

KINH CATHOLIC COMMUNITY WITH THE CATHOLIC DEVELOPMENT IN ETHNIC MINORITY REGIONS IN KONTUM DIOCESE

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When Catholicism was preached in Kontum, Kinh Catholic community was established in Kontum. The villages of Kinh Catholics were established from various sources but they have had common character that is they have been a basis for development of Catholicism in ethnic areas.

The origins of villages of Kinh Catholics in Kontum have been diversified: Some villages were established from believers and relatives of Kinh priests; some villages were established from Kinh people who were sold into slavery in ethnic areas then clergymen redeemed them to establish the villages of Kinh people; some villages were established from Catholics of Bình Định province who emigrated to Kontum in Văn Thân movement(1885); inhabitants of village divided into some groups to establish new villages.

When speaking of the origin of Kinh people in Kontum, the book “*Kontum people*” Nguyễn Kinh Chi and Nguyễn Đồng Chi wrote that “Annam people had lived in Kontum 85 years ago. Forest and mountain in Kontum had been danger nobody dared to go this area. When King Tự Đức forbid Catholicism, many Catholics followed Fathers to refuge in Kontum. Because working for living in Kontum was easy so they settled

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in Kontum. Many of them got married to native people so many persons of mixed blood were born. Many people of Quảng Nam province were kidnapped by Xodang people. Fathers redeemed them. More and more Kinh people lived in Kontum, especially in 1885-1886, 200 Kinh Catholics refuged in Kontum and established new villages”¹

In the region of Bana people. Tân Hương village (now Thống Nhất precinct, Kontum city) was established in 1874. Most people of this village were followers of priest Nguyễn Do and slaves who were redeemed by priests. At first this village called as Trại Mít then it was changed into Gò Mít in 1909 and 1926 it was called as Tân Hương. On this problem priest P. Dourishboure wrote that “The redemption of slaves that set up families and eventually established the Catholic villages was followed by missionary points. When we had condition we redeemed slaves, they cultivated the fields which we had cleared. After converting to Christianity they became the nucleus of the new Christian community”².

Phượng Nghĩa village (now Thắng Lợi precinct, Kontum city) was established in 1882 by the Kinh Catholics who followed priest Hoa to set up new village. Then many Kinh Catholics from delta to settle in this village to found a parish.

Phượng Quý village (now Vinh Quang commune, Kontum city) was established in 1887 by slaves in Quang Nam who were redeemed

¹ Nguyễn Kinh Chi and Nguyễn Đồng Chi *Ethnic people in Kontum*, Huế Publishing House, 1937 p. 9-10

² P. Dourishboure. *People in Hồ village*, Đà Nẵng publishing House, 2008 p.140

by priest Poyet Trinh and other Quảng Nam people. In 1933 the population of this village was 400 people.

Phường Hòa village (now Đoàn Kết commune, Kontum city) was established in 1892 by people who were in Trại Lý village followed priest Nicolas Cậ to cross Đăk Bal river to grow rice in Kontum. In 1993 the population of this village was 300 people. Many people from different places converged to live in this village.

In region of Xơđăng people: Ngô Trang village (now Đăk La commune, Đăk Hà district, Kontum province) was established in 1885. Inhabitants of this village were Quảng Nam people who were arrested by Xơđăng people then they were redeemed by priest Ferrgoyen Hương and some Catholics of Bình Định. In 1934 in this region there was another Kinh Catholic Community, it was Hà Mòn village (Now Hà Mòn commune, Đăk Hà district).

In the region of Giarai people: Ngô Thanh village (now Hòa Bình commune, Kontum city) was established in 1925. At first this village has only servants of priest Kemlin Văn. Phước Cần village was formally established in 1929 by Kinh people who had lived in delta. Until 1941 in the region of Giarai people in Gia Lai province there were 19 Catholic villages of Kinh people.

Aside from above villages in Kontum there were two Kinh villages, they were not Catholic villages. They were Trung Lương village (established in 1924) and Lương Khê village (established in 1927).³

³ Võ Chuẩn. Kontum province. Huế Publishing House, 1933 p. 30-31

When moving to Kontum, Kinh people established hamlets and villages. They took culture of delta with them to the Central Highlands. At the same time they acquired cultural elements of the Central Highlands to create their special cultural characteristics.

On the administration: beside system of village office as in delta, in the village of Kinh people there were other special positions such as: the head of recruitment who recruited people to establish village; the manager of temple and pagoda; the manager of fields; officiating priest of village; the manager of worship in hamlet⁴

On economic life: in the first day, Kinh people often settled in places where rice wet were cultivated. Because of good land, people farmed one crop a year they had enough rice to eat a year. Because “ although peasants did one crop a year they were not afraid of bad harvest. By one basket of rice seeds peasants cropped 25 baskets of rice in bad land. In good land peasants could crop 75-80 baskets of rice without fertilizer”⁵. Besides farming, Kinh people in Kontum did many other jobs. For example wood work, brickwork, fishing, wine brewery... Among jobs of Kinh people, trader and exchange with ethnic people were most prosperity. Local people called these jobs as “commerce”. Traders brought the goods to sell to local people in villages. Then fairs were gradually established. In 1935 , in Kontum city there were 6 fairs⁶.

Because of severe weather condition , the houses of Kinh people in Kontum were made by bamboo, thatch and straw. Because Kontum

⁴ Võ Chuẩn. Kontum province. Huế Publishing House, 1933, p. 31

⁵ Võ Chuẩn. Kontum province. Huế Publishing House, 1933. p. 35

⁶ Nguyễn Kinh Chi and Nguyễn Đồng Chi *Ethnic people in Kontum*, Huế Publishing House, 1937 p.16

had not sea and road traffic was difficulties so the main food of Kinh people was meat. Style of dress, voice of Kinh people did not change. However, Kinh people exchanged culture with local inhabitants . Many ethnic people learnt rice cultivation of Kinh people . Kinh people learnt how to carry the goods and child from ethnic people.

Besides cultural, economic and social aspects, the reciprocal impacts of ethnic groups in Kontum and Kinh people still manifested clearly in religious aspect. The impact of the Kinh Catholic community on Catholic propagation in the ethnic regions were reflected in following aspects :

The village of Kinh people were early found in accordance with arrangement of clergymen so almost of villages of Kinh people were in key places as Kon-Maha, Touer, Hà Nòn, Kon Trang Menei ---and in places of main three ethnic groups in Kontum.

Most people who emigrated to Kontum were Catholics. Although their origins were different but when they entered the village, they had to be Catholics. Clergymen organized of life of Catholic in favor of the missionaries work.

It was more important that the clergymen intended to develop economy and stabilized society and religious life in Catholic villages of Kinh people. Clergymen hoped that the establishment of Kinh Catholic villages influenced on the religious life of ethnic villages. The author of book *development of Catholicism in Kontum* wrote that “Fathers establishes parishes of Annam people because this region were fallow

and ethnic people were work –shy... Fathers wanted that ethnic people learnt Annam people how to farm and venerate Catholicism”⁷.

The villages of Kinh people were examples for the villages of ethnic people. The Kinh villages were stable but the villages of ethnic people were instable (because ethnic people often left their villages) . The life and work of Kinh people were very good but ethnic people were often bad because they often suffer from failure of crops, die of famine and conflict. Kinh people very respected Catholicism but ethnic people often missed Catholicism and returned to their old belief. Kinh people usually settled in the places where land was fertility and they settled permanently in selected areas. Ethnic people who are nomadic habits “shifting cultivation of wandering hill tribes. This influenced on their life and their religion. . The author of “*development of Catholicism in Kontum*” recognized that “ ethnic people are habit of change of village so priests met many difficulties because they had to build many new churches. If they wanted to build solid church they had to establish strong Annam parish”⁸.

The village of Kinh people were modern for the organization of life and agricultural production. The method of cultivation of Kinh people were new and useful to ethnic people. Many ethnic people learnt the method of cultivation of Kinh people”⁹.

In 1884 Mr. Navelle investigated in Kontum and he remarked on Kinh people “Annam people become colonialists , they propagated an

⁷ P. Ban and S Thiết *Development of Catholicism*. Achieves in The library of Kontum province, p. 236

⁸ P. Ban and S Thiết *Development of Catholicism*. Achieves in The library of Kontum province, p. 224

⁹ Võ Chuẩn Kontum province. Huế Publishing House. 1933 p. 35

unique civilization in Kontum. We have to recognize that only Annam people could develop in this region because they know how to resist severe weather condition. They thirsted for well-off life.”¹⁰

Because of many reasons ethnic people often followed or left Catholicism in the past. But the most important reason was that ethnic people could leave superstitious action or in other words, the traditional customs drew them from the ties of Catholicism. But the Kinh Catholic community was an example for the respect of Catholicism. We have not found the document on leaving of Catholicism of Kinh people. Clergymen were interested in establishing the villages of Kinh Catholics because “ they wanted ethnic people to learn how Annam preserved Catholicism and grew rice”¹¹. Priest Nguyễn Hoàng Sơn highly appreciated the role of Kinh people in missionary work in ethnic minority region. He wrote that “ Kontum diocese was established in 1932 with about 20. 000 believes. Among them there were nearly 4000 Kinh Catholics. Kontum diocese had 21 parishes and 164 Catholic communities. Missionary works spread gradually because Catholic communities were often far from each other. Catholic communities were solid foundations for development of Catholicism in ethnic minority regions”¹²

¹⁰ Nguyễn Kinh Chi and Nguyễn Đồng Chi *Ethnic people in Kontum*, Huế Publishing House, 1937 p35

¹¹ P. Ban and S Thiệt *Development of Catholicism*. Archives in The library of Kontum province, p. 236

¹² Priest Nguyễn Hoàng Sơn. *Kỷ niệm đệ nhất bách chu niên (1908- 2008)* . Training school for Yao Phu organization in 2008 p. 25

