

**LIVES OF FOUR MARTYRS OF TONKIN:
WHO BELONGED TO THE DOMINICAN
PROVINCE OF OF THE HOLY ROSARY
IN THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS; BEATIFIED
THE 20TH OF MAY, 1906**

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Lives of Four Martyrs of Tonkin: Who Belonged to the Dominican Province of of the Holy Rosary in the Philippine Islands; Beatified the 20th of May, 1906 by M. B. Cothonay

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M. B. COTHONAY

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BEATIFIED THE 20th OF MAY, 1906

By REV. M. B. COTHONAY, O.P.

P. J. KENEDY & SONS
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LOAN STACK

APPROBATION OF THE ORDER

We have read the work entitled *Lives of Four Missionaries of the Friars Preachers Martyred at Tonkin in the XVIII Century, Beatified the 20th of May, 1906*, written by Father M. B. Cothonay of the Friars Preachers, and we have judged it worthy to be printed.

Rome, 20th of October, 1908.

Fr. Leonard Lehu of the Friars Preachers,
Provincial of Holy Land.

Fr. Barnabé Augier of the Friars Preachers,
Master of S. Theology.

Imprimatur

Fr. J'ph Laboré

Master of S. Theology,

Prov. of the Friars Preachers.

Nihil Obstat.

Remigius Lafort, S.T.L.,

Censor.

Imprimatur.

John M. Farley, D.D.,

Archbishop of New York.

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PREFACE

The four Martyrs of whom we have written the history were all Dominican religious. Three of them Spaniards and one a Tonkinese. All four were martyred at Hanoï, the capital of Tonkin, outside the territory of their mission, the first two on the 22nd of January, 1745, and the other two the 7th of November, 1773.

The Dominican mission of Tonkin divided to-day into three Vicariates Apostolic, formed at that time but one only, under the name of the Vicariate Apostolic of Eastern Tonkin. Its territory extended between the Red River, the Clear River and China. This territory, however, was not exclusively reserved to the Dominicans, as it is at the present day—Jesuits, Augustinians, and Carmelites had missions in various parts.

Tonkin in the XVIII century had kings who did not govern. The family Trinh had seized the power, and one of its members really exercised it under the name of *Chúa* or Lord. This word "Chúa" has no exact equivalent in our tongue. Real kings to whom the name alone was wanting, the Annamite "Chúa," had a family likeness to the mayors of the palace of the Merovingian epochs in France. Japan at that time was similarly governed. Such was the political situation in the middle of the

XVIII century. The "Chúa" or kings of Tonkin, as we shall often call them, since they possessed its real authority—these kings, contemporaries of our martyrs, whom they condemned to death, were in the first place corrupt men, leading the licentious life of the Oriental princes. They were surrounded by eunuchs and perverse mandarins, who exercised upon them an unfortunate influence. They had the mental views and prejudices of their race, heartily detesting all that came from outside; the Christian doctrine they hated instinctively, because it condemned their licentious inclinations; moreover, during this period which extends from the year 1737, in which the first of our four martyrs was arrested, to 1773, the year when the last two were put to death, the "Chúa" or kings of Tonkin had to repress several insurrections which came near depriving them of their usurped power. Frightful calamities desolated the country: disastrous inundations, prolonged droughts which caused the loss of several crops, and brought in frightful famines, pestilence, cholera, small-pox, etc. The mandarins excited by the calumnies of the bonzes, represented the Christians and missionaries to the King as the cause of all these evils. All this was more than sufficient to bring these weak and naturally cruel princes to commit the greatest injustices and even to shed the blood of the ministers of God.

The religion prohibited in Tonkin and for the defense of which our martyrs died, was called in the decrees of proscription, the religion of the "Hoa-lang." Who was this "Hoalang"? Neither more nor less than a Portuguese merchant, others say a Hollander, whose stuffs bore embroidered in the weave the flower (hoa) of the sweet potato, Khoai lang; whence the name given to the cloth itself and soon to him who trafficked with it. This merchant professed the Christian religion; the pagans not looking closely into these matters, had not been slow to designate all Christians, even those of their country by the name of followers of the religion of "Hoa-lang."

This name soon produced an equivocation, of which, at times, the Christians profited, with, or without the connivance of the mandarins. When one of the faithful appeared before the tribunals the mandarins asked him:—"Do you profess the religion of "Hoa-lang?" The answer was invariably the same: "I profess the religion of the Master of Heaven." This is the name by which the Annamites designate the Christian religion even to this day.

Thanks to this confusion, for which they could not be held responsible, a great number of the accused secured liberty and safety, while at the same time, openly confessing the God whom they were reproached with serving.