

Western Missionaries' Overview on Religion in Tonkin (North of Vietnam) in the 18th Century

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ABSTRACT: *The author compares the two rare books, one in Vietnamese and the other in Latin, namely “Tam giáo chư vọng” and “A Small Treatise”. The two books were both composed in great efforts of Italian missionaries at the order of Saint Augustine while they came to work in the North of Vietnam in the 18th century. Despite slight differences, the two books provide rich materials regarding religions and beliefs of the Vietnamese people. Although authors managed to classify religions and beliefs in the region, there are still limitations in their works due to lack of understanding of indigenous language, customs and culture.*

Recently, while reviewing *Tam giáo chư vọng* (*An Overview on Three Religions*), a hand-writing book in Vietnam national language, I made reference to *Tiểu luận văn* (*A small Treatise*) written by hand in Latin by Adriano a Sancta Thecla in 1750¹. These two quite similar books are stored in the Foreign Mission of Paris' archives. They were both composed of the same materials by Italian missionaries at the order of Saint Augustine. These missionaries, at the same time, provided an overview on religion in Vietnam. Despite of differences in style and structure, the two books cover the same events. Thus they can be considered “a twin”.

Vietnamese scholars should pay attention to the Vietnamese version. For the Latin version, 10 years ago, I had suggested the head of the Archives of the Foreign Mission of Paris that it should have been publicized for European scholars and historians but he said the book would only be sold if it came out in European language rather than Latin. When I found that as the book has just been published in English and translators forgot to mention *An Overview on Three Religions*, I decide to use both of these two books in order to learn and at the same time generalize

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Western missionaries' knowledge regarding religion in Vietnam in nearly three centuries ago.

1. General Comments

3 or 4 centuries before, mostly what the Europeans knew about cultures outside Europe were all via Christian missionaries. Because of the need to preach and share Christian faith with strange peoples they first needed to learn native languages, thoughts and customs. Thus mission would often come with knowledge about ethnology, culture and especially religion.

Vietnamese history book reveals that in 1533, a European missionary called Inikhu (should be Inigo) came to several villages in the coastal area of the North of Vietnam but we have no information about his nationality and which order he belonged to. After him, some other missionaries also came to preach and gained some followers, including members of Lord Trinh's family. The mission work, however, was carried out discursively and because of lack of favourable conditions, the result was limited.

Not until the 17th century, did the number of missionaries increase. They often came from the same home land or order thus it was more easily to regularly organize mission work. Consequently, knowledge on language, history, culture and religion in Vietnam was enriched. Ethnological elements, however, were represented as a whole, not separated into different disciplines.

In the first stage, those missionaries collected all what they witnessed in real life, and also what they could understand from Vietnamese and Chinese books. They divided their collection into 3 categories: what was strange to the Europeans would be considered "curious"; what was relevant to their religion would be considered "constructive"; and what contrasted to their faith would be considered "superstitious". This reminds me of the collection of *Letters of constructive and curious things* (Lettres édifiantes et curieuses) composed by missionaries from Jesus order. This collection came out in 31 volumes, first in 1717 and was suspended in 1774 because some European kings prohibited the order and also incited Roman Catholic Church to ban this publication until 1814. After the Jesus order was allowed to republish those letters, they made the new edition with 14 volumes and categorized the contents according to each specific locality. In this new edition, the 9th volume was for Vietnam. Not until the 18th century was knowledge regarding

religion in Vietnam separated and systematized. And this is the work by Italian missionaries at the Saint Augustine order.

Regarding history of mission in Vietnam, people would often talk about missionaries from the Jesus order at the Foreign Mission of Paris or under the Dominican order (Portugal) while they knew very little about Italian missionaries. These missionaries did not work for long in Vietnam (from 1701 to 1761) but some of them who were outstanding in knowledge. They were the first to present religion in Vietnam systematically and quite adequately.

Hereunder, I would like to address these following issues: 1. Missionaries' knowledge of religion in the 17th century; 2. Italian missionaries in Vietnam (1701-1761); 3. An overview on religion in Vietnam in the 18th century; and 4. Some comments.

2. Missionaries' Knowledge of Religion in Vietnam in the 17th century

In the 17th century, missionaries from Jesus order, despite the number was small, had managed to investigate and publish in Europe books about Vietnamese history and culture: *Christofle Borri – Relation de la nouvelle mission des Pères de la Cochinchine* (Report on mission work by Jesus' missionaries in Cochinchine, the translation version from Italian into French was printed in Lille in 1631); Alexandre de Rhodes: *Histoire du Royaume de Tunquin* (History of Tonkin, translated from Latin into French and printed in Lyon in 1651) and *Phép giảng tám ngày* (or *Teaching of Christianity in 8 days*, written both in Latin and national Vietnamese, printed in Roma in 1651); Joseph Tissanier: *Relation du voyage au Tunquin*, 1658, 1659, 1660 (Report on the voyage in Tonkin in 1658, 1659, 1660, printed in Paris in 1663) and Marini: *Relation nouvelle et curieuse des royaumes de Tunquin et Lao* (Report on strange things in Tonkin and Laos, translated from Italian into French, printed in Paris in 1666).

It is clear that during this time, course of religion was not yet separated from course of ethnology. Except for work by Borri which only discussed on history and customs, other books all spent several chapters to talk about Three Religions, superstition, wrong awareness and inappropriate worship. In mid 18th century, and this was the first time, Italian missionaries had intention to propose a systematical overview on religion in Vietnam. But later, very few ever thought about systematizing materials. There were two reasons: 1. *theoretically*, there appeared

more and more complicated religious phenomena thus it was very difficult to classify them. A French missionary, Léopold Cadière, had pay attention in examining correctly in details and written many books on religion in Vietnam in stead of spending too much time for theoretical classification; 2. *In practice*, Cadière believed that classification was also unnecessary. It was more important to list for followers what wrong worships should be avoided.

3. Italian Missionaries at the Saint Augustine Order in Vietnam

3.1. Missionary organization in Vietnam

In the 17th century, missionary organization in Vietnam had big changes. In the early half of the century, mission work was confided for missionaries at Jesus order under the patronage of Portuguese King. On one hand, missionaries needed Portuguese trading boats when they wanted to go preaching in remote areas. On the other hand, in order to avoid conflict between the Portuguese and the Spanish who were looking for colonies, Alxandro VI stood out to act as a mediator. The two sign then signed in Tordesillas Convention (1593) which divided areas under these two countries' affection: The Portuguese went further to the East, over Africa, India to Vietnam and Chinese mainland while the Spanish went to the West, over American continent to the Philippines.

In 1654, a missionary, Alexander de Rhodes, sent a proposal to Pope Innocente X in Roma in which he asked for permission to establish Vietnamese Catholic hierarchy. He used these reasons: the community of Vietnamese Catholics had become larger thus more priests and bishops were needed for preaching and guidance. However, European countries could not send enough missionaries to those areas, and even if they could do that, local governments would not permit too many foreigners to get into their countries because of national security. De Rhodes did not agree with the ideal saying that because the Vietnamese Catholics had just followed the religion for a short time and their faith was unstable, they themselves could not become missionaries to guide the native followers. De Rhodes argued that there had been Vietnamese who accepted to be put in custody, tortured and even sentenced to death because of their faith². At first, the Pope did not agree but after listened to Rhodes' explanation, in 1658, he decided to send two French missionaries, Francois Pallu and Pierre Lambert de la Motte, to be bishops who would represent for the Catholic Church in Vietnam: Tonkin (the North) and Cochinchine (the South). And, also in this time, the Foreign Mission of Paris was established.

This decision is very important for the history of mission work. In reality, there might not be a plot to use missionaries as path-finders for colonialists. In contrast, there was a need to avoid colonialists make use of religion. In reality, when signed in the Tordesillas, the Pope also commended kings of Spain and Portugal the duty to support mission works, and let them select relevant bishops. The Church, however, had soon realized that it was wrong to do so because kings of those countries even though supported mission works, had tried to select and acculturate native people into ones who would speak Spanish and Portuguese. When the Church found out that the way of mission needed to be changed, they thought that it was the best choice to use the French missionaries since at that time France had not any colony and also no commercial interests in Asia. Thus they would have no idea to acculturate the native Christians but only try to integrate into their own culture.

Being aware of the problem, Portugal and Spain had made hindrance for the two new bishops. Francois Pallu, for example, was given into custody by the Portuguese. Among missionaries sent to Vietnam by Portugal, some did not recognize those bishops and hindered their activities. However, new policy gradually became stable. From the later half of the 17th centuries, French missionaries were well aware of the fact that they were working for the Catholic Church, not for the French king or culture. Money for the mission works came from Catholics' donation, not from the French king. And when dealing with Vietnamese graphemes (Nôm and national script), two French bishops, Pigneaux de Behaine (Bá Đa Lộc) and Teberd, had translated them all into Latin (the language used in Catholic Church) not into French.³ Vietnamese Catholics were taught in Vietnamese books, and religious materials in Nôm was popular since the first half of the 17th century until mid 20th century while books of the Three Religion were still written in Chinese scripts. For this rule, Vietnamese who followed Christianity had not become Portuguese or Spanish speakers. Until France sent its troops to interfere into Vietnam, there appeared changes but these were for the whole country, not only for the Catholics.

In 1695, Vietnam was divided into the two regions, the South and the North. In Tonkin, bishop Pallu (1626-1684) was in charge while in Cochinchine, bishop Lambert de la Motte (1624-1679) took the responsibility according to assignment by the Church. Until 1679, Tonkin was divided into Eastern region and Western region, along with the Hong River (Red river). Bishop Jacques de Bourges (1630-1714) was responsible for Western region and Bishop Francois Deydier (1634-1693) was responsible for the Eastern region. They both came from Foreign Mission of Paris. In

1693, after Deydier died, the Church left the Eastern area of Tonkin for Spanish missionaries at the Dominican order.

Italian missionaries at the Augustine order came to work in Vietnam when missionary organization had been stabilized. They worked in the Eastern of Tonkin within the domain of Dominican order. Like missionaries from this order, they were no longer dependent on their kings but on Catholic Church of Roma.

There were only 13 Italian missionaries and they stayed in Vietnam for 60 years (1701-1761). They were responsible for a small area around Kê Sặt village in Hải Dương province. Among them, there were two or three who had deep knowledge. One of them, Ilario Costa di Gesu (1694-1754), had been selected to be a bishop. He was the fifth bishop who took care of the East Tonkin region from 1737 to 1754. In 1749, Father Ilario chose an Italian missionary in his order, Adriano Thecla (1667-1765), to be a general vicar, the one who was closest to him. Portuguese missionaries, however, tried to mobilize the Church so that they could be the only missionaries to be in charge of the East Tonkin region. And they succeeded finally. Thus in 1761, the Church required Italian missionaries to get out of that region. Only Adriano, aged 94 that time, did not want to leave the place that he and friends had been working for 60 years, and died in Vietnam in 1765.

3.2. *Intellectual Activities of Missionaries at the Saint Augustine Order*

Father Ilario and Father Adriano were the two most excellent missionaries at the Saint Augustine order in Vietnam in the 18th century⁴. These are sentences about Ilario by Bishop Louis Néez who was responsible for the West Tonkin region (1739-1764): “Father was extremely genius in writing. Thanked to him, Church of Tonkin had produced many books. He not only wrote those books for missionaries at his order but also for believers within his region.”⁵ In fact, in 31 years of working in Vietnam, Father Ilario had written 4 in Latin and 14 other religious books in Vietnamese, one of them was *Criticizing Buddhism* in *Dị đoan chí giáo* (*About superstitious faiths*). Adriano himself wrote *Chronicle about China and Tonkin region*, *Small Treatise* and *Biography of Father Ilario, Bishop of Coricée* (1756).

Within this article, I am only interested in ethnology on religion. Regarding this subject, we must first talk about *Small Treatise on sects among the Chinese and Tonkinese* by Adriano, which was translated and annotated by Olga Dror in English⁶. In the Introduction, Adriano noted materials he used: besides what he knew by

observation in daily life, he talked about a lot of materials he learnt via other missionaries such as Francisco Gil de Federich, a Spanish missionary from Dominican order (he became a martyr in 1745), Wenceslas Paleczek, and a Bohemian who managed missionaries at the Jesus order in Tonkin. He also mentioned *about superstitious faiths* and *Index Historicus* (Index of history) by Father Ilario along with Vietnamese history books and Chinese classic works.

Alongside with *Small Treatise*, we must discuss *An Overview on Three Religions*⁷. This is a small-sided book in handwriting (10x15cm) without showing the date. However, in the page 29, there is a sentence: “This year is Nhâm Thân (year of Monkey) under Cảnh Hưng the 13th. This means that the book was written in 1752, the same time with *Small Treatise* by Adriano. The author did not write his name but he introduced about himself as follow: “I am from Western, in Italia, came to the East to teach about Religion of the God for people in this An Nam (Vietnam) country...” We can argue that the author was an Italian missionary and he spoke Vietnamese fluently. But who is he then? Besides Adriano and Ilario who had written many books and understood reality in Vietnam, there was no other. What is more, as Adriano was writing *Biography of Father Ilario* and listed his books, he did not mention *An Overview on Three Religions*. The book might have been written in different plot and style, but the content is similar to *Small Treatise* (in Latin). Is this book written by Adriano? I think this is not true. Because Adriano was the one who collaborated closely with Father Ilario and he even used Ilario's materials. Secondly, Adriano used to write in Latin or Italian for Western missionaries. He was not as good at Vietnamese as Ilario that he could write books to teach Vietnamese people. Thus it could be not too mistaken if we put that the book was written by Adriano. The reason why Adriano did not sign in the book and mention about it in Ilario's works could be that when he listed all the books in 1756, two years after Ilario's death, the original version had been lost. Only one copy was kept by Bishop Néez and then sent to the archive of *Foreign Mission of Paris*, the same to what happened to *Small Treatise* by Adriano himself. We know for sure one thing: *Small Treatise* and *An Overview on Three Religions* were all written by Italian missionaries at Saint Augustine order under Father Ilario's management.

4. Overview on Religion in Vietnam in the 18th century

Small Treatise and *An Overview on Three Religions* are the two books composed in the mid 18th century that only focused on religion in Vietnam. Knowledge of many

Western missionaries at different orders was summarized in a consistent approach of ethnology. The task was to collect religious elements; separate those from other cultural elements then build up a unique field. After that they looked for appropriate criteria to systematically classify those religious elements into right order. One could say that the two books are a great effort to summarize religious picture in Vietnam in slightly different formats. The two books based on the same events and were written by people who were from the same order and working closely together in the same region. They had a rather similar plot for each book. Differences may be found as they aimed at two kinds of audience: The *Treatise*, written in Latin, was for foreign missionaries who had just come to Vietnam to learn about indigenous beliefs; *An Overview on Three Religions*, written in Vietnamese in a conversational format, was to help (Catholic) believers learn how different their faith and others' beliefs were.

4.1. Materials

Besides little observation in Vietnam, missionaries, Adriano for example, would often think that Vietnamese thoughts and customs were similar to what of the Chinese. They learned that the Vietnamese followed Chinese culture used Chinese to write official documents and history books. Thus they often went to China to get familiar with Chinese culture before going to Vietnam. In fact, if there weren't such missionaries as Girolamo Majorica or Alexander de Rhodes, who had been excellent in Vietnamese and written, books in Nom (traditional Vietnamese script) and modern Vietnamese script, many Western people would think that Vietnamese was just a kind of Chinese people.

From beginning, materials written in the mid 17th century about Chinese and Vietnamese culture mostly based on available books and some observation in Vietnam. After the 1st century, however, materials became various since missionaries had witnessed many rituals, festivals and worship ceremonies for Vietnamese gods and for King Le or Lord Trinh when they were still alive. In *Small Treatise*, Adriano had four times talked about important events recorded by Francisco Gil de Federich. All those events were a mixture of some Taoism with sorcerers, Buddhism which had turned certain gods worshiped popularly into Buddha, Bodhisattvas or Buddhists. Thus God, Buddha, immortals, saints was gathered in a mess but all under control of the State which followed Confucianism. The evidence was, as we know, the king asked his officers in the department of ceremony to investigate all gods

worshipped in the country. They were supposed to learn clearly about story of each god. If a god had both a high moral life and at the same time contributed much for the nation, the king would award him a royal certification of high god, medium god or low god. The King also appointed relevant worship ceremony for him. In case a god became less sacred, his rank could be lowered. I would argue that this was the first time religious events in Vietnam were classified systematically⁸.

It is necessary to note that authors mostly described rituals in practice as discussing Three Religions. They, however, seldom mentioned about basic concepts such as “Three Moral Bonds and Five Constant Virtues” of Confucianism, “vimukti” (liberation) of Buddhism or metaphysical concepts of Taoism. The reason is that people at that time could have been more interested in specific rituals than in abstract concepts such as “transform and to be born” and “forms and emptiness” or missionaries only focused on such things because of these two reasons: first, they wanted to propagate the religion that worships only one “true god” so they only cared about what belonged to popular culture that was in contrast to their faith, polytheist concepts and magician superstition, for example. They did pay attention to different kinds of cosmology of each party in Three Religions because those were not relevant to the conception that the God himself (in Christianity) created the world. They also made reference to biography of founders of Three Religions to state that they were actually human beings, not God. Thus their ethnology regarding religion was not just description but also assessment according to their own moral criteria.

Secondly, the reason is because of the religious situation at that time. After 3 or 4 centuries of prosperity, Buddhism had enjoyed significant support from Lý and Trần dynasties. However, from Late Lê dynasty, Buddhism and Taoism were not any more given favorable conditions from the governments. They were also strongly criticized by Confucians. Buddhism fell into recession, was sometimes mixed with popular magician superstition while founders of those two other religions was assimilated into gods of the normal people. As describing religions, missionaries did not talk much on teachings because followers that time had very few books on theory, and they mostly focused on rituals and sacred invocation.

It could be said that authors of these two books had selected and used materials according to the same criteria.

4.2. *The Way of Classifying Materials*

Classifying events, materials are theoretical work that researchers must do. But what are the criteria should be used?

To classify, missionaries had got already framework from Three Religions. That was what Matteo Ricci (Li Ma-Dou), an Italian missionary, from Jesus order and Nicolas Trigault, a Belgium missionary, had done in *Histoire de l'expédition chrétienne au Royaume de la Chine* (History of Christianity mission in China), printed in 1617. Later missionaries did the same thing. Even Chinese and Vietnamese people themselves often say that “Three Religions come from one source”, it seems that they had never thought thoroughly on doctrines to prove that what that source is. The problem is Vietnamese people often mistook Buddha, Immortals, Saints and Gods. They would worship who they thought to be sacred. Because of this wrong awareness, framework according to Three Religions could not help for classification.

If Western missionaries wanted to use that frame work, they must not be confused among different religions but should better know how to make one religion different from the others. Besides, they took the hierarchy in Three Religions: Confucianism was the first, Taoism the second, and Buddhism the third. Confucianism took the first place since it was the official religion of the state; Taoism took the second position because it was established by the Chinese; and Buddhism stood at the end of the list because it was imported oversea. According to the hierarchy, missionaries believed that they did not need to talk much with Taoism and Buddhism which were going downward. They, instead, turned to Confucianism because it was the mainstream religion while the other two were considered “false religions” if not superstition. Later, Christianity was also categorized into the same kind with Buddhism and Taoism, and moreover, even was repressed by the indigenous government. This problem had never happened to other religions within the country.

Yet as trying to understand and classify religious phenomena in Vietnam, Western missionaries were always well aware that their religion worshipped only a “true God” and thus became very different with native faiths. Due to awareness of their identity, they, on one hand, managed to culturally integrated with native culture, and on the other hand, kept their faith. They were confused or assimilated their god with Buddha, immortals, deities or saints. Some one could argue that those missionaries had been intolerant. But I do not think so.

Even framework from Three Religions taken for classification, the method of organizing chapters in *Small Treatise* and *An overview on Three Religions* is not totally the same. The reason is the familiar framework only enlisted religions with specific founders, doctrines, organizations while neglected popular (or folk) religion. That is why the framework becomes too much narrow when it deals with popular religions. Missionaries had to use two solutions: 1. In *Small Treatise*, besides three chapters for Three Religions, Adriano wrote one extra and longest chapter for deities and a short chapter for the phenomenon of divines⁹; 2. In *An Overview on Three Religions*, the author keeps the Three Religions framework then tried to put popular religions into one of chapters written for three religions.

4.3. *Two Kinds of Audience*

4.3. 1. Adriano wrote *Small Treatise on the sects among the Chinese and Tonkinese* in Latin in order to help Western missionaries understand religion in Vietnam. Because he wrote for Western people, he must find out a reasonable classification which was similar to Western way. He divided religion in Vietnam into 5 categories. Even though the author named the book “*Small Treatise*” which sounded neutral, in fact he criticized and fought against what he believed wrong, just like *An overview on Three Religions*.

4.3. 2. *An Overview on Three Religions* was written in about before or after 1752, at the same time with *Small Treatise*. It was written in Vietnamese language to teach followers to simply make different between Christianity and other religions thus criteria for classification was unnecessary. In a textbook form, it used a format of a conversation between a Western scholar and an Eastern scholar. Even the book had a form of argument; its foremost purpose was for mission work. It helped followers be aware of misunderstanding when they had not yet joined Christianity. The book had no intention to provoke non-Catholics because firstly Catholics took a modest number and was often denounced, captured, detained or killed; secondly, at that time, Vietnamese letters using Latin letters were just used in Catholic communities. The outsiders of these communities could not read this letters.

Eastern scholar here was a Confucians because Confucianism wanted to discuss on proper behavior of any person, not on evils or the death thus it was not very incompatible with Catholicism of Western scholar. Mover over, Western scholar depended on Confucianism to blame other two religions to be “nonsense”.

As said above, only by looking at the contents of the two books can we see that the authors had tried to put all religious phenomena into the narrow framework of Three Religions¹⁰. Other authors later tried to avoid this classification. They used different ways of classification.

5. Some Comments

5.1. *On the Overview on Religious Studies*

Religious phenomena in Vietnam were extremely complicated and materials used to write those books were various. They were books by Chinese, Vietnamese or previous Western missionaries or events which were observed and recorded in Vietnam. The significant contribution of Italian missionaries at the order of Saint Augustine is a method to build up an overview. Firstly, they classified everything into an order. They partly succeeded because they had tried to look for characteristics of each religion. But their difficulty was that not only common people but also ones who knew about religion, except for Confucians, may be, had no clear knowledge about each religion. Until present, we can still find many books for fortune-teller, or deity worship printed by Buddhism pagodas. Therefore, it is not necessary, for example, to classify this religious phenomenon into that religion.

It is necessary to note that missionaries often paid attention to what contrasted to their faith. Thus that was an indirect way to present their faith which was very different with polytheist religion of the native people.

5.2. *Impact from Debate on Catholic Rituals in China*

As missionaries enlisted religious activities that contradicted with their faith, they would generalize many elements which were not really wrong to the understanding of the native speakers such as worshipping ancestors or Confucius. Regarding this problem, I would argue that the task of cultural integration had not been perfected due to a lot of inadequate understanding about religion of the native people.

Actually, everyone knows that Catholicism worships only one God, so no other entity should be worshipped. However, in common language of many peoples, we can find out words referring to worship at different levels. In Catholicism in Europe, there are three specialized words that originate from Greek language: *latria* means attitude to worship only one God; *dulia* means worship to saints; and *hyperdulia* means worship especially for Mother Mary who is mother of Jesus.

However, when missionaries entered Vietnam, they found out that people would use the word “thờ” (worship) for many different objects such as: the king, parents, ancestors, gods, Buddha, Mother Goddess, etc. Because missionaries wanted to use the word “worship” for their God only, according to *latria attitude*, they concluded that other objects that the Vietnamese worship was wrong. That is why the fourth commandment said “to be generous and respect parents” not “worship parents”. This is the same in China that time. Missionaries in order to obey the Pope had prohibited Catholics to worship Confucius and ancestors. Chinese emperor Qian Long (1662-1736) of the Qing dynasty explained that rituals for Confucius and ancestors were civil, not religious. But the Roman Catholic Church did not agree and issued many decrees to ban these rituals.¹¹ Of course missionaries who were working in Asia knew this. Thus attitude of Italian missionaries in these two books are not too difficult to understand. I must add that not until 1939 did Pope Pio XII abolish those decrees.

5.3. Regarding Ethnology and Culture

Mission work required missionaries to be knowledgeable about language, culture and customs of the native people. Regarding the case of Vietnam, they had left a great work. Alexander de Rhodes, a missionary from Jesus order, had written a book on Vietnamese grammar¹² and a Vietnamese - Portuguese – Latin grapheme. Two French bishops, Pierre Pigneaux de Béhaine (1741-1799) and Jean-Louis Taberd (1794-1840) had composed a Vietnamese - Latin grapheme in traditional script (Nôm) and national script (Vietnamese). Another French missionary, also from Foreign Mission of Paris, Léopold Cadière, who was excellent in Vietnamese, especially language of the people living in the middle of Vietnam, had written a lot about Vietnamese language and religion. The most special thing is that he, based on different ways of speaking, had outlined a philosophy of the common Vietnamese people¹³.

That was initial efforts in studies. Nowadays, we can supplement those by observing daily activities but we cannot neglect what had happened in many centuries ago.

5.4. Primary Attitude of Missionaries

Most Western missionaries went to preach in East were generous to native people. They really wanted to share their faith with others just like Buddhist monks went every where to indoctrinate the way to get to Nirvana. Despite of native religion was very different with their faith; missionaries believed that the people there could understand the theory and then follow Catholicism. In the two books said above, authors had tried to explain that human beings shared one origin. They were all created by one God but they could be different because of differences in historical situation. Both books stated that before the Flood, divine kings in China and in other places worshipped only one Heavenly King or God, just like what were written in the Bible. After the Flood, peoples were dispersed and then their faith and custom became diversified.

Reference:

¹. *Opusculum de Sectis apud Sinenses et Tunkinenses (A small Treatise on Sects among the Chinese and Tonkinese): A Study of Religion in China and North of Vietnam in the Eighteenth Century*. Author: Adriano a Sancta Thecla, Olga Dror translates from Latin and annotates in English with co-operation of Mariya Berezovska, introduction by Lionel M. Jensen. Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 2002, 239 pages and 115 pages of original pictures.

². See this report in: Henri Chapoulie. *Aux origines d'une Eglise. Rome et les missions d'Indochine au XVII^e siècle (Origin of a Church. Roman Catholic Church and areas of mission in Indochina in the 17th century)*, Paris, 1943, Vol.1, material No. 4, p. 391.

³. It is necessary to note that Alexander de Rhodes spoke French but when he made the Vietnamese grapheme, he translated them all into Latin and Portuguese.

⁴. See: André Marillier, *Nos Pères dans la loi – Notes sur le clergé Catholique du Tonkin de 1666 à 1765* (Predecessors of our faith – Notes of Catholic missionaries in Tonkin from 1666 to 1765). *Eglises d'Asie. History Studies*, No. 2, 1995, volume No. 2, pp. 121-127. See also Olga Dror, *Ibid*, p. 24.

⁵. See: André Marillier, *Ibid*, p. 124.

⁶. Foreign Mission of Paris' archive (AMEP), No. 667.

⁷. AMEP, code V-1098.

⁸. Even scholars such as Lê Quý Đôn (1724-1784) and Phan Huy Chú (1782-1840) paid attention to such events, they did not relate them systematically and in fact, they wrote about those events after Western missionaries.

⁹. Adriano's book consists of these 5 chapters: 1. Confucianism; 2. God cult; 3. Magicians (means Taoism); 4. Fortune-telling, physiognomy, telling the good –bad hours, geography; 5. Buddhism. The sixth chapter for Christianity in China and Vietnam was not yet finished.

¹⁰. The main contents of *An overview on Three Religions* are: Overview on Confucianism; Overview on Taoism; and Overview on Buddhism.

¹¹. Pope Clemente XI issued a decree on 20 January 1709 and on 19 March 1715 (named: Ex illa die); Pope Benedicto XI issued a decree called Ex quo singulari on 11 July 1742. See: Jean Charbonnier. *Histoire des Chrétiens de Chine*, Paris 1992, pp. 180-183.

¹². Nguyễn Khắc Xuyên. *Vietnamese Grammar by de Rhodes*, 1651, Thời Điểm publisher, Garden Grove (California), 1993, 234 pages, original version in Latin pp. 199-229.

¹³. See: *Philosophie populaire annamite*, in *Anthropos – Revue internationale d' Ethnologie et de Linguistique*, Salzburg (Autria), Vol. 2 (1907), pp. 116-127 and 955-956, and Vol. 3 (1908), pp. 249-271. This paper was then reprinted in *Croyances et Pratiques religieuses des Vietnamiens*, Paris, EFEO, 1957, Vol. 3, pp. 41-205.