

The Heritage of Catholic Village Regulations in the Red River Delta: Characteristics and Values

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Abstract

Catholic village regulation is an remarkable product of Catholic culture's integration to Vietnamese villages. Formed on the basis of Vietnamese village regulations, Catholic village regulations bear in them Vietnamese village element and religious element, thus carrying spectacular features, including political – religious institution and Catholic ceremonies. With the role to manage villages, maintain moral and cultural traditions in social life of the community, Catholic village regulations sketched out vigorous picture of various yet secret physical and spiritual life of the Catholics, and at the same time transmitted historical, ethical, cultural and social value throughout each period of Vietnam's history. That is the value of Catholic village regulation herigate in the Red River Delta we would like to introduce in this study.

Keywords: Regulation, Catholic Village Regulation, Value of Regulation, Characteristics of Regulation, Red River Delta, Vietnam.

INTRODUCTION

The Red River Delta, where 11 provinces (Vietnam Statistical Yearbook 2019: 46) are located, is a place featuring nuances of different regions and thus has become a culture intersection for many years. It was also the first region in Vietnam to accept Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and then Catholicism in century XVII. These religions, when being imported to Vietnamese villages and interfering with existing beliefs and religions, had created richness and diversity to Vietnamese culture and at the same time contributed to a more vibrant national identity. Village culture is a symbol of Vietnamese traditional culture in the Red River Delta, because it was attached to the image of traditional villages (or traditional culture) in Vietnam with three attributes: *a sense of village community* (awareness of democracy among villagers and communities in production and protection of the village, culture evolvement, lifestyle and morality...); *a sense of self-governance* (most visible in the establishment of village regulations) and *the uniqueness of each village* (two near villages can obviously have dissimilar characteristics). In a village unit, self-governing power was largely grown from right of the elders and respected elders, as per old sayings: "*trieu dinh trong tuoc, lang nuoc trong xi*" (*the Dynasty respects authority, the village respects the old age*). The state law was based on the government, but the village rule was based on traditions accepted by living experience of the villagers and passed down from one generation to another. *The village rule* comprises of oral principles on all cultural and social activities of all members in the village, mean while *village regulation* was a kind of *written village rule*, which was created in order to assure social equality.

Village regulation (Huong uoc) has different names: village custom (*tuc le*), fixed-price agreement (*keboan uoc*), convention (*quy uoc*) ... but all refer to a document stating rules and custom of each village community to regulate behaviors of villagers. Specifically: according to *Vietnamese Dictionary*, village regulation is defined as law in a village set up by villagers (Van 1994: 413). According to *Han-Viet Dictionary*, *huong* means village and refers to an area of 12,500 households living together, and *uoc* (in *Kiem uoc* which means binding, or villagers take good manners as a model that people are required to follow and must not go beyond, or *uoc* (as in “wish”

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means two parties promise to do things as per their rights and obligations) (Thieu 1993: 697-478), thus *Huong uoc* means taking rules, customs and manners, rights and obligations of two parties as the common norms for every villagers to follow (Nguyen 1999: 910). *Tuc le* or *customs* are rules and lifestyle that have existed for a long time and became a habit of villagers (Nguyen 1999: 1747). *Quy uoc* or *convention* consists of things that are agreed and need to be followed (Nguyen 1999: 1381). The concepts *huong uoc*, *kehoan uoc*, *huong le*, *ke uoc*, *huong kehoan*, *ap kehoan*, *cuu kehoan*, *quy uoc*, *tuc le*... were often used to refer to rules of activities in the village, including: Institutions of social organization, activities of associations, wards, sub-wards, and conduct of popular beliefs and religions, etc. The most common term *huong uoc* or *village regulation* will be used as a research concept. Accordingly, *Catholic village regulation is a set of conventions and rules that are composed in documents by villagers of a Catholic village.*

Catholicism was introduced to Vietnam from the middle Century XVI (1533), however its propagation and development did not start until Century XVII (1615) when Buzomi Jesuit Missionary came to Hoi An (nowadays Quang Nam province). In the process of propagation, the missionaries succeeded in integrating organization system of Catholic churches to Vietnamese village organization. The creation of *Catholic villages* (parishes and sub-parishes) with every villagers as Catholics of missionaries not only helped believers in keeping their faith, but also played an important role in creating Catholics units. It is clear that *Catholic village* was the product of the Catholics missionary process to Vietnam, bearing two elements: *Vietnamese village and Catholicism.*

When studying the history of Catholic villages, Nguyen Hong Duong divided *the establishment and development process of Catholic villages in the Northern Delta of Vietnam* into 3 periods, of which *the second period from post 1862* (when Nguyen Dynasty signed a peace treaty with France to cede 3 provinces in the South East region and allowed Catholics to be freely propagated in Vietnam) *to 1954 was when Catholics villages were completed and stable* (Nguyen 2011: 82-126). In this period, Catholic villages gradually accomplished its own characteristics while Catholic village regulations were also released. The earliest text of Catholic village regulations that we collected was *the village regulation of Dien Truong village, Nam Dinh province* in 1850 (which we will discuss in details in next part).

By reviewing documents of village regulations, we found out that the establishment and development process of Catholic villages happened in two ways: *Tach giap* (*dividing a village to smaller sub-villages*) and *Doanh dien* (*establishing villages of immigrants*), among which, *Tach giap* or *dividing a traditional Vietnamese village to smaller sub-villages* was more popular. By this way, a Catholic village separated from a traditional Vietnamese village could become a full village/parish (for example: Bac Trach parish in Thai Binh province) or remain as a Catholic sub-village coexisting with traditional Vietnamese villages (for example: Chat Thanh village in Ninh Binh province or La Tinh village in old Ha Tay province (now Hanoi)). The division of a village into sub-villages was actually a way to divide assets that originally belonged to the village (may they be state-owned fields, old places of worship for villagers, or even worshipping objects, etc), which normally led to conflicts. Therefore, villagers had to set up convention or regulation to resolve possible conflicts. This was reflected clearly in convention documents of Catholic villages in the Red River Delta (Bac Trach, Cao Mai commune, Truc Dinh District, Kien Xuong town (Diplomatic note of Bac Trach, 1989) or non-Catholic and Catholic village in La Tinh, La Noi commune, Tu Liem District, Hoai Duc town (now Hanoi) (Jonh 2007).

Catholic villages were established from the base of and also had functions like traditional Vietnamese villages. Thus, we would like to present the definition of *Catholic village as the living and working place of Catholic and non-Catholic people in a specific area.* There were two types of Catholic village: *Non-Catholic – Catholic village and full Catholic village.* *Non-Catholic – Catholic village* or “bean sticky rice / *xoi do*” village as called by old folks - was the village where Catholic and Non-Catholic people lived (the term *dan luong* or *non-catholic people*, which indicates people not following Catholicism, is rarely used in the countryside today as no longer appropriate, yet we still use it here to assure truthfulness of this document. The term “*xoi do / bean sticky rice*” *village* can be understood that within one village, Catholic sub-villages and Non-Catholic sub-villages lived together, some villages had only 1 Catholic sub-village while some villages had more Catholic sub-villages than Non-Catholic sub-villages. *Full Catholic village* was the village whose 90% to 95% people were Catholics.

Catholic village is the result of Catholicism's establishment and development in Vietnam. Notwithstanding, it still possesses original characteristics through its *political – religious institutions*. One feature of Catholic village is the *Catholic village regulation or convention*.

The period from post 1862 to 1954 was when Catholic villages completed and settled, ergo Catholic village regulations developed accordingly. All village regulations we have collected were made in this period. For convenient tracking, we did research by classifying village regulations into two types in accordance with two periods: before and after year 1921 – the year of French's rural reform. In particular:

Village regulations in the period before rural reform or Pre-rural-reform village regulations (before 1921) were customs of each village agreed verbally, and then written down in poonah paper and mostly in Han-Viet language, hence the content and form were basically not consistent. In the research, we worked on 28 Pre-rural-reform village regulations, of which the earliest was in 1850, and the latest was in 1920 – right before the French's rural reform event.

Village regulations in the rural reform period or Rural-reform village regulations were created from 1921 to 1944 during the French's rural reform in Vietnam. Content of these village regulations was based mainly on content of Pre-rural-reform village regulations and adjusted by request of colonial government. After colonizing Vietnam and from the beginning, the French kept Vietnamese village structure unchanged and the governing party intended to utilize the old villages management apparatus, hence Governor-General of Indochina Paul Doumer supposed that: "Thanks to stable structure of An Nam villages... that in front of us is not millions of individuals but thousands of collective groups which are organized strictly with discipline; and they stay connected to us by each division unit of which we only know the Notables Council" (Phan 2008: 175). Not long after that, with the aim to grab whole governance and exploitation of Northern people like what they had done in the South of Vietnam, especially to discard the norm "custom rules the law" and the existing coherence of Northern villages, the French tried multiple times but failed to remove village regulations. As a result, they decided for a rural reform from August, 1921. During the rural reform, village regulations received great attention. The French maintained village regulations while removing some old ones which created disadvantages to colonial government. New clauses related to discrimination of social classes and positions, giving feast to whole village to celebrate exam passing, graduation or promotion (*khao vong*) ... were also added to deprave and separate the Northern communities – who had been strongly coherent since the old days. Rural reform can be found in Decrees on August 12th, 1921 and February 25th, 1927 by Resident-Superior of Tonkin and Decree on May 23th, 1941 of King Bao Dai. The key point of Decrees on August 12th, 1921 is (1) the *replacement of Hoi dong Ky muc or Notables Councils* (existing before rural reform) *by Hoi dong Toc bieu or Sub-village Councils* (or *Hoi dong Giap bieu* because the members of new councils would represent family lines and sub-villages but with limited number; the head of these councils were *Chanb huong hoi* or *Main village mayor* and *Pho huong hoi* or *Vice village mayor*), and (2) the strengthened control of the government on villages management body, especially the role of *Lý trưởng* or *Commune mayor* as well as financial control via budget establishment for each commune. Yet, after 6 years, colonial government had to re-establish *Notables Councils* to operate alongside with *Sub-Village Councils*, for which the Decree on February 25th, 1927 stated the functions of Notables Councils as consulting body to Sub-village Councils to enforce bureaucracy and financial control. Later on, the Decree of King Bao Dai discarded completely Sub-village Councils and reinforced Notables Councils, whose heads were *Tien chi* or *Main Village Head* and *Thu chi* or *Vice Village Head* (Institute of History 1990: 272).

It can be seen that after hundreds of year after being imported to Vietnam, Catholicism has contributed greatly to the country's cultural heritage treasure in various areas: architecture, art, music, literature, especially handwriting... and obviously Catholic village regulations – a Catholic Cultural Heritage.

So what is heritage and Cultural Heritage? According to *Etymology Han-Viet Dictionary* (Buu 2009: 433), *heritage* or *di san* consists of two parts: di 遗 means leaving behind; san 产 means assets, so *di san* means the construction, work, assets or anything valuable in terms of history, culture, science... passed down from old generations to young generations. *Cultural Heritage* or *Di san van hoa*, as per Clause 1, Chapter 1, *Amended National Cultural Heritage Laws*, "includes tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage, spiritual and physical products that have

historical, cultural and scientific values passed down from one generation to another in the Social Republic of Vietnam” (National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2011).

As stipulated by *National Cultural Heritage Laws*, cultural heritages are divided into two main types: *Tangible cultural heritages and Intangible cultural heritages*. *Intangible cultural heritages* include: good customs in lifestyle of the nation; products of literary, artistic, scientific, oral literature, folk performance; traditional craft works that have spectacular values; traditional medical knowledge; food cultural values, traditional costumes and other folk knowledge; traditional festivals. On the other hand, according to Pham Khanh Ngan (2014): *Documentary heritage (under World Memories Program) is the result created from signals, codes, sounds or images to record remarkable thoughts, historical, cultural and scientific achievements on diversified forms of belief-carrying things*. These include: *document in text forms such as drafts, books, newspaper, propaganda pictures, official dispatch, working paper, computer files... Content of documents can be recorded in ink, pencil, paint, digital signature or other methods. Delivering materials can be paper, plastic, sedge, leather, palm leave, bark, stone, cloth, hard dish, and other back-up materials*” (Pham 2014: 66-70). Apparently, village regulations can be considered as a cultural heritage of Vietnam.

Regarding Catholic heritages in Vietnam, Nguyen The Nam assumes that Catholic heritages are all (physical and spiritual) relics inherited from the past and passed down to presence, related to Catholicism and having Catholic attributes, having values in terms of history, culture, science... in Vietnam. Thus, Catholic heritages in Vietnam possess 3 features: *Firstly*, they must have characteristics of a heritage (being documentary, passed by generations, being valuable...). *Secondly*, they must be a heritage having Catholic essence (here we understand as sacredness originated from Catholic ceremonies and sacraments; or being the product created from Catholic cultural environment). *Thirdly*, they are heritages originated in or closely pertained to Vietnam (Nguyen 2014: 10-11).

To conclude, we perceive the concept: *Catholic cultural heritage in Vietnam is the products brought to existence by or associated with Catholicism, passed down by time and containing all attributes of a heritage*.

Village regulations, especially the old ones written in Sino - Nom in general and the ones of Catholicism in particular, have been disappearing because of constant changes in society. This once again assures that the remained Catholic village regulations are the only evidence for unique cultural heritage values of Catholicism in Vietnam. In the study of La My Hang (La 2013: 250-259), the number of Catholic Sino - Nom bibliography stored at Institute of Sino - Nom study and Paris National Library – France were 35 publications under 6 categories: Stories about Saints; Catechism; Catholic poetry; *Catholic village regulations* (Ngoc Dong Village regulations (玉同鄉約), Serial: AB.324); Books on education; Dictionary and searching books; Bibliography related to local government’s policies on Catholicism; Books for Catholicism research and learning. These are rare and valuable documents of Catholicism and are now stored carefully. In this study, we would like to introduce about Catholic village regulations whose cultural heritage values are typical of Catholicism in the Red River Delta of Vietnam.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Description on Outline, Form and Content of Catholic Village Regulations

The researched documents consisted of more than 100 documents of Catholic village regulations and customs in the Red River Delta. This is not the final number, but can cover mostly what is needed for the research. Of more than 100 documents collected: 28 documents were written before the rural reform (referred to as *pre-rural-reform village regulations*), 75 documents were written during the rural reform (referred to as *rural-reform village regulations*); 38% of the documents are village regulations of Full Catholic villages and 62% are village regulations of Non-Catholic - Catholic villages.

Because village regulations are of valuable document category, we could not approach original version of these documents and so most researched documents are copied version, which created difficulties in material identification. However, taking all time, space and research objects into account, all village regulations were made in paper (of different types in each period). By applying Textology and History methods, we brokedown the research on appearance, form and writing style of the village regulations as below:

Structure of Village Regulations

Normally, Vietnamese village regulations and Catholic village regulations shared the same structure which includes:

Creators of Village Regulations

Village regulations were composed by people having authority in the village like village officials, Head of village, Head of Commune, or people having “Thanh hien” (knowing Chinese characters), being old, receiving high education and were nominated by everyone in the village to compose village regulations. For example: custom of Dien Truong commune (Nam Dinh province) said: Only people passing academic exams should be assigned to compose regulations, otherwise composer should be the one contributing to the village or should be elder people. That is the custom” (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies, Serial AF.a11/44).

Reason to Compose Village Regulations

Every village regulation always had beginning part to explain specific cause to compose that regulation or custom, for example, *the pre-rural-reform village regulations as in custom of Duong Cuoc commune (Thai Binh province) said: "...The 1st Head and 2nd Head (Tien chi and Thu chi, respectively) (the ones of highest dignity, education and age living in the village) and Head of Commune gather at the communal temple to amend and record customs of the commune and clarify the precis of ancestors. After a long time of consideration and planning, now we adjust all customs and update as followings* (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies. Serial AF.a5/70).

For rural reform village regulations, most documents had beginning part similar to: “According to rural reform orientation stated in Clause 8 dated August 12th, 1921 by Resident-Superior of Tonkin on village regulation reform” while some village regulations did not mention about this event but pointed out the need to do regulation reform so the customs will be better. For example, *village regulation of My Dinh village (Thai Binh Province)* said: “This village regulation edits and records distinct customs and regulate small things in the village. Politics of the village complies with Decree and applicable laws of the Government (Institute of Social Science Information, 1936: Serial Hu 2879).

Content of Village Regulation

This comprises of regulations for detailed issues of each village; the number of regulating points varies by each village, yet always written in two parts: main regulations and sub-regulation or custom. We will dig deeper into these in later parts.

Date of Establishing Village Regulations

Full name of the active governors, officers, signatures of those learning Han-Viet characters, Head of commune, Head of village – author of the village regulations, followed by stamp.

d and *e* were shown in the text as followings:

For example, *custom of Lac Nhue (Ha Nam province)* said: “Nguyen Dynasty, named Khai Dinh 5, date 25, month 6. Attested Head of Commune Nguyen Huu Lieu” (Sino - Nom Institute, 1920), while *custom of My Dinh village (Thai Binh province)* said: “The minutes of My Dinh village to compose this village regulation as per No. 555 dated 15 (Aout) year 1936 – each village has to compose its own village regulations. Now the Notables Council, Sub-village Heads Council and people of the village compose village regulations which adds 49 clauses, and the above clauses have been read to everyone for agreement and obligation. Head of Communed signed on August 24th, 1936” (Institute of Social Science Information, 1936: Serial Hu 2879).

Regarding Language of Village Regulation

In more than 100 documents of Catholic village regulations collected and selected, there were 2 languages used as followings:

Firstly, Sino - Nom: Village regulations were written in two types of character: Han (Chinese characters) and Nom (lomographic Vietnamese characters). These regulations were mostly *pre-rural-reform village regulations* made at the end of Century XIX, beginning of Century XX. Material used for the document was normally poonah paper or *giay do*, duong tree paper or *giay ban*. Text of village regulations in this period were normally written by the village's Confucianism students in Han or Nom characters. For example, *custom of Lac Nhue commune (Ha Nam province)* was written in Han characters with 44 clauses for Non-Catholic villagers and 21 clauses for Catholic villagers, besides ceremonial or funeral oration for different ceremonies (Institute of Sino - Nom, 1920). *Village regulations of Ngoc Dong (Hung Yen province)* was written in Nom characters with 32 clauses for Full Catholic people (of Full Catholic villages) (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies, 1913: Serial AB.324). Village regulations of this period are now stored in library of Institute of Sino - Nom Study and library of Institute of Social Science Information, and their content was translated to Vietnamese by Sino - Nom experts.

Secondly, Text in Han (Chinese) – Viet (Vietnamese) – French characters: there were *rural reform village regulations* in different forms, some documents were written in two types of characters (Han and Viet), some were written in three types (Han – Viet – French), but mostly were written in national language – Vietnamese or Viet. This type of regulations was mainly composed in the middle of Century XX (1921-1944) – the time of rural reform by the French. Text was usually hand-written, typed or made to ready-printed templates on material like duong tree paper, poonah paper, student notebook or A4 paper..., particularly: *custom of Quat Lam village (Nam Dinh province)* was hand-written and copied exactly the template of rural reform orientation, having 82 clauses under 18 parts, including 54 pages in French (page 1-18), Vietnamese (page 19-39) and Chinese (page 40-54). *Village regulation of Lam Phuong village and village regulation of Tuy Loc village (Ninh Binh province)* were recorded in 72 pages in 3 languages (French (page 1-26), Vietnamese (page 27-48) and Chinese (page 49-72), reporting 79 clauses of ready-printed templates (Institute of Social Science Information, 1924: Serial Hu 4622). There were village regulations written in 2 languages, including: *village regulation of Lao Phu village (Hai Phong province)* having 40 clauses in Vietnamese and Chinese (Institute of Social Science Information, 1933: Serial Hu 1894). For the time being, most text of village regulations we collected was in Vietnamese hand-writing, for instance: *village regulation of Duc Trai village (Hai Duong province) – 105 clauses* (Institute of Social Science Information, 1936: Serial Hu 962), *village regulation of Lien De village (Nam Dinh province) – 158 clauses* (Institute of Social Science Information, 1942: Serial Hu 2424) ... The documents of village regulations in this period are now stored in library of Institute of Social Science Information.

It appears that village regulations were made in different materials, languages and hand-writings in accordance with historical conditions of each period. For *pre-rural-form village regulations*, text was mostly hand-written in 100% Sino - Nom characters (28 out of 28 documents collected). *Rural-form village regulations* had around 93% (70 out of 75 documents collected) of text in hand-written form of mostly Vietnamese language, some villages, whose customs were similar to the pre-printed templates of colonial government, used the pre-typed templates to fill in or typed in additional customized content. Before and during the rural reform, village regulations were in hand-writing form, whose writing was done by members of Confucianism Literary Association. In the past, Confucianism Literary Association gathered people who were knowledgeable, understood Sino - Nom characters and Vietnamese and had good hand-writing to write ceremonial/funeral oration and regulations for the villages...

Regarding Year and Stamp of Village Regulations

Each period had different village regulations, thus *year of village regulation* lies in between such periods. *Pre-rural-reform period* includes documents composed before 1921 (second half of Century XIX and beginning of Century XX), and the earliest village regulation we have collected for this period was in 1850 (for example: *village regulation of Dien Truong village, Nam Dinh province*), then 1866, 1907, 1908, 1915 and 1916; the latest composed of pre-rural-reform village regulations was in 1920 (for example: *village regulation of Lac Nhue village, Ha Nam province*). In the *Rural reform period (1921-1944)*, village regulations were composed discontinuously in 1922 (*village regulation of Lam Phuong village, Ninh Binh province*) and 1923 (*village regulation of Tieu Dong village, Ha Nam province*), vibrantly in 1933-1936, and finally in 1941, 1942 (*village regulation of Thuy Nhai, Nam Dinh province*).

Regarding Content of Catholic Village Regulations

Content of Catholic village regulations before Rural reform period (before 1921) was mostly general regulations to adjust self-governing relationships to assure fine customs of the village. In addition to reserving religious practice as well as traditional ceremonies of Vietnamese, the village regulation also focused on maintaining village's culture, including discouragement of female teasing, alcohol addition, opium trade and use... These activities would affect the neighborhood and village's custom if not being strictly managed. Specifically: *village regulation of Ton Dao village, Quy Hau, Kim Son (Ninh Binh province)* said: "Clause 1: Opium is strictly prohibited when many people in the village have consumed and made it a habit, now as per high-level request, 7 points to control this are: (1) any official consuming opium should pay fee of 6 *quan*, any grown men consuming opium should pay fee of 3 *quan* and be whipped 30 times ... (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies, 1917: Serial AF.a4/27). Clause 1 of *custom of Thuan Nghiep (Thai Binh province)* said: "In the weather of autumn spring, sub-village's people gather and collect money in the worshipping temple and hand over to the Head in charge to conduct ceremony showing respect to worshipping (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies, 1916: Serial AF.a5/65). Moreover, there were also objectives related to organization structure and social organizations of the village, culture and custom, security and other regulations to assure spiritual life of the community; regulations to assure obligations to the government, including tax, manual worker obligations and specification on rewarding and punishment.

Regarding rural-reform village regulations (period 1921-1944), though amended by colonial government, their content still preserved general requirements to maintain good customs passed down from previous period, especially more consolidating in terms of parts and clauses organization. The usual rural-reform village regulations would have 2 parts similar to those of old Vietnamese villages: *politics part (covering issues on political institution, social organizations, lands and security)*, and *customs part (covering issues related to customs, ceremonies, rewarding and punishment of villages and communes)*. Even so, the ceremonies mentioned in general Catholic village regulations only specified ceremonial dates. Some village regulations in this period can reveal clearly the consolidation in structure and content, for example *village regulation of Phuong Xa commune (Thai Binh province)* had 176 clauses put in alphabetical parts: "...Part A – Politics (clause 1 to 20) ... Part S – Living and burying in other village (147 clauses). From Part T – Custom on fighting against from Clause 1... to Part U – Worship and altering (29 clauses) (Institute of Social Science Information, 1942: Serial Hu 2950). *Village regulation of Hao Xa village (Hai Duong province)*.

Had this content structure: "Part 1 – 62 clauses – consists of overall clauses: politics of the village must comply with decrees of Resident-Governor... then Spending-Collecting Book, tax allocation, allowance for long trip, guarding activities of village, small temple house (*diem*) and levee, assigning soldiers, order, emergency, gambling prohibition, hygiene standard, suing, living in another village. Part 2 – Owned Custom of the village – clause 63 to 105 – covers content on: marriage, funeral, communal fields and land, general worship and praying (for Non-Catholic only), dividing and conclusion (Institute of Social Science Information. Serial Hu 1481).

From Catholic village regulations, we can see the diversity of village regulation forms and religious activities of Catholic people reflected in them. The Vietnamese humanism value, spirit of solidarity and unity... were also inherited from and promoted in Catholic village regulations, showing profound integration of Catholicism in the culture of Vietnam. Catholic villages reinforced the variety of cultural heritages while Catholic village regulations conveyed their own characteristics and values in the flow of Vietnamese culture.

RESEARCH METHODS

To explore the features and heritage values of Catholic village regulations in the Red River Delta, we used Textology as the main method, while also utilizing Historical and Religious approaches.

First of all, the study used *Textology* and *History* to outline Catholic village regulations in the general picture of Vietnamese village regulations in the Red River Delta before and during rural reform (1921). After that, to assert the characteristics and associated heritage values of the Red River Delta's Catholic village regulations, we employed *Religious object* (Nguyen 2014: 3-15) approach to dissect and interpret terms and clauses in Catholic village regulations from the view of: belief, conduct and community. Consequently, we examined clauses on ceremonies, lifestyle, education... to capture Catholic values in the life of Catholic village communities generally and Vietnamese villages specifically. To meet the above objectives, we used different methods in each part, including: consolidating, comparing and analysing to evaluate and comment on the features and values of

Catholic village regulations in the Catholic village community in the Red River Delta, and finally suggested solutions to foster the value of village regulations in the modernized and international integration era.

Religious studies in Vietnam in recent years have undergone flagrant transformations in terms of approaching methods. Besides the popular methods like History, Philosophy, Sociology, Ethnology..., there have been more studies that take advantage of Textology to deep-dive religions. In Textology method, the text or documents are used as the object to study associates of beliefs and religions reflected in the old books, works, village regulations, epitaphs... and assess the impact, effect, value and role of beliefs and religions towards the society in specific periods. Religion is social awareness as well as social entity. *Religious hypostasis* is a term indicating the whole religious reality existing in the past and also an institution and structure of social life, absorbing impact from its relationship and interaction with other social institutions. Religious hypostasis is the holism of religious beliefs and practice of individuals and groups following common values identified by collectivity, objectivity, symbolism, experience and sensitivity that did and are existing in society's life (Nguyen 2014: 3-15).

Amidst attributes of a religious hypostasis, there is one in which Textology was already present throughout research process – *document properties*. Document properties here means the old books and paper, village regulations, inscriptions, archeology artifacts, performance art, music, behavior, body language... - all are rooted from Textology, used to clarify information and different upon demand of the creator. As Nguyen Quoc Tuan already pointed out: “Religion not only comprises of people but also visible texts, images, music, practice, architectures and relics, especially archeology relics, literary works, art, culture; which means religious hypostasis also has document properties and broad research through multiples areas will reveal its multidimensionality...” (Nguyen 2014: 3-15).

As text is selected as the object, Textology method will base on this object to carry out researching steps to follow duties and functions of Textology. Sino - Nom Textology method is considered as appropriate to use Textology in researches as it has depth and guarantees verification. Text is created upon two elements: information and information transmission tool. Text research process hence includes two steps: (1) checking and adjusting information transmission tool and (2) collecting, exploring and evaluating information – this step is for deep dive analysis in areas where text is considered as researching object.

For religious study in general and Catholic village regulations study in particular, the steps mentioned above are critical for only pre-research on the text can help us know what type of text (a work, inheritance letter, village regulation or engraving...), name of text, author, date, era and some unusual attributes, mainly text content (the main exploration and analysis when studying religion by Textology).

RESULT AND DISCUSION

By studying Catholic village regulations in the Red River Delta, we point out some characteristics and values of Catholic village regulations, then propose on how to preserve and promote the heritage value of Catholic village regulations in modern society.

Result

Characteristics

Structure analysis of Catholic village regulations in different periods has disclosed their most basic feature: *political – religious institution property*, while other features – *communal fields and lands, worship and praying, customs and culture style* differed them from Vietnamese village regulations. One topic worth mentioning when we studied the content of Catholic village regulations is *management of social – cultural activities* in the villages, including: guarding, living in other village, positions and levels, giving feast to whole village to celebrate good news of one person (*khao vong*), buying and selling positions in bunch (*mua trum, ban truong*), assuring safety and security, eradicating bad customs and social problems, marriage and funeral of each family... This management stressed the importance of organization and management of villages' official departments in helping the society in each period, especially in assuring family - family line - village and society connection, social orders, lifestyle and manner in each nuclear of the society. Thus, Catholic village regulations merged its typical attribute to Vietnamese village regulations to bring out the diverse beauty of Catholic village culture and Vietnamese village

at the same time. That is the heritage that Catholicism has created and contributed to the cultural heritage treasure of Vietnam. We would like to mention some characteristics of Catholic village regulations as below:

Firstly, amongst documents of Catholic village regulations, *worship and praying* is a crucial part showing daily religious activities of Vietnamese Catholics. It started with Saint worship days, mostly great ceremonies in church and worshipping house that were detailed in the village regulation documents, for example: *village regulation of Du Hieu village* said: “*Clause 133*: Every year, Full Catholic villages have 6 great ceremonies being memorial ceremony to honor Ancestor Saint. On each ceremony of the ceremony weeks, the council and Vice-Head of family line should gather at communal temple to assign people to prepare for Catholic procession. The expense for these ceremonies and annual incense shall be covered by village’s fund hold by an old pastor, no food and drink gathering will be organized” (Personal document, 1938).

Secondly, *Ceremony* part, which specified regulations on Vietnamese traditional customs – funeral, marriage... (a typical feature of Catholic villages as per *Marriage Sacraments*), received constant attention of Catholic villages. Traditional customs (mainly in farming) imprinted intensely by the regions and areas are traditional holidays (*Lunar new year*), *Ancestors worship*, *Land use ceremony* (to wish for fruitful harvest), *New rice ceremony*, *Passed-generation worship*, *Death ceremony for people contributing lands to society*, *Village celebration*... (Nguyen 2020: 130-148). They were all regulated specifically in terms of conduct time, ritual and worship things. Funeral was stated clearly for each level in the village (normally there were 3 types in correspondence with 3 levels of villagers), especially those who came from another village. For instance, *Clause 74, village regulation of Van Giao village (Nam Dinh province)* said: “All villagers are Catholic people, when somebody dies, the funeral holder proposes to the Head of village, officials will receive information and give funeral fee of three levels: 1st level – 30 *dong*, 2nd level – 20 *dong*, 3rd level – 10 *dong*” (Institute of Social Science Information, 1942: Serial Hu 2367).

In Catholic villages, *marriage* – one of Seven Sacraments of Catholic rituals was also mentioned in Catholic village regulations: each Catholic people can only have one wife or one husband (*one husband, one wife*), and *the groom must go to the church*. For example: *village regulation of Vinh Tri village, Nam Dinh province* said: “*Clause 103*: Full Catholic village only allows one husband, one wife, any one getting the second wife or husband will not be accepted by the village to prevent bad model for other people” (Institute of Social Science Information, 142: Serial Hu 3528”).

Thirdly, requirements on culture, customs and education (in Full Catholic villages, children from 7 years must learn Catholic Bible from parents) were specified in village regulations. For example, *fixed custom of Tang Bong commune, Thai Binh Province* said: “...parents must arrange to teach Liturgical book to a child from 5, 6 years old so he/she learns good behavior and worships God. When he/she turns 7 or 8, he/she should be allowed to confess his/her sins and join ceremony to be taken care of spiritually. If he/she is lazy or ignores the learning, parents must apply strict teaching method to prevent being dishonest to the religion, distorted mentally and physically and made fun of by people” (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies, 1908: Serial AF.a5/65). On the other hand, regulations on unity between Catholic and Non-Catholic people was an integral part of village regulations of Non-Catholic – Catholic villages.

Giving feast to the whole village to celebrate someone’s achievements (*khao vong*) or buying and selling positions in bunch (*mua trum, ban truong*) were practices transferred from custom of old Vietnamese villages to Full Catholic villages, showing intersection and integration of Catholicism into Vietnamese village. *Mua trum, ban truong* can be found in *custom of Thuan Nghiep commune, Thai Binh province*: “Normally, if officials in the village are not at the same age, people will not respect. But officials in sub-village can be bought by positions and levels. Anyone should give feast of 12 *quan* when promoted to 1st position, 8 *quan* when promoted to 2nd position and 6 *quan* for 3rd position. If the position was bought and the feast comes later, he must sit behind 12 people. Anyone getting position offer from (Head) district official can pass the position down to his blood-lines. People taking academic exams or joining public officials selection can be assigned to appropriate positions. However if their son/daughter or grandchild passes the exams, the feast should be hold and he should pay 20 *quan* and give away 1 bunch of areca nut and 1 bottle of alcohol to respect human morality” (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies, 1916: Serial AF.a5/65).

Fourthly, communal fields and lands were regulated in details: villages having large area of fields should re-allocate fields periodically and upon agreement of all people in that villages, especially Non-Catholic and Catholic villages. Officials must review list of grown men to serve manual works (through records of birth and death) to avoid missing or extra allocation which can break unity among people. For villages having small area of fields, field work was normally assigned to people in Group of Religious Conduct and then the produce will be used to prepare for ceremonies of the villages. For example, *village regulation of My Dinh village (Thai Binh province)* recorded precisely the number of fixed assets of the village, and assigned Head of family line and Treasurer to use and manage such assets to take care of religious work, while communal fields were re-issued every 3 years: “We have 1 church, 1 guest house, 1 line of house, garden, pond and filed which are watched by Head of family line and Treasurer... Communal fields are re-issued every 3 years ” (Institute of Social Science Information, 1942: Serial Hu 2879).

Fifthly – political – religious institution – a notable topic in Catholic village regulations. Political – religious institution is regulation on titles election and work allocation for Group of Religious Conduct (to help the main pastor) and Sub-Village Heads Council to manage Catholic village. The standard mentioned in this regulation was strict and severe, only people with appropriate level of morality and education would be selected. For example, *custom of Bac Trach (Thai Binh province)* said: “In the family line, among those officials, we must choose 2 people with high morality to take charge of Vice Head position, 2 to take care of *tu tich khan*, 3 as staff, 2 to look after paralyzed people, 3 to keep *hanh phien*, 3 *truong* old men and 3 *truong* old women to look after children and work of *truong* people. 3 people for *Chan khan luan*, *Chan kieu khan*, 1 *truong* person for the octet, 1 *truong* person for the drum, 1 maid for houses of the same *khan*, communes will support people to build dike and separate river, however they must sign request to keep the house, and then official in charge must approve before carrying out work to assure religious rule” (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies, 1916: Serial AF.a5/68). The selection of competent people to Group of Religious Conduct can be seen in *fixed custom of Tang Bong Commune, Clause 1*: “Clause 1: here are the requirements for Main Head, Vice Head, 1 secretary, 2 *truong* people – 1 woman and 1 man, 1 guarding *truong* person. Competent ones must have morality and be recommended/confirmed (by the main pastor) to take on the position” (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies, 1908: Serial AF.a5/65).

The outstanding features of Catholic village regulations reflected the vibrancy of old villages where Catholic people delicately interleaved *ceremonies and conduct of Vietnamese traditional ceremonies* with *Catholic ceremonies*, creating a persistent and long-lasting presence in Vietnamese culture. This also indicated the harmonized cooperation and exchange between traditional and modern cultures of Vietnamese in general and of Catholic people in particular. Village regulation was “standard measurer” that unfolded the role, responsibility and awareness of Catholics in daily cultural life, especially in Catholic village festivals – where each Catholics dedicated his heart, mind and body to the village and society, aiming at unity in community and nation. What was reflected in typical village regulations could not reveal exactly the spiritual side of Catholics, yet when written down in text, it has become actual and lively documentary of village culture. The diversity of traditional Vietnamese villages when incorporated with the uniqueness of Catholic culture has created distinguished characteristics of Catholic village regulations amongst Vietnamese village regulations in the Red River Delta.

Value

It is true that similar to any other religions, Catholicism also needs to *protect* and *authorize truth* of its religion. If a religion does not protect the truth, it will fall into heresy and wrong direction, become broken or just a theory. As a result, truth is always an important element of religion, a constant, a value that is preserved permanently despite varying cultural contexts and spaces. Being handed down by different ways, Catholicism has created Catholic cultural values in several areas and enriched Vietnamese culture. One of those values is Catholic village regulations – the unexampled heritage value of Catholic village as well as Vietnamese village. Due to its various roles and functions, Catholic village regulations carried along a variety of values in terms of history, morality, traditional culture and society.

Historical Value

With the role to contain information, village regulation had its meaning and value in the history of one village, one area or one historical period like Rural reform period (1921-1944) that the French executed in Vietnam. Regarding historical document value, the old village regulations played a part in directing base policy and setting up of updated village regulations in the modern time. Particularly, in some historical times, village regulations also reflected national spirit, united community and “Custom rules the law” long-lasting norm and protected the villages against French governance (as mentioned in *part I - Introduction*), thanks to which all traditional and cultural values have been well conserved and developed.

Moral Value

As a sacred object/collective like other religions, Catholicism must have bindings to build up its special hypostasis and came up with actions to protect the truth, authorize the truth and orient people to conduct lifestyle relevant to the stated truth. This *moral – ethical value* of Catholicism can be seen in Catholic village regulations’ reservation and development of good customs, community culture tradition and promotion of dogma and humanity values.

The preservation and promotion of good customs is visible in ceremonies and praying throughout religious life of Vietnamese Catholics, which differed by each village yet still, contributed to the durability and evolvement of Catholicism. The modern Catholic ceremonies were integrated in traditional customs of Vietnamese, especially the rule of “one wife, one husband”. Since immigrated to Vietnam, Vietnamese Catholics skillfully incorporated Vietnamese customs with Catholic customs in their daily life. One old custom of Vietnamese – *Hau* worship (*cung Hau*) was also mentioned in village regulation. *Hau* worship is the offering of fields, money, gold and silver, worshipping tools... to the village or temple, pagoda... so that the offerer will be worshipped for a long time after reaching “100 years old”. Normally, for people who had money and assets but no son to continue blood line, to prevent “fighting for food of lost ghosts” (*cuop chao la da*), beside assigning someone to pray to them in front of the altar, they also did *Hau* worship because of no inheritor and worshipper. Some people did *Hau* worship when the village was in difficult situations so they provided money and fields and then later will be worshipped. Some people did *Hau* worship so the village, temple, pagoda... would do death ceremony for them or their family members, some did that to level up their or their family’s position and reputation, or just to hide behind the saints, so the village would worship them a long time later... (Nguyen 2011: 480-490). For example, *village regulation of Dap Khe village (Hai Duong province) reported on custom of Hau worship for both dead and living people*: “the dead *Hau*: Nguyen Thi Hue has 1 *mau* of field, Nguyen Van He – 2 *mau*, 2 *sao*, Nguyen Thi Loan - 2 *mau*, 2 *sao*, the living *Hau*: Pham Thi Nhi has 1 *mau* of field, Nguyen Thi Hoe – 1 *mau*. Total 7 *mau* 4 *sao* of fields will be classified for auction sale every year, money of the dead will be used for their *Hau* worship; money of the living will be spent on communal works” (Institute of Social Science Information, 1942: Serial Hu 1062). *Hau* worship was also a good practice for all villagers to follow, as in Xuan Hoa, Kien An. The purpose of this custom was for the village to be more accomplished, have more cultural value and better ordered, while reflecting village culture’s integration into Catholic villages, the harmony between Vietnamese and Catholic lifestyles, between tradition and modernity in villages in Vietnam and especially in the Red River Delta. Every village had different ways to reserve its fine customs. Religion reservation always went in line with Vietnamese tradition and ceremonial reservation. Culture and lifestyle were also well taken care of, issues related to marriage, women teasing, alcohol addiction or opium trade and use... would have bad impact on the neighborhood and village’s customs if not being strictly handled. *Village regulation of Vinh Tri village (Nam Dinh province)* stated clearly on marriage in a Full Catholic village, as in Clause 103: “Full Catholic village only allows one wife for one husband, anyone getting the second wife will not be accepted to prevent bad model for other villagers” (Institute of Social Science Information, 1942: Serial Hu 3528).

Reinforcement of morality on human value was most visible in Filial piety (loving parents and harmonizing with siblings) – an important part of three moral bonds and five constant virtues (king-servant; father-offspring; husband-wife) – the core of Confucianism. The village regulation regulates responsibilities of parents towards children and vice versa, of neighbors and female respect in Catholic villages. *Filial piety* was stated clearly in Clause 109 and 110, part 18,

village regulation of Phu Nhai village (Nam Dinh province): “Anyone in the village living a good life but leaving his grandparents and parents in bad condition will be advised to take better care of them. If he does not follow, he will be considered ungrateful and the village will apply punishment on his position until true repentance” (Institute of Social Science Information, 1940: Serial Hu 4232).

Reservation of national cultural tradition is apparent in ancestors worshipping. After the 1980 Common Letter Catholics had become more accountable and consistent in worshipping their ancestors in each family, family line and village.

Traditional Cultural Values

The traditional value of religion lied in reinforcement and strengthening of unity and support in each family and family line and the equality and transparency in the villages’ community. From human organization and division to cost allocation in each ceremony – all activities were conducted seriously, equally and transparently as per regulations of the village. Beside worshipping God, holidays or ceremonies were the event for all Catholics gathering to enjoy meals, meet each other, share living experience and together live a better life. These practices had created the respective routine and family tradition in each villager, family and family line of Catholics. Every one was obliged and responsible to participate in the activities, which proved the long-life village coherence tradition, supporting and uniting living style of Vietnamese Catholics in the background Vietnamese culture. *Pre-rural-reform village regulation of Chat Thanh commune* said: “Non-Catholic officials and Village Head of Chat Thanh commune, Chat Thanh, Kim Son district, Yen Khanh would like to propose about sub-village division. Upon creation, all villagers were Non-Catholics with no separation on manual and field works. In Tu Duc year (no exact year mentioned), thanks to *keoan dien*, some villagers followed Catholicism so the sub-village volunteered to be one Catholic sub-village; of which the Imperial Commissioner declared that sub-village division must be in harmony... Although the sub-village was separated, the solidarity remained unchanged... Now we would like to urge for field allocation for 87 grown men in the village, each one gets 2 *man 5 sao 6 thuoc*... Catholic sub-village has 10 people with 25 *man 4 sao* of field” (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies, 1897: Serial AF.a4/23).

Strict regulation to handle conflicts that caused disunity and affected culture and tradition of the village would encourage every villager to adjust his behaviors, be more cooperative and together build up better village. Each village would have different punishments for the conflicts, as in *village regulation of Ton Dao, Ninh Binh province*: “Custom of the village encourages harmony, anyone having disagreement in anything should propose to village Head, or Commune Head; or the pastor to see the right and wrong as per main religion. Anyone trying to compete and leads to fighting will be fined with 6 *mach* and whipped 30 times. If he does not agree with solution and proposes to higher level but fails to be reasonable, he will be fined with 3 *quan* and whipped 100 times. In case of further noncompliance, he will be banished from the village (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies, 1917: Serial AF.a4/27).

Social Value

Coexisting with the State’s laws, village regulations with management role in village society had implied *self-governance* (Nguyen 2014) in *Catholic villages*, maintained order and discipline and created a stable and secured environment for the whole village community. In society management in each period, the State only reached out to villages, communes or resident groups, while villages/resident groups directly reached out to each citizen. Therefore, village is the intermediary, an extended hand of base organization, connecting the State and people, being the most remarkable self-governing organization to control political, economic, cultural... institutions of Vietnamese villages. Specifically, in Catholic villages, the main Pastor possessed the final decision on Catholics of Catholic village, in both religious and life aspects. Village regulation also stated clearly in these two aspects: *social management and religious life*. Religious right is the typical of Full Catholic village regulations, particularly: *The selection of competent people to Group of Religious Conduct*. For example, *fixed custom of Tang Bong commune, Clause 1* said: “Clause 1: here are the requirements for Main Head, Vice Head, 1 secretary, 2 *truong* people – 1 woman and 1 man, 1 guarding *truong* person. Competent ones must have morality and be recommended/confirmed (by the main pastor) to take on the position (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies, 1908: Serial AF.a5/65). *Arrangement of*

swing, maintaining social order and security and religious education were of great importance in family and village. However, the role of the main pastor in solving conflicts in Catholic village was also critical, as when the Village Head could not come up with a solution, the case must be submitted to the main pastor before higher Head levels, as can be seen in *village regulation of Ngoc Dong (Hai Duong province)*: “Any villager feeling unfair in any case must propose to Village Head for first solution. If not satisfied then please go to Vice Head of Commune, then Great Father for another solution. If he does not follow that order or follows the order but still feels injustice after judged by Great Father, he must be fined 6 *quan* and whipped 30 times. The fine and punishment will be doubled if he still finds the solution unreasonable after proposing to Head of Noble Council. If final solution is unpersuasive to him, he will be disqualified to lower level. Any things and fee incurred will be born by the whole village” (Institute of Sino - Nom Studies, 1913: Serial AB.324).

Thus, the unbending rules in Catholic village regulations in terms of both life and religion and punishment schemes for violating cases in daily life had encouraged villages to be more aware, responsible and avoid next instances, based on the thought of keeping the image for family and village and being “religiously devout”. This had led to new lifestyle with high organization and discipline, isolation and reservation in each Catholic community in the Red River Delta. Village regulation reflected *self-governing of the village* while *political and religious institution* were parallel and appropriate with the governance of State and the Church. The role of Group of Religious Conduct was crucial to the life and religion of all villagers. Nevertheless, it also created reservation and locality, sometimes totally isolating Catholics from the traditional culture in their instinct, which created conflict between Non-Catholics and Catholics in the village.

DISCUSSION

From the above study, we would like to initiate some topics on the current Catholic village regulations as below:

Firstly, village regulations are conventions of a community of people living in a village to harmonize relationship between individual and individual, individual and collective group and this collective group with another. In the case of Non-Catholic – Catholic villages, it is more necessary and realistic to have village regulations to stabilize relationships and national and religious unity. The self-governance of Catholic village regulations had created moral culture values that affected social life of typical village communities in the background of Vietnamese culture. Consequently, what should we do to foster moral educating tradition and the sense of responsibility in each individual and family of the community? How to improve consciousness on the value and role of Catholic village regulations in the modern society, especially in building new cultural life in the countryside?

Secondly, village regulation is one of intangible cultural elements that created village culture. It is the accumulation and coherence of custom, routines, cultural and religious lifestyle that the ancestors had built up and passed down to following generations. Catholic village regulations had contributed to maintain the stability, order and discipline of the villages, creating family tradition from individuals to family and bigger communities of the village, especially the binding of village communities in the Red River Delta. Apparently, village regulation is a unique product of Catholic culture, a Catholic cultural heritage as part of and addition to the diversity of Vietnamese culture. Thus how should we reserve and promote the value of village regulation heritage in the modern time?

First of all, as a *management tool*, village regulations indicated ownership of working people in Vietnamese villages under feudal regime. Content of village regulation – *on one hand*, reflected standards in customs and lifestyle of the people, and *on the other hand*, affirmed people’s self-governance of social – cultural life (physically and mentally) on a daily basis.

In fact, village regulation before and during rural reform is “the laws” of each village, because it was village regulation that regulated behaviours, personal and collective relationships in the village and set up democratic environment on voluntary basis. *The self-governance* of village regulation was shown from the beginning of its content, with assurance of high democracy: “the village is a mini government” so “State has laws, village has custom”. Yet, village regulation was composed and executed based on laws: “village is the root of the government, the state proper only if village is strong”. Each village was economically independent, having assured social security and order and each villager was a shield to protect his village – these all indicate self-governance. From ownership

perspective, village regulation was the base to confirm independence or self-control of each villager, every thing was brought to discussion toward highest agreement and unity.

It is notable that after a while from August Revolution in 1945, particularly after 1954 – when village structure no longer existed, village regulations – “spirit” of villages started to fade, but did not disappear, because those regulations from the village’s custom already rooted in the mind of each villager, and so “the reborn” of traditional values of village regulations continued to thrive as people maintained customs in daily life. By this way, village regulations had the chance to *re-affirm its self-governing role* since Decree 10 of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee – Course VI-1988 (normally called Course 10). With self-encouragement, many villages had composed common conventions to control areas of social – economic life, thus came the re-establishment of village regulations.

During its existence and evolution over different periods, village regulations had constantly adapted to the society, yet still stimulated its *active role in conveying human values* through “good neighbourhood”, or “the spirit of solidarity” when people take care of each other through ups and downs of daily life, sharing difficulties and achievements when “leaves protects tattered ones” from tax paying to marriage, funeral events... Especially, village regulations placed high priority on learning spirit with rules on money rewarding or punishing on academic results of children and the requirement that children must learn by heart the Bible when reaching school age. *National unity* was also reinforced, mostly in Non-Catholic – Catholic villages, where difference in religions might lead to conflicts, yet we also can see that solidarity amongst people was visible through awareness and responsibility of people when protecting public properties, guarding the village, harvesting crops or in village’s festivals.

In the modern social – cultural life, we should compose new village regulations following policy and direction of Communist Party and the Government, yet it is necessary to consider advantages and disadvantages in composing regulations and conventions that are relevant to customs and at the same time preserving distinctive characteristics of each village, especially Catholic village. Catholic village regulations with new cultural rules and standards to fit new context will become an useful “tool” in specifying laws and policy of the government and simultaneously play a part in educating ethical tradition, adjusting behaviors, shaping human values and reinforcing accountability of each individual toward his family and village community. The effective implementation of Catholic village regulation will increase the value of cultural heritages, religion, beliefs and good customs in daily and religious life, manifesting “7 objectives good for life, 3 objective good for religion” lifestyle (Chairing Team of The Committee for Solidarity Catholics of Vietnamese issued Decision No. 149/QD-UB-DCT, 2009) of Vietnamese Catholics. As a result, villagers will foster the cultural, civilized, safe and healthy lifestyle and become more “immune” against social evils and toxic cultural products nowadays.

Though living values have been adjusted to become more appropriate with the changing society, the cultural heritages will continue to last with time, carrying historical, cultural, religious, social... values in each period of our country. Notwithstandingly, the erosion of time has created some loss of heritages having high documentary value, including village regulations. The conservation of Catholic heritages in general and Catholic village regulations in particular thus will need the support and participation of cultural and religious institutions and organizations, especially researchers to evaluate their heritage value as the base for proper conservation and promotion solutions.

CONCLUSION

By describing and analysing forms and contents as well as evaluating the values of Catholic village regulations in the Red River Delta, we have come to the following comments:

Firstly, when studying culture of the Red River Delta, the most visible thing was village culture, especially after religions were imported to Vietnam and integrated to Vietnamese culture toward higher regional cultural diversity. Catholicism entered Vietnam (the old Vietnamese village) and created new type of village beside the traditional Vietnamese village – Catholic village (on the base of Vietnamese village). The origination and evolution of Catholic village have been known under two forms: (1) the separation of Catholic sub-village and Non-Catholic sub-village from traditional Vietnamese village to Catholic village; and (2) the creation of

Catholic village by recruiting people from different regions and areas. Consequently, Catholic village possessed two factors: *Vietnamese village factor and Religious factor*. Similar to Vietnamese village, Catholic villages had two-sided attribute being “concensus and conflict” and “isolation and exchange” of institutions and cultural activities in the village.

Secondly, village regulation – village’s customs in written form, was one of village’s cultural products and in each period, village regulation can be adjusted or supplemented to adapt to daily life. Catholic villages were formed from Vietnamese village, thus Catholic village regulations shared some same points of Vietnamese village regulations. Basically, Catholic village regulations had changed considerably in terms of form, outline and content. Compared to pre-rural-reform village regulations, rural-reform village regulations were more consolidated and scientific in terms of structure, form and content. The purpose of those changes were to make the villages more perfect, cultural and in better order. Features of Catholic village regulations can be found in detailed regulations on: *worshipping, custom, culture and lifestyle, communal fields and political – religious institution*. *Worshipping* (actually Saint servings) and *marriage* (one husband, one wife) were the most outstanding features of Catholic villages and Catholic village regulations in the Red River Delta. Content of Catholic village regulations also expressed their historical, moral, cultural tradition and social values in the society. This proved Catholic village regulations’ integration into village culture, the harmonization between Vietnamese and Catholic lifestyle, the merge between tradition and modernity in Vietnamese villages.

Thirdly, the overall content of village regulations did reflect the two-sided attribute of Catholic villages in the Red River Delta – being *different but united, conflicted but harmonized*. Thus, it is possible to draft out a lively picture of the diversified but deep spiritual life of Catholic villages from their village regulations. Village regulation was the “connecting line” between the Church and the Government in specifying documents and directions on the life of Catholic villages in particular and the whole society in general. The application of policies of Communist Party and the Government, especially belief and religion policies in social life in the countryside will needs village regulations and conventions so the the specification of each policy document is appropriate with each village while still assuring legal aspect. As a result, this will help build regime to unify, gather and democratize people, utilize national solidarity in modern life, especially in area of religious people.

Fourthly, the creation and multiplying of village regulations in Catholic villages are highly recommended in the current situation, as it represents *traditional attribute* of Vietnamese culture. Moreover, *new village regulations* will become one standard to evaluate cultural area or village of the nationwide campaign *Building cultural villages*. The more “document-specific” village regulation is, the easier and more effective implementation work is. Notably, the revolution “*All citizen unify to build cultural life in each area, live good life and remain good religion*” with 10 objectives – 7 for good life and 3 for good religious practice motivated by The Committee for Solidarity Catholics of Vietnamese has recorded good achievements. To strengthen ownership of people under scheme “Party leads, authority controls, people are the owner”, management works need to cooperate well between modern social organizations and religious organizations like: Fatherland Front; Family line and other social groups (Unit Party, Unit Youth Organization, Women Association, Veteran Association, Farmer Association...) with Parish Pastoral Council (Parishes, Charity, Propaganda Group...). This cooperation will assure *stability* for the process of building and fostering Vietnamese culture to be more advanced and nationally vibrant.

Fifthly, at the moment, the conservation of Catholic heritage value in general and Catholic village regulations in particular are calling for the help of Ministries, Departments and Industry of different levels to review, report, evaluate and work out proper solution for each type of heritage. When we start to develop new countryside, the cultural and human value of village regulations still need to be passed down and promoted to create mentally cultural value of both Catholic and Vietnamese villages and at the same time eradicate bad customs that cease the progress of villages toward integration and development./.

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