

OUR LADY OF LA VANG AND TRA KIEU IN VIETNAM SEEN FROM THE NON-CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT

Nguyễn Quang Hưng ^(*)

Introduction

Vietnam is a multi-religious country. In pre-historic period there were shamanism and animism. Then Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism were widespread from India and China into Vietnam during the almost one thousand years of Chinese occupation. Because of syncretism of the Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, the Vietnamese are relative tolerant in their spiritual life. There is no religious war in Vietnamese history. But since Christianity was widespread five centuries ago, the relationship between Christians and non-Christians becomes problematic. This is a so called "ritual question" because of differences between Christians and non-Christians in their world outlook, cultural-religious rituals and values. For example, traditional Vietnamese are under strong influences of "Mother Goddess" faith (Dao Mau), an art of shamanism. The Vietnamese Catholics are not exception and the veneration of the Lady is for them very and very important. But the rituals of veneration of Our Lady are different from those of traditional-Mother Goddess-faith.

Our Lady of La Vang and Tra Kieu is a pure Catholic worshipping. This is an apparition of Our Lady of La Vang more than two centuries ago in the time of a hard Christian persecution. At the moment when Catholics almost lost all hopes they saw an apparition of Our Lady. Thank to Our Lady's blessing the Catholics could overcome their difficult situation. Since then all Catholics in Vietnam are proud of Our Lady of La Vang. The Lady veneration was carried out since colonial time. Beside of La Vang Catholics are also the witnesses of later apparition of Virgin in Tra Kieu (Quang Nam province) or in some other places, etc.

In context of the instability relationship between Catholics and communists in twenty century in Vietnam the veneration of Lady could not be more a pure religious worship. In 1951 the Lady of Fatima was introduced into Vietnam as a reaction against communism. During the Vietnam War some bishops and priests wanted to

* . Assoc. Prof. Ph. D., Vietnam National University (VNU), Hanoi.

use the veneration of Lady in struggle against communism. That was why the veneration of Our Lady was prohibited by the communist authorities after Vietnamese unification in 1975. Only in last time this veneration could be continued only in La Vang, but not in Tra Kieu formally.

On our opinion, the cultural-religious factors play a definitely role in relationship between communists and Catholics generally and in reaction of the authorities to veneration of Lady particularly because of most communists are non-Christian. The analysis of the issues from the cultural-religious point of view is in the focus of this presentation.

I. History of our Lady of La Vang and Tra Kieu and tradition of Our Lady veneration in Vietnam

As the Catholics around the world are well-known with the Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal, every Catholics in Vietnam is well-known about Our Lady of La Vang which has more than two centuries history. The Vietnamese name ‘*La Vang*’ means a ‘loud calling’. This name becomes popular possibly because at that time in La Vang, which belongs to Hai Lang district, Quang Tri province today, this was almost only jungle. There were even many wild animals such as tigers, lions, bears, etc. It was very difficult and dangerous for those people who had to live in jungle for many days and weeks. No foods, no house, cold winter, Christian persecution by the Tay Son dynasty, etc. It was easy for someone to go in wrong way inside the jungle or to face wild animals, court troops or something like that. To find and to help each other in emergency they had usually to call with a loud sounding.

Our Lady of La Vang is the name which the Catholics in Vietnam usually use for the apparition of Our Lady in La Vang during a Christian persecution in 1798. La Vang is a place about 40 miles far from Hue city, now is a pilgrimage which belongs to diocese Hue in central Vietnam. That was the first time apparition of Our Lady in Vietnam. A church was built in the same place where some Catholics saw an apparition of Our Lady. Our Lady of La Vang has a history since the end of eighteen century.

In 1593, Catholicism was introduced into Quang Tri province in Central Vietnam by Diego Aduarte, a Dominican missionary. He established a mission in Dinh Cat; a place is not so far from La Vang now. The first apparition of the Lady of La Vang to the Vietnamese people was noted during a great persecution in 1798 when King Canh Thinh (reign 1792-1802), successor of Quang Trung, a founder of the Tay Son

dynasty, had to issue an anti-Christian edict to destroy all Catholic churches, seminaries and arrest all European missionaries and Vietnamese Catholics. It should be said that that was the time of a civil war between the Tay Son dynasty and Nguyen Anh, a follower of the Nguyen lords in South Vietnam. Some missionaries, especially bishop Pigneau de Behaine, had supported the lord Nguyen Anh. Pigneau de Behaine took Prince Nguyen Phuc Canh to France to call for help for Nguyen Anh. In consequence the Versailles agreement between Louis XVI and Nguyen Anh lord was signed in 1787. Automatically, the Tay Son court had to consider European missionaries and Vietnamese Catholics as their enemies. The Christian mission became a challenge for the Tay Son court⁽¹⁾.

The story of Our Lady of La Vang is following. To escape from the Tay Son court, many Christians took refuge in the jungle situated in La Vang, where they experienced hunger and sickness, and prepared themselves for martyrdom. Many Catholics sought refuge in the deep forest of La Vang. A great number of those people suffered from the bitter cold weather, lurking wild beasts, jungle sickness and hunger. At night, they often gathered in small groups to pray. Unexpectedly, one night they were visited by an apparition of a beautiful Lady in a long cape, holding a child in her arms, with two angels at her sides. The people recognized the Lady as Our Blessed Mother. Our Blessed Mother comforted them and told them to boil the leaves from the surrounding trees to use as medicine. She also told them that from that day on, all those who came to this place to pray would get their prayers heard and answered. This took place on the grass area near the big ancient banyan tree where the refugees were praying. All those who were present witnessed this miracle.⁽²⁾ From the time the Lady of La Vang first appeared, the people who took refuge there erected a small and desolate chapel in her honor. During the following years, her name was spread among the people in the region to other places. Despite its isolated location in the high mountains, groups of people continued to find ways to penetrate the deep and dangerous jungle to pray to the Lady of La Vang.⁽³⁾

In 1864 about thirty Catholics from village Co Vuu, Quang Tri province, came to La Vang. They were the first Catholic pilgrims in La Vang.⁽⁴⁾ That was short after Nham Tuat peace agreement between the Hue dynasty and French-Spanish invaders

¹. <http://www.marypages.com/Nguyen.jpg>

². <http://www.marypages.com/LaVang.htm>

³. <http://www.marypages.com/LaVang8a.jpg>

⁴. <http://www.marypages.com/LaVang.htm>

to abolish a Christian persecution. Since then Christian worshipping had formally freedom in whole Vietnamese territory.

After that more and more Catholics see La Vang as a wonderful place for pilgrims. New pilgrimages went on every year despite the continuous persecution campaign. After the persecution had officially ended, Bishop Gaspar ordered a church to be built in honor of the Lady of La Vang. Because of its precarious location and limited funding, it took 15 years for the completion of the church of La Vang. It was inaugurated by Bishop Gaspar in a solemn ceremony that participated by over 12,000 people and lasted from August 6th till 8th, 1901. The bishop proclaimed the Lady of La Vang as the Protectorate of the Catholics. In 1928 a larger church was built to accommodate the increasing number of pilgrims. But this church was destroyed in the summer of 1972 during the Vietnam War because Quang Tri province is one among main blood battles during the Vietnam War.⁽⁵⁾

The veneration of Lady is carried out more intensive during the Vietnam War in context many Catholics were mobilized into the struggle against communism. That became a symbol for religion freedom in Republic of South Vietnam in contrary with that under communist North Vietnam. In April of 1961, the Bishop Conference in South Vietnam selected the holy church of La Vang as the National Sacred Marian Center. In August of 1962, Pope John XXIII elevated the church of La Vang to the Basilica of La Vang. Since then the Lady of La Vang becomes popular not only for Vietnamese Christians. On June 19, 1988 Pope John Paul II in the canonizing ceremony of the 117 Vietnamese martyrs, publicly and repeatedly recognized the importance and significance of the Lady of La Vang and expressed a desire for the rebuilding of the La Vang Basilica to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the first apparition of the Lady of La Vang in August of 1998.⁽⁶⁾

The Lady of La Vang continues to be an inspiration for those who suffer for their faith, and she continues to invite people to pray and make sacrifices for the love of their faith. Our Lady of La Vang, pray for us. The Holy Father recently said, "In visiting the shrine of Our Lady of La Vang, who is so loved by the Vietnamese faithful, pilgrims come to entrust to her their joys and sorrows, their hopes and sufferings. In this way, they call on God and become intercessors for their families and nation, asking the Lord to infuse in the heart of all people feelings of peace,

⁵. <http://www.marypages.com/LaVang.htm>

⁶. <http://www.marypages.com/LaVang.htm>

fraternity and solidarity, so that all the Vietnamese will be more united every day in the construction of a world based on essential spiritual and moral values, where each one will be recognized because of his dignity as a son of God, and be able go in freedom and as a son toward the Father of Heaven, 'rich in mercy'".⁽⁷⁾

The Christians in Vietnam are witnesses for more apparition of Lady. Formerly called Simhapura (Lion Citadel), Tra Kieu belongs now to Da Nang diocese, another one about two hundred miles far from La Vang. It was the first capital city of Champa kingdom, serving in that capacity from the 4th to the 8th centuries. Since the fifteen century first Vietnamese came to live here after the fall of the Champa kingdom. Today nothing remains of this ancient city except the rectangular ramparts. Unfortunately all of the Cham architectures at the site have long since disappeared, with the exception of rectangular ramparts and stone banisters on Tra Kieu hill and traces of the citadel wall and various palace buildings in the nearby rice fields. Tra Kieu belongs to Quang Nam province and Christian mission was widespread here in the beginning of seventeen century. First church was built here in 1680.

After Patenotre Agreement in 1883 Vietnam became a French colony. At the beginning of colonial time there were a lot of nationalist movements against French, among them the Can Vuong. There were conflicts between Catholics and non-Christians in the Can Vuong movement under leadership of the Confucians. With the slogan "Killing the Frenchmen as well as killing Catholics" (*Bình Tây sát tả*) there were thousand Christian and non-Christian victims of this movement. Hundred villages were burnt. By the way to escape from Christian persecution some Catholics saw apparition of Our Lady in 1885. Thank to Blessing of Our Lady the Catholics were escaped from Christian persecutions by the Can Vuong movement.

During the late 19th century the French had constructed a Roman Catholic Church at the summit of Tra Kieu hill; this was replaced by a new church building in the 1960s. A large number of important arte-facts have been discovered at the site, including several fine carvings currently on display at the Cham sculpture Museum (*Bao tang Nghe thuat Dieu khac Cham*) in Da Nang. Other remains may be seen on request in the church shop.⁽⁸⁾

The Our Lady of La Vang and Tra Kieu are deep impressed on every Vietnamese Catholics. Nowhere in Asia Catholics are devoted to veneration of Lady than those

⁷. See: <http://www.marypages.com/LaVang.htm>

⁸. See: Wikipedia

are in Vietnam because of, as above said, influences of thousand years shamanist traditional Mother Goddess worship. Every year there are festivals to celebrate Our Lady of La Vang. Two La Vang and Tra Kieu are places for thousand Catholic pilgrims. Beside of Our Lady of La Vang and Tra Kieu, Vietnamese Catholics have also veneration to Our Lady in Gia Kiem (near to Saigon) and some other places. But they all are not welcome by the contemporary communist authorities. It is pity that the fact that Protestant branches are no tolerant with Vietnamese traditional culture, among them veneration of Lady, is a great hindrance for Protestant mission in this country itself.

II. Veneration of Lady of La Vang and Tra Kieu seen from a non-Christian viewpoint

The veneration of Lady of La Vang and Tra Kieu stands not outside the context of an instability relationship between Catholic Church and communist authorities in Vietnamese history in twenty century. It was true that the veneration of our Lady was carried out even during the colonial period although it was not systematic organized by the Catholic Church. But it was also true that in colonial time the veneration of our Lady was simple a pure religious worshipping.

But the situation was something changed after 1945 with establishment of Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam. In First Indochina War the veneration of Lady was almost interrupted. During the Vietnam War when Vietnam was divided this was a contrary picture on religious worshipping life in North and South Vietnam. Meanwhile hundred temples and pagodas in North Vietnam were destroyed in many ways and even traditional veneration of Mother Goddess faith was prohibited because of propaganda on Marxist materialism and atheism among government officials and peasants and because of collective movements we see a significant development of religious worshipping in South Vietnam. Overall churches and temples were repaired or new built, a relative similar situation that was in colonial time.

Moreover, the regime in Saigon had used veneration of Our Lady of La Vang for some its political motivations. When Vietnam was divided according Geneva agreement Quảng Trị province is in bound with demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam. Pilgrimage La Vang is only about twenty miles far from demilitarized zone. Saigon regime under Catholic president Ngô Đình Diệm wanted to transform La Vang into an outpost against communism. The veneration of Our Lady

of La Vang was carried out every year. La Vang became pilgrimage for many bishops and priests. Even some non-Christian government officials of the Saigon regime usually had visited this place but not for their religious worshipping. The veneration of Our Lady of La Vang became a symbol for religious freedom in South Vietnam in contrary with that under communist regime in North Vietnam and was carried out more intensive than that was during the colonial period.

Closing with political aspects is reasons for communist authorities to hinder veneration of Lady after Vietnamese unification more than twenty years long. Catholics could be continued to carry Lady worshipping here only in 1998 after a dispute between Catholic Church and authorities in August the same year. At the beginning the authorities were not welcomed with festival on the occasion of the anniversary of two centuries of apparition of Lady of La Vang. On the other side, the Catholic Church was not already to have compromise with hindrance of the authorities. To avoid conflict both sides could find at last moment a peaceful decision and the anniversary ceremony could be carried out with participation of about two hundred thousand people from all Catholic dioceses in whole Vietnam. Since then the festivals in La Vang can be carried out every year.

Seen from the first sight the reaction of the authorities in Hanoi to veneration of Lady only because the political reasons and nothing more. It should be emphasized that there were some apparitions of Lady in twenty century in Vietnam. This was an apparition of Lady in 1955 in Ba Lang (Thanh Hoa province) when Catholics were in a difficult situation of the exodus as a power struggle between communist and anti-communist forces after Geneva agreement. Thousand Catholics were already to leave North Vietnam meanwhile the communist authorities propagated their so called policy for solidarity of Catholics and non-Catholics and promised to religious freedom. The communist authorities saw this apparition of Lady in Ba Lang in 1955 in Thanh Hoa province simple as a product of some priests and CIA who had mobilized Catholic peasants to leave North Vietnam. According to communist authorities this apparition of Lady was no religious, but a pure political event.

Only after collapse of communist block Vietnam authorities carry out a more open policy toward religions. Now only Our Lady of La Vang veneration alone could be

carried out and there are thousand Catholic pilgrims came from all dioceses. The other one of Tra Kieu is still now formally hindered.

But as above we said, it is only at first sight! In reality the political aspects are only one side of the issue. The cultural-religious factors always play a role for the long-term problematical relationship between Catholic Church and native authorities in Vietnam in history and at present.⁽⁹⁾ Meanwhile in almost all countries in Southeast Asia there are conflicts between religions, such as between Muslims and Catholics in the Philippines, or between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia, or between Muslims and Buddhists in Thailand, there are almost no sharp religious conflicts in Vietnam. But conflicts between Catholic Church and native authorities nowhere in Southeast Asia are as sharp as those are in Vietnam. It was well-known Christian persecution under kings Minh Mang and Tu Duc in 19th century. Traditional Vietnamese are under strong influence of the native shamanism and animism and one of them is the "Mother Goddess" faith (*Đạo Mẫu*). Most Vietnamese are in their daily life polytheists and secularists. They pray to Buddha, but also to others Gods, too. They pray usually not for the sufferings to end or something like that in other life, but for their happiness, health, money, etc, also all things in this life. Trần Trọng Kim once said: "The Vietnamese are active in their worshipping activities, but have no devotion to any religion".

The Catholics are no exception with their veneration of Lady. The veneration of the Our Lady of La Vang is for most Christians in Vietnam very and very important. But Catholics are different from the traditional Vietnamese in some their cultural-religious rituals and values. Christians follow the ten admonishments in Old Testament, among them fourth admonishment demanded everybody to respect and to love their parents, but Christian piety is different from that of Confucian. The rituals of veneration of Lady are different from that of the traditional Goddess veneration. Because of monotheism Catholics, for example, consider Virgin not as Goddess, but Mother of Christ and there is no cult, but only veneration of Lady. The position of Virgin is something lower than that of Christ. Moreover, the statue of Lady with

⁹. See: Nguyễn Quang Hưng, *The Analysis of Influences of Factors upon Vietnamese Policy to Catholicism Seen from the Cultural-Religious Point of View*, Journal Social Sciences and Humanities, N^o. 4/2006, pp. 10-21.

partly European architecture looks something different from that of traditional Vietnamese Goddess.

In fact the “Ritual Question” (*Vấn đề nghi lễ*) has not been systematic analyzed. It appeared in Vietnam since the beginning of the Christian mission. First edicts against the new religion were given in seventeen century by the lords Trinh in North Vietnam (*Đàng Ngoài*) and Nguyen in South Vietnam (*Đàng Trong*) most because of ‘ritual question’. For example, an edict was given by the Trinh Trang in 1630 which was directed against the new religion because of Christian conception on monogamy. Trinh Trang could not accept the Christian monogamy because he and some mandarins in court had a lot of concubines.⁽¹⁰⁾ It could to say, most edicts against Catholicism in seventeen and eighteen centuries were because of ‘ritual question’, also because of cultural-religious factors.

In the 19th century the issue became more and more serious because the Nguyen dynasty had considered Confucianism as the “state religion”. Usually in a Confucian state, the emperor as the son of Heaven (*Thiên Tử*) and has an absolute power. Loyalty to emperor (*Trung Quân*) is the first Confucian virtue (after that comes the piety to parents and ancestor as the second virtue) and that is not acceptable for Christians. For Christians not Confucian emperor, but Christ in any cases comes first. If Vietnam one day became Christianized country, the legitimacy of the emperor and his Confucian dynasty could be challenged, thus the question about rituals was also political. We will briefly examine the ritual differences. From a cultural-religious point of view Christians and non-Christians here remained relative independent from each other, as displayed in the following table:

Traditional non-Christians	Christians
Under influences of traditional East Asian Confucian culture	Under influences of Christian-European culture
Loyal to emperor (<i>Trung Quân</i>) above all	Loyal to emperor, but Christ comes first
Patriarchy: male conducted ancestor veneration and property inheritance	Gender equality: Woman is emancipated; monogamy.

¹⁰. See: Alexandre de Rhodes, *Lịch sử vương quốc Đàng Ngoài* (History of the Kingdom North Vietnam), translated from French by Hong Nhue, Ho Chi Minh city, 1994, p. 124.

Parents-children: piety with ancestor veneration	Parents - children: piety but without ancestor veneration ⁽¹¹⁾
Cultural-religious life: polytheism, not devout to any religion	Cultural-religious life: monotheism, devout
Religiously inclusive and tolerant	Religiously exclusive
Religious activities: private, without church organization	Religious activities: collective, with church organization
Relationship with God: a relative distance	Relationship with God: an absolute distance
Hierarchy: by age and social position	Hierarchy: by church position

During the colonial time the Can Vuong movement under leadership of Confucian scholars with a slogan “Killing the Frenchmen as well as killing Catholics” was not without cultural-religious factors. The worrying about the end of Confucian values and civilization when Vietnam nation lost sovereignty was a main factor for Confucian scholars to mobilize the movement. Not Frenchmen, but Vietnamese Catholics were most victims of this movement.

The situation is relatively the same when communist conquest to power in Vietnam in 1945. Most communists are non-Christian and have another world outlook than Christians. Many of them were born in traditional Confucian or Buddhist families and they are in their daily life under influence of traditional Vietnamese culture. Moreover, it could to say, the communists are not so call ‘normal non-Christian’. It is well-known religion had played a very important role in the Vietnamese culture and history. Buddhism and then Confucianism were state religions in Vietnam almost one thousand years, from eleventh to nineteen century. In any case nobody could deny the fact that Vietnam is Buddhist relatively similar as Thailand or Confucian country relatively similar as Korea. It is impossible to say on Vietnamese culture without religions and beliefs.

But despite of those de facto and in contrary to Christians the Vietnamese communists wanted to build a so called atheist society in which any role of religion is denied. In this question the communists have learnt nothing from Vietnamese history. First time in Vietnamese history the role of religion in society development

¹¹. The Vietnamese Catholics were allowed to carry out their ancestor veneration only after the Second Vatican Council.

was formally so underestimated that was totally denied by them. For the communists there is not God as a Supreme Being, no Creation and no supernatural forces. In the eyes of communists they all are only human fictions. All real things are only natural, even minds, souls are only reflects, images of all social-cultural conditions by the men, and depend from economical conditions. With the doctrine of economical materialist, Karl Marx, "Religion is opium for people" the communists in Vietnam were before the collapse of communist block under strong influence of the Soviet Constitution of 1936 in the religious affairs. All traditional religions and beliefs, among them Goddess Mother worshipping, was considered simple as superstitions. Under communist regime the ideological-political and cultural-religious aspects in their conception on religion are closed each with other. From cultural-religious point of view the gaps between communists and Catholics are wider and more serious than that between Catholics and traditional non-Christians.

There have been some changes in both Christian and non-Christian communities in the last few decades after collapse of communist block. On the one side, the role and position of Marxism in Vietnamese society now is not strong as it was before collapse of communist block although Communist party of Vietnam (CPV) continues to consider Marxism as a state ideology. Formally, CPV continues now to see Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought as its ideological guidelines. But in practice there are at least three factors to reduce the role and position of Marxist-Leninist ideology in contemporary Vietnamese society.

Firstly, a development of a market economy demands the changes in administration and political institutions. The authorities are looking for a so called combination between Marxism and market economy, a utopia. If Marxist doctrine on relationship between economy and politics is true, a socialist state (superstructure) could not be based on a market private capitalist national economy (infrastructure) and a gap between them is unavoidable.

Secondly, in a post- cold war globalization we see a boom of nationalism instead of Marxist proletariat internationalism. Even the Marxist theory of class struggle that had strong influences upon international politics during the cold war, is now only one of the aspects in development of international relationship; in many cases peaceful co-existence and co-operation in international relationships between nations are in priority. In many cases not class interests or ideology of whatever political party, of a

social class or stratum but nationalism, national interest determinate international politics.

Thirdly, Marxist conception on religion has now only little influence in Vietnam. This is a boom of religious activities among all Vietnamese social strata in last decades. Almost all religions, especially Protestantism and Buddhism are increasing their adherents. Not only peasants, but also government officials and businessmen visit pagoda and temples to pray for their happiness. There were only 300-350 thousand Protestants in 1990. In 2009 there are about 1.5 million adherents of this religion.

The collapse of communist block demands the Vietnam government to carry out a more open policy regards religion. In November 1990 the Political Bureau of CPV gave a special Resolution No. 24 concerned to religious affairs. This was a turning-point in government policy to religions. First time the CPV recognizes some cultural-religious values and religious ethics for development of society. Some pagoda and temples which were destroyed during the Vietnam War and collective movements are now repaired or new built. It is undoubted that the leaders of CPV today, so called 'red capitalists', are not so materialistic and atheistic in comparison with that in post-colonial period. In any case, the role of Marxist-Leninist ideology in contemporary Vietnamese society is not in gold age as that was before the collapse of communist block. The formal role of Marxism-Leninism as state ideology is in Vietnam now only a temporary decision for the legitimacy of CPV at this moment. On the non-Christian side, in context of the Renovation (*Doi Moi*) and especially the collapse of the Communist block, Vietnam state carries out a more open policy regarding religion. We see worshipping overall, in state and private offices and institutions, or in mass media, etc.

On the other side, the Second Vatican Council opens the Catholic Church up to other religions and cultures. Even dialogues between Christians and communists were welcome. In reality there were some dialogues between Christians and Marxists in Europe were carried out in Germany, France, etc. On the lights of the Second Vatican Council Vietnamese Catholics are allowed now to venerate ancestors. Nowadays the Catholic Church in Vietnam is very active in integration with traditional Vietnamese cultural values and rituals. Today we see, for example, Catholics use joss sticks or white mourning heard band in funeral. They do the relative same traditional steps in marriage ceremony (offer marriage to a girl, to

be engaged to marry, etc.) as non-Christians. Instead of Gothic or Baroque architectures, some church buildings have relative similar architectures as that of temples or pagodas.

The cultural-religious gap between Christians and non-Christians are now not as problematic as it was before a half of century ago. However, significant differences and gaps between Christians and non-Christians still exist and they can be solved only in long-term.

Conclusion

In any case the cultural-religious factors play a very important role in relationships between Catholics and non-Christians as well as between Catholic Church and native authorities in Vietnam in history and at present. The differences between Christian and traditional Vietnamese rituals and values are consequences of introducing of monotheistic Christianity in Confucian region, including Vietnam.

Our Lady of La Vang and Tra Kieu worshipping is very important for Vietnamese Catholics. The un-welcoming of the Hanoi authorities toward veneration of Lady of La Vang and Tra Kieu is not without the cultural-religious reasons. The cultural-religious factors alone could not cause directly conflicts between Catholic Church and authorities, but they can play a definite role to increase or otherwise to dissolve those. The veneration of Our Lady of La Vang and Tra Kieu is originally a pure religious worshipping and should be not used for any political motivations. /.