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Cities of Nineteenth Century Colonial Vietnam

Hanoi, Saigon, Hue and
the Champa Ruins

Pierre Barreton, Brossard de Corbigny,
Charles Lemire and Gaston Cahen

Translated and with an Introduction by

Walter E. J. Tips



White Lotus Press

Contents

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Front cover picture: The Rue Catinat in Saigon (Drawing by Slom, engraving by Devos)

Back cover picture: The hand of an Annamese literati (Drawing by P. Sellier, based on a photo of de Corbigny)

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Introduction

In the first report of this book, we find the account of an officer of the French-Spanish expeditionary corps in the Bay of Tourane, the first point France obtained in Cochinchina and indeed in the whole of Annam, present-day Vietnam. The officer fought to take control of the area surrounding the bay and the extract was anonymously published from his letters. The editor of *Le Tour du Monde* found it even necessary to make some reservations about the very harsh judgements of the character of the Cochinchinese which this officer had incorporated in his letters. However, his opinions are not uncommon: quite a number of writers have fallen for generalizations, and usually less than flattering ones, or mere propaganda destined for the home front and the opinion makers in the French press. His account remains a first hand report of this important first Hispanico-French expedition and the battles which started the Indochinese adventure for the French Navy. Moreover, Pierre Barreton provides a succinct history that serves as an introduction to his more elaborate description of Saigon as he saw it in 1892 or 1893 after more than thirty years of colonial work.

Saigon stirred the French passions as perhaps no other of their colonial cities did, not in the least because the rue Catinat was allegedly a copy of the rue de la Paix in Paris, and terraces to sip imported wine with pretty girls readily available too. On the whole, Saigon was meant to be a tropical version of the beloved capital of France. What Pierre Barreton wrote in his essay applies to a city that had seen several decades of French *colonis* operating their businesses and plying export trade with the locals. A very early view of what Saigon was like when it was almost virginal, with wildlife still roaming the still empty tracts of land in the inner city, was provided by Dr. A. Morice in 1872-73 (*People and Wildlife in and around*

Saigon, White Lotus 1997). Where he saw a town and a harbor with only some immigrants and, of course, the ubiquitous overseas Chinese merchants, there is now a network of pleasant streets, villas and shops and the liveliness and flavor of a European city as well as the hustle and bustle of Cholon, the Chinese quarter that accompanies every economic opportunity created in Southeast Asia since the early days of Dutch and Portuguese trading. However, Barreton's account sustains a triumphant tone—one of monuments, of *grandeur* and soldier's barracks—in which the almost barked orders of the Chinese merchant to his coolies would be almost out of place, were it not for the inevitable taxes that could be levied to pay for the similarly inevitable legion of administrators of the *grandeur* and the *mission civilisatrice*.

So much different is Hue, the old bastion of this people that had suffered at the hands of the Chinese first, and now saw new hordes of overlords appear in the land they basically conquered from the Chams. Brossard de Corbigny described the splendor of the Court of Hue and the history of Annam in 1878 as a member of a diplomatic mission received on 14 April 1875 by the now nominal King of the recently “conquered” state. For all practical purposes, Cochinchina became a colony and the “area” around Hue, as one could describe it somewhat ungenerously—because the Annamese military power to resist the French canons was largely insufficient—was henceforth “protected” by the French presence. This French diplomat has an eye for more than the solemn audience with the king and reports a host of interesting customs, curiosities and some valuable craftsmanship among the Annamese. It is a record of things that would be under the pervasive influence of French bureaucrats and under pressure from modernization which inevitably was the undoing of the old monarchs and of the class of literati that held sway over the population by virtue of their painfully acquired skills to decipher the most simple texts written in Chinese characters.

In the fourth essay in this book, we see glimpses of the totally different, “Indianized” culture of the Chams, the former “indigenous” people of much

of the middle part of Vietnam. Together with Charles Lemire we call them the original population; people displaced by the Annamese coming down from China less to establish a protectorate and more to annihilate or push the Chams into the mountains. Like so many Frenchmen sent to administer the budding colony, Charles Lemire, became fascinated with the remnants of the Chams' masterful building and artistic technique when visiting the caves of Thuy-Son with their Cham sculptures, the Cham towers of Binh-Dinh and Qui-Nhon and the inscriptions at Chua-Nghe. He was one of the very early observers of these archeological treasures and his visit predates the setting up of the museum in Tourane—indeed, he saw most of the treasures in situ. While he does not discuss the Cham people, at least what is left of them, he opens some vistas to understand the shockwave that must have been the result of the clash of two cultures so different, when the Vietnamese people gradually outnumbered and outmigrated the Chams and doomed them to become minorities in their own land. The Cham people and what was left of their world in the 1920s were described by Captain Henry Baudesson in his book *Indochina and its Primitive People, Everyday Life, Rites and Superstitions of the Moïs and the Chams of Vietnam* (White Lotus 1997). Lemire's emphasis is on their legacy in stone—a testimony that will, in part, outlast all new modernization waves, large numbers of “antique” dealers and, perhaps, the Chams, themselves.

Some of this dynamism of the Vietnamese people is also shown, albeit under the guidance of French colonial administrators, in the transformation of Hanoi in what was then commonly called Tonkin. Gaston Cahen runs the gamut of all the great early achievements of France in the Far East, from education to railways, not to forget the Pont Doumer and the rubber on the trishaws wheels while deploring what has not been done yet. Indeed all this appears to be going well and leading to sound development were it not for the fact that with the buildings and infrastructure the seeds of colonial administration gone berserk were watered: a government that would lead to conflict and a taste of independence less than fifty

years later. Gaston Cahen's almost triumphant first lines, published in 1907, already made us understand that only a French Hanoi would be acceptable: "Travelling 3,000 miles, passing from Europe to Asia, from the Far West to the Far East, leaving France for Tonkin and suddenly discovering France again, with cities, people, things familiar to the eye since childhood, that sounds like a paradox, and yet, it is the truth." And Pierre Barreton furnished another example of colonial aims in the Far East when he discussed the role of the Chinese in rice growing and exporting in Cochinchina. Noting that the Chinese perform no manual labor but seem to get the lion share of the benefits, he asks the question: "Why can't we organize this and reap the profits?" Indeed, at that time, it comes naturally to a Frenchman in the colonies to see possibilities like this: "And then, if it is permitted to venture a proposal, why should we not in Cochinchina try an administrative culture, so-to-speak? The administrator of the district would furnish the farmers under his wings, for a lease proportional to the harvest, the tools, working buffaloes and the seeds. The rice would then be delivered to central warehouses established in every province and the Chinese or other merchants could supply themselves there. Thus, one would cut out the crowd of intermediaries who take the entire benefits from the real workers and the country." One can only add, "And the president of the Republic saw that administration was good and that it spread to the four corners of the world and reproduced itself, relentlessly."

Although Gaston Cahen ended his overview of reforms with the wish that France should take into account local needs and aspirations more, and a real meeting of cultures rather than an enslavement was necessary, nevertheless for the majority of the Vietnamese, these rapid conversions were unacceptable from the beginning.

Dr. Walter E. J. Tips
April 1998

Cochinchina in 1859

Pierre Barreton

1

Introduction¹

So, you want to have an idea about this country, the people who live there and its government? Well then, imagine China in miniature, a little narrower, a little more strangled, reduced to 360 000 square kilometers, to 20, perhaps 25 million inhabitants; a China, the principal water courses of which run parallel to the meridian, from north to south, instead of running with the latitude, from west to east, and you will have, except for the climate, a rather accurate idea of Cochinchina. The Philippine Islands would replace Japan. The northern frontier borders China, like China borders Russia. Annam is tributary to China; China is not yet so to Russia but with the manner in which General Mouravieff is proceeding, that cannot be far away.

The Annamese Empire consists of three main parts: Tonkin in the North, Cambodia in the South and Cochinchina between these parts. Previously Cambodia was independent and even formed a rather powerful state. The Cochinchinese have taken the best part of its maritime provinces, more or less like the English have done with Burma. For what remains, the king of this small state is tributary to the sovereigns of Siam.

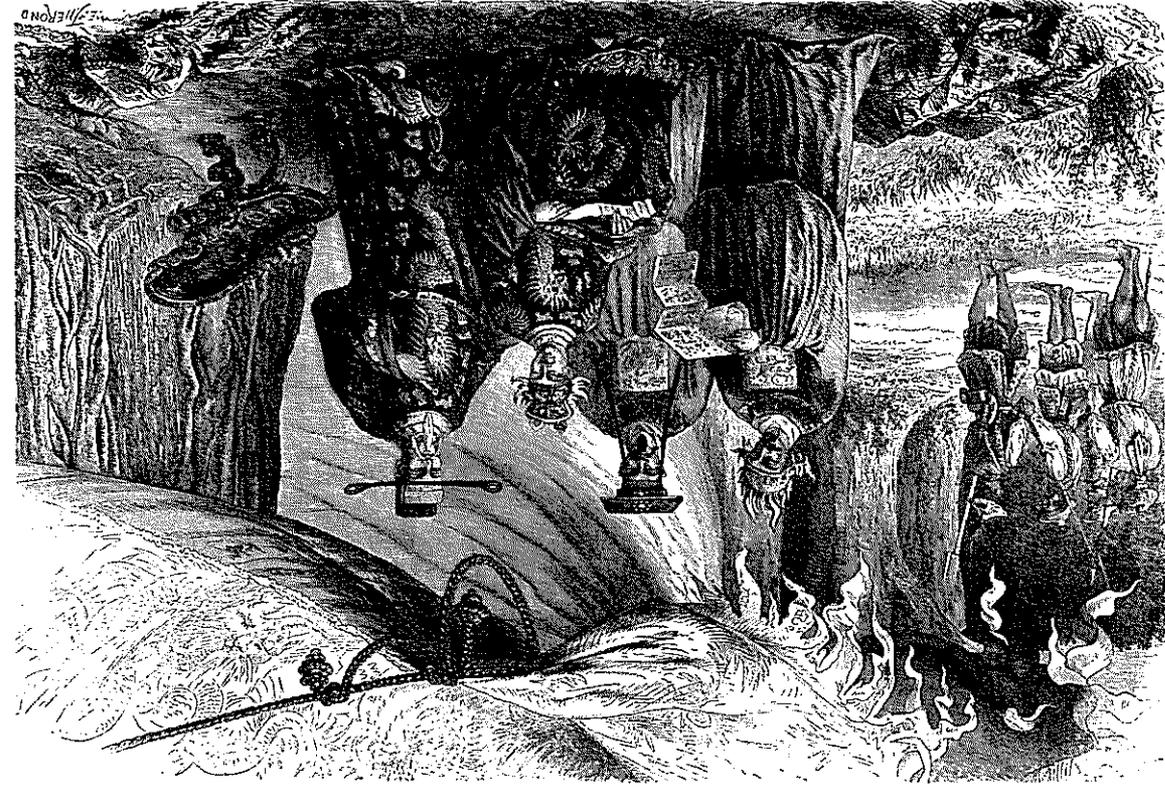


Plate 1. Portrait of the emperor and his ministers (Drawing by Therond based on drawings)

The government of the Empire of Annam appears to be copied from the Chinese government; as such it is entitled to the sympathies of some sinologists who, let me say so in passing and for as much as I know them, are capable of taking up the cause for Emperor Tu-Duc against us, as they shamelessly do for Emperor Hien-Foung against Messrs. Bruce and Bouboulon. A single journey to China would cure all their enthusiasm.

The Emperor of Annam is the father of his subjects but a father as the elders understood it when they advised the citizens to energetically love their children, amare fortiter liberos. The concern of the monarch most often translated itself in blows of whip and rattan, especially the rattan, the essential instrument of Asiatic politics. It begins with the prime minister, who, beaten with a stick, beats in his turn, and so on to the lowest rungs of the social ladder. It would be difficult to calculate how many blows with the stick one instant of imperial bad mood would represent.

Since, before anything else, children owe their fathers, there is nothing surprising in them fulfilling his needs and even accommodating his whims. Consequently, His Annamese Majesty quite deeply draws from the moneybag of his good people. Besides, he is an honest and pious man, an ardent disciple of Confucius and Fo, who knows the antique maxims by heart and who, when he cuts heads, which happens quite often, cuts those of Christians by preference.

Below the emperor, one finds the mandarins who pass half their lives in learning to read, to obtain their position, and another half with holding to ransom their subordinates, in order to gain something from their studies. Nevertheless, not all make a fortune, because if they hold to ransom, they are also blackmailed and besides the blows of the stick that come down the social ladder, there is the corruption that climbs up. With this system, no complaints are possible, despite the protective laws of which one always speaks except to apply them. You see, you could be mistaken: one could image one was in the Middle Kingdom. Finally, when it comes to size, traditions, public morals, private customs and those towards State religion, Cochinchina is to China, what Belgium is to France.

Ba Ba Ba Ba Be Bl Bu Ca Ch Cl Cc Cc Cu Cu Dc Dt Fil Fo Fo Gè Gè Gè Gè Gi Gl Gc Gc Gl Gl Hè Hè Hc Hc Ht IoI IvI IvI JcI JcI JoI Kè

The climate is far from healthy, especially on the coasts and during the rainy season. I know something about this. But it is eminently suitable for a host of small animals which develop with incredible speed and which testify to an out-of-the-usual activity. Especially mosquitoes are raging. I have often seen some of my companions get up unrecognizable, their eyes popping out of their heads, horribly bloated. You could meet them without recognizing them. Our cousins could not give you an idea of this pest; it is something impossible and unimaginable, which pursues you, torments you, which never leaves you rest or respite. To close an eye at night, mosquito nets are absolutely necessary, and even then! In certain villages, they told me, there is no living thing, including the pigs, that have not got their very own net. Otherwise, they would die in one night.

2

A Retrospective Overview

Our relations with the Kingdom of Annam started in the 18th century. Mr. Poivre, a man of great talent, the friend and protector of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, arrived in Cochinchina by 1749, where he was sent by the India Company. He had to try to enter in relations with the emperor of that time, who, at first, showed goodwill which however did not last long, and, to sum up, from the mission of Mr. Poivre resulted the discovery of a few useful plants which he brought to our colonies.

Not much later, Annam was in turmoil because of a great insurrection, rather similar, except for the modern spirit, to that which for ten years had put China in flames. This insurrection escalated rapidly and managed to dethrone Nguyen-Anh, later Emperor Gia-Long; this was by about 1786. Louis XVI, understanding the France's interests in creating a point of sup-

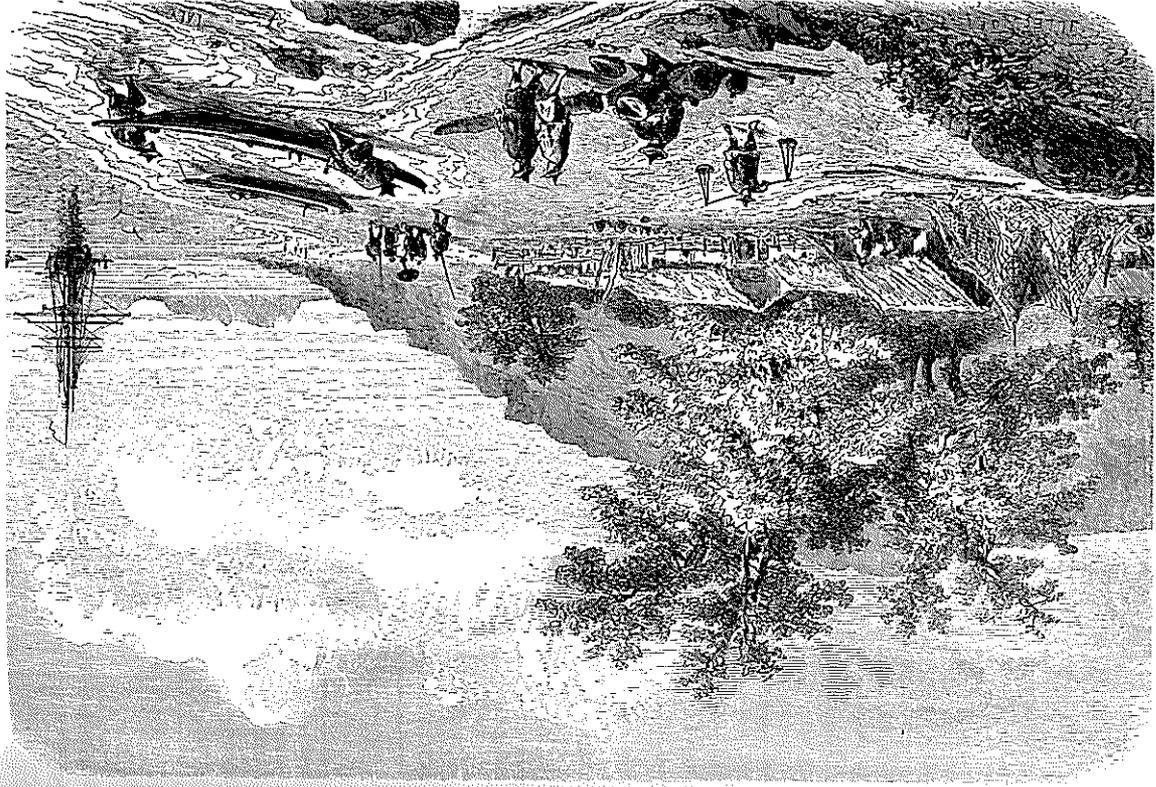


Plate 2. A beach in the Bay of Tourane (Drawing by Jules Noé)

port in the seas off China, took side with the deposed sovereign, just like we should have fought on the side of the great Chinese insurrection against the Manchu dynasty, who played us such bad tricks. On 28 November 1787, a treaty was concluded between Gia-Long and France. According to the terms of this treaty, of which you might like to know the principal stipulations, we had to place at the disposal of the Cochinchinese monarch, seven French regiments, twenty war ships and five million [French] francs, of which five hundred thousand in cash, the rest in artillery, muskets, etc. In return, the port and territory of Tourane (Han-San), the adjacent isles of Fai-Fo in the south and Hai-Wen in the north, were ceded to France. In case some power or other would have attacked the new post, the king of Cochinchina had to furnish at least sixty thousand soldiers, dressed and maintained at his expense, to co-operate in the defense of the ceded territory.

The revolution that broke out in France paralyzed all the plans of Louis XVI. We could not send the troops which were to act in support of Gia-Long, but several French officers left for Cochinchina; among them were, Messrs. Chaigneau, Dayot, Vannier and Olivier. A son of Mr. Chaigneau lived in Paris at that time, and he even enlightened the Cochinchinese question by several articles in the newspapers, full of interesting details of the noble-hearted men who have led the way in these distant seas. The fact remains that they were perfectly received by the legitimate sovereign, disciplined his army and placed him back on the throne.

The fortress of Saigon, a plan of which I include [Plate 3], is the work of these intelligent officers.

Gia-Long died on 25 January 1820. His son Minh-Mang succeeded, and was as uncompromising, as hostile to Europeans as Gia-Long had been good willing. His reign was that of old Asiatic barbarism, the triumph of all the bad instincts characteristic of Chinese dynasties. This lasted until 1841, the date of the death of Minh-Mang. A fall from his horse saved the world from him. Thien-Tri, ascended to the throne after him and he was a little less cruel than his father, a little less persecuting,

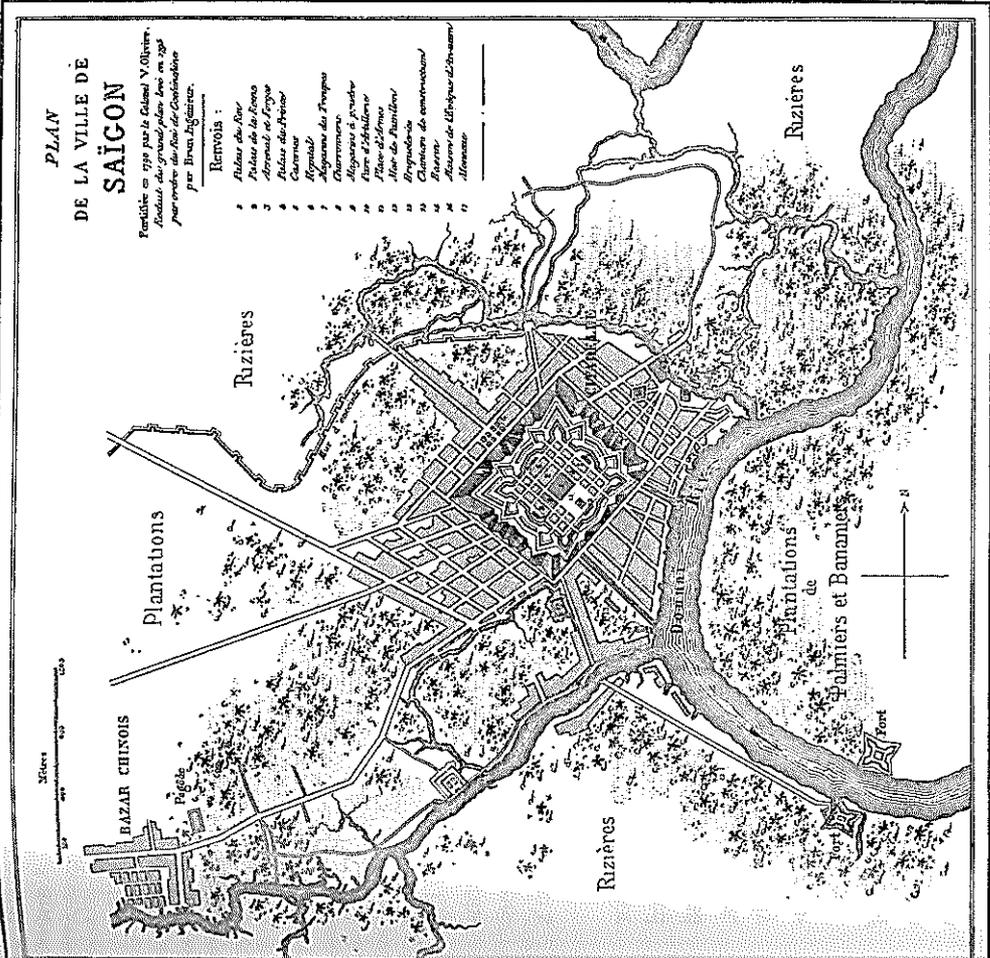


Plate 3. Map of the City of Saigon, fortified in 1790 by Colonel V. Olivier (Reduced from the great plan surveyed in 1795 by order of the King of Cochinchina by Engineer Brun)

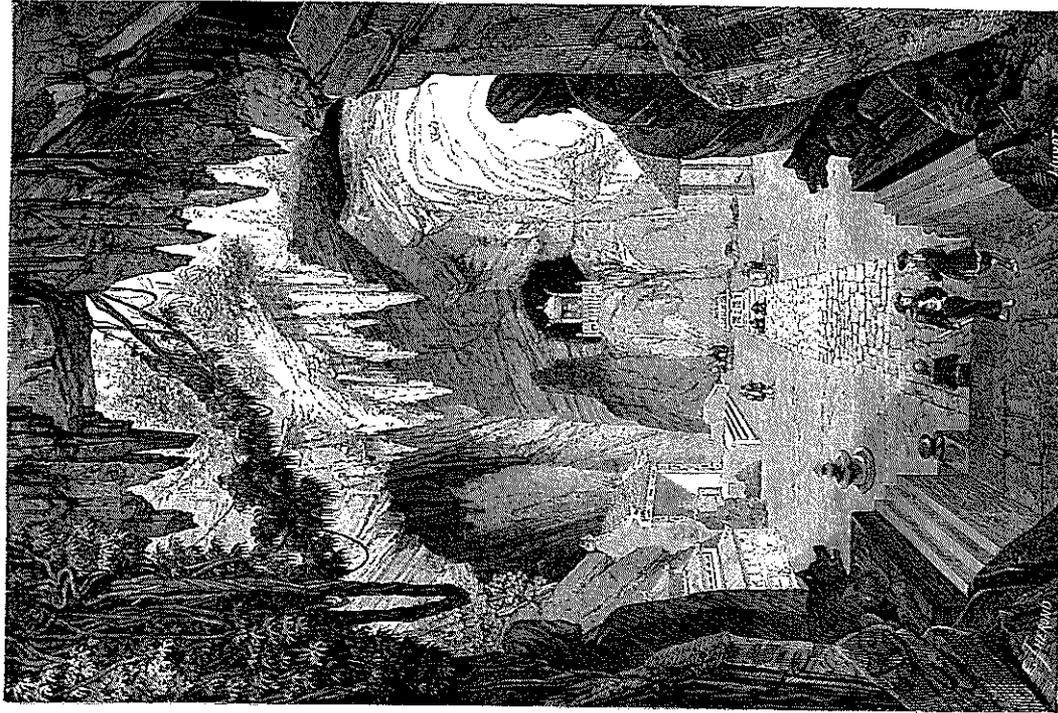


Plate 5. Buddhist temple in the marble rocks near Tourane (Drawing by Thérond, based on the *La Favorite Atlas*)

laws. The mandarin must in this case take recurrence to the severest penalties and in case of a relapse, it will be impossible to pardon them.’

Despite the geographic and other advantages offered by the port of Tourane, the humiliating harassment to which foreign ships were subjected formed an insurmountable obstacle to commercial transactions.

Every European ship that comes to this country can only sell its cargo to the king because the people are, or say they are, too poor to buy anything. Fearing the greed of the mandarins, all the locals act as if they are poor or bury their money if they have any. Then, to deal with the king, the only trader of his kingdom, the captain could only go to Hue-fou, the above mentioned royal edict prohibiting, on pain of death, to enter the interior of the country. Thus, he must accept the mandarins as intermediaries, who will hold him to ransom without the bother of conscience or mercy. When finally, forced by punishment and humiliation, he managed to place his cargo, come unending disputes about the payment, then other difficulties for the loading of his ship. In this respect, indeed, he has once more to deal with the king, the sole salesman as he is the sole possible buyer, and always passing via the intermediary of his honest agents. In case of deceit or errors, what would it help to complain? Set back by so many obstacles, European trade has ceased to appear in Tourane.

Mr. de Montigny, during his mission to Siam, wanted to try a last diplomatic protest with Tu-Duc and completely failed in this attempt. From this resulted the expedition we executed in cooperation with Spain.

The Most Recent Expedition

The forts of Tourane, European style constructions, which defended the bay and which appeared to be something formidable from afar, were taken on 1 September 1858 in a single act by less than two thousand men, half of them French, half Spanish officers and Tagal soldiers from Luzon.

Entering the fort of the Observatory, we were very surprised to see the Annamese artillerymen seated on their guns, quietly, arms crossed. If they would have fled, they would have happily had cut their heads off; if they would have prolonged the defense, they would have uselessly tired themselves; being in doubt, they abstained, letting themselves be cut down with the most incredible lack of concern. This is how the soldiers of Duc understand their orders and, in this respect, they are second to the Chinese only. Many of these good fellows did not have a uniform; they were in rags, like all the inhabitants of the country. The greatest part was armed with flint guns, from the factory of Saint-Étienne, which has greatly surprised us. On the field I have found several wooden powder horns, but I cannot confirm that this item was statutory in the Cochinchinese army. During that time the eastern fort blew up; the next day the western fort also sprang. If the forts were rather poorly defended, they were however splendidly armed. I have seen magnificent bronze pieces, with only the back-sight adjusters attached. The western fort contained moreover a field artillery stock, beautiful six and nine pieces, almost similar to ours, only mounted on huge wheels, like an American buggy. The same day we were definitively established on land, in time to wait for the Annamese army, if it was gripped by a desire to show up. But it did not come. The heat was oppressive, as I have rarely experienced in my life. It was a furnace. Two or three men succumbed to the action of the sun and to fatigue. Besides,

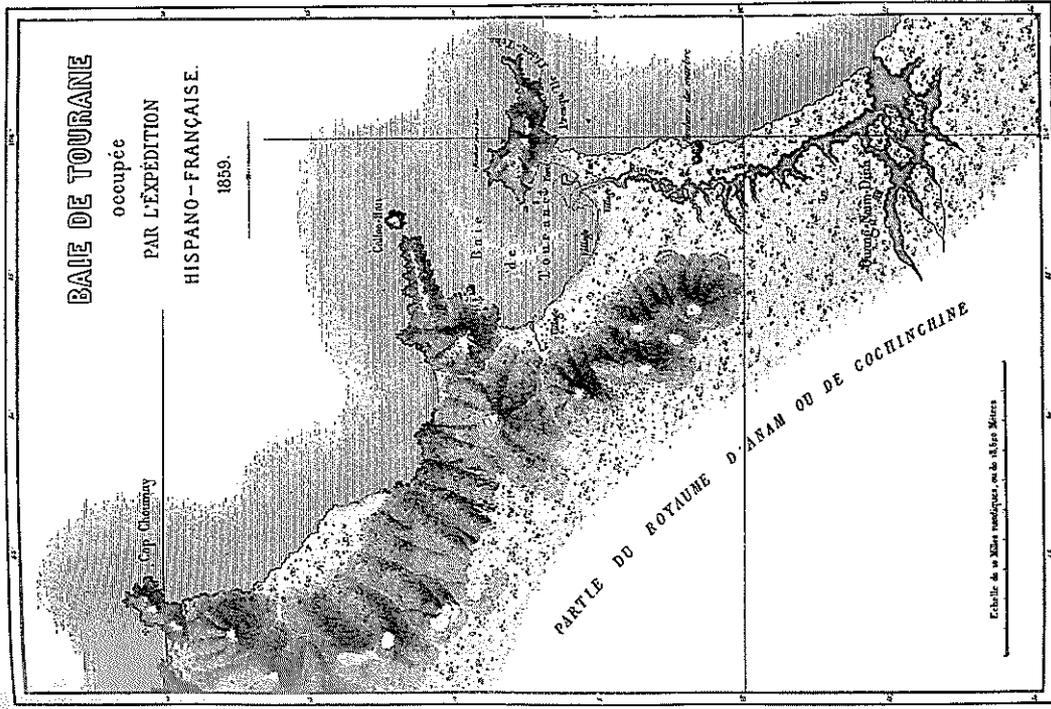


Plate 6. The Bay of Tourane, occupied by the Hispano-French Expedition, 1859 (Engraving by Erhard)

there is nothing as beautiful as this Bay of Tourane [Plate 6], jagged cross-wise, with its two mountainous capes prolonged into the ocean. And while our two squadrons are at anchor, with the movements of men on land, the varied uniforms of our infantry, our sailors, and colonial troops from the Philippines, the flags of the two nations floating above the destroyed forts recall the activity of a Europe coming finally to shake off the secular lethargy of the old Orient.

I spare you the report of our small daily battles, of the marvel of our installation, of our pleasures and our misery, most often under a lashing rain because the dry season begins only in December, to tell you about our expedition to Saigon, some two hundred miles to the south.

If you look at the map and follow the course of the Cambodia River, which is called the Mekong there, you notice at its mouth a score of arms manifesting itself across an infinite number of land accretions of all sizes, something which I can only compare with the delta of the Ganges, or with Dutch Zealand. Of these accretions, some are furnished by this huge river, one of the largest in Asia, the others by another very important water course which throws itself in the sea at some distance, like the River Scheldt does with the River Maas [in the Netherlands]. Continuing my comparison, Saigon would be more or less at the location where Antwerp is [in Belgium]. Imagine a perfectly flat country, cut through by magnificent rivers, extremely densely forested, but in which Ficus, teak, palm and banana trees interlock their branches and leaves in all imaginable ways possible; place here and there under this barrel vault of greenery, huts made of osiery and bamboo, in the vicinity of which move, mill and wade about, in good understanding with each other, more or less dirty and ugly specimens of the race of Adam, dark and gentle buffaloes, pigs, the bellies of which touch the soil and finally chicken of the variety which the Exposition of 1855 has popularized in Europe, and now you know as well as I do this part of lower Cochinchina. The views [Plate 2 and 4], one of which is a sight of the mouth of the Saigon River, depict the general appearance of this country better than could a detailed description.

The Capture of Saigon

Nine February last we were at the mouth of the Saigon River with the *Le Phlégéton*, flying the flag of rear admiral Rigault de Genouilly, *Le Primauguet*, three gunboats, as many varied transport ships and a Spanish steam-avisos, the *El Cano*, if I remember well. We resolutely progressed amidst this labyrinth of rivers, eaten away in the most bizarre fashion, besides finding everywhere five or six fathoms of depth, the bowsprit in the shaft. The main arm was rarely wider than one hundred meters in width. It was defended by a dozen well armed wooden forts and by three squadrons. All this was taken out rather rapidly; only the two last, those which were closest to the city, held quite long. They took us sideways and our gunboats, all close together, could not return fire but by the two front artillery pieces. Nevertheless we needed only one hour to finish with them. We were in Saigon.

Now, try to imagine, I would not say a city like we have in Europe, but a tropical forest in the bosom of which here and there almost comfortable houses rise up; all this is green, fresh, cut through by brooks which run here and there and cross and which are lost in the thickets. Amidst this vegetation, hidden by trees, there is a great square fort with bastions, and cut from stones of a good size: this is Saigon and its citadel. The former was ours, the latter was soon too, although one could not see it from the river and we were obliged to shoot by guesswork. After having extinguished its fire we climbed it with big bamboo ladders and we expected to find the gunners sitting astride their guns like in Tourane; but this time, they had fled.

However, we found a great stock of material, a complete arsenal, 85,000 kilograms of powder in cases or in barrels, saltpetre, sulfur, lead, military

equipment, rice to feed 8,000 men and 130,000 francs in local money, i.e., in zinc coins. You need 3,000 to have 5 francs, which brings the number of the small zinc coins that made up the military coffers up to 78 million pieces.

I installed myself in a pagoda to pass the night there and I rarely have had a better one. The pagodas are the lodges of China and Indochina; one eats there, one drinks there, one sleeps there if one can, one even signs treaties there like in Tien-Tsin, without any kind of profanation; Buddhism is tolerant. It is a little like the Greek churches of Cairo in which the priest lives in a family with his children who play in front of the altar and his wife who cooks in the chapel. In short, one is infinitely better off there than in certain hotels which I know, for example, the Hotel du Prince de Galles in Aden—as English as it can be. And I fell asleep thinking about this career of adventures which brought me so far away from France, though into a country entirely filled of France, in this fort that was built by Frenchmen and taken by Frenchmen. How much it is true that we are everywhere and that Asia is no longer at home.

The next day I woke up with this splendid nature surrounding us like an ocean of greenery. By 7 a.m., I saw two of my men come to bring me a poor rather bizarrely rigged out devil. The other evening during the action, he had hidden in a fig tree; he sat there the whole night and it was only at the first light of dawn that our sailors had seen him. It was a problem to convince him to come down. You can imagine my surprise when I heard him utter in the most pitiful tone, but with an elegance which Cicero would not have denied him: *Parce! Domine! Non hostis sum, christianus Cambodjanus!* To my shame I must admit that the prisoner knew more Latin than I did; but the good Doctor D*** came to my help and soon we understood each other.

His name was Li-Kouan. He was a boy of 27 to 28 years of age, a short, squashed nose, jutting cheekbones, a dull face, black hair, dirty white skin color going to yellow and a premature portliness. He wore wide trousers, a little damaged by his climb and some kind of small blouse descending to

his knees. As he told me so nicely, he was a Christian living in Cambodia, although from Chinese origins. Two days ago, he had tried in vain to join the squadron, on the river, with the bishop of Saigon, Mgr. Lefebvre and the next day, he had seen a missionary being massacred.

Li-Kouan and myself soon were the best friends in the world. He told me that there were about 500,000 Christians in Cochinchina and gave me rather curious details about the small kingdom of Cambodia. I have told you that only the maritime provinces had been conquered by the Annamese. The border is some twenty miles from Saigon, at the most. Beyond that begins the jurisdiction of the illustrious King Duong, *illustris rex Duong*, as my convert called him, a sovereign who has known adversity. For a long time a prisoner of the Siamese, he was obliged to become a clockmaker in order to live. One would say he is small and fat, very much marked by a pox, a fanatic for Europeans. He also likes to think he knows Latin, if I can believe Li-Kouan, and he would have his dining room decorated with inscriptions in the style of the following: *domus manducare bubere que*. His first eunuch is also his first cook and I can imagine that the great master of the Cambodian artillery, of whom my prisoner spoke only with the greatest respect, on top of his assignment must fill a few domestic functions of the same type. From royalty, Duong has only a waist coat in yellow silk, attached by a gold belt; besides that, he is a good bourgeois of Paris or London, lost on the plains of Asia, giving you cordial handshakes and offering you *Eau de Cologne* at the end of the meal, by lack of being able to serve you *Champagne*.

What do you think of Li-Kouan and his sovereign? I admit that the former counts in my memories today and that the latter has cheered me up during my free time in Saigon. What a singular country Asia is where one can find such contrasts! Go to the far end of the Orient, in an army camp, on the breach of Saigon, to hear Latin and to rediscover souvenirs of college in these mysterious and distant regions! What a bizarre impact of our young Europe on these old worlds and what revolutions are in sight today, now that steam has eliminated distances, similar to a mobile bridge which would link the ends of the globe!

Moreover Saigon offers great commercial advantages; from this point of view, it is the most important place of Cochinchina. The river is navigable for the largest ships, even for liners, and I have never met such a steady and easy river. One tide is sufficient—they last twelve hours here—to ascend the river up to the city, with a small, favorable breeze. The country is flat, the rice abundant, much more beautiful than that of Siam. I have seen very beautiful ground sugar, almost white, as well as some kind of candy sugar. Dyeing woods are abundant, the wax is splendid and, as to cinnamon, it appeared to me of a quality superior to that from China and the rest of Cochinchina. I have no doubt, in one word, that with a little perseverance and a spirit of following through, we make of this privileged port one of the beautiful posts of the world. The population is Indochinese and, although little sympathetic, she is certainly less hostile than that of Canton. Moreover, barely a few miles separate Saigon from Cambodia in the strict sense and there is a completely different race, very easy to assimilate. You can judge by what I have told you about King Duong. As singular as they may appear, all these details are very exact. Since then, they have been confirmed by a missionary who has lived three years in the country. Add, finally, that from the military point of view, the position can be considered as absolutely unassailable. By establishing a few batteries along this winding river, I do not know any flotilla that could think of penetrating, even less so because she would have to deal with Europeans.

Li-Kouan has left for Phnom Penh, Namwang in Cochinchina, his usual residence, a few miles from Udong, the capital of Cambodia. He had to ascend the Mekong River, hidden in the junk of a Christian friend. The citadel of Saigon, built for Gia-Long by a colonel of the French army engineers, no longer exists; it has been blown up. We have only kept the forts near the river which remain under the guard of Major Jaurreguiberry. They are in good hands. Be reassured that the jewel of Annam as they call Saigon and its province here, endowed as it is with soil, climate and waters, could be heading for a great future under French domination. Already the Catholics, who are very numerous in this area, come to us from all sides. Thanks to their devoted support, Mr. Lefebvre, bishop of

Ba/ Ba/ Ba/ Ba/ Be/ Bk/ Bu/ Ca/ Ch/ Cl/ Co/ Co/ Cu/ Cu/ Do/ Du/ Fit/ Fo/ Fo/ Ga/ Ga/ Ga/ Ge/ Gi/ Gl/ Gc/ Gc/ Gt/ Gt/ Hc/ Hc/ Hc/ Hc/ Hc/ Io/ Iv/ Iv/ Je/ Je/ Jo/ K/

Isaropolis and first vicar-apostolic of these regions, has established the foundations for a school, a hospital and even a church which will be, no doubt for a long time still, the most beautiful one in Indochina.

I forgot to tell you that at the time when our ships were signaled on the coasts of Cambodia, a division of the Annamese navy which was stationed there like it was the case formerly with the Roman flotilla at the Cape of Micena, sought refuge in one of the thousand canals which cut through the double delta of the Mekong and the Saigon River. We could not follow them there by lack of depth but the channel was blocked and the Cochinchinese vessels, after a three month blockade, were reduced to such extent that the mandarin Kiemsin who commanded them had them burned and relieved the sailors of their duty. These unfortunates, after having wandered for ten days, arrived, in a terrible state of destitution, in Saigon where, like the poor devils they were, they were received and helped by us, to their great joy and astonishment.

The flotilla that was destroyed consisted of eight first rank war junks and of five second rank junks. The Cochinchinese admiral first sought refuge at Campot, on the Gulf of Siam. But there, fearing the rage of the emperor, he sliced his belly open in the presence of the officers of his chiefs-of-staff, as the Roman Admiral of Cap Micena would not have failed to do for the great glory of Nero or Domitianus.

Nevertheless do not believe that all the Annamese officials are so decided to sacrifice themselves on the altar of heroism, or rather of fear, in classic style. A few weeks later I was lucky enough to see with my own eyes an army mandarin, blessed with more practical philosophy than his navy colleague, arrive in Saigon. He is not less than the local prefect of the province. The time of sowing approaching, this worthy man, as a true disciple of Triptolemus, had seized the pretext of agrarian interests to enter into negotiations with us and to ascertain by himself the state of affairs and the faces of the men who occupied his place in his former residence.

Brought to our commander, he prostrated before him, not more nor less as if he had to do with an idol and addressed him a discourse which our

interpreter has translated more or less in the following characteristic terms: "You are not like those pirates who come too often to our rivers to loot cities and insult women: you are wise, because you have come out of this great nation of the West which, in the reign of Nguyen-Anh, sent him a virtuous man who was his friend, and you are strong, since you are from the same country of those who have given the throne to my father, of which Tay-Son had robbed him. Nobody can resist you if you fight, but faced with weakness you are disarmed. Let us thus sow our land and give us the assurance that you will not retract your protection at the time of the harvest."

Whether he was sincere or not in his request, it was accorded him and he was brought back to the vanguards with military honors of which he appeared to be as astonished as he was appreciative.

Dressed in a long robe of embroidered damask and a pair of red silk trousers, which did not cover his rather badly shod black feet in oriental slippers, this august dignitary was dressed with a black skullcap, decorated on the front, like the hat of a road-mender, with a wide metal badge with the name and the coat of arms of H. M. Tu-Duc, and armed on the sides with two appendices in black gauze, nine inches long and not so badly imitating the two wings of a night butterfly. This strange chief's cover is the distinctive insignia of civilian mandarins; for this only he would have merited to be honored by a chisel, if the hat would not be towering over the most typical head and body which luck had brought me: a square face, yellow color, and bloodshot eyes blinking under eyebrows that are demonstrably too big for the organ they cover, too wide a mouth, hanging lips, teeth black and corroded by betel, a body at the same time thin and stocky, and, finally, spindly limbs, such is the description of the ex-mandarin of Saigon. With a few variations, it could serve for all his compatriots. One must only replace, when it comes to the people, the expression of falseness and cunning which dominates in general among the high by an appearance of dejection and sadness.

Thus it should be well-understood that the Cochinchinese are not beautiful; if they are the younger brothers of the Chinese, they are degenerated

as compared to their elders, who, without being Apollos, generally share this physical force which derives from the build of their waist and limbs. Moreover, they possess a quality which their neighbors from the south completely ignore, cleanliness.

What we call the fair sex at home does not make an exception here on the general rule. Despite a soft and good willing look, a bust rather well formed in youth, feet and hands which would be the envy of a Parisian, and long, black, and always badly combed hair pulled up with little care on the back of the head, the Cochinchinese woman does not cast, at the first look, a more agreeable impression than her husband and master. For one as well as for the other, there are the same facial traits, the same shape of clothes, the same deteriorated teeth, the same mouth oozing constantly with the bloodied saliva betel provokes and, finally, always and everywhere, the same dirtiness of body and clothes. They even assured me that the latter, which must always fall down by dilapidation before they are replaced, enter in the gastronomical calculations of their owners, big or small, rich or poor, for the myriad insects they provide asylum to and for which the women are not less greedy than the men.

Except for this extraordinary taste, common to all classes of society, even those of the highest rungs, the people of Annam appeared to be more sober than those of the Celestial Empire. They ignore any culinary delicacies. They eat little, feed themselves only with rice, yams, and a species of pea limited to this country. Only during the festival of the new year, a celebration that is at the same time religious and civilian in Cochinchina, the usual temperance is placed aside and, according to a local expression, but which is easy to understand in all Gaelic homes, each family does its pig, i. e., cuts the throat of a fat pig, kills its ducks, pillages its supplies of brooded and fermented eggs (in Cochinchina they loath fresh eggs) and devours in one or two meals their annual savings. But even during this annual debauchery, amidst the fleeting flushes of the wine and the rice liquor (camchou or rack), the Cochinchinese does not stray from a certain sadness which is habitual to him. His greatest outbursts of joy never bring

him to dance and I do not believe I ever heard one singing. Not loud, little verbose in conversation, which he maintains, in any circumstance, on some kind of rhythmical and nasal mode, if such a people possessed national hymns, they must be of the kind that we westerners would chose to bury the devil. In the end, the general impression that we have of the Cochinchinese of both sexes and of any age, is that they form, before anything else, a gathering of melancholic people; perhaps this is because from generation to generation they have grown old without ever knowing freedom.

5

Return to Tourane

Our return to the general headquarters has been marked by two very different events. The first, which has all of us interested very much, was the meeting with a Siamese war ship that crossed our steamer in the lower reaches of the Saigon River and it saluted us with eleven gun shots, a salute we rushed to return. Soon we learned that a nephew of the first king of Siam was on board and that he was making a study trip. This young man passes in the country for a distinguished scholar.

Our commander has been aboard to pay him a visit; the prince has appeared to be very sensitive to this attention. He then came to visit our ship, examined it with great care, especially the steam engine and made a two-hour walk with us which appeared to hold a special interest to him.

The next day the junk lifted anchor and went to Saigon. The traffic between Cambodia and the Gulf of Siam was formerly very busy and it will soon be like in the past.

The second meeting during our trip, less pleasant than the first, was that of a typhoon, or sea dragon, as they call the atmospheric turbulence that reigns in the China seas when the monsoons change. Now, the regions which stretch between Saigon and Tourane itself being on the borders of two climate zones, which alternatively and in inverse directions experience the heat and the cold, the dry and the humid, these regions, I said, are especially haunted by these phenomena feared by sailors. Concerning the size, force and effects of a typhoon, I first send you to the testimony of a modern traveler who has resided during long years in Asia. "An earthquake or the eruption of a volcano," says the reverend Dr. Gutzlaff, "perhaps causes greater disasters; nevertheless, if somebody would like to picture the last day when heaven and earth will disappear, it is in the middle of a typhoon that one must look for it. They say about these terrible phenomena that everything is devoted to destruction and that the world will be plunged in chaos again. No human words can paint this frightening crisis, nor the violence of the storm, in which man is but an atom."

Now, this citation being well-engraved in your imagination, I hasten to tell you, without wishing to accuse the reverend Gutzlaff of not having a sailor's foot, that the typhoon which threw itself upon us in front of Cap Saint-James, was probably not of the worst kind because it sufficed, after having shaken us up rudely, to throw us out of our course as far as the waters of Borneo.

This vast distance did not stop us from arriving in Tourane quite in time to participate in a new and brilliant campaign against the Cochinchinese.

To say the truth, a more or less marked success had become indispensable for the security of our position in Tourane because during the time peace negotiations, solicited by the Annamese government, ostensibly went on between our general headquarters and the Court of Hue, the latter secretly circulated the rumor among its subjects that the barbarians from the West, beaten and chased away, were going to purge the sacred soil of Annam from their presence; then, in addition, it supported these rumors by fortifying the lines occupied by its army facing us with men, guns and entrenchments.

Thanks to the thousands of hands of which an absolute government can dispose, always armed with the rattan, the hatchet and of all the capital of the country, the positions of the Annamese army from defensive as they were first, had become little by little aggressive and by the end of last summer, hermetically blocked ours, at least on the land side.

Take a look at the map which I have incorporated [Plate 6]: from the first day we were master of the southern peninsula, that of Thien-Tcha, to which the interior of the bay owes especially its mooring excellence. Our military buildings, our warehouses, our ambulances and our protected walkways are there. We could come and go on the narrow and sandy isthmus which descends from the peninsula to the River of Tourane. We occupied the two forts that commanded the entrance of this watercourse and our vanguards covered and protected the mass of poor soil and straw huts from which it has obtained its name. Beyond that and over the whole rest of the circumference of the bay, up to the end, our possessions are limited to the narrow strip of the coast which our gunboats, always cruising, always alert like guards on the lookout, can cover with their cannonballs.

Let us now refer to the north of the bay. There is yet another peninsula, but formed by a massing of mountains the sharp tops and the forested flanks of which, inaccessible to any other visitors than wild cats, lose themselves in the clouds part of the year. An advanced spur of the great chain which runs from the south to the north over the whole of Cochinchina, joins this gigantic massif at the most three miles away of the village of Tourane and, projecting its spurs backwards from the latter to the edges of the river, presents to those who manage to penetrate the interior an insurmountable obstacle everywhere except on the great road from Tourane to Hue. Now, this road, which follows the borders of the sea and then enters into a ravine which you can see at the point where the interior mountains reach the Callao peninsula, was closed, by a walled fort guarded by many soldiers and through which not even any local could go without a good laissez-passer. Besides, if this road could be swept by the cannonballs of

our guns from Tourane to the ravine, it was also under daily fire from the ravine to Tourane by the batteries which the Cochinchinese had installed with manpower and tenacity on the line of heights parallel to the shore.

It is this state of affairs which Admiral Rigault de Genouilly and his courageous lieutenant, Major Saint-Elme Reynaud (today rear-admiral), wanted to have stopped before returning to France.

During the night from the 14th to the 15th, the admiral took his measures, divided the weak forces of which he could dispose in three attack columns, placed the Frenchmen on the wings, the troops from the Philippines in the center and led us, at daybreak, in an attack on the mountains parallel to the road to Hue. Despite the obstacles massed by human hands since long on a soil that already defended itself, despite the moats multiplied in astounding numbers amidst the vertical escarpment and the slopes strewn with bamboo's of which the hatchet had made as many chevaux-de-frise, despite, finally, the fires quite well fed by the enemy, our small troop soon crowned the heights and by midday, a line of entrenchments, half a mile long, supported by eight forts, armed with 46 firing mouths and defended by 8,000 men, was taken out with the bayonet by less than 1,500 Europeans and Tagals. The reserves of the enemy, massed on the edges of this famous ravine, for a moment appeared to be wanting to recommence the battle, but after all reflections had been made, sufficed with parading some war elephants, and then folded back following these to the heights of the road to Hue, leaving us to burn down and destroy the conquered works, raze the entrenchments and blow up the Cochinchinese canons by loading them to the mouth with shell fragments; among these pieces, coming out of the foundries of Hue, there were some splendid ones. All of them were very regularly cast and made from a rather good metal.

The next day only a long trail of smoking ruins was left of these formidable lines, testifying once more to the eternal supremacy of Europe over the degenerated peoples of the Far East.

By lack of the road to Hue, the crests of which we still have to conquer, that day has brought us at least the undisputed possession of the plain of

Tourane. Several, less prudent than impatient, have used the opportunity to extend the circle of their excursions and visit as hunters, as artists, as naturalists, or even simply as curious people, the space comprised between Tourane and the mountains as well as the strip of dunes and sand that runs between the river and the sea. Some have pushed in this direction up to the Marble Mountains, these rocks consecrated by local superstition and of which the government, during these latter days, has forbidden entry, even for locals. One recalls here what they have cost, nearly thirty years ago, the mandarin of Tourane, for having let himself be led astray by the vapors of champagne and having taken the officers of the La Favorite there. Fifty blows of the bamboo stick good and swiftly received by him in the presence of his august and easy-going sovereign, imprinted the respect for the imperial edicts deeply into his dermis.

Moreover, the description and the drawing which Admiral Laplace has been able to give us of the Marble Mountains and of their underground temples being the most complete we then possessed [Plate 5], amateurs of picturesque scenes and artists (these people are without pity) perhaps do not think that they have been paid too much by the chastisement of the Cochinchinese magistrate.

The Marble Mountains are located in the middle of sands two hours away from Tourane; the river is north and the ocean south of them. As one approaches them, one notices poor huts squatting under these rocks and small pagodas built in pretty caves, the current of which bathes the entrance. The five marble rocks, which look like the tops of mountains buried in the sand, or crushed cathedrals, are separated from each other by passages covered with small trees, climbing plants, or obstructed by rocks blackened by the rains and the sea wind . . . One of these paths, which the shrubs veil with their thick leaves, ends at a long corridor cut in the rocks and the incline of which is softened by a few widely spaced steps. After passing a few seconds in the most complete darkness, this corridor leads to the front of an underground passage, the gripping effect of which is magical.

This excavation to which human hands have brought great changes, could be fifty feet long by forty wide, and about forty-five high. From the door, which is flanked on both sides by huge stones representing a human being in bizarre dress and a fabulous animal, one descends over a steep staircase to the bottom of the cave which receives light by a natural opening placed in the middle of the arch, from where lianas covered with leaves and flowers hang in festoons, and the brightness of which marvelously contrasts with the varied and shiny colors of the rocks. Opposite the entrance and in an elevated recess, to which leads a small brick road terminated by a few steps, is placed the grand altar adorned with red chandeliers and candles of the same color. A few other rather simple ornaments encircled a three feet high wooden statue depicting a seated man. His features, his clothes which have nothing of the Chinese style, his joined and flatly placed feet and his outstretched hands designate him rather well as an idol of the cult of Buddha, a cult which has furnished the Cochinchinese a great part of their superstitions and monuments of which, of a distant past, one finds in their region.

It is not known whether this religion has come to this country from China, or whether Hindu or Singhalese missionaries have brought it during the era of great Buddhist preaching. Still, the moral dogmas of Sakhi-Muni are not known in Annam but by an very small minority, and the majority of the high ranking of the State, as ignorant as the masses, believe in sorcerers, in the devil, in good and evil spirits of the four elements. For a Cochinchinese, the bones of the tiger reduced to powder, the ashes of deer antlers and elephant brains are endowed with admirable properties. The latter makes the thickest oaf light to carry, that one gives a heart to the most cowardly blackguard, finally, the last, more precious still, can make an idiot into a literate mandarin. Still other infallible prescriptions go around among the poor Annamese. No doubt they get them from their neighbors the Chinese, who could well have them transferred to populations that are less distant from the Seine and the Thames.

When I was ending my letter, I wanted to report a significant success of our army. Since the affair of 15 September, the Cochinchinese, retreated north of the ravine, concentrated their forces and erected new entrenchments on a high mountain which dominates, at the same time, the road to Hue at its entry to the mountains and the outskirts of the Callao peninsula.

This position allowed them to maintain themselves opposite us in a position that is always threatening, to receive supplies, ammunition and all kinds of reinforcements. Rear-admiral Page understood that before transferring the majority of the forces which he had to North China, he had to throw back the Cochinchinese beyond the line of mountain summits. Consequently, at 4 a.m. on the 18th, the frigates *Némésis* and *La Phlégéton*, two gunboats, a transport ship and a Spanish corvette left the mooring, went to the other side of the Bay of Tourane, about three miles away and moored fore and aft in front of the enemy fortifications, which immediately opened fire that was as sustained as it was murderous. The frigate *Némésis*, flying the admiral's flag, was especially the target of the enemy pieces and had to suffer a lot during the first moment of the attack: a helmsman on the side of the admiral had his head shot off; a few moments later, a battalion chief of the engineers, to whom he gave an order, was cut into two; the commander of the frigate received a head wound at the same time; a ships ensign, Mr. de Fitzjames, was hit by an explosion of wood; a cadet was wounded at the arm. Nevertheless, the more precise fire of our sailors soon took the overhand; a huge column of fire and smoke rose into the sky, telling us that one of our balls had squarely hit a powder warehouse and the admiral ordered his chief of staff, Mr. de Saulx, to effect a landing and overpower the main fort. At the head of a column of 300 men, this officer executed this order with drive and speed and despite the strong resistance of the Annamese and the difficulties of the terrain, he lifted up his detachment with vigor, entered the defense work as the first man and soon, from all sides of the bay, we could see the French flag fly above the highest point. The affair had taken three-quarters of an hour, had cost us considerable losses but it had brought us an important result by making us masters of the road to Hue, the only route open to our

enemies and through which they received all their resources. Henceforth, all the exterior slopes and the crests of the mountains which surround the bay are ours and we can descend on the opposite slopes as soon as our chiefs judge it expedient.

Note

1 Notes from an unpublished correspondence. The editor of *Le Tour du Monde* added an endnote as follows: "The whole descriptive part of this article appears to be very accurate, but perhaps it is expedient to allow with some reservations only some of the judgments in regard to the Cochinchinese population and the consequences of our expedition."

Saigon

Pierre Barreton

1

The appearance of Saigon First impressions

Cap Saint-Jacques is in sight, that is French soil. . . . Then begins the fastidious navigation in the yellowish and clayey river which descends from Saigon between low banks, flooded, and green by the eternal mangroves.

After the unending sharp twists of the monotonous river appear the high red towers of the cathedral of Saigon. Soon one discovers the port and the city. The transport ship slowly maneuvers in the war port and moors at the quay. . . .

One descends a ladder. "Two men at the gangway!" At the appeal of the quartermaster, the sailors on duty press forwards adjusting their always unruly belts and the hurried landing happens amidst shouting, calls and tatters of conversation exchanged from far between friends who are waiting and passengers impatient to get on land. Invitations for the evening, for tomorrow, are crisscrossing. The news about promotions, decorations and sometimes, alas, about the dead circulates at the highest pitch.

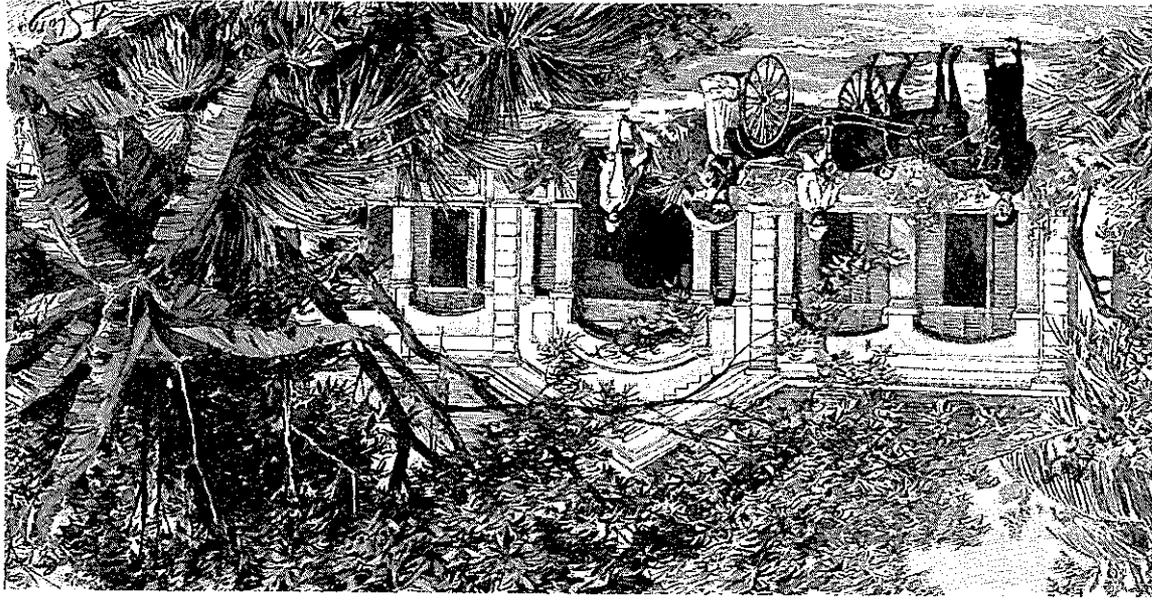


Plate 7. A Saigon house (Drawing by Slom, engraving by Devos)

Little by little the quay empties, becomes less boisterous, regains peace. The lively colored Malabar carriages (these are the hackneys of the country) fill with takers and the small valiant Annamese horses bring a host of youth of officers, officials and settlers to the city.

The war port occupies a large space on the Saigon River, reserved for the mooring of the State ships only. Many gunboats, torpedo ships, sometimes armored, cut their white hulls through these clayey waters.

Just next to the landing the mansion of the admiral hides in the greenery. Further down, the arsenal, the most active colonial beehive one could wish, rattles the city with the blows of its power hammer. The services provided by the great refitting basin are invaluable; the greatest tonnage ships can easily have any damage repaired there.

Across railings and gardens one observes the long red roofs of the navy's supply warehouses. On the commercial quay, at the edge of the military domain, we admire the new hotel of the Messageries fluviales of Cochinchina and the elegant flotilla of the company.

Finally, we are in the rue Catinat, famous for its splendid boutiques, decorated pubs and unending movement of carriages and strollers. A movement that is, on the days of the arrival of a transport ship, made still more hectic by a few hundreds of young men rushing to find distraction after a long journey.

Some dive into the pubs, eager for a fresh drink. Ice is not always in abundance aboard and, for those landed from a transport ship, only the experience itself can give an exact idea of the delights harbored in the iced foam on a cocktail or the simple froth of a glass of beer. Others attack the hotels, which luckily are numerous and comfortable. One wants a real bed, wide and very white. Another rejoices in the expectation of a copious meal served in immaculate cutlery. On the sea, when the weather is bad, one is forced to neglect, routinely, some hygienic tasks and one keeps this disastrous habit in the calmest weather.

The rue Catinat is remarkably animated. It is not the movement characteristic of Chinese streets that one finds in all Far Eastern cities, with this

milling of naked torsos, of bare legs, restless, laid about and sleeping. Here the liveliness is entirely European, I was going to say Parisian; long before me, it has been said that Saigon is the Paris of the Far East.

At 5 o'clock when the sun's low on the horizon allows to abandon the so disgraceful but so indispensable colonial hard hat and to leave the closed carriages, one witnesses a long queue of well harnessed equipages, bringing out the whole of Saigon for the daily walkabout.

The gracious Europeans, more and more numerous, have not abandoned the best practices of Parisian fashion, but the strong sex has completely renounced the luxury of dress; nothing is less complicated than its trimming: a jacket and a pair of trousers dazzling white, that is all, and it is very convenient.

Fashionable column writers who are knocking down their world tour in less than twenty-four days and who, unfortunately for their readers, have barely the time to know the country about which they speak, tell in all seriousness about extraordinary things in our colonies, especially in Cochinchina. The Europeans in Saigon, if I can believe them, sadly walk in the dusty road, their faces pale and their eyes dull behind enormous black glasses! . . . They stoically seem to wait for the fatal fate that is reserved for them by "the Cochinchinese evil." These alarming descriptions are from another age or from another country.



Plate 8. A congaie
(Engraving by Bazin,
based on a photo)

No doubt, the men and women of Saigon have a delicate and fair color but roses mix with lilies, and laughter is not absent from their faces. This delicacy of color is a fact of life in the shade, obligatory in this country of unforgiving sun. Enclosed all day long in darkened apartments, to which the smallest infiltration not only of light but also of reflection of heat is carefully avoided, the settlers naturally acquire this whiteness which is in no way an indication of a faltering health. It is sufficient to live in Saigon and to meet the Saigonese to be convinced of this. We are convinced that those who describe our colonial cities too lightly would gain by passing at least a few days in the ports of call they so cheerfully damage by the blows of their pen.

2

The installation—The furniture The knick-knacks—The "auction"

According to an English principle, in Saigon as anywhere else, the first care needs to go to comfortably installing oneself. Thus, from the first days onwards, multiple errands need to be run to get done with the troubles of finding a "hut" and with equipping it. Finally, after unending riding about in small Malabar carriages through the great garden that constitutes the city, one fixes one's choice on such dwellings that are well exposed to the refreshing "monsoons" or on those that are better sheltered from the sun, or better shaded. The relations between lessors and lessees are very simple: there are no leases, no complications. The rents are fixed: so many piasters per month.

Furniture is by preference bought in the auction house, at the "auctions", to use the imported British word that is commonly used. In these auction

rooms in some way takes place the turning over of the furniture of those who leave to those who arrive. An auctioneer presides over the contracts and levies a small brokerage fee. This intermediary service, which is not just convenient, is very much appreciated in a city in which the population of officials is very fluctuating. Some return to France to enjoy a holiday, others head for a new destination, still others on the contrary are just installing themselves. It is as necessary for the former to quickly get rid of their furniture as it is for the latter to quickly obtain furniture. Anything you can imagine passes through these "auctions": horses and carriages, chests inlaid with mother-of-pearl and ivory, Japanese bronzes of any value, old Chinese porcelains, [cream-colored] Satsuma pottery, cloisonné work, silkwares from Tonkin, etc., are fought over every Sunday at the auction. This contest is highly favored; the mundane people of Saigon come to talk about knick-knacks and Chinese trinkets with more grace than knowledge. And, what do you want, in that game the cleverest deceive and are deceived. Naturally, porcelains are held in highest esteem. It was China, we know, which made porcelain fashionable at home. In the seventeenth century the Jesuits already sent admirable pieces of Chinese ceramics to Europe and old Japan gave birth to Chantilly porcelain. Those who are not tempted by the luxury of furniture abandon the auction and furnish themselves simply at the Chinese cabinet-makers and basket workers who have a complete range of very well-done furniture in bamboo, rattan or light wood.

But if you are new in the China travelling career, it is wise to ask a friend to serve as bargainer with these sons of Heaven who never worry about taking advantage of the ignorance of Westerners. Since they scorn speaking French and since, generally, we do not speak much Chinese, by common agreement one has settled for a kind of conventional language—one speaks like a nigger: "Me want this." But do not think that it is always that simple. There is a host of bizarre expressions, which one picks up quickly though, but which are almost indispensable if one wants to conveniently close a deal with one of these too skilled traders or to

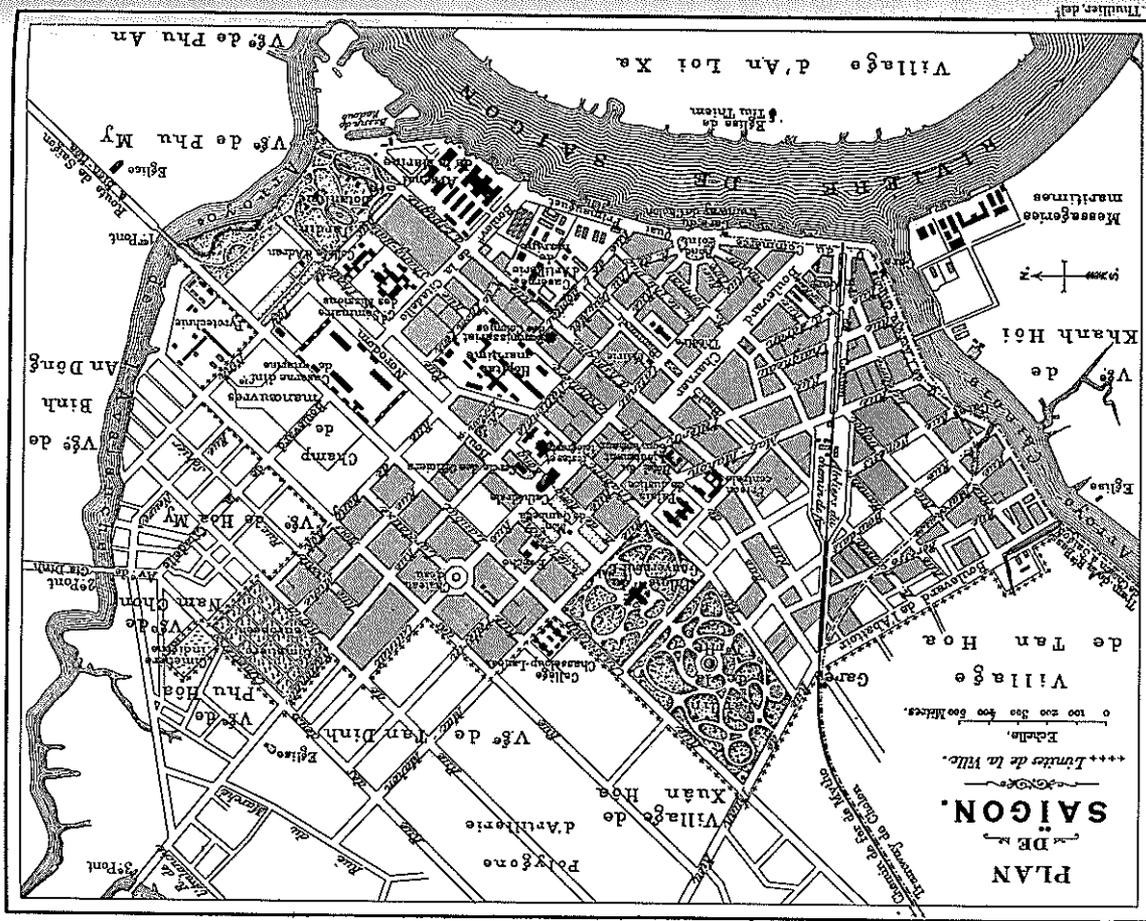


Plate 9. Map of Saigon (+++ city boundary) (L. Thuillier)

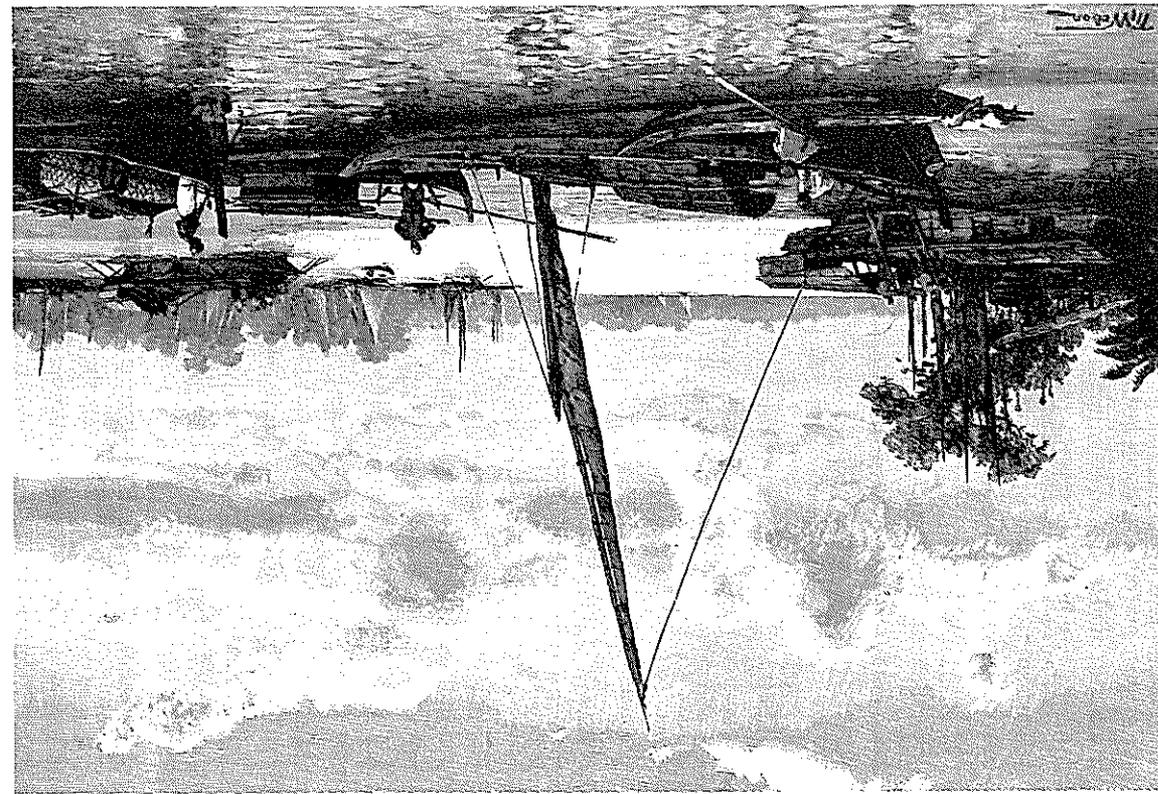


Plate 10. The Saigon River (Drawing by Th. Weber, engraving by Maynard)

understand and make oneself understood by the Annamese boys employed as our servants. The *throat hair cutting knife* is a razor; the *what hour it is* is a watch, etc. *Should look sir friend how much to cost* does not tell a newly arrived much. One needs a certain training to understand that you are asked, if you do not have total confidence, to inquire with the competition which is also Chinese and as thieving as the shopkeeper with whom you are dealing.

As soon as the sale has been closed, an army of "moving coolies," who are always near these shops stacks sofas, cabinets, mattresses etc., on carts with long arms. Here then you have a complete set of furniture for twenty-five piasters, barely a hundred [French] francs. The coolies have done the moving quickly. They somewhat know all houses and without needing any advice they place, the furniture in the right place.

A last errand run to add a few accessories to this limited colonial appointment and the installation is complete. All that needs to be done now is to hang up the lantern that, in Chinese style, burns all night long under the veranda at the doorstep. Nothing is more pleasant than these uncountable small lights shining in the sleepy gardens. Also an unoccupied house brings bad luck, so sad does the absence of this traditional night light feel.

3

The home cooking—At home

If one does not live with a family, it is the practice to group with friends and to commonly occupy one of the pleasant Saigon houses. This association has the little pretentious name of "home cooking." The goal of the home cooking is to give its members the pleasure of living with

friends, comrades one has time to chose carefully, and the amenities of a less boring kitchen than would become that of the best hotels after some time. It is the solution to the problem of living pleasantly and cheaply.

The organization of a home cooking arrangement is very simple. At an auction or at the Chinese shopkeepers you buy the objects necessary for this kind of co-operation: sideboard, table, plates, etc. A place of honor is reserved for the huge half-liter glasses suitable to hold the ice cubes one abuses too often. It is true that the doctors of the city pretend that—if you drink with the expenses accruing to them—ice is the best digestive!

In turn each associate takes the lead of the home cooking with the official title of "chief of the kit." This official of the private sphere fills the meticulous role of a good housewife: he deals with the cook and exerts a close supervision—with a hundred Argus eyes is not too much—over the servants, the work and the wine cellar.

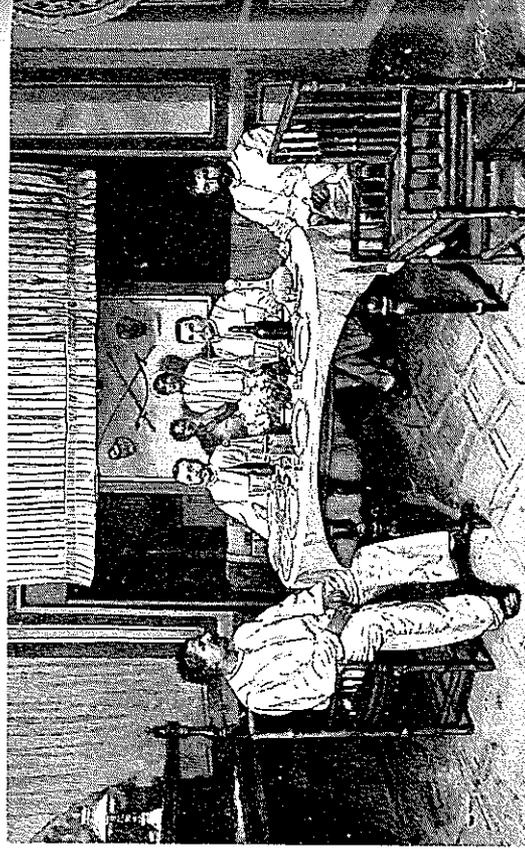


Plate 11. The home cooking (Engraving by Bazin, based on a photo)

If the chief of the kit is "resourceful" one better quickly forgets the best menus of the world. Very much at ease, comfortably installed in a house, under the punkah that waves softly, the home cooks are left entirely to the wishes of the dearest. From the distant Romans to Monselet, the gourmands, the supporters of the palace have written their opposition to a maxim of miser in white chalk on the doorstep of their dining rooms. Even more so in the colonies, one must eat well and good in order to do well and do well in order to live happily. Happiness: does it not consist to a great deal of being healthy enough to enjoy one's fortune and having sufficient fortune to enjoy one's health!

When home cooking, invitations are easily made and frequent; one simply puts an additional place setting. The menu is always sufficiently copious and cared for to welcome a guest and receive him well. In a hotel, however, one must calculate and adapt one's ideas of good relationships and friendship to the strength of one's wallet.

They eat very well in Saigon. The cooks are almost all artists, very enamored with their art. They prepare the dishes with pleasure and with a slowness that augurs well. They excel in pastry; it is impossible to turn and roll pastry lighter. In some kitchens, Chinese are preferred to Annamese; it's a question of a special colorfulness and then the Annamese hair bun is as decorative as is the Chinese plait and the locals do not do less in skillfulness, in care and in cleanliness, regardless of what is said, to the cook of the Celestial Empire.

It is written in the guide for the good bourgeois housewife in Saigon: if you want to receive your guest particularly well, do not fail to serve him a leg of lamb. A leg of lamb is a piece of luxury in Cochinchina. The sheep, rather scarce, are generally rather bad; a good leg of lamb of a good lamb thus is even rarer. In the provinces of the interior, in important centers, this precious meat is not sold and I have known gourmands reduced to being offered a complete sheep having come from very far at great expense, to satisfy their ruinous desire to see a golden simmered leg of lamb "à la bretonne".

If you really want to give in to Saigon fashion, it is indispensable for a gala dinner to offer your guests simple artichokes, well very skinny and wrinkled ones, having come from Europe in the iceboxes of the liners. This kitchen vegetable which passes almost unobserved in the West, evokes on the palates of the settlers crises of greed. It has always been impossible for the most skilful agents of culture—and these esteemed officials come in numbers—to acclimatize the artichoke with the smallest success. Naturally the attraction of the forbidden fruit for those with light wallets makes that with each mail arriving from France many dozens of these poor vegetables condemned to transportation are taken by storm.

Melons, pears and cherries are also delicate sought after dishes. They arrive in rather good condition in hermetically closed boxes. Pastry, ice creams and sherbets are common items. The most ordinary cooks know how to marvelously thicken conserved milk into delicious creams. Natural milk is scarce, expensive and bad. Champagne is served at the smallest feast and replaces all the old or fine wines, which are too quickly spoiled by the heat of the tropics. And then, this sparkling represents a little of French gaiety that can hardly be exported.

The pleasantly looking huts, which are coquettishly planted amidst evergreen gardens, easily retain those who are not much tempted by the world and its pleasures. One is so much at home, on the familiar sofa, in the evening when the sun goes down and flowers and plants exude their perfumes! Some methodically suck their cocktails with their silver straws or sip their iced absinthe with little gulps. Others paint, play music, convinced that to cultivate an art is the best way to isolate oneself from the world. It is also, it is true, the best way to attach oneself to it! Many try photography. This pastime, having become trivial in old Europe, offers interesting distractions here and preserves picturesque memories.

4

Society life—Five o'clock—Clans and gossip—The “nonetheless” waltz

In such a charming city one must not be surprised to meet all that current fashion requires. They are a little behindhand, but so little! Mail from France barely takes a month to bring the latest models of the Gymnase-Dramatique [Theatre] or the [Theatre of the] Vaudeville. Many provincial towns and of the not so provincial would envy Saigon its luxury, comfort and the exquisite taste of the day.

The women—and pretty ones are not scarce—have multiplied occasions to see each other and to be seen. Each of them has her turn of being host. The “five to sevens” of these pleasant hostesses are assiduously adhered to and these receptions are very ceremonious. The elegant, bright dresses and the uniforms throng in salons that are soon too small. The uniforms are very simplified; the officers wear a dress of white cloth with a few stripes and gold or silver buttons. Those who are not officers sometimes think they should press themselves into frock coats or morning coats which go badly with the local colors which are less dark.

The hour of the visits is amongst the most pleasant. Despite the solemnity of some salons, which is a little exaggerated, one meets with very charming company in these gatherings. But sometimes the pleasure is mixed. If one chats a lot, often one talks too much and the unending commentaries on the happenings of every day sometimes become disagreeable gossip for someone or other. Cliques take shape and this whole society, made as one could wish for agreeableness, is pleasing itself by engaging in a needle pricking war.

In Saigon, unfortunately, as in all French colonies and some others, must it be said, there is little understanding between civilians and the military. This is very regrettable but it has been like this for a very long time and that is an excellent reason for this bad state of affairs to continue. The civilian does not like to approach and the military man is on guard. At the time of the conquest and the pacification, the saber fulfilled its function and remained master more or less everywhere; it was a legitimate compensation for a life full of sacrifices, dangers and courage. Luckily in Cochinchina victory has been obtained long ago and in its turn the civilian administration plays its peaceful role as good it can while the military sadly see their arms rusting away. The antipathy born from this changing subordination, from one order to the next, have not failed to turn bitter. Reciprocal infamies work up people. The civilians reproach the military of loving gallantry, the military hold lack of respect for the stripes against the civilians and the exchanges are not always going back and forth calmly.

This state of affairs, not only detestable from the point of view of good relations which is the charming part of life on distant shores, also contributes to giving credence in the metropolis to echoes which are as false as they are little pleasant. Indeed, it is very unpleasant to hear our colonial officials being judged so arbitrarily by people whom the fright of seasickness or the spare-time activities have not permitted to cross the Egyptian Isthmus. If it is true to say, following Madame de Sévigné, that "the reputation of an officier is as fair and as delicate as that of a woman," the reputation of officials who do not have the honor to be military men also merits consideration and it is useful to make an effort not to stain it just for fun. One also hears time and again that these colonial officials are "sons of their fathers" having managed to do well, chosen most of the time amongst the idlers of the boulevards. Luckily for our colonies, nothing is more wrong; those who desire to see for themselves rather than believe words soon find this out. Without, of course, talking about the officials coming out of the special schools who enter the colonial administrations through a procedure that offers the most serious guarantees. In the same

way, those who, not belonging to the civil service, owe their nomination to favors or to titles obtained elsewhere, are scrupulously chosen and I do not believe that any metropolitan administration has anything to reproach the colonial administrations the way they have been organized for the past several years.

I know very well that the writings of de Beaumarchais are eternal, that in any age and in all countries there have been bad tongues who have freely vented their natural nastiness, but it is not less distressing, in all respects, that rumors so malevolent and so little founded find willing ears and capture minds which do not take the trouble to think. Thus, what is happening? Officials and military men often erect barriers between themselves and do not meet often. Everybody loses by it because the cheerfulness and the liveliness so necessary for the colonies do not find their dues.

These quarrels can be divided in sub-groups, if I may express myself like this. The navy officers seldom meet their comrades of the other corps; they judge them too military. One could perhaps reproach the officers of the "Great Corps" that they are not sufficiently so. Whatever there might be to it, the officers with helmets are pleasant mundanes and their little taste for militarism means they are neglecting the company of simple civilians less.

The traders and officials also form their small, too often well divided "cliques." The officials, whether they administer or judge, whether they pay or receive, are in the fashion of the rural policeman, proud of their parcel of authority, proud of belonging to the "government"! The traders—and they are luckily more and more numerous—have the only, and very legitimate, ambition of draining dollars and of expanding their shops on the rue Catinat. The rue Catinat designates, in its abstract sense, all "these people who come to do business in the colony." The slightly protecting and amusing intonation of this line has for a long time been the whole of our colonial policy; the official tolerates the businessman and seldom favors him.

It is certain that at the top of these affairs the minds are broader and the orientation less particular. In high places, one is realizing that our colonies and, among others, Cochinchina which is especially rich, must become excellent terrain for our commercial development. But one is really saddened to see a colony destined for prosperity so divided and often to such great extent by quarrels of people and administrators. Indifference and colonial egoism must nevertheless lead to this virtue which the moralizers call charity and the philosophers indulgence. Central authority reacts against these ideas of mean-minded coerie. Presently they are getting results; they will get even better and surely this state of affairs, which is deplored by anybody who is concerned to some extent with our colonial future, will not survive the continual progress of trade and the good graces of the quadrille.

Indeed, the salons where one dances, enjoy the benefits of neutrality. Terpsichore indifferently rallies all her loyal followers and engages them into a harmonious whirl, far from quarrelers and those impeding round dances. It is very remarkable how every person in Saigon professes a passionate devotion for this gracious Muse. Balls are frequent and dazzling: official balls, more intimate evenings, a waltz occasion after dinner; almost every evening they dance.

The ball of 14 July, offered by the government to the "peoples" is of course among the most dazzling and most sought after feasts. During this feast all the official pomp shows itself amongst the most beautiful scenery of green and flowers that tropical vegetation can offer. The governor-general's palace puts up its arris in a park lighted by uncountable Chinese lanterns in the national colors. The high stage, with its double rows of Annamese infantrymen in gala uniforms, barefoot, is most picturesque in appearance. At the entrance of the great hall groups in black dress, embroidered clothes and indigenous tunics are thronging. Under the verandas, salons for games open wide, full of light, taken by storm by devotees of all races and all colors, who fraternally join elbows to conquer one of the green carpets flanked by the two usual torches. The Annamese are

gamblers like no other. For a long time exploited by Chinese games, by the famous game of the thirty-six animals and by thirty-six other games as well, he is always prepared to loose the better part of his piasters. During these festive days, the racial prejudices are abandoned; white ties, black tunics and chocolate heads gallantly exchange their dollars.

The true unique salon is that for dancing. This huge temple occupies the center of the palace. On three sides high openings give way to porticoes decorated with the most beautiful palms of the Cochinchinese flora

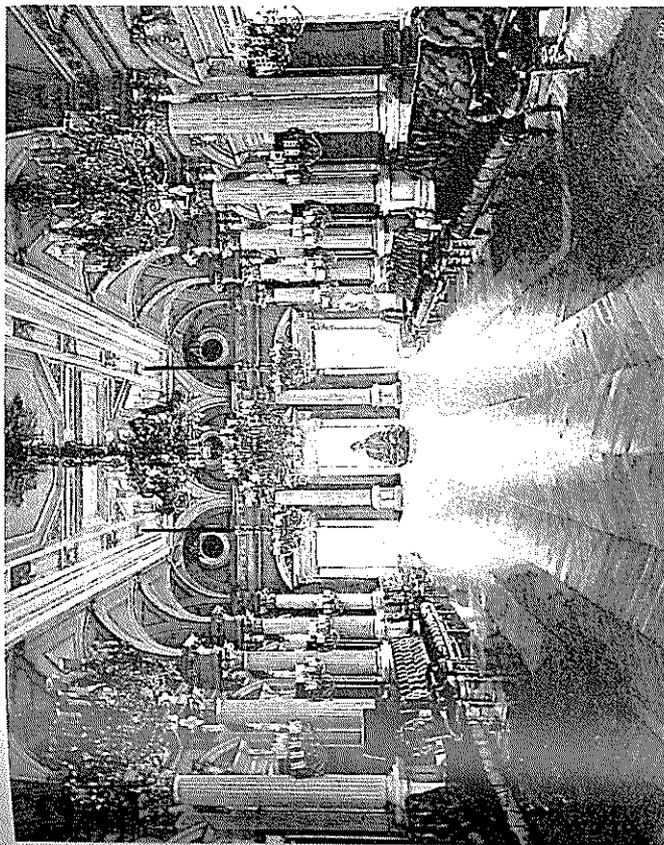


Plate 12. The dance hall in the governor's palace
(Engraving by Privat, based on a photo)

and while, across the wide open verandas, the breeze passes, softly caressing the monsoon, the excellent musical band of the navy grouped on a portico takes the waltzers without deafening them too much and fills the park with its gay harmonies. The garden is uniquely dazzling and I know nothing so pleasant as these nights in the Orient filled with balmy scents and phosphorescent fireflies, with the far away and softened rhythm of the bands! The “champagne salon” is most often passed through. This champagne, which passed out of fashion in France where one barely dares serve it in any other way than tortured in complex preparations, reigns here supreme. Its rosy bubbling stimulates brains made languid by the oppressing heat. Everybody drinks of it and drinks plenty and I admit that here I have really known the charms of “French wine”.

5

The walkabouts—The inspection tour—The marvelous Botanical Garden—The city gardens

The favorite walkabout of Saigon’s people is the famous “inspection tour.” This tour is made in a vehicle from five to six in the evening. The very beautiful road makes a great curb to the North of Saigon and enters the territory of the district or the inspection of Giadinh, which has imposed its christening on it. A wide road, carefully maintained, runs across luxuriant rice-fields, sometimes shaded by high trees and bordered by lively flowering hedges, sometimes open and straight. The air is better than in the city and the monsoons, although well abated, sweep up a little of this humidity which always comes out of the ground. During part of the walkabout, the

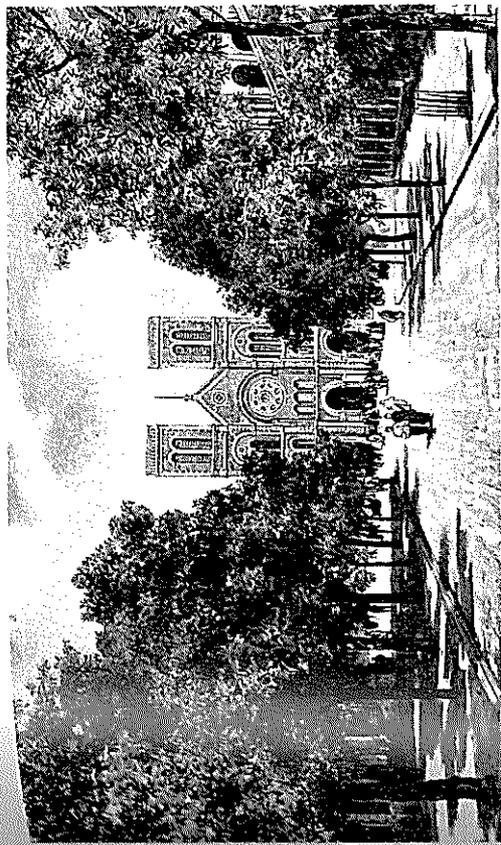


Plate 13. The upper side of the rue Catinat and the cathedral (Drawing by Slom, engraving by Maynard)

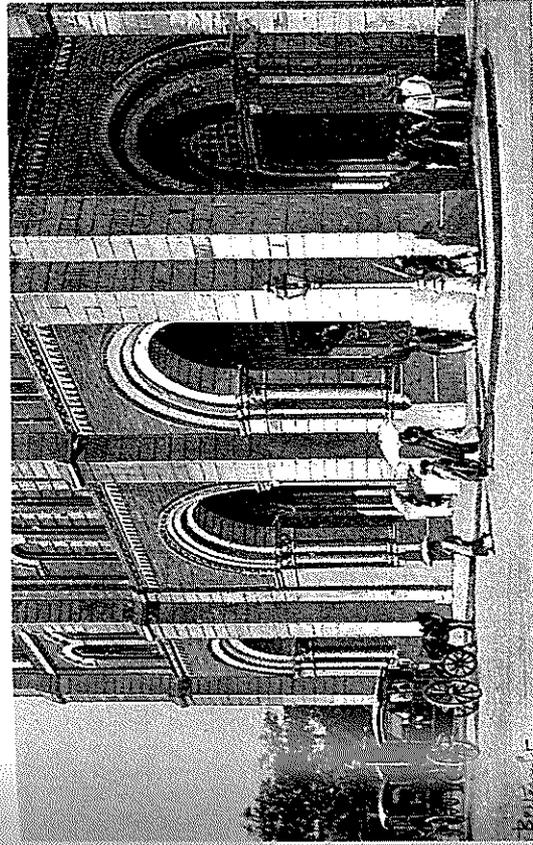


Plate 14. The exit of the office (Drawing by Bertheault, based on a photo)

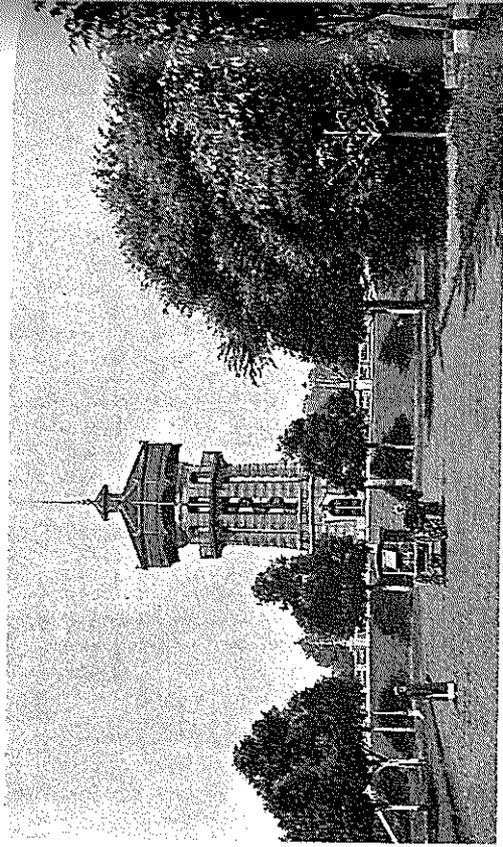


Plate 15. The water tower (Drawing by Berteaault, based on a photo)

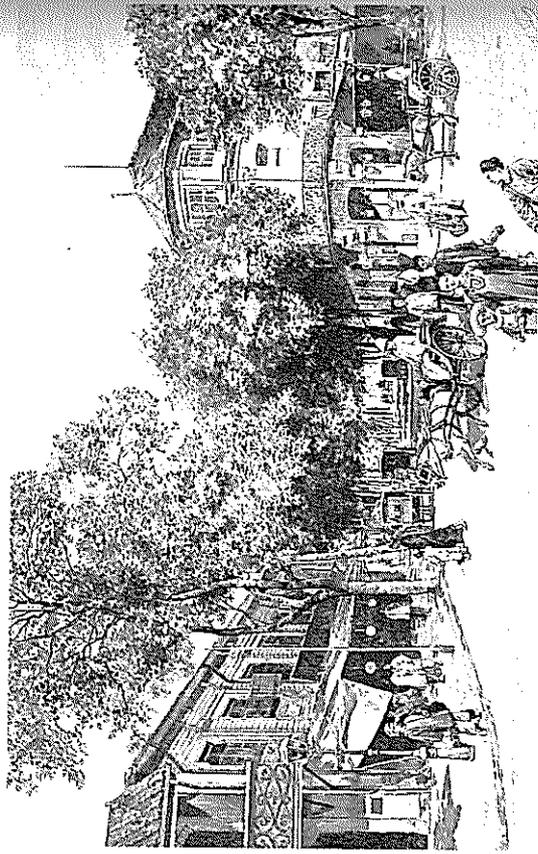


Plate 16. The rue Catinat in Saigon (Drawing by Slom, engraving by Devos)

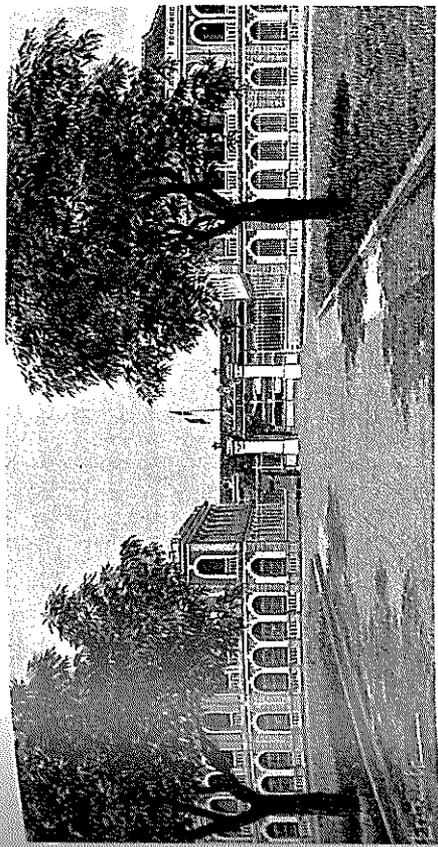


Plate 17. The army barracks (Drawing by Berteaault, based on a photo)

carriages walk slowly. This chosen place varies according to the fashions. The "acacia avenue" cedes to the "lake tower"; a few months pass and good form changes itinerary. One exchanges greetings and smiles; one worries about the new faces. It is there one looks for a few dinner conversation topics, for some appetite.

The return goes by the Botanical gardens, quite rightly famous. Indeed, on the banks of a wide arroyo, which is less muddy than they usually are, stands the most splendid park one can imagine. Wide avenues are shaded by powerful tropical trees, labeled and classified. Other lanes are bordered by the most beautiful collection of palm trees. The thick and very green lawns are dotted with luxurious flowers dazzling by their colors and too strongly perfumed. For those for whom the most beautiful species of the Indochinese flora are not sufficient, the complete fauna of the country has been brought together in this magnificent décor. Tigers, panthers, elephants, bears and a thousand species of snakes share the elegant pavil-

ions that spangle this garden. Especially the birdcages have retained the care of the architects. Infinite varieties of very great or minuscule birds are locked in huge wire-netted chalets, hidden under the greenery and refreshed by a small Versailles fountain with spurting water. The pelicans, ibises and all kinds of species of palmipeds, which can be tamed, swim in liberty in a charming lake planted in the middle of the Botanical Garden.

All these marvels are very much appreciated by the people of Saigon and in the evening, those that are tempted less by the famous inspection tour come to watch this beautiful Far-eastern nature, so wisely reconstructed in the most beautiful park one can possibly admire.

Although less pleasant than the botanical and zoological park, the garden of the city nevertheless offers a very agreeable excursion for those who love space and shade. Set up in the location of an ancient forest, the

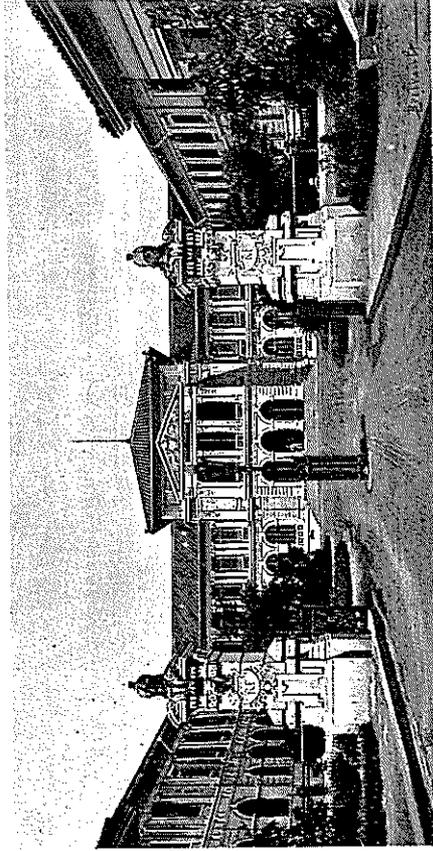


Plate 18. The Justice Palace (Drawing by Berteault, based on a photo)

old hosts of which have been respected, this garden contains phenomenal trees. Every Sunday, the park adopts its festive appearance. The musical band of the navy infantry attracts the whole of Saigon there. Those loyal to the inspection tour desert their favorite walkabout and, when the sun goes down, carts, landaus and barouches gather in the splendid avenue that surrounds the kiosk of the musicians; in three or four rows the vehicles follow each other or cross.

A second walkway all around the pavilion is reserved for pedestrians. It is fashionable to leave one's vehicle a while and to stroll around this circle among which a certain intimacy reigns. One gathers in groups, one talks a hundred-fold. The charming Saigon ladies excel in gossip and then, is it not very interesting to get to know the latest story one has heard talking about through the spicy menu!

And mocking the world is the whole art of enjoying.

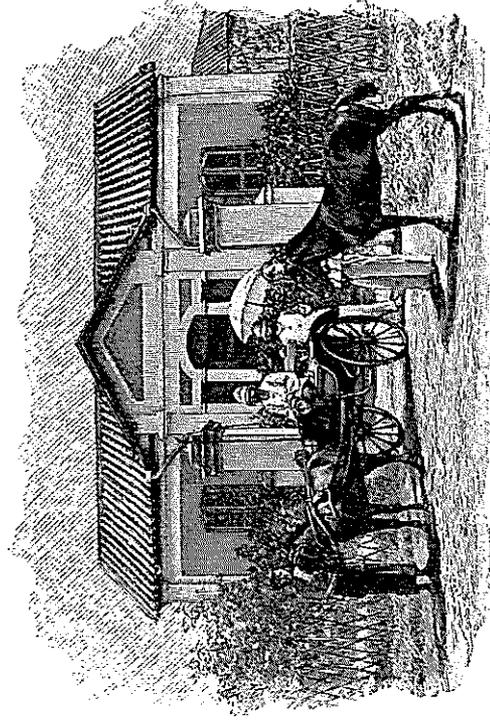


Plate 19. A small house in Saigon (Engraving by Bazin, based on a photo)

The white toothy-pegs sharpen their skills in this game, sometimes biting a little too deep and then again is there not a certain charm in this too! In our colonies the average intelligence is very high, higher than is commonly assumed and the inevitable stories, or the scandal mongering, lend the environment a special taste. Here they do not have the trivial gossip of the province. The turns of phrases are finer, more funny, what do I know! The best minds hardly ever fail to join in this delicate role and, damn, if the distraction is always naughty, it often has the bad excuse of being witty.

6

Monumental Saigon—Streets and boulevards

The capital of Cochinchina is without dispute the most important city of France's colonial possessions. During the thirty years that have followed its annexation, it has been very much embellished. Saigon is now one of the most beautiful cities of the Far East.

A beautiful palace has been built for the governor-general. Public monuments have been built that would embellish whichever city in the world. Magnificent avenues with tamarind and mango trees throw a salutary shade over wide, well-built roads.

Saigon certainly is not a city of marble but simple bricks have been wisely used by artful people whom the colonial budget, swollen with resources, allows to keep for the constant embellishment of the growing city.

Very many edifices have risen up from the ancient swamp of Giadinh. Each avenue conquered from the muddy arroyos is guarded by flowery villas and elegant palaces and high up in the city the cathedral imposes its huge mass built in the best Roman style. Its high square towers can be seen from very far away at every meander of the river that leads from the sea to the city. Built on the summit of the city, this beautiful monument is for more than one reason dear to the Saigonese. It flatters their pride and moreover, for a completely unpredictable reason, this cathedral has a right to our recognition. It was when establishing the deep foundations that one has discovered the great expanse of potable water which amply feeds Saigon with a water which many cities in France would be envious of. The flow of this underground lake is inexhaustible and during the dry season, as during wintertime, public fountains and private pipes never dry up. Nevertheless, the soil, sand as one would wish, which forms a natural filter for this beneficial lake has created a thousand problems for the builders of this heavy construction and one had to lengthen the first works on the construction to find a resistant layer very low. However, the mass has gained the overhand and one of the towers has sunk: well, quite lightly but nevertheless in an observable way, so that, like the Notre-Dame, the cathedral of Saigon has towers of unequal height which displeases those in favor of irreproachable symmetry. This splendid church is the dream come true of an old settler of Cochinchina, the priest of Saigon. He has preached and collected money so happily that the millions have streamed in and have cemented the walls of his dear building rather quickly.

On the square of the cathedral, the postal and telegraphic services are spaciously installed in a palace, with new clappers and decorated in the fashion of the pavilions of our last Exposition. Some of these lively fresco paintings are in the best taste and dazzling in this sunny environment.

High up in the city, which it crosses north to south, the Boulevard Norodom brings homage to His Majesty Norodom I, king of Cambodia, our protégé, well known in old Europe for his extravagance of small very red and barely green ribbons which look very much like our ribbon of the

Légion d'honneur. And, to judge from the many loyal who wear his colors, this coffee-with-milk Majesty surely has a right to public recognition; also the boulevard which carries his name is among the most beautiful. Some hundred of meters long, it is rich in monuments.

The splendid palace of the government blocks it with its long casino-like front and the cathedral offers it its apse buttress. On the other side rises the water tower that sends the water from the underground layer with sufficient pressure to operate comforting showers.

On this same boulevard stands the great bronze statue of Gambetta. It teaches our subjects, the Annamese, that at home we erect statues and with good reasons for the courageous who strove to throw a foreign invasion from our national soil. Gambetta is displayed in a fur-lined outfit, a little hot for the country, with his head thrown back shouting: "Gentlemen, to Tonkin!" Whatever! Destinies are fickle like waves and human things may take strange turns. Poor Gambetta, how he now appears to be inspired by the purest patriotism, only thinking about France and of the grandeur of her dominions!

Further down one finds the club of the officials, the hotel and the general's park, and, finally at the very end, the well situated brazenly built barracks. Our young marines are valiant in Cochinchina and hence the hospital has always been too large by much, but to say the truth, few houses are so well-placed than these famous barracks which leave the barracks of Colombo, of which the English are so proud, far behind. A little lower, in the heart of the city, the deputy-governor's palace displays Corinthian architecture which one is really surprised to find here. In these fast-growing colonial cities one does not at all expect to find high columns with undercut capitals and the imposing grace of the Greek style. On the side, the Justice Palace occupies a great space with its three building wings in severe style.

The wide Boulevard Charner, built on an old miry arroyo opens a splendid view of the trading port and plays the role of the [rue La] Cannebière [in Marseille] marvelously. It is correct to say, in order not to hurt the

pride of the people of Marseille that it is not at all comparable in liveliness. For lack of the animation of Marseille, this wide avenue enjoys other advantages. Once a week, the musical band of the navy infantry reunites, after dinner, all that Saigon has in terms of lungs dying to breathe a little fresh air from the breeze of the river which flows wide at the end of the boulevard. Many cafés are situated on one and the other side of the avenue and they open their great gaily-lit verandas to the boulevard.

We return to the map of Saigon for the long string of city streets. Many names belong to the Gotha of the navy, others are local in origin and recall the names of kings, warriors or cities of Annam, Cambodia or China on their blue street nameplates. And even then "street" is an incorrect name: if the lowest Gascon had been involved in the birth, there would have been only "avenues". Indeed, in all directions, wide avenues running straight under a vault of foliage cross this huge garden enameled with cainhas and palaces.

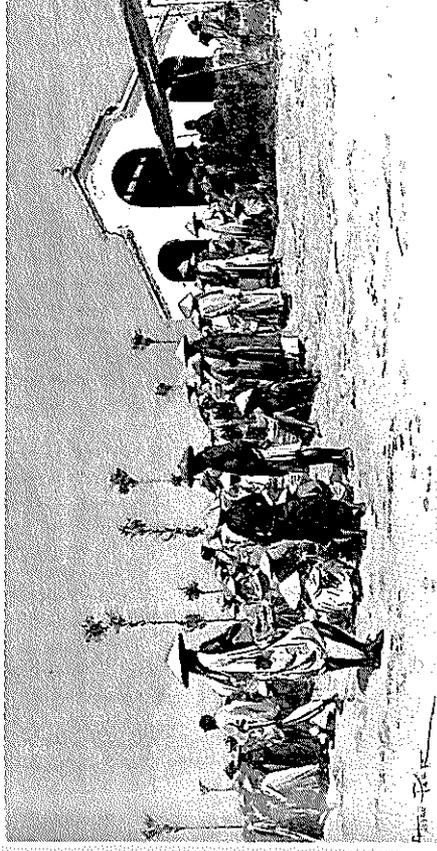


Plate 20. At the market on the street to Cholon
(Drawing by A. Paris, engraving by Devos)

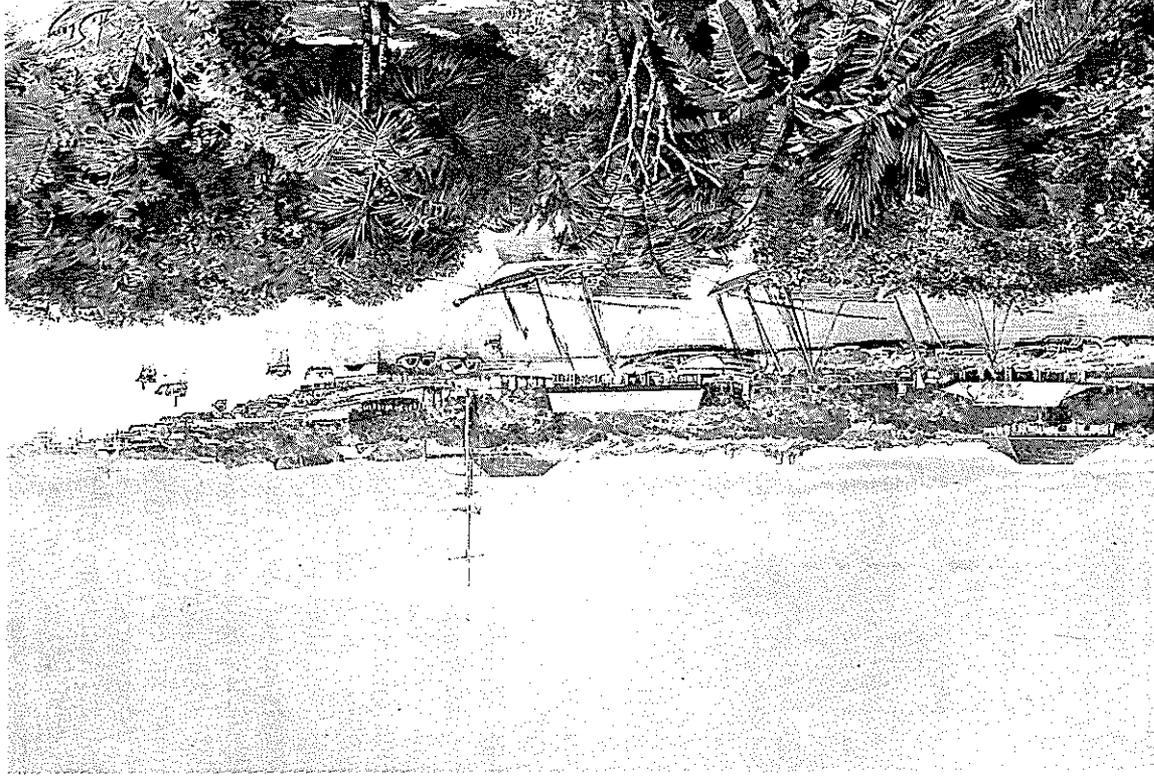


Plate 21. The entrance to the port of Saigon (Drawing by Slom, engraving by Bazin)

The famous rue Catinat nevertheless distinguishes itself by more stunted trees and by European looking houses, with shop fronts and a sparkling lightning. A long row of shops offers clients American shampoos, Waterbury winders, Crémieux suits or the ultimate sensation of the divine Loti.

7

Saigon, seaport—The mail from France—A Chinese port

Saigon is a great seaport that is not at all on the seaside. This truth seems, no doubt, as little complicated as an aphorism of Mr. de la Palisse and, nevertheless, it is not pointless to say that our great French Far-eastern port is forty miles into the interior. Because, do you believe it, one meets good people who neglect this detail and thus more easily and from far away resolve certain economic problems in regard to the commerce of French Cochinchina.

Certainly, in many respects, it would be better that our capital was on the coast. Projects to establish a trading city at the entrance to the Saigon river, notably at Cap Saint-Jacques, are being studied. It has always been necessary to abstain from them, the difficulties of implementation being greater than the best goodwill. While waiting for something better, the merchant port stretches along long perfectly managed quays, at the very entrance to the city.

The offices of the Messageries maritimes and the huge warehouses of the company which one can see downstream as soon as one turns the last curb of the river, are in the center of the commercial port, at the confluence of the river and the great arroyo of Cholon.

The regular mail service to France is guaranteed once a week by the Messageries. As soon as the gunshot announces the entry of the liner into port, the animosity in the city grows. Those who expect news run to the post office where they await with the greatest impatience the going through and the distribution of the mail. Everybody is absorbed in reading letters and newspapers. Those who expect relatives, friends, or who are distracted and consoled a little for being so far away from the fatherland by the walk to the mail take the road to the Messageries maritimes. At every departure and arrival, it is in a crowd that they assault the sampans of the "signals mast" which transports the strollers to the quay of the Messageries, on the other side of the Cholon arroyo. Barely a few minutes of crossing and one is fully on this magnificent quay of the great company where the biggest liners always find sufficient mooring space. This quay appears to be much closer to France than the rest of the city. The people one mixes with have left France barely a month ago; furthermore, if it concerns a return visit, everybody will be in Marseille in twenty-six days!

From these weekly pilgrimages to the steps of the motherland, one returns happy if one brings back a new friend with recent news from Europe. One returns sad, on the contrary, if one has accompanied a friend to his departure and I do not know what kind of sentimentality, what love for the native soil makes the small pearls, which the burning sun cannot easily dry up, sparkle in the corners of one's eyes. In the colonies, even those who have only good memories and happy expectations look with ardor towards France, absent since long months. Where one is happy, but which is nevertheless not the motherland; only those who have crossed the borders know the power of feelings for the native soil.

To return to the city, the road which could be called overland road, as opposed to that which I have just taken to the confluence of the arroyo of Cholon and the Saigon river, the overland road I said, exits from the great barrier of the Messageries' yard and crosses, over an elevated road, muddy badlands, flanked by small quite dirty looking Annamese huts which provide the newly landed with a deplorable idea of the local authorities' con-

cern with sanitation. And, nevertheless, they are already working on the improvement of this ward, which is suburban, so much is true, but which is very important because of the establishment of the Messageries and numerous rice hulling mills, the smoke filled neighborhood of which has nothing pleasant to show. Surely I do not believe that this terrain will ever be transformed into luxury villas but in the long run they will manage, no doubt, to sanitize this corner of the city and to replace the cloaks which border the road with simple grasslands.

But this complaining cannot last long; barely one has gone through these few hundred meters or one arrives at the splendid bridge which crosses the Chinese arroyo. Along the railing of the bridge stretch the high walls of a metal factory, the workshops of which occupy a great space on the bank of the arroyo. One crosses the arm of the river over a daring bridge with a single arch, under which pass the high masts of junks and barges. From the peak of this bridge—one of the most remarkable pieces of art of the city—one has a view of the Chinese port that is as picturesque as it is wide.

In the middle of the river, the junks come and go in long rows, according to whether the tide brings to Cholon or descends to Saigon. On both banks of the arroyo trade is lively. On one side there are great European factories, rice hulling and milling factories; on the other, the long row of Chinese merchants and the huge rice warehouses. Nothing is more remarkable in the evening than the deep perspective of the quays illuminated by thousands of lanterns at the Chinese shops and by the uncountable lights of the boats. The Chinese are very generous with light and the small petrol lamps, with porcelain lampshades, are spread around prodigiously. Nevertheless, one must admit that the nauseating stench which spreads from the rather questionable water of the arroyo, is not such as to retain admirers for a long time. This arroyo of Cholon is really too welcoming for refuse of all kinds. At low tide, like the waves of Theramenus, it pulls back appalled, leaving unutterable flotsam in the open on the banks.

8

The Annamese—Character—Dress— Jewelry—The Annamese woman

The Annamese woman of Cochinchina is, as everybody knows, a French subject since many years. The conquest of this country has not taken place without encountering any resistance. The campaign has been bloody and difficult. It was a period during which it was not fashionable to increase, sometimes deform, the colonial events and often to delay, by budgetary hesitations, the final conquests. But our blood has been fertile; France has done a lot and in great style in Cochinchina. The battlefields on which so many names that have become popular have gained fame are transformed into greening rice fields. Our efforts have been productive. Every year this valiant country lowers the expense of the metropolis by several millions. These laudable results show to satisfaction what a nation, colonizing whatever they say, can do when it does not encounter obstacles to its course within itself.

Roads are strewn in the immense provinces and transport the riches of the uplands to uncountable arroyos. These arroyos, or natural canals, reunite the river arms in all directions. The Mekong delta, thus carved up, forms a mosaic of fertile and eternally green isles. This admirable irrigation system makes of the Annamese a more or less amphibious being. Entire families live in a sampan, some kind of flat boat covered in the middle in the fashion of Venetian gondolas. The bow and the stern are turned up horn-like and give these small floating houses, which are very skillfully maneuvered by oarsmen standing upright in the front and the back, a special grace.

The Annamese villages are grouped at the very edge of the arroyos. Nothing is as picturesque as this multitude of straw huts (the thatch of the Far East) shaded by palms. In them lives and works a population that has often been accused of laziness because it is silent. The Annamese is light-minded, inattentive but intelligent. He is very timorous so that gentleness works better with him than brutality. The famous "cadouille" (a slender rattan stick) has for long lashed the small of the back of these poor devils without producing brilliant results. Patience is preferable because these people understand nothing of our fits of anger. We will gain in their minds by being calm and silent like them. Power and gentleness, the two methods are easy to experiment with on the boys that serve us. Those who treat their boys harshly or mistreat them are poorly served. One must give orders clearly and gently; if the boy does not obey, most of the time, it is because he does not understand.

The Annamese is not beautiful, but one gets quickly used to his type of ugliness. His eye is lively. His physiognomy is gentle, often gracious. The woman especially is not devoid of charm. The body is supple, the hips are well formed. The small naked feet, very well kept, can be admired for their most idolatrous of shapes. The onset of the wrist is extremely slender, even frail, which leaves the pretty hands this prodigious flexibility which attains its height with the Javanese woman.

The indigenous dress is very simple. Men and women wear a long tunic falling to the ankles. It is open on both hips in the fashion of our men's shirts; the sleeves end very wide at the wrists. This is the cai-ao (kee-o). From the belt to the heels, the Annamese wear the cai-quan (kee-kouan), a wide and floating pair of trousers, held in place in the waist by a lively colored, silk shawl. The tunic and the trousers are made of more or less expensive cloth according to the social classes: usually these clothes are in black, purple or white silk. The rich Annamese dons sandals, the day-ham-het. The greatest majority goes about barefoot.

Both men and women roll their opulent, ebony hairs in a bun at the back of their heads. The women hold them in place with golden pins that are

shorter than the famous pins of the Japanese. In Cochinchina a turban is the privilege of the strong sex. The men use little jewelry and barely wear a few rings. To compensate, the women are overloaded with it; it is by kilos of gold one estimates the jewels of a congaie. Bracelets, one shoved next to the other adorn the arms up to the elbows. Heavy necklaces imprison their small necks in a yoke of gold. In the very rich families, the women wear diamonds, be it set in collars or in rivièrè form, or incrustèd in a great plaque hanging on their breasts. These diamonds are usually badly cut and rather poor in brilliance.

This whole population is gay, happy with its fate and always ready to laugh. It has already been said that the Annamese is the Frenchman of the Far East. This likeness is no doubt flattering for our Indochinese subjects but it is indisputable that one finds in the Annamese a little of this spirit, of this pleasant tone, of this benevolent dynamism which makes of the Frenchman the nicest man in the world.

9

European theatre—The races The buffalo cart race

They say it is a tradition when founding a colony, for the Spanish to first build a convent, the Italians a church, the Dutch a stock-exchange, the English a fort and the French a theatre and a dancing hall. Saigon is clearly in line because the city has elegant dancing halls and also a subsidized theatre. Thus, the watchword is to amuse oneself and during the dry season, the six months of theatre contribute to make our capital the most elegant colonial city. The present theatre, as provisional as it may

be, does not lack some comfort. The theatrical company is like all companies abroad. There are excellent elements but they generally had too much success. The tenors have holes in their voices and the Marguerites sometimes are a little faded. Other elements, on the contrary, start their careers and have been bedazzled by splendid contracts. Finally, without making fun, with a few cuts in the dangerous parts, they give a big opera, struggling along . . . The comedy is nevertheless better in season and, above all, the operetta pleases. Every year the benevolent municipality gives a subsidy to the theatrical company with which many provincial cities—and not the least important—would be well off.

Sometimes the Saigonese are facetious; the racing association is a curious expression of this mind bend. Saigon has its small Longchamps. The racing track is very beautiful, on a huge open grassland. The oval of the track is perhaps exaggerated for these "puppet" races. These poor very small Annamese horses, so nice in front of their light vehicles on the pretty avenues of the city, inspire a true pity on the race course, when pushed by great blows of the riding crop by locals dressed up as jockeys clinging to the manes of their mounts like monkeys in a circus. Despite the relative attraction of this sport, I do not at all believe that the race has anything to gain from the overtaxing of these charming little animals and the generous subsidy granted to the racing association would be, in my opinion, better spent to establish stud farms in lower Cochinchina in order to at least have horses before thinking about making them race. Indeed, the horses are becoming very scarce and, thus, expensive. Cambodia furnishes very beautiful specimens but then again, the reproduction is poorly assured and without the least pessimism, one must expect a period when there will be no more horses in our colony, which would really be a pity. This small, tough, nervous race so easily handled that even children make their carriage and horse into a toy, is worthy of attracting the interest of the public authorities, in accordance with the consecrated formula.

If the "push-push" still needed to acclimatize in Saigon, one would regret less, from a practical point of view, the disappearance of the equine

race but all the attempts made to this day to introduce this form of locomotion have been in vain. The reason for this state of affairs is strange: the Annamese absolutely refuse to pull a Chinese in a rickshaw, the Chinese would not disagree less to carry an Annamese. Indeed, the Chinese in Cochinchina is not like in Tonkin, for example, a conqueror or a former conqueror; he has never completely ruled the Mekong delta and the ancient Chams are always there to confirm their resistance to the Mongol absorption. The Annamese puts a legitimate pride in never serving a Chinese. One the other hand, the Chinese are not as numerous in Cochinchina as they are in Tonkin, a region bordering their empire. The sons of heaven who have come to seek easy fortune far from their fatherland, would not agree to do a job so little rewarding and so difficult. And perhaps also the tax that we have levied on each Chinese head is little suitable to attract the poor devils of coolies whose only income would come from pulling a trishaw. These many reasons have made all the attempts so far to have this vehicle run about on the green avenues of the city fail. I do not talk about ideas in regard to this subject that have been pronounced by the professionals of human dignity. Naturally, they would be opposed to the fact of seeing a man pull another around in a cart. The authorities of the colony have not followed these philanthropists in their speculations about feelings and these are the only difficulties which I have discussed that have prevented the trishaw from circulating, as it is the case in every other city in the Far East. I admit that my humanitarian ideas do not at all stop me from wishing Saigon this type of locomotion which is so convenient and so cheap.

The racing association could even add an interesting number to their meetings: the trishaw race. Does it not already have ox cart races! This is surely one of the most curious things that I have seen. In line are some twenty narrow carts, of a very special shape. Each cart is harnessed with two Cambodian cows with heavy withers, attached by the yoke to a long post, which at the end is pulled backwards in a horn. These harnesses are adorned with palms, abundantly furnished with little bells and loaded with

a cluster of Annamese. As soon as the departure bell has given the signal to these bizarre vehicles, the whole makes a terrible din, the bells ring, the locals armed with long spuds excite the poor animals with their shouting and especially by their gesticulating so that they gallop in an extraordinary manner, insane and in all direction. Beasts, men and carts clash, turn over and turn back upright. This race so novel in nature lasts for a few minutes of mad gaiety for the spectators. Barely two or three carts arrived at the post and received the prize for their efforts, all the others slipped away or tumbled in all directions, over the barriers of the track. The most surprising is that I saw nobody killing himself in this diabolical game and not even a cow was disemboweled! This is certainly an excellent comical idea and if the racing association does not do much to improve the equine race, she tries at least to amuse everybody.



Plate 22. The wife of the Doc-Phu of Cholon
(Drawing by Bazin, based on a photo)

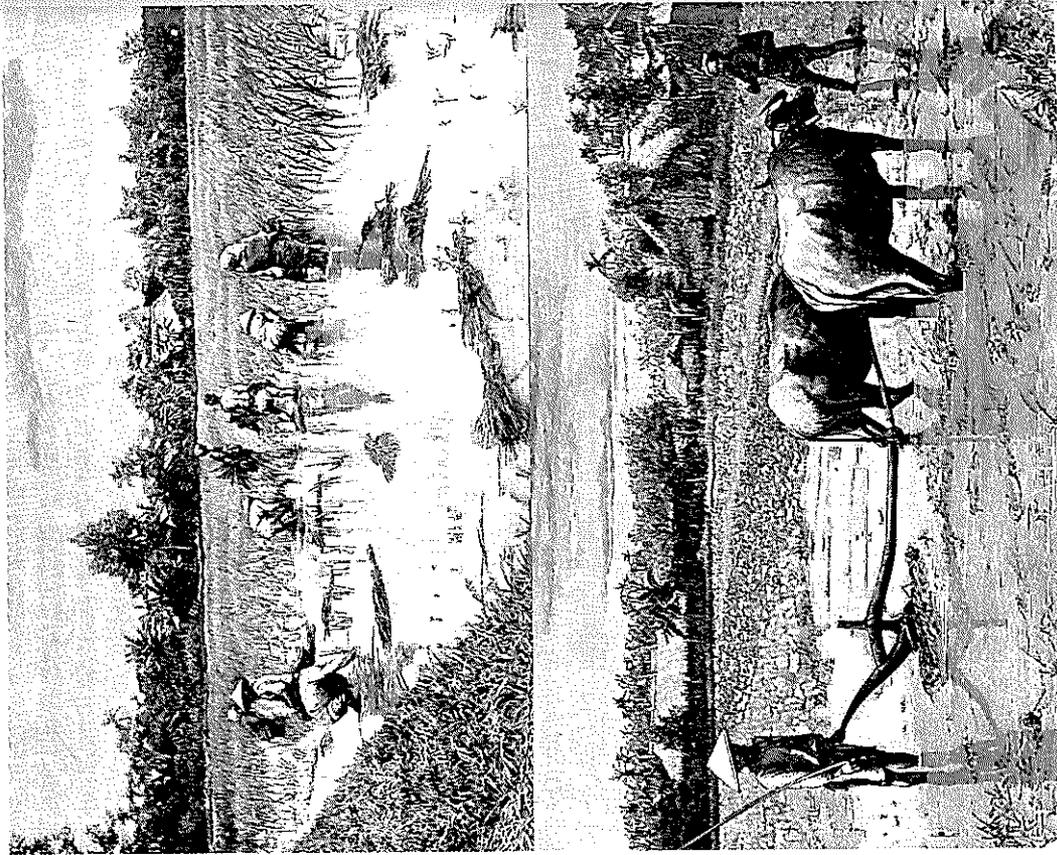


Plate 23. Transplanting and plowing of rice-fields
(Engraving by Devos, based on a photo)

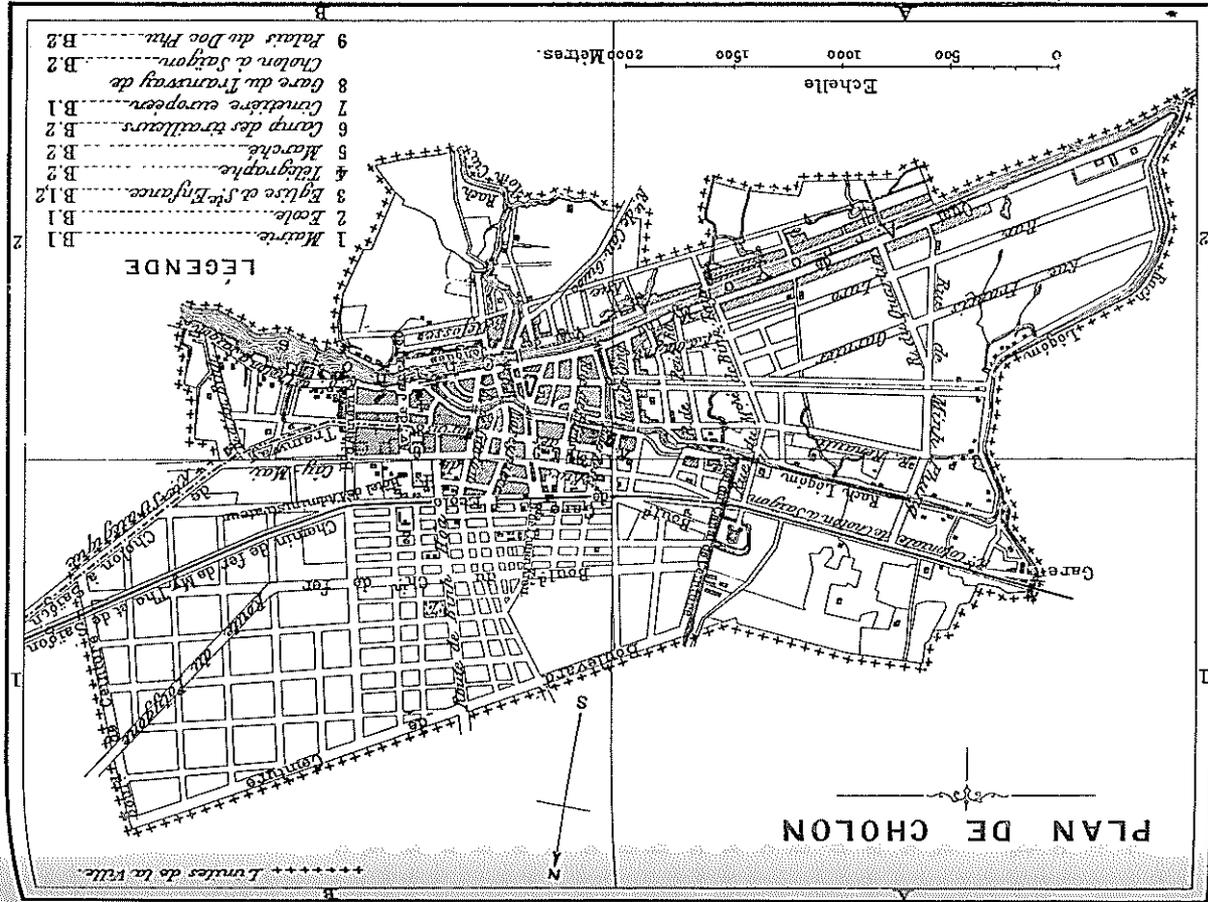


Plate 24. Map of Cholon (+++ city boundary) (L. Thuillier)

L. Thuillier, del.

10

Cholon—The hospitable palace of the Doc-Phu—Annamese high-life

Cholon is the great commercial city of Cochinchina. It is an entirely Asiatic city, almost a suburb of Saigon, the Europeanized capital. In barely half an hour one makes the journey from Saigon to Cholon. For this easy and interesting excursion one has a choice of means of locomotion. First, a railway line crosses straight through the "plain of the tombs", a vast deserted countryside strewn with splendid mausoleums or modest tombs. This is the Annamese cemetery, vast, without fences, without borders, without any crop whatsoever, without trees and almost without greenery. It is the great final resting-place of the Buddhist of Nirvana. Secondly, one can get to Cholon by the route of the Chinese arroyo, along which a fast and light small Decauville tramway with narrow tracks circulates, exactly the same as the one that had so much success at the 1889 Exposition and that has been nimbly transported and installed here, to the great pleasure of the Asiatics, who have become excellent clients. The tramway passes full steam amidst a great crowd of people, Chinese for the greater part. On one side of the road one overlooks the arroyo overloaded with huge junks with their sides stuffed with rice, which are moved by a dozen Chinese perched on the roof of each vessel with the help of a long oar which all of them push.

On the other side one follows the long file of Chinese houses made of brick or straw. On the edge of the road, long covered markets, shelter the boisterous crowd of Annamese and Chinese housewives every morning. Sometimes a pagoda sticks its indented architecture a little above the ordi-

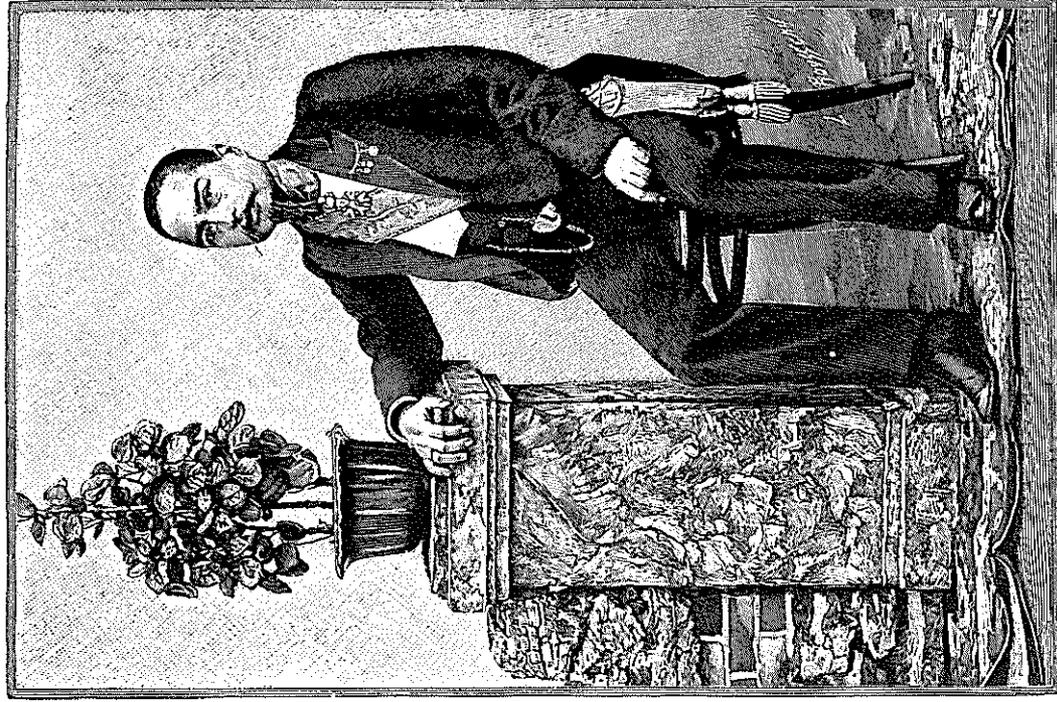


Plate 25. The Doc-Phu of Cholon
(Engraving by Rousseau, based on a photo)

nary huts and attracts attention by a noisy din. After the long curves of the arroyo one arrives at the agglomeration in the strict sense of the word: this is Cholon, with its streets regularly aligned with the most diverse displays of merchandise and ambulant food-stalls. Here there is nothing European anymore; the merchandise does not recall a single product that is familiar to us. One is truly in China. Cholon is indeed a city almost totally absorbed by 60,000 Chinese. The entire trade is in the hand of the Celestials, the ceremonies are those of China and the theatre is also Chinese.

The Chinese live a lot in "associations". Their associations possess, no doubt, only distinct similarities to the "Jockey" or the "Épatant" [The Capitai] but still one is treated perfectly, when one has the rare chance to be received there. Indeed, if one has relations in the Chinese world—it is not always easy—one gaily passes time in Cholon, in Chinese style, including a dinner which is at the least curious.

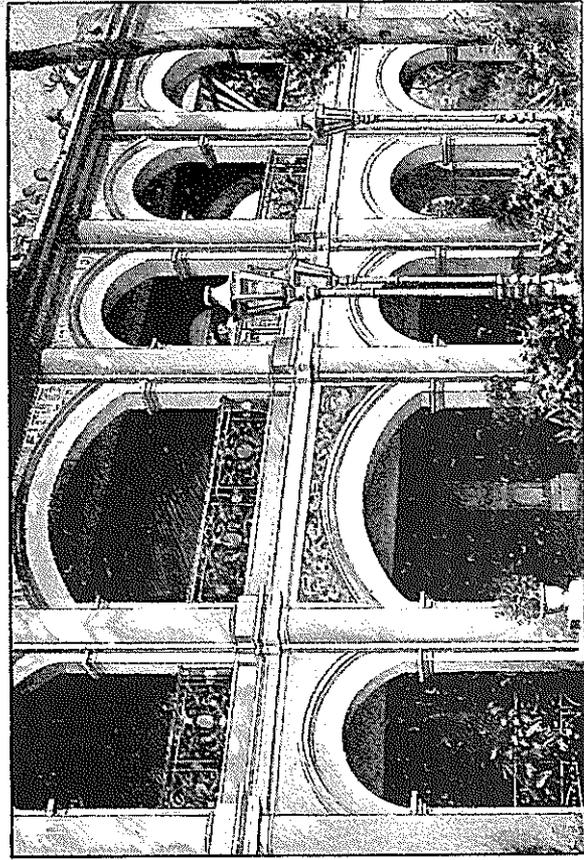


Plate 26. The palace of the Doc-Phu
(Drawing by Boudier, based on a photo)

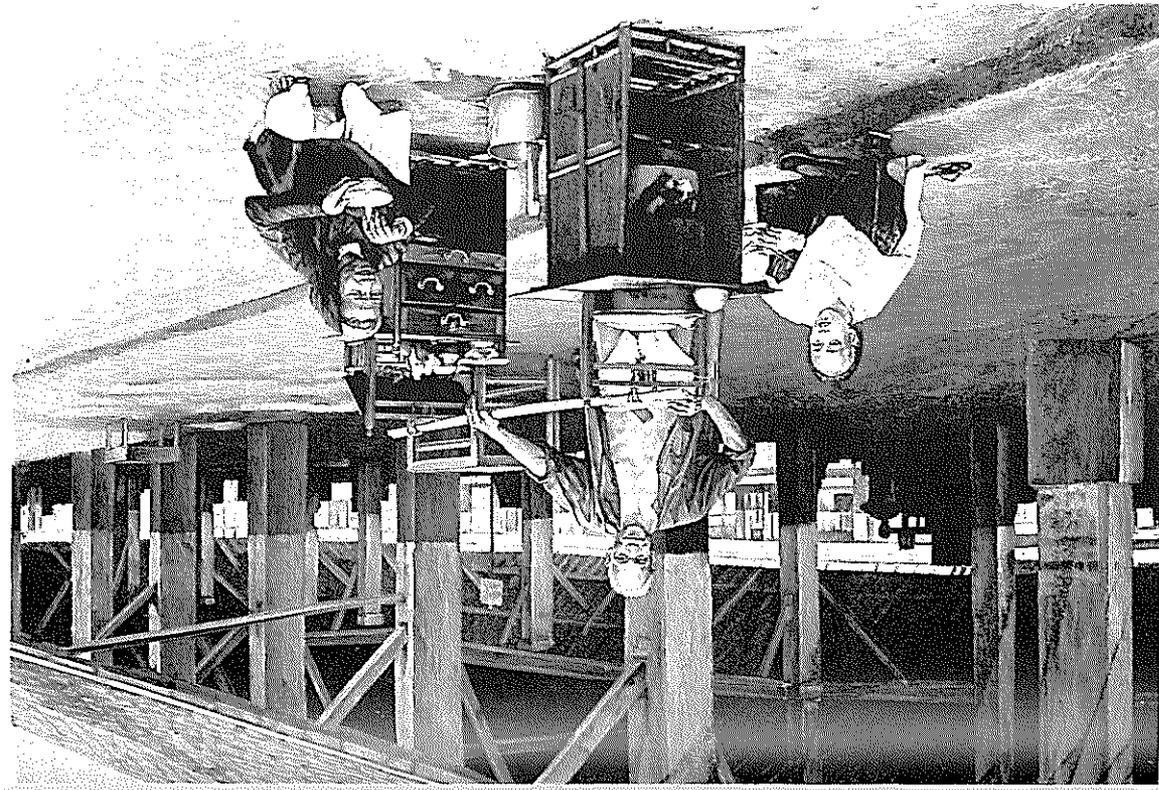


Plate 27. An ambulant food-stall (Engraving by Rousseau, based on a photo)

The evening continues at the theatre where the prominent spectators possess the much sought after right to enter the artists' foyer. There a crowd of walk-ons works over their heads with brushes and try to give themselves the most horrible appearances. In the special boxes, the leading players are making up in front of minuscule mirrors, inlaid with mother-of-pearl and which are the decorations of our European displays. They take salves and fine colors from the small drawers of these slender lacquered pieces of furniture of which our young girls make puppet cupboards, and later, jewel boxes. In China, women do not appear on the stage and men play the feminine roles. In Cochinchina, there are adaptations and the feminine roles are played by quite pretty, small Chinese.

The decoration of the theatre hall is very passable, the center lights glow profusely and hangings with subjects as fantastic as they are variable furnish the boxes of the gallery. On the ground floor are the baignoires, armed with field beds and with all the accessories of a small opium den. The fact of bringing together in such a small space the attractions of music and of the paradisiacal delights of opium is an indication of a civilization that certainly is not at its beginnings.

I admit that I have not been able to accurately take stock of the degree of progress of Chinese music. Is she very much behind or very much ahead? I do not know. To tell the truth the melody is quite difficult to grasp and the harmony appears impossible to appreciate for my ears which rebel against this racket. But again Lohengrin and Tannhäuser, have they not been classified, for a long time, with the fantasies of dubious taste!

Every evening, the hall is full to the gunwales and the play continues deep into the night, sometimes to continue during several evenings. The spectacle consists of unending sung declamations, always accompanied by the stamping and the creaking of a numerous, bizarrely composed orchestra. The drums and the cymbals rival with sharp flageolets and the artists' falsettos. These epic plays, very long and very monotonous, hold for a European but a mediocre attraction.

One of the curiosities of Cholon, one could say if we did not have to do with a commander of our Légion d'honneur, if you please, is the Doc-Phu-Su. A Doc-Phu-Su is the Annamese official who runs the local administration of a great city or of a big province. This mandarin "of the highest button" is charged with the administration of Cholon and her 100,000 Asian inhabitants, under the high supervision, be it understood, of the French administrator. This Doc-Phu, like all the indigenous dignitaries of Cochinchina, shows the best intentions in respect to our country, which has maintained the majority of the ancient privileges of the mandarins, while also giving them new ones. This one here however is closer to us than the others in dress and in manners; I dare not add also by his language because, despite the best will in the world, he has great troubles to make the kind words which he has for every visitor understood.

In a sumptuous, entirely European style mansion, he lives with a great family and a single wife, a managing woman. She keeps the keys of the coffer and surely she understands perfectly how to enlarge the purse. Indeed, the Lord Buddha, as a god who does things well, blesses large families and the Phu has not less than 14 children. While the oldest sons try to acquire the failings which still are lacking in their race in Paris as well as the latest "chic" of the day, the daughters and the very small ones live completely in Annamese fashion and they piously preserve their patriarchal habits. Among the Annamese, respect for the father is the beginning of wisdom. You should see how everybody, small and big, steps out of the way when the family chief passes by. No caresses, no sitting on papa's knee, only the respect and a little fear. Is that better or worse than our familiar method, dear to the good King Henry? I leave this question to the specialists.

It is indisputably at the Doc-Phu's of Cholon that one eats best in Annamese style. He cares a lot about the renown of the good kitchen that his house possesses and offers everybody the hospitality of the most agreeable table in the world. The diners, always in great numbers, take place around the large table covered with an infinite number of small bowls

containing the most diverse preparations. Every invitee armed with two ivory sticks and a porcelain spoon has a small plate, a bowl of rice and a microscopic cup destined to receive the choum-choum or rice liquor, the only drink with which one washes down an Annamese meal, in front of him. Upon the invitation of the master of the house, the diners take by means of their sticks and the spoon of each of the numerous small plates and they haphazardly obtain a mouthful of sucking-pig, regally cooked, a few roasted [Rhynchophorus] palm larvae, etc. Annamese soup, a greenish mixture of young bamboo shoots, swallow nests and rhinoceros tendons is very delightful food.

Always by means of the sticks, one places the picked piece on the bowl of rice and with the help of the small spoon one waters each mouthful with nioc-nam, some kind of oil extracted from fish dried in the sun that has a very fine taste when it is fresh, but this is rather rare to come by! In houses less well kept than the Phu's, and they are numerous, the nioc-nam is usually terribly rancid and it spreads a very disagreeable smell, which, for a European nose, is not a good encouragement to taste at all. When the mouthful has thus been prepared and watered, one brings the bowl of rice to the lips and between the two sticks, one introduces the delicious quarter into one's mouth following it up with great shoves of rice with the help of the ivory sticks.

Women are not admitted at the table; they make a gallant exception, one should add quickly, for the Europeans of rank, whom the Doc-Phu receives with all the principles of etiquette which he has picked up during his frequent travels in France. And in these small feasts the role of his wife and his daughters solely consists in fanning the diners with great fans and in answering the smallest desires of papa's guests.

When everybody has for a long time struggled away with these sticks—less dangerous than our fork and knife but also less handy—when one has praised into heaven the excellence of the dishes, the flavor of the seasonings and the velouté of the choum-choum, those who are in the know of the Annamese customs have taken care not to leave a single grain of rice

and, placing the sticks across the bowl, they bring the master of the house the customary tsin-tsin, some kind of thank-you salute which is brought using both hands.

At this time, good Annamese etiquette demands that the invitees bring testimony, using very noisy guttural sounds, that their stomach is overcome with satisfaction. It is useless to add that Europeans have always felt better to pass for uninformed than to manifest their satisfaction in such a barbarian language. The Annamese meal ends with a great bowl of tea, which is welcome.

Then the table is cleared of all the small plates, the place setting is changed to European style and they bring a huge chateaubriand with apples for those who were not seduced by the delights of the Annamese table. One must admit that, if one vaunts the better-known steaks less, at least the Bordeaux wine of the best vintage makes you forget the choum-choum.

For desert there is an avalanche of the most varied fruits. A privilege of the hospitable house of the Phu is that one eats excellent early fruits. Mango and the delicate mangosteen, to the humble banana, the fruit of the poor people, are particularly well selected. Then comes a long series of Annamese pastries in the preparation of which the young girls of the house have become artists. There are tidbits of all kinds: small, exquisitely flavored petit fours, fondants, babas, jams, etc., the list is very long and varied. And champagne, which is present for all feasts at the Phu's, excites the heads and cheers up the stomachs.

The Doc-Phu of Cholon does not limit these splendors to his city house; he also receives in his "country house". This is what he calls the tomb of his ancestors and his own, on which he has carried out a lot of work! Indeed, it is the custom to prepare ones eternal resting-place in a dignified manner and long in advance. It has something especially serious, this long excursion in this beautiful park, filled with lush vegetation and trees of all kinds which have taken the power of their trunks and their eternal verdure from the accumulated ashes of an ancient family! Without any

order at all, here and there, under the flowers or standing up in the middle of the lawns, lie or stand old funerary stones recalling a long veneration and a cult brought to the memory of the ancestors throughout the ages.

The name of country house is however not a simple image. In this vast enclosure, great houses have been built in order to give feasts rather than to live in them. Indeed, the resting-place of those who passed away generally does not at all inspire in Asians the respectful terror that our cemeteries spread. The anniversary of the dead is a family occasion that one celebrates with great pomp, without sadness. For each solemn occasion, two or three hundred relatives or friends come to eat, drink, smoke opium and deafen themselves by the creaking hullabaloo music of the country's maestros. And the cult is the more agreeable for the deceased the more their memory has been celebrated in Pantagruelian banquets in which the choux-choum is not at all spared.

11

Annamese and Chinese solemnities— Têt—The Dragon Festival

The Têt celebrations open the Annamese year, at the beginning of our month of February. During the three days these solemnities last, the locals give themselves over to the wildest festivities. Trade stops and it would not be possible to buy the smallest quantity of rice. Everybody has obtained a smack of money by selling or pawning what is in their way because one must, at any price, obtain piasters to pass in a dignified way these days of general jubilation. For the lovers of knick-knacks, it is the moment of a lifetime to augment the collections.

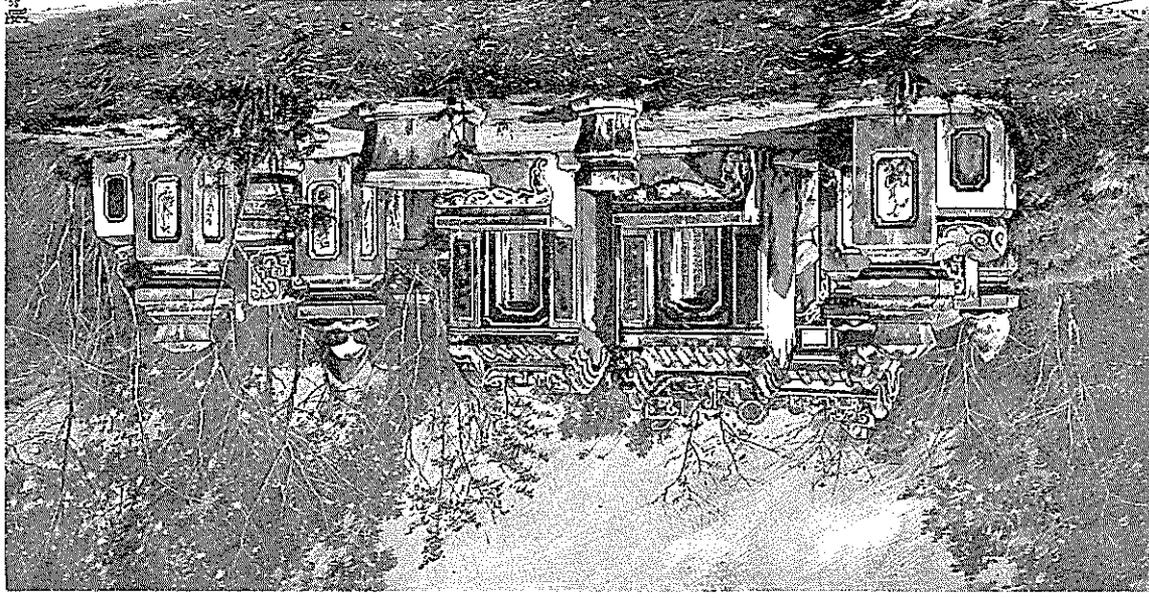


Plate 28. Tombs of the Doc-Phu's ancestors (Drawing by Boudier, based on a photo)

From dawn of the great day, the feast begins by deafening explosions of firecrackers. Chinese and Annamese don their gala uniforms. The Chinese are especially remarkable with their lively colored silk dresses and their great ceremonial hats composed of glass jewelry which produce the most dazzling effects in the sun. In fine dress, all those who, for whatever reason, have business with Europeans come to their houses to deposit their calling cards which are as long as an alder and covered with indecipherable characters written on pretty paper strewn with gold powder. They do not restrict their attentions to this and come with their hands full of gifts, too full even, because simple discretion does not allow one accepts them all, but one would offend a supplier, for example, if one would not take a packet of tea or some fruits from his basket. The personnel of the house offer small gifts. The cook prepares one of his best cakes on the sly to considerably treat a surprised gourmand. The custom is to take special care of the children's dresses which are of the richest. All these babies are made up, dolled up in the funniest way. Is it not surprising to rediscover the graceful dress that we were wearing during our pudgy days?

Every local hut is garlanded, tied full of ribbons and abundantly provided with banners and inscriptions of all kinds and, if one enters, the altar of the ancestors is decorated with flowers and the tables are overloaded with food. After the visits, the time that is not used for gambling is devoted to eating, drinking more than is appropriate and producing a terrible din with firecrackers. It is extraordinary how these people, however peaceful in appearance, love this noisy entertainment. But one cannot form oneself an exact idea about the noise produced during these few festive days. It goes this far that one cannot go out by carriage without some danger because the small horses of the country want to have little to do with this racket.

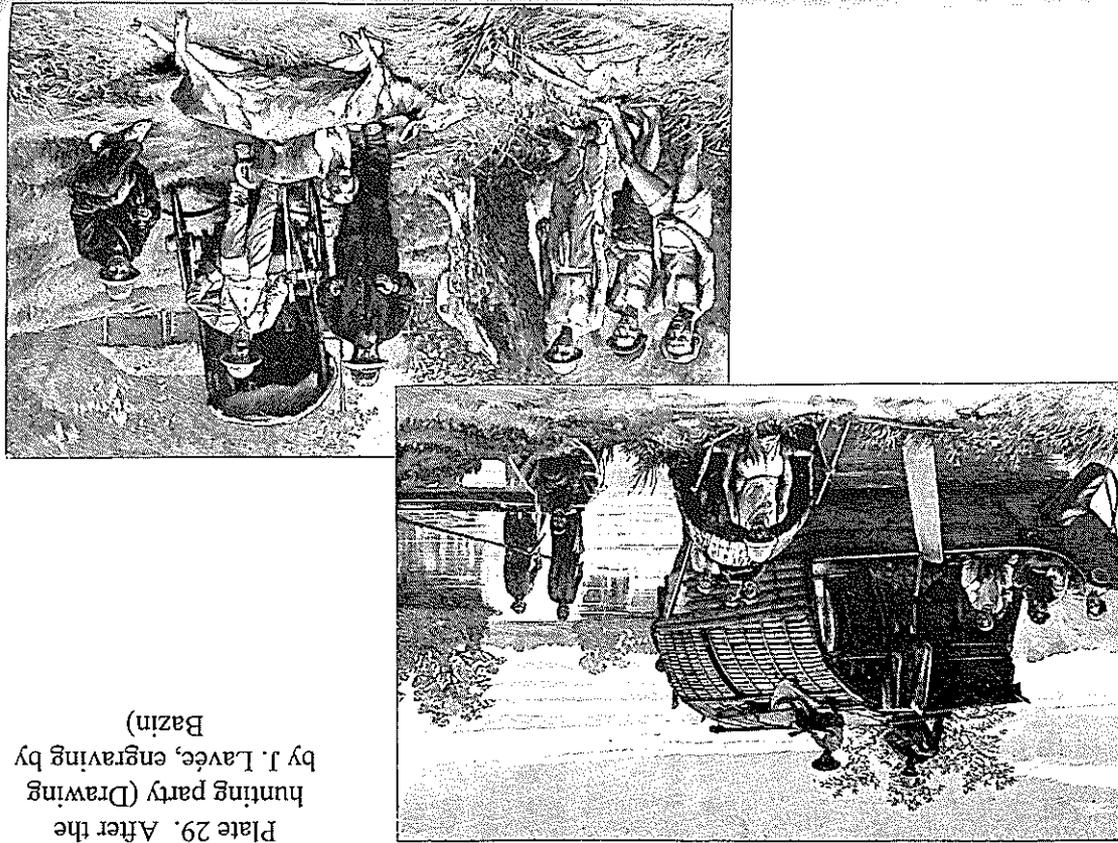
During these days, the high local personalities of course receive their family and the Doc-Phu of Cholon, be it well understood, reunites in his vast mansion his numerous collaborators. He also invites the Europeans and it is part of the fun to go to this annual evening feast. More in particu-

lar, he receives in his pagoda, a private chapel consecrated to the ancestor cult. For the wealthy, a pagoda is a vast temple in which the riches of the family are accumulated. The pagoda of the Doc-Phu of Cholon is very remarkable from the rooftop to the ground; the columns and the panels in rare wood are very artistically sculptured and the wide chairs inlaid with mother-of-pearl are truly splendid. The whole house and all the gardens are at the disposal of the invitees and lighted with this profusion of Chinese lanterns and all kinds of lamps that is so Asian. A buffet meal is served as desired and surely obtains a most legitimate success. One must nevertheless add that this evening feast which brings together Annamese and Chinese does not please all Europeans and these motley evenings do not possess the gaiety which would correspond with their noisy bearing.

Special Chinese celebrations take place rather frequently but the most remarkable one is the feast of the ancestors, of peace, of work, of business, etc., more simply put the Feast of the Dragon (Dung Co), which is celebrated towards the middle of April. These festivities cause huge expense and it is certain that these expenses are the indications, among the celestials settled in our colony, of a great present-day commercial prosperity and an absolute confidence in the future.

The Chinese are organized in congregations or associations with special chiefs, supervision and customs even; each congregation has its pagoda, which is embellished according to the wealth of the association during the solemnities. For example, the pagoda of the Canton congregation is truly splendid; the back of the hall is adorned with gilded wooden statues depicting spirits and the famous among the philosophers of the Middle Kingdom. Very close to the altar, overloaded with gifts in kind, fruits and cakes, stands a gigantic incense-burner flanked by two enormous standard lamps which stand out against the embroidered and gold laminated hangings, under the light of the very finely sculpted center lights. An unending crowd of Annamese and Chinese passes in a long procession in front of all these accumulated riches. Without dispute, the crux of the feast is the walkabout of the dragon which, very curiously, bears a certain similarity to that of Tarascon in our Provence.

Plate 29. After the hunting party (Drawing by J. Lavée, engraving by Bazin)



It is an unending procession of pedestrians dressed in bizarre costumes and grouped by congregation. It is a long parade of carriages, of gold and red lacquered shrines and of altars, of little pagodas and of chairs with more or less gracious bearers in which are seated, serious and immobile under the implacable sun, young children with brilliant dresses representing the famous personages of Chinese history or allegoric divinities: I pass over the details. This whole parade is mixed with bands with trumpets, drums, creaking instruments and overly sharp flageolets which produce a hullabaloo without equal and constantly, along the route, there are explosions of firecrackers which deafen everybody, because there is no good solemnity, be it a birth, a funeral, marriage or even other events without a lot of noise. It is a need, it seems, for this tranquil and silent people to relax its nerves in similar infernal celebrations. At the very end of the procession, the dragon, an enormous monster in painted cardboard, closes the parade. A solid chap, hidden under the scaly body of the monster makes the dragon execute the most uncoordinated movements. The head, which is a masterpiece of horror, opens its mouth, turns its eyes, sticks out its tongue and displays various feelings with an expressive and fantastic facial expression. This long snake body unrolls in tortuous coils and the monster jumps and leaps ferociously to the sounds of a diabolical music of loud blows of a gong and drums.

In front of the official palace the dragon does not fail to make a bow and supplements it with respectful salutes, then it executes very whimsical merry-making dances in honor of the hosts. The appearance of this kind of cavalcade is of the most picturesque and especially very local in color. Under the sunlight, it enfolds, long, dusty, noisy and lively, beating the air with its hundreds of flags, standards and banners with a thousand colors, waved by men in strange costumes.

12

Around Saigon—Hunting— Thudaomot—Mytho—Cap Saint- Jacques

Saigon has a right to be preferred in all respects. But, despite the delights of the capital city, it would be unforgivable to neglect the so practical waterways that the tufted arroyos, which are the richness and the convenience of the Mekong Delta, trace in all directions. And even then one must hurry to quickly do these little excursions before the unavoidable colonial apathy puts an embargo on all good will and makes the parties, which the more courageous organize, fail. Hunting, almost always pleasant often decides the most immobile to run through the jungle and to abandon for a few hours the good habits. And, truly, a more or less long sojourn on a sampan has nothing that displeases. The boys take care of preparing the beds, as well as the mosquito nets for the delicate and, very much at ease in these wide flat boats, one glides, gently rocked by the rhythm of the oars, and one sleeps good nights refreshed by the breeze of the river.

The journey is organized and calculated to the tides in order to reach a hunting ground in the morning. Each hunter chooses his post a little bit haphazardly and the Annamese whips launch dogs that do not hesitate to lead. Do I risk to be accused of bragging when I say truthfully that the occasions that one does not bring back to the boat some con-nai (deer), con-man (roe buck) or con-huou (chamois) are rare. Certain regions of Cochinchina, carved up in small isles between river arms that are wide enough to bar the hairy race from migrating are extremely rich in game to



Plate 30. Cap Saint-Jacques (Drawing by A. Paris, engraving by Maynard)

the point one would not believe it. Deer, which the Annamese rarely track, is sometimes so little frightful that it comes to show its antlers and its long curious muzzle at the edges of humpbacked badlands, barking and scratching at the buffalo carts of the country when passing.

More modest hunters leave the big game in peace and make do quite well by fighting black grouse or snipes in the rice fields. The grouse is quite rare around Saigon but snipes abound. Less active than their European sisters, their swerves do not manage to shelter them from the lead and it is by tens that more or less skilled hunters count their pieces on the scoreboard.

The monkey, the palm rat (some kind of squirrel) and peacock are hunts for amateurs which all have their enthusiasts. Tiger, unfortunately abundant in Cochinchina, can become a dangerous neighbor, especially for the dogs; it happens that he fights with them in front of the whips, but he flees when Europeans approach. The Annamese is less unpleasant to him and the statistics register a certain number of victims of the royal beast every year. There is of course a specialized tiger hunt. The dangers of this sport attract the courageous and the value of the corpse entices a lot of interested people. A few good shots with explosive bullets lie in wait for the enemy and thus shoot a few of these ferocious beasts at the expense of serious danger. Traps work better and have the advantage of posing no danger at all to the hunter. The pit with the goat, for example, is an original trap. In the forest one digs a deep pit equipped with sharpened posts, destined to inflict on the imprudent wild cat the torture of impaling. The earth thrown all around forms a gently sloping glacis on the side of the woods, while on the side of the pit the embankment is steep. The gaping pit is hidden at the bottom of the interior slope of the embankment by a light hurdle of branches and leaves, sufficiently pulled together to hide the construction. Above and in the center of the pit with the help of an improvised trestle, or better a bend branch of a neighboring tree, they hang, by the small of the back, in a kind of hammock a young suckling goat which will soon utter heartbreaking appeals. The tiger, scenting this

goat distanced from his relatives and especially far from its guardians an easy prey, approaches the poor creature abandoned by the glacis with the soft slope from the height of the embankment. But the beast is placed in such a way that the tiger can only taste it by jumping on its prey and he jumps so well that he brings with him his innocent bait into the torture chamber.

In Saigon hunting is for a great number of people a constant pretext for excursions in all directions. And, according to the tides that turn the course of the river twice a day, one ascends in the natural direction of the river or one descends to the seaside. Thudaumont is the favorite end point of those who enter the upper reaches of the river of Saigon, while Cap Saint-Jacques is the last attraction for those who prefer the downstream excursion. The port of Thudaumont, a few hours of launch to the north of Saigon, really deserves the fame it enjoys. Prettily established on the flank of a hill, this small town has already some character. The hotel of the administrator, coquettishly build at the top of the village overlooks the river and the vast rice fields of the other bank. To the great harm of Cochinchina, the privileged situation of this growing village can barely be found in other stations. Thus, lucky Thudaumont reigns supreme among all those soliciting an administrative post in the interior. This little country, so gay, so rich! It is a very important market center. And I recall with the greatest pleasure the festivities for a recent agricultural contest in this minuscule town. Nothing was lacking, not the ribbons, not the speeches, not the medals, not even the animals, big and fat, to dispute the prizes! We had races, boat races, games of a thousand kinds, swings, wooden horses, Russian mountains and, at night, the walkabout of the dragon, without which there is no good Annamese feast. The feast ended in a profusion of lanterns, rockets and firecrackers of the noisiest kind. And while many boats floated with their garlands of Chinese and Japanese lanterns on the river, the parade with a thousand torches went through the town amidst a horrible hullabaloo of shouting, drums and fireworks. This unusual gathering of noise and fire constitutes the highest degree of public celebration

the Annamese population can attain. Also, that day, I remember, everybody was delighted with his day and his evening, especially perhaps the Europeans.

Mytho, an advanced port in the countryside, on the great Mekong river is, with Saigon-Cholon the most important city of French Cochinchina. To allow for a more easy transit of all the riches that come down from the Upper Mekong and from the great fish-rich lakes of Cambodia, they have joined Mytho by a railway line to Saigon. This relatively short line—it has about 70 kilometers only—has taken a long, delicate and difficult time to build because of the renewed subsidence of the little resistant terrain it crosses through. Artificial constructions to harden or greatly strengthen are dotted along the route and the journey is done across very good rice fields, wide arroyos, swamps or coconut and areca palm forests. One gets to Mytho in three hours. It is a short journey and there is no European passing through who has not gone to see the famous park with the caimans.

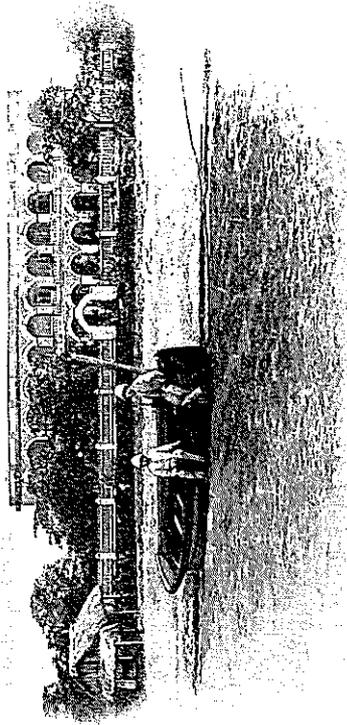


Plate 31. The Hotel des Bains

In a huge, very dirty fish-tank are milling about, one on top of the other, a score of these vile animals, blackish, muddy and horrible. Nothing is more bizarre than the selling of their meat and nothing is more barbarian than the kind of amputations they let them undergo. At low tide they pull one of the animals from the mud; they solidly tie it up to a tree, the head in the air, then with a coupe-coupe, some kind of long, sharp cutlass they cut away one meter to one and a half meters of its tail which is sold in small quarters to the Annamese who are very fond of this oily food. The operation terminated, they detach the patient and they bring him to the fish-tank in which he plunges leaving a red trail of blood. He is then spared by his torturers as long as it takes for the tail to grow back, then he undergoes a new torture and so on. This type of harvest is very original and the Annamese, with the cold cruelty of Orientals, have intelligently exploited the curious property these animals possess of being able to restore over time the part of their being that was taken away.

A savored excursion, although further, is that of Cap Saint-Jacques, the southern most point of the Cochinchinese peninsula in the China Sea. It is there that the Saigonese go to fill their lungs with pure salted air. At the foot of the mountain with the lighthouse, the Coconut Bay offers all the delights of a less than Far-eastern seaside health resort. The beach strewn with very fine sand gently slopes over several hundred meters. A great and well-managed hotel provides the bathers hospitality under the best conditions of comfort. In all directions, delightful excursions can be made: be it that one climbs the lighthouse mountain, where the guardian with a charming grace is the honor of his small installation, which carries the light 30 miles around, and of his tour; be it, on the contrary, that one visits the artillery works of the navy which builds, along an entire mountain flank dominating the sea, strongly fortified batteries.

The commercial standing of Saigon and Cochinchina

In Cochinchina, especially in Saigon, trade and industry take a considerable place. The industry is more or less completely in the hands of Europeans. The trade and the bank belong for a great part to the Chinese and the Malays. It is very unfortunate that the label "French" thus cannot be applied exclusively. Among our possessions in the Far East Cochinchina appears most apt at rapid Frenchifying. Our civilization and our customs are accepted, which is better than being imposed. We are strongly established in the delta of the great river, i. e., at the gates of a region the population of which reaches 20 million people and which stretches in influence over many half-barbarian peoples which are destined by the evolution of things to enter with us in commercial exchanges and to undergo our civilizing attraction.

The Mekong, the many affluents of which spread around in all directions across fertile areas is a powerful auxiliary to this penetration. As far as beyond the great lake of Cambodia, a complete flotilla crisscrosses at regular intervals the uncountable arms of the river. Soon a navigation service on the Upper Mekong, beyond the rapids of the Isle of Khône, will allow us to hoist our flag and to have our products penetrate the bosom of Laos even, as far as its capital, Luang Prabang. Indeed a narrow track railway line will transfer the merchandise and will easily link the commercial line of the lower river to the Upper Mekong route which, above the rapids, will cross through a large little developed country suitable to become rich and prosperous thanks to the richness of the soil. Mr. Pavie, our consul-general in Bangkok, has crossed for long years these upper

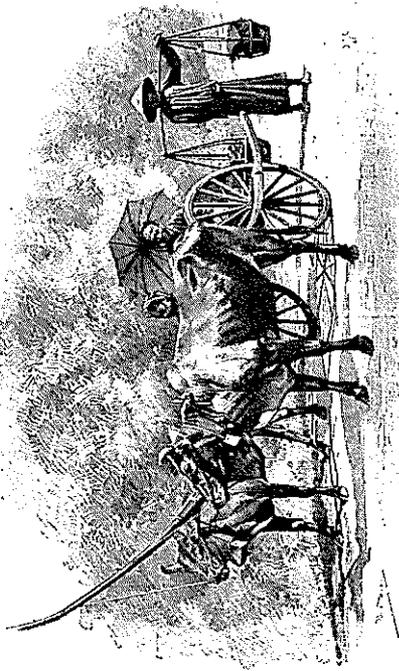


Plate 32. A cow cart (Drawing by Boudier, based on a photo)

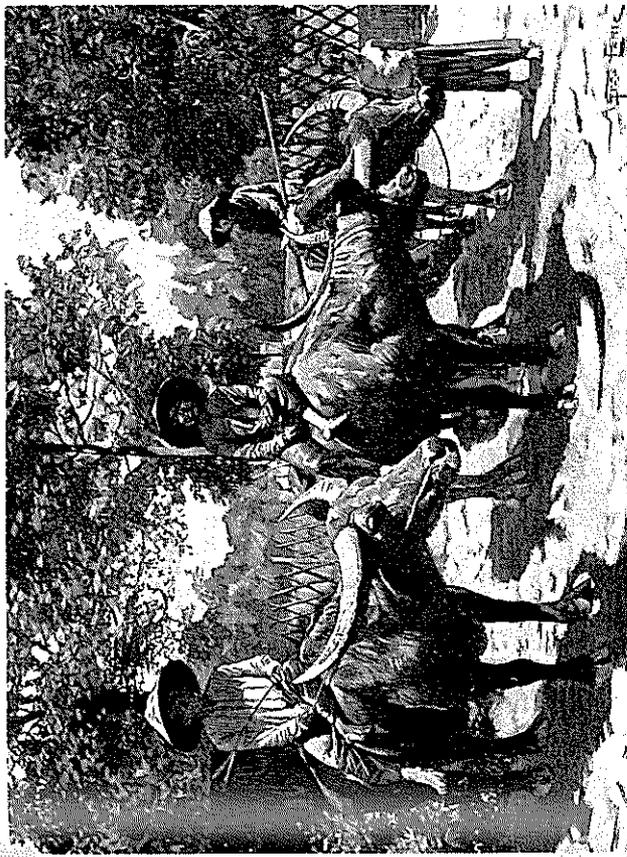


Plate 33. Buffaloes of Cochinchina
(Engraving by Bazin, based on a photo)

regions and he has made efforts to make these populations love France. We have the right to hope for a great field for the deployment of our activities in the near future.

Naturally Saigon is the port where all these commercial operations will be centralized and the shipping movements of this port are closely linked with the prosperity of the regions for which it serves as the outlet. Last year, the general report on the customs statistics showed the entry to the port of 160 French ships, measuring a tonnage of 216,231 tons and 326 foreign ships, measuring 308,707 tons, which gives a total of 481 ships and 521,884 tons shipped. There is no doubt that shipping movements of one thousand ships, hauling a million tons is a considerable result. If one also considers that this movement is going in an ascending line, one is justified to hope a lot for our colony, which is already in a ripe age.

The considerable picking up of the commercial situation is partly due to successive excellent rice harvests. Cochinchina which courageously fights to get out of the difficult situation which has been created for her by having to subsidize Tonkin for several years, finally sees its future turning bright and its state improving. The interior commercial situation has been finally liquidated under disastrous conditions, so much is true. Many bankruptcies have brought turmoil to the business world and brought crises from which Chinese traders and Malay bankers had to suffer more than Europeans. Nevertheless, the market of Saigon is today sheltered from a return of the catastrophes which have shaken it so badly and the equilibrium which had been suddenly destroyed is more or less re-established.

Cambodia, the import and export business of which necessarily transits the Mekong and Saigon is blooming fully. The trade relations of this country extend as far as Upper Laos and the heart of Siam. In these distant regions the situation is delicate, sometimes difficult, as is shown too brutally only by the acts of piracy which recently moved all those who are concerned with our peaceful expansion and it would be regrettable, exceedingly so, to be forced for the honor of the flag to have to engage in a violent armed repression against any one country. Such an extreme measure would stop the development of the regions rapidly ruined by a war,

however short it may be, for several years. I believe that it is the task of a skilful policy and enlightened diplomacy to bring, without firing a shot, the Bangkok government to serve prompt and good justice and to rid our colonial borders from looters and bandits whom we sometimes have wrongly treated tactfully. The learning experience already obtained a long time ago in Tonkin must indicate the way to proceed.

The external commerce of Cochinchina comprises the own trade of the colony, the imports destined for Cambodia and the neighboring countries, which supply themselves from Cambodia, as well as the export of the products of these countries. In 1892, the imports have reached the figure of 37,613,879 [French] francs and the exports reach the figure 53,704,846 [French] francs (not included cash payments), which gives a general total of 91 million [French] francs for the trade of French Cochinchina.

The highest figure of imports is for "works in metal"; it reaches 18 million francs, while farinaceous foods and especially rice come ahead in exports with a total of close to 43 million. Rice is indeed the wealth of Cochinchina and I believe I can say the only true wealth of the country. Thus, all the trade, all the industry of Cochinchina turns around this product. If the harvest is abundant, all the branches of trade flourish; on the contrary, if the rains are too late to fertilize the rice fields, the Annamese farmers, pressured by the Chinese who run usurious rice banks will be in a state bordering misery. The culture of rice plays a very central role among these populations; it is that which demands least work and which provides the greatest profits. This double advantage is certainly very tempting and people less lazy than the Annamese would do with it. Unfortunately, this crop cannot flourish in France and one must look elsewhere rather than at home to resolve the economic and agricultural problem. Rice is only grown in more or less natural rice fields, fertilized by a humid heat. Alas! Our farmers in France, by lack of a product that is so easy and so profitable, continue to labor and search for the treasure of the good La Fontaine.

The principle to grow, as much as possible, in a country the products which grow best there has not always been considered an indisputable

truth and numerous European settlers, especially French, have tried to make fortune in Cochinchina with crops that do not have great chances of giving excellent results. Thus many of them have vainly tried to plant sugar cane in open fields and have ruined themselves trying. Rice only feeds its man well and enriches all those who take it as the basis for their trade. The Chinese, I said earlier, hold the rice banks in Cochinchina; indeed, the Chinese brokers travel the provinces, offering the Annamese farmers money, tools and even the beasts of burden which are indispensable to put the rice fields in a state to produce well. At the moment of the sowing, it is again the Chinese who furnishes the seed necessary for the sowing. The Annamese is so indifferent that he neglects to keep from one harvest to the next the few bags of rice which he needs for sowing again.

The sons of Heaven who have not come to Cochinchina to idle, know perfectly well how to profit from the insurmountable negligence of these peoples and without doing any work, they reap, thanks to their usurious loans, almost the entire benefits, when the season has been favorable. It is true that these remarkable bankers run risks; an unlucky year brings them enormous losses; the advances which they have made are gone and the only hope is to quickly get better years which would to a great extent pay back the damages. The Chinese way appears worthy of retaining our attention, very much so indeed. We are in the presence of people who do not engage in any material work whatsoever and who by their intellectual work only, by their acumen, by their courage to risk capital, make a fortune quickly and drain towards China the money from our colony. What these daring bankers, who sometimes do not hesitate to risk a thousand to gain a hundred almost without failing, do why would we not do this! The interest which our farmers' banks would demand would no doubt be less usurious, consequently the risks would be lower and everybody would gain. And then, if it is permitted to venture a proposal, why should we not in Cochinchina try an administrative culture, so-to-speak? The administrator of the district would furnish the farmers under his wings, for a lease proportional to the harvest, the tools, working buffaloes and the seeds. The rice would then be delivered to central warehouses established in

every province and the Chinese or other merchants could supply themselves there. Thus, one would cut out the crowd of intermediaries who take the entire benefits from the real workers and the country.

The rice, according to the terrain where it is transplanted, produces a particular species; thus more than 200 different species are counted, the most sought after are those of Gocong and Vinh-Long on the great arm of the Mekong. The quantity of rice produced in the colony amounts to more than 9 million piculs (one picul is about 60 kilograms) and is worth about one dollar on average. The export reaches the considerable figure of 6 million dollars.

In the same way as trade, the industries are the more prosperous, the more they center on rice growing. The industry of rice hulling and milling does not stop growing, no doubt at the expense of small local hullers. Nevertheless, the development of great European factories that occupy a great number of Annamese workers, without unemployment or fits and starts in the work, is most beneficial. There are five or six factories in this industry, be it in Saigon or in Cholon; they are very prosperous and prepare the whole of the rice exports. But there is space for many other factories of the same type; when the harvest is abundant, it happens that rice sheaves go moldy in the fields while waiting for the Chinese junks which must take them away, because the Annamese, once the harvest completed, considers his job finished and would not go through the trouble to bring his products to the next town himself; he waits.

A curious thing is that in French Cochinchina there is no weaving factory. Thus, since rice is put in bags, as everybody knows, the industrialists must procure these bags in Hong Kong or Singapore. Certainly fibrous plants are not lacking in the colony itself and I believe a weaving factory would rapidly enrich its shareholders. But the difficulty is to find shareholders for our poor French colonies that do not but ask for some capital and a little confidence in order to become rich!

An Eight Day Embassy to Hue (Kingdom of Annam)

Brossard de Corbigny

1

**The Kingdom of Annam or of
Cochinchina—Tonkin—Objective of
the diplomatic mission—A few words
on the history of Annam—The French
military mission in 1787—
The certificate of French mandarin**

The kingdom of Annam, one of the oldest states in East Asia, is situated between the 11th and the 23rd degrees latitude north, along the eastern coast of Indochina. Before our conquest of Saigon, three clearly distinct regions were placed under the domination of Hue, then as now the capital of the Annamese kingdom. These were: in the North, Tonkin; in the middle, Middle Cochinchina and in the South, Nam-Ki, Gia-Ding or Lower Cochinchina, of which we have just (April 1875) been recognized the legitimate owners by the king of Annam.

Of these three original provinces, Tonkin and Middle Cochinchina only remain for the present king, Thu-Duc, who cannot in future claim any title whatsoever over our beautiful colony of the Far-East. Middle Cochinchina has always been considered the poorest of the three countries; it has never taken the flight that a wise administration and European trade have already given to our provinces of the South and which they will soon give to the valley of the North, in Tonkin, when we will have established the first posts of a limited administration. It is in the middle region, pushed against the sea by a range of wooded mountains, that Hue, the fortified capital of the Annamese, is located, visible at a distance of 25 leagues. A few small rivers descend from the mountains and, too quickly to fertilize the narrow region, throw themselves into the sea; one of them bathes the walls of the citadel while passing and then throws itself into the sands of the sea at Tuan-an.

Tonkin, which is more similar in geographical configuration to certain provinces of Lower Cochinchina, allows it to count on a commercial future of some importance. The Hong-Kiang or Red River, which waters it, comes from Yunnan, the Chinese border province which is rich in various minerals, and the river will no doubt one day carry these precious export



Plate 34. The *Antilope* crossing the bar of Hue
(Drawing by Th. Weber, based on a sketch of Brossard de Corbigny)

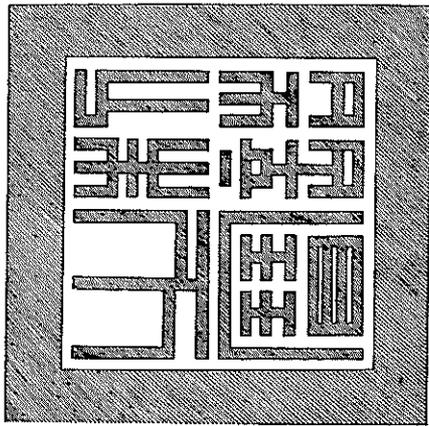
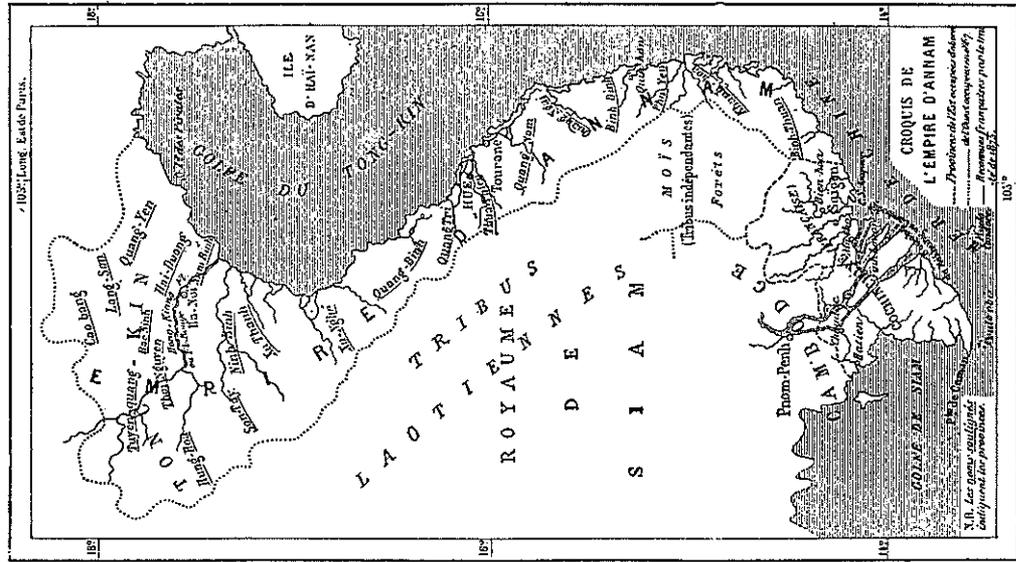


Plate 35. The royal seal of Minh-Mang, 1820 (reduced by half)



Gravé par E. Harard.

Plate 36. A sketch of the Annam Empire (— eastern provinces first occupied; ... western provinces occupied in 1867; ___ recognized as French by the treaty of 1875; underlined names indicate provinces)

products to the sea. In its delta, the Hong-Kiang shuts in a flatter region, more fertile than the region of Hue and formerly this region did not only furnish, together with Lower Cochinchina, all the rice necessary for the Annamese but also the cargo for many ships sent almost everywhere in the China Sea.

Since the French occupation, trade has grown considerably in our colony. Tonkin on its part can hope for an equally rapid development, if it gets boldly in touch with Europe, but such a feat would require, on the part of the government of Hue, first a complete change of ideas in regard to the barbarians of the West; then, also monetary sacrifices which it is incapable of bringing. Disorder, weakness and impotence have invaded this beautiful region and they keep on growing due to the presence of looting Chinese gangs, which, having been thrown out of their country, have audaciously occupied several fortified posts in the Red River valley. Especially fear for these invaders has pushed Thu-Duc to conclude the treaty of alliance with us made in Saigon in the month of March 1874 and recently exchanged in Hue itself.

Admiral Duperré, then governor of French Cochinchina, delegated his powers as plenipotentiary to an embassy nominated by him from among the staff of the colony¹ and charged these envoys with the very singular mission to get to king Thu-Duc to hand him, in the solemnity of the Annamese court, a copy of the treaty first and then, in a solemn audience, the insignia of the Grand Cordon of the Légion d'honneur and the gifts of our government.

Only once, in 1863, French ambassadors, Admiral Bonnard and his following, were admitted to an audience with the king under similar circumstances. Before this date, one must go back to the predecessors of Thu-Duc to find a reception of European ambassadors to this court which is so closed usually to foreigners.

Before discussing the actual ceremonies at the court, let us discuss in a few words which were the first relations of the old kingdom of Annam with the barbarians from the West, almost always Frenchmen.

Around 1600, a few missionaries landed in Cochinchina; at that time it was a much larger kingdom than today and already many tribulations had sometimes enlarged and sometimes reduced its borders. Its neighbors of Cambodia and Siam in the West and China in the North, had often fought it, almost always leaving the advantage to the Annamese weapons. Nevertheless, during this period, despite these wars, a certain trade was being done on the coast with Japan, China and a few rare European ships. In principle everything happened well between the Annamese and the new preachers from the West; but, later, the local authorities, seeing the rapid progress of new ideas, entered a phase of persecutions—a sad period which must be considered closed today if the Annamese respect the clauses of the new treaty to the letter.²

Despite this spirit generally hostile to the propagators of the Christian religion, certain of them received at times proofs of true friendship from the reigning princes, especially from Gia-Long the most illustrious in the entire Annamese history and famous in the annals of the missions because of his continuous attachment to one of the prelates of this same religion which was so suspect to his predecessors. It was around 1780 that Mgr. Pignaux, bishop of the Adran see, lived close to the king. He died around 1797 and Gia-Long consecrated his sadness with a funeral tomb that is very well known to the inhabitants of Saigon. We will later explain how king Gia-Long had become liable to the bishop of Adran for the crown, and for the peace and prosperity of his people.

Even today, despite the recent events of Tonkin, in which Christians have been put to death as a reprisal for an unfortunate revolution, the chief of the Hue mission, Mgr. Sohier, has managed by his sincere character and by his deep knowledge of the country, to change the old hatred of the king into a real respect, into kindness even. Mgr. Sohier, during the time our navy was waging war in Cochinchina a few leagues from Hue, saw a prince being put on his head by king, or as they say, Emperor Thu-Duc. Obligated to flee into the forests, the Christians did not abandon him and saved him from death until the day he could, thanks to the treaty of 1863,

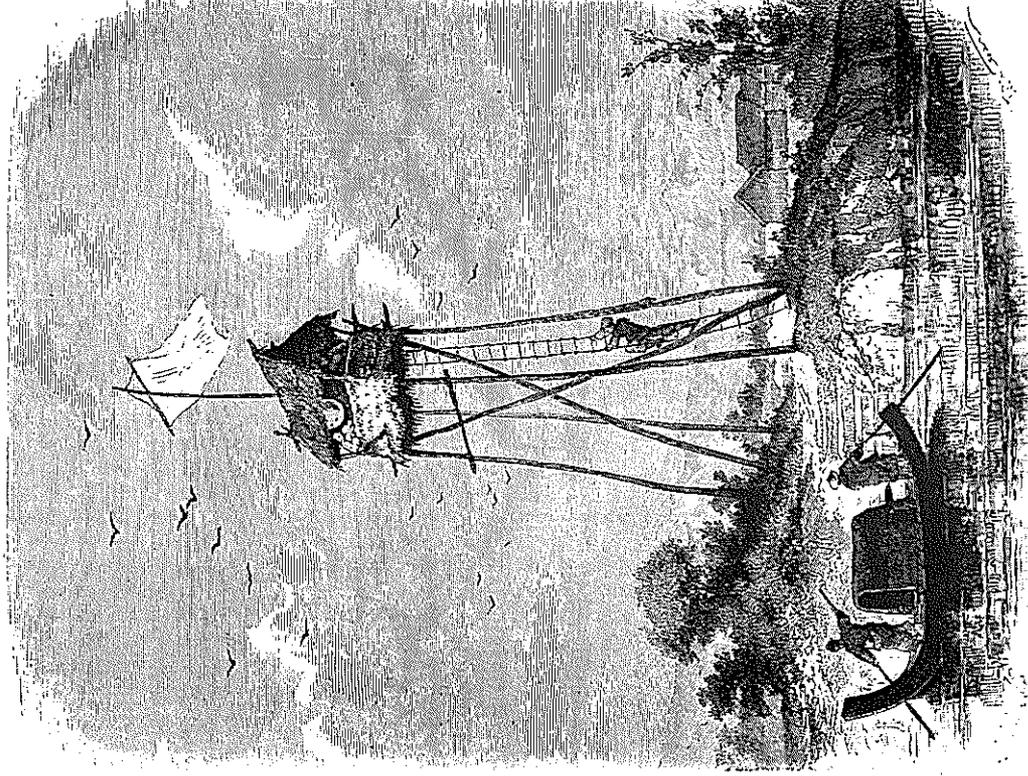


Plate 37. Watch tower or guard post on the bank of the Hue River (Drawing by Th. Weber, based on a sketch by Brossard de Corbigny)

appear again in daylight at the side of Admiral Bonnard, to the general stupefaction of the Annamese, who thought he was dead for a long time. Since then, peacefully living amidst his flock he has gained the full confidence of the sovereign. He often translates state papers, enlightens Thu-Duc and his counselors and would have taken the king to the mission of western sciences if the mandarins, envious of his influence, would not have opposed His Majesty by the prohibition of the protocol.

Other, still older examples could be cited and would prove that, on the one hand, if the social and religious laws of the Annamese maintain a hatred for our beliefs and an aversion to our ideas, on the other hand, several missionaries have been able by their wisdom to acquire a real influence in the council of these shadowy kings.

Sometimes Thu-Duc recalls, no doubt, that around 1780 his grandfather Gia-Long, chased by victorious competitors, found asylum with the bishop of Adran, who was hunted down himself and chased from the coasts of Annam. It was at that time the bishop came to France to request Louis XVI for the support of our arms in order to place the dispossessed prince back on the throne and he was fortunate enough to obtain troops, ships and money. In exchange for this help Gia-Long had to give France the port of Tourane and the island of Poulo-Condor (1787) if he managed to grab his crown back. After an already long transfer, the expedition landed in India, where the troops were requisitioned to fight the English against whom we then fought with the objective of re-conquering the glorious influence of Dupleix. The expedition would be dismantled but, as compensation, the governor of India authorized four of the most distinguished officers of the colony to continue on the dangerous mission with the bishop. Thus it is that Messrs. Chaigneau and Vannier, lieutenants, Dayot, a hydrographic engineer and Ollivier, an infantry officer, arrived in Cochinchina in the retinue of Mgr. Pignaux. They went immediately to work, training soldiers, fortifying places with Vauban-style fortifications, building war ships and drawing up maps of the country. Thus they managed by their intelligent actions and almost without means to place in Gia-Long's hands

a power so great that he could re-conquer his throne in a short time. Later they built the citadel of Hue and several others, built navy dockyards, drew up maps of the coast which are still used today, and, finally, launched the country on an entirely new road. Two of them married at the king's court.

Here is the translation of a certificate elevating one of these daring civilizers (Mr. Vannier)³ to the rank of a high dignitary of the kingdom:

"The chief of the Middle Army, commanding the bronze ship adorned with the eagle with spread wings, a royal delegate, instructor of the king's men, going by the name Nguyen-van-chau (Vannier), has crossed the seas by his courage. He subjected the storms by his genius and brought about the meeting of the Dragon with the clouds (the source of good). He mastered his ship like a horseman masters his horse, he excels and dominates by his great merit.

"It is appropriate to reward him highly and to elevate him to the dignity of Chau-chan-vo-hau (renowned master of military arts).

"He commands a ship, has his orders executed by the naval army and obtains excellent discipline by a mixture of goodness and strictness. His military skill requires prompt execution. It is appropriate that his merit accumulates and that he occupies these functions. In this manner, his renown will not die.

"May this certificate be respected.

"Under the reign of Gia-Long, 1st year, 11th month, 12th day (1802)."

On the great red stamp is written: "The appending of this very precious stamp indicates a promulgated royal order."

After a flourishing reign, Gia-Long died (1820) leaving the crown to his son Minh-Mang. Then the persecutions of the Christians began again and even obliged the French who had come to the help of his father to leave the country. A few years later, his son Thieu-Tri succeeded him (1842). Under this reign the persecutions continued and later still, under the reign

of Thu-Duc, who ascended the throne in 1847. Thus it is under the present king that the reprisals of France and Spain started and the conquest which followed, completed in 1867, ended in today's treaty, by which Annam definitively cedes the six provinces of Lower Cochinchina to us.

2

The beginning of French Cochinchina—Enlargements

At the beginning of this war, in 1857, our grievance against Hue were numerous. At any time, except for some rare intervals, despite the assurances of the mandarins, the missionaries were sought out, persecuted and even put to death. Forgetting the services rendered to Gia-Long by our nationals and the promises made by this king, his son had thrown out the French and Mr. Chaigneau, our representative. Later, Thu-Duc did not bother to answer to complaints on similar subjects presented by France. It was necessary to force him by the beginning of hostilities to receive the letters from our government. He still did not answer and some time after this a Spanish bishop was executed in Tonkin. France and Spain then decided to take up arms and hostilities began in Tourane. Admiral Rigault de Genouilly commanded our flotilla; the Spanish had Colonel Lazarote and later Colonel Palanca as chief.

The admiral soon understood that the conquest of Tourane (1858) was far from giving us the advantages the possession of Saigon, the capital of Lower Cochinchina and the true granary of the kingdom, would provide. Thus he directed his operations against this city which fell in our hands in 1859. Then, a few fortunate military days followed each other quickly

and Hue, finally convinced that the hour of the reprisals had come, signed a treaty (1862) by which Annam ceded to us half of the present-day colony and opened three ports in the North to European trade. In defiance of the treaty signed just recently, the court of Hue sought immediately to secretly rise the population of the conquered territory using anonymous circulars. The war barely having ended, these provinces did not ask for anything but to return to their fields which were tranquil again. It mattered little to them to whom they would have to obey, French commanders or local mandarins. On our side, we took care to respect the ancient administration, the communal registers and the religious rites. Moreover, the civil organization among the Annamese is very competent; each village, each municipality comes under a mayor, a prefect and the latter under the governor of the province. Nothing was changed in this state of affairs; only, French administrators were appointed to control these different administrative levels.



Plate 38. Hue: citadel or official city
(Drawing by Th. Weber, based on a sketch by Brossard de Corbigny)

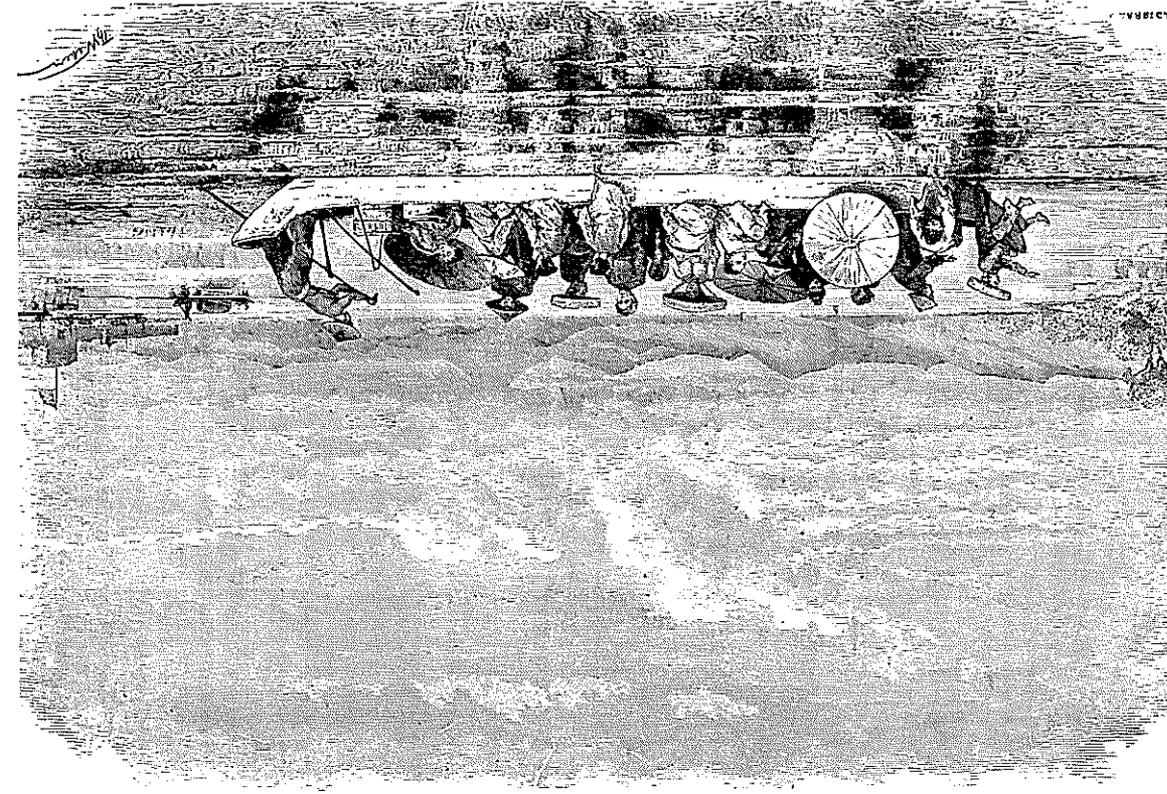


Plate 39. The Hue River (Drawing by Th. Weber, based on a sketch by Brossard de Corbigny)

Little by little it became clear that the silent hostilities incessantly solicited against us found an effective support in the three other provinces of Lower Cochinchina then governed by Phan-tan-giang, one of the pillars of the empire. This viceroy, having become our neighbor, was too intelligent to let himself be used for these futile attempts. On the contrary, he made every effort possible to convince the king of the necessity of peace and saw with sadness his advice refused without any concern for the future. He especially felt the approach of the fatal moment when the French flag would cover the three provinces placed under his orders with its shadow.

After various attempts of conciliation and an embassy to France, Phan-tan-giang, powerless to have his advice accepted in Hue, despairing to see us abandon our conquest, also did not want to ask us for asylum and poisoned himself amidst his relatives, after having recommended his children not to start a fight with France, and even to bring up their descendants in the European tradition. Despite these last wishes, the sons of Phan-tan-giang did not wait long to place themselves at the head of all the intrigues which we had to put down since then.

It is in 1867, under the government of Admiral de la Grandière, that the occupation of the three western provinces took place without spilling blood.

Some time before this, the kingdom of Cambodia, bordering Lower Cochinchina in the Northwest and dominated and tributary to Siam, had thrown itself in our arms by asking us for a protectorate. Thus from the western side our colony was safeguarded to the exterior; in the North there was only a narrow border with Annam and even then this region is covered with thick forests inhabited by savage, independent tribes. Despite these new borders, Hue still sought to foment troubles, blind uprisings, in the interior of the colony even, the weak and ever rarer thrusts of which were put down by the population, tired since long, itself, together with us.

The treaty which the embassy of 1875 has just exchanged with Thuduc, by which this king cedes us the three new provinces and receives

from us all kinds of help, will it signify the end of these insane attempts? Will he finally understand the futility of such hopes? Will he see that we will uphold our rights and will not abandon so many local people openly allied to our ideas?⁴

3

Departure for Hue—The coast— Tourane—Entrance of the Hue River—Father Hoang—Mail from the king—Barrages—The official boats— The navy yards—The village—The appearance of the citadel

On 4 April 1875, the cruisers *le Duchaffaut* and *l'Antilope* embarked the diplomatic mission for Hue in Saigon. A few days later, these two steamers moored in the beautiful bay of Tourane which is today almost deserted because one rarely counts more than two or three dilapidated ships on anchor in a creek of the harbor and which represent the major part of the present war flotilla of the Annamese.

The coast, from Saigon to Tourane, is mountainous, jagged with well sheltered bays capable of making the fortune for a seafaring, trading country; but here nature uselessly pours out its gifts: no serious trade whatsoever livens up these beautiful mooring places. One must add that the narrow and mountainous strip which forms Middle CochinChina is little inhabited. At the moment, one could obtain only forestry products and

some other unimportant ones. While we rapidly sail alongside this picturesque line of mountainous bays, the literati of the mission cover entire pages with Chinese hieroglyphics. These are the translations of official letters and requests that will serve us in Hue. Ong Ba-Thuong, phu (prefect) of Saigon, one of the main Annamese literati supporting our ideas, is in charge of re-reading and polishing up the texts translated by our friend Prioux, interpreter of the mission, who has himself become, by the necessity of the work, a distinguished literati. It is curious to see these two representatives of races so far apart transcribing French pieces in Annamese with the help of the characters of a third language, Chinese, which they write fluently without speaking it however, one or the other—an advantage of an ideographic language, offset greatly by the obligation of several years of learning to get to the simple reading of an everyday piece of text.

Barely moored in Tourane, we receive the visit of the mandarins of the place. Their sadly equipped boats come, towed one by the other, to moor along the steamers and the chiefs climb on board to wish us welcome. All these people, mandarins and soldiers, are not shining with cleanliness. This is the first impression one gets but one must admit the ranking visitors possess a dignified and calm posture, the fruit of the study of Oriental literature. These visits and all the others for the duration of the embassy have been planned for and notified between the Annamese authorities and the commander of the Antilope, as the representative of the governor. This drawing up of the program of the ceremonies has taken place last month. It was the preoccupation of the high mandarins of the rites. Indeed, it is known that in the Far East, these practices of etiquette are very important. In Hue they keep a special ministry busy. The minister of the rites is the guardian of traditions. He decides on new cases; he makes the king himself respect the consecrated practices. He has censors under his orders especially charged with this delicate task.

In the morning of 9 April we left the Duchaffaut, too large to enter the Hue River, and we proceeded with the Antilope to the bar of Tuan-An, the harbor of the Annamese capital. By noon we were in front of the two

sandy points of the mouth, where the small citadel of Tuan-An stands amidst coconut trees. This fortification is less serious a problem than is the weak depth of the passage. Although the citadel is built in French fashion, it would be, with its old guns, easy to destroy if ships with high sides could approach the coast and enter the river. We salute the Annamese flag from far and the old sleeping canons wake up for us to return the courtesy. The sea is a little high, the pilots dare not come out and the weather is getting more and more overcast, but Captain Communal knows his business, he goes straight into the passage where the sea is already breaking. Half an hour later we moored inside the points amidst some twenty local junks, sheltered from the bad weather. There was a new visit of the mandarins of the port bringing us the tam-tri or mandarins charged with continually guiding, protecting and also spying a little on the members of the mission during our sojourn. With them is presented an Annamese who at first sight differs in nothing from the local authorities, but what a pleasure it was for us to hear him speak French! It is Father Hoang, a local Catholic priest, attached by his government to the embassy to serve as interpreter and help us as best he can during our sojourn in Hue. Our new acquaintance has an alert air, intelligent eyes and quick gestures. He is always ready to answer our thousand questions. He has absorbed his religious and European education in Poulo-Pinang, Saigon and France. Having come back here as a missionary, he took part as an interpreter in various embassies sent by Saigon during and after the first Cochinchina affair. But these extras are rare and usually Father Hoang stays here to catechize his compatriots and to teach their children. A Frenchman at heart, he is not less appreciated by the Annamese government which means they would not know how to do without his services.

Here then is a priest of an outcast religion that formerly was persecuted by the government of Hue, occupying an official state position. The pride of the mandarins must suffer somewhat from this, but training and keeping special interpreters would constitute a much higher expense and here pride, although extreme, always cedes to even the smallest saving. And

then the appearances are more or less saved: the priest is dressed in Annamese fashion, a great lacquered hat above the turban, a long narrow robe falling to the knees, the embroidered tobacco pouch hanging from the belt and around the neck the golden clover, the symbol of the high esteem of the king. But under this exterior of local official hide the feelings of a Christian missionary and Father Hoang symbolizes rather well, in this group, the possible fusion of two races so different in many respects.

10 April—This morning at daybreak, a messenger of the king, armed with these little flags which move over everybody when he passes, arrives completely out-of-breath to announce the Tuan-An mandarins that they must let us freely move upriver. It was clearly understood, since about a month that on this day at that hour we would ascend to Hue. Formal orders to that effect had already been given and nobody has hardly any longing to have His Majesty repeat the same thing twice: one attracts a beating so easily! But the mission of the king's messenger is for everybody a small satisfaction of pride and makes the people believe that Thuduc spontaneously accords us a precious favor as unexpected as it is deserved. Upon this we lift the anchor and leave. Father Hoang and the tram-tri are aboard and for what follows they are with us, plus an old sailor of the country who has embarked as pilot. Our captain could very well show him our more detailed maps which provide more information on their own river than all the Annamese but what would it serve to disillusion the old seadog? The expression is sacred, but nevertheless this one here looks more like an old fox; his eyes are deep and lively and his mouth is toothless by age and not, as they say of our sailors, because of the use of sea biscuits, a delicacy completely unknown on the ships of the king of Annam. All these traits framed in a triangular figure with jutting cheekbones give our man the typical physiognomy of an old Annamese since childhood accustomed to skillfully dodge meetings with high mandarins. As pilot he does not compromise himself more and we ascend following the maps to the barrage of the stakes thrown from one bank to

the other. These fortifications protected by two small forts leave boats only a narrow passage that is easy to block with the piles of stones accumulated for this purpose on the two banks. Between the barrages the Anilope no longer finds the two and a half meters necessary for its passage; thus we wait here until tomorrow morning for the boats sent to meet us.

On the 11th, early in the morning, seven long dugout canoes with a crew of more than a hundred oarsmen bring a big junk with a square tent on top along the side. The embassy takes place under it, accompanying the small chest with the treaty. The French flag has been displayed on the junk and our seven towers, lining up in one line, pull the oars forcefully amidst the noisy commands of the militia doys (local non-commissioned officers). The long snake with a hundred fins is not lacking in solemnity but it is slow like everything that is solemn and we took more than seven hours to ascend a few miles on the river. This speed, does it go on the nerves of our mandarins, I believe so; anyhow, one of them walks back and forth, berating the oarsmen and distributing here and there some encouragement with blows of the rattan. He even condemns two poor devils to receive then and there the chastisement for their feebleness. The victims lie down flat on their bellies with a carefree air and receive, completely dressed, ten blows of the rattan very close to the small of the back, not without uttering fitting soft plaintive chuckles. After which, the boss of the boat, executor of the sentence, salutes the inflexible mandarin by prostrating three times; the two delinquents do the same and return to their oars, without further suffering from their disagreeable incident. In fact, this little thrashing across wide clothes cannot be engraved but in their memories only.

On the way we pass in front of the State shipbuilding yards. They are but straw sheds, sheltering two or three ship-hulls the size of a brig. At one of them a few laborers are working, and another, started lately, gives us an accurate idea about the high seas ships. The plans, which have served as models for these ships, are very close to European drawings of the last century. During this time, they say, barbarians from the West were shipwrecked on the coasts; the king bought the wreckage of the ship to

dismantle it and then to serve as a model in his yards. In Tuan-an there are two other ships of the same model, with rounded shapes and lifted up in the back. The rope, the anchor, the sail etc. are then bought in Singapore or in Hong Kong and the ship is rigged in the same manner as ours. As to the cannons, for a long time they were cast in the surroundings of Hue itself.

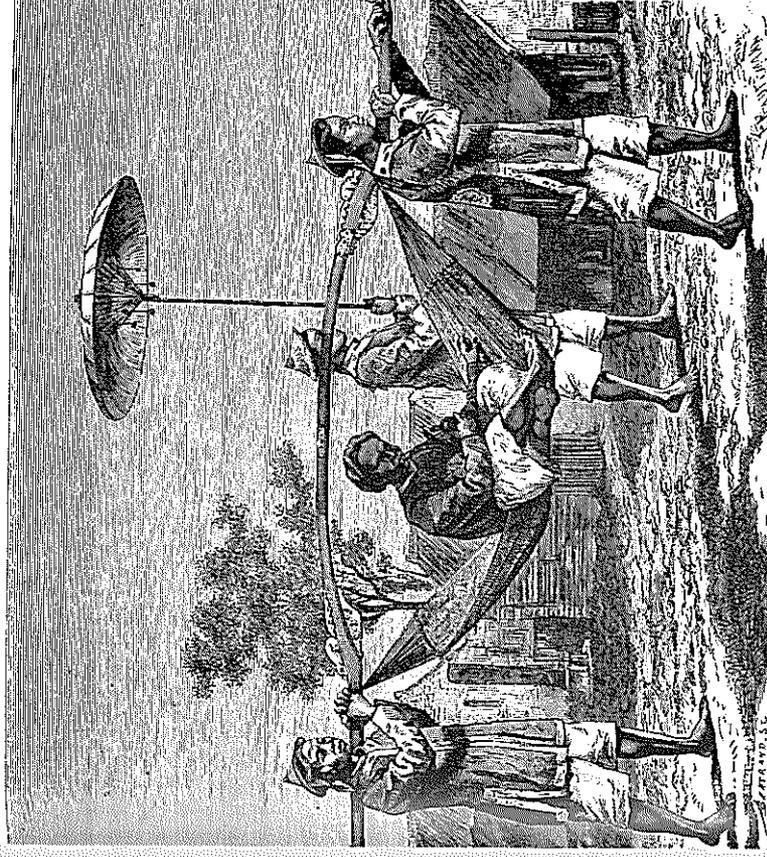


Plate 40. A hammock and parasol used by mandarins (Drawing by P. Kauffmann, based on a sketch by Brossard de Corbigny)

Two or three steamers, bought expensively in Hong Kong, complete the high seas flotilla; on their first journey they were already damaged. It is an honest speculation of English commerce, but of little effect to support the attempts of the policy.

Finally, trade junks, armed as good and as bad as it goes with lame cannons complete the invincible Armada. Besides their poor state, these ships are too few in numbers to enter in a battle with the Chinese pirates—determined bandits and good sailors—incessantly cruising the coast; looting the weakest and being looted by the stronger, devourers or devoured, but fearing nothing in the world but meeting our war steamers. The latter destroy in passing a few pirate junks. The treaty which we will exchange with Thu-Duc gives him sea steamers, a hundred cannons, a thousand rifles, but it is doubtful that the Annamese can get rid once and for all of the blockade of the Chinese pirates without our help.

After the ship yards we steam past a farmed island. From the cannons of its earthen fort we are saluted when passing and it signals by means of its watchtowers our imminent arrival at the capital. Two hours later, our convoy passes the mooring places of numerous junks. We are in the suburbs of the commercial city. Straw huts with hardwood frameworks throng under the clumps of bamboo along the bank. From time to time, a low house sticks out above the alignment of the lime huts; it is the private home of a lower ranking mandarin or of a merchant family. Further down, a small pagoda, narrower even than the houses, shows its roof adorned with plaster molds on the arrises and its front embellished with religious maxims. The Annamese does not like to spend for the sake of spending, more so for a temple which produces nothing. Thus these shelters of Buddha are more often than not simple Chinese-style kiosks, built in the shadow of some big tree or other and very rarely surrounded by a small brickwork wall. It is there, like in China but perhaps with fewer fervors that the worshipper will burn prayers or plant his small sandalwood sticks around the altar.

The commercial city of Hue is separate from the official city or the fortified enclosure. It stretches, downstream from the latter on the other side of one of the defense ditches and is only linked to the citadel by wooden bridges that are easy to demolish. One or two long very badly maintained streets constitute more or less the whole village. The houses are built in stone and covered with tiles. Daylight only enters through the entirely open front which is equipped with stepped tables on which everybody squats and deals in objects exposed in this kind of entrance hall. Bamboo mats are placed on the edges of the roof like tents and make the interior even darker.

Here we are finally at the last bend of the river, in sight of the citadel's walls. The building stands out against the background of high mountains, some fifteen leagues away. The long gray line of these bulwark walls first of all inspires sadness and starts feelings of isolation, which are in harmony with the defying spirit of the inhabitants. At the foot of the walls, three kilometers long each side of the square, one observes a few huts; horses and goats graze on the grass of the bank. If this wall shelters secrets impenetrable for foreigners, surely they are well guarded from prying eyes. No buildings stick out above the walls; no pagoda shows its bizarre silhouette; one can barely see a few arris of the royal roof or the tops of bushy trees. A single square bastion, painted yellow, dominates the middle of the southeastern façade. It carries the flag of the king and small cap-like accents, grouped by fives on the arris of the walls are as many shelters for the cannons. On this façade, two doors and that of the yellow small fort break the monotony of the line a little. Belvederes with curved back roofs stand above them and serve as defenses.

4

Landing of the embassy—The house of the ambassadors—The pace and dress of the mandarins—The plaque—The long nails—The impossibility to make photos—A tribunal that tries the accused in secret

Our boats are drawn alongside the bank under the fussing cries of the crew's chiefs. Mandarins are awaiting us on the landing in the shade of their great umbrellas between two lines of soldiers armed with lances with rainbow-colored triangular flags. The people are thronging about in mute curiosity. Almost all these people have never seen Europeans, except for missionaries and here the spectacle of our uniforms and the parade of our escort are a subject of amazement which is easy to read on the faces.

The treaty, carried by two sailors, goes at the head of the cortege; the embassy and the tam-tri then follow. Above our heads great black umbrellas are opened and thus we reach, crossing between a thousand flags floating in the wind, the official residence of the ambassadors. A great yellow and green banner hoisted up near the gate indicates in Chinese characters the name of the place, Seu-Quan. In the middle of a great courtyard stand other lodgings prepared for the embassy; these are Annamese houses with roofs covered with mats and with ceilings of ordinary red or blue silk. In the main building, a room covered with mats will be the dining room; all around small dark rooms are destined for each of

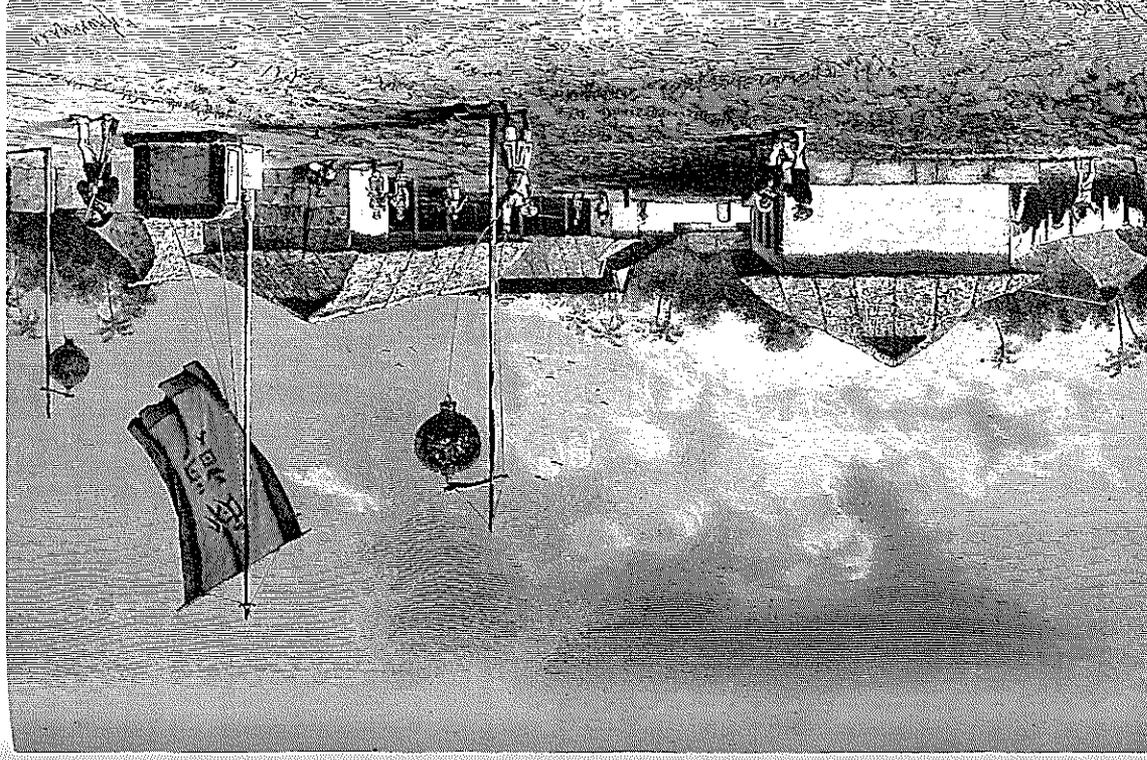


Plate 41. The house of the ambassadors (Drawing by P. Kauffmann, based on a sketch by Brossard de Corbigny)

us. In it they have placed large, local beds with mosquito nets of light-colored silk, a very useful precaution in the present season. An armchair, a hardwood table and a few objects for a European style dressing table complete the furnishings. Further down, in the courtyard, other houses shelter the escort and there is even a small theatre, only as big as a hand, and built with-mats for the circumstance which will serve to bring a few plays from the classical repertoire. Two large kitchens complete our new home. Every morning, by the order of the king, his men will bring us abundant supplies of all kinds and, day and night, a militia guard will stand around the enclosure wall.

The same evening the official visits start. In these meetings, even if only a few steps have to be taken, every mandarin has himself carried in a hammock and followed by an escort, without forgetting the umbrella always unfolded above the head of the dignitary. In Hue, the mandarins have only one, but in the provinces they take several for themselves, according to their rank. As to the hammock, it is made of cotton or red silk for the higher ranking and blue for the lower ranking literati. A great red strut adorned with gildings, serves to support it on the shoulders of the porters and sometimes a small roof with curtains completes this palanquin of sorts. At the head of the cortege, a messenger pushes aside the passers-by with blows of the rattan and in the back, a group of followers carries the indispensable objects for every well-to-do Annamese: inlaid pipe, betel box, paper, writing case and tea set. If the chief is a military man, he has, moreover, himself preceded by his saber with its wooden sheath inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

In regard to the dress of our visitors, it is very simple: a black turban and a long grenadine robe with wide sleeves falling to the knees which covers another, wider one; the wide trousers are in light silk; leather slippers complete the outfit. A small ivory plaque, hanging from the neck, has the rank and functions of the mandarin written on it. Thus everybody knows whom he is addressing. For how many anonymous black clothes at home would it not be useful to hang up like this, a small calling card

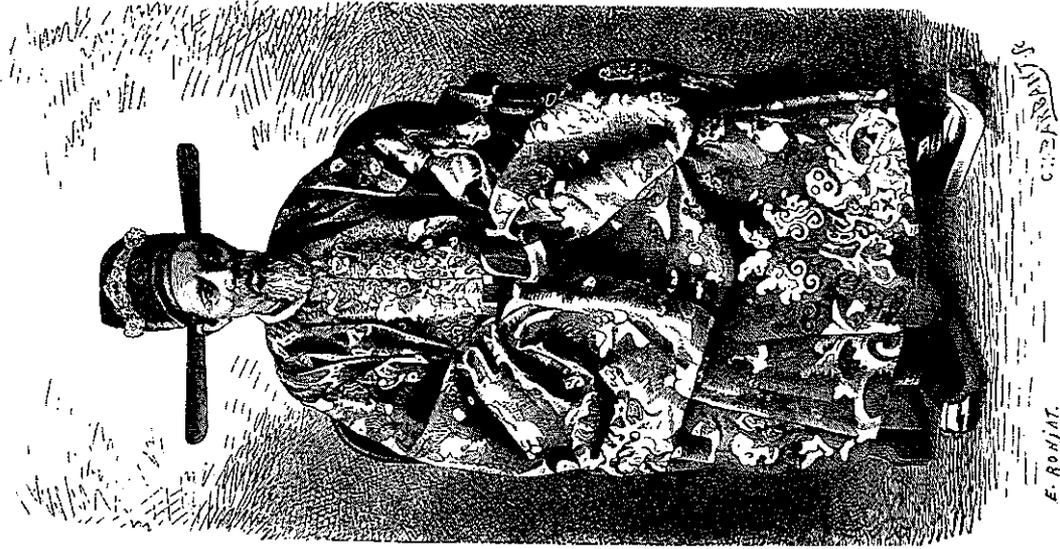


Plate 42. A high Annamese mandarin
(Drawing by E. Ronjat, based on a photo)

giving the name and especially the functions of the visitor? Every employe is carrying this official notice, clearly in the open, except for the spies of His Majesty and God knows they are numerous! Without counting the spies on the spies because this method to know the truth more or less is widely practiced at the court. Everywhere during the visits and the meetings one observes people without plaque coming and going in all directions. These are for the greater part spies placed around the mandarins. Others, less known, watch the first who pay the latter back in turn. This great and honorable institution is spread to all corners. One of these obscure informers shows Prioux his ivory plaque hidden under his clothes and mysteriously indicates others of his comrades to him. To us they matter little; what we have to say to the king could never be repeated sufficiently, in every possible way and form, in the interest of the two countries.

The gala dress of the mandarins is only worn for solemn occasions. For the four highest of the hierarchy's nine steps, this is a wide robe with huge sleeves in silk embroidered with multi-colored animals and fantastic drawings. On the dress of the civilians there are dragons, the crane and the tortoise. For the military, it is the tiger that shows its fierce face. All these clothes are made in China. The hat is composed of a black skullcap containing, tied up in a bun, the hairs that are worn at full length. On this head dress gilded ornaments are displayed and on each side, two narrow foot-long fins extend; they are made of gauze embroidered with gold thread and they look very much like the light wings of dragonflies. At the waist, a belt in the form of a hoop which does not hold the hips tight has more or less precious stones; at the height of this circle some kind of sloping fins join with the robe and spill backwards over the belt of the mandarin. Finally, as shoes there are Chinese boots with great white soles. The supplement to this costume is an ivory palette, some kind of great, very thick paper knife that is held with joined hands in front of the chest; it is the insignia of command. The pay of a high official can go as high as some hundred [French] francs monthly at the most; plus a certain number

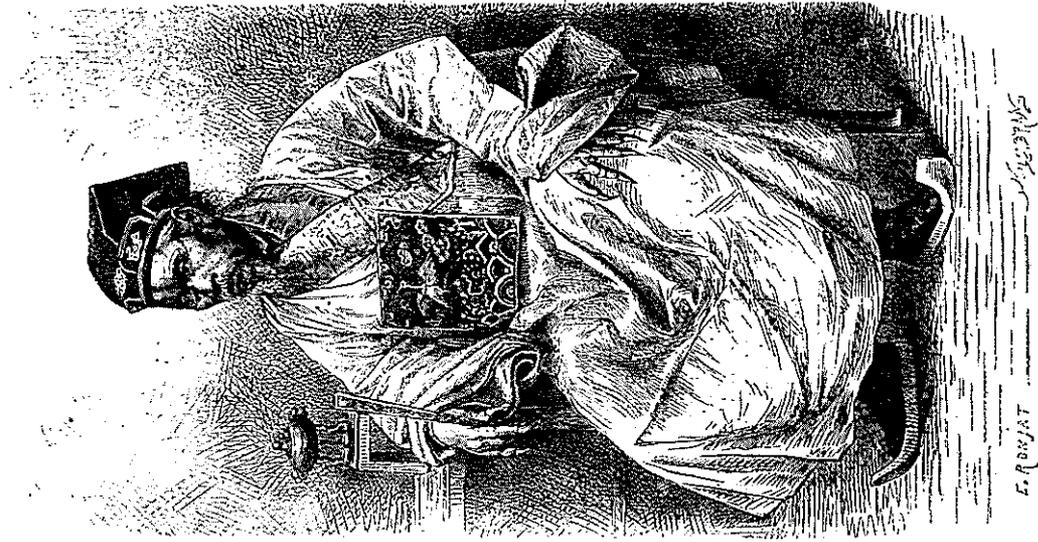


Plate 43. A low ranking Annamese mandarin
(Drawing by E. Ronjat, based on a photo)

of rations of rice and especially a variable quantity of small and large illegal benefits which are brought by circumstance which every man knows how to create. All this together ends up being a position in this country where life costs nothing and they give a ration and one franc monthly to a soldier for all his services. For the latter, it is true, the village is of some help because they let them cultivate part of the communal land.

Among the five last ranks of the mandarins, the dress is in dull black silk. On the breast a square embroidered sometimes with a crane and sometimes with a tiger indicates the rank of the literati; the hat without wings is pulled backwards like the neckpiece of a woman's hat and its ornaments are silver colored.

A very curious indication of the profession of literati consists in being able to show disproportionately long fingernails, especially on the left hand; these appendages sometimes reach twenty-five centimeters in length. Photography allows us to present an exact reproduction of the hand of a wise literati, with elegantly twisted fingernails [see Plate 45]; only one finger lacks these growths—this is, they say, to scratch oneself—a very laborious work among all the ranks of the Annamese hierarchy.

We ask the king's envoys whether Mr. Gsell who has come with us to practice photography, could be authorized by His Majesty to take a few sittings, or at least some portraits. They do not understand much of this rather simple request; it can only be, they think, to take some pieces of the country with us and views of the fortifications and plans of the citadel to attack it in future. This new art (new!) bothers them. The next day, the king has the same distrust expressed to us and since there is no diplomatic necessity in this we are quite regrettably forced to do without the help of the collodion; the pencil will replace it as best it can, without stirring up the suspicious susceptibilities of politics. One could have expected these objections because the Annamese, when they can obtain even the smallest concession, will not fail to claim it in principle, without searching to understand the bases of things. They managed to obtain that there will be no photography, this is a gain. Their vanity, having been obliged to yield in

important points, will be fixed on futile details and the mandarin who will be put in his place and cede to our pressing demands will do so without beating about the bush but a moment later he will search to obtain some insignificant concessions. If he obtains these futile things, he will not fail to have his glory sung among the king's entourage.

Inspired by the same ideas, a tribunal of Hue lastly judged, behind closed doors, an official which it dared not attack and nevertheless it pronounced the condemnation of the accused by default, taking good care however that the sentence would never be executed or even petitioned to the guilty person. It was a childish satisfying of pride and, at the same time, blind impotence.

5

King Thu-Duc—His character— Enslavement of the king by his court— Barbarian laws—The literati— The writing—Annamese crafts

King Thu-Duc is in the twenty-eighth year of his reign, a period of time filled, by his own fault, with sad pages in the history of his country. The disastrous war that he was unable to avoid was not enough to set him on the course of progress after such a terrible experience. The storm having passed, he and his mandarins locked themselves again in the terrible enclosure of the citadel, throwing to each other the consequences of their lack of heeding state affairs and doing nothing to avoid new misfortunes. Now like then, the king remains inactive instead of giving the State a salutary impulse. During this time Tonkin was invaded by the Chinese or

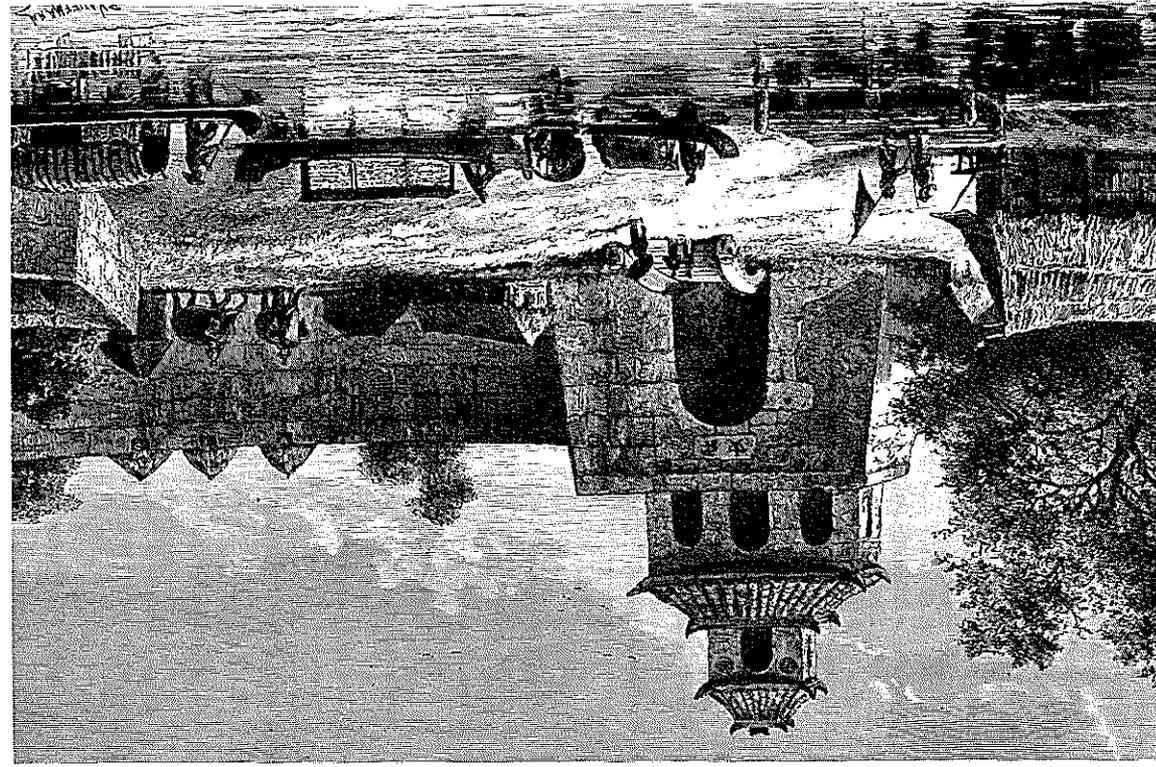


Plate 44. Gate to the citadel of Hue (Drawing by P. Kauffmann, based on a sketch by Brossard de Corbigny)

delivered to its interior uprisings and, sixteen years only after the capture of Saigon, nothing remains to Thu-Duc but to accept from us support without which his kingdom, obstinately closed to progress and to any external relations, would fall one day or the other in the hands of some gang of adventurers. When the present treaty will have given him, in ships and in weapons, the means to have his borders respected, when he will be able to get our support, will he know how to use this powerful lever. Will he, seeing the danger distance itself, prepare during the peace for the eventuality of a war against the Chinese gangs? Will he suppress coastal piracy? In view of the standards of the Annamese army, its equipment and the decay of the flotilla, we are permitted to doubt that Thu-Duc will ever achieve this result.

This king, protected by truly strong walls, can bring down heads with one word or make it rain blows of the stick on the shoulders of the greatest literati. A short while ago he sent one of his ministers away as a simple soldier with one signal and, nevertheless, despite this, he is not less the first slave of his kingdom.

The system of isolation, divine if you want, which removes him, makes it easy to imagine what kind of life he leads. Son of heaven on earth, some kind of divinity for his subjects, the manifestations of the half-god receive the greatest respect. But the chiefs of the mandarin are close to him, envious to maintain this celestial isolation amidst his numerous wives and his forty eunuchs. During the river hunts, his preferred entertainment, emptiness is again created around his person. Then his junk has only women on the oars. Its mats are majestically lowered and from all sides they distance inhabitants and travelers from the bank because the views only would soil His Royal Majesty. Under such conditions how could one get to know the truth about things in one's kingdom?

Despite his personal desire to get to know the inventions of the barbarians from the West, he does not get to know the bottom of things but on the day when the done facts strike him with amazement. He could not even overturn this whole mob of literati that surround him and finally walk the road he is, they say, disposed to follow.

Thus the king of Annam is but an idol and it is on his ministers one must let the blame fall without being fooled by their obeying posture offered as soon as a question embarrasses them. These mandarins can oppose the simplest deeds of the king. It is in this way, as we said above, that under the pretext of the Code of the Rites, they stopped him lastly from taking up relations with Mgr. Sohier, the chief of the provincial congregation.

Thu-Duc, not being able to receive the bishop in the citadel, paid him a visit at the mission but immediately the mandarins let His Majesty know that this visit to priests of the new religion would cost him his throne and that when returning he would find his successor seated on the throne. Needless to say that Thu-Duc did not insist and, contrary to the proverb, he kept his place by going to a river hunt that they arranged. The Rites, on the other hand, energetically protect the royal dignity; any attempt at revolution or of a conspiracy is not only punished with the death of the guilty ones but also of that of the parents and the male offspring.

Here is a very recent event: a few years ago the chiefs of such a conspiracy, pushed no doubt by the designated successor of the king, failed in their attempt the moment they were entering the palace. They were immediately put to death; a number of their relatives underwent the same fate. Children on the breast were not spared either and today they still keep the last son of one of the guilty ones in prison. As a refinement of the cruelty, they wait to execute him until he has reached the age of reason and could then understand well the error his father has bequeathed him. An older brother of this unfortunate has already undergone the torture on the day he attained the set age. One can imagine the position of the mother, still alive because of her condition of simple woman. Such are the savage customs of these deep literati in whose eyes we pass for barbarians.

Although favor here worms its way in all kinds of things, it is most often by examination only that the mandarins get their honors. Apart from the relatives of the king who jump the first steps at once, every literati must publicly furnish proof of his knowledge. The one who came first thus can, as soon as he got a brush, place himself in the ranks for a coming

ministry but to climb the scale, how much time must one not dedicate to simple reading and to book study. Thus there is a need to possess a certain wealth already.

And then the son of a poor farmer, if he manages to get the first certificates by himself, will he be happier with them? His diploma of doctor in his pocket, he will search some kind of employment but everywhere the places are taken and ten competitors before him wait for a vacancy. There then he is incessantly lying in wait, discontented and jealous of the people already in place, trying to damage them by his informing, spied upon in his turn and living from day to day without assured resources. Would it not be better to learn as much letters as is needed for the needs of the family or for trade and peacefully live at home without trying to set an impossible target?

But we did not come to Hue to repeat the arguments of another hemisphere, let us close the chapter of the unrealized ambitions.

The Annamese write with Chinese characters; the two peoples thus can correspond although they do not at all speak the same language. For proper or phonetic names, this does of course not apply. Some French names written in Annamese will be represented by characters the Annamese sounds of which are close to the French word but these same characters pronounced by a Chinese will not recall at all the wanted name. How can one address letters from one people to the other? It is true that there rarely is trade and thus little correspondence.

It is especially by reading books that the future literati advances in the knowledge of writing. Easy works and certain not so complicated codes are first deepened. When he manages to read them fluently, the student passes a first examination. Then, in more complicated books, he learns characters that are less common. Finally, codes of advanced philosophy with annotations of several authors are studied. Thus, at the same time, one learns to read and to know the maxims and argumentation, exposed, discussed, turned over and twisted by all that China has in terms of famous transcribers. In all this the main merit lies in memorizing; before anything else one has to remember thousands of characters.

These old classics, silent about any kind of modern ideas lead only to theoretical discussion without material results. It is, in one word, quibbling and Chinese routine. What could we expect from an engineer, of an administrator, of an employee of whatever kind, instructed only in the beauties of Greek philosophers? How many discourses have come out of the mouth of the literati in these countries and how little action has followed their words!

Little by little we manage in our Cochinchina colony to substitute the head breaking ninety thousand Chinese characters by our twenty-five letters of the alphabet. In our schools, the children learn Latin writing, modified according to the needs of the pronunciation by six very simple accents. By combining the accents one arrives rather well at giving each word its true meaning, based most often on the manner in which it is sung.

Many Annamese words seem, at the first approach, identical for little exercised ears, but almost imperceptible intonations sometimes make the meaning differ in eight or

ten completely different ways and without these sung accents, our twenty-five letters would be insufficient to reproduce the finer points of intonation.

Nevertheless, the Annamese cannot completely abandon Chinese writing; it is at his uncle the Chinese, as he respectfully says, that he procures opium, pottery, cloths and barter goods because, by themselves, the Cochinchinese barely get from the soil more than primary products and crafts which take a small place in his existence.

In the North, in Tonkin, they produce more, be it quite remarkable ornaments of mother-of-pearl of which we will soon speak, or, but rarer, quite fine niello copperware. The Tonkinese only hold the secrets of this work. Not only do the arts and crafts receive few impulses from the government, but also, for its part, the crafts only find obstacles in their way. If an adroit craftsman begins to obtain some gains from his work, he is immediately reported to the governor of the province and sent to Hue by the mandarin as a matter of routine. He is installed in the citadel, where he is fed, but the whole of his work and his freedom have become a matter of the king; salary, none or little: prison work would cost as much. Thus Hue produces absolutely nothing besides the most vulgar objects of common usage. A few producers of gross ornaments work there in perfect mediocrity while objects in the same style produced today at the missions, sheltered from the royal monopoly, and sold by mutual agreement, are small masterpieces of marquetry. At the latter's, progress, extension and better distributed work as the demand increases; at the mandarins', on the contrary, obstacles, monopolizing and fading away of the craft. On this point again our liberal ideas would scare the power holders; they feel that trade could one day counterbalance their administrative importance.

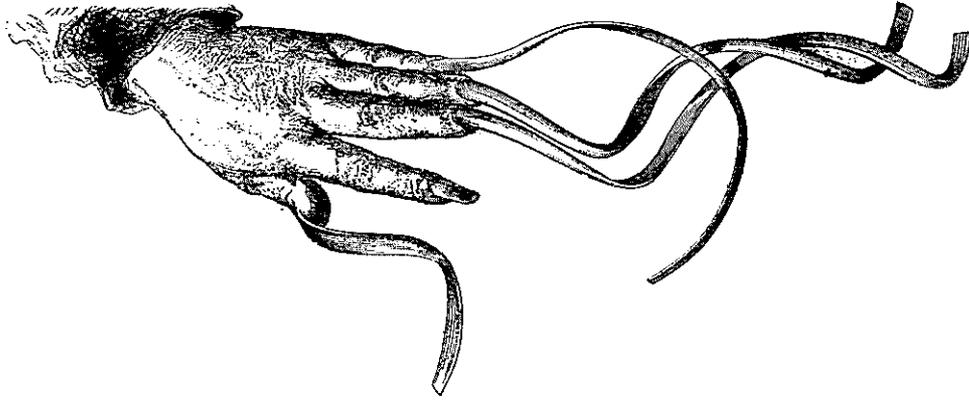


Plate 45. The hand of an Annamese literati (Drawing by P. Sellier, based on a photo)

6

**Mother-of-pearl inlays—Dress—
Sumptuary laws—Yellow, the royal
color—Prohibited letters—
Polygamy—The condition of women**

The craft of mother-of-pearl inlaying has been pushed to a remarkable level in Tonkin. Why? How is it that these barely dressed, malnourished people have started to produce in their huts of leaves, cases and furniture with an original, finely detailed design with panels adorned with extremely refined mother-of-pearl mottoes? Why is such elegant work almost exclusively destined to contain vile betel chew? Edible lime dirties these pretty boxes everywhere and dirty sticky hands put spots on the exterior. It has always been done in this way, from father to son.

The raw materials are not far away; mother-of-pearl is furnished by a big shell rather common on the isles and on the coast. Nevertheless, green mother-of-pearl comes from Europe. As to the wood, it is widespread everywhere and it is not precious at all. It is a species of hard brown hardwood, lending itself well to work with the gouge.

To reach this refinement, already appreciated in Paris, the worker, the Annamese artist first drafts the pattern to be reproduced on paper. Then, he pinches small pieces of iridescent mother-of-pearl in a vice, he polishes the festoon which he wants to make with a file (and what a file!) and little by little, thinning down his mother-of-pearl with skill, he manages to cut out the finest contours: in the vice there is only left a small piece of



Plate 46. Annamese craftsmen laying mother-of-pearl (Drawing by J. Lavée, based on a sketch by Brossard de Corbigny)

mother-of-pearl lace, a fruit or a leaf, which he has taken care of to cut into certain assorted reflections, in order to juxtapose the various hues of all these charmingly lively pieces of mother-of-pearl, golden yellow, yellow, pink, purple and green.

This rather lengthy work is continued by the incrustation of each piece in the thickness of the wood, successively accomplished by hand. Precision enhances the merits of the piece a lot. Finally, the whole is polished and they complete the ornamentation by small, blackened slices of the chisel in order to lighten the general appearance of the work.

At other times the mother-of-pearl is sculpted in a bas-relief and sticks out above the panels. These objects are a little more expensive, but the workmanship is still inexpensive. A few years from now this Tonkinese craftsmanship will be very sought after in Europe and one does not see at all how the production of showy stuff, with its punches, could, like in Japan, replace one day the meticulous work with the file. Another local craft is that of red copper vases in niello. The latter are much less ubiquitous than the boxes with analogue objects in Japan and also inferior to them. Nevertheless, there are very original niello gold, silver and black copper boxes and spittoons.

If one joins the ivory work and rather primitive weaving of local silk, plain or embroidered with very simple designs and dyed using the methods of the country, to these crafts, one would have more or less the whole list of Cochinchinese crafts. Ceramics, artistic casting, glassware and iron works are unknown there; the products of the soil are barely refined.

The man of the street does care little about his future; the craftsman, passionately loving the village near which the modest tombs of his parents stand, attached to his rice fields, has no desire whatsoever to engage in trade or distant enterprises. He leaves the worries of doing business to the Chinese; as far as he is concerned, life seldom worries him; if he earns a little more one-day, he sleeps longer the next day. His hut, his clothes, his betel and his rice cost him little and provided the mandarin does not come too often to drain his earnings by contributions, this indolent existence is

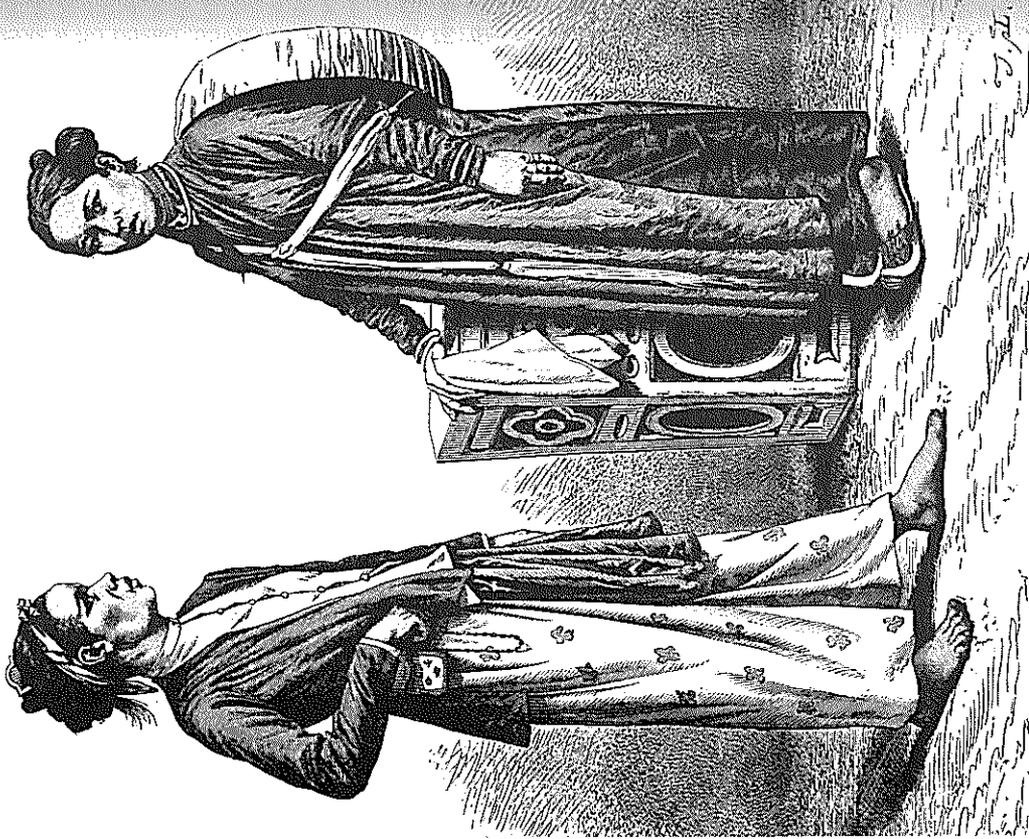


Plate 47. Annamese (Drawing by J. Lavée, based on a photo)

sufficient to his taste. If he wants to obtain some luxuries, he will grow a few mulberry trees, makes some silk or indigo, raw sugar in certain areas and with these resources he buys an item imported from China, opium, tea, chisels, utensils or even a couple of buffaloes to extend his rice fields. One also has to buy soap; the use of it is completely indifferent here, or to say this more correctly, antipathetic among all the societal classes. From the point of view of cleanliness, the Annamese occupies the last rank perhaps on the list of peoples. In this respect he differs completely from the Chinese. The latter, on the contrary, makes himself noticed by his love for bathing and he cannot resist the pleasure of throwing the first bucket of water taken from the well over his body.

The dress of the Cochinese recalls in nothing the fantasies of western Asia; the dress is always plain, not the smallest embroidery, no gilding whatsoever. The long robe with tight sleeves is white or dark in color. It is common to both sexes, as are the trousers in light cloth; nevertheless the men also wear a short jacket, buttoning straight down with a small collar tightly holding the neck. The hairs, among the two sexes, are worn full length and are tied up in a bun behind the head; the women and even the men, often increase the volume by false locks which one can see hanging for sale in every market. The literati and aged people wear a not so voluminous black turban and the children of the common people are happy with a simple red or blue foulard. Beards grow very late among the Annamese as well as the Chinese; thus they usually attribute an age far above the real one to us. The elder women wear a white turban too so that the only pronounced difference in the dress of the two sexes consists of two buttons of amber worn as earrings by the women. Often they also have a circle of silver all around their necks or else an amber necklace and even then they say that pregnant women give it to the husband to wear around his neck.

A hat is only worn in the sun or the rain; that of the men is conical and covers the head like a candle extinguisher to the shoulders; the hat of the women is wide and flat, resembling the lid of a great, round box. It is

made with the leaves of palm trees and two long silk strings, ending in tassels, leave from the edge and fall lower than the knee. In the bottom of the hat, a small mirror allows the elegant lady to admire the narrowness of her eyes, the smallness of her nose and the attractive blackness of her teeth, darkened by betel.

Sumptuary laws prohibit the people from wearing silk, but in Lower Cochinchina, since our occupation, the yellow-skinned daughters of Eve have not failed to profit from the liberty we accord them to dress as they please and today one observes in Saigon, like on the Boulevard des Italiens, young fanciful ladies dressed in light colored silk wearing rings, just like a mandarin's daughters. So far luckily the costumes have remained in conformance with the old type among both sexes and one has not in Annam the distressing spectacle of a pair of semi-nude legs strolling without shoes under a very wide, more than used soldier's greatcoat, the abandoned flotsam left by a dismissed military man when departing for France. The Annamese, great and small, do not possess the shortcoming of decking themselves out in our dress, like so many Counts de Marmalade and other gingerbread generals of quite a number of countries. Does this prove that they have on their part the common sense to prefer the clothes that are most convenient or that they refuse whatever comes from us? Perhaps the two together.

The mourning dress is very simple: it consists of wearing clothes that are not hemmed in which, at the low end, are fraying as a sign of sadness.

Like in China the sumptuary laws go back to a distant past. The sovereign only can use intense yellow colors. Only he can dress in yellow, write on yellow paper; his people and his elephants wear a livery in the same color. Also the yellow flag flies permanently on the citadel and for us, sailors, it gives the great wall the little joyful appearance of a solitary lazaret. The umbrellas of the king are, of course, in the same color.

Red is the color of high-ranking mandarins; their similarly colored trousers, like their hammocks, are an indication of their rank. Finally blue is left to the lower ranking officials.

The middle doors are exclusively reserved for the passage of the sovereign. Only he can hunt in the province of Hue and he only kills some little birds there. Only he can have private elephants; if they kill wild ones with tusks, a rather rare thing, the ivory is given to him by privilege. The rites also prohibit, except to the king, to have two-story houses built and only in royal houses can hardwood be used for the skeleton. One must never pronounce or write certain characters which are reserved for the king. Others cannot be used with regard to mandarins, if they are included in the writing of their names. It is almost as if, in France, one cannot write or say, even when talking about music, the word *re* or *mi* in front of Mr. Rémi.

Whatever there may be to it, it is curious to see our interpreter turn, by all kinds of written or spoken circumlocutions, around the prohibited word that quite naturally has entered writing or conversation. This singular usage has been sanctioned by King Gia-Long. When dying he left behind a golden box with compartments; each of his successors, when taking the crown, opens one of these pigeonholes and finds two characters in there destined to be respected by the whole kingdom. Those of the present king mean: the continuation of power and have from then onwards been added to his name.

The religious belief here, like in China, as their object the cult of the ancestors and the greatest misfortune a man can be struck with is not to have a male descendant to preserve his memory, or still to be buried very far away from the survivors of his family. Thu-Duc has no children and this is not the smallest of his sorrow. Adoption is often practiced by lack of male children. When the king dies, all his wives keep their widowhood and will end their lives near the tomb, in isolation, but not always in the most complete harmony.

The women are nevertheless treated with gentleness or at least as equal to their spouses. They have a lot to say in the household; those of the common people are of an inextinguishable scolding talkativeness in their frequent disputes. Hardworking and active, they take care of the house-



Plate 48. Annamese women
(Drawing by J. Lavée, based on a photo)

hold, go to the market loaded with heavy packs. They row in the boats as much or more than the men, pushing the oar, maneuvering the rudder with their feet, while at the same time watching the food spread out on a mat and the small cooking pot boiling rice on the fire. All this does not stop a mother from, at the same time, chatting entire hours with the other woman rower of the boat.

7

The army—Singular distrusts The rattan—Money

The province of Hue and those which border it furnish, they say, twenty-six thousand soldiers to defend the country. This figure appears exaggerated; during our stay here we have not seen the twenty-sixth part of this number. If the king really had such a powerful force in hand he would not have failed to make them parade, more so because later we got to hear distrustful noises in respect to ourselves. The country remained alert during our presence in Hue; the ministers have only agreed after many negotiations to cede to our demand to go upriver on a war ship. They are really worried about the cannons of the *Antilope* and affirm that the high official charged with negotiating the preliminary agreements has promised, in writing, his head to the king if our ship opened some kind of hostility or if we or our escort (we were forty-five in number to land) engaged in some way whatsoever in acts against the person of His Majesty.

A closed-rank militia, marching in squads, does not exist here; nevertheless the troops do exercises with rifles and lances but no collective maneuvers whatsoever.

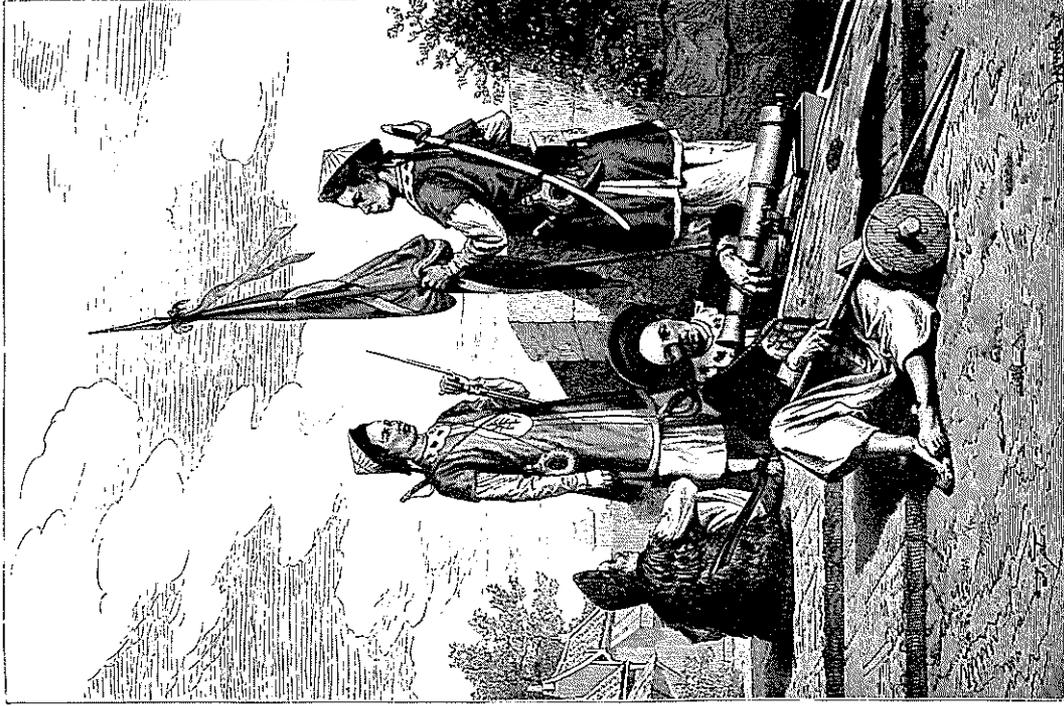


Plate 49. Annamese soldiers (Drawing by J. Lavée, based on a sketch by Brossard de Corbigny)

The uniform, which is always of the same cut, is varied in colors. It is some kind of blouse buttoned down in front and, at the lower end, it is split on the sides. It stops above the knee. The color is bright, red, green or white embroidered with a wide ribbon in a different color. The sleeves are in a third color contrasting with the body of the blouse, be it yellow, green or pink; the collar is straight and the facing is in the color of the borders. On the breast and in the middle of the back the soldiers usually have a circle as big as a plate, on which one can read in half-foot characters: "A courageous soldier"—"The winged one from the forest"—"A tiger of Hue." That is the name of the company. The short, wide trousers reach to the knees; it would be white if the courageous men of King Thuduc would be less horrified by soap. Sometimes, sandals and a cloth belt add to the dress. A black turban catches the hairs and on top of all this a small conical, almost flat hat of striped bamboo is kept in place by red strings fastened under the bun. This vaguely recalls, like a monkey recalls a man, these plate-like hats especially met with in the resorts of the French coast.

The non-commissioned officers are dressed in cloth of a single color, sometimes in velvet and on their shoulders they wear two oval plaques adorned with tassels. They are happy for their sole weapon to have a flexible rattan stick, the symbol and unquestionable instrument of their power. The equipment of a simple soldier consist of an old saber, carried on the back in a shoulder strap, of a flint gun or a lance with a triangular flag the colors of which usually go with the dress. On his side hang a small flask and a wooden box serving as cartridge pouch. Although all these things are poorly fitted, these uniforms, these lances with flags arranged in long lines cast an original image. In the interior of the citadel, we have also seen soldiers armed with great round shields hanging on their backs as the last vestiges of ancient wars.

The *deus ex machina* of all these troops, the great resort of the administration and the army, the motor nerve, the great sympathetic of the whole Annamese system is the famous rattan stick, a small piece of rattan of half

arms' length [approx. 6 feet] which does not recognize rank or age and which falls heavily on the stoutness of the delinquents. Every soldier of the escort carries one around his neck; it is to get people out of the way. Every man of rank holds a rattan in his hand; it is to enliven the zeal of his soldiers. The literati administer it by proxy but receive it directly. Finally, from the king who gives the rattan but does not receive it, to the dog of the lowest farmer which receives without giving, everybody, in this good kingdom of Annam, more or less hears the rattan whistle past his ears for his account or for somebody else's.

Besides soldiers and mandarins, the citadel also houses other people attached to the court. First of all the pages, which we have seen in official ceremonies, dressed in the manner of soldiers. They are however dressed with hats similar to those of the mandarins but for that matter they are not more carefully dressed. Their functions consist in carrying flyswatter, incense-burners, fans and royal umbrellas. Then, getting closer to the private palace, one meets an enclosure for the natural eunuchs. They keep the women of the king and serve as intermediaries between them and the exterior. Still further to the center and all around His Majesty, there are the women, numbering some one hundred, they say. They take care of the service of the interior: receive letters, write those of the king, in all, they execute the functions of officials of the crown.



Plate 50. *Tael*, silver ingot. On the front side: "made in the reign of Gia-Long;" backside: "pure silver, one *tael*;" other sides: "silver money 2 ligatures 80" and "verified for the weight."

It appears correspondence is active, because everything is asked in writing from the king; private audiences are not used much. About this whole central part located inside the third wall, we have only some information. The main officials themselves do not enter the enclosure of the eunuchs. The king receives and gives his rare audiences outside these completely private buildings.

As currency we find the ancient zinc coin, worth one-seventh of a [French] centime, here. Its shape has not been changed; always inconvenient, always strung up through its middle opening in heavy rosary strings, it continues to break its rope from time to time to spill on the ground, so much so that one has to collect one after the other the six hundred discs to reach a value of eighteen French sous only. There is more but here only the copper coin, six times higher in value, or about one centime. In terms of silver they have the *taël* worth eight francs and fifty centimes. It is a small ingot in pure metal, quite widespread in use. It remains in the treasury of the State and rarely comes out in the form of gifts.

While we are taking notes and making sketches, the negotiations between the envoys succeed each other and we have come to 13 April 1875, the day set for the exchange of the instruments of ratification.

8

Court ceremonies—Exchange of the ratification instruments—General repetition—A solemn audience—The interior of the citadel—The princes—An expensively paid smile

By ten o'clock our *tam-tri*, followed by the king's men, come to get our copy of the treaty; the red hammocks are brought and everybody, Frenchmen and Annamese, dressed in gala dress, confides himself to the porters as conveniently as is possible. At the head of the cortege the treaty proceeds, carried in the shade of four royal umbrellas. Another escort group closes the procession; the lancers line up, and behind them the inhabitants come running to catch a glance of us. No sympathy on their part, that is natural; at least they do not show any blameful act, surprised by what they are seeing, indifferent as to what happens.

The junks soon brought us across the river and we walk in the same order across the enclosure of the citadel. After the external gate, one crosses an esplanade of about two hundred meters, separating the two first lines of wall and one sets foot near a small room painted red. It is a subsidiary building of the barracks and military warehouses. Tea and sweets are waiting for us there.

Today we will only proceed a few steps from here to the Ngo-Mon gate, the main entrance of the second enclosure; but tomorrow, the day of the

audience, it is inside the third line that we will see the king. From our stopping place we can see the great esplanade extend to the foot of the walls without buildings; the interior side of these is a talus covered with great tiles. In the middle of the southeastern side rises the hideout, painted yellow, visible from outside. Few cannons; the parapets and their straw roofs hide them from our eyes. After a quarter of an hour of waiting, the delegates of the king are announced. There are two of them, in gala dress, accompanying the Annamese copy. Their features are filled with emotions; one barely recognizes this same Ki-Vi-Ba, usually endowed with a jerky, occasional laugh of the most ringing kind, under this mask for the occasion and the great brocaded robe. The envoys, interpreters and phu ba-thuong start to read the two texts and during this time, a crowd of lower ranking employees, small clerks and literati throng around us, listening, watching over the shoulder of their great chiefs, without the least embarrassment. It is the custom here, it seems, to distance nobody, to let the pipe, betel and fan bearers end up in the best places to observe a little of what goes on in politics. One of them excessively scratches himself close to us; another, sticking the neck of the tea pot in his mouth, blows to clean it out and fills the cups again to the brim. Another does something worse still and all these people throng together in a few square meters. The rites especially erect moral distances between the different classes.

Finally, the copies are signed, the stamps affixed and the two corteges direct themselves towards the tiled esplanade of the Ngo-Mon gate. Three bridges lead to it; it is itself pierced by three front bays and two lateral ones. Above these entrances, superimposed galleries crown the ramparts and dominate the place. The king, they say, is staying behind the lowered mats, to observe us at his ease. Each cortege entering from a corner arrives in the middle of the place. Umbrellas are arranged at the foot of the wall. Around the gate, the king's men hold burning incense-burners, fans, flyswatters, etc. Two rows of red mace ushers complete the service guard. Soon the ambassadors approach each other, pronounce a few words for the occasion and exchange their respective copies. For the evening, the

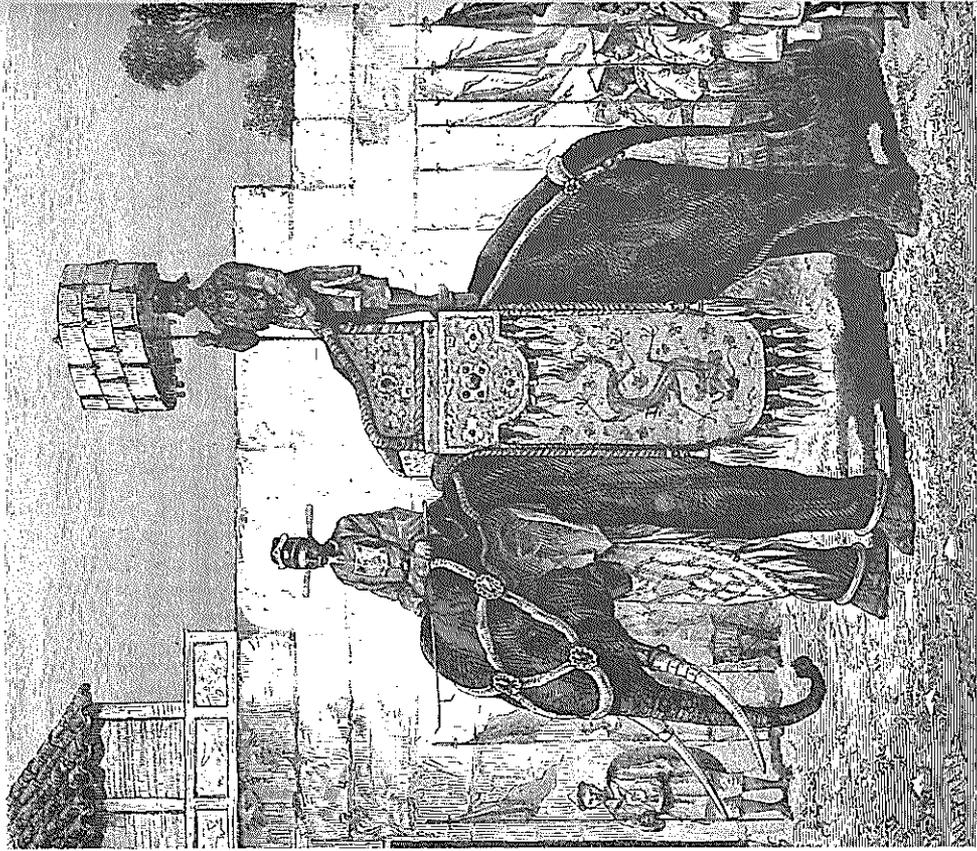


Plate 51. Parade elephant in Hue (Drawing by P. Kauffmann, based on a sketch of Brossard de Corbigny)

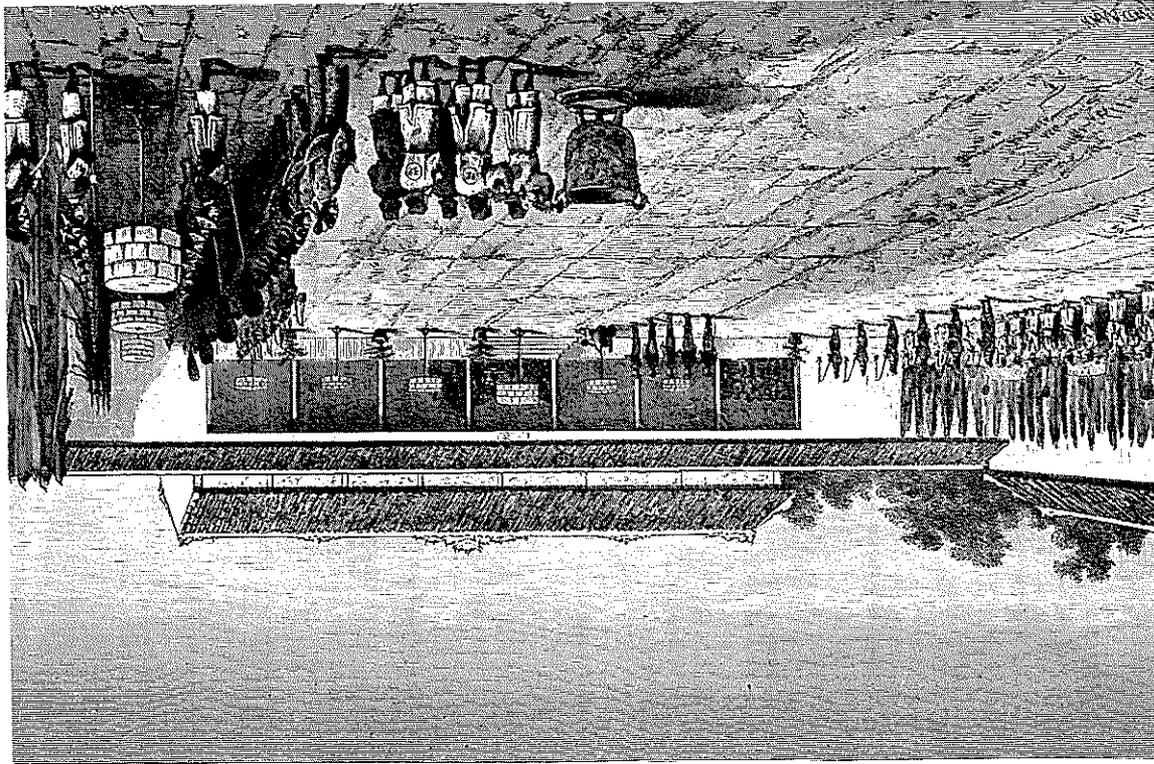


Plate 52. An audience at the Court of Hue: reception of the French embassy (14 April 1875).
 (Drawing by P. Kauffmann, based on a sketch of Brossard de Corbigny)

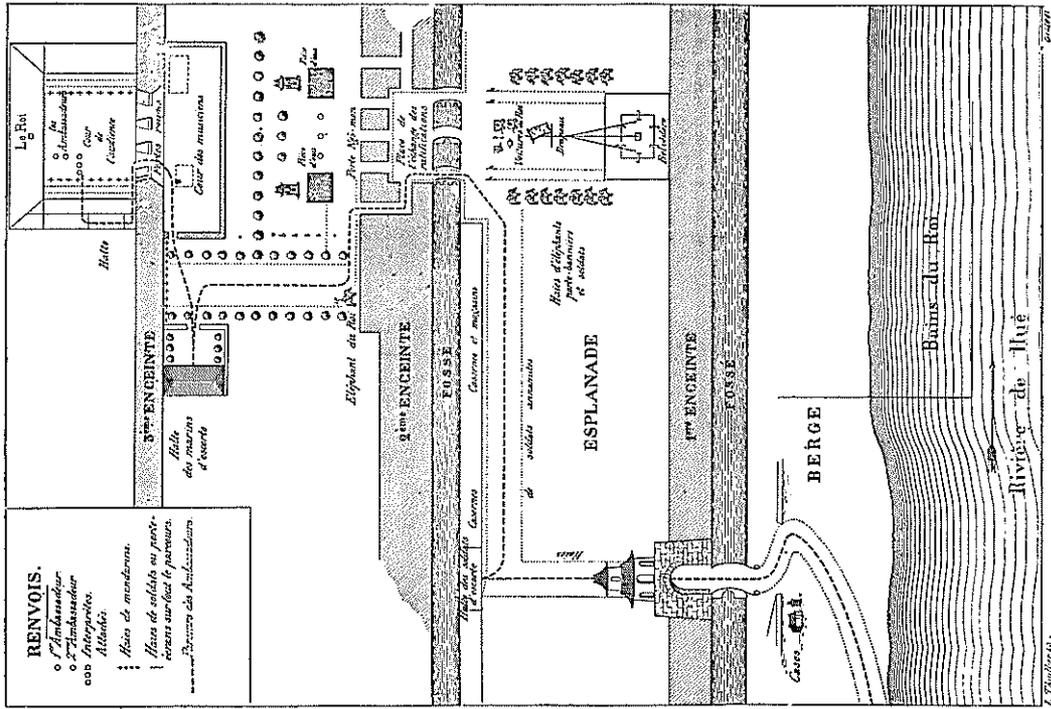


Plate 53. Map of the reception of the French Embassy (14 April 1875)
 (L. Thuillier) (see the text for explanation)

first Annamese ambassador then announces to us the visit of his colleague of the Rites charged with submitting to us the laws of etiquette of the court for tomorrow's audience; then everybody slowly walks back to his side. We climb in the hammocks and the jog trot of our porters soon brings us back to our boats.

Indeed, in the evening, the chief of the Rites in person, followed by his acolytes, comes to initiate us in the ceremonies of the audience. He starts immediately to rehearse in front of us the steps and backward steps which our initiators will have to make, the greetings which we will extend ourselves to His Majesty, in which order we will enter, etc. . . . "This chair here," he tells us, "is the king; here to the right, this great empty case is the prime minister; there, the post, is the rehearser of the royal words." Then he has five small square mats placed symmetrically on the ground. Are they going to continue their exercises with a few jack-knife dives in use at the court and invite us to make as many in front of the king? The portliness of the grand master of ceremonies reassures us. . . . These squares simply indicate our future places and we will find them tomorrow at the audience, like isles of refuge in the middle of the great reception hall.

The general repetition ends rather late, with some bursts of laughter in both camps. This evening the mandarins can still be gay, but tomorrow . . . when the case will be the minister . . . when the chair will be the king! . . . They will no longer laugh because, according to whether things will work out well or badly, they will quickly gain a favor or fifty strokes of the rattan. According to the conduct of these foreigners one can see oneself elevated in rank or shortened by the length of a head.

As far as we are concerned, we guard our weapons, salute French style when entering and leaving and we will remain covered the rest of the time, because the audience is in the open air. The words to be exchanged by both parties have been notified word for word. Thus, there is nothing, in all these details, that is not perfectly compatible with the rites and dignity of the two nations.

But with all this, the mandarins of the court are not calm. They evidently ask themselves whether we have not come here to make a big scene because we bring our weapons to the audience. Our escort, it is true, will stay outside of the second enclosure but are we not part of those people who not long ago, have occupied half of amazed Tonkin with a handful of soldiers? The answer will come tomorrow evening.

14 April—We get up early today in order not to delay the time set for the departure under this hot sun. Like yesterday and with the same splendor, we present ourselves at the gate of the enclosure, but this time it is with our French escort that we cross through the thick wall.

This citadel is the only force that is a little serious and simply a defensive one, which Thu-Duc has at his disposal.

Major Ollivier has built it under Gia-Long, according to plans used in France. Its walls would be a serious obstacle for an attacker without artillery but also the great number of useless mouths that it harbors would stop it from resisting a blockage which is easy to organize in the plains and the surrounding river arms. It stands on an isle formed, on one side by the river itself, and on the three other by rather wide canals on which boats are navigating. At the foot of the wall floats a moat; two or three very rounded stone bridges stretch across it on each side and provide access to the interior through the walls of the gates which are twenty to thirty meters thick. Then one arrives in an esplanade where we stopped yesterday and which we find adorned with soldiers in various colors today. We leave our detachment of infantry at the barracks and continue to the Ngo-Mon gate, preceded by our ten sailors. There we get down from the hammock, the umbrellas are closed because they are not opened inside the second enclosure.

In front of the gate, a curious spectacle attracts our attention [see Plate 53]: over the whole width of the esplanade long rows of soldiers are facing each other, leaving a free space in the middle for the king's carriages orderly arranged. Behind the soldiers, the parade elephants, armed

with tusks are placed in two rows; on their backs they have their excursion palanquins, some kind of cubic armchairs from which great curtains hang on both sides. The mahout is seated on the neck, his hands motionless and on the rump another servant holds a high umbrella in garish colors. There are about twenty of them. Among the unhitched carriages in the center, one especially attracts the attention; it is some kind of completely red cabriolet almost transparent: one would say it is a big lantern of paper on wheels. Another, with four wheels, green and yellow recalls the ancient public stagecoaches. They tell us that it dates from the present reign but surely the shape is French and at least from the previous century. The white horses harnessed with yellow are besides it, sheltered by the umbrellas of the king's house.

After having passed under the Ngo-Mon gate we first of all find the two biggest elephants of His Majesty as immobile guards. They guard the passage, dressed up grandly. From their breasts and from their flanks great yellow curtains with embroidered, multi-colored dragons hang down. On their back is the chair of the king, fixed with red ropes with gilded knots. Their tusks have gold rings and their front feet have bracelets of the same metal. The head is completely harnessed in with intercrossed red ornaments. In their capacity of privileged of the king, the two mounts have a mandarin with a blue robe as mahouts and on the rump a page armed with an umbrella in yellow cloth with tatters. Then we pass between soldiers holding shields, arranged along an avenue with trees. To the left, two white horses, the king's mounts, are aligned in the row. To the right, water ponds surrounded by openwork railings are, it seems, caiman tanks. Here, like in China, the tail of these vile animals is a very appreciated dish. Between these fish-tanks, two big fantastic tigers completely gilded throne on their base. They show their teeth thrusting their enameled eyes, jutting from their orbits, on us, from under blue oriental vases. At the end of the avenue the mandarins of the four last grades are standing with their backs to the third enclosure which is forbidden to their low rank. Here we stop on the left side, in an entrance hall, while waiting for the moment of the presentation.

During the time they serve us tea, our poor tam-tri, with voices strangled for fear, repeat to each the recommendations of the previous evening, in regard to the place to take, the posture to maintain and the words to exchange. Here Father Hoang, who enters with us, wears a dress for the occasion. He is changed into a mandarin in no time at all, with a square hat on his head, a long robe with embroidered cranes, an ivory plaque in his hand and a befitting face.

Finally, everything is ready; we follow our initiators through the low door of a courtyard filled with musicians. Some have snakeskin guitars, others some kind of violins, ivory oboes or cymbals with three lobes like cloverleaves. The whole noisy family of gongs and drums is united in their hands, but among so many instruments, one more Chinese than the next, the one that we believed, when we were young, to have come from Peking to give a reply to the bass drum of our regiment even, the Chinese jingling Johnny, of course, is completely lacking in the hullabaloo collection. One more artistic illusion taken away from us!

Here we are then at the great gate of the third enclosure. The flaps of it are red, adorned with furiously twisted gold dragons; a doorframe of the same style supports the roof of this entrance. Using a detour to the left, we are led under the gallery of the great tiled courtyard where the royal audience will be held. Seated in the shade, we have the time to observe the arrangements made in honor of the meeting. To our left, in the back of the gallery, the princes, standing in groups, watch us with curiosity. They are draped with yellow silk with a leafy design and have pretty, completely gilded hats on their heads. Their physiognomy is refined. Their skin color is relatively light and dull; one can immediately see a difference in behavior between them and the other locals. Near them begins the great open gallery facing the entrance to the courtyard. It is there that the king will be. Opposite us, the other side of the square courtyard is also built as a covered gallery. In this great tiled place, under a blazing sun, a thousand banners, which have been brought by soldiers who are along each side of the enclosure, are floating. In front of them extend other rows

of fan-bearers, umbrella-bearers and lancers of all kinds. On the first row, the superior mandarins, aligned, immobile, about a hundred in number on each side, display their robes embroidered in many colors to the sun. Finally, in front of the latter stand the pages holding lighted incense-burners. In the corners of the courtyard, two troops of musicians complete this set up of a thousand motley colors. The ranks are immobile, but the banners, the flags, the umbrellas wave in the wind and the sun produces unexpected contrasts in the whole. In the center, the great silk robes mirror the rich shimmering of their Chinese embroidery. We enjoy, under the open sky of the tropics, this rare spectacle of the court of Annam in gala dress.

There is a new time of waiting under the gallery, a moment of such agony for the initiators that one of them, stupefied, does no longer know to whom of us he should address himself. Finally, they lead us past the multicolored rows to the row of the high dignitaries. There we recognize in the center of the space, level with the first mandarins, our small squares of yesterday evening, placed before the throne. At the same moment, a loud shouting resounds, cannon shots are heard in the distance: it is the arrival of His Majesty.

The red doors, opened at the same time, let the melodies of the bands that are posted in the entrance court come to us. This concert, less rough to our ears than we feared at first, lasts only a few minutes. It stops as soon as the king has taken his place. We see him coming near a table and despite the bright light that blinds us, we distinguish his slightly pallid face, his long, thin beard and his rich yellow sovereign's costume.

Then the minister of Rites in person comes in front of His Majesty and prostrates on his knees, his face against the ground, then he requests, still on his knees and with joined hands, the permission to introduce the French ambassador.

The king has a rehearser answer that the audience is open and we advance to take place on the mats. After having greeted His Majesty, the extraordinary envoy explains the goal of his journey, says that he has come

in the name of the French government, to request news about the king of Annam, to hand him the Grand Cordon of the Légion d'honneur and offer him gifts as a mark of satisfaction with the exchange of the treaty, effected the previous evening. These words, translated by the interpreter of the embassy, are spoken to the king by two successive rehearsers, although he has perfectly understood them; then they place the decoration and the list of gifts on the table in front of Thu-Duc. He then answers with a word of thanks and requests in his turn news from the president of the French Republic (words a little enigmatic for this oriental autocrat). His very precious words are again repeated by the same intermediaries; an answer and thanks for the envoy.

The king then retires to his quarters, followed by his pages armed with fans. We greet him when he leaves; all we have to do is to retire too.

When one thinks about the mystery with which the sacred person of this half-god is surrounded vis-à-vis his loyal subjects, such a meeting cannot be but a difficult effort for His Annamite Majesty and one understands why these audiences do not end by a more intimate conversation, as it is already done in Siam and Japan. If Thu-Duc has given us full satisfaction today, this has not always been the case in his rare meetings with Frenchmen. One time a curtain veiled the sacred person even from the eyes of those attending. Thus, today there has been progress and everything has gone well. Nevertheless, a very futile incident has knit the royal eyebrow: two of the princes arranged on the lower end of the platform allowed themselves a smile when seeing that we did not wear our hairs tied up in a bun. As punishment for such a great lack of decorum Thu-Duc has deprived them for a year of their salaries and of their rice rations. They are not making fun at the court . . . As to the other officials engaged in the ceremony, they had only compliments; rewards have even come, the next day, to confirm the royal satisfaction.

At the time when, coming out of the audience, we joined our escort, His Majesty has sent one of his chamberlains to seek personal news about the embassy. It is, it seems, a signal honor.

During the return by the same route, the same cortege is at its post and we find our palanquins to return to Seu-Quan at the Ngo-Mon gate.

This then is what it is, in the year of grace, 1875, an audience of the king of Annam, no doubt little different from what it was a hundred years ago, but one hundred years from now, what will remain of these things, of all these mandarins? Other ideas will perhaps have arrived here. Annam, if it is not absorbed by China, must it not disappear one day in the new thrust that came from Europe to overflow the Far East?

9

A theatrical play—Hue, the village Envoys of the king—Exchange of gifts

The evening of the same day they offer us a theatrical play at our home. The theatrical company, the Hac-Boy, arrives with all its accessories, costumes, lances, flags and sabers. About twenty actors, their faces entirely painted black and white, dressed in faded rags, pale imitations of warrior costumes of the Chinese theatre, entertain us for two hours in terribly piercing tones to the noise of gongs and oboes with some war adventures or other from times past. The fighters thrash about rolling their eyes and the mandarins with false beards hold forth and fume. The entire small company stays within the three square meters that serve at the same time as décor, dressing room and accessory warehouse but it makes a noise like two armies on the attack and by doing so obtains the approbation of the whole ward, perched in the street on tables to better enjoy, over our wall, its favorite spectacle.

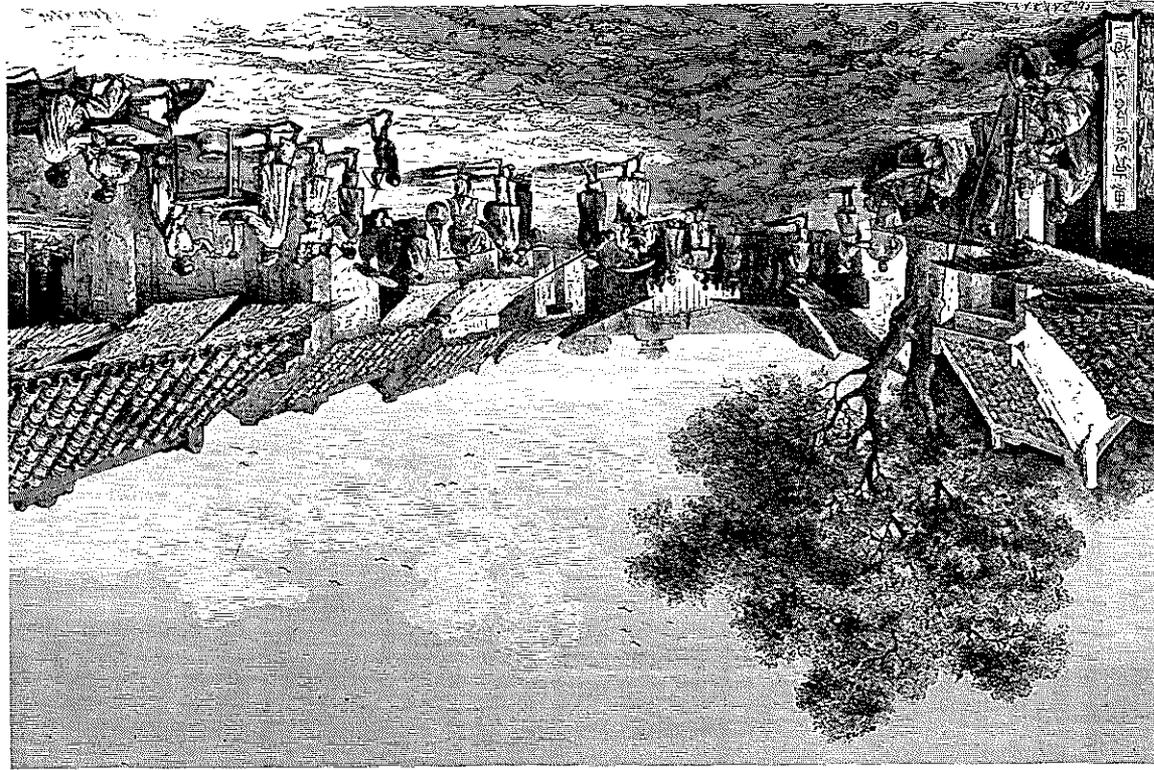


Plate 54. A street in the commercial quarter at Hue (Drawing by P. Kauffmann, based on a sketch of Brossard de Corbigny)

The next days pass with private meetings between the two first envoys. We use the occasion to visit the merchant town which neighbors the citadel. It is there that the small trade of Hue is done. The sea junks come to moor on the bank. The main street looks rather sad. Houses, generally in stone, blackish and dark, follow each other without proper alignment; the water jars and refuse occupy the street and when it rains on all this, one no longer knows where to set one's feet.

15 April—This morning, carried in the shade of four royal umbrellas, a box arrived with great pomp from the palace. These are lincées, delicate fruits from the gardens of His Majesty. In the afternoon, a similar cortege, this time preceded by the minister of foreign affairs in person, bring to our Seu-Quan a series of red boxes with yellow labels. These are the gifts of the king.

The mandarin also hands a letter of His Annamese Majesty to the extraordinary ambassador. The latter, as is done according to the rites, lifts it up three times in front of himself when he receives it. The royal message announces the dispatch of very precious objects to the president of the republic, to the ministers, to the former governors, to the present governor in Saigon and to the two highest-ranking members of the embassy. These very precious objects are repoussé gold plaques from which hang tassels of European glass pearls. The name of Thu-Duc and a watchword varying according to the case are written on the jewel. A small ribbon, variable in color, serves to hang it from the neck. It is the reply to the various classes of the Légion d'honneur we have brought. A list of the gifts contained in the other boxes is also handed to the first chief of the embassy.

From our side we present, among others, a throne in gilded wood and red morocco leather, a table also gilded and with a marble top, a great vase of Sèvres, a box of very beautiful pistols, yellow silk and velvet as the king only is authorized to accept. To the various high mandarins we present a great Venice mirror, onyx vases from the Maison Barbedienne, a telescope, stereoscopes, silk from Lyon, etc.

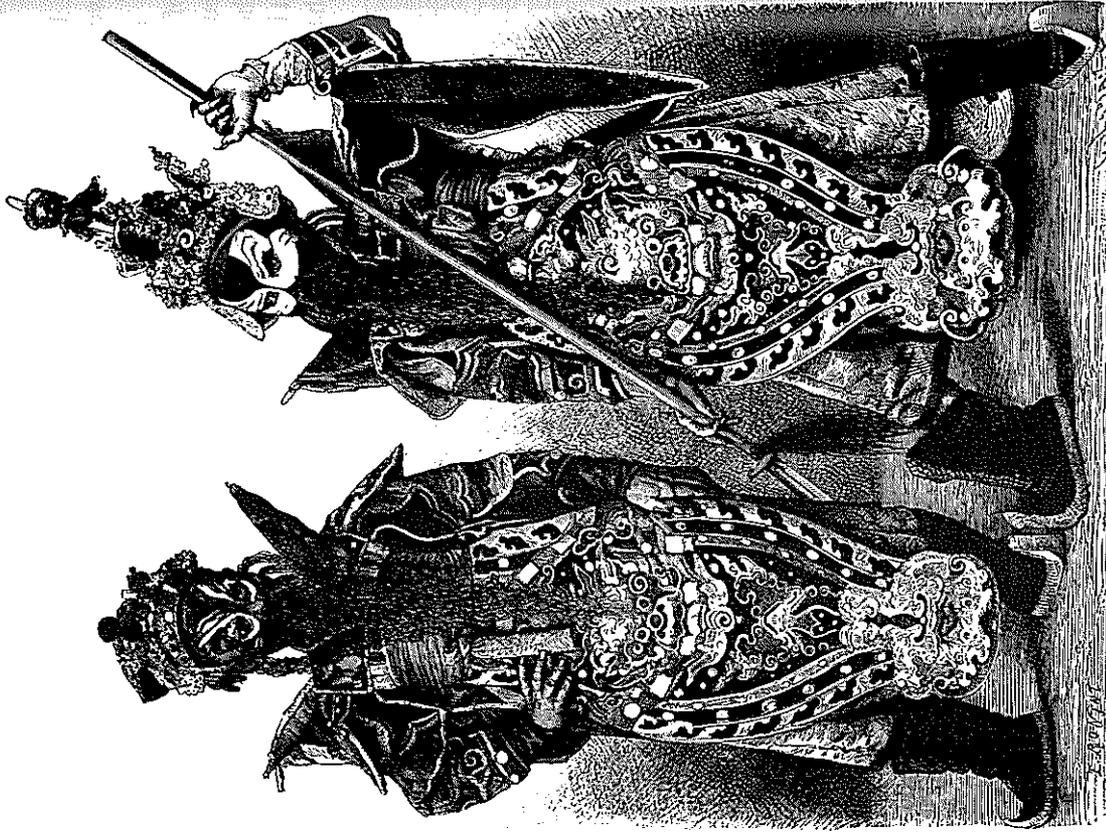


Plate 55. Theatre costumes of warriors chiefs in Hue (Drawing by E. Ronjat, based on a photo)

10

**A mass at the missionaries' church—
The orphanage—A last walk—Begging
and singing elephants—The gifts—
Departure**

18 April—Today, a Sunday, there is a mass in the small church built amidst the areca palms, three-quarters of an hour away from here. The missionaries' house stands nearby and its surroundings are populated by Christian families.

The bishops and priests keep us for lunch, which allows us to later visit the day nursery of Mgr. Sohier. Behind his residence the charity of the missionary has gathered the abandoned children or whom they bring to him, often in a state of despair. Local foster mothers provide first aid to the orphans, lull them in baskets hung from the ceiling and constantly watch them. If they can get over this first, so difficult step, of their lives, and not many manage it, they are dressed, brought up by the priests and learn in their school how to gain their daily rice. The girls weave silk and in their turn take care of the children up to the time they marry with some good farmer of the neighborhood. These families, as you can imagine, are devoted to the missionaries, around whom they remain grouped in dense villages.

19 April—Here we are, close to our departure: throwing a last glance at the village where we stay. Enlivened by so many local soldiers the street has been transformed quickly into a makeshift restaurant. Everywhere are

arranged in front of the houses, on high tables, great bowls from which everybody can pour as much boiling tea as he wants for a few zinc coins. The gourmands are offered dogs roasted in their entirety or fish sauces sprinkled with all kinds of hacked spices. Smoking rice is in abundance and the sticks work relentlessly. Returning, we find singular collectors at the door. Three elephants from the palace, walking around to graze, stopped when they passed to bring their special talents to fruition in front of us. Trained like the dogs of the blind they beg zinc coins for their mahouts; those which are thrown to them, although they are spread around on the ground, are skillfully collected with the end of the trump and then passed to the mahout seated on the neck. Very sensitive to commands they lie flat on their bellies and then stand up as ordered. If the mahout starts to sing, his trumped student punctuates every sentence with a guttural cry coming from his deep innards.

Finally, we enter to prepare our departure and the boarding of the king's envoys.

The king desires to send to the marshal-president of the republic one hundred pieces of silk, two elephant tusks, two rhinoceros horns, ten *taëls* of eagle wood^s and a pound of cinnamon; to the admiral-governor of French Cochinchina, seventy pieces of silk, one elephant tusk, one rhinoceros horn and two *taëls* of eagle wood and to the envoys, attachés, interpreters, captains, officers, etc. medals, some pieces of gold and silver, and pieces of silk.

The gold and silver medals [Plate 57] are very different in size, thin like white iron and pierced by a square hole in the middle. On one side they display, together with various emblems, characters indicating the present reign; on the other, a motto or a flattering wish. They are not used as money but are given for solemn occasions. Here are the mottoes on some of ours: "The three profusions (wealth, a long life and a lot of sons)—The three long lives (for yourself, your children and your reputation)—A souvenir of a million inhabitants—To procure wealth and a long life for the people—The meeting of the dragon and the clouds (the source of good)—

The sun, the moon, the stars and the clouds—The five felicities (wealth, fame, tranquility, power, a long life)—(On the other side, five bats, symbols of the five joys)—The four charms (a good house, a good climate, success in business, no worries)—Virtue is one.”

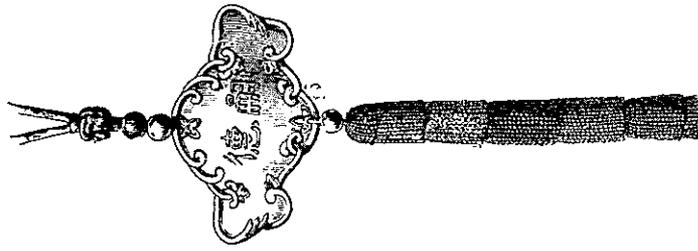


Plate 56. A golden decoration of the king of Hue

Front: “Thu-Duc;”
backside: “practice virtue, cultivate concord” or a similar phrase according to the recipient

21 April—Today we must swallow the departure dinner, a royal present as a farewell gesture, without batting an eyelid. By noon the table is ready; fifty bowls are stacked one against the other, a pair of sticks accompanies forks and plates which they had the courtesy of placing in front of us. Like gentlemen with style we lift our chopsticks three times to the height of our eyes to say that we accept this very precious dinner of the king. In the bowls a host of small, round, fat, white, red and yellow things in oil or sugar are stacked up. In the lot, I only recognize a duck boiled almost intact. Our neighbors, the mandarins, more experienced and overflowing with refined attention discover and with their sticks take from the bowls some appetizing piece of raw dog which they place on our plates in a friendly manner. Some kind of Chinese anisette serves as a digestive for these fine, wild culinary imaginings of eccentric composition. After an hour of simulated savoring, the fifty bowls disappear and become the feast of the servants.

On 22 April, the mandarins bid farewell. That evening itself the aviso arrives in Tourane where the Duchaffaut, our companion on the return, waits for us. Two days later, everything fortunately concluded, the two steamers throw the anchor at the moorage of Saigon.

Notes

¹ The mission was composed of Messrs. baron Brossard de Corbigny, captain, extraordinary envoy; Regnault de Prémèsnil, commander, second envoy; Brossard de Corbigny et Blouet, lieutenants, attachés; Prioux, navy infantry officers, Annamese interpreter and Chinese translator; Ba-thuong, *phu* (prefect) of Saigon, literati of the colony; Nicolas, local interpreter. The escort, composed of 10 sailors and of 25 navy infantry soldiers, was commanded by Messrs. Juin, lieutenant and Bordes, lieutenant of the navy infantry.

² Indeed, it is stated that the Christians will be considered equal to other locals, will be allowed to take official positions, and that the bishops will be allowed to go around the kingdom if they have the correct papers.

³ Mr. Vannier, after 36 years of sojourn in Cochinchina, went back to France with his wife (a Christian Annamese of high birth) and his children, to Lorient, his departure port, where he still lives today with his family.

⁴ For more details on the history of the new colony see the two volumes, Paris Challamel, of Mr. Vial, former director of the interior in Saigon.

⁵ Eagle wood, endowed with healing properties, is very rare and it has a very high value. Cinnamon is also considered very valuable; the king has the monopoly of its culture. Rhinoceros horn is some kind of universal medicine, which, reduced to powder, heals all kinds of wrongs when it fulfils certain conditions of age and texture.

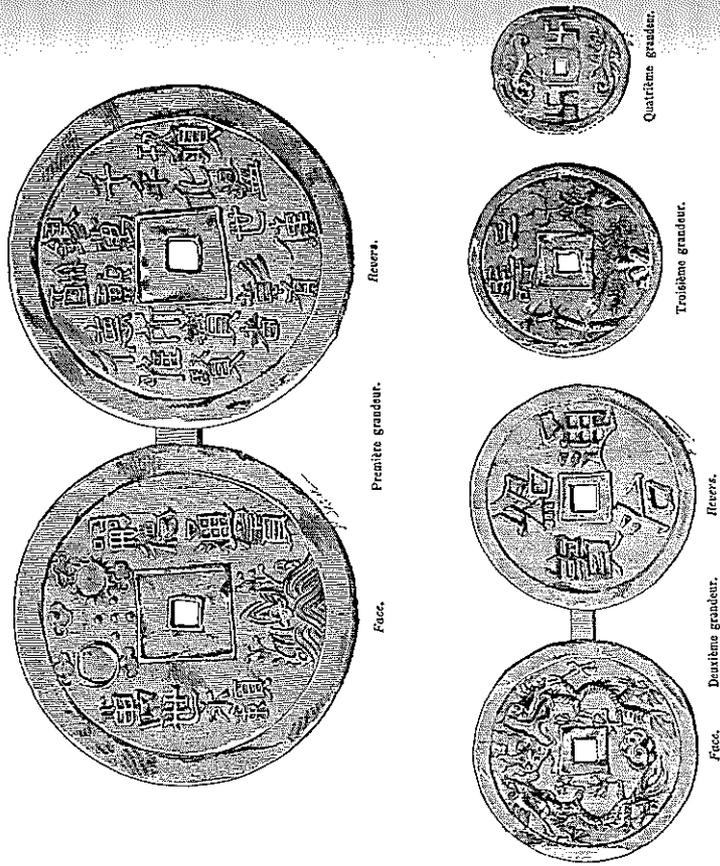


Plate 57. Gold and Silver medals given by King Thu-Duc to the Embassy. First size. Front: "eternal souvenir of ten thousand generations. Minted in the reign of Thu-Duc;" backside: "after a thousand years matter transforms into gold of which medals are made in order to pass on, for ten thousand generations, a memory of virtue, but only wisdom is precious." Second size. Front: a medal called "the meeting of the two dragons;" backside: "minted in the reign of Thu-Duc." Third size. Front: the medal of "the three long lives;" backside similar to that of the second size. Fourth size. Front: the medal of "ten thousand imaginary things;" backside similar to that of the second size.

The Ancient Monuments of the Chams (An Archeological Excursion in Annam)

Charles Lemire

1

The port of Tourane

The objective of our journey being to visit the Cham monuments, the ruins of which are spread over the center of Annam, we disembarked at Tourane, from where we could spread out to the North, the South and the West, sometimes overland, sometimes by sea.

For a long time the city was called "Tourane-the-Sands," and Pierre Loti has only seen monsters from a nightmare there. If one takes the trouble after landing to take a trishaw and has oneself driven to the end of the quay, one will find a pretty woodland there destined to serve as a public park. The shady avenues and the central roundabout are adorned with fifty Cham archeological pieces coming from various places in the province.

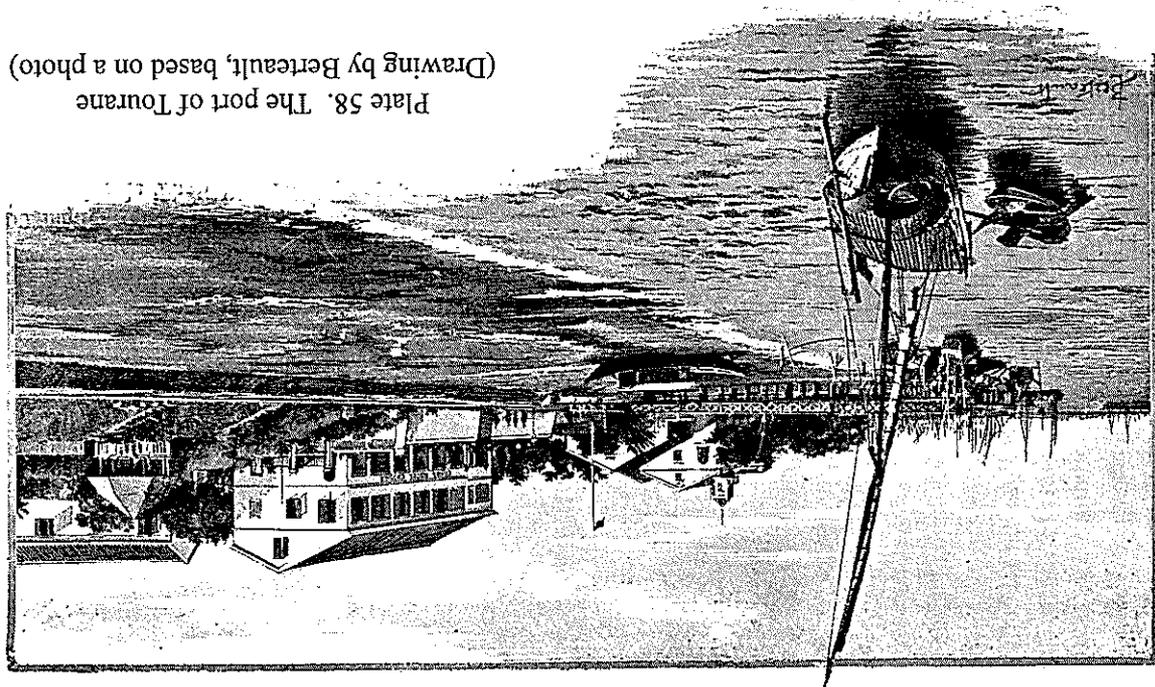


Plate 58. The port of Tourane
(Drawing by Bertault, based on a photo)

2

The Cham sculptures of the Thuy-Son caves

We take a light sampan that brings us in an hour and a half to the mountains of Ngu-Hanh-Son, on the right bank of the river. This calcareous upthrust comprises five white, gray and pink marble mountains. The main one, that of Thuy-Son, has very picturesque caves, temples and monasteries. One enters it by marble staircases, cut by landings and with porticoes that are falling in ruins. These buildings date from King Minh-Mang's visit to the caves in 1827. They have often been visited but one rarely visits an altar isolated in an excavation behind the home of the guardian monks of these temples and caves, haunted, say the Annamese mandarins, by the beneficent spirits which are the protectors of this region. Nevertheless one can observe sculptures coming from the Chams there: there is an altar formed by four superimposed sandstone blocks. Two of these blocks are former capitals; the two others are ogival medallions framing a Cham warrior, dressed with his armor and waving a sword in the height of the fight.

Thus it is that the Annamese sometimes systematically destroy the vestiges of a conquered people, sometimes make them useful in buildings or rites for the Buddhist cult. Did there exist a Cham building in these caves or in the rocks of the mountain, or have the Annamese transported these blocks to this height? It is a question that could perhaps be answered by perusing the archives preserved at the monastery. The monks who live there do not take care of them well and one must shake their torpor to pull them out of the bliss of an anticipated nirvana in which they appear to be plunged for a while.

From the top of a jutting platform on which the commemorative stele of the king stands, one observes the Chinese town of Faifo, where the residence of France has been transferred in December 1892.

In three hours we climb to Quang-Nam, the provincial capital, where the tong-doc (governor) and the Annamese authorities reside.

3

The monuments of Thap-Binh

Half an hour of boating upriver and four hundred meters from the left bank we visit the octagonal towers of Thap-Binh. They are guarded by a stone rhinoceros of Cham cut and by a similar animal clumsily imitated by the Annamese, who have erected small Buddhist altars inside the towers. These towers are in flat, very resistant bricks, having undergone, perhaps in place, an intense firing. We continue to Tra-Keu where we arrive at night.

4

Important ruins at Tra-Keu

An important Catholic mission is established three kilometers from the landing point; a beautiful path along the river will lead us there. It comprises a beautiful church and a presbytery. Further down there is a local convent where they produce silk cloth and an orphanage surrounded by a pretty orchard and greenish rice fields. The main buildings are built

on the embankments of the huge walls of a Cham citadel, flanked by brick towers, one of which is still standing upright. The materials employed by the Annamese come from the Cham. Halfway there a hillock called Beou-Chan, surrounded by small buttresses, rises up. It is there that the palace of the Cham stood.

Terraces and staircases lead to the top of the hill. These staircases were adorned with stone animals: sphinxes, lions, elephants, etc. The cow Nandy with a breast adorned with necklaces and spherical bells is resting in a lying posture. Its ears and horns are broken. On the platform, a small relief represents processions of bayadères. Their bellies and their breasts have been cut off by blows of the hatchet and this interesting block remains half covered in the ground and the grass.

Another shows us a royal cortege composed of a horseman and of another seated figure, with a suite of warriors and women. The corners are supported by sphinx (*kruts*).

On this block of 1,900 kilograms was enthroned the statue, larger than life size, of Uma or Parvati, the wife of Siva, 1.30 meters high. She is squatting, the legs crossed, the bust naked, dressed with a tiara, wearing a necklace, a belt, and rings on her arms and her legs. The lotus stalk or the whole of what she held in both hands has been broken. This statue has

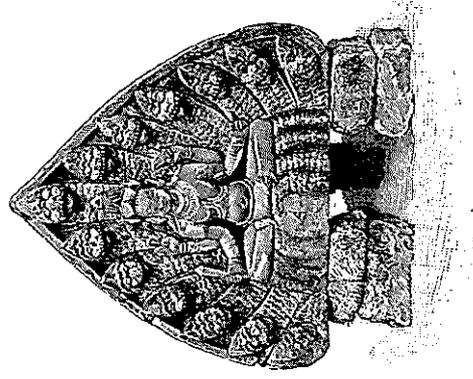


Plate 59. Siva (Engraving by Bazin, based on a photo)

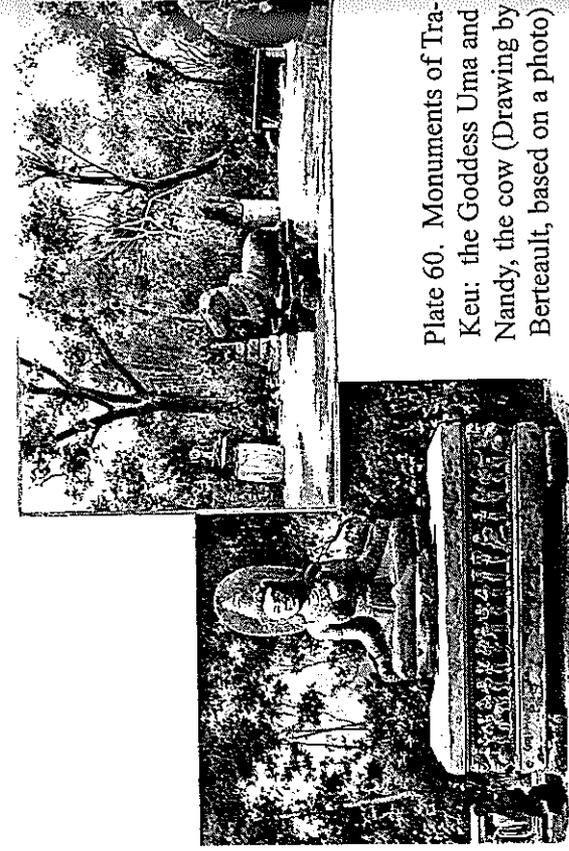


Plate 60. Monuments of Tra-Keu: the Goddess Uma and Nandy, the cow (Drawing by Berteault, based on a photo)

been brought to Tourane, as well as two round fine sandstone bases, 1.30 m in diameter, artfully sculpted and in former times covered with a special varnish. The tympanums of the pediments have also been preserved from destruction.

In an ogival medallion one can see Vishnu, crowned and dancing, holding a lotus flower. In another, better preserved one, Siva is surrounded by thirteen Naga snakes turning their menacing mouths towards him.

Standing sphinxes, snake charmers waving a banner in one hand and a snake in the other, capitals depicting lions, lintels with fine Greek spirals or intertwined foliage, women in prayer, fine Aryan type heads of young men with a fine straight mustache, winged angels with joined hands, and a

great lintel composed of nine women on pediments flanked each by a different animal constitute a curious set of Cham art specimens.

We continue our journey, sometimes on horseback, sometimes by foot or in palanquins, following the mandarin road to the South.

5

Cham monuments of An-Don and Kuong-My

In the prefecture of Thanh-Binh we have to cross a plateau of white sand, 6 km in length. The landscape looks like a flat countryside covered by snow which the sun makes dazzling and which burns our eyes. Soon thereafter, we observe the three towers of An-Don in a bouquet of trees on the right side.

A toppled over stone elephant in a rice field foretells the approach.

They are open to the sky. The ceiling of the main tower is surrounded by a cornice of sixteen moldings. The middle door is formed by huge sandstone monoliths. In front, among the rubble of sculptures, a great block broken in three pieces is covered with Cham inscriptions. It sinks little by little in the wet soil.

The next day we arrive at the ancient fort and the market of Tam-Ky, where the navigable lagoon which links this place with Faifo and Tourane, ends. The seat of the sub-prefecture of Ha-Dong is on the right and it is from there that starts the road which leads to Tra-My, country of cinnamon and tea, inhabited by Moi obliging to Europeans and trading with Chinese.

We pass the very wide river of Kuong-My in a ferryboat. On the territory of this municipality, half-hidden by hedges and trees, rise up monuments with multiple projecting sides, surrounded by all kinds of rubble.

In Tra-Keu the decorative effects appear to have been borrowed from the animal kingdom; in Kuong-My there are especially partially mutilated figures that have been found and brought to Tourane. A crowned warrior, 1.50 m in height, with great teeth, carries a lotus flower in one hand and in the other a rosary. Is it not curious to see this object of the rites being used, at such diverse dates and moments, at the same time among Chinese, Chams, Muslims and Christians? Another warrior with big round eyes, with a threatening face and powerful muscles has an arm lifted up holding a large dagger to fight an enemy. Around his chest a snake is spiraling towards his head. At the origins of the theogonies we find this snake again, an enemy of the human species but obeying a divinity. A third figure also displays a threatening attitude. Around them are a statue of a standing Siva holding a lotus and statues of his worshippers, hands joined and their heads crowned.

Black, very finely grained sandstone stones are covered with very finely engraved inscriptions. Unfortunately, they are broken and the Annamese have made some pieces of it disappear, fearing that by means of these ancient inscriptions, which they cannot decipher, one will dispute them the possession of the land conquered by their ancestors from the Chams.

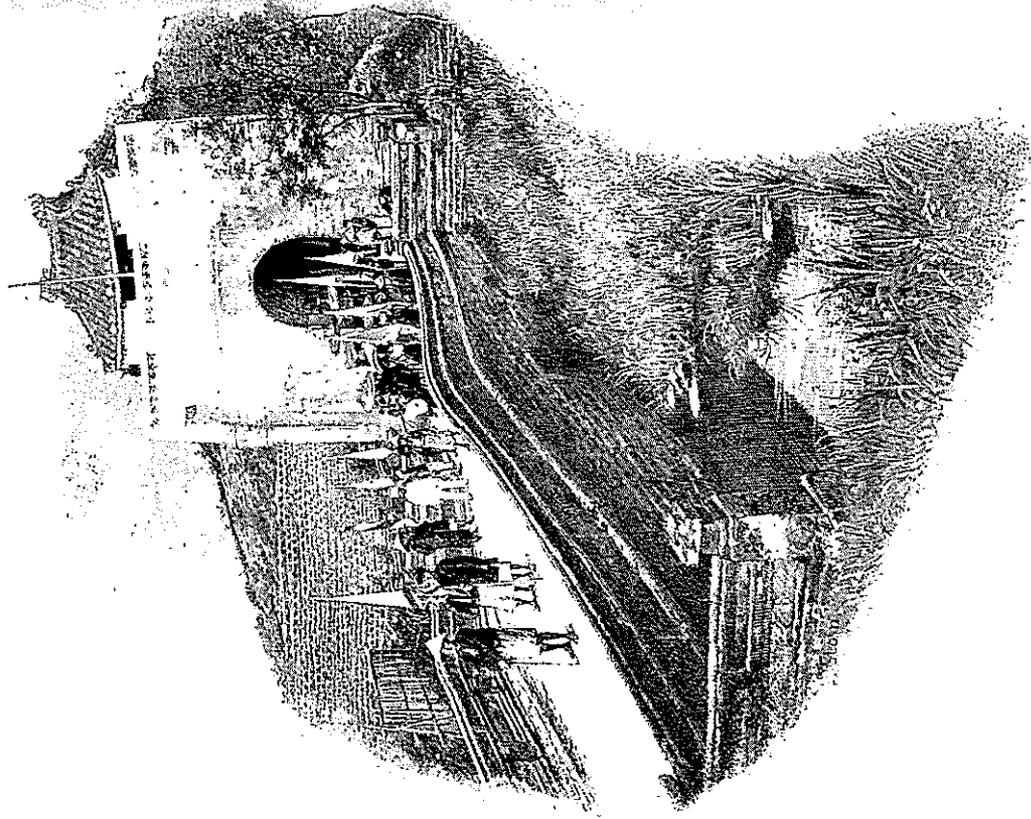


Plate 61. The gate to the citadel of Binh-Dinh
(Drawing by Slom, based on a photo)

We take the road along the river again; we leave the pretty communal house of Lain-Hi to the left. Mulberry fields stretch as far as the eye can see, alternating with maize fields, potatoes, sugar cane, indigo, carrots and rice fields. Herds of buffaloes stare at us stretching out their heads adorned with a beautiful pair of crossed horns.

After two hours of marching, we leave the road for a while. We ford a tributary of the river of Dong-Pho to get nearer three Cham towers, near Cho-Dinh, called "Ivory Towers" by the French and *Duong-Lang* by the Annamese.

They stand on a hill, in a forest of splendid mango and jackfruit trees. Huge majestic Banyan trees attack the lateral towers. I had the bushes removed to be able to walk around the monuments. They are much higher, more carved and better preserved than the two towers of Thi-Nai. That in the middle is higher and more adorned than the two others. The big work is in red bricks but they are richly enhanced with granite ornaments depicting elephants and dragons. Above the doors runs a series of bas-reliefs depicting dancers, standing lions, monsters, animals, women and elephants. The corners are formed by huge dragonheads and animals with grimacing faces, which succeed each other while appearing to get smaller which produces a fantastic effect. These towers are still surrounded further by moldings and friezes cut in the granite. Four big monoliths form the doors; they stand a little above the ground.

The Annamese literati, deprived of any ideal, only knows the ancestor and tomb cult. His eyes remain fixed on the ground, while the Khmer lifts his eyes up and his thoughts towards the top of the towers and towards multiple heavens where the joys grow and become immaterial. The Annamese does not celebrate the material beauty of the monuments: the Khmer Pang refers in his poetic chants to the Angkor temples as "the august perfection". "In his enthusiastic fervor, lowering his head, he adores the statues of the master which he has not been able to see in life in extasis and he inspires himself on seeing these monuments to direct his aspirations towards what is good, towards knowledge, purity, charity and eloquence!" (*L'Édification d'Angkor*, translated by E. Aymonier).

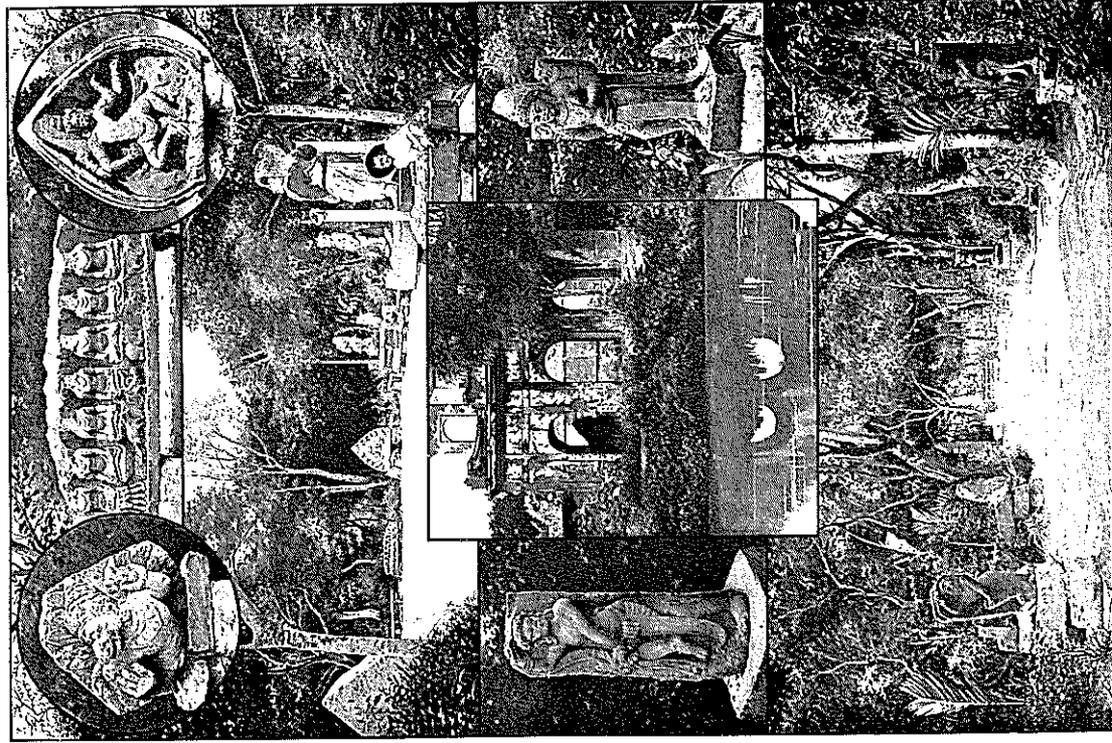


Plate 63. Monuments of the Cham park in Tourane
(Drawing by Gotorbe, based on a photo)

It is curious to put together the sculptures of the towers of Duong-Long with those of Angkor, a partial description of which we borrow from the Khmer Pang. Indeed, here like in Angkor, "lions with horrible appearances, the mouth gaping and the fangs sharp, look alive. The caryatids are formed by monsters standing up or lying down. The top tapers in silhouette, adorned with sparkling mirrors that throw the reflections of the light far in the sky. The layered roofs curve back in points with silver, ivory or copper ornaments (from which they get their nicknames). Lotus stalks, new flowers or dancers with stretched arms spring forth. The serene, strong Brahmas on the four sides look towards the four points of the compass.

The Buddhists admit that in the world of Maha Brahma there are numerous sacred beings which they call Brahmas, while the Brahmans only recognize one single and eternal Brahma whom the Laotians call *Tapromh*, "the ancestor".

"Vishnu, audacious and powerful, has mounted on the garuda or on the head of richly caparisoned elephants. Around him, the naga snakes unwind their elongated and scaly bodies and set their menacing heads upright. Fantastic animals follow in rows and vigilant guardians inspect with a watchful eye.

"The face of Siva is reproduced amidst figures who came to adore the splendor of this Light of the three worlds and ask him for victory, power and life.

"Finally the figures of the women are pleasing. Their supple and slender bodies are endowed with every perfection. Their heads are crowned with flowers. Some have their hairs tied up, other have it cut."

"Their breasts, firm and round, look like lotus flowers. Some hold celestial flowers by their stalks; others look at each other while bowing or grab each other's shoulders while disputing the stalks of flowers. Others are smiling gaily as if they were in pleasant conversation: one would think one saw them make a gentle and veiled confession, then lowering their heads, divided between love and a sense of decency. Covered with

necklaces, bracelets and rings they lean over, turn and lie down, cheerful, supple, swaying."

All proportions maintained, the same subjects of ornamentation are met with in the Cham monuments. Thus we have chosen to apply the descriptions of grand works made by a Khmer to more modest works but in the same style, built in Annam by a people so different from the Annamese.

This Cham people occupied the country before the Annamese who have replaced them by the right of conquering them. The kingdom of the Cham was comprised between Cao-Bang in Tonkin and Baria, the border of Cochinchina, from the first centuries of our era.

About 800 years ago, king Po-Klong, pushed to the South by the encroachment of the Annamese, built himself a capital called the "Town of the Firs" in the place where Hue, the present capital, is presently located. Later the kingdom of Champa had Qui-Nhon as its capital, a few kilometers north of present-day Binh-Dinh. Finally, in the fifteenth century, their last fortress was at Phan-Ry, the port of Binh-Thuan. During this time, they were still powerful since a king of Java married the daughter of a Cham king and since their princes could gain the hand of Annamese princesses.

Their temples were adorned with great statues in gold and silver, with diamond eyes and rubies for teeth. Statues in gilded bronze, cases, golden platters, necklaces and jewels adorned with precious stones, pearls and ivory were found in abundance among them.

Then began the Annamese invasion and by 1658 the Chams were pushed back into the mountains of Binh-Thuan, where they live today under the name *Moi*, "barbarians". Dispersed in this way, they still form a population of 50,000 souls, distributed over 80 villages. They are with 10,000 in Cochinchina, 60,000 in Cambodia and 10,000 in Siam, 120,000 to 130,000 souls in total.

Oppressed excessively by the Annamese they saw liberators in us. Some of them are Muslims, others at the same time Brahman and Buddhist.

They know about Mecca and they have a mosque. They practice a mixture of Brahman and Buddhist rites. Thus they do not possess cows. They possess some sort of fearful and religious veneration for the animals that must carry them into the other world. This is a Hindu tradition.

Among the majority of the Chams of Binh-Thuan, the daughters ask for marriage and not the boys. They do not have slanting eyes and wear a white and green robe. Their type is better than that of the Annamese.

"This people," says Mr. Aymonier, "have a great past. It is a distinct race, interesting as any, in our colonial empire. Its language, writing, religions and customs differ totally from those of the Annamese. Less important than those of the Cambodians, their monuments indicate taste and a similar civilization. The conquerors were only devastating barbarians who have systematically destroyed a great quantity of Sanskrit or Cham inscriptions and mutilated the most beautiful pieces of antique sculpture." In Cambodia, the Siamese, although they are Buddhists were also relentless destroyers.

The Cham monuments of Annam are mainly square—rectangular or octagonal—towers. They usually are gathered in a group of three, as a recollection of the Brahman trinity. Some are on heights, others are at the entry of valleys, but signals are visible from one to the next and we have used them in 1887 for military optical telegraphy.

We have visited the Ivory Towers and those of Thu-Tien, the Silver Towers (*Bang It*), the Golden Towers (*Troc Loc* and *Go Sat*), the Copper Towers (*Canh Tien*), and those of Binh-Lam and Qui-Nhon.

They are at the same time in granite, sandstone and red bricks. The architectural principle is the same as in Cambodia: it is a cut monolith placed side by side without cement. The ornamentation is the same but the towers are isolated and they are not superposed by galleries at the intersections or by cross-shaped naves.

From where and how were these huge blocks brought? We have no answer. How have they been able to lift them up to place them? They show only groups of holes three centimeters deep.

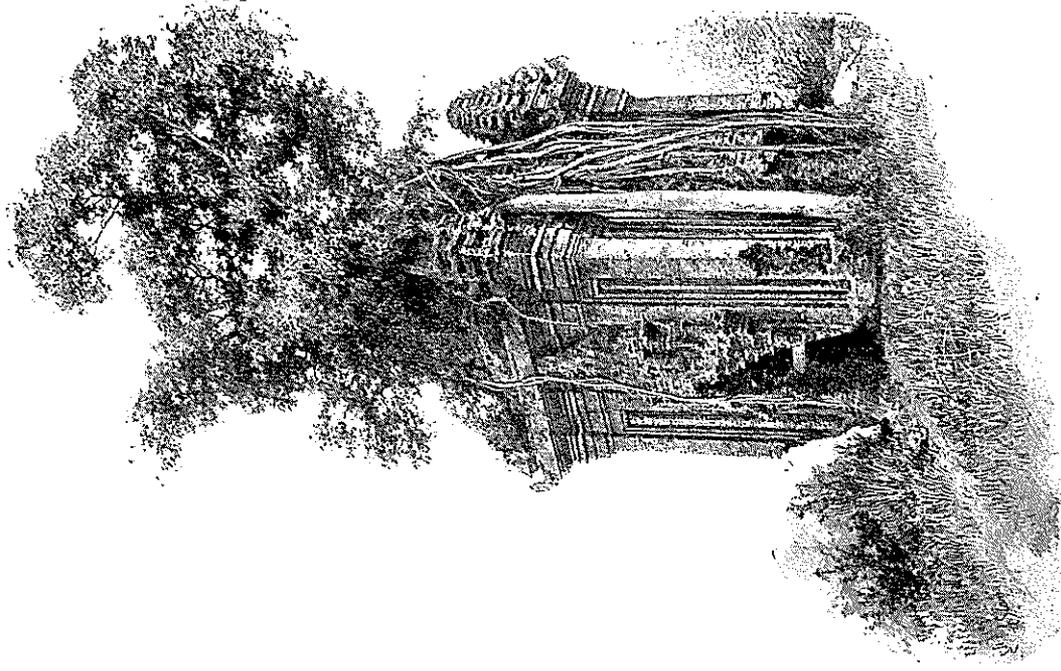


Plate 64. Cham tower of Thu -Tien
Drawing by Slom, based on a photo)

This practice, which is generally found also in those from Cambodia has, despite what the inhabitants say, as objective to link the stones by iron clamps only and even less to cover the building with some kind of metallic facing or other. Mr. de Lagrée, describing the quarries of the same stones in Cambodia says that no stone in the quarry showed traces of holes. Thus they did not serve for transportation but for the lifting of the blocks to their place for which they helped themselves with cramps, levers or utensils we do not know about.

Formerly there were three towers in Qui-Nhon. The sculpted debris of one of them has served for the bases of the columns of the former royal warehouse.

The two towers that still subsist can be seen from far. Their walls are painted with greenery and shrubs grow on their degraded domes. One would say they were two black giants leaning one against the other and their appearance recalls the verses of Victor Hugo:

[vers l'autre incline
Vieilles Tours que le temps l'une
[verte colline,
Et qui semblez de loin, sur la

Deux noirs géants prêts à lutter.

And indeed, the Cham towers situated on the hills served in 1887 and 1888 for our struggle against the rebels. Franco-Annamese units were installed inside and on the outside an optical telegraph.

These towers are without roofs, which one could not know, seeing them from the outside. The vault must have collapsed. A finely worked base in stone that is broken now must have supported a great statue. There is no cornice but square holes on two sides and round ones on the two other sides must have received wooden struts supporting a ceiling in sculpted wood. The wooden doors were with two leaves, massive and embedded in holes made in the sandstone monoliths of 1.60 m that formed the frame.

Each of these towers has only one square door opening to the rising sun. Thus the people did not enter there. On each of the three other sides false



Plate 65. Praying women (Drawing by Berg, based on a photo)



Plate 66. Brahma, Ganesa, Vishnu (Drawing by Berg, based on a photo)

doors are jutting out with a tympanum of the fronton. They are full and their quadruple diagonal ribs are framed by four concentric ramps of foliage moldings.

The northern tower is 7.60 m on the sides and 4 m on each inside wall. Eight stories divided from the columns' shafts to the top, form a dome with a square base of 25 m in height and they recall the eight parts of the Buddha's bones that have been locked in eight urns to be placed in the towers with eight stories.

On each side the bricks imitate five high square columns above which the sandstone pieces are placed, approaching each other by horizontal courses to form a dome up to the top, which ends, according to tradition, in a gilded ball and a vertical spire. The elders report that the interior was in gold lamé and that two hundred years ago the crew of a European ship which had already visited the coast and the port, came back to take this ball and the ornamentation and took them aboard the vessel.

Besides the well neighboring the towers of Qui-Nhon there is one of these rectangular blocks of 3.50 m in length, 2 m in width by 80 cm in thickness. These granites could not be sculpted.

The sculpted monoliths are in gray sandstone, similar to that of Angkor, with a fine grain and capable of resulting in a perfect polish. This tone is soft to cut in the quarry and hardens in the air but not enough to resist the rain and the sun. It is the same stone which the Cambodians called "mud stone," *thma pok*. The sculptures made from it are so delicate, so deeply cut and so finished that, according to a legend spread among the people and among the highest of Cambodia, the materials of the Khmer monuments were made from all the pieces with earth and water and molded in the liquid state according to shapes assigned by the Great Architect of the universe, Prea Pus Nuka, the delegate of Prea En Indra, the king of the spirits.

What is curious is that the base and the capitals of the columns, whether they are in stone or in bricks, recall the Greek style of the best periods to

the point of confusion: it is the same general design, these are the same moldings, the same ornamentation, worked with an almost equal perfection.

The lintel which links the columns offers a series of dancers from both sexes, in Cambodian style, legs spread, arms in the air. Along the frames naga snakes with human heads and two arms unwind. We find these snakes at the origins of all cosmogonies as the enemies of the human race but subjected to the superior divinities.

The stories, or rather the eight double ribbons of jutting stones, form the crown of these buildings. The middle of each of these ribbons is occupied by a personage, god or king, holding scepter or sword. Lions with manes are seated on both his sides, watching him, as well as griffons with a tail with a plume and women holding a lotus stalk. In the upper ribbons, small symmetric ogival niches, which diminish in size every story, flank the figure of the middle.

At the corners the *krut* or *garuda* stand out. These fantastic beings have the bust, legs and arms of a woman, a head and a beak of an owl or of a crowned dog, claws and wings by which they hold on to walls like the gargoyles in our old buildings. The *garuda* is the mount that *Vishnu* uses to cross through the air. One observes him, in the first ribbon, astride the neck of one of these animals, which are the enemies of the *nagas*, thus recalling the battle between good and bad angels.

The *nagas* or snakes with monstrous heads reside under the rocks, which serve as the base of the mountain (*Meru*) which supports the world, and in the surrounding waters. They are the protectors of *Buddha* and terrible for the poor humans.

The *yaks* occupy an intermediate class between the demons and the angels. They guard the second heaven, in which they abandon themselves in chants and dances together with women but they can change in shape and come to roam on earth and in the waters. Another kind of *yak*, the *rahas*, which live in the forests of the Himalaya mountains, on the contrary, keep

their original shape. It is believed that this name designates the indigenous people.

At the Silver Tower, the angels of the walls are supported by yaks with a cut mouth, a grimacing face and jutting eyes. At the Golden Tower, these are ganesa, men with elephant heads wearing a tiara and necklaces and holding a scepter in their hands and whose trump is resting in the other hand. It is the symbol of power and intelligence.

It is known that the Buddha has died in India 543 years before Jesus Christ. Seventy-eight years after the Christian era Buddhism was introduced in Indochina. It had battles to fight but it rallied the masses and substituted or superimposed itself on the cult of Brahma, whose imprint dominates in architecture and in the cult of the Chams and Khmers. The Buddhists have never showed any aversion for the Brahman figures but they take care, says Mr. Feer, "to place everything under their Buddha, in such a way that Brahma and the gods of his pantheon appear to bring homage to Buddha and are the first Buddhists only."

This closeness and this association of Brahman and Buddhist figures had to be indicated. It is believed the ruined towers of Annam are of Khmer origins: they are Cham in origin. The Cham, Malays, Cambodians and Hindus had continuing relations among them, before the appearance of the Annamese in the country. Thus, although different, the features of their architecture have many points of analogy. It is beyond doubt that these buildings had a religious, strategic and national objective. The fashion of their decorations not only recalls the Greek style but also the style of our Medieval sculptures.

"If one only lifts up one's eyes," says Mr. de Lagrée, "towards the ogival vaults of these towers, if, leaving aside the regular intertwining of stalks, flowers and foliage, one looks at the grimacing crowd of monsters of the Buddhist mythology, the naive figures of angels and saints in prayer on the cornices cut in high relief, one feels transferred into our western Middle Ages. How much proof for this analogy can be found! The mouths of the dragons, the diabolical contours, the long claws alternating with pious

figures kneeling in ingenuousness and contemplation are not surpassed in our old cathedrals."

We made the ascent of the stony hill of Thap-Ba-Manthien, or the Hill of the Three Towers. We saw open Bien-Hoa stone quarries there, a stone despised by the Cham architects. The vaults are low and ogival and that of a remarkable neighboring edifice is cylindrical. These vaults are built like in Cambodia. The stones, superposed on each side by horizontal courses, come closer together and fit together, each jutting over the one below. They knock off the interior endings from the base to the top and obtain the cylindrical or ogival cut. The surface was then polished and sometimes painted.

The great tower has four doors, cutting each other along the points of the compass like a dome or a triumphal arch. The neighboring small building has two, oriented North-South.

In this tower was enthroned a Siva with ten arms, with a tiara, simply dressed with Cham shorts, the legs crossed on a spread lotus. On his nude chest a snake unrolled, lifting its heads towards that of the god. The statue is cut in black granite with a very fine grain of which there are no samples in the surroundings. Legend has it that all these materials have been brought from elsewhere. Thus between Qui-Nhon and the Silver Towers one meets some twenty rectangular sandstone blocks measuring almost 6 meters in length by 0.80 m of squaring off. They have been forgotten along the road. How were they, in that time, able to transport overland, on the sea and on the rivers and hoist to the top of hills and put in place 20 to 25 meters high blocks that weigh 6,000 kilograms?

The Siva of which we have spoken has been sent to France in 1884. Important shipments previously made for Lyon in 1877 have been lost in a shipwrecking in the Red Sea. In Qui-Nhon one can see two of these blocks, one of which depicts two rows of religious people in prayer.

Tucked away in the mountain we have found bronze statuettes, a Ganesa with the head of an elephant, a goddess Uma, the wife of Siva, of the purest Aryan type, and a Brahma with five heads and ten arms. Four

heads are looking towards the points of the compass and the fifth stands above the other four. This Brahma in green bronze is very old and could very well go back to the fourth century.

The towers enclosed statues of precious metal. The first of these have disappeared one or two centuries ago. Those in stone have been taken out more recently. They have dug out the walls to rip out those that were attached to it. Above each interior door there is an ogival niche in which a half-relief woman with a bare bust, wearing a very richly adorned high hairdo and holding a water lily flower in her hand, was standing.

The majority of these statues, be they in metal or in stone, were gilded. "To this effect," said Mr. de Lagrée, "the statue was covered with a black resinous paint, similar to that which is still being used by the Cambodians and which is called marak. Over this they applied the vermilion of the gilding. For the great statues that were exposed outside, they mixed the marak with a paste of ashes forming a coating 4 to 5 millimeters thick. The gilding disappears with great difficulty and this varnish cannot be changed, as can be seen on the statues which I have carefully collected and which date from many centuries ago."

These towers, similar to those which in Cambodia are called Prea Sat, served no doubt for holding the remains of great personages. The Chams burned their corpses. On the same funeral pyre they sent the wives of the deceased kings. The ashes were gathered in precious vases or surrounded by very expensive objects. The custom of enclosing the ashes in pyramids has been continued until today. The inhabitants of the country, during the time of the wars, and the conquerors, after the extermination of the Cham, have searched for and taken away the wealth these buildings contained. The Annamese annals even state that in 436 a general had taken in possession one hundred thousand pounds of gold as his part of the booty, after one of the defeats of the Cham (or Lamap), and that he had broken their precious statues. Having retreated, the specters of the statues, which he had broken never ceased to appear to him, and they harassed him until the end of his days.

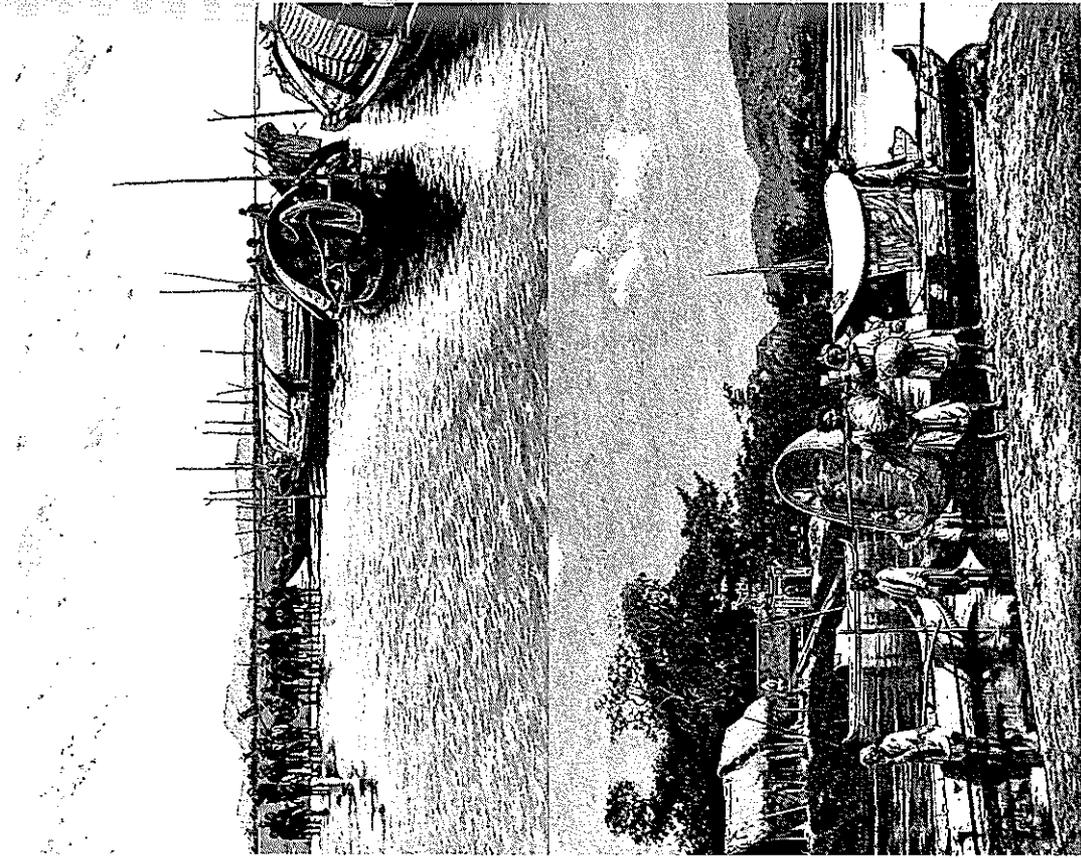


Plate 67. A sampan flotilla and a ferry boat
(Drawing by Bogaert, based on a photo)

Against this general, the Chams had sent a considerable number of elephants that caused his troops to panic. The Chinese general had big elephants, tigers, lions and rhinoceroses built in bamboo, very well imitated and he filled them with rockets and powder and brought them into the battle. When the elephants of the Chams came back into the battle, terrified by the sight of animals that could spit fire and flames with a lot of noise, they fled and the Cham army was routed. That was the period of Homeric wars, well before powder was known in France.

The nature of the inscriptions taken from these monuments by Mr. Aymonier has been deciphered by Mr. Bergaigne. They indicate the age of these buildings and their uses and made clear that they had been consecrated to the cult of Vishnu, Siva and his wife Uma (or Parvati). They give the names of the Cham kings and draw our attention to this civilization that was formerly ignored. The inscriptions and the reigns of the sovereigns stretch from the third to the fifteenth century of our era. These inscriptions are sometimes in Sanskrit and sometimes in old Cham. The oldest in Sanskrit are in verse form. The alphabet stems from southern India and dates back more than fifteen hundred years, an era during which Indian civilization flourished on the eastern coast of Indochina, where Marco Polo has seen it in its entire splendor in the thirteenth century. The dates, which start from the year 78 of the Christian era, have served to fix the chronology of the Cham kings.

The inscriptions are singing the praise of the kings, princesses and devout persons of whose liberality they tell. They perpetuate the memory of the temples' and the statues' erections. They indicate that these temples were dedicated to Siva, to his wife and to the linga of Siva. They build golden statues for him and the Khmers came to take these away as far as Nha-Trang in 965. It is in this part of Annam that the most beautiful Cham temples are still standing, among others those of Po-Nagar, described by Mr. Aymonier.

The destroyer was the Khmer king Rajendra Varman, bearing the same title Varman as the Cham kings. The latter often took the qualification

Vrah-Pada, the sacred feet, Prea-Bat, like the present kings of Cambodia do. The Cham kings called themselves Indra and Sinha and took the title Raja, king of kings. The name Ciampa is that of a city of the kingdom; they said Ciampa-Pura like one says Sinha-Pura, Singapore, Nagara-Ciampa like one says Nokor-Khmer. One can still see the analogy between the two peoples. The Chams called the Cambodians Kur and the Annamites, in 1142, Yvan, like today.

There are Cham inscriptions from the tenth to the eighteenth degree latitude North. The inscription of the most modern king dates from the fourteenth century and has been found in the province of Binh-Dinh where they have found also some of the twelfth century. These are invocations to Vishnu reincarnated in the man-lion, to Siva and to his wife Uma, and to Vishnu reunited with Siva in a single body. Siva was worshipped under the names borrowed from the kings who built temples for him or who contributed to enhance the splendor of his cult. The kings thus were hieratic personages whose persons were sacred and associated with that of the divinity, like in all of the Far East, as well as in Indochina, Annam and China. But in Champa it is always Sivaism that dominates, with a mixture of Buddhism left in an inferior state.

7

The monastery of Thap-Moi

We take the mandarin road to the North to visit the monastery of Thap-Moi and the ruined Cham monuments in this region.

The first part of the road, between Binh-Dinh and Phu-Cat, is bad: the stone bridges are ruined; the wooden bridges have no roadway and lack posts. Our horses get across the three first rivers by fording.

On the left we observe the Cham tower of Canh-Tien. It is the location of the old Cham city of Bang-Xa and of their great citadel of Cha-Ban, which was 12 kilometers in circumference. One could still recognize the entrance because it was flanked by two fantastic stone animals and two sandstone elephants, 2.20 m high, facing each other. One bears a crown and has a necklace. These two monoliths have been, say the Annamese, brought from Quang-Nam by the Chams fleeing the conquerors. This fact proves that at that time there must have been arched bridges, roads of Bien-Hoa stone and transportation means unknown today. Despite the courage of its 70,000 defenders, of which 40,000 were massacred and 30,000 taken as prisoners to Hue, the citadel of Cha-Ban fell finally to the power of the Annamese in 1458 and it was destroyed barely a century ago by Emperor Gia-Long who built the present citadel of Binh-Dinh further down.

The town and fortress of the Chams was defended by a number of advance posts, marked by towers, between which optical signals must have been established like we had in 1887.

These are the Copper Tower, the Golden Tower, the Silver Towers, the Towers of Qui-Nhon, Ke-Son and Binh-Lam and the Ivory Towers. The Chams also commanded the estuary of the present Bay of Qui-Nhon in the East and the mountain ranges of the West and the South.

One of them, the Copper Tower, has small detached towers on top, at the corners of which rise stones sculpted in the shape of curved back acanthus leaves, silhouetted against the blue sky. These stones, superposed one on the other in the same order while diminishing in size, give the massive top of the tower a much more slender and a somewhat fantastic appearance. The four corners of the tower, from the base to the top, consist of square columns sculpted in sandstone. The vault is full; the dome is square. The four sides join at the summit, which must have had a copper ball or a spire.

Continuing our route, we soon arrive at the main monastery of the region, called Thap-Moi, "New Tower". A gravel road crossing the river and breached by aqueducts in granite leads us there. Behind the temple

are the houses of the monks, their students and the servants, their private chapels and a pretty garden of mango trees, in the shade of which a few curious sculptures coming from the neighboring Cham temples have been gathered.

8

The ruins in Hue

The liner brings us back to Tourane and we proceed to Hue over the Peak of the Clouds. We pass a few days visiting the necropolises of the kings of Annam which each depict a Trianon [Castle] and they are truly the Champs Élysées of the royal manes.

The only vestiges of the Chams which one finds there are from the ruined enclosure of the capital that King Poklong built there eight centuries ago. It is called the "Capital of the Firs" and it is perhaps as a souvenir of the battles with the Chams that the princes of Annam are compelled to plant a fir with their own hands in the location situated beyond the river of Phu-Cam and on its right bank. It is in this way that the staggered rows which surround the Esplanade of the Imperial Sacrifices, where every three years the king celebrates an important ceremony of a day and a night in the presence of all the mandarins and delegates of the municipalities, have been formed.

Also on the right bank of the river of Hue one sees a mountain in the form of a trapezoid adorned with a jagged outline of firs and placed facing the gate to the royal palace. It is called "the king's screen."

Since a small French steamer is going to Thuan-An, the port of Hue and to Dong-Hoi, the capital of Quang-Binh, we use the opportunity to look at

the vestiges the Chams have left in this province. During our stay in Dong-Hoi we first made an excursion to the prefecture of Quang-Ninh and to the provincial temple of literature (Van-Mieu). We only touch upon Dong-Hoi because we have the intention to study the famous caves, very little known and almost never visited, of Chua-Nghe or Cu-Lac. It's quite a journey to get there.

9

The inscriptions of Chua-Nghe

Leaving from the capital (Dong-Hoi) we continue on horseback to follow the mandarin road crossing through the monumental gate of the stone wall. On the right side we pass the beautiful church with two square towers and we reach the market town and sub-prefecture of Bo-Trach across arid burning sands.

We visit in passing the fishing harbor of Ly-Hoa and its picturesque pagoda laid out in tiers along the river. Then we cross the sands and the picturesque rocks of the beach up to the market of Quang-Khe at the mouth of the Song-Giang, which is close to 900 meters wide.

We rent three sampans in this harbor, one of which is to serve for the kitchen supplies and we ascend the northern branch, called the Song Nay. Having arrived in front of the militia post of Minh-Cam, one observes on the right bank the narrow entrance to a very high and very deep cave, the existence of which could hardly be suspected from the outside.

On the interior rocks they have placed, like natural altars, stones with the appearance of shapeless statues and fantastic animals. Deep crevices make walking difficult. The bats come out of their holes and one hears the

yelping which originates, say the Annamese, from the dog of Buddha, huddle up in the invisible depths of the cave.

On the left side, a pretty path leads us to the residence of the sub-prefect of Tuyen-Hoa. The plantations are bordered by palms, areca palms, grape-fruit and jack-fruit trees.

We descend the Nay again in a single night and we take the southern branch, the Son, to the territory of Cu-Lac and to the fields of the Christian village of Phong-Gia. The river is very deep and embanked. In front of us huge walls or steep rocks are rising up. A narrow opening, trapezoid in shape, gives passage to our canoes and we enter the circular basin, the vault of which is fifteen meters high. On the right side, rising in terraces, are flat rocks on which small altars consecrated to the spirits of Chua-Nghe are placed.

In the back opens the black door of a cave that appears to just break the water. A pilot armed with a boat hook and a torch bearer produce the effects of Charon, the pilot of the hells. We navigate between walls which are sometimes white, sometimes black, from which stalactites and stalagmites, hanging from the ceiling, detach themselves.

After 30 minutes of navigation in a picturesque labyrinth of basins and corridors, one reaches a sand beach the level of which is higher, while the river disappears without noise, without whirlpools, although the tide pushes it. The Song-Non, the middle branch, dives under the mountain for 3 kilometers and then reappears. The Song-Son, the southern branch, suddenly stops without diminishing either in width or in depth and without no trace of it can be found.

We land on this beach and we walk on the calcareous soil of the gallery of the Acheron to a hall in the shape of a horseshoe, sustained, from the foot to the top, by stalagmitic columns. Other broken pillars look like the ruins of an ancient temple. Piles of large old bricks are spread around here and there.

On the rocky walls Cham inscriptions in irregular forms, crudely engraved by the offspring of the conquered, blocked by the conquerors and

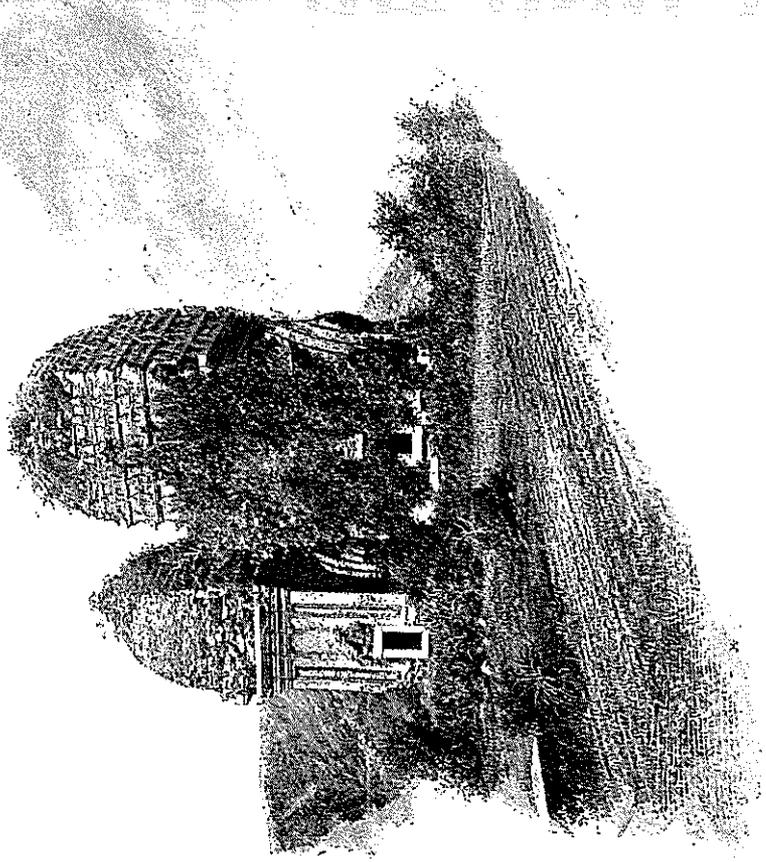


Plate 68. Cham towers of Qui-Nhon
(Drawing by Slom, based on a photo)

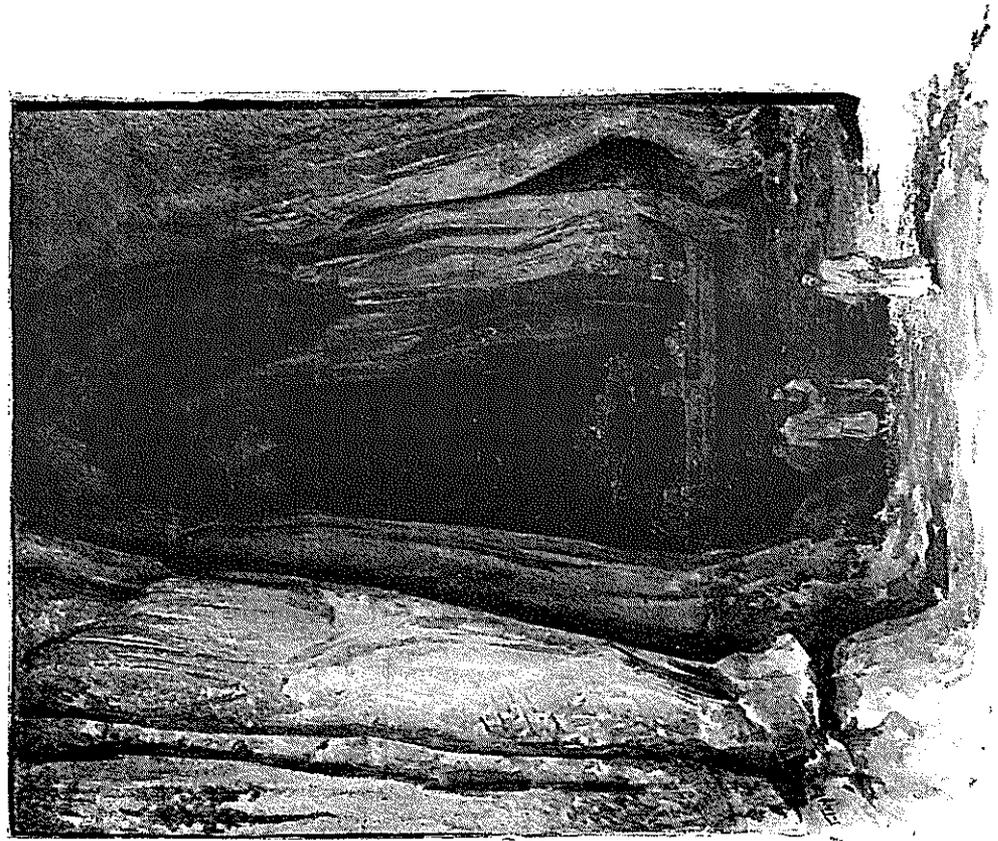


Plate 69. Interior of the caves
(Drawing by Taylor, based on a photo)

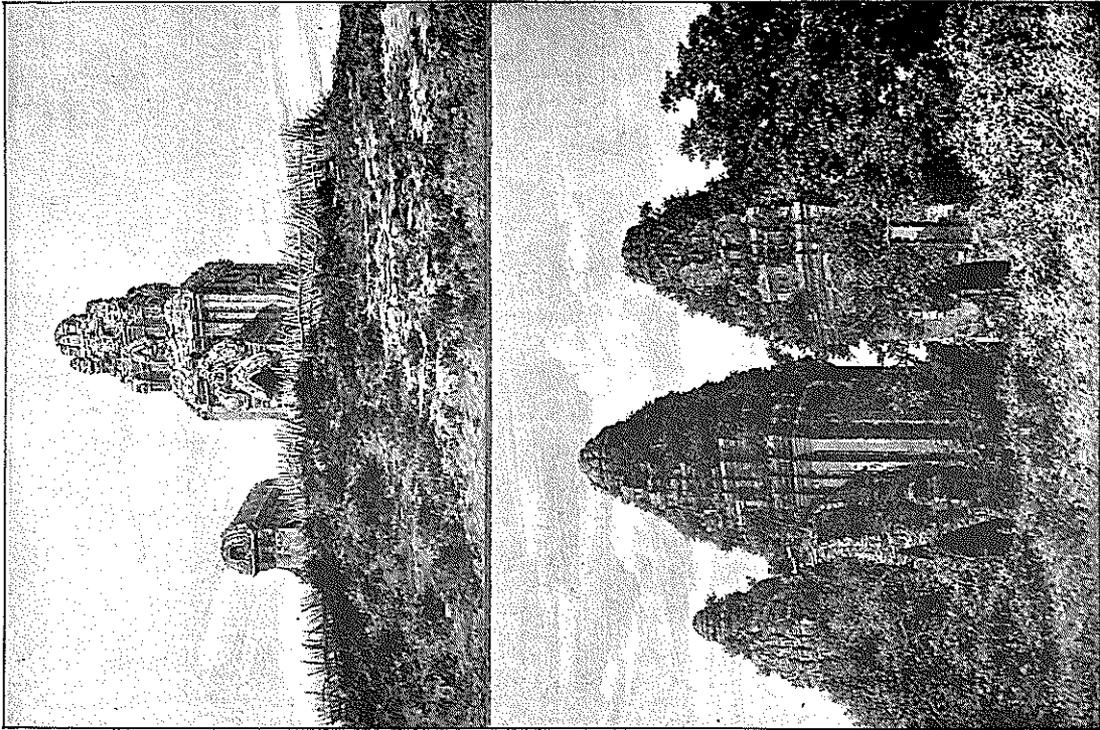


Plate 71. Cham monuments of Binh-Dinh
(Drawing by Taylor, based on a photo)

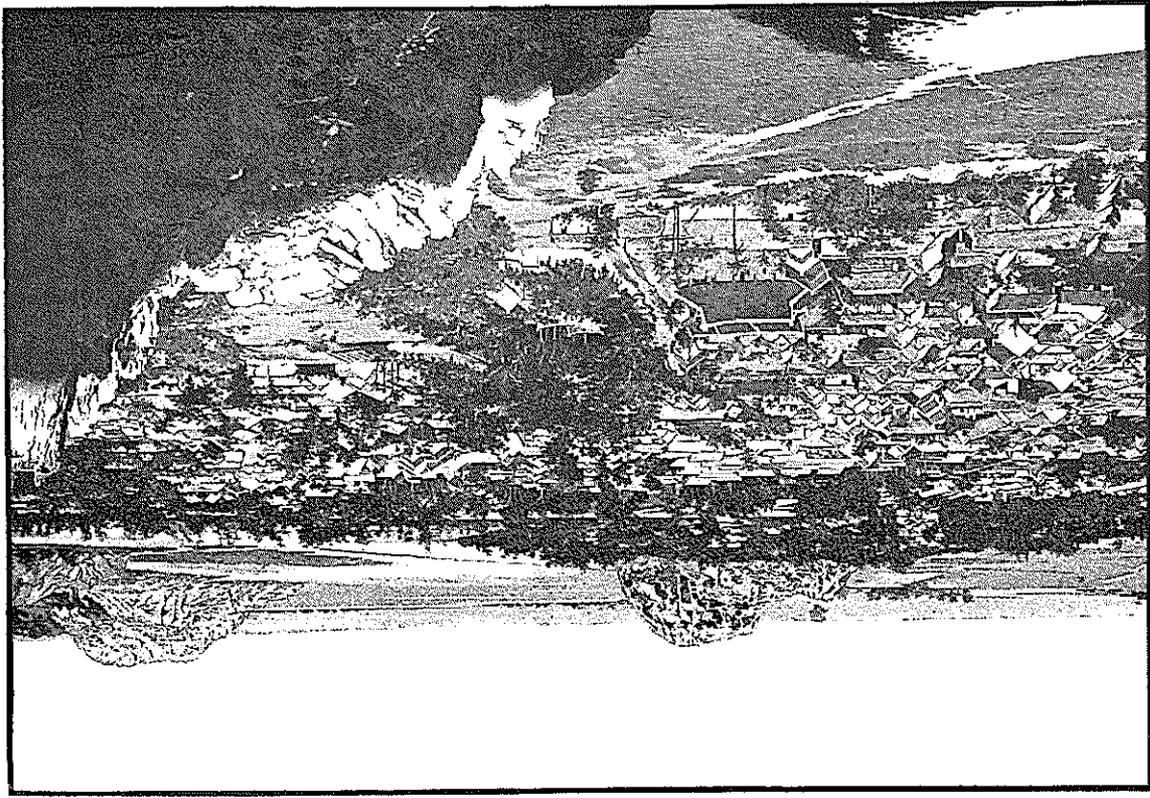


Plate 72. The village of Sai-Son (Drawing by Gotorbe, based on a photo)

We lit the torches again and we penetrated into the second gallery, that of the Styx, narrower but higher and more irregular than the first one. Huge stalactitic blocks recall the fountains of the Concorde under the frozen snows of winter and the stalagmites have the appearance of these fountains during summertime. We retraced our steps. When we left, it was night outside. We heard the shrieking of peacocks, of monkeys and budgerigars hiding from branch to branch in the cracks of the rocks.

While demonstrating contempt for these conquered people, Moi, Cham, Tho, Tiem which they all lump together under the name Moi, "barbarians," the Annamese are still terrified by the memory of the power of the Chams. After five centuries of occupation they are still worried what has become of the spirits of the former owners of the country. According to them, these spirits must roam around hungrily because their descendants have perished and do not offer them gifts. If a farmer suffers from an illness, a plague, such as smallpox, he sees in the shadows of the nights apparitions of dispossessed Moies. He calls the sorcerer who will confirm that indeed the former owner of the land is irritated and that one must appease him by renting or buying his land from him. Thus one can see the motives which have brought the conquerors to make disappear all traces of the former inhabitants. It is the task of the French, the new masters of this region to stop these mutilations and this destruction and to preserve the ruins of the Cham monuments.

10

Measures to be taken for conservation

The history of the Cham nation, of this people which has preceded the present inhabitants in Annam, can be reconstructed little by little and in fragments. It is curious to find amidst a population with a Chinese civilization traces of a very interesting nation with an Indian civilization. At first it was believed that the extent of the Cham nation was rather small, that this people was small in numbers, its domination of little importance and its degree of culture not very advanced. The works of Aymonier and Bergaigne have thrown a new light on this past which goes back, according to the annals, to close to 3,000 years before our era and which has only disappeared in the fifteenth century. Each of these fragments will reconstitute the building and will show us the necessity of preciously conserving the testimony of this civilization so old and so different from the one that we find today on the same soil, where we too have installed ourselves as conquerors but not as destroyers or oppressors. Collections of stone and bronze statues have been taken to France in 1890. They have even attracted the attention of the literate public, at the occasion of an Indochinese exhibition in the provinces where they were shown for the first time. They are destined to complete the Khmer Trocadero Museum, the art of which is similar and the Hindu origins of which are the same. One and the other have their very special place in the Guimet Museum. The oriental scholars are pleased to know that the Ministry of Public Education and Fine Arts will take charge of donating such an interesting acquisition about the history of a vast country over which we have established our protectorate.

Note

¹ Which indicates that some are girls and the others are women, the Cambodian girls wearing, from their marriage onwards, crew cut hairs.



Plate 73. An elephant
(Drawing by Bazin, based on a photo)

Hanoi

The recent transformations of Tonkin's capital

Gaston Cahen

1

The Railways of Tonkin

Travelling 3,000 miles, passing from Europe to Asia, from the Far West to the Far East, leaving France for Tonkin and suddenly discovering France again, with cities, people, things familiar to the eye since childhood, that sounds like a paradox, and yet, it is the truth.

A boundless swampy plain bordered on the horizon by mountains that blur in the fog, that is the impression the Tonkin Delta gives at first sight. But this undulating prairie of gray colors, is it not a corner of France? Would it not be possible that these rectangles of such a beautiful green were fields of corn on the blade? And how could you believe this grass is rice, that it hides a soaking and muddy soil, if clumps of bamboo would not remind us that tropical vegetation is not identical with that of the West, and if buffaloes, sunken into the mud to their bellies, did not stop us from thinking about the cows of France that hit a firm soil with their heavy hoofs.

Also, the best road in this swamp is no longer the river, the thousand arms of the river in which the water, which is not deep enough, would get sampans and steam launches stuck: it is the railways, a real railway, neat and gleaming like a new toy, which, passing over metal bridges, brings you in a few hours from Haiphong to Hanoi. Do not believe that this short line from the capital of Indochina to its port is isolated in the country. If you want to continue your route towards the North-West, going up to the Chinese border, take a ticket all the way to Yen-Bai and soon up to Lao-Kai. By steam boat and then by railway you would have passed without stopping from France to the Far East, from Marseille to China. You can also reach the "Gate to China," towards the Northeast, in the direction of Canton, by splitting off at Hanoi: it is sufficient to go to the ticket office and to ask one of the Annamese employees—they all speak French—a ticket for Lang-Son. And if you fancy returning, a poster will announce that the railway to the Southwest reaches Vinh, while waiting until it will be continued to Saigon along the coast of Annam.

Nothing or almost nothing will change in habits you bring from France and you will barely notice that this gentleman, with a dignified air, seated beside you and dressed more or less like you, carries a rolled mat on his back and that he is a Chinese merchant. Who knows whether you even noticed the Annamese? They are nevertheless numerous and use the railway line at least as happily as our farmers in France do. Like them, they drag pigs and poultry to the market and the women are not less overloaded with children and baskets, not less talkative or embarrassed, according to the case, than the farmers' women of Bourgogne or Normandy. But here a fourth class is reserved for the locals. The coaches of the fourth class are equipped, along their entire length, with simple benches: they look quite like the coaches at home. Since the Annamese pay very little for this kind of public transportation and since they can take whatever they wish with them, they very much appreciate this rapid, economic and safer locomotion than their carts or their barges. This then appears to be a good example of taking care of the needs of the country. So far the railway has

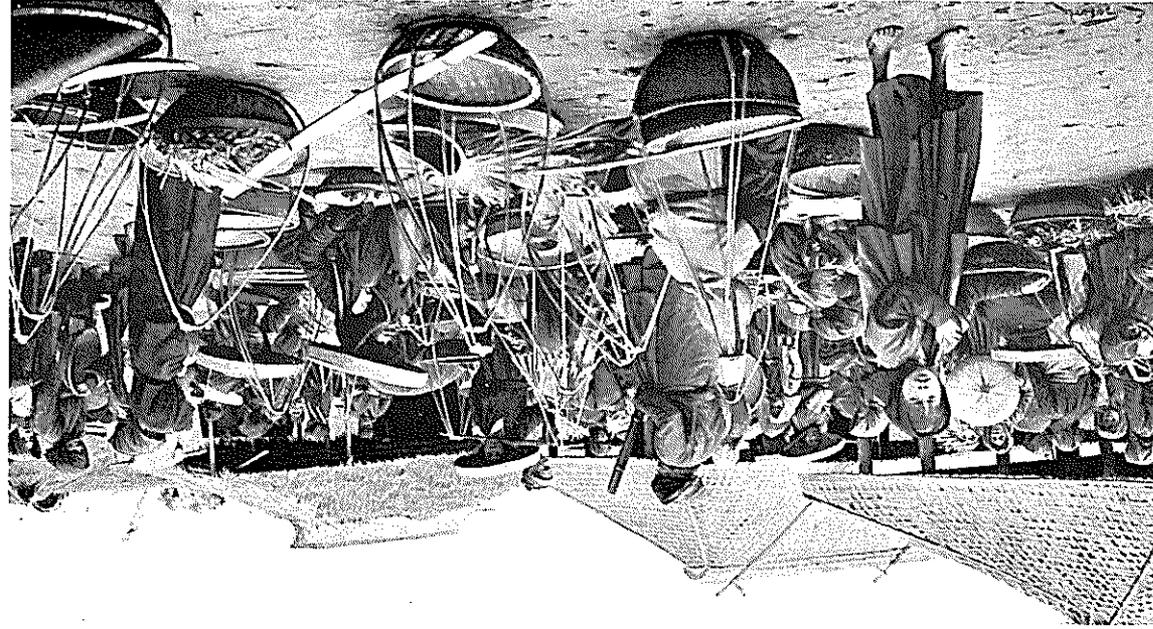


Plate 74. The farmers' women who come to the market are not less burdened than are French farmers' women

only transported travelers or small packets. But have patience! When it will enter into the heart of Yunnan, this high Chinese plateau the natural slope of which inclines towards the Tonkin Delta, like the waters today, the agricultural products of the Southwest of China could pour into Tonkin.

The railway is not the only western invention the Annamese adopted. Having barely arrived at the station of Hanoi, the trishaws, these light vehicles with two wheels, pulled by an almost nude local will remind you of the Exposition of 1889. They will only surprise you by their numbers, their modest price (two to five sous for a trip to the city), the shouting of the coolies who pull it: "There is one! There is one!" and finally by the comfort of some of them: these, the latest to be created, are armed with great bicycle wheels with steel spokes and rubber tires, wheeling around noiselessly, without collisions in the wide flat streets of the city. The Annamese call them "rubber-trishaws." Perhaps you will also see the landaus, waiting for the officials to get off the train in the square of the station, completely similar to those of France and different only from them

by the livery of the local coachmen and the relaxed posture of the small Annamese horses. But surely you will meet Annamese on bicycles: employees of businesses having come to get a traveler, boys seeking news, onlookers, etc. Their dress will astonish you first. The heat has made them wear light and loose-fitting clothes. Some have a white pair of trousers and a white jacket hemmed in by a wide brightly colored belt—think about the small pastry bakers of France—others, more important and more dignified, wear some kind of robe in black silk. Imitating the French and so they can speed on their bicycles, they dress as

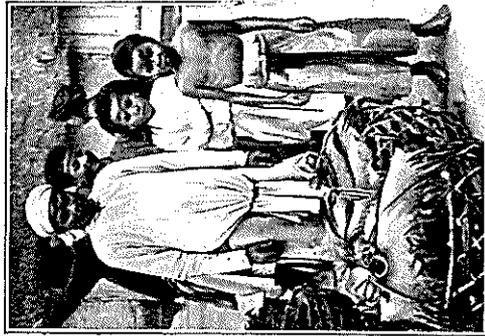


Plate 75. A banana salesman

as they can with trousers that do not fall beyond their calves. Some even imprison their always bare feet into horrible laced boots. This is because every Annamese boy or orderly of Hanoi, having come in contact with westernization by contact with or by serving French, immediately nourishes three ambitious dreams. The first, the most pressing, is to possess a pair of yellow shoes. Whether they put them on their feet or hold them in their hands, it does not matter. The essential thing is to show everybody that he, too, possesses yellow shoes. The second is to buy a French umbrella: the vile local umbrella-like objects or the Chinese showy stuff are not up to our steel springs and our cloths. This need, in a country where the winter fog, the "drizzle," is penetrating and in which the summer showers are torrential, appears so natural that it would lend itself, it appears, to an extension of our commerce in this branch, on the condition that we cater, here like in everything, to the local habits and offer them very cheap objects to their taste. Finally the supreme hope of an Annamese servant or employee is to buy a bicycle and a certain number of them manage to realize this ambitious project. Braving the heat, one sees them pedal in the sun, crushing vulgar pedestrians, Annamese and French, with their contempt.

2

Hanoi: the electric tramway

Five hundred steps away from the Hanoi train station, passes an electric tramway, a trolley. It leads from the city center to a suburb, the village of Kinh-Luoc and crosses a long local road, the rue du Coton. Others leaving from the same place, diverge towards parts of the city that are sometimes very far away, the paper village, for example, and the Imprimerie Schneider

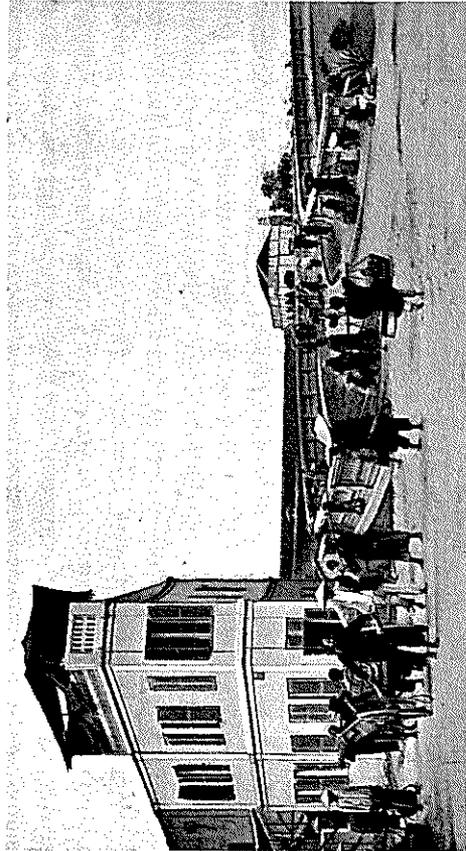


Plate 76. Modern Hanoi: the house at the corner with the quay

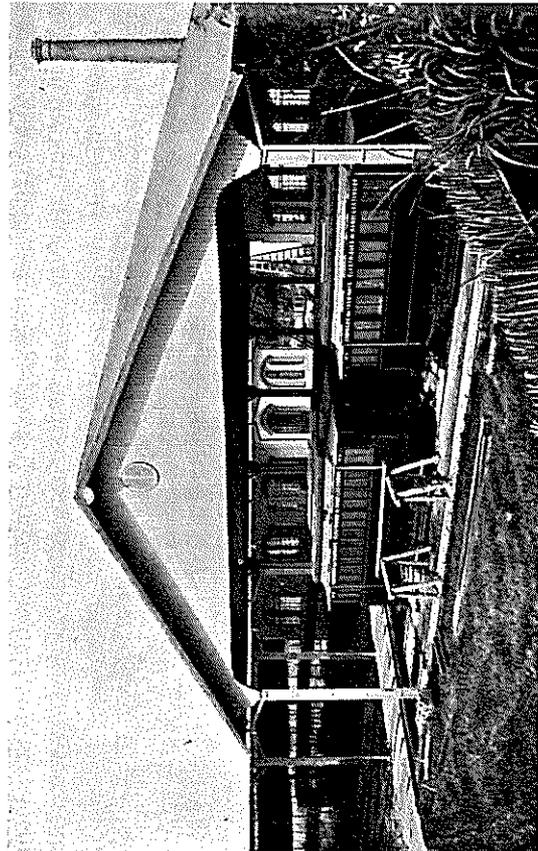


Plate 77. Modern Hanoi: the tramways garage

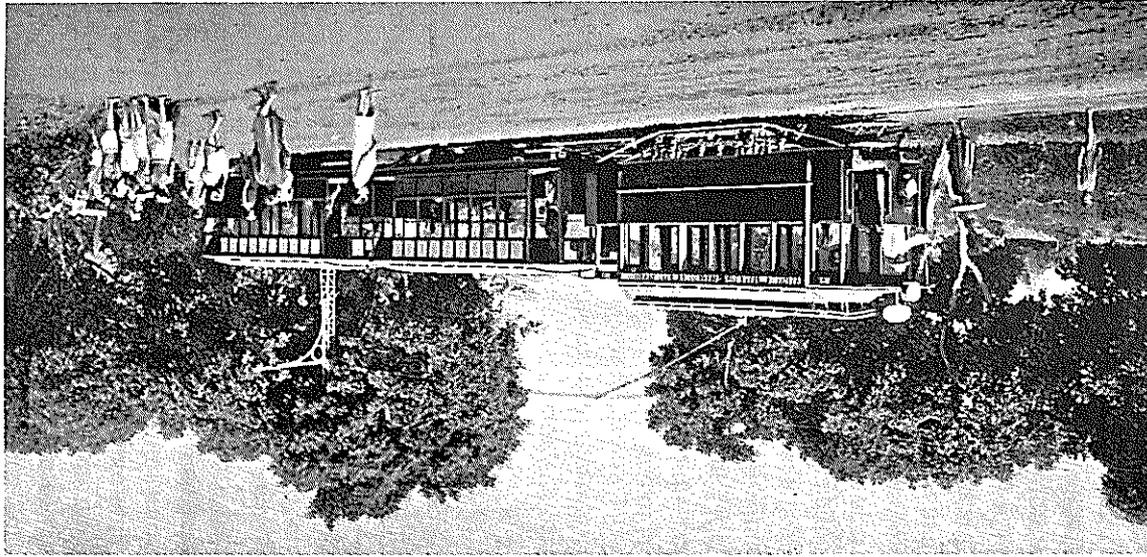


Plate 78. Do not think that the tramways are used by Europeans only

which employs several hundred Annamese typographers. It is not one of the smallest charms of Hanoi to offer a long excursion by electric tram, across her streets, her wards and her suburbs. Do not think that only Europeans use the tram. It goes along a charming lake with pink lotus flowers and a pretty temple—the pagoda of the brush—enclosed in the middle and it links the European quarter to the local. Annamese and Chinese have hardly any more business with the French part of Hanoi than Frenchmen—and also French ladies—have with the silk, jewelry and porcelain shops of the Oriental quarter.

3

The ecclesiastic quarter

Landed from the steamboat, passed from the railway line of Haiphong to the electric tram of Hanoi and finally having reached the center of the capital of Indochina, you will find . . . Versailles or Orléans. This cathedral—moreover, in a horrible Italian Gothic style—which stretches its two arms towards the sky, this brand new post office, this great theater in stone and bricks which closes the perspective of the rue Paul Bert, where hotels and cafés overflow with clients at the hour of the apéritif, where shops rival in luxury, where employees, officials, officers, soldiers throng, is it the décor of a city in the Far East and are we in the Chinese world? Official buildings like private buildings possess the appearance of old acquaintances. In the middle of the city we notice the Mayor's House, the Palace of the Resident, the Banque Indo-Chinoise, the Reformed Church, the Palace of the General, etc., and the great hotels which offer "all modern comforts." Immediately after the street has bent, in the shade of gardens filled with trees, flowers and perfumes, are hidden away small private

houses, buried in greenery. Some, the latest, built according to the requirements of the climate which have finally been recognized, push their superposed stories as high as possible up to the sky, above the swamp. Further down, in the countryside, on the marvelous banks of the "Great Lake," in the surroundings of the new palace of the governor-general of Indochina, elegant villas recall so well their sister of Ville-d'Avray, Garches or Meudon that one regrets to have come so far to be brought back so close to Paris, smack in the middle of France. This involuntary reflection takes even better shape if one realizes that the pretty small houses must be rather poorly equipped against the tropical heat, the constant humidity, the winter drizzle, the typhoons, in short against the conditions of Tonkin. For this, one wishes them not less luck but more real charm that is due to the lucky adaptation of the local style or French taste to practical needs.

When one more closely examines these buildings, public or not, it is not only the façade which surprises but the institutions which they represent. The congregations occupy a ward and not one of the smallest, of Hanoi by themselves. Besides the cathedral is the bishop's palace, surrounded by a park. Opposite, an orphanage continues into a vast and beautiful garden. A little further, the Catholic College for girls proudly pushes up its stories and the School of the Friars that follows it unrelentingly increases its buildings in numbers. We could not dispute the services the missionaries have rendered the cause of education. Formerly they have invented a very ingenious system of transcription of the Annamese sounds into special characters, lookalikes of Latin letters, and if the quoc-ngu (pronounce kok-nieu, literally, "the language of the kingdom") is not free from any criticism and improvement, she therefore does not reproduce less the so refined sounds of the Annamese language by a simple and short method. And for the Annamese it establishes a fortunate transition between their own idiom and French; it is a bridge thrown over the abyss that separates the two languages. The missionaries have also educated and continue to educate a rather great number of locals in current usage or even in advanced knowledge of French. Finally, outside Hanoi, in the countryside, before the first settlers arrived, they have cultivated large parts of the coun-

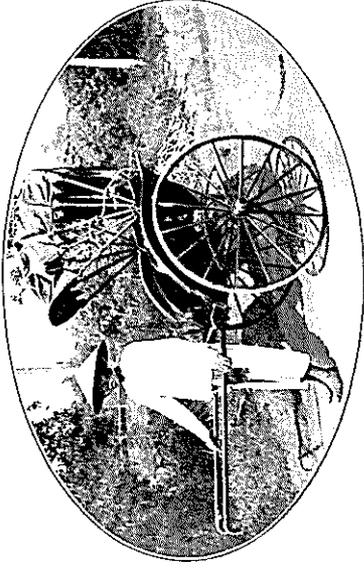


Plate 80. The trishaw: a modern trishaw with rubber wheels

4

The Paul Bert College

Close to the splendid buildings of the ecclesiastical quarter of Hanoi is a more modest establishment familiar to French eyes: this square edifice, pierced by many windows, surrounded by a courtyard without shade, alas—just like in France—from where the shouting of children, who even in the sun, in the anemic climate of Tonkin remain always young, emanates. You have guessed it, this is the upper primary school which they call here without pretension, the Paul Bert College.

The sons of officials sit shoulder to shoulder with half-breeds of a French father and an Annamese mother: the latter can be distinguished by their already brown skin, by their knowledge of Annamese and by their inferiority in French and this inequality of pupils of the same age causes serious difficulties in teaching.

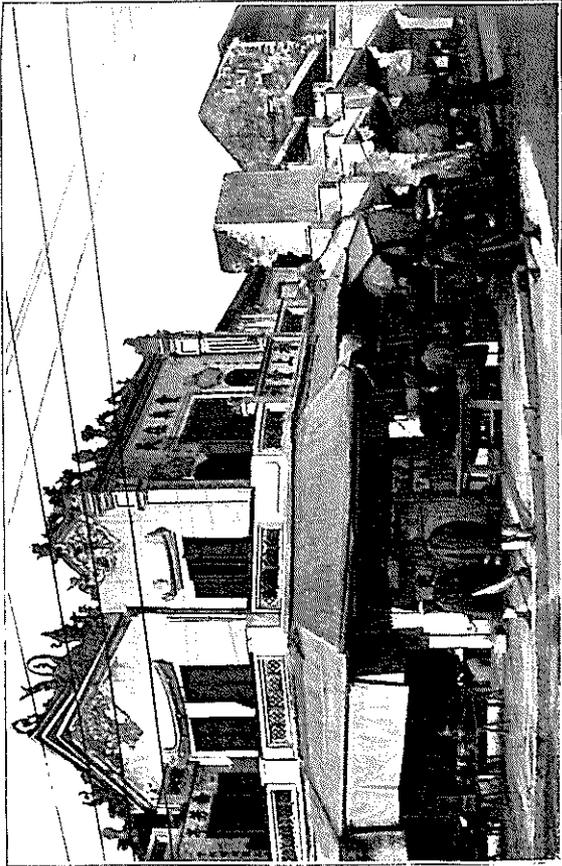


Plate 79. Electric wires in front of a Chinese house in Hanoi

Nevertheless their work is not such that it does not elicit violent controversy. If the priests of the Mission Étrangères teach, together with Latin, French to their converts, the Spanish Dominicans, firmly installed in vast areas of Tonkin's interior, are content with instructing Latin only, an excellent means for the new catechist to take recourse to the influence of the Mission in case of the smallest dispute with French officials.

5

The École française d'Extrême Orient

Opposite this, the house of one of the first settlers, solidly placed in the middle of a great park, today forms the École française d'Extrême Orient, an archeological institute similar to its elder brothers, the Institute of Cairo, the School of Athens and the School of Rome. Besides its professors in language, history and religions of the peoples of the Far East, she offers the public her library which encloses part of the treasures that escaped the last looting in Peking—a unique advantage which places it out of competition—her collections of Sanskrit, Burmese, Siamese, Cambodian, Laotian works, etc., her collections of Annamese and Japanese works and, finally, a very rich European documentation. Its museum, the invaluable Chinese porcelains of which have been cruelly ravaged by a typhoon, still contains some great pieces of Chinese ceramics, a few bronzes and first class Chinese enamel and a series of Indochinese antiques which will be enriched. Born only yesterday (1900), the École française d'Extrême Orient, by its works, its bulletin and its archeological missions has already gained a notoriety of the good kind in the Far East and in the West.

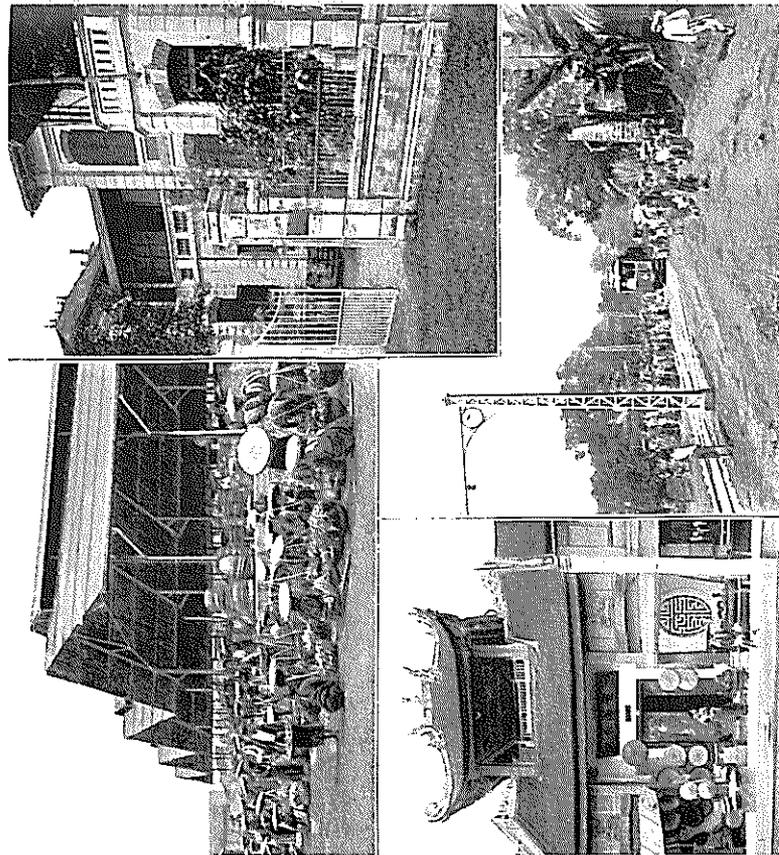


Plate 81. The markets—A modern house—The portico of a pagoda—
The tramway line

6

The barracks

They have relegated two establishments as much needed as the schools: the barracks and the Hospital. The barracks are gathered in a huge enclosure, the ancient citadel of the city. Each different arm finds itself conveniently lodged in its own quarters where the new buildings touch watchtowers, bastions and ramparts in Annamese style, old Chinese cannons and antique bronze bells.

7

The military hospital

Along the banks of the Red River, refreshed by the breeze and the shade, the Military Hospital stretches out. This building, almost perfect among its kind, with its modern installation, its wide corridors, its beautiful airy rooms and its special pavilions would inspire a legitimate pride if its huge size would not remind us that soldiers and officers, military and civilians (all French patients and even the local soldiers are welcome and taken care off), people from the city and from isolated posts in the jungle, are all exposed to the dangers of the climate, malarial fevers in the plains, forest fevers in the mountains and dysentery everywhere.

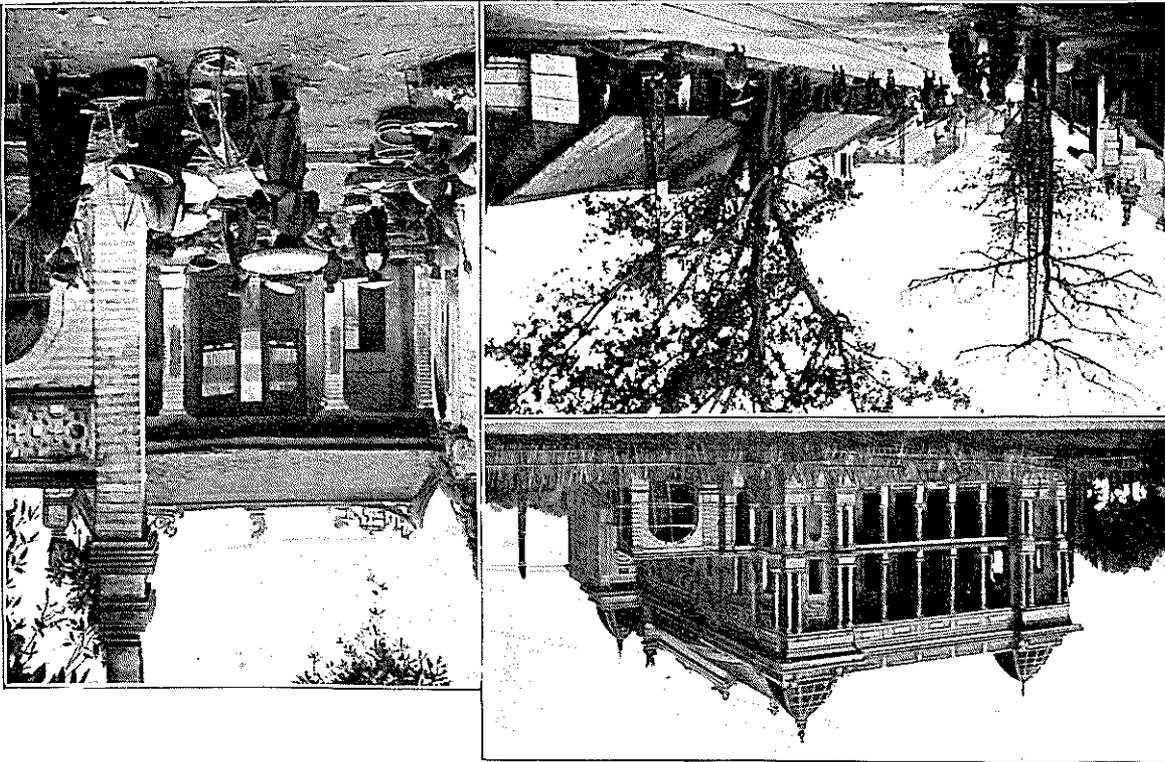


Plate 82. The new theatre—The Paul Bert street—In front of a temple

8

The local hospital

Barracks, college and cathedral, however important these buildings may be, it is difficult, it seems, to sustain that they contribute to the objectives of the locals only. Thus France has understood that in return for the great sacrifices it demands from the Annamese, she owes compensations: in Hanoi itself a hospital and several special schools have been dedicated to them. The local hospital, with its obstetrics and maternity section is far from being despised by Annamese and Chinese. No doubt, they first consult their midwives or the sorcerer, then a Chinese medicine-man, but if their remedies fail they will not hesitate to see the French doctor. You can judge then the effect the healing of a hopeless case would have on these people! Surely in Indochina more than in China still, French medicine must be regarded an excellent agent of penetration. It offers people who are ready to adopt the practical improvements of European civilization, tangible results, striking proof of western superiority over local empiricism.¹ The Annamese remain not less sensitive to these demonstrations by facts than do our farmers in France. Many of them let themselves be vaccinated voluntarily, others come to get the care of the foreigner who heals. The promotion goes around by itself and each generation brings more eagerness to listen to advice, the effectiveness of which is known.

9

The School of Medicine and the Professional School for Annamese

In this sense, there is even better news. The Annamese are endowed with such a refinement of touch, with so much patience that with some application, they would make great male nurses. Better ask the commanding doctors of our colonial troops who had to call in their help. To make use of these dispositions, the government of Indochina has just created a School of Medicine for the use of locals. Several years of study will teach pupils, who are rushing to attend, elements of anatomy, hygiene and medicine. Are they only aiming to produce well-instructed male nurses or, in a more ambitious undertaking, would they also try to make them into supplementary doctors and public health officers? The first proposition seems to be supported by most of the French doctors, the second would please the Annamese a lot. Moreover, the latter will always have a penchant for exaggerating the importance of their titles and the extent of their knowledge amongst their fellow compatriots. The essential thing is that, by means of the locals themselves, notions of hygiene and rational medicine are introduced among the people, whose ignorance or negligence favors epidemics.

However lively the desire to learn to heal and to take care of patients is, as numerous as the requests for entrance to the School of Medicine may be, this is not the only taste for knowledge the Annamese testify to. Not far from the domain of the Mission of Hanoi, a small enclosure extends.

A modest small house is hidden in the middle: it is a practical school for drawing, model making, bronze casting and production of lacquer. At its very beginnings, it was not very famous or very well known in 1905. And nevertheless, the pupils were beginning to attend it assiduously. It is because it responds to well-characterized tendencies of the Annamese: an innate and refined taste for things such as plastic arts, together with practical and material preoccupations. Their artistic sense, although less deep, less striking and less pure than among their Chinese neighbors and among the Japanese, does not fail to leave a mark on their houses, their dress and their small domestic utensils. It is the people themselves, especially in the cities, who demonstrate best by spontaneous findings, it seems, the universality and the refinement of this instinct. The Annamese, despite the crushing superiority of their rivals in China and Japan, have they not built temples, citadels, monumental gates, and honorary ramps that testify to an art, if not very original, at least specific and refined? Their pottery had it formerly not a justified renown? Even today, despite the downward trend of art, which is the result of a hastened rush to satisfy the Europeans who are more eager to get souvenirs than beauty, their wood sculpture, their mother-of-pearl encrustation and their embroideries on Chinese or Lyon silk do they not prove their patience, their love of crafts and their artistic disposition? At the end of this same year 1905, an Exposition of toys in Hanoi obtained a great success. Besides ingenious imitations of our mechanical toys, one admired especially a collection of bamboo animals covered with paper in which the deep observation of nature stood out: crabs running after a prey, local fish with big eyes reproduced with the veracity of their movements, etc., in short, some kind of transposition—for children's use—of these Japanese animal figures, the exquisite realism of which delights all connoisseurs. But let us note it: by preference the Annamese engage in decorative and industrial arts. Silk, mother-of-pearl, bronze and lacquer take on a precise and determined role in their hands, responding to the necessities of life, objects for the Annamese cult or ornaments destined for French taste and imagination. Producing a vase,

inlaying a panel, embroidering a cloth, that is good; selling these objects, that is even better. The Annamese does not appear to be more given to an aesthetic sense than he is to a practical one, to artistic toil than to commercial ardor.

10

The French language schools

The School of Applied Arts satisfies these aspirations partly; they find another greater field of activity, more open and more fertile in the schools of French language. These are already very great in numbers and multiply with such speed that it is impossible not to indicate this fact to the excessive pessimists. The government of Indochina had a need from the beginning for well trained interpreters. It has founded the College for Interpreters in Hanoi, some kind of secondary establishment destined for the locals who wish to obtain a solid knowledge of French. Reorganized in the last years, it comprises former pupils from the primary school, scholarship-holders or grant-holders selected all over Tonkin by competition, a few paying Annamese and a section for the Chinese. It is administered by French teachers assisted by local instructors who speak French. Like in all the schools in Tonkin, the crowds of Annamese is so great that each year they are obliged to eliminate a very great number of applications. It is that, besides the lure of studies more or less free of charge, the College offers the certainty of an opening in the official administration for the best pupils, in business for the others. The French trading houses seeing themselves forced to take recourse to ever more numerous employees because of their development and the local customs, one understands that the Annamese, who understand French well, would not fail to find a lucrative place.

But however secondary or higher this College may be, it is still very far from satisfying the extreme need for French which the Annamese population of the cities testifies to. The French primary schools set up immediately after the conquest were first entrusted to people who were more or less experts in education, former non-commissioned officers and simple private persons without university degrees. Since then one effort had the objective of replacing the goodwill of the first hour by a staff more skilled in its role. In this sense, it appears, a vigorous effort is needed to endow Tonkin not only with capable teachers of a solid pedagogical and moral value but especially prepared by a special course for their role in Tonkin. Thus they must be trained in place, in the country itself, under the prevailing conditions, i.e., with the climatic, intellectual and moral demands of the area and of the population in mind. An hour of excursion in the local quarter of Hanoi, five minutes of talking with an Annamese colleague or whatever Annamese would be better for the experience of the future school teacher, than reading the greatest works on Tonkin in France in the reclusion of a study.

This observation is so trivial that the locals have felt the necessity to remedy this absence of adequate organization and practice. There is no doubt that they attend the French primary schools but they are still so insufficient in many respects! It often happens that the teacher, imbibed with ideas and methods suitable for children in France's schools, still thinks he is in front of pupils from Paris or the provinces. He knows nothing about these pupils. By lack of knowledge, even a summary understanding of the minds and characters and of Annamese civilization, he does not know how to adapt his instruction to the special needs of his listeners. This does not stop him in the long run and thanks to the remarkable genetic disposition of the Annamese for study work, from obtaining sometimes surprising results. Yes, these small chaps, with their shaved heads from which two or three locks of hair still hang down, who play with balls with their feet like children play with their hands in France, will one day end up correctly reading a page of French, writing it in a writing formed

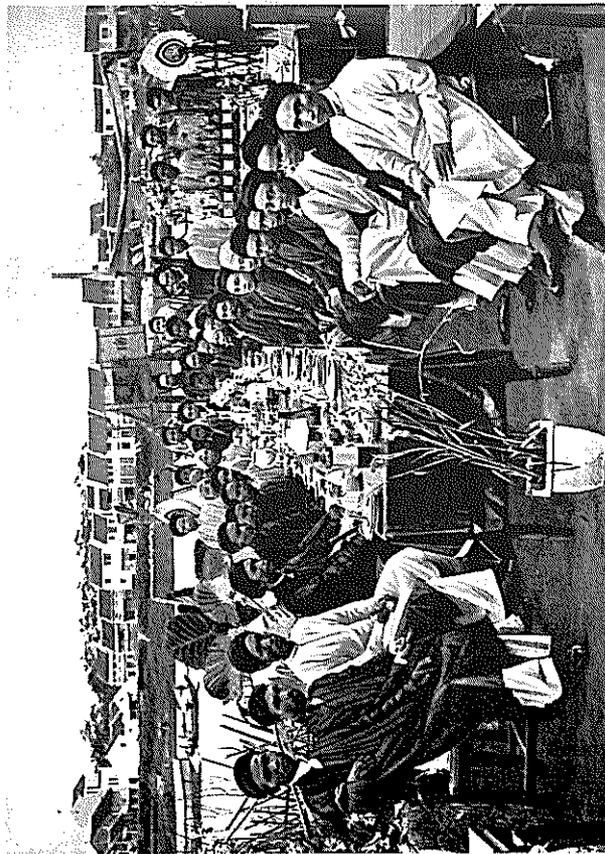
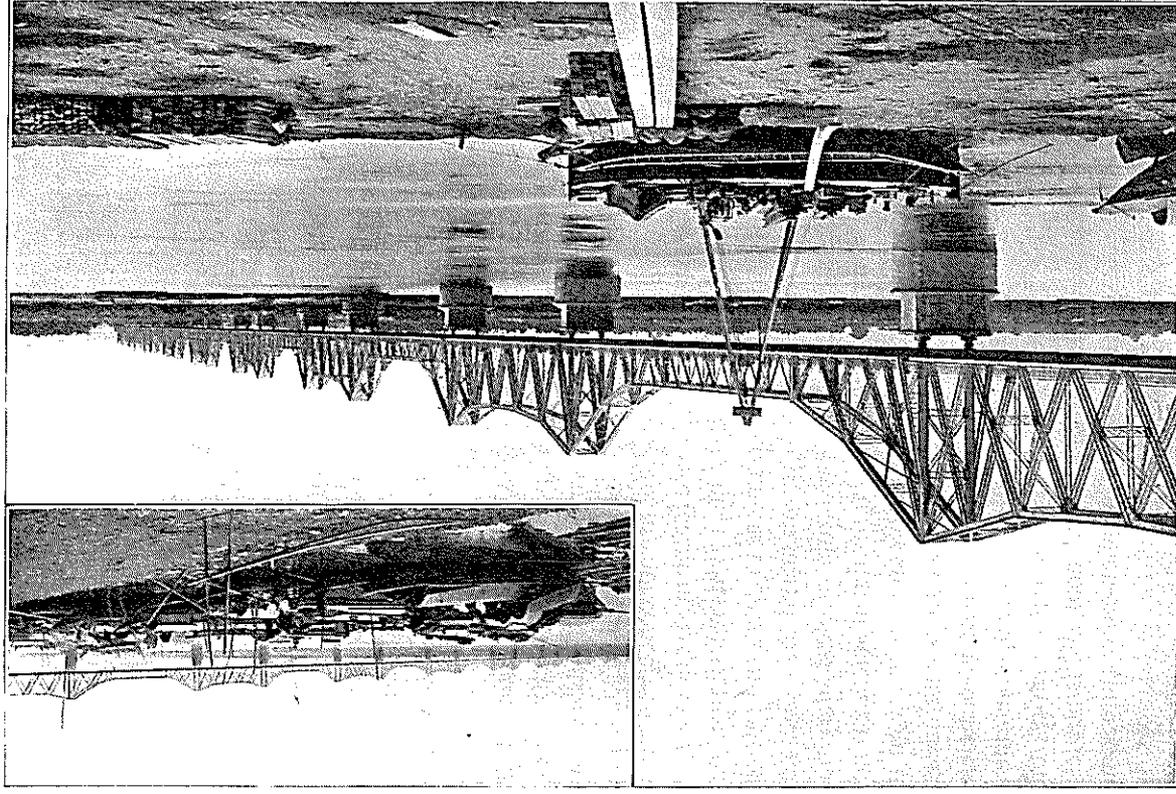


Plate 83. The members of the college of interpreters destined for the locals who wish to acquire a good knowledge of French. The table is laid out in European style

with care in which their artistic abilities can be seen, but will they have understood the lessons they mouth by heart? Will they have assimilated the "very substance" of the education? If I judge this matter by a few personal experiences, I doubt it very much. And it could not be different. In order for two peoples so different as the French on the one hand and far eastern people on the other, to understand and mix well, it is necessary that both sides make a step towards the other, really study each other. Pasting our education as it is on the heads of the Annamese, the inheritors of the great civilizations of India and China, impregnated with local superstitions and Confucian or Buddhist ideas, is a pipe dream. Thus, while waiting for the French teachers to bend to their height and to accommodate them, the Annamese have themselves come to the schools of their western teachers. In 1905, "Teacher's courses" which represent the Teacher's Colleges of France, have opened everywhere in Hanoi. The future Annamese teachers eagerly attend them. Since more than ten years, Annamese teachers outside official education, provide a mutual benefit instruction of French in courses which in France we would call evening courses, Sunday school or continuing education for adults. Placed under the patronage of the Association philotechnique de France, they have multiplied quickly, opening departments in the provinces, in Nam-Dinh, the second literary capital of Tonkin and all over the Delta; they grow everyday. Nothing gets more at you than going into one of these local schools. An Annamese in a black or dark blue silk robe, his hairs carefully rolled under a black or white turban (white for a period of mourning), brings a lesson in the most refined French, a lesson which no teacher in France would disavow. One is even tempted to find it too perfect, too literary, this French of the schools and it is especially the method, the spirit of these courses, one would find too schoolish and routine. Because, alas, the Annamese, being excellent copiers but poorly blessed for original works, it appears, have copied exactly what they have seen from their French teachers and the whole progress boils down to hearing professed by an Annamese courses destined for the pupils of Picardy or Cham-

Plate 84. The quays of the Red River and the Doumer bridge



pagne. How true it is that a close collaboration of one and the others imposes itself to establish a common work which will not be exclusively Annamese nor exclusively French but which will take from both the materials that can be assimilate by Tonkinese pupils and which will present the material in a format appropriate to their mentality.

However intense may be the attraction of the Annamese towards study, towards French, what huge gaps still need to be filled among them, around them! It is especially the population of the cities which turns with fervor to the school. But, despite the circle of attraction that will grow wider, how many people still, even in the city, remain either foreign or resistant to French influence! Beyond the cities spreads out the mass of the Annamese farmers, i.e., the great majority of the inhabitants. How weak is our action upon them!

Finally, behind the Annamese from the Delta, the mountainous belt of Tonkin is inhabited by peoples that are still imperfectly known, the “savages” as they are sometimes called. Is it necessary to say that until now no teacher has gone to open a French language school among them? Can one maintain that the locals of Upper Tonkin and Laos are not concerned much with French language; that it is not indispensable for the *nhya-qué* (farmer) to know French to labor with his buffalo in the mud of his rice-fields, that the fisherman of the coast has no need for grammar to catch and salt his fish? Another not less vast terrain remains to be conquered and it does not appear that one could dispute, in the field, the utility of elementary notions of arithmetic, if not of mathematics, general results of science if not Science itself, and finally hygiene by default of medicine: we want to speak about the education of local women. According to oriental ideas, neglected, despised or worse in their families, some of them nevertheless manage to assimilate scraps of knowledge and all appear to demonstrate a remarkable common sense. While in other, neighboring countries, the role of women, how important it may be in the final analysis, is not less hidden and veiled, in Indochina, on the contrary, women enjoy quite some freedom and consideration to openly engage in business, to take part in

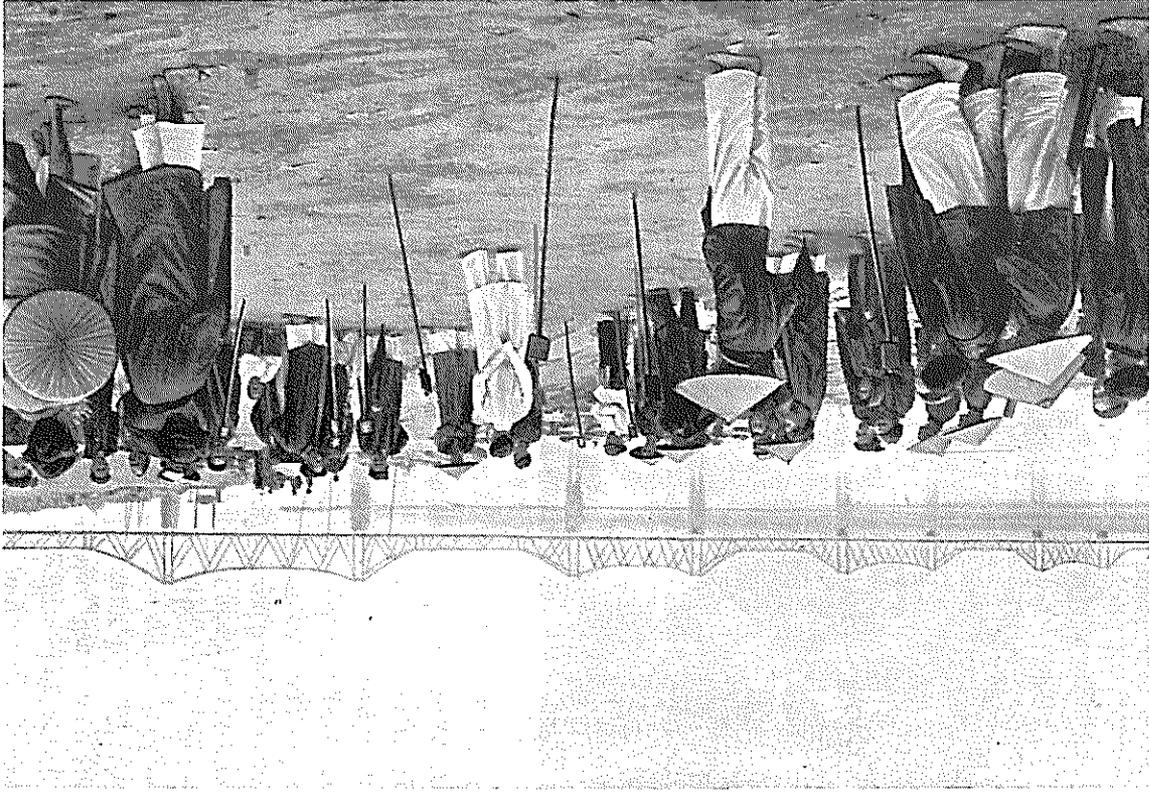


Plate 85. Conservation of the old traditions: chessboard on the river bank

domestic affairs. Not only in the heaviest work but in the most refined commercial operations, one finds women, woman-coolies, shopkeepers, wholesalers, but also the woman is often in Indochina, the recognized mistress of the house: servants, children, husband, interior, business, she leads everything and everybody by the stick—in the strictest sense of the word. Thus one can judge of how much interest it would be for her, and as a consequence for us, to have education suitable for her needs envisaging to give her the notions of household economy, hygiene and business arithmetic which are lacking her! Certainly, the task is not an easy one and in this more than in anything else good judgment, founded on experience and direct knowledge of the country and its inhabitants, imposes itself. But the results will compensate the troubles that will be involved in the establishment of rational programs as well as the special pedagogical work.

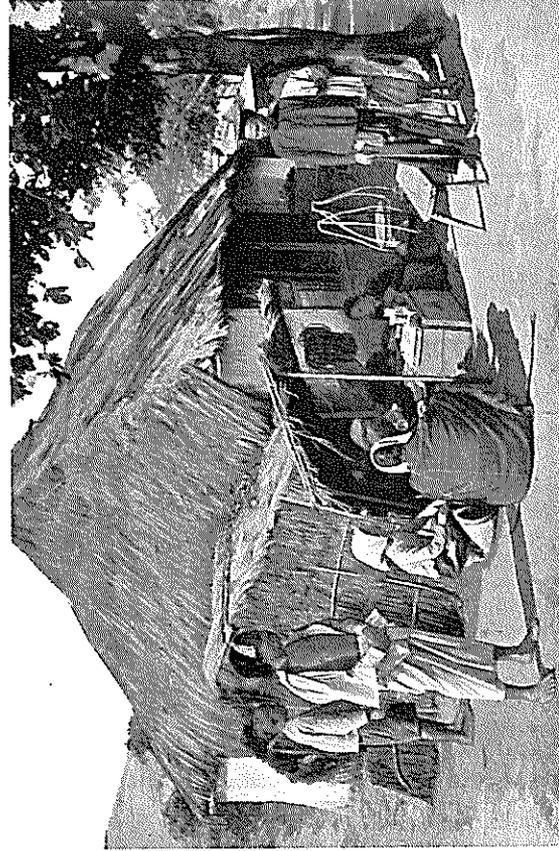


Plate 86. At the door of an Annamese house

If the farmers' women of France are far from having ideas and care in accordance with the latest scientific results as spiritual food, one should think about the mass of superstitions and bad habits that must be broken or turned around among these Annamese women in order to have clear principles of hygiene and medicine penetrate their brains. But if one would make an effort to instruct them in the demands of housing and nutrition, to preserve the health of their kin, to indicate to them current illnesses and elementary care, the smallest illness would no longer get worse by lack of prompt appropriate remedies, the epidemics would be less frequent and less widespread and serious and would one not have achieved, in this way, a reduction of sticky-eye among the children and a limitation of the hearths of contagion and would the result not be felt by our "protégés" as well as by ourselves? And the influence which would come with the recognition of these women, happy to be finally delivered from ignorance, would it not be a great help for our work? Let us not deprive ourselves of their precious support, if, to obtain it, we only need an adaptation suited to the environment and its necessities?

11

The Franco-Cantonese School

The Chinese, more active, more enterprising and richer than the Annamese have felt the strong desire to have their children learn French. These Chinese are almost all Cantonese. In Hanoi, some have important shops of silk and porcelain; others are rivals, often quite redoubtable of French trading houses because they have at lower prices and sometimes with better quality all the products that French officials ask for, from soap from Marseille to the best wines from Bourgogne and Bordeaux. Thus in Hanoi

itself, in Tonkin and over the whole of Indochine, small shops and Chinese hawkers proliferate. They poison the French soldier with dubious vile, but very cheap, liquor and they monopolize business with the Annamese farmers and the lower classes, i.e., with almost the entire local population. In the field they are the undisputed masters and no French trader can compete with them. The Chinese of Tonkin, the Cantonese thus present themselves as very big businessmen or as well-off merchants, or small shopkeepers who are successful because of economizing, patience and mutual assistance. They have their commercial associations, their "guilds," their temples built at their own expenses and they are richer and more sumptuous than the Annamese ones. They have just founded their school. Not content to send some of their sons to the College of the Interpreters or to the French primary schools, they have managed to group themselves and to act by themselves. Already they pay an Annamese teacher to teach French to their children. The Annamese teacher speaks poor Cantonese and knows French less well than a French teacher but he has two advantages over the latter: he is happy with a very modest salary and, to the Bourgeois Cantonese, although he is an Annamese educated by the French, he appears much more accessible and closer to them than a teacher coming from France who ignores everything about the Chinese and shows himself proud about his assumed superiority, an insupportable feeling for Chinese pride. Despite everything, it was a pleasant spectacle for a Frenchman to see this French course given by an Annamese to Chinese pupils. They gathered in a great hall adjoining a temple, rue des Voiles. Petroleum lamps, similar to ours, lighted the rows of benches identical to those of our schools and, in the back, there was the usual blackboard. These Chinese pupils were boys from 12 to 20 years, dressed tightly, in Cantonese style, in their silk trousers, the plait hanging on their backs or rolled in a matting on the nape of the neck, some with shaven heads—a small characteristic indication, it seems, of a remarkable evolution of ideas among the people of the Far East—and so well dressed in European style that it was impossible, completely

impossible, to distinguish them from European pupils. Full of liveliness and vigor, loud and undisciplined and aggressive, they arrive in commotion. As soon as the lesson has started, it is on study they focus all their juvenile ardor. According to Chinese habits, in groups of five or six, they spell in loud voices and read at the top of their voices, without worrying about their neighbors. Does it matter, despite this strange hullabaloo, deafening for European ears, one feels the invincible ardor, the enraged tenacity, the tireless patience of a people that has placed all its energy in commerce and agriculture, literature and art, that sends people of fifty or sixty years to the school benches, that will not be stopped by any obstacle or difficulty in its constant march towards commercial enterprise and minutely detailed knowledge.

This course has soon seemed insufficient and the Franco-Cantonese School—this is its official name—has just installed itself in a building, erected at the expense of the "Assembly of the Cantonese," on land bought by it, in which boarding pupils find lodging and board and in which external pupils will follow regular courses. And one does not know whether one must congratulate oneself with the progress of this Chinese movement towards the French language, towards western scientific culture or be distressed that they organize themselves without us and if we persevere in our inertia, in our ignorance and our pride, against us. In any case, if one can discuss this or the other detailed matter, differ on the system of transcription of Annamese sounds or Chinese into French, on the effectiveness of a method, there nevertheless remain two facts which appear incontestable. That is, first, that education in French for people from the Far East must adapt to the local needs to be understood and assimilated. The French must make efforts to understand the local mentality and on the other hand, the local teacher, pupil of the French, knows how to adapt his lessons for use by his compatriots, that is the result we must obtain.

Conclusion: reciprocal understanding and a peaceful collaboration between French and Annamese

Another fact is the tendency, common all over the Far East today, from India to Japan, including Indochina and China, to throw oneself on western science but not as a disinterested discipline and a higher theoretical culture, surely not. The Hindus, Chinese and Japanese want to take practical results from western science. Long live science, but not pure science. The material and palpable that is what touches them in science, that is what they demand and what they are looking for in Europe. The Japanese have learned mathematics: it is to construct ships and cannons. The Hindus and Chinese become engineers to build factories, install railway lines and bridges. The Chinese study natural history: it is because they want to become doctors. They want to learn French and the Annamese follow them on this road: they no longer want to be servants or interpreters only, but business employees, cashiers, merchants with a French clientele, craftsmen or male nurses. Thus, they are busy learning French which gets them places, gains and profits while they are waiting for something better still.

That being the case, one understands the role the teacher must play in the work of renovation of the Indochinese world. If we want that it is successful, let us try our best to understand these peoples, i. e., let us learn to respect them and to appreciate them. And when the relations will gradually become closer in the fields of science, to the extent that the Annamese will speak French and will better understand the genius of France, that the

French will no longer treat the Annamese as slaves, as subjects, as inferior and despicable people, a government based on reciprocal respect, on mutual recognition, will replace the mute or undeclared state of hostilities. Let us be wise enough to use the precious tendency of the Annamese and the Chinese to learn our language and our scientific methods.

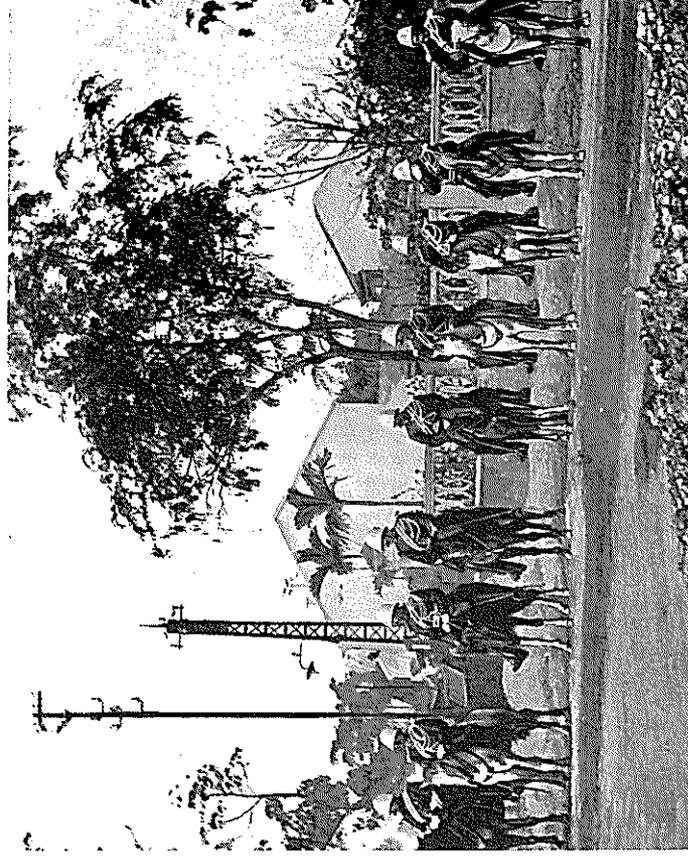


Plate 87. Gendarmes awaiting the passage of the governor
on a 14th of July day

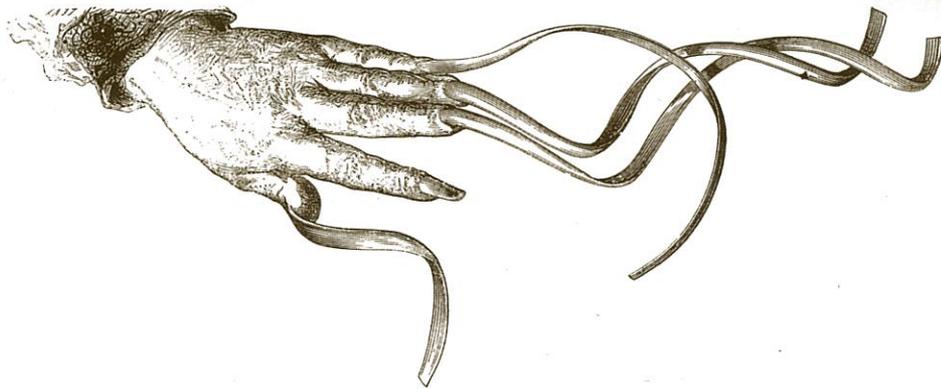
Note

- 1 One must not conclude from this that the local medicine, especially Chinese medicine, is to be rejected completely as a ridiculous fairy tale. On the contrary, it appears that as they know it better and understand it more, as French doctors accord high value and great effectiveness to it. Also in this field, would it not be expeditious to collaborate in a common undertaking to obtain the certain information acquired by the experiences of the Orientals and to join the local empiricism to western science to push back our frontiers, to gain new provinces for Science and Civilization?

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