

THE GENERAL BACKGROUND AND THE EXPANSION OF THE SALESIAN WORK IN THE EAO REGION IN THE 1950s

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Introduction

The scope of this paper is to give a general – and not a comprehensive – background that will help us understand the political and ecclesial situation vis-à-vis the Salesian expansion in the EAO region in the 1950s. Thus the study is limited to those EAO provinces or countries where the Salesians were present in the 1950s. These, with their year of starting, are: Macao 1906, China 1910, Japan 1926, Australia 1927, Hong Kong 1927, Thailand 1927, Timor 1927, Myanmar 1938, Philippines 1951, Vietnam 1952, Taiwan 1952, South Korea 1954.

1. General Background before the 1950s

1.1. Colonialism

One of the most significant events in the memory of EAO region, particularly in Southeast Asia, was Colonialism.¹ The 1920s and 1930s was the time when colonial control of the countries of Southeast Asia was at its fullest extent, but it was also the period when the foundations of foreign rule in the region came under considerable strain. It was a period when modern nationalist movements became important. And not least, it was a time when there were major revolts against foreign rule: British colonial

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¹ Cf. Peter CHURCH (ed.), *A Short History of Southeast Asia*, Singapore, John Wiley and Sons (Asia) Pte Ltd, 2006.

government in Burma; France ruled over Vietnam, Cambodia and Lao states, with these three colonial possessions known as French Indochina; Dutch ruled the territories that were to become Indonesia; America was the colonial power in the Philippines; in Macao and East Timor, the Portuguese maintained a tiny colonial presence; Britain ruled over the Malayan Peninsula, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

In the 1920s calm seemed to be the general, though not absolutely complete, order of the day. The colonial governments had encountered resistance to their rule. The Dutch, for example, had fought bitter colonial wars as they expanded their hold over the Indonesian islands particularly in Aceh region and northern Sumatra. In Burma, it took years of what the British called “Pacification”, which was in effect a small-scale colonial war before peace was established. In Vietnam resistance to the French was almost continuous. In some parts of Southeast Asia, however, the nationalist stirrings were not so apparent. In Cambodia and the Lao states, for example, there simply were no significant nationalist movements. In the Philippines the Filipinos by and large accepted the promise of the United States that it was, indeed, determined to grant independence under generally benign American control.

As the 1930s drew to a close, the idea of independence was generally not even discussed by the colonial rulers particularly in the British, Dutch and French colonies. In Indonesia, for example, known as Netherlands East Indies, Governor-General de Jonge firmly insisted in the 1930s that the Dutch would be ruling their colonial subjects for another three hundred years!² It was this context that explains why Communism and the Second World War had such a shattering impact on Southeast Asia and on the other regions.

1.2. *Communism*

Following the 1917 Communist Revolution in Russia, it's not surprising that some saw the revolutionary theories of communism as

² Milton OSBORNE, *Exploring Southeast Asia*, Crows Nest, NSW (Australia), Allen & Unwin 2002, p. 145.

a way of gaining independence. If a political group acting in the name of the workers of Russia could overthrow a corrupt, authoritarian monarchy, perhaps embracing communism could lead to the overthrow of colonial regimes. The role of communism in the developing anti-colonial movements was most important in Vietnam but also had its followers in Indonesia and played a small but significant role in the Philippines.³ Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam, probably the best-known of all those who sought independence from a colonial power through revolution, had already embraced communism as the answer to the major political problems of the world, including colonialism.

1.3. *The Second World War*

The Second World War in Southeast Asia and the surrounding regions, heralded by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, marked the point that the European dominance could be defeated and the myth of European superiority could be demolished.⁴ Japanese victories showed that the arguments of the various nationalist groups in the colonies had been right – the colonial powers and their representatives could be defeated by Asians. With the old colonial masters removed and their prestige damaged, the people in much of Southeast Asia found that they now had new colonial masters, Asians this time, it's true, but in other ways, occupying the same sort of position as those they had just defeated. The Japanese surrender on 2 September 1945, meant the victory of the colonial powers that had controlled Southeast Asia before the Second World War, but it also meant that the colonial era could never again be reinstated without challenge. For all the countries of Southeast Asia, the next decades were dominated by the issue of independence from the colonizers who returned after the war, whether it would be granted or resisted and how it would be gained – through violence or by peaceful means.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

2. General Background in the 1950s

2.1. *Independence from Colonialism*

By the late 1950s, almost all of Southeast Asia gained their independence in different ways and over an extended period of time. In some cases, notably in Indonesia and Vietnam, independence was gained only after prolonged armed struggle against the colonial powers. Malaya gained independence while still fighting an ethnically based insurgency. Burma gained its independence from the British at the end of the Second World War but not without internal political squabbling. Laos gained independence with a fragile compromise of integration between the Communist Pathet Lao troops and the country's army. Cambodia gained its independence through the persuasion of King Norodom Sihanouk but not without political tension between the monarchy and conservative politicians. The Philippines had gained independence politically from the United States at the end of the Second World War but somehow dependent economically on the United States. Indeed it was the start of the breakdown of colonialism, before the end of the 20th century, but without political stability in all the colonized countries in the 1950s.

Those countries that gained their Independence more or less in the 1950s were: Korea 1945, Myanmar 1948, Laos 1949, Vietnam 1954, Philippines 1946, Indonesia 1950, Cambodia 1953, Malaysia 1957, Singapore 1965.

2.2. *Colonial Association*

With the collapse of colonialism in the years immediately before and after the 1950s, the feeling of animosity towards Christianity as a western or foreign religion was present in some EAO countries.⁵ This feeling was the fruit of their experience of the pains of colonialism itself as in Cambodia, Burma and Vietnam; the attacks by Western

⁵ Cf. Hubert JEDIN (ed.), *History of the Church. The Church in the Modern Age*, Vol. X, London, Burns and Oates 1981, pp. 751-777.

powers as in Japan. In *Cambodia* the Catholics in their small mission Church were branded as agents of a foreign religion. One who had himself baptized a Christian was called a traitor. In the *Malay Peninsula* the 1950s was the time when Rome desired to give new stimulus to the Catholic mission by taking into account the ethnic circumstances, introducing the transfer of church government to native hands; by removing the causes for the ever louder complaints that the Catholic Church was biased, that it was not supranational but bound to the Western colonial powers; and by showing the people that the Holy See understands and fosters the struggle of colonial peoples for independence. In *Thailand* though the country was never colonized by foreign powers, on account of black propaganda against the French colonial power in the 1940s, the Catholics were also persecuted by some groups of fanatics in some parts of the country. The situation improved after World War II. In 1953 there were among 18 million inhabitants, at most 85,000 Catholics, mostly Vietnamese and Chinese, seldom Thais. In *Myanmar* residence permits were withdrawn from all missionaries, especially from foreign missionaries who had entered after 1948, the year of independence. The state claimed the sole right to educate the youth. In an effort to accommodate the strong national consciousness of the population and to remove prejudices against the Catholics, Rome pushed from 1954 for the transfer of the direction of the Church to native Bishops. This strong sentiment toward the Catholic Church as foreign religion restricted evangelization mostly to the animistic mountain tribes of the population and to the immigrant Indians and Chinese. In 1955 there were among 16 million inhabitants only about 150,000 Catholics, scarcely any of them Burmese who had professed Buddhism exclusively. In *Japan* even though great progress was made by Pope Pius XI solving the problem of the Japanese rites in 1936, by allowing Japanese Catholics to share in the patriotic and civil ceremonies, the animosity towards the Catholic Church was not completely erased in the 1940s and 1950s. The slogan of the anti-foreign Japanese nationalistic movement was: Christianity is a foreign religion, hence not for the Japanese. To curb this nationalistic perspective towards

the Church Rome hastened to turn over all ecclesiastical territories, to a great extent governed by foreign prelates, to Japanese prelates. Some foreign missionaries voluntarily relinquished their position to the Japanese clergy. Transforming the ecclesiastical hierarchy to its native leadership was somehow a solution against anti-foreign sentiment towards the Catholic Church. Much earlier than Japan a similar solution happened in the *Philippines* to curb any anti-foreign Filipino nationalistic movement, particularly the schism of the Aglipayan church from Rome in 1902. Although the indigenous Aglipayan church may not be seen as a nationalistic movement against the Catholic Church, nevertheless it was an offshoot of the Filipino fight for justice and freedom from the Spanish clergy and the colonizers. Their demand was to give to Filipinos all the bishoprics and other ecclesiastical dignities in the country. In 1960 all the seven archbishoprics and fourteen residential bishoprics were governed by Filipino Archbishops and Bishops with only two exceptions because both were missionary territories (Diocese of Surigao and Archdiocese of Cagayan). With this growth and development in the Philippine Church, the Aglipayan church had no reason to exist. It was in the 1950s and 60s that a new responsibility devolved on the Philippine Church: the evangelization of Southeast Asia. At least, the Filipino missionaries were not exposed to the suspicion that they were emissaries of Western "imperialism". In 1958, the Conference of the Bishops of Southeast Asia decided to establish a radio station in Manila, known today as Radio Veritas for evangelization of Southeast Asia.

2.3. *Menace of Communism*

Though colonialism contributed to the antagonistic attitude towards the Catholic Church as a foreign religion, in the 1950s Marxist Communism, was the primary antagonist of Christianity. Communism had extended its influence from Russia into most of Eastern Europe, central Asia, Vietnam, North Korea, China and other parts of EAO region. The communist victory in China would make Southeast Asia a major theatre in the Cold War. This Cold War between 1940s and

1960s made the superpowers manipulate newly emerging Southeast Asian countries, which were faced with a choice between the conflicting role models of *communism* and *capitalism* as the means of achieving national unity and general development. The United States, which had survived the crash of Wall Street (1929) emerged as the prominent political, economic, military and ideological power in the Cold War against Communism.

In China, foreign missionaries were expelled after the decree of June 1950 by the Communist regime on the suppression of “counterrevolutionary activity”. In 1957 the regime tried to construct a National Chinese Church separated from Rome by appointing bishops without papal approval. From 1957 to 1962 alone, a total of forty-five bishops were appointed by the state.⁶ This persecution of the Catholic Church stifled all development and expansion of the religious congregations, particularly of the Salesians in China. By 1957, all the ten settings in China were closed.

Communism was also a threat in the Philippines. In 1951 the Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines, Msgr. Egidio Vagnozzi (successor to the Salesian Apostolic Delegate from 1922-1948, Msgr. Guglielmo Piani) wrote to Fr Renato Ziggiotti begging with insistence and encouraging the Salesians to come:

“It is true that there is the political situation that can arouse some preoccupations, the nearby conflict in Korea and the uneasiness about the Huks in the country. But this is also a Catholic nation, the only one in the Far East, that needs to be saved from communism... At any rate, the situation in these islands is not all desperate. We are defended by the sea and by the jagged configuration of the archipelago, as well as by the American forces... Above all, there is the protection of God and of the Most Holy Virgin whose title of ‘Mary Help’, so full of meaning and promise, reached here also”.⁷

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 755.

⁷ Gregorio BICOMONG Jr., *The Arrival of Don Bosco in the Philippines, Requests made to the Salesians, 1891-1951*, Makati City, Don Bosco Press Inc. 2001, p. 144.

2.4. *Political Peace and Political Change*

In many countries where there was “political peace” after the Second World War, the growth of the work of the Salesians was apparent in the 1950s. Political peace here is not the absence of political instability but rather the absence of major wars both from internal and external factors or absence of political coercion. It is a general trend that where there was political peace, the beginnings and expansion of the Salesian work was facilitated in the 1950s. In Korea, for example, after the three-year *Korean War* (war between North and South Korea, 1950-1953), the concrete proposal in 1953 from the Bishop of Kwangju became the seed of the start of the Salesian work through the coming of Fr. Archimede Martelli in 1954.⁸

In Vietnam although there were the initial work of Fr Francisque Dupont in the 1940s and the arrival of the Salesians, Fr Antonio Giacomino and Fr Andrej Majcen in Hanoi in 1952, an initial development of the Salesian work occurred only after the *Indochina War* of 1954 (known as the First Indochina War where the Vietnamese fought against the French for Independence) which culminated with the signing of the Geneva agreement that divided Vietnam into two: the north to the communists, and the south to the nationalists. It was only after the *Vietnam War* (1960s-1975) (also known as Second Indochina War, where North Vietnam fought against the south and Americans), that most of the Salesian Houses were founded in spite of the communist control.⁹

In the Philippines, despite the many requests for the Salesians before the *Second World War*, nothing was realized until the war was over. Msgr. Piani, the Salesian Apostolic Delegate to the

⁸ Cf. Michael CHANG, *A Concise History of the Salesian Korean Mission* in Nestor C. IMPELIDO (ed.), *The Beginnings of the Salesian Presence in East Asia*, Vol. I. Hong Kong, ACSSA 2006, pp. 179-183.

⁹ Cf. John NGUYEN VAN TY, *The Beginning of the Salesian Work in Vietnam. The Patriarchal Story and Exodus* in N.C. IMPELIDO, *The Beginnings of the Salesian Presence ...*, I, pp. 165-177.

Philippines, also cites the several years of war which afflicted and devastated the Far East as one of the reasons why he did not succeed in starting the Salesian work in the Philippines.¹⁰

However, if political peace can help develop the work of the Salesians, political change could also help its expansion. In China, for example, after the collapse of Chiang kai-shek rule on the mainland, the communist People's Republic of China was officially established in Peking. This political change brought about the expulsion of Salesian foreigners from China especially in 1954 and their transplantation to other countries like Vietnam, Philippines, Korea and Taiwan. Other Salesians who were destined to go to China before the communist take-over of Salesian works were also diverted to other countries. It answered the problem of the lack of personnel in the early development of their works.

2.5. *A Church in Transition*

In the Catholic Church too the 1950s were known as the period of transition. It was a transition from a defensive, and anti-ecumenical Catholicism of the first half of the century to a period of openness to dialogue with zeal for the unity of Christians. We recall that until the 1950s the Catholics were still cautioned about association with Orthodox and Protestants and forbidden to attend the World Council of Churches meetings without permission from the Holy See. The monitum *Cum compertum* of the Holy Office in Rome, issued on 5 June 1948 made reference to the regulations of Canon Law (Canon 1325, par.3) that participation in discussions of faith with non-Catholics was allowed only with the previous permission of the Holy See.¹¹ In 1950s the last eight years of Pius XII's pontificate were still characterized by a growing conservatism. In 1958, with the election of Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncali who took the name of the controversial Pisan Pope, John XXIII, and widely known as the

¹⁰ G. BICOMONG, *The Arrival of Don Bosco...*, p. 97.

¹¹ H. JEDIN, *History of the Church...*, p. 469.

“Pastor”, change had come to the Catholic Church. In 1959, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Pope John XXIII announced at St. Paul’s Outside the Walls that there would be an ecumenical council for the Catholic Church. In 1960 the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity was established. This ecumenical council, known as the Second Vatican Council, was opened in 1962 and paved the way for the passage from an “intransigent” Church to a “liberal”, open Church.

If change had happened in the 1950s discarding the defensive attitude of the Church towards ecumenical movement, the same happened when it came to dialogue with non-Christian religions, in which majority of the countries in the EAO region are non-Christian countries, with the exception of the Philippines, East Timor, Australia and Papua New Guinea. Historically, until the 1950s, Catholic understanding was that in order to be saved one *had to belong to*, one *had to be a member* of the Catholic Church. From the third century theology of St. Cyprian, through *Unam Sanctam* of Pope Boniface VIII, through the profession of faith sworn to by the Fathers of Vatican Council I, the teaching was explicit: *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*: “Outside the Church, no salvation”. In Vatican Council II, opened by John XXIII, the documents Dogmatic Constitution on the Church - *Lumen Gentium*, the Decree on Ecumenism – *Unitatis Redintegratio*, and the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian religions – *Nostra Aetate*, conceded that God did indeed work through religions and churches other than the Catholic Church alone. With that allowance the whole new interreligious dialogue and ecumenical horizons were opened.

2.6. *A Particular Need after WW II*

The weapons and machines used during the Second World War were indications of tremendous progress in industrialization, particularly of the industrialized nations. These modern machines echo the need for an accelerated social and economic development particularly for the developing countries in the 1950s through the opening of the

technical schools. In 1952 the Congregation too took up Professional, Technical and Agricultural Schools as the main topic for the 17th General Chapter.¹² In answer to this need some EAO countries heeded the sign of the times to help the poor young people learn a trade and contribute to the economic progress of the country.

In the Philippines, for example, on 31 January 1951 the Catholic Hierarchy issued a pastoral letter on the need of Vocational Schools in the education of the country:

“A serious regard for the needs of the country as well as a sane spirit of patriotism demands that vocational training be given stress in the educational system. For lack of vocational training the Philippines, according to many critics, is fast becoming a nation of lawyers, accountants and typists...”¹³

It was because of the statement by the Church hierarchy that Fr Carlo Braga, the Provincial of China, was encouraged to write a letter to the Rector Major, Fr Pietro Ricaldone, saying that it was the propitious moment for the Salesians to come to the Philippines.

In Myanmar the best modern school of the area known as “Don Bosco Technical School” was set up in 1957 through the zeal of Fr Bordin. It was envisioned to have a grand Polytechnic Institute in an industrial quarter of Rangoon. Unfortunately in 1965 the government confiscated the entire school and “nationalized” it.¹⁴

In Thailand two Technical Schools were founded: one in Bangkok in 1947 and another in Surathani in 1959.

In Korea, although a little late, a Vocational Training Center was also established in 1968.

¹² Santo Russo, *I primi venticinque capitoli generali, 1877-2002. Società di San Francesco di Sales, Salesiani*, Catania, La grafica editoriale-edizioni di Nicolò 2007, p. 55.

¹³ J. BICOMONG, *The Arrival of Don Bosco...*, p. 110.

¹⁴ The source is an unpublished article entitled *The Salesian Congregation in Myanmar* written by Joachim Ye MAUNG.

In Vietnam, because of the ravages of French Indochina War, the Salesians felt the need to accept the Boys Town with about 450 boys in Hanoi in 1952.¹⁵ This was eventually transferred to the South of Vietnam after the Geneva agreement in 1954. In the Philippines the Salesians started their work in Cebu Boys' Town for the street children in 1954, and in Sydney, Australia, in 1952.

2.7. *Houses opened in 1940s, 1950s and 1960s*¹⁶

Houses opened in the 1940s (20 houses)

<i>Macao 1906</i>	(1940 Colegio; 1942 Yuet Wah; 1943 Coloane)
<i>China 1910</i>	(1946 Peking; 1943 Su Chow)
<i>Japan 1926</i>	(1946 Kokubunji; 1947 Nakatsu-Osada Koen; 1947 Tokyo-Meguro; 1949 Osaka)
<i>Australia 1927</i>	(1940 Melbourne; 1946 Adelaide; 1947 Hobart; 1947 Oakleigh)
<i>Thailand 1927</i>	(1947 Bang Nok Khuek; 1947 Banpong; 1947 Bangkok; 1947 Haad Yai; 1947 Hua Hin)
<i>Timor 1927</i>	(1946 Dili; 1949 Fuiloro)

Houses opened in 1950s (27 houses)

<i>Macao 1906</i>	(1951 Macao – Stampa)
<i>Japan 1926</i>	(1950 Chofu; 1952 Hita; 1955 Saeki; 1959 Tokyo – Yotsuya)
<i>Australia 1927</i>	(1952 Sydney – Boys Town; 1957 Port Pirie)

¹⁵ Cf. John NGUYEN VAN TY, *The Beginning of the Salesian Work in Vietnam* ..., pp. 170-172.

¹⁶ Cf. *Elenco Generale della Società di San Francesco di Sales 1940-1963*, [Editrice SDB, Torino].

- Hong Kong 1927* (1951 Hong Kong – Shaukiwan; 1952 Hong Kong – Kowloon; 1957 Cheung Chau)
- Thailand 1927* (1957 Udonthani; 1959 Surathani)
- Myanmar 1938* (1954 Rangoon; 1957 Anisakan)
- Vietnam 1952* (1952 Hanoi – 1955 Thu Duc; 1955 Go Vap – *Training Center*; 1957 Dalat)
- Philippines 1951* (1951 Tarlac; 1952 Victorias; 1953 Mandaluyong; 1954 Makati; 1954 Cebu Boys Town; 1956 Muntinlupa; 1956 San Ildefonso; 1958 San Fernando)
- Taiwan 1952* (1952 Taipei)
- South Korea 1954* (1954 Kwanju; 1958 Torimdong)

Houses opened in 1960 (23 houses)

- Japan 1926* (1960 Nakatsu; 1961; Tsukumi; 1963 Kawasaki)
- Australia 1927* (1961 Chadstone; 1964 Ferntree Gully; 1964 Lysterfield)
- Hong Kong 1927* (1965 Hong Kong – Wanchai; 1966 Hong Kong – West Point)
- Thailand 1927* (1964 Bangkok; 1964 Betong; 1964 Yala; 1965 Ron Phibun)
- Timor 1927* (1960 Ossu; 1962 Baucau; 1964 Fatumaca)
- Myanmar 1938* (1965 Anisakan)
- Vietnam 1952* (1962 Tram Hanh)
- Philippines 1951* (1960 Canlubang – *Rizal Inst.*; 1963 Canlubang; 1968 Don Bosco Tondo)
- Taiwan 1952* (1963 Tainan; 1964 Taipei)
- South Korea 1954* (1963 Seoul)

Although a good number of houses were opened in the 1950s in the EAO region, all the houses in China were closed because of Communism in 1957. In the 1950s, however, one can see that the Philippines had the most number of houses opened. This was the result not of the expulsion of the missionaries from China by the communists but of the *persistent and numerous requests* before and after the 1950s (since 1891!) for the Salesians from civil authorities, ecclesiastical authorities, benefactors and Salesian Cooperators.¹⁷ Negotiations regarding pending requests were going on after the war, in particular in Tarlac and Victorias (1949), even before the expulsion of the Salesian foreign missionaries from China. The first three Salesians who arrived in the Philippines in 1951 were not expellees from China: Fr Anthony Di Falco and Fr John Ruthkowski from the Western Province of the United States and Fr Guido D'Amore from Hong Kong. Fr Braga later, knowing the political situation getting worse in China, wrote to Fr Ricaldone in 1951 saying, "*The Philippines is opening for us its doors and it would be good to channel our energy towards it.*"¹⁸

Concluding Observations

By way of conclusion, I would like to outline the following challenges facing the Salesian historians in the EAO region:

1. Most of the provinces have not written their history until the 1950s. Some have just mentioned works that were opened in the 1950s but not in a detailed and scientific manner. The challenge is to write the history, if the archives are open, in the light of the political, ecclesial and social changes of this period.
2. For those EAO countries colonized by foreign powers and where there was a strong presence of ancient religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism and Confucianism, Christianity was associated with the foreign, western, colonial rulers. Did the

¹⁷ Cf. J. BICOMONG, "*The Arrival of Don Bosco...*, p.1-11."

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

change of attitude of the Church towards the non-Christians and our separated brethren in the 1950s and 60s favour the development of the Salesian works in our region? What was the effort of the Provinces to remove this impression of a Church that is “western” or “colonial”? What was the effort on the part of the Provinces to prepare local vocations for positions of leadership from the 1950s onwards?

3. In most of the EAO region, Catholics are in the minority vis-à-vis the great ancient religions. Was this a great obstacle in the expansion of the Salesian work? If so, it is good to delineate in the history of these Provinces how they tried to overcome this obstacle. What efforts were made on the part of the Provinces for interreligious and ecumenical dialogue especially in the 1950s and 1960s?
4. When the Vietnamese became independent from France in 1954, they changed the names of the streets in Saigon (and the name Saigon itself to Ho Chi Minh City in 1975) in an attempt to erase the traces of French colonization. The famous Rue Catenat, so well-known to journalists, was renamed Thu Do (Freedom). There were, however, two streets named after Frenchmen which the Vietnamese did not change. One was named after Pasteur, the great scientist to whom the whole world is indebted. The other was named after a French Jesuit missionary, Fr. Alexandre de Rhodes, whose Vietnamese name was Da-clo.¹⁹ This was a tribute to the man to whom the people of Viet Nam owe their modern script through the publication of his Dictionary in Annamese language (Annam is the central kingdom) in 1650. This missionary approach of de Rhodes in Viet Nam, similar to Ricci in China, was based upon a profound respect for the native language, native ideas, native costumes

¹⁹ Cf. Miguel A BERNAD, *Five Great Missionary Experiments and Cultural Issues in Asia*. (= Cardinal Bea Studies XI). Manila, Ateneo De Manila University 1991, p. 57.

etc., all of which constituted the soil on which they wished to build the Christian edifice.

A great Salesian missionary in Japan, Fr Vincenzo Cimatti, used to say: “If you wish to be a missionary in Japan, either you become Japanese upto the marrow of your bones or you don’t accomplish anything.” “I would like to die here, in order to become Japanese soil.”²⁰ Such was the testimony of Cimatti on missionary methodology and spirit of inculturation. What was the effort of the Provinces, at the beginning of the post-colonial era from the 1950s onwards, in inculturating the Salesian Spirit and the Gospel in the native context?

²⁰ ENZO BIANCO, *Diventare Terra Giapponese. Il Servo di Dio Don Vincenzo Cimatti* (= Collana Santi Salesiani 13), Roma, Editrice SDB 1979, p. 4.