spanish Dominican missionary born in Soto de Valdeón in 1732. In 1790, he was appointed Titular Bishop of Fesseë and Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin. He took on governing this diocese for 10 years and died in the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin on February 2, 1789 (Ritzler and Sefrin 1958, 215; 455).

272–273; 317–320; 337–338; Launay 1925, 240; *Nouvelles Lettres Édifiantes des Missions de la Chine et des Indes Orientales* 1823a, 262–282; *Nouvelles Lettres Édifiantes des Missions de la Chine et des Indes Orientales* 1823b, 1–66), created proactivity in training the indigenous missionary forces of the Dominican missionaries. This explains why the number of Vietnamese priests ordained in the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin was much higher (26/37: 70.3%) than the number of indigenous seminarians and catechists ordained in Manila (3/37: 8.1%) or Macao (8/37: 21.6%). In the 18th century, the Dominican missionaries in Eastern Tonkin sent Vietnamese seminarians and catechists abroad to receive priestly ordination as a temporary measure. It was only carried out by the missionaries of this religious order in the period 1754–1763, when priest Santiago Hernandez, although ordained bishop of the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin by the Holy See in 1757, was not able to come to take over the management of this missionary area until 1763 (Bá Cầm 2008, 474). Even so, this temporary measure also contributed to strengthening the Vietnamese priest force of the Dominican Order in Eastern Tonkin at that time.

Regarding the results of missionary work from 1676 until the end of the 18th century, despite facing many difficulties and challenges from the policy of banning Christianity by the Vietnamese monarchy, as well as internal conflicts in the Dominican Order between Italian Bishops and Spanish missionaries, in general, the evangelization work of this religious order in the Eastern Tonkin region still achieved remarkable results. Until now, scholars have not found any original material or academic work that comprehensively, specifically, and continuously mentions the missionary results of Dominican missionaries in Eastern Tonkin in this period. However, through collecting and pairing somewhat fragmented content in some materials recorded by missionaries or archived by missionary organizations, researchers of Vietnamese Christianity history can still partly visualize the “missionary picture” of Dominican missionaries in the Eastern Tonkin region. Through several letters written from 1699 to 1705 by missionary Raymundo Lezoli, Bishop of the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin, currently archived at the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, it can be known that during this period, Dominican priests operating in this missionary area baptized 18,461 adults and 7,443 children. At the same time, 259,641 parishioners received the sacrament of reconciliation, and 10,048 people received the sacrament of confirmation from these missionaries of the religious order (Archivio della Congregazione per la Propagazione della Fede 1701–1704, f. 245, f. 264, f. 268; Archivio della Congregazione per la Propagazione della Fede 1705–1711, f. 95, f. 114, f. 118). During the years 1711–1719, although the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin faced a situation of having no bishop for a long time (1706–1721) along with the negative impacts of the decree banning Christianity issued in 1712 by the Tonkin government (Gispert 1928, 155), overcoming the above difficulties with many different measures, the Dominican missionaries operating in Eastern Tonkin at that time still baptized 7,007 adults and 11,650 children. They also performed the sacrament of reconciliation for 292,796 parishioners (Archivio della Congregazione per la Propagazione della Fede

1714–1725, f. 566, f. 571; Gispert 1928, 156; 159–160; 163; 166). In a letter sent to the Dominican Order Superior in Manila in 1777, missionary Feliciano Alonso, Bishop of the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin from 1790 to 1799, also said that at that time, the Dominican missionaries still maintained their stable management of over 74,930 parishioners in 40 residences in the Eastern Tonkin region (Gispert 1928, 287). In particular, by the late 18th century, the content of Dominican Order materials in Manila still showed great promise for missionary activity in the Eastern Tonkin region as the number of parishioners increased almost indefinitely (Gispert 1928, 304). Thus, although not yet complete, the above figures have partly demonstrated the constant efforts and endeavors in the missionary activities of Dominican missionaries in the Eastern Tonkin region in the 17th and 18th centuries.

4. Conclusion

The 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries were an entirely eventful period of missionary activity in Vietnam, with the participation of Western missionaries from many different missionary forces. From that process, researchers can easily recognize the “national mission” trend when “the Jesuit missionaries tried to protect and maintain Portugal’s missionary prerogative. In contrast, the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris tried to establish leadership rights and France’s influence on this country’s missionary work. Meanwhile, Mendicant Orders backed by Spain also pursued similar goals.” (Anh Thuan 2021a, 376) As part of the Mendicant Orders, the Dominican Order, of course, also cannot be outside the influence of this trend.

Although being one of the missionary forces present in different areas of present-day Vietnam since the mid-16th century, until the early 17th century, the evangelization activities of Dominican missionaries in this country had not yet achieved many results. There are many reasons to explain the above situation. The shortage of missionary human resources led to dioceses under the Portuguese (Goa, Malaca) or Spanish (Manila) could not continuously send large numbers of Dominican missionaries to Vietnam. Moreover, at that time, Dominican missionaries were still not interested in conquering the faith of the Vietnamese. Therefore, the study of the culture and language of this ethnicity has fallen into oblivion for a long time. That made the Dominican Order – One of the first Christian religious orders to have the opportunity to bring the light of the Gospel to the Vietnamese in the period 1550–1628, but when they returned to this country in 1676, they became “latecomers” compared to the Portuguese The Society of Jesus and the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris.

Furthermore, from the second half of the 17th century to the end of the 18th century, Dominican missionaries also had to face challenges from the policy of banning Christianity by the monarchical governments in Vietnam as well as conflicts taking place in Eastern Tonkin at that time, between the Italian bishops (Dominican Order or the Order of Saint Augustine), who the Holy See assigned to

manage this missionary area, and the Spanish Dominican missionaries, the force that had outstanding contributions in building this diocese. The above problems have more or less negatively affected the missionary activities of the Dominican Order. However, with constant efforts, these religious order missionaries still created positive changes in missionary activities in Vietnam. By the end of the 18th century, after nearly a century of being assigned by the Holy See to manage the Diocese of Eastern Tonkin (1698), Dominican missionaries had succeeded in attracting many Vietnamese to believe in Christianity and trained indigenous missionary forces. During that process, the Spanish missionaries also gradually affirmed their influence on the Dominican Order missionary work in Vietnam in general and the Eastern Tonkin region at that time and until the beginning of the 20th century.

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