

Local Administrators and the Nguyễn Dynasty's Suppression of Christianity during the Reign of Minh Mạng 1820–1841

MAKINO Motonori

Introduction

The most severe attempts to suppress Christianity in the history of Vietnam were made during the reigns of Nguyễn 阮 Dynasty Emperors Minh Mạng 明命 (1820–1841) and Tự Đức 嗣德 (1847–1883).¹⁾ Records kept by Church members abound with descriptions of the Nguyễn Dynasty's various tactics and policies to combat their religion. Despite the many martyrs who suffered under the government's crackdown, all of these accounts end happily ever after with the Church's final "victory and glory" in the name of religious freedom.²⁾ In contrast, we observe interpretation commonly adopted in the political histories of professional academics which views the suppression of Christianity as the initial provocation for France's military invasion of Vietnam and eventual colonization of the region.³⁾ Much of this research literature takes on an anti-colonialist hue, with analysis criticizing the expansion of the Church's power and authority within local society. Although expressing completely opposite views on the subject, both narratives commonly share the motif of the pre-modern feudalistic emperors and bureaucrats of the Nguyễn Dynasty in confrontation with the "anti-establishment" forces of Christianity.

The interpretation of the cause of religious suppression also revolves around these two opposing views. For example, in what has been called the classic work on the study of the Nguyễn Dynasty, Alexander Woodside concludes that the Nguyễn Dynasty's attempts at religious suppression stemmed from the Christian community's existence as a departure from the Dynasty's Chinese political model and as an obstacle to its efforts at national integration and political centralization.⁴⁾

In more recent research, Jacob Ramsay has focused on the socio-economic aspects of religious suppression.⁵⁾ At the onset of its efforts at sup-

pression, the Nguyễn Dynasty had found itself beset by the widespread practice of bribery involving Christian communities and local administrators, which for the Church functioned as the most conventional means of avoiding persecution. However, from the mid-1830s on, together with the expansion of France's foreign missionary efforts, a huge amount of funds to support them flowed into Vietnam, causing a sudden sharp rise in the price of bribes. Consequently, the increasing greed of local administrators ultimately led to the escalation of social tension between the two groups. Thanks to Ramsay's dynamic analysis of the situation, heretofore unknown relationships that existed between Christian communities and local administrators have become somewhat clearer. However, Ramsay's uncritical acceptance of the conventional conceptualization of a bureaucracy stalwart in implementing the Nguyễn Dynasty's Chinese model pitted against Christian forces threatening that very establishment and his depiction of the relationship between the two as simply pecuniary both require reexamination. Moreover, Ramsay has presented his argument concerning the whole Christian community of Vietnam based on an analysis geographically limited to the central and southern regions known as "Cochinchina," while avoiding detailed consideration of the northern region, Tonkin, as evidenced by the absence in his work of primary source materials describing the Church and local bureaucracy in that part of the kingdom.

As a matter of fact, the beginnings of Christianity in Vietnam are deeply rooted in the Tonkin region.⁶⁾ In particular, the Nam Định 南定 region of the Red River Delta has a tradition of Christian evangelism dating back to the 16th century, and despite frequent attempts by the government at suppression, a significant number of Christian communities was formed over a long historical process.⁷⁾ Even as Vietnam entered the decades of the mid-19th century, it is difficult to say that Christian churches had not ceased to constitute an anti-establishment force within their surrounding regional communities.⁸⁾

In order to investigate the relationship between local administrators and the Christian communities under their jurisdiction, it is necessary to understand, for example, religious distinctions and the personal ideas and prejudices of individual bureaucrats, given the fact that the relationship concerns Christianity as a set of ideas and beliefs. To do so, we will have to analyze the relationships of local administrators to the central government, in addition to problems unique to the regions they administered. There is no doubt that suppression of any kind does have a clear politi-

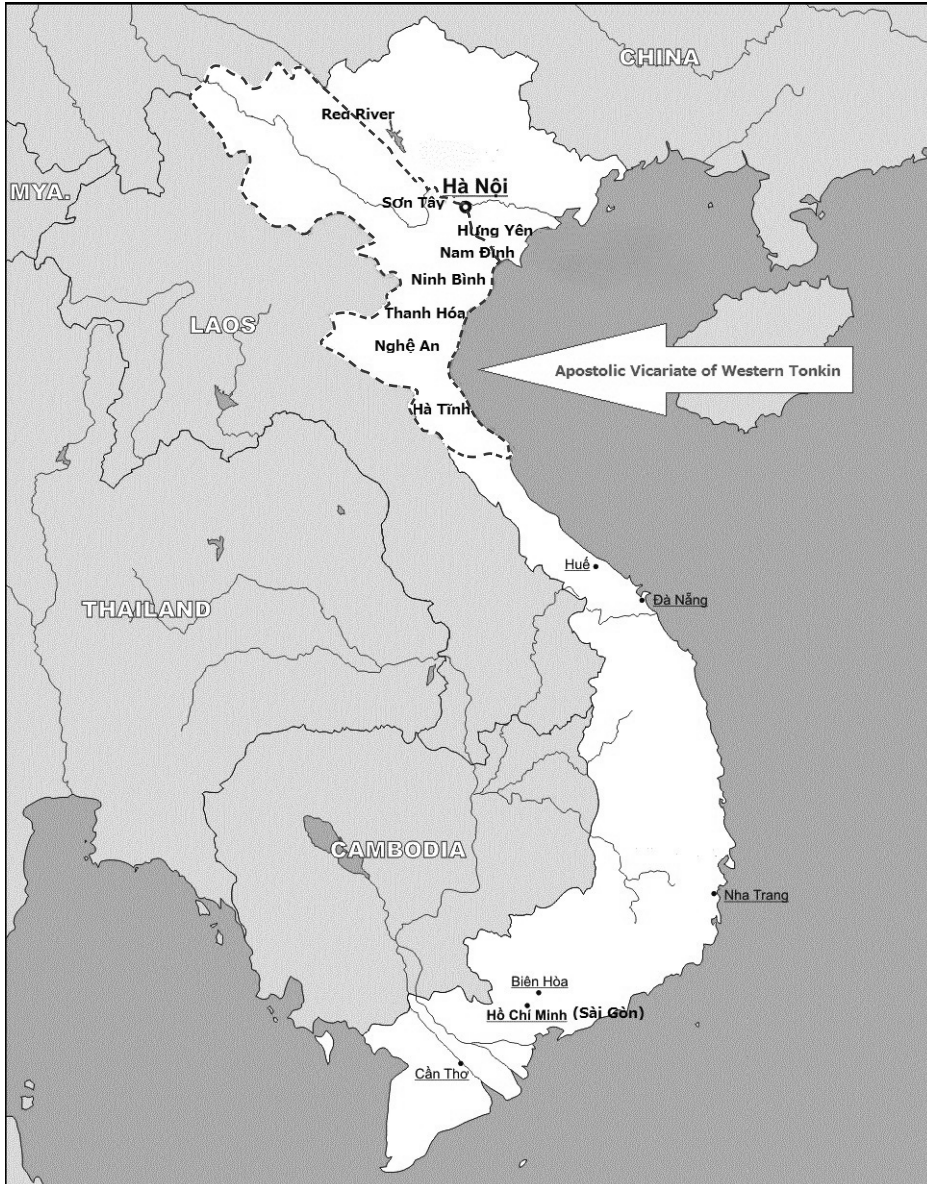
cal and economic background; however, when considering the religious question, a far more multi-faceted approach is necessary.

Assuming the leading role in the conversion of 19th century Vietnamese society to Christianity was played by the group known as La Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris (The Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, hereafter MEP), the present article relies heavily on the source materials in the Archives of that mission (hereafter AME), which have been gradually made available to the public since the late 1990s. In particular, the article draws from handwritten correspondence of its members,⁹⁾ and a portion of that same correspondence that was compiled for the publication *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* (hereafter APF), the annual report of La Société pour la Propagation de la Foi (The Society for the Propagation of the Faith).¹⁰⁾ For the Nguyễn Dynasty's side of the story, we have depended upon the work *Đại Nam thực lục* 大南寔錄 (Chronicles of the Nguyễn Dynasty)¹¹⁾ and a number of Sino-Vietnamese (Hán) titles kept in the archives of the Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies (Viện Nghiên cứu Hán Nôm 漢喃研究院).¹²⁾ Constant reference to both sets of source materials will enable as rigorous an analysis as possible of the true nature of the incidents which occurred regionally during the government's campaign of suppression.

From the 19th century to the present day, the Christian community of Vietnam has never exceeded 10% of the total population.¹³⁾ In 1832, just prior to the all-out efforts made by the government under Emperor Minh Mạng to suppress Christianity, the number of adherents had been put at between 400 and 500 thousand throughout Vietnam, between 300 and 400 thousand of whom were believed to have resided in the northern regions.¹⁴⁾ The Church at that time in northern Vietnam, which had been divided into two Apostolic Vicariates along the Red River, was dominated by the MEP's *Vicariat Apostolique du Tonkin Occidental* (Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin) in the western half and by the Spanish Dominican Order's *Vicariat Apostolique du Tonkin Oriental* (Apostolic Vicariate of Eastern Tonkin) in the eastern half. The geographical foci of this study, the Nam Định and Nghệ An 乂安 regions, were located in the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin.

Alain Forest, utilizing the AME source materials, has focused on this Vicariate in clarifying the social and political relationship between the formation of the Christian community and the local administration under the Lê-Trịnh 黎鄭 Regime during the 17th and 18th centuries.¹⁵⁾ According to Forest, as soon as the Lê-Trịnh Regime's central government in Hà

Nội issued its order prohibiting Christianity, enforcement was stepped up in the Red River Delta region centered around Nam Định, while in Nghệ An the military commander and eunuchs appointed as the region's governors chose to protect local Churches by all means possible.¹⁶⁾ The



Map Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin

reasons cited by Forest for the Nghệ An governors' decisions were 1) the large number of Christian converts among the troops and their families in this historically highly militarized region and 2) the need for the support of the military by civil administrators in successfully governing the region.¹⁷⁾

Following up on Forest's research, this writer continued the investigation regarding the Christian suppression policy pursued in Tonkin under the Tây Sơn regime (1788-1802) and found the respective responses to prohibition orders by the local administrators of the Red River Delta and Nghệ An regions to possess the same marked differences as under the previous Lê-Trịnh regime.¹⁸⁾ Now it is only appropriate to examine whether or not there was any change in the response and attitudes of local administrators in the two regions regarding the Christian suppression policies implemented under the Nguyễn Dynasty during the early 19th century, for the purpose of gaining as long a term perspective as possible on the kind of social change taking place in Tonkin from previous eras.

In concrete terms, we will focus on four top level bureaucrats dispatched to govern the Nam Định and Nghệ An regions during the Minh Mạng Era and investigate how each responded to the central government's directives to implement its religious prohibition policies. Each official being a top level administrator, their performances can be evaluated either by the MEP archival materials that name them specifically or by verifying them in the Vietnamese records. They will be evaluated on the basis of what kind of impact they exerted on the predicament in which the Tonkin Christian communities under their jurisdictions found themselves during the first half of the 19th century.

1. Nam Định and Nghệ An Prior to 1838

1-1. The Christian Bureaucrats of Nghệ An: The Friendship between "a Certain Christian Civil Official" and the French Missionary Masson

It was in 1825 that the Minh Mạng government began its program of suppressing the Christian communities of Vietnam by issuing a series of directives ordering prohibitions regarding the disembarkation of European missionaries,¹⁹⁾ confining them within the capital of Huế,²⁰⁾ and the like. Though merely one aspect of the promotion of a centralization policy based on Confucian ideas about enlightened authority and governance, this campaign of suppression not only weakened the political influ-

ence of local administrations who were supporting Christian forces inside the system, but also dealt a violent blow to the Church itself.²¹⁾

There was one exception, however, and that was the Christian community of Nghê An, which enjoyed peace and tranquility throughout those turbulent times under the auspices of a high level civil servant who was himself a Christian and strove to protect his fellow adherents. According to a report submitted by the French missionary Masson in 1828,²²⁾ since the appointment of a Christian premier mandarin in Nghê An, peace and security were visited upon every *chrétienté* (Christian settlement) under his jurisdiction. The official in question had issued notifications to each settlement stating, "In the discharge of all affairs, the act of forcing Christians to participate in superstitious village rituals is hereby forbidden."²³⁾ That same year, a missionary by the name of Jeantet reported that during the past three years he counted in Nghê An more sacraments of Penance and Eucharist than had ever been conducted, and stated "the level of religious activity has not changed from before suppression was introduced."²⁴⁾

In 1830, this same top level official brought his wife and children, who were also pious adherents to the Faith, to attend Mass said by Masson. They were also accompanied by the official's entire administrative staff. After Mass, Masson conversed at length with the official, expressing gratitude for the tolerance which he had constantly shown towards the Christian community.²⁵⁾ We also find in Masson's correspondence the words, "Even if this high level official is unable to avoid attending heathen rituals due to his official capacity, his faith is strong, and he performs all that is expected of any Christian," which are followed by praise for the Christian piety of his wife and the diligence displayed in their home life.²⁶⁾ According to Masson, since the official in question was of impeccable character and enjoyed the complete trust of Emperor Minh Mạng, he was highly respected by both Christians and non-Christians alike; and in sacrificing his bureaucratic career for his faith in Christianity, he had decided "to become like a blind man or a cripple [for Christ]."²⁷⁾ Masson states, "Thanks to the protection he has given us, we are able to conduct our missionary duties as freely as if we were living in France."²⁸⁾ A colleague of Masson's by the name of Journoud also reported, "Because the top bureaucrat of Nghê An is a Christian, the region's clergy and laity conduct their religious activities under peaceful conditions, a manner completely different from other regions."²⁹⁾ As to whom this high level Christian official actually was, the mission sources provide no clues as to his name, thus obliging us to turn to the Vietnamese sources for verification.

Hồ Hựu

According to an entry in the *Chronicles of the Nguyễn Dynasty* (hereafter *CND*) dated the sixth month of the ninth year of the Minh Mạng Era (hereafter written as Minh Mạng 9.6),³⁰⁾ we find one Hồ Hựu 胡佑 being appointed to the office of Hiệp trấn 協鎮³¹⁾ from that of Tham hiệp 參協³²⁾ of Nghệ An. Since the post of Hiệp trấn was at that time a top level civil appointment, second only to that of Trấn thủ 鎮守 (Provincial Governor), there is a fairly strong possibility that he was the “top level Christian official” mentioned by the French missionaries. Secondly, his administrative career corresponds well with a number of statements in the missionary records.

Let us begin with the statement made by a missionary named Retord, who arrived from France in 1832. After departing Macao and landing at Ninh Bình 寧平 on the northern coast, he was escorted to his destination by a Christian military officer who had been sent by a top level government official, also a Christian. This official had been asked by Bishop Harard of the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin to ensure Retord Safety.³³⁾ Later during the same year, Bishop Harvard and Masson were provided with an official escort in performing a grand Easter celebration at Phúc Nhạc 福樂, which lay within the jurisdiction of that same Ninh Bình top level Christian official.³⁴⁾ It is this same Christian bureaucrat of Ninh Binh whom we saw previously active in safeguarding the Church in the Nghệ An region and whom we have identified as Hồ Hựu, who according to the *CND* entry dated Minh Mạng 12 (1831). 10 was confirmed as the new Inspector General of Ninh Binh.³⁵⁾

During the tenth month of the following year, Hồ Hựu was appointed Inspector General of Sơn Tây 山西 province and assumed the duties of Provincial Governor of Sơn Tây, Hưng Hóa 興化 and Tuyên Quang 宣光 provinces, in an effort to quell the rebellion raised by Lê Duy Lương 黎維良, which spread through the hill region of the northwest.³⁶⁾ In a report submitted at the beginning of 1833 by a missionary by the name of Murette, who was in charge of the Vicariate's missionary effort in the northwest, we find the statement, “The local governor, who is a Christian, was instrumental in securing the release of a priest held captive by a group of non-Christians.”³⁷⁾ That same year, despite the prohibitions on Christianity ordered by the Emperor, Murette was able to confer with this same governor for the purpose of receiving his protection wherever

possible and thus preventing the destruction of four Church facilities³⁸⁾ operated by *Le Maison de Dieu*.³⁹⁾

Meanwhile, Hồ Hựu's pacification campaign against the Lê Duy Lương rebels ended in failure, resulting in his being charged with dereliction of duty. He was relieved of his office and put on trial before the criminal court in Huế, which sentenced him to death, but then suspended the sentence.⁴⁰⁾ That same year Masson wrote:

The top Christian official who had made such a tremendous contribution to the Church in Nghệ An was appointed general in the imperial army for the purpose of pacifying a rebellion that arose far away from Tonkin. Being unable to accomplish the task, he was marched back to Phú Xuân 富春 [Huế] on foot to face criminal charges.⁴¹⁾

Masson also states that he sent a member of his congregation to meet the officer on his way back to Huế in order to express his condolences and tell him how indebted he was to him for the kindness and tolerance with which he had treated his flock.⁴²⁾

In light of the above incidents, there should be little doubt that between 1828 and 1833, within the region from Nghệ An to Ninh Bình and along the hill region of the northwest, the highly placed Christian bureaucrat who was said to have protected the area's Christian communities and lent support to the missionary effort was none other than Hồ Hựu. As a top official of the Minh Mạng era, Hồ Hựu utilized his status and authority to the fullest wherever he was appointed, in order to protect the missionary clergymen and their congregations in every way imaginable.⁴³⁾ Of special note is the deep personal friendship that developed between Hồ Hựu and Masson during the former's three years as Provincial Inspector of Nghệ An. This relationship enabled all the parishes of the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin under his jurisdiction, especially the Nghệ An region, to enjoy an atmosphere of missionary work free from the violence and obstruction that terrorized the rest of the kingdom.

1-2. Anti-Christian Bureaucrats: Anti-Government Activities and the Church in Nam Định

In addition to forming the center of the MEP's Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin, where its bishop resided from the end of the 17th century, the Nam Định region also formed the center of the Spanish Domini-

can's Apostolic Vicariate of Eastern Tonkin on the border demarcated by the Red River. The latter vicariate became a hotbed of rebellion, stirred up by pirates and bandits based in the hill regions of Tonkin after invading from the coastal areas. The rebellion raised by Phan Bá Vành 潘伯鑠 during 1826-1827 was especially destructive to rural villages in northern Vietnam during the first half of the Minh Mạng era.⁴⁴⁾ It was thought that many Christians had also participated in this rebellion. According to reports submitted by the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin missionaries, a Christian, who was in police custody as a suspected rebel, testified that two bishops of the Apostolic Vicariate of Eastern Tonkin and ten Vietnamese priests were involved. Minh Mạng dispatched fifty of his agents to arrest these rebels, indicating that the Dominican European missionaries were being targeted.⁴⁵⁾ Deeply shocked by the death of Nam Định Governor Lê Mậu Cúc 黎茂菊 on the battlefield,⁴⁶⁾ the Dynasty forces surrounded the Dominican settlement of Trà Lũ 茶縷 village, the base of operations for Phan Bá Vành's rebel army. Only after burning it to ground was the rebellion pacified.⁴⁷⁾

Thus as far as the Nguyễn regime was concerned, the Nam Định region was not only a Christian stronghold, but also a gathering place for anti-government rebel forces. One high official who had been dispatched to Nam Định in the government's efforts to quell Phan's rebellion was Hoàng Kim Xán 黃金燦, a Minister of Justice 刑部尚書 who took command of the operation as Commander-in-Chief 經略使.⁴⁸⁾

Hoàng Kim Xán: Confidant of Minh Mạng and Anti-Christian Bureaucrat

Hoàng Kim Xán, a native of Phú Yên 富安 province in central Vietnam, had been a civil official at court since the founding of the Nguyễn Dynasty by Emperor Gia Long 嘉隆. Due to Minh Mạng's deep trust in him, Hoàng Kim Xán was appointed to such top central government posts as head of the Justice and Defense Departments, and his son, Hoàng Tá Viêm 黃佐炎, was married to the Emperor's fifth daughter.⁴⁹⁾ Upon Hoàng Kim Xán's unexpected death in 1832 due to illness, Minh Mạng was said to have been "moved to tears".⁵⁰⁾ Hoàng Kim Xán was also one of the regime's central figures who strongly supported measures to suppress Christianity. When he was in the post of Assistant Administrator of the Board of Civil Affairs 吏部右參知, he authored an excoriating memoir, entitled *Nghĩ thanh trừ Gia Tô đạo* 擬清除耶穌道疏 (How to Eradicate

Christianity).⁵¹⁾ In 1830, after three Christians were taken into custody at the village of Mông Phụ 蒙阜 in Sơn Tây province, one of them died after being tortured.⁵²⁾ If we match this fact with the content of the accusations made against Jaccard, a MEP missionary of the Apostolic Vicariate of Cochinchina, that same year at the village of Dương Sơn 陽山 on the outskirts of Huế,⁵³⁾ it is apparent that Hoàng Kim Xán was deeply involved in both incidents.⁵⁴⁾

He was appointed the Provincial Governor over both the Nam Định and Hưng Yên 興安 regions and arrived in Nam Định in 1832.⁵⁴⁾ At that time, the central location of the MEP Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin was the village of Kê Vĩnh on the bank of the Red River, where Bishop Harvard resided along with his French missionaries, Vietnamese clergymen and laymen.⁵⁶⁾ A rumor that Hoàng Kim Xán had been given secret orders as Minh Mạng's *ministre affidé* to employ cruel and violent methods to suppress Christianity soon spread throughout the region, and a group of Christian adherents headed for the provincial capital of Vị Hoàng 涓潢 (present day Nam Định City) in order to appease Hoàng Kim Xán with peace offerings. However, this extreme anti-Christian official flatly turned down the money and gifts from the Church. Moreover he told the party in no uncertain terms that villagers should build mausoleums in honor of their ancestors, and warned that unless the Churches were completely dismantled, he would be unable to guarantee the safety of the local residents.⁵⁷⁾ However, the sudden death of Hoàng Kim Xán just after his arrival in Nam Định delayed the implementation of Minh Mạng's Christian suppression campaign in that province.

Meanwhile, in southern Cochinchina (Mekong Delta), Lê Văn Duyệt 黎文悅,⁵⁸⁾ the most powerful local leader during the reigns of both Gia Long and Minh Mạng, died of old age in August of that same year.⁵⁹⁾ The group of advisers, called the "great pioneers 開國功臣," who supported the Dynasty from the time of its founding by Gia Long and felt neither sympathy nor antagonism towards Christianity, had throughout the early reign of Minh Mạng gradually disappeared from dynastic politics, resulting in a generational transition.⁶⁰⁾ At this juncture, Minh Mạng began to promote further political centralization, which entailed a permanent policy aiming at the suppression of Christianity. Among other things this policy identified the Nam Định region in particular as a locus of possible collaboration between Christians and anti-government forces. It was on the 1st of June 1833 that the Emperor took the opportunity to issue an order prohibiting Christianity.

2. The Crackdown of 1838 in Nam Định

2-1. Nam Định: The Anti-Christian Bureaucrat, Trịnh Quang Khanh

Trịnh Quang Khanh 鄭光卿 was a top level bureaucrat under the Minh Mạng regime who became known as the “boucher des chrétiens.”⁶¹⁾ While holding various local administrative posts on the Red River Delta during the 1830s, he assumed the lead in efforts to suppress Christianity around Nam Định after 1838.⁶²⁾ After the death of his confidant Hoàng Kim Xán, Minh Mạng turned to Trịnh Quang Khanh as his “hit-man” to wipe out the forces of Christianity. Entries in *CND* regarding Trịnh Quang Khanh during the Minh Mạng Era begin with one dated Minh Mạng 11 (1830). 1, at which time he had been promoted from the post of Imperial Guard of the Board of Civil Affairs 吏部署郎中 to Assistant Provincial Intendant of Quảng Trị province 廣治參協.⁶³⁾ At the time of Hoàng Kim Xán's death in 1832, Trịnh Quang Khanh was promoted from Provincial Judge of Quảng Trị to Provincial Intendant of Nam Định, marking the start of his career on the Red River Delta.⁶⁴⁾ The following year he was given the joint appointment of Inspector General⁶⁵⁾ and Provincial Intendant of Hưng Yên.⁶⁶⁾ During that time he is said to have won the hearts and minds of the people from Nam Định to Hưng Yên. In 1835 he was transferred to Hà Nội for two months to serve as Inspector General,⁶⁷⁾ before being appointed Provincial Governor of Nam Định and Hưng Yên and relocated back to Nam Định.⁶⁸⁾ At the end of 1837, when Minh Mạng heard during court deliberations that “despite the prohibition order, Nam Định is still populated by tens of thousands of Christians,” he ordered Trịnh Quang Khanh to make an exhaustive effort to apprehend all Christian clergy, European and Vietnamese alike, in the region.⁶⁹⁾ Against a backdrop of 1) the almost completed pacification of large scale rebellions in the northern hills (led by Lê Duy Lương and Nông Văn Vân 農文雲) and the southern Mekong Delta regions (led by Lê Văn Khôi 黎文傀) and 2) deep suspicions about involvement on the part of the Christian community in those uprisings, Minh Mạng and his privy council had now declared an all-out campaign to suppress Christianity throughout his kingdom.

2-2. The Crackdown of 1838

Under direct orders from the Emperor himself, Trịnh Quang Khanh

initiated his campaign of suppression throughout Nam Định in January 1838 by ordering a large amount of crucifixes to be sent from Huế to Vị Hoàng. On the 6th March of that year, he had a crucifix placed on the ground before each fortification's gate so that passersby would be forced to step over them while entering and exiting.⁷⁰⁾ This was also the time of the influx of pirates and brigands, who ran amok throughout the Red River Delta. The reports that reached Trịnh Quang Khanh described this situation as “a Christian uprising,”⁷¹⁾ probably in a calculated attempt to graft malicious intent toward Christians onto the acts of non-Christians. What follows is a chronology (in modern calendar dates) of the incidents surrounding Trịnh Quang Khanh's campaign of suppression during 1838 in the Nam Định and Hung Yên regions.

【17 April】

Vũ Văn Lân 武文憐, a catechist working for the Apostolic Vicariate of Eastern Tonkin,⁷²⁾ is taken into custody by non-Christians at the village of An Liêm 安廉,⁷³⁾ Nam Định province, leading to the discovery of six confidential letters written by Father Joseph Viên (Đặng Đình Viên 鄧廷瑁). During questioning by Trịnh Quang Khanh, Văn Lân reveals the whereabouts and physical characteristics of Dominican missionaries and Vietnamese priests, marking the beginning of a rigorous manhunt throughout the Red River Delta region.

【27 May】

An imperial edict, which arrived in Vị Hoàng on the 24th, raises accusations that 1) regarding the incident of 17 April, Trịnh Quang Khanh, in order to ingratiate himself with the Emperor, fabricated the written testimony of the prisoner Vũ Văn Lân into a confession of conspiracy against the government and falsely submitted it as evidence and 2) Trịnh failed to report the fact that there were European missionaries hiding within his jurisdiction. Consequently, Trịnh and the Inspector General of Hung Yên from where Văn Lân's letter was sent are to be relieved of duty. However, the punishment seems to have been suspended for a month, since Trịnh takes personal charge of the search for clergy members, mobilizing some 3,000 troops under his command to search and pillage villages of Christians and non-Christians alike.⁷⁴⁾

【28 May】

Bishop Delgado of the Apostolic Vicariate of Eastern Tonkin is taken under guard to Vị Hoàng, as the blockading and pillaging of the villages within the Vicariate continues.

【3 June】

Bishop Harvard of the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin flees the College at Kê Vĩnh and seeks refuge at the chrétienté in the hills of Ninh Bình Province, while French missionaries Charrier, Gauthier, Jeantet and Retord, as well as Vietnamese priests, are forced to wander from region to region for their own safety.⁷⁵⁾

【10 June】

Dominique Hénarez, Coadjutor⁷⁶⁾ of the Apostolic Vicariate of Eastern Tonkin is arrested along with catechist Văn Chiêu and several lay members of the congregation and taken to Vị Hoàng. Several days later, Vicariate priests Bernard Duệ and Dominique Hạnh are arrested at the village of Trung Lễ 中禮.⁷⁷⁾

【23 June】

Joseph Fernandez of the Apostolic Vicariate of Eastern Tonkin and priest Pierre Tuân are arrested at Kim Sơn 金山, Ninh Bình Province. Both the informant and arresting officer are given cash rewards. The same day, Vicariate of Western Tonkin priest Jean Duyệt is also apprehended in Ninh Bình and taken to Vị Hoàng.⁷⁸⁾

【25 June】

Bishop Hénarez is beheaded along with his catechist Chiêu, ending the 80-year-old bishop's 48 years of missionary work in Vietnam.⁷⁹⁾

【2 July】

The village of Kê Vĩnh is blockaded, and priest Jacques Nam, local landlord Antoine Dich, and Dich's son-in-law Michel Mi, village headman (里長), are arrested and taken to Vị Hoàng. A search of the village results in the confiscation of a large amount of prayer books and other ceremonial items.⁸⁰⁾

【6 July】

Bishop Harvard dies at the Ninh Bình chrétienté of Bạch Bát 白鉢,⁸¹⁾

having contracted malaria while moving from refuge to refuge in the hill region.⁸²⁾

【12 July】

Bishop Delgado dies while incarcerated, and his corpse is beheaded.⁸³⁾ On the 24th, Joseph Fernandez is also beheaded.⁸⁴⁾

【End of October】

In recognition for the continuing arrests of Christian missionaries and priests, Trịnh Quang Khanh is reinstated as the Provincial Governor of Nam Định and Hưng Yên⁸⁵⁾ and vows to intensify his “campaign of persecution.”⁸⁶⁾

As a result of the giant crackdown led by Trịnh Quang Khanh, 22 martyrdoms were recorded during 1838 alone, and all religious operations, including churches, rectories, Maison de Dieu facilities and convents, throughout Nam Định were completely shut down and destroyed.⁸⁷⁾ The death of Bishop Harvard left the seat of the Vicariate’s leader vacant, and the scattering of its French and Vietnamese clergy in all directions marked the most destructive blow ever to the missionary effort in the region.

Trịnh Quang Khanh’s relentless campaign of search and seizure on the Red River Delta continued past 1838.⁸⁸⁾ Even after the death of Minh Mạng on 20 January 1841, whereupon much of northern Vietnam experienced improvements in conditions conducive to Christian evangelism, Nam Định saw no slowdown in Trịnh’s campaign of aggression that spring.⁸⁹⁾ Right up to the time of Trịnh’s retirement from the governorship of the province for health reasons,⁹⁰⁾ Nam Định was to enjoy no respite from his suppression of Christians.

Now from the ravaged Churches of the Red River Delta during the later years of Minh Mạng’s reign, let us shift our attention to the situation in the Nghệ An corner of the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin during that time.

3. Christian Sympathizers of Nghệ An

3-1. The Administrative Protectors of Christianity

Following the initial order prohibiting Christianity in 1833, a similar order containing even more severe provisions was to be sent to every part

of Vietnam at the beginning of 1836.⁹¹⁾ However, in Nghệ An the order was not promulgated until the following year. As to why, Masson offers the following explanation:

The prohibition order included a double-edged penal provision declaring that whenever a missionary was arrested, the administrators in the jurisdiction where the arrest took place were to be severely punished. Therefore, out of fear that they would be censured, they probably delayed promulgation to save their own necks.⁹²⁾

In addition, although the assistant to the top official of Nghệ An was not a Christian, his son worked as a catechist in the Church, and it was through this son that the following message was passed to the missionaries:

It is clear that the Emperor has become blinded by passion and antagonism. It would be an egregious act of violence to implement this edict. It would be best to put it aside for a while. If so, we should get along as well as before.⁹³⁾

Consequently, the year 1836 passed in an extremely peaceful and calm manner in Nghệ An, free from the frequent outbreaks of rebellion and civil strife that marked other regions.⁹⁴⁾ According to Bishop Harvard, who was stationed in Nam Định:

Masson's Nghệ An, which takes up one-third of the Vicariate, is extraordinarily peaceful and calm, quite in contrast to the other two-thirds where government suppression, rebellion and betrayal of the Church by fallen Christian informants run rampant.⁹⁵⁾

There is also confirmation in the source materials that the local administrators of Nghệ An were actively protecting the Christian community.⁹⁶⁾

Concerning the dramatic arrest in 1837 of a missionary by the name of Cornay in the Sơn Tây region in the northwest of the Vicariate, and his subsequent execution as the main conspirator in a rebellion, no one in the Nghệ An region was aware of the incident. Even if the local authorities were appraised of the details, they told no one. Among these officials were those who warned and encouraged Christians "to keep your clergy members in hiding."⁹⁷⁾

During the year 1838, which we have seen was marked by large scale

efforts to suppress Christianity on the Red River Delta centered in Nam Định, the response of the local authorities of Nghệ An is described in a report submitted by a missionary, Simonin, the following year:

If in fact the officials had wanted to follow the intentions of the Emperor, we would have all been arrested. Our officials are good men with good intentions who wished no hardship of any kind to befall us or our Christian congregation. Under such circumstances they took action only to save appearances.

Several officials suggested to us, “If per chance there are European or Vietnamese priests among you, be careful not to expose them. Keep them hidden, for if you do not, there is so-and-so and his evil cohorts who will raise legal accusations against them and force us to pursue them.”

The governor of the prefecture (知縣) where I reside called a meeting of the local village headmen under his jurisdiction and upon confirming if there were any Christians among them, told them on no uncertain terms, “If per chance there are priests residing among you, either make them leave or keep them in safe hiding.”⁹⁸⁾

Even when a new prohibition order was issued in 1839⁹⁹⁾, the local authorities of Nghệ An first kept the edict secret for two months, then, probably fearing charges of dereliction of duty, finally dispatched copies to the region’s village headmen with no additional orders, resulting in no problems arising.¹⁰⁰⁾

During the last half of the 1830s, the Christian suppression policy of the central government, which gradually escalated in severity, was met in Nghệ An with complete indifference and laxity. The main reasons for such a reception were the pro-Christian sympathies and laissez-faire attitudes of the local authorities, in particular, the top executives.

3-2. Nguyễn Đình Tân, Top Bureaucrat of Nghệ An and Protector of Its Christian Community

In a report submitted in 1839 Masson states:

The most ardent protector of Christianity among the high level officials of Nghệ An has been stationed here for over eight years, and as a result of the praise given to his benevolent administration, Emperor

Minh Mạng himself approved the continuation of his appointment for at least another three years.¹⁰¹⁾

By matching this statement with information provided by *CND*, we can verify that one Nguyễn Đình Tân 阮廷賓 served between 1832 and 1840 in the high level bureaucratic post of administrative commissioner of Nghệ An.¹⁰²⁾ The item dated Minh Mạng 13 (1832). 11 tells us that Nguyễn Đình Tân was indeed appointed Provincial Intendant of Nghệ An,¹⁰³⁾ and the section for the year Minh Mạng 21 (1840) states that he was transferred to the post of Assistant Minister of the Board of War 兵部左侍郎.¹⁰⁴⁾ Given the fact that the normal duration of local administrative appointments under the Nguyễn Dynasty was on the average two to three years, eight consecutive years in the same post is indeed exceptional.¹⁰⁵⁾

As shown in the previous section, during the escalation of anti-Christian suppression towards the later years of Minh Mạng's reign, the Church in the Nghệ An region was exceptional in its ability to carry on business as usual in its evangelical efforts. This period and the term of Nguyễn Đình Tân's appointment as Provincial Intendant of the region completely overlap, showing almost without a doubt that the high level official mentioned in the missionary records as protective of Christianity was indeed Nguyễn Đình Tân. We will see in the next section, upon examination of Nguyễn Đình Tân's initiative as an executive administrator in sabotaging the anti-Christian suppression campaign generated by the central government, the unique regional character of Nghệ An in terms of how it at once subsumed the worlds of both its local bureaucracy and Christianity.

3-3. Intervention by the Provincial Intendant and the Provincial Judge

Masson gives the following explanation of the factors involved in the 1838 Christian prohibition order's lack of effectiveness in the Nghệ An region:

In Nghệ An the local officials showed compassion towards us with no malice of forethought. In this respect, we were aided by the circumstances attributable to Emperor Minh Mạng himself. That is to say, the edicts prohibiting Christianity were transmitted solely to the Military Governor...¹⁰⁶⁾ Emperor Minh Mạng never communicated with the region's remaining two top level civil officials; and it was this legal breach of decorum that worked in our favor. In other words,

whenever the Military Governor would take action to implement the edict by conducting house to house search and seizures, the two civil administrators would do all they could to block it; and one of them would find all kinds of reasons not to enforce the governor's directives, while at the same time warning us in secret to be on the lookout.¹⁰⁷⁾

As to the identity of the three top bureaucrats mentioned above, first the civil administrator given special mention as a master of obfuscation was our own Provincial Intendant Nguyễn Đình Tân, discussed in the previous section, while his colleague was the Provincial Judge Phùng Đắc Ninh 馮得寧.¹⁰⁸⁾ The Military Governor was Tạ Quang Cự 謝光巨, the highest ranking official holding jurisdiction over both the Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh 河靜 provinces.¹⁰⁹⁾

Despite the fact that Tạ Quang Cự was the Governor of Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh throughout the decade of the 1830s, much of his time was spent away from Nghệ An in an effort to quell rebellions in the northwestern hill region, while the normal duties of administration and jurisprudence in the region were left to the passive attitudes towards suppressing Christianity held by Provincial Intendant Nguyễn Đình Tân and the Provincial Judges who came and went during that time. In this respect, the normal chain of decision-making by the top provincial executive officers concerning the implementation of Minh Mạng's anti-Christian campaign was quite different in the case of Nghệ An in comparison with that of Nam Định.¹¹⁰⁾

3-4. The Network Formed by Local Administrators and Christians

Comparing other regions within the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin, especially with Nam Định, we find members of the Nghệ An Christian community involved in anti-government activities to be virtually non-existent in the available source materials. There is only one case recorded in *CND* during the Minh Mạng Era, in 14 (1833). 10 to be exact, where a Christian by the name of Trần Danh Nguyên 陳名元 joined a band of outlaws to conspire with one Phạm Đình Trâm 范廷簪, a member of the provincial regiment, in a mutiny. The conspiracy never got underway and ended with the arrest of fourteen people, including Trần Danh Nguyên and Phạm Đình Trâm.¹¹¹⁾ However, according to Masson's account of the incident,¹¹²⁾ sixteen people (including seven Christians) were

apprehended, and a report of what happened submitted to the central government, with hardly any interrogation, much less torture. The reason given by Masson for such an uneventful ending to the incident was “that not a few leaders of the conspiracy were local officials, so if a full-blown investigation had been conducted, there was the possibility that over half of the bureaucracy of Nghệ An could have been held jointly responsible.”¹¹³⁾ The mutiny had been proposed jointly by a group consisting of both administrators and members of the Christian community, and as soon as the conspiracy was discovered, it was summarily covered up. We can only assume that there existed in Nghệ An the intention on the part of these two groups to mutually share information. The following report submitted by Masson implies the existence of such a network and gives us a classic example of how it worked, even during the years of the most severe implementation of Minh Mạng's anti-Christian campaign:

In 1837 in the hill region of Nghệ An, a certain non-Christian heard rumors of the impending arrival of Simonin, one of our missionaries, and petitioned the Military Governor to investigate and make arrests. However, although the governor accepted the petition, absolutely no action was taken. After the non-Christian repeated his demands three times, the governor called one of his Christian subordinates and told him that an investigation of the whereabouts of Simonin would be conducted the following day. Anticipating the intentions behind the governor's disclosure, the Christian official informed Simonin of the day and time of the investigation and was able to ensure the missionary's escape. On the day scheduled for the investigation, about forty troops were dispatched to where Simonin was reported to be residing, but for the purpose of arresting the non-Christian informant on charges of being the leader of a gang of thieves. After his arrest, the informant had all of his possessions seized.¹¹⁴⁾

In addition, it is possible to identify a relatively large number of Christians working at the lower level of officialdom involved in coastal security. In 1833, Masson proposed that Nghệ An be established as the Vietnamese port of haven on the maritime route between the MEP logistics center in Macao and the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin. The main reasons behind this proposal were that 1) Nghệ An was the location of a large chrétienté made up of fisherfolk and merchants and 2) almost all of the harbor officials were Christians.¹¹⁵⁾ The Nguyễn Dynasty records

(*CND*¹¹⁶) and *Minh Mạng Tấu nghị* 明命奏議¹¹⁷) also cite Vàm Thù 汎守 (Harbor Supervisors) for dereliction of duty in occasionally allowing the disembarkation of European missionaries. And of course, if these officials were Christians, the dereliction of their duties was no doubt intentional in facilitating the movement of Christian personnel and materials into Vietnam at Nghệ An, more smoothly than in any other region.

Concerning the intensive campaign of suppression waged by Trịnh Quang Khanh on the Red River Delta, Nghệ An missionary Simonin made the comment, “Our mandarins were well intentioned and did not want to cause us any trouble”¹¹⁸) and Masson states in a letter that same year:

Our mandarins kept complete silence concerning the prohibitions issued by the king and secretly told us to be vigilant. In their campaign of violence, nonbelievers tried every means available to apprehend our priests, although to no avail, but in comparison to elsewhere, we had almost nothing to fear.¹¹⁹)

Ringling loud and clear in the phrase “our mandarins” is the sympathy that was growing at that time within the minds of the missionaries of Nghệ An regarding the local officials whom they regarded as their protectors.

Afterword

Hopefully this article has clearly demonstrated the fact that during the early 19th century, as in the past, the Christian community of Nghệ An continued to enjoy stability and progress under the protection afforded it by local administrators. Within the Nguyễn Dynasty bureaucracy’s world of dramatic change of appointments based solely on strict discipline, the wisest of its members understood that success meant serving out one’s term without incident rather than with exemplary distinction.¹²⁰) Given this mentality, officials who were dispatched from the central government to administer the provinces made, without exception, maintaining the status quo in their respective locales their highest priority.

For example, in the Nam Định region, which was thrown into constant social instability due to the occurrence of frequent anti-government uprisings, thought to involve Christians, maintaining the status quo meant that local officials would be forced to wage campaigns of suppression and

pacification under the leadership of such anti-Christian advocates in Emperor Minh Mạng's personal entourage as Hoàng Kim Xán and Trịnh Quang Khanh. On the other hand, in the Nghệ An region, maintaining the status quo meant the weaving of a "safety net" to protect both the local bureaucracy and the Christian community from the disturbing effects of the same central government's attempts at religious prohibition and suppression. The points of articulation in this safety net were none other than local administrators sympathetic to Christianity, beginning with Hồ Hựu and Nguyễn Đình Tân, in conjunction with local missionaries, like Masson. Both these human factors remained on the ground for relatively long periods of time and were highly valued by local members of the bureaucracy, the Church and the general populace.

The Christian community of Nghệ An, which was able to come out of Minh Mạng's campaign of suppression unscathed, stands in stark contrast to the fate of its counterpart on the Red River Delta. For this reason, the Christian community of northern Vietnam was saved from extinction. As the Nguyễn Dynasty's campaign to suppress Christianity began to gradually wind down during the reign of Emperor Thiệu Trị 紹治 (1841-1847), we observe the Christian community of Nghệ An expanding its sphere of influence. In 1846, after the establishment of the Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Tonkin in the former southern portion of the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin, the Church in Nghệ An was able to take better advantage of its unique qualities and situation.¹²¹⁾

However, during the latter half of the 19th century, on the brink of French colonization, Nghệ An under the reign of Emperor Tự Đức was destined to become the stage for the most intensive anti-Christian movement in Vietnam's history. Therefore, the next logical step in understanding the history of the Vietnamese Church would be to examine to what extent the Christian community of Nghệ An, having suffered little or no ill effects from the suppression inflicted on the Church during the first half of the century and consequently enjoying continual stability and development, experienced social change during the Tự Đức Era.

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of Foreign Missions of Paris, the Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, Harvard-Yenching Institute and Toyo Bunko for their invaluable assistance in researching and publishing this paper.

Notes

- 1) It was during the reigns of the first Emperor Gia Long (1802–1820) and his successor Minh Mạng that the Nguyễn Dynasty enjoyed its largest territorial hegemony and its most prosperous decades. Then during the reign of fourth Emperor Tự Đức, the French intervened militarily, demanding that the suppression of Christians be immediately ended and that the faith be officially recognized. Incidentally, Christianity in 19th century Vietnam was limited exclusively to the Roman Catholic faith and both terms will be used here interchangeably.
- 2) The major accounts of this type include Adrien Launay, *Les Missionnaires Français au Tonkin* (Paris: Librairie Delhomme et Brigueot, 1900); *idem*, *Histoire Générale de la Société des Missions-Étrangères, I, II, III* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2003) and Phan Phát Huồn, *Việt-Nam Giáo-Sư* (Saigon: Cùu Thê Tùng Thu, 1965). In particular, there are various extant publications describing the execution of French missionaries in the inspirational hagiographic style. For example, an account of Théophane Vénard, who was “martyred” in 1861, *Vie et Correspondance du Bienheureux Théophane Vénard* (Tours: Maison Alfred Mame et Fils, 1922) which went through 14 different printings seems indicative of the huge readership enjoyed by tales of martyrdom within French Catholicism of the late 19th and early 20th century.
- 3) The major works of this type include Nicole Dominique Lê, *Les Missions Étrangères et la Pénétration Française au Việt-Nam* (Paris: Mouton, 1975); Tsuboi Yoshiharu 坪井善明, *Kindai Vetonamu seiji shakaishi 近代ヴェトナム政治社会史 [The social and political history of modern Vietnam]* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai 東京大學出版會, 1991) and Nguyễn Văn Kiệm, *Sự du nhập của đạo Thiên Chúa Giáo vào Việt Nam: từ thế kỷ XVII đến thế kỷ XIX* (Hà Nội: Hội Khoa học Lịch sử Việt Nam, 2001).
- 4) Alexander Barton Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 283–289.
- 5) Jacob Ramsay, *Mandarins and Martyrs: The Church and the Nguyễn Dynasty in Early Nineteenth-Century Vietnam* (Redwood: Stanford University Press, 2008).
- 6) Charles Keith refers to Tonkin as ‘the historical heartland of Vietnamese Catholicism’ in his recent book, *Catholic Vietnam: A Church from Empire to Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), p. 18.
- 7) It is likely that the first Christian missionaries arrived in Vietnam during the first half of the 16th century. Then during the early 17th century, members of the Jesuit clergy expelled from Japan under government imposed prohibitions along with lay members of their congregations relocated to Vietnam and became involved in missionary work.

- 8) For research on a cultural linkage between Christian and non-Christian communities from the viewpoints of religious beliefs and morality, see Nola Cooke, "Early Nineteenth-Century Vietnamese Catholics and Others in the Pages of the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 35 (2004): pp. 261-285. For an approach to the subject from the aspect of linguistic usage, see Motonori Makino, "The Vietnamese Written Languages and European Missionaries: From the Society of Jesus to the Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris," in *Beyond Borders: A Global Perspective of Jesuit Mission History*, ed. Shinzo Kawamura and Cyril Veliath (Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 2009): pp. 342-349.
- 9) Archives des Missions Étrangères de Paris. These primary sources will be referenced by AME cataloging according to file no. and folio; e.g., AME 695 fo 132.
- 10) This society was established in Lyon in 1819 as a support organization for the French foreign evangelical movement. Its organ *APF* will be referenced according to tome no. (T) and page no.; e.g., *APF*. T2. p. 199.
- 11) *Đại Nam thực lục* 大南寔錄 (Chronicles of the Nguyễn Dynasty), 20 vols. (Tokyo: Keiō Gijuku Daigaku Gengo Bunka Kenkyūjo 慶應義塾大學言語文化研究所 (Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies), 1961-81). Instead of citing the volume and folio numbers of the original work, the page numbers of the above cited Keio University facsimile will be cited; e.g., *CND*: 1234.
- 12) Hán Nôm works will be cited by title and the Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies' catalog number. Trần Nghĩa, François Gros, Viện Nghiên cứu Hán Nôm và Học viện Viễn đông Bác cổ Pháp (L'Institut Hán Nôm et de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient), *Di sản Hán Nôm Việt Nam thư mục đề yếu = Catalogue des livres en han nôm* (Hà Nội: Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, 1993).
- 13) As to the estimates of the total population of Vietnam under the Nguyễn Dynasty, Woodside gives a figure of between 5 and 7 million (Norman G. Owen, ed., *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia, A New History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), p. 113), while Nguyễn Thế Anh has measured 9 to 10 million (Ooi Keat Gin ed., *Southeast Asia: A Historical Encyclopedia, from Angkor Wat to East Timor* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2004), p. 971). The Roman Catholic population of present day Vietnam has been estimated at about 6 million, or 7% of the total population (Tổng cục Chính trị, *Một số hiểu biết về tôn giáo, Tôn giáo Việt Nam, Sách tham khảo* (Hà Nội: Nhà xuất bản Quân đội Nhân dân, 1993), p. 163).
- 14) AME 695 fo 132.
- 15) Alain Forest, *Les Missionnaires Français au Tonkin et au Siam (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles): Analyse comparée d'un relatif succès et d'un total échec, Livre II Histoires du Tonkin* (Paris: Harmattan, 1998).
- 16) *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.
- 17) Alain Forest, *Les Missionnaires Français au Tonkin et au Siam (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles): Analyse comparée d'un relatif succès et d'un total échec, Livre III Organiser une église convertir les infidèles* (Paris: Harmattan, 1998), pp. 149-150, p. 343.
- 18) Makino Motonori, "Tai Son seikenka niokeru Pari gaikoku senkyōkai Nishi-Tonkin daibokuku: 1788-1802" 西山政權下におけるパリ外國宣教會西トン

- キン代牧區：1788-1802 [The Vicariate of Western Tonkin of La Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris under the Tay Son Dynasty 1788-1802], *Tōyō Bunka Kenkyū* 東洋文化研究 [Journal of Asian cultures] (學習院大學東洋文化研究所 Research Institute for Oriental Cultures Gakushuin University) 8 (2006): pp. 69-101. See also, George Dutton, *The Tây Sơn Uprising: Society and Rebellion in Eighteenth-Century Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), pp. 175-196.
- 19) Issued in February 1825 (*APF*. T2. p. 199, *APF*. T3. p. 421).
 - 20) Issued in December 1826 (*APF*. T5. p. 356).
 - 21) A typical example of a top level military bureaucrat is Lê Văn Duyệt 黎文悅, Viceroy of Gia Định 嘉定總鎮, a stronghold in southern Cochinchina. For a discussion of the forces behind Lê Văn Duyệt, see Shimao Minoru 嶋尾稔, "Minh Mang ki (1820-1840) Betonamu no Namuki chihō tōchi nikan-suru ichi kōsatsu" 明命期 (1820-1840) ベトナムの南圻地方統治に關する一考察 [On the Political Integration of the Nam Ky Region of Vietnam], *Keiō Gijuku Daigaku Gengo Bunka Kenkyūjo Kiyō* 慶應義塾大學言語文化研究所紀要 [Reports of the Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies] 23 (1991): pp. 175-191, and Choi Byung Wook, *Southern Vietnam under the Reign of Minh Mang (1820-1841): Central Politics and Local Response* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 2004).
 - 22) Guillaume Masson (1801-1853), who arrived in Tonkin in 1825, was to spend the rest of his life in Nghệ An, winning the trust of all the clergy and lay people of the Vicariate of Western Tonkin and hoping to soon be appointed its Bishop.
 - 23) *APF*. T5. p. 331.
 - 24) *APF*. T4. p. 307. During that same year, a large retreat was held and attended by 4,000 lay people, 24 priests, several nuns and staff members of Le Maison de Dieu (AME 694 fo 704). Concerning le Maison de Dieu, see note 39.
 - 25) *APF*. T5. p. 339.
 - 26) *APF*. T5. p. 340. These "superstitious," "heathen" rituals probably refer to Confucian rituals related to ancestor worship, etc.
 - 27) *APF*. T5. p. 340.
 - 28) *APF*. T6. p. 396.
 - 29) AME 701 fo 1157.
 - 30) *CND*: 2126. On the Nguyễn Dynasty's list of successful civil service examinees between the years 1807 and 1918, entitled *Quốc triều Hương khoa lục* 國朝鄉科錄 (The Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies' Catalog No. 2880), we find the name Hồ Bảo Định 胡保定 (changed to Hựu 佑), who was a native of the village of Giang Trạm 江站, Tân Long 新隆 prefecture, Gia Định 嘉定 province. After passing the examination in 1819, his highest level appointment was that of Provincial Governor of Bình Định 平定 and Phú Yên 富安 provinces (平富總督).
 - 31) Hiệp trấn, renamed Bố chính 布政 (Provincial Intendant) in 1831 was placed under the Tổng đốc 總督 (Provincial Governor) and assumed the duties of Provincial Governor and Tuần phủ 巡撫 (Inspector General).
 - 32) Tham hiệp was at that time the highest juridical post in the provinces. It was

- renamed *Ấn sát* 按察 (Provincial Judge) at the end of 1831.
- 33) *APF*. T6. p. 435.
 - 34) *APF*. T6. p. 420.
 - 35) *CND*: 2493.
 - 36) Minh Mạng 13 (1832). 10 (*CND*: 2614).
 - 37) *AME* 695 fo 162.
 - 38) *APF*. T7. p. 434.
 - 39) These facilities provided important educational and welfare services to major parishes within the Vicariate. For more details, see Makino Motonori, “Pari gaikoku senkyōkai Nishi-Tonkin daibokuku niokeru “kami no ie” (Maison de Dieu)” *パリ外國宣教會西トンキン代牧區における「神の家」* (Maison de Dieu) [The role of Le Maison de Dieu in the activities of the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris], *Ajia Chiiki Bunka Kenkyū* アジア地域文化研究 [Komaba Journal of Asian Studies] (東京大學大学院総合文化研究科アジア地域文化研究会) 1 (2005): pp. 68-87.
 - 40) Minh Mạng 14 (1833). 4; *CND*: 2754-2755.
 - 41) *APF*. T7. p. 419.
 - 42) Jaccard, a missionary assigned to the MEP's Apostolic Vicariate of Cochinchina who had been taken captive and brought to Huế by Minh Mạng to work as a translator, related that while the Christian bureaucrat was imprisoned, his wife granted him, Jaccard, a visit during which the priest expressed his condolences (*AME* 695 fo 206).
 - 43) During the uprisings following the pacification of Lê Duy Lương's rebellion, Hồ Hựu joined the army stationed in the hill region of Cam Lộ 甘露 in 1834 to quell the rebellion led by Nông Văn Vân 農文雲 (*CND*: 3076) and that same year was appointed Official in Charge of Miscellaneous Affairs of the Board of War 兵部司務 (*CND*: 3233). After being appointed Provincial Intendant of Cao Bằng 高平布政 (*CND*: 3342-3343), he returned to Huế to take the post of Capital Governor 承天府尹(京尹) (*CND*: 3650), during which time, he attended in 1836 the execution of a young Christian literatus by the name of Lương, whom he treated with the utmost compassion, specially arranging for Lương's mother and children to visit the prisoner at his place of execution on the outskirts of Huế (*AME* 695 fo 503-504). He then replaced Phan Thanh Giản 潘清簡 as Deputy of Inspector General of Quảng Nam 廣南 and Quảng Ngãi 廣義 (*CND*: 3862). While stationed in Quảng Nam province, upon encountering four non-Christians who had exposed a Christian community to rob it of its wealth, he severely punished the accusers (*APF* .T12. pp. 556-559).
 - 44) Masaya Shiraishi, “State, Villagers, and Vagabonds: Vietnamese Rural Society and the Phan Bá Vành Rebellion,” in *History and Peasant Consciousness in South East Asia*, ed. Andrew Turton and Shigeharu Tanabe (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1984), pp.345-400. It was following this period of rebellion that the reclamation of the Red River Delta's coastline was proposed by high official Nguyễn Công Trứ 阮公著, a project that was led by the former rebels (Shimao Minoru, “Genchō: “nanboku ikka” no keisei to sōkoku” 阮朝:「南北一家」の形成と相克 [The Nguyễn Dynasty: The

formation of and struggles within a unified northern and southern house], in *Iwanami kōza Tōnan Ajiashi* 岩波講座東南アジア史 [Iwanami lecture Southeast Asian studies series], vol. 5, *Tōnan Ajia sekai no saihei* 東南アジア世界の再編 [Reorganization of the Southeast Asian World], ed. Saitō Teruko 齋藤照子 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 2001), p. 32).

- 45) AME 694 fo 671, fo 692.
- 46) *CND*: 1885.
- 47) *CND*: 1980–1982.
- 48) *CND*: 7779–7780. The assignment lasted for three months in 1827 (*CND*: 1985–1986, 2027).
- 49) Hoàng Tá Viêm (Hoàng Kế Viêm 黃繼炎) was from 1870 to the early 1880s one of the most powerful bureaucrats in northern Vietnam. He is best known for joining forces with the Black Flag Army 黑旗軍 in the struggle against the French. See Tsuboi, *op. cit.* pp. 214–216.
- 50) *CND*: 2520. For his outstanding service and achievements he was conferred with the title of Associate Grand Scholar 協辦大學士 and sent a length of cotton cloth interwoven with gold. (*CND*: 7780).
- 51) *Nghi thanh trừ Gia Tô đạo số* 擬清除耶蘇道疏 in Vol. III of *Quảng kí tập thi văn lục* 廣記集詩文錄 (The Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies' Catalog No. 2806, Archive No. A. 362).
- 52) *APF*. T6. p. 395.
- 53) *APF*. T5. p. 408, *APF*. T6. pp. 477–485.
- 54) *APF*. T6. p. 412.
- 55) *CND*: 2493.
- 56) In the Gazetteer of Đồng Khánh (*Đồng Khánh Địa dư chí* 同慶地輿誌, The Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies' Catalog No. 1157, Archive No. A. 537/1–2) compiled at the end of the 19th century, we find the place name Vĩnh Trị 永治 located in Nghĩa Hưng 義興 district, Nam Định province, which may correspond to the old village of Kẽ Vĩnh presently located on the outskirts of Nam Định City.
- 57) *APF*. T6. pp. 412–416.
- 58) During the 1820s, Lê Văn Duyệt had accepted the demands of the missionaries of the Apostolic Vicariate of Cochinchina, led by Bishop Taberd, and resisted Minh Mạng's attempts to suppress Christianity (*APF*. T4. p. 360), however, in 1832 after taking to his sick bed (*APF*. T6. pp. 626–628), his influence within the central government dwindled.
- 59) *APF*. T6. p. 626.
- 60) This gradual generational transition within the regime's top elite was marked by a parallel transition from an emphasis on military prowess to excellence in civil governance. For more details, see Shimaō, *op. cit.* (2001).
- 61) Launay, *op. cit.*, 1900, p. 72.
- 62) According to the civil service listing (*Quốc triều Hương khoa lục*), Trịnh Quang Khanh was a native of the village of Phú Long 富隆 in Kiến Hòa 建和 prefecture, of Định Tường 定祥 Province and passed the examination in 1821.
- 63) *CND*: 2302.
- 64) *CND*: 2598–2599.

- 65) *CND*: 2874-2875.
- 66) *CND*: 2962. He was re-installed the following year. (*CND*: 3322).
- 67) *CND*: 3619.
- 68) *CND*: 3664.
- 69) *CND*: 4145-4146.
- 70) *AME* 696 fo 244-247.
- 71) *AME* 696 fo 402-404, fo 432-433.
- 72) Concerning the role played by catechists in northern Vietnam, see Gonoï Takashi 五野井隆史, "Iezusukai hikaiin no Konguregasan to kaisōka: Nihon no dōjuku to Tonkin no Katekisuta nokakawari" イエズス會非會員のコングレガサンと階層化：日本の同宿とトンキンのカテキスタの關わり [Congregação and the stratification of Non-Jesuits in Asia: The relationship between Dōjuku in Japan and Catechista in Tonkin], *Shigaku Zasshi* 史學雜誌 103, no. 3 (1994): pp. 351-389, pp. 478-479 and Makino Motonori, "Pari gaikoku senkyōkai no Betonamu senkyō to Katekisuta: 18seiki matsu kara 19seiki zenhan niokeru Tonkin no Kirisutokyō shakai" パリ外國宣教會のベトナム宣教とカテキスタ：18世紀末から19世紀前半におけるトンキンのキリスト教社會 [The missionary work of the Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris and its catechists in Vietnam: The Tonkinese Christian community from the end of the 18th to the first half of the 19th centuries], *Tōnan Ajia: Rekishi to Bunka* 東南アジア：歴史と文化 [Southeast Asia: History and culture] 35 (2006): pp. 3-21.
- 73) In the Gazetteer of *Đông Khánh*, we find the village of An Liêm located in the prefecture of *Thư Tri* 舒池 of *Nghĩa Hưng* 義興 district, *Nam Định* province.
- 74) *AME* 696 fo 253-254, fo 404, fo 433, fo 762. This corresponds to *CND*: 4260-4261 (Minh Mạng 19 (1838).4, which reports that *Trịnh Quang Khanh* was relieved of duty along with his subordinate, Inspector General of *Hung Yên* 興安巡撫, *Hà Thúc Lương* 何叔良, and replaced by *Lê Văn Đức* 黎文德 and *Doãn Uân* 尹蘊, respectively.
- 75) *AME* 696 fo 266, fo 301.
- 76) Coadjuter was next in status to bishop of a vicariate, serving as the latter's adviser. In the Vietnamese vicariates, many coadjuters took charge as top executives of their largest sub-divisions. For example, in the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Tonkin, the Bishop was stationed at *Nam Định*, while his coadjuter was stationed at *Nghệ An*.
- 77) *AME* 696 fo 263-264. According to the Gazetteer of *Đông Khánh*, there was the village of *Trung Lễ* in the prefecture of *Giao Thủy* 膠水 of *Xuân Trường* 春長 district, *Nam Định* province.
- 78) *AME* 696 fo 270-273, fo 290, fo 302.
- 79) *AME* 696 fo 273-275, fo 825.
- 80) *AME* 696 fo 281, fo 301-307.
- 81) The gazetteer *Các tổng trấn xã danh bị lãm* 各鎮總社名備覽 (The Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies' Catalog No. 328, Archive No. A. 570/1), compiled during the Gia Long Era, contains the name of the village of *Bạch Bát* 白鉢 in *An Mô* 安謨 prefecture, *Ninh Bình* province.

- 82) AME 696 fo 269, fo 281–284.
- 83) AME 696 fo 287–290.
- 84) AME 696 fo 293–296.
- 85) *CND*: 4314.
- 86) AME 696 fo 339–340.
- 87) AME 697 fo 297.
- 88) AME 701 fo 1335. For example, the chrétienté of Kê Bàng was surrounded by order of Trịnh Quang Khanh on the 30th of May 1840. Two Vicariate priests by the names of Nghi and Ngân, a priest seeking refuge by the name of Thịnh, two catechists and seven lay persons were arrested and their ceremonial paraphernalia confiscated (AME 697 fo 250, fo 297–300). Three of the priests and two lay persons were “martyred” (AME 697 fo 297–309).
- 89) *CND*: 4840. The item dated Thiệu Trị 紹治 1 (1841) Leap 3 states that Trịnh Quang Khanh with Nguyễn Văn Nhị 阮文貳, the Inspector General of Ninh Bình arrested French missionary Berneux and confiscated ceremonial paraphernalia.
- 90) *CND*: 4930. Also, the item for the 12th month of the same year mentions the dismissal of Trịnh Quang Khanh for covering up a case of bribery (*CND*: 4957–4958).
- 91) *CND*: 3804–3805.
- 92) AME 695 fo 573.
- 93) AME 695 fo 707–708.
- 94) AME 695 fo 712.
- 95) AME 695 fo 712–713.
- 96) For example, there is the report submitted by Simonin, a fellow missionary under Masson, stationed in Nghệ An.

The officials of Nghệ An openly support local Christians, resorting to bending the regulations to the extent of exempting attendance at superstitious ceremonies which non-Christians argue by any means possible are compulsory for all (AME 695 fo 709).

There is also the case of a non-Christian village headman who planned the arrests of local clergy during that year being sentenced to one-hundred lashes by the authorities for the persecution of Christians without authorization, as stipulated in the provincial regulations (AME 695 fo 1029).

- 97) AME 695 fo 1027. Also, to an official who paid a visit to where European missionaries were residing, one local wealthy non-Christian reported, “There is a whole village made up entirely of Christians who are believers in this religion prohibited by royal edict.” In response to such complaints, the official would interrupt the speaker and intentionally change the subject of the conversation (AME 695 fo 1029).
- 98) AME 696 fo 419–420.
- 99) *CND*: 4469.
- 100) AME 696 fo 802. A lower ranking official stationed in the area where Masson and Simonin were residing summoned a Christian physician and relayed the

message, “We are aware that there are two Europeans missionaries residing in this jurisdiction. We have no intention of doing them any harm, but if any trouble does arise, please send them elsewhere.” (AME 696 fo 727).

- 101) AME 696 fo 723.
- 102) There is a detailed account of Nguyễn Đình Tân's career in Vol. 25 of *Đại Nam Chính biên Liệt truyện nhị tập* 大南正編列傳二集. In summary, born in the suburbs of Huế to one Nguyễn Đình Đức 阮廷德, in Minh Mạng 2 (1821) he passed the civil service examination on the recommendation of the local governor (鄉貢). Seven years later in 1828 he was promoted from Junior Assistant in the Board of Civil Office 官吏部員外郎 to Supervisor 吏部郎中, then in 1832 was transferred from Supervisor of the Board of Works 工部郎中 to one of the Board of Interior 內務府郎中 (CND: 2250). It was during that same year that he was dispatched to Nghệ An to participate in a survey regarding the construction of a harbor in the north central region and ended up submitting a report to the Emperor concerning the sentiment among the local residents he observed in the area bordering on the Thanh Hoa 清華 (清化) region (CND: 2572-2573).
- 103) CND: 2633.
- 104) CND: 4636.
- 105) Masson states, “Since high ranking officials do not normally remain in any given region for over four to five years, this is an extraordinary case.” (AME 696 fo 736).
- 106) Here Masson explains what he means by the Military Governor. To wit, “a kind of viceroy with simultaneous jurisdiction over Hà Tĩnh 河靜 and Thanh Hóa provinces, who is the highest level administrative official in the kingdom. In France he would have the same status as the supreme commander of the armed forces.” This explanation conjures up the Vietnamese post of Provincial Governor of An Tĩnh (Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh) 安靜總督. However, after the firm establishment of Minh Mạng's centralized government regime, the post of Provincial Governor essentially became a civil appointment in the Nguyễn Dynasty bureaucratic scheme (Trần Thanh Tâm, *Quan chức nhà Nguyễn* (Huế: Nhà xuất bản Thuận Hóa, 2000), pp. 300-301).
- 107) AME 696 fo 461.
- 108) According to the civil service listing (*Quốc triều Hương khoa lục*), Phùng Đắc Ninh was born in the village of Dương Xá 楊舍, in the prefecture of Siêu Loại 超類 of Bắc Ninh 北寧 province and passed the civil examination in 1819 (舉人). According to CND, he was appointed Provincial Judge of Nghệ An in Minh Mạng 18. 7 and relieved of duty in 20. 3, a term of office of average duration, but very short in comparison to that of Nguyễn Đình Tân. Therefore, we can conclude that the unique character of the Nghệ An administrative world did not stem from its Provincial Judges, but rather from its Provincial Intendant, who adopted the same policy for the region.
- 109) According to the missionary reports, the local Military Governor not tolerant of Christianity was in early 1839 transferred to the Cambodian border to serve as a mere army sergeant. His successor is described as a

humanistically disposed military officer who felt no particular antagonism toward Christianity and who upon taking office appointed a well-known local Christian medical man as his personal physician (AME 696 fo 723-724). A search of the *CND* records reveals that during Minh Mạng 20 (1839). 3, Tạ Quang Cự was replaced by Phạm Hữu Tâm 范有心 as governor general of An Tĩnh (*CND*: 4409). Tạ Quang Cự was then made military general in Huế with no specific duty station, assigned to the construction of levees on the Phố Lợi 普利 River on the outskirts of Huế (*CND*: 4411). Although the missionary report confuses the destination, it is likely that it is describing the transfer of Tạ Quang Cự.

- 110) There is only one example in the extant sources of the suppression avoidance mechanism not functioning in Nghệ An, involving the arrest and “martyrdom” of a local priest by the name of Pierre Tuy. Tuy’s arrest took place on the 25th of June 1832 between the dismissal of Hồ Hựu in late 1831 and the appointment of Nguyễn Đình Tân in late 1832. Once the priest had been handed over to the authorities and the imprisonment procedures had gotten underway, it was impossible to avoid reporting the incident to the central government, thus preventing any chance of escape. Tuy was executed on the 11th of October 1833 upon direct orders from Minh Mạng himself (*APF*. T7. p. 405).
- 111) *CND*: 2956. Trần Danh Nguyên and Phạm Đình Trâm were sentenced to *lingchi* 凌遲, by which the prisoner’s flesh was slowly sliced away until dead, while the rest were beheaded.
- 112) On the 29th of October of the same year, Masson learned of the mutiny three days in advance from a wholesale merchant, who was Nghệ An’s wealthiest Christian (AME 695 fo 214).
- 113) AME 695 fo 215.
- 114) AME 695 fo 708-709. The Military Governor referred to here was most likely Phạm Văn Điển 范文典, who served as Provincial Governor of Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh in place of Tạ Quang Cự between the end of 1836 and the mid-1837.
- 115) AME 695 fo 185. Forest indicates that many people engaged in Vietnam’s highly mobile occupations, such as fishing and commerce, were Christian adherents (Forest, *op. cit.*, *Livres III*, p. 151). In a letter written to Macao in 1841, Masson also proposed that from then on all missionaries bound for the most intensely persecuted regions, such as Nam Định and Cochinchina, be routed through Nghệ An before deployment to their appointed destinations (AME 701 fo 1571-1572). The safe destinations proposed by Masson, either Cửa Hội 會汛口 or Cửa Lò 爐汛口, were surrounded by large-scale Christian settlements, most of whose residents were engaged in fishing or maritime transport, thus providing convenient routing of missionaries to Masson’s chrétienté upon disembarkation (AME 701 fo 1572).
- 116) *CND*: 4272-4275.
- 117) This is a collection of memorials submitted during the Minh Mạng Era (The Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies’ Catalog No. 2173, Archive No. VHv. 96/1-9).

- 118) AME 696 fo 757.
- 119) AME 696 fo 765.
- 120) Nola Cooke, "The Composition of the Nineteenth-Century Political Elite of Pre-Colonial Nguyễn Vietnam (1802-1883)," *Modern Asian Studies* 29, no. 4 (1995): pp. 741-764; Shimaō Minoru, "Betnamu Genchō zenki (1807-1847) kyōjin no nin'yō kanshoku nikansuru nōto" ベトナム阮朝前期 (1807-1847) 舉人の任用官職に関するノート [Career success of Cử Nhân during early Nguyễn period Vietnam], *Keiō Gijuku Daigaku Gengo Bunka Kenkyūjo Kiyō* 29 (1997): pp. 79-87; Emmanuel Poisson, *Mandarins et subalternes au nord du Viêt Nam une bureaucratie à l'épreuve (1820-1918)* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2004).
- 121) Makino Motonori, "Genchō Shōchiki Betnamu hokubu niokeru Kirisutokyo senkyouwo meguru shosō, Pari gaikoku senkyōkai Minami-Tonkin daibokuku setsuritsu no haikai nitsuite" 阮朝紹治期ベトナム北部におけるキリスト教宣教をめぐる諸相：パリ外國宣教會「南トンキン代牧區」設立の背景について [Aspects of mission activities in Northern Vietnam under the reign of Thieu Tri Emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty: Backgrounds for the establishment of the Southern Tonkin Vicariate of the Societe des Missions Etrangeres de Paris], *Tōyō Bunka Kenkyū* 東洋文化研究 [Journal of Asian cultures] (學習院大學東洋文化研究所 Research Institute for Oriental Cultures Gakushuin University) 11 (2009): pp. 87-119.