

Wang Annan rijji: A Hokkien Literatus Visits Saigon (1890)*

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Abstract:

This article presents and translates a manuscript record emanating from a Chinese based in Batavia who in 1890 went to Saigon in order to assist a Dutch emissary. It shows that its author, a certain Tan Siu Eng, was the secretary of the Sinologist Willem Pieter Groenevelt who had been sent on a mission to Indochina to investigate the opium regime. The record provides insights into the Baba Chinese community from the Straits in Saigon, as well as in the way its author looked at the French colonial system, which he compares to its British counterpart in Singapore.

Keywords:

Chinese in Saigon; Babas in the Nanyang; Hokkiens in colonial Vietnam; Chinese South Seas' travel records; early French colonial Cochinchina

Presenting the Text

Chinese merchants and those of Chinese origin who were settled in the South Seas never ceased to sail from one port to another, but they have hardly left any memoirs of their experiences in more distant times.¹ It is only from the start of the nineteenth century that they began to compose small texts in local languages and in Chinese. The oldest known one, which has been published in Thai and English, is that of a junk captain, a certain Chinkak, who went to trade in Bali in 1846 in the service of a Siamese noble.² Even so, it is only the transcription of an oral account, made at the request of the court when he returned to Bangkok.³ Like the court of Huế in Vietnam, Bangkok wanted to be informed about neighbouring countries and European policies in the region.⁴

The 1880s development of the press in Malay and then in Chinese undoubtedly helped stimulate the publication of traveller's records, but it is still too early to know how extensive the phenomenon was. From our unsystematic reading, we know of four narratives (two in Malay and two in Chinese) that were published in the press in Batavia and in Singapore, with a fifth (in Chinese) remaining in manuscript. In regard to the two in Malay, one was done by Tan Hoelo (Chen Fulao 陈福老), a Peranakan from Batavia who

* This translation abridges the French version on which it is based. In particular, details of the voyage between Batavia and Saigon have been summarised and the return journey excised. For the full version, with illustrations and Chinese text, see "De Batavia à Saïgon: Notes de voyage d'un marchand chinois," *Archipel* 47 (1994): 155–84, with the Chinese text in 5 unnumbered pages subsequent to page 184. The article which precedes the travelogue, which is also occasionally abridged, has been slightly revised by C. Salmon. Footnotes enclosed in brackets are by the translator. *Archipel* is available on-line at <http://www.persee.fr>. Claudine Salmon is the emeritus director of research at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris. Her email address is Claudine.Salmon@ehess.fr. The late Tạ Trọng Hiệp was a distinguished professor of Vietnamese studies at the University of Paris VII. The translator thanks Claudine Salmon for her highly valued assistance.

1. This does not include travellers who came from China, like Zhou Daguang 周达观 and his many successors. In regard to the spelling of Chinese names and of the names of people of Chinese origin, we use either the transcription in usage in Western sources of the time, followed by the *pinyin* version in parentheses, or solely this latter version when the names are only known in the Chinese sources.

2. Elisabeth Graves and Charnvit Kaset-Siri, "A Nineteenth-century Siamese account of Bali with introduction and notes," *Indonesia* 7 (1969): 77–122.

3. See *Ibid.*, p. 77, note 1.

4. See Chingho A. Chen 陈荆和, "On the 'Ha-châu Missions' Conducted during the Early Period of the Nguyen Dynasty," *Journal of the Institute of Asian Studies* 11 (1990): 63–82 (in Japanese). A French translation by C. Salmon, in collaboration with Shibata Shintaro and Tạ Trọng Hiệp, may be found in the *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 81 (1994): 101–24, which is available on-line at <http://www.persee.fr>.

specialised in the sale of European goods and who visited the universal exposition in Paris in 1889,⁵ the other was by Na Tian Piet (Lan Tianbi 蓝天笔, b. 1836), a merchant from Bengkulu (on Sumatra) who plied between Sumatra and Java in 1900–01.⁶ In regard to those written in Chinese, they were composed in 1888 by two Singapore Peranakan, Tan Keong Sum (Chen Gongsan 陈恭三, b. 1861) and Li Qinghui 李清辉 (originally from Malacca, who lived roughly from 1830 to 1895). In *Lat Pau* (*Libao* 叻报),⁷ Li recounted his experiences on a voyage of eight days to Saigon and on a journey of two and a half months to Shanghai and Japan via Hong Kong, Fuzhou, Saigon, Xiamen, and Canton. While Tan Keong Sum published his narrative in the week after his return,⁸ Li Qinghui did not reveal his until 1889.⁹ As for the text remaining in manuscript, it was produced by a literatus then living in Batavia, who went to Saigon in 1890. It is entitled *Wang Annan riji* 往安南日记 or “Record of a voyage to Annam”. Unlike the two other texts, which have been recently republished and studied,¹⁰ the *Wang Annan riji* remained unknown until 1987, when it turned up in the catalogue of Leiden’s Han-Nôm holdings.¹¹ This is this text that we present here. It is one that evokes the economic relations between Chinese businessmen of Singapore and those of Saigon–Chợ Lớn and informs us about how one Chinese traveller saw the world around him being transformed by Western impact.

The Author

In the French version of this article we speculated about the identity of the author, which was not revealed in his travelogue. We deduced from the text that he originated from southern Fujian Province, just like the other travel diarists with the possible exception of Chinkak, who might equally have come from Chaozhou 潮州 in Guangdong Province.¹² We noticed that, just like Tan Keong Sum and Li Qinghui, when our author reached Saigon he went looking for Babas¹³ from the Straits Settlements who had gone there to invest in the

5. His travelogue first appeared in the *Bintang Barat* of Batavia and was reprinted, untitled, in the *Bintang Soerabaja* (26 Sept–12 Oct 1889).

6. Na Tian Piet, “Diwartakan perjalanen saja moelai dari boelan februari 1900 sampai boelan februari 1901,” *Pembrita betawi* (Feb. 1900–1901), reprinted in *Primbon Soerabaia*, 15 March 1901 and next issue. For a French translation, see *Archipel* 54 (1997):177–88.

7. The *Lat Pau*, first published in 1881, is the oldest Chinese published Chinese language newspaper in Singapore. See Chen Mong Hock, *The Early Chinese Newspapers of Singapore 1881–1912* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1967), p. 24.

8. See Tan Keong Sum, “Yuenan youji 越南游记,” *Lat Pau*, Nos. 1935–37, 1939–40, & 1944 (8–10, 12, 14, & 18 May 1888). That same year the text was published as a small book by the Lat Pau Press. See David K. Y. Chng, “The *Yuenan Youji*: A Rare Book Published in Singapore (1888),” *Archipel* 43 (1992): 131–137.

9. Li Qinghui, “Dongyou jilüe 东游纪略,” *Lat Pau*, Nos. 2162–80 (12 Feb–5 March 1889).

10. See “*Yuenan youji*—Xiancun xinma zuizao de huawen wenxue chuangzou danxingben 越南游记—现存新马最早的华文文学创作单行本,” in Zhuang Qinyong (David K. Y. Chng) 庄钦永, *Xin-Jia huarenshi xinkao* 新呷华人史新考 (Singapore: Nanyang xuehui, 1990), pp. 113–27; Chng, “The *Yuenan youji*”: 131–37; Claudine Salmon, “Regards d’un Peranakan de Singapour sur le Vietnam (1888),” *Archipel* 43 (1992): 139–44; and Tan Keong Sum, “Récit d’un voyage au Viêtname,” *Archipel* 43 (1992): 145–66; and Leung Yuen Sang (Liang Yuansheng 梁元生), “Li Qinghui yu ‘Dongyou jilüe’ 李清辉与东游纪略—Yibai nianqian yige xinjiaporen fangwen Zhongguo de jilu 一百年前一个新加坡人访问中国的纪录,” *Nanyang xuebao* 南洋学报 39,1/2 (1984): 33–47.

11. See Truong Van Binh, “Les fonds de livres en Han-nôm hors du Vietnam. Inventaire No. 2: The Han-nôm books preserved in Leiden,” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 76 (1987): 416. No explanation is given of how the Institute of Sinology acquired these texts.

12. It seems likely, from epigraphic evidence in Jakarta, that several ships’ captains from Siam were natives of Fujian. The 1858 restoration of the Tianhou 天后 temple, which was funded by merchants from Minnan 闽南, provides one piece of evidence. Among the donors’ names listed were four sea captains who had come from Siam. See W. Franke, C. Salmon, and A. Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia* (Singapore: The South Seas Society, 1995), vol. 2, I, 1.6.3

13. The expression *Baba*, which Chinese in the South Seas transcribed by the doubled character *cen* 岑 (which is pronounced as *ba* in Hokkien), is still used today throughout the Malay world to designate descendants of Chinese from Java and the Straits Settlements; its origin is uncertain but it is thought to be related to a term of

French colony. We return to this point below. However, unlike those two other authors, he does not seem to have been closely related to any great Baba or Peranakan family,¹⁴ at least judging by the friends who came to see him off when he left.¹⁵ We also noticed that his social standing was not negligible because he travelled second class on a Messageries maritimes liner.

Recently Koos Kuiper has solved the enigma. While researching the Dutch officers in charge of Chinese matters in the Netherlands Indies (*ambtenaren voor de Chineesche zaken*) he first discovered that Qu Molin 瞿墨林, the Dutch government's emissary who travelled in the company of our author, was none other than the Sinologist Willem Pieter Groenevelt (1841–1915) who, since 1887, had been a member of the Dutch Indies Council.¹⁶ In the same way he identified “interpreter Yang” 翻译官杨 (complete name Yang Yali 杨亚理) as Arie Arend de Jongh (1856–1941), who was in office in Mentok (Bangka) from 14 May 1887 to 28 July 1890.

According to Dutch records, in 1890 Groenevelt was sent on a mission to Indochina to investigate how the French authorities had brought the opium trade under state control through the 1881 creation of the opium *régie*, in order to see if it could be introduced into the Dutch colony. A further note in the archival records states that Groenevelt had asked to be accompanied by a certain Chinese (whose name was not mentioned) who was meant to be given a salary and a second class fare.

Koos Kuiper later identified this Chinese as Tan Siu Eng (Chen Xiuying 陈琇荣[莹], b. Xiamen 1833, d. Batavia 1906), said to be a *xiu cai* 秀才 (or graduate of the former first degree) from Xiamen 厦门 who lived with his family on the little island of Gulang yu 鼓浪屿 off the coast of Xiamen. According to his descendants, Tan was hired by Groenevelt to provide advice about the running of the Chinese Orphan Chamber (*Wees Kamer*) in Batavia,¹⁷ and perhaps also to help translate various official documents. This presumably occurred in 1874, because his narrative tells us that this was not the author's first such trip: “I had already been to Singapore sixteen years ago. The town had not then its current prosperity.” Later, when describing a walk he took in Saigon, he equally notes that he had been there sixteen years before. Still according to his descendants, Tan Siu Eng was joined in Batavia by his wife and children and never returned to Xiamen. Whether Tan also engaged in some business, apart from his work as scribe and translator, is unknown, although it seems likely because he is said to have asked his son-in-law (also native to Gulang yu) to become his assistant.

address in several Middle Eastern languages (notably Turkish, Persian, and Arabic) in which it variously means “father”, “grandfather”, and “religious leader”. The term has existed in the Malay world from at least the start of the nineteenth century. From the 1820s, it became increasingly used to designate the descendants of Chinese.

14. The great-grandfather of Tan Keong Sum, Tan Hay (Chen Xia 陈夏, 1736–1801) had settled in Malacca around 1770, when the town was still controlled by the Dutch, and began a shipping service to Makassar (Celebes) which his descendants continued. One of Tan Keong Sum's brothers, Tan Keong Saik 陈恭锡, received an English education and became politically important in Singapore (Chng, “The Yuenan Youji”: 134). As for Li Qinghui, his brother was one of the founders of the Association of People from Yongchun 永春 (Fujian) and he was himself the son-in-law of the well-known Baba businessman Tan Kim Seng (Chen Jinsheng 陈金声, 1806–64), a Malacca Baba who owned the Hing Hin (Fengxing 丰兴) shipping company which had a branch in Shanghai. (Leung, “Li Qinghui”: 38.)

15. Only one of their names is known to history, that of Huang Chaomu 黄朝木. He donated money to help restore a temple in 1890, but judging by the small amount given he did not belong to the great merchant class. See Claudine Salmon and Denys Lombard, *Les Chinois de Jakarta: Temples et vie collective* (Paris, Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1980), vol. 1, p. 226.

16. This new development is based on Koos Kuiper, “Du nouveau sur la mystérieuse mission de Batavia à Saïgon,” *Archipel* 77 (2009): 27–44. Groenevelt retained this last position until 1895, when he retired and returned to the Netherlands.

17. According to Kuiper, the officers in charge of Chinese matters used to hire Chinese literati to assist them in their various functions.



Figure 1. Portrait of Tan Siu Eng from Jakarta
(reproduced with the kind permission of the Tirtaman Family), from *Archipel* 77 (2009): 29.

From the style of the text and by its calligraphy (assuming it was not a copy done by another hand) it is clear that the author had certainly received a good Chinese education. One may see also that he had spent a long time abroad because, after the fashion of the two Singaporean authors, he does not hesitate to slip transcribed foreign words (from Malay, French, and English) into his report where it would have been very easy to use Chinese terms. Among other examples, our author uses the term *bilik* to mean “cabin” on the ship,¹⁸ just like Tan Keong Sum who used the Malay expression *asem* 亞參¹⁹ when speaking of the tamarind trees lining the roads in Saigon. And just like Li Qinghui, who contented himself with transcribing the French word “banque” as 夢 (pronounced *bong* in Hokkien) when speaking of Saigon banks instead of using the Chinese equivalent *yinhang* 銀行, our author has recourse to the European expression “consul” (in Hokkien *kunsun* 公順) when he could have easily used the Chinese term *lingshi* (*guan*) 领事(官).²⁰ However,

18. It seems likely that the expression *mali* (Hokkien *bali* 麻离) is a transcription of the Malay term *bilik*, meaning a room.

19. See Tan Keong Sum, “Regards d’un Peranakan de Singapour”: 149.

20. The Dutch consul at the time was Th. Speidel, a businessman who ran, with his relatives, a steam driven rice mill called Union Rice Mill, according to the *Annuaire de la Cochinchine*, 1890, pp. 264, 315. The author rendered the European word “consul” by the Hokkien term *kongsun*. There were no Chinese consuls accepted by Dutch or French authorities until the twentieth century, although the British accepted a Chinese consul in Singapore in 1877 (Yen Ching-Hwang, *Coolies and Mandarins: China’s Protection of Overseas Chinese during the Late Ch’ing*

unlike Tan Keong Sum and Li Qinghui, who always referred to time in European terms, our author usually measured its duration according to traditional Chinese usage.²¹ This underlines his mainland background: while this form of computation is found in the journals of Manchu government officials sent on missions to the South Seas,²² to our knowledge it is extremely rare among diasporic Chinese in the Nanyang, where colonial powers had imposed twenty-four hour European time.

What is rather disconcerting is the author's way of describing the administrative geography of Vietnam, by relying on oral information—sometimes quite confused—that he apparently obtained from a compatriot established in Saigon. He does not bother to write place names according to Sino-Vietnamese usage, merely noting them “phonetically” according to Hokkien pronunciation, just as he does for toponyms in the Malay world.

The fact that Tan Siu Eng was settled in Batavia explains why he avoided any allusions to the Dutch colonial system and contented himself with comparing the French system in Saigon with its English counterpart in Singapore. The solitary unfavourable remark he made in regard to the Dutch appeared at the very end of his story, when on the return voyage he was exposed to the coarseness of Dutch soldiers who had been fighting in Aceh (north Sumatra).²³ This elicited a general comment: “It is true that a State cannot do without strong soldiers, just as a doctor cannot economise on potent medicines. Weapons are the instruments of misfortune and I even say that soldiers can be called men of misfortune. Being lodged under the same flag as them day and night, I felt like I was sitting on a carpet of needles.”

What was his Mission?

Although the aim of the Dutch emissary was to investigate how the opium régime operated at administrative level, he probably also needed to understand how the raw purified opium produced in the régime's factory was acquired and resold by the *détaillants* (or retailers) who were often none other than the former opium sub-farmers. Very likely he also wanted to know what kind of problems could arise within such a system. For these discreet inquiries, Groenevelt needed the help of the interpreter Arie Arend de Jongh, who also acted as his secretary, as well as that of Tan Siu Ing. The latter could easily move within the Chinese community and obtain private information about sensitive matters which would never have been revealed to a foreigner, such as opium smuggling or how retailers could profitably dilute the drug by mixing it with other ingredients, like tea leaves.²⁴

The Early Babas in Saigon

The Dutch consul in Saigon, Th. Speidel, invited our author to stay in the house of his employee Chan Eng Bok (Zeng Yingmu 曾永沐), a “British subject”²⁵ who was living in the “rue des Babas 峇峇街”. Tan Keong Sum also said that Chinese from the Straits Settlements lived in the same street, which he called “rue de Fujian”: “Chinese born at

period (1851–1911) (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985), p. 135). It may be, therefore, that the term *lingshi (guan)* was not widely known in the Nanyang at this time.

21. The exception is when he mentioned clock time during the voyage between Batavia and Singapore. One Chinese hour equals two European ones.

22. One example is the record of the reformer Zheng Guanying 郑观应 (1842–1922), who was sent by the Guangdong authorities on a more or less secret reconnaissance mission to the region in the early 1880s. See “Nanyou riji 南游日记” (preface dated 1884) in *Zheng Guanying ji 郑观应集*, ed. Xia Dongyuan 夏东元 (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1982), vol. 1, pp. 946–1009.

23. This terrible war had begun in 1873 and did not end until the eve of the Second World War.

24. As a matter of fact, the official report written by Groenevelt is appended with a very rich documentation which obviously is the result of the enquiries made by Jongh and Tan Siu Ing. See Kuiper, “Du nouveau sur la mystérieuse mission”: 38.

25. See National Archives No. 2, Ho Chi Minh City, Conseil privé (TDNK) 3672, and Gouvernement de la Cochinchine (Goucoch), 1A 6/205, dossier 5.

Malacca and Singapore are settled in Vietnam; there are twenty to thirty families who, for the most part, live in Saigon in Fujian Street (*Fujian jie* 福建街);²⁶ some came with their families, others have married there; there are also some who, being married already, have taken concubines.²⁷ If we do not yet know very much about the first Babas from Batavia who settled in Saigon, we are a little better informed about their fellows from the Straits Settlements.

Several of them had settled shortly after the French arrived—if not before—like Tan Keng Sing (Chen Qingxing 陈庆星) who sold construction timber and was involved in “the consignment of shipping and commissions”. His business had early expanded, as is shown by a public notice in the *Courrier de Saigon* of 5 August 1865: “Messires Tan Keng Sing/Tan Keng Ho (Chen Qinghe 陈庆和) / Tan Keng Hoon (Chen Qingyun 陈庆云) [...] ships’ suppliers, are honoured to inform those who might be interested that they have greatly expanded their commercial undertaking established in Saigon in 1861, under the company name of Tan Keng Sing Brothers/Shipping Consigners/Commission/Construction Timber/Import–Export.” The same year, Tan Keng Sing became an associate of the opium farmer Ban Hap (Wanhe 万合).²⁸ We know from epigraphic sources that Tan Keng Ho, noted as “resident in Annam”, had given 1,000 dollars towards the creation of the Tan (Chen) ancestral temple in Singapore, the *Bao chi gong* 保赤宫, in 1878 and 400 when it was completed in 1883.²⁹ Song Ong Siang notes that when he died in 1877 Tan Keng Ho was still an opium farmer and left a considerable fortune, both in Saigon and Singapore.³⁰ Chinese from the Straits also very quickly made themselves middlemen in the rice trade, a privilege that they nevertheless had to share with Cantonese merchants who had the quasi-monopoly on rice export to China. Tan Keng Ho figured among the biggest rice merchants in 1874.³¹ In the 1880s, when steam driven rice mills were set up in almost all the big ports, another Singapore Baba set one up in Saigon. He was Tan Kim Ching (Chen Jinzhong 陈金钟, 1829–92), the oldest son of the famous businessman and philanthropist Tan Tock Seng (Chen Dusheng 陈笃声, 1798–1850), the owner of the firm Chin Seng (Zhenxing 振成) which already had a branch in Bangkok. The Saigon mill began operations in 1888. If our author made no reference to it, by contrast Tan Keong Sum and Li Qinghui both visited the mill. The first reported: “In Cholon there are some five or six rice mills.³² The Chin Seng firm has built one which is very shortly to begin operation.” Each mill could process four to five thousand piculs.³³ As for Li Qinghui, he tells us that its manager was a certain Huang Jinshou 黄锦寿, no doubt a Singaporean. Finally, he notes that he was

26. According to information from Mr Lê Văn Năm (whom we thank), Fujian Street corresponds to present-day Tổng Duy Tân Street in Chợ Lớn. People originating from southern Fujian (Zhangzhou 漳州 and Quanzhou 泉州 Prefectures) gathered there, and their temple, the *Erfu miao* 二府庙 or “Temple of the two prefectures” [which according to Le Van Luu, *Pagodas chinoises et annamites de Cholon* (Hanoi: Imprimerie Tonkinoise, 1931), p. 65 was founded around 1835], was located there. For a contemporary description, see Phan An et al, *Chùa Hoa thành phố Hồ Chí Minh* (HCM City: Thành phố HCM, 1990), pp. 76–83.

27. See Tan Keong Sum, “Regards d’un Peranakan de Singapour”: 155.

28. Chantal Descours-Gatin, “Opium et finances coloniales: la formation de la Régie Générale de l’Opium en Indochine (1860–1914),” thèse de 3e cycle, University of Paris VII, 1987, vol. 1, p. 55. Also see Etienne Denis, *Bordeaux et la Cochinchine sous la restauration et le second empire* (n. p., 1965), p. 198.

29. See Chen Chingho 陈荆和 and 陈育松, *Xinjiapo huawen beiming jilu* 新加坡华文碑銘录, *A Collection of Chinese Inscriptions in Singapore* (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1972), pp. 267, 272.

30. Song Ong Siang, *One Hundred Years’ History of the Chinese in Singapore* (originally 1923; Singapore: University of Malaya, 1967), pp. 271–72.

31. Denis, *Bordeaux et la Cochinchine*, p. 233, where his name appeared in the first line, with Denis Frères, as signatories of the minutes of a meeting of French and Chinese merchants of Saigon and Chợ Lớn that marks the beginning of methodical commercial action to improve local rice.

32. The first, called “Rizeries de Saigon”, was established in 1869 by Andrew Spooner and Renard et Cie; the second, “Rizeries chinoises”, in 1876 by Guandhin et Cie. See *Ibid.*, pp. 237–38.

33. See Tan Keong Sum, “Regards d’un Peranakan de Singapour”: 152.

invited to dine by Tan Hin Long (Chen Xinglong 陈兴隆)—son of the deceased Tan Keng Sing mentioned above—who had inherited his father's entire fortune and who owned a large number of properties.³⁴ Even the place where our two travellers from Singapore lodged, the Fujiheji 福基和记 Company, seems to have been owned by one of their compatriots.³⁵

Furthermore, we know that Chinese from Singapore had two social clubs in Chợ Lớn to which they went for amusement but also to discuss business. The first attempt to set up such a club had occurred in October 1878, but the request was rejected for unknown reasons. In 1882 a second application was successful. Tan Sou Bian 陈四面, "admis à domicile en France",³⁶ was the president, and Tan Tho and Tan Thang (or Chang) the vice-presidents. The club was located in Chợ Lớn, at 68 rue de Paris (near rue de Phuc Kiên and alongside the Fujianese Chinese club at number 66).³⁷ The second club was approved on 12 May 1886, after the original application of 6 August 1885 had been rejected. The proponents had based their request on the fact that they formed "a separate category" from the Chinese who had already set up social clubs. However, it required the intervention of the British consul and a supportive letter from the mayor of Chợ Lớn to overcome the Interior Department's reluctance to approve any more Chinese clubs since so many became illegal gambling halls. Among its ten founder members, all "British subjects" from Singapore, were Goh Yen Keng (Wu Xianqing 吴贤庆), Chan Eng Bok—with whom our author stayed—Chan Cheng Tee, Tan Toan Khat, and Tay Chow Beng (Zheng Zhaoming 郑昭明).³⁸ The proponents wanted to call their club the "cercle de Chinois sujets anglais", but the administration insisted on the "cercle des comprodores chinois du commerce" instead. In 1886, Tay Chow Beng (comprador of Chợ Lớn's Gien Chong Ghie rice store)³⁹ was listed as president, with the vice-presidents being Goh Yen Keng 吴贤庆, employed by W. Hale and Company (Saigon) and Chan Eng Bok, employed as we have seen by Th. Speidel (Saigon).⁴⁰ The clubhouse was in Chợ Lớn, at 105 rue des Marins.

34. See Leung, "Li Qinghui yu Dongyou jilüe": 46.

35. See Tan Keong Sum, "Regards d'un Peranakan de Singapour": 153–54, and Leung, "Li Qinghui yu Dongyou jilüe": 45.

36. [A Napoleonic innovation, this was an intermediate stage between alien and French national status that could be granted to worthy foreign residents in France. It was extended to Cochinchina in September 1874. [See CAOM, Indochine G 00 [1], c. 111] Being *admis à domicile en France* gave French civil rights to someone with foreign nationality. The status was abolished in 1927. See M. F. P. Herchenroder, "The French Law of Domicil in Relation to Foreigners," *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law* (3rd ser.) 19 (1937): 239–44. Translator's note.]

37. See National Archives No. 2, Ho Chi Minh City, Conseil privé (TDNK) 3672, and Goucoch, 1A.6/205, dossier 5. The ten founder members were Tan Sou Bian, Tan Tho, Tan Thang, Gam Keng Ghieu (also *admis à domicile en France*), Huynh Banh, Tu Vieng, Tran Ho, Tran Tam, Tran Luong, and Lui Thien Tho, whose names were also given in Chinese characters. [Ten was the minimum number of men officially required as co-signatories to a request to establish a *cercle*, although up to 40 members were allowed. Archival records almost invariably contain only ten names. Unlike many others, this club operated for 4 years without official incident. See Goucoch 1A.6/205, dossier 5. Translator's addition.]

38. [Two were employed by Speidel, three by Denis Frères, two by the Wee Chy Sing Company (itself owned by a wealthy Baba from Singapore with 20 years residence in the colony), one was employed by W. Hale, while the other two were listed as a merchant and a land owner. In 1886, Tay Chow Beng, originally listed as a merchant, was described as a comprador at the Gien Chong Ghie store. Unfortunately, not all names are legible. See Goucoch 1A.6/186, dossier 3. Translator's note.]

39. Tay Chow Beng's ancestry was in the independent department of Yongchun in Fujian, but he was born in Singapore. His name appears among those who contributed towards setting up the Singapore *Yongchun huiguan* 永春会馆 or "Association of People from Yongchun" in 1905. See Chen Chingho and Tan Yeok Seong, *Xinjiapo huawen beiming jilu*, p. 212. He spoke fluent French and English and was at some point naturalised as French. See "Le Cochinchine et la curée. Les Douanes et les Régies, l'Entreprise Fontaine - Tay Chow Beng and Co," *Asie française*, 30 Jan 1907.

40. [See the letter dated 12 August 1885, from the Chợ Lớn mayor to the Interior Director, Goucoch 1A.6/186, dossier 3. Translator's note.]

Salmon and Ta: *Wang Annan riji*

The Babas also had their own temple, the *Fengshan si* 凤山寺 or “Phoenix Mountain Temple,” which still exists in a private house situated at the intersection of Ký Con and Nguyễn Công Trứ Streets. It is still known to locals as *Chùa Ông Bồn xóm Bàba* or the Ông Bồn temple⁴¹ in the Baba quarter. Although very humble, outside the main door there is still preserved a board bearing the name of the temple, dated the 8th moon of the year *dingyou* 丁酉, Guangxu 光绪 reign (1897), that was written by Tan Keong Sum, the Singapore Peranakan who had visited Saigon in 1888.⁴²

Taken together, in all this we can make out the linkages in a network that connected Singapore to Saigon and to Batavia, via the Lingga and Riau Islands.

The Author's View of Vietnam

Our author recognised the good management of the French in the economic sphere. He noted the development of Saigon since his first trip, the broad, shady streets that headed off in all directions, the public fountains, a modern bridge being built over the Chinese Arroyo, the density of population, and the abundance of goods in the marketplace. It caused him to exclaim: “The French excel in the harmonisation of commerce and we could say that the town is not inferior to Hong Kong or Singapore”. However, he did not let this economic success blind him; he quickly raised the issue of who was paying for these great works, in order to rapidly reveal that all the costs were borne by the Chinese community, that taxes endlessly rose, and that justice was arbitrary, in a word, that French administration was not as good as that of the English. He concluded with the observation that: “Recently, the number of merchants setting up here has begun to decline”.

In addition to this, the memory of the country's conquest by the French was still very fresh in the visitors' minds. Our author, like Tan Keong Sum before him, lamented the fate of the Vietnamese, whose defeat saddened him. For the former it was explained by the country's geographical configuration (“an excessive flatness”), and by the fact that “there was no more vital energy [left] in the earth of Annam”,⁴³ but our author attributed it to “maladministration and the decayed state of the [country's] armed forces”. Unlike Zheng Guanying who, in 1888, still hoped for a Vietnamese resurgence,⁴⁴ our author instead stressed their accommodation to the colonisers:

The French hold political sovereignty in their hands, while the Vietnamese mandarins compete for the honour of serving them because they are handsomely paid. The French have given them positions so that they have become their henchmen.... The Vietnamese proudly show off their endless contentment. At the moment, they only know France and no longer know that there was a Vietnam.

He was no less severe towards the colonisers, saying simply that “they exercise their tyranny while filling their pockets with gold or silver”.

These judgements reveal the ambiguity of the position of Chinese merchants. They also had to “rally” to colonial powers, whose superiority in the technical and administrative domains they recognised, while still hating them. The passage of Chinese

41. There are several *Fengshan si* across Southeast Asia, most notably in Singapore where the earliest was founded in 1836, followed by another in Penang in 1860. It is the local name for Guo shengwang 郭圣王, a divinity from the Song era who originated in Anxi 安溪 District of Quanzhou 泉州 Prefecture, Fujian. See Chen Ching-he and Tan Yeok Seong, *Xinjiapo huawen beiming jilu*, p. 102; and W. Franke and Chen Tieh Fan 陈铁凡, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1982–87), vol. 2, pp. 564–67

42. A new temple with the same name has been built at 338 Nguyễn Công Trứ Street. A stele dated 1947 relates the story of its construction. Nothing therein suggests there were Babas among the donors. We thank Tôn Nữ Quỳnh Trân for helping us find these two temples.

43. See Tan Keong Sum, “Récit d'un voyage au Vietnam”: 155.

44. *Zheng Guanying ji*, p. 1004: “I want to believe that the Vietnamese have not lost their virtue; in their hearts they have sworn to throw off the French tyranny.”

warships through the port of Saigon, which our author reports with great circumspection—the authorities in Batavia having already shown themselves very suspicious of these Manchu missions—is the single glimmer from the East to oppose the imperialist force symbolised by the reference to soldiers from the Aceh front that closed the travelogue.

Record of a Trip to Annam (13 March–11 May 1890)

On the morning of the 23rd day of the 2nd lunar month of the year *gengyin* 庚寅 (13 March 1890), I accompanied the Dutch government's emissary, Mr Qu Molin, who was going to Annam. We took a boat from Tanjung Priok where several acquaintances [...] came on board to bid me farewell. [...] On the evening of the 25th day (15 March) we arrived at Bangka Island. [There] an old man of seventy with an impeccably dressed entourage of several people came on board: the old man was the local honorary major,⁴⁵ his middle-aged companion the captain, and the younger ones the major's great nephews. [...] They had brought the interpreter, Mr Yang,⁴⁶ on board, and also wanted to greet the emissary. [*The next day the sea appeared dotted with small islands that formed part of the Dutch administered Riau Archipelago. On the larger islands, the author reported, people had planted pepper and gambier and mined a lot of tin.*⁴⁷ *That night they reached the Riau port (Tanjung Pinang) where they unloaded some cargo and took on a small quantity of goods. From there Singapore was only a couple of hours sail away the next day.*]

Among the passengers was Mr Huang Taihe 黃太和公司, captain of the Chinese of the Lingga Archipelago,⁴⁸ a dependency of Riau, who had ordered a horse drawn carriage [to meet the boat] and who invited me to have a rest in his shop. [...] In the afternoon, we returned to the carriage and he invited me to drive through “greater” and “lesser” Singapore. [...] Everywhere there were great crowds and interlocking carriage wheels; there were also plenty of inns. The people lived in multi-storey houses. The markets were plentifully supplied with goods; you could spend whole days there without exhausting them. I had already been to Singapore sixteen years ago. The town had not then its current prosperity. To see the place again today, things have really changed a great deal. This arises from the fact that the English excel in commerce and administration.

On the evening of the first day of the extra second month [21 March] I rejoined Emissary Qu to embark on the French steamer, a large ship that could carry more than 100,000 *dan* 担 of cargo.⁵⁰ It had not yet been loaded, so we had to climb a ladder to reach the second bridge.⁵¹ On the upper bridge there was a canvas cover with the words “first

45. According to the *Regerings Almanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, in 1890 Tjoeng At Tiam who was captain of the Chinese of Mentok (Bangka), had been granted the title of honorary major. He held office from 1886 to 1895. The other official living in the island's capital only held the rank of lieutenant: he was probably the major's son, Tjoeng Fai Hioen, who had been appointed in 1887. See Mary Somers Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992), pp. 58, 82, 154, 171; and Franke, Salmon, and Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, vol. 1, pp. 486–92, for the inscriptions (ancestral tablets, noticeboards, and the tomb of a family member).

46. As mentioned above the “interpreter Yang” was Arie Arend de Jongh.

47. Gambier production and marketing at the time was in the hands of Teochiu (from Chaozhou 潮州, Guangdong); the Riau planters sold their crop to Singapore merchants some of whom had come from these islands. See Yen Ching-hwang, *A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya, 1800–1911* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 120. As for tin, it was in fact only mined on the islands of Bangka, Billiton and Singkep. See Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper*.

48. This was undoubtedly Captain Oeij Soei In who was appointed in 1877. See *Regerings Almanak*, 1890, vol 2, pp. 235–36.

49. *Dapo* 大坡, “greater Singapore”, designated the part of the town south of the river, and *Xiaopao* 小坡, or “lesser Singapore”, that to its north.

50. The Messageries Maritimes had opened a direct route between Singapore and Saigon in 1880. See Paul Bois, *Histoire du commerce et de l'industrie de Marseille XIXe–XXe siècles* (Marseille: Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie Marseille-Provence, 1991), vol. 2, p. 412.

51. Here the author uses the term *ben* (Hokkien *pun* 笨), which makes no sense and seems to be the transcription of the French “pont”.

class” written on it. There were more than twenty cabins there. The beams, the pillars, the decorated parts of their capitals, and the doors and windows were all lacquered and incrustated with gild. There were silk curtains in the openings. The cabins were carpeted; the beds were made up with immaculate white linen and there were flowers on the pillows; their outer parts were made of a sort of white cane;⁵² the washbasin and inlaid table gleamed like oil. The second class cabins had a similar fit-out. The bathrooms and toilets contained iron pipes in which water always flowed; they were cleaned daily with a brush so that there was never the least objectionable odour. The stairs were supplied with floral rubber mats that caught at one’s heels when going up or down them. The food was served by Western men. Excellent wines, tea, cold water, and cakes were present in abundance; among them were glasses, plates, and cutlery that were changed three or four times at each meal. On top of this, a ventilator blew cool air. To have some tea, one needed only to call to be served immediately. When night fell, they lit dazzling electric lamps that illuminated high and low more clearly than the stars. These lights were superior to kerosene lamps and were not even extinguished by a very strong wind. Furthermore, there were air-vents suspended from pipes so that there was fresh air wherever people were sitting throughout the ship.

The ship was fast. When it cast off, it raised waves and a big wind; it only took two days and one night to reach Annam. The Dutch consul⁵³ came on board to welcome the emissary and on the night of the third day [25 March] we berthed at Saigon. The consul invited me to go to rue des Babas⁵⁴ where I was to lodge in the shop of Chan Eng Bok (Zeng Yongmu).⁵⁵ They had prepared a banquet and made up a bed, and I was handsomely treated.

The next morning, they sent someone to invite me to go around the streets and the commercial quarter. The buildings are all very high and the shops flourishing; the houses are all multi-storeyed; the streets are broad and planted with tall, dense trees on both sides. They open out in all directions. Carriages come one after the other, with no space between them, and the people likewise. In the marketplace they have built a long hall divided into five or six parts so that people can display their goods: vegetables, fruits, fish, prawns, the flesh of pigs, cattle, and sheep, dried foods, chickens and ducks, all were piled high in great abundance. The people were crushed together like mice. I had already been here before, sixteen years ago, and had passed by this spot, but it was totally different now and I recognised nothing. The French excel in the harmonisation of commerce and you could say that the town is not inferior to Hong Kong or Singapore.

However, their penal laws, their revenue farms, and their poll-tax are excessive. If a Chinese or a local person infringes the law, indulging in fisticuffs or gambling, whether sentenced for it or not, they give the police dogs⁵⁶ free rein to beat them up, to the point of causing serious or mortal wounds, without anyone being called to account over it. I’ve heard it said that they do not show the least compassion where old men, children or

52. Literally, *baishiteng* 白石藤.

53. At the time the consul was the businessman Th. Speidel who, with some relatives, operated the Union Rice Mill (*Annuaire de la Cochinchine* 1890, pp. 264 and 315).

54. The term *bà ba* is still used in southern Vietnam to designate the child of a Chinese father and Malay mother. It was also used as late as the 1960s in Singapore to designate a Malay-Chinese person, while the term *áo bà ba* is still used, originating from a garment worn by the Babas (Son Nam, *Văn Minh Miệt Vườn* (reprint, 1970; HCM City: Văn Hoá, 1992), p. 43. Tôn Nữ Quỳnh Trân also informs us that the Baba are still remembered in Ho Chi Minh City in two local foodstuffs, a rice cake wrapped in banana leaves and a popular dessert, *chè bà ba*, that resembles the *gula Malaka* so enjoyed in Baba circles in Malaysia and Singapore.

55. He was a Speidel employee.

56. Literally, *da gou lang* 大狗狼, which was probably a derogatory expression for the French police. According to Rev. Thomas Barclay, *Supplement to the Dictionary of the Vernacular or Spoken Language of Amoy* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1923), p. 96, the expression *toa kau* (*da gou*, “the big dog”) was used in Singapore to designate the police chief.

women are concerned. Innumerable are those who have been arrested and put to death by these torturers.⁵⁷ In recent times, the number of merchants coming to settle here has declined.⁵⁸ We can see quite evidently that the behaviour of the French is much inferior to that of the British.

I spent three more nights there and on the morning of the 6th day [26 March] people reported that six or seven Chinese warships had entered the port.⁵⁹ Some were saying that they had accounts to settle with the French; others that these military vessels were coming from Germany where they had been purchased and were stopping here on their journey; still others said they were on special patrol on the high seas.⁶⁰ When they entered the port, crowds jostled to get on board to look at the big cannons and the military equipment and the ships' authorities could not prevent them. That morning, loud cannon fire rang out which made the earth tremble. Seeking the cause, I learned that the authorities on board and the deputy French governor general⁶¹ were thereby saluting each other, each making a salvo in response to the other. A little later, groups of Chinese soldiers from the ships paraded in squads of ten throughout the streets, without the French forbidding it. On the morning of the 9th day [29 March], they left to inspect other seas.

57. [These claims seem exaggerated. In regard to serious injuries inflicted by police responding to public affrays, extant records suggest that Chinese brawlers were not always innocent victims. The two-day series of rolling brawls between Ban Hap's Hokkien congregation (including a hard core of Heaven and Earth Society affiliates) and Vietnamese cabbies in late August and early September 1888, whose recent memory no doubt added substance to this particular claim, is a good example. Twenty-two of the 50 arrested Chinese were injured, one of whom later died of his wounds, but so were 12 Asian and 3 French policemen, with 4 Asian police agents hospitalised. Two thousand armed Chinese were involved, requiring the military to clear the streets at one point. In this case, Chinese rioters basically gave as much as they got. [See Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence (CAOM), Gouvernement Général de l'Indochine (GGI), reports and correspondence in dossiers 9025 and 21544] If police brutality was as typical as our author claimed, the most likely underlying cause would have been frustration at police inability to get legal convictions for the two offences named by the author. It was rare that Chinese arrested for brawling or gambling could be convicted in French courts because the metropolitan penal code in operation in Saigon-Chợ Lớn criminalised those who ran gambling dens, not the gamblers. Where brawling was concerned, investigating judges needed direct proof of individual criminal responsibility to sustain a charge, something Chinese evasions or denials usually made impossible to obtain. In regard to a high death rate among imprisoned men, this may have been accurate; but the main cause was likely to have been malignant conditions within the prisons themselves. Mid-1880s' prison records from Poulo Condore, where Chinese secret society members awaiting administrative expulsion were often first incarcerated, indicate a chillingly high mortality rate from illness. [Prison registers for 1882-87, Goucoch, 1A 19/0812]. Translator's note.]

58. [There had been a very poor crop in 1889 and rice exports had fallen by 40% compared to 1888. While total imports had fallen by more than 3 million francs in value, foreign (largely Chinese) imports had accounted for over 90% of the decline. Chinese business, and hence immigration, consequently suffered badly in 1889-90, something not ameliorated by the uncertainty surrounding the application of the first protective tariff in the middle of 1889. Chợ Lớn was still in recession for much of 1890, although commerce and Chinese migration both picked up again in 1891. See the customs reports held in CAOM, Indochine L-30 (9), carton 229. Translator's note.]

59. Colonial newspapers at the time also reported this visit, which occurred at the same time as a French warship was docked at Saigon, hence the exchange of salvos. The lieutenant governor of Cochinchina invited both admirals to dinner. The Chinese admiral also made a train trip to Mỹ Tho in early April where he was welcomed by the administrator, officers of the French garrison, local *colons*, and a large crowd of Chinese and Vietnamese. The 2 sources diverge in regard to number: the French mention only one warship, which arrived on 25 March, compared to our author who said there were 6 or 7 that arrived on 26 March.

60. The French authorities seem not to have felt the political significance of this visit. Charles Fourniau, who has researched this era extensively, found no mention of it in any official correspondence at the Aix-en-Provence archives. Yet it seems likely that this was the same inspection mission by the Chinese navy's Northern Seas Squadron (*Beiyang jiandui* 北洋舰队) that the Chinese and English press of Singapore say arrived there on 3 April 1890, some days after leaving Saigon. After a few days there, the squadron sailed to the Philippines. The warships had been bought in Germany in 1887; each was commanded by a captain while the squadron itself was commanded by Admiral Ding Ruchang 丁汝昌. Their reconnaissance mission at this time was intended to impress diasporic Chinese in the Nanyang and to encourage them to invest in China. For the Singapore visit, see Chui Kwei Chiang 崔贵强, "Wanqing guanli fangwen xinjiapo 晚清官吏访问新加坡," in *Nanyang xuebao* 南洋学报 29 (1974): 20-21.

61. In fact, no such official existed. This must refer to the lieutenant governor of Cochinchina.

Salmon and Ta: *Wang Annan riji*

On days of leisure I strolled about in Saigon with former compatriots long established there. I noticed that there were public fountains in the streets from which it was very easy to get water.⁶²



Figure 2. A Public Water Fountain in Saigon, 1906

Source: Mr Nguyen Tan Loc (http://nguyentl.free.fr/html/cadre_sommaire_vn.htm)

To the south of the town a new iron bridge is being built. It is long and high, painted red and green, solid and elegant. It almost forms a rainbow. Not only is it useful for crossing the Arroyo, but it is an attractive object as well.⁶³ Although the French are hard, they nevertheless agreed to outlay this great expense [I remarked]. Someone said to me, laughing: “You think it’s the French who have to bear such a sum?” I responded: “Who else then?” He replied: “It is the accumulated total of the capitation taxes paid over the years by the Chinese; at first, each man only paid two dollars a year;⁶⁴ at present the sum has risen

62. The idea of creating public fountains went back to 1862, when their importance was first recognised. See Jean Bouchot, *Documents pour servir à l’Histoire de Saïgon* (Saïgon: A Portail, 1923), p. 40. It was not until the 1886, however, that the problem of supplying clean water to them was finally solved. Previously, Saïgon’s water had come from wells, which were less than adequately hygienic. That year a system of filtered water brought from a spring by underground pipes began to service the whole town. A. Bouinai and A. Paulus, *La France en Indochine* (Paris: Challamel, 1892), pp. 209–10.

63. This should be the bridge at Khánh Hội, a village opposite Saïgon on the left bank of the river. An 1893 map placed it on the Chinese Arroyo. For an 1893 description of the completed bridge, and of the commercial traffic that flowed beneath and around it and the businesses that lined it, see Pierre Barreton, “Saïgon”, *Le Tour du Monde*, 7 & 14 Oct 1893, p. 227.

64. [A flat capitation or poll-tax of “2 dollars” (or piastres) per head began in Nov 1863 (see Bouchot, *Documents pour servir à l’Histoire*, p. 392). Later, it was divided into 3 categories. By an administrative order of 23 Jan 1885, big businessmen in the first category paid 60 piastres per annum, medium merchants, successful professional men, or self-employed craftsmen paid 20 piastres, and everyone else paid 5 piastres per year. An order of 19 Feb 1890 then increased the rates to 80, 30, and 7 piastres respectively. [See the note from the Cochinchina governor to the governor-general dated 25 March 1897, at CAOM, GGI, 24817] The 9.5 piastres mentioned in the text must

to nine and a half dollars; they say it's still not enough; I've heard it said that, since last year, the cost of the public fountains had been fully acquitted; some say that this year's tax increase will be to construct the iron bridge and for roads. We can't know when this will end; it's why the immigrants who have settled here are [so] worried."

I then asked: "What are the provinces of Annam?" He replied: "The six provinces that surround Saigon are called "the six inner provinces" by the French; here are their original names⁶⁵—I am poorly informed of the changes in place names implemented by the French—: Gia Định 嘉定, called by the French Xigong 西貢 (Saigon), Long Hồ 龍號 (Vĩnh Long 永隆),⁶⁶ Mỹ Tho 美稻 (or Định Tường 定祥),⁶⁷ Lộc Nại 祿賴 (Đồng Nai 全狒 or Biên Hòa 邊和),⁶⁸ *Loc Sui Yen* 路水淵 (Long Xuyên 隆川 or Hà Tiên 河仙),⁶⁹ and *Ka Lok Bin* 加轆憫 (An Giang 安江?).⁷⁰ As for the six outer provinces that constitute Nam Kỳ 南旗,⁷¹ they are Bình Thuận 平順, Khánh Hòa 侃化, Phú Yên 浮緣, Tân Châu 新州,⁷² Quảng Ngãi 廣義, and Quảng Nam 廣南. The capital is in the centre with more than six other provinces; they are Thuận Hóa 順化,⁷³ Quảng Trị 廣致, Quảng Bình 廣平, Hà Tĩnh 夏陳, Nghệ An 義安, and Thanh Hóa 青化 which, with six other external provinces, make up *Pingpoa* 平判.⁷⁴

have included additional contributions that were levied from 1885, perhaps including municipal ones. Translator's note.]

65. The author visibly transcribes the place names told to him according to Hokkien pronunciation. Those which have not been identified are noted in italics, with a Hokkien spelling. The division the author establishes between *Pingpoa* 平判 (which combines Nam Kỳ 南圻 and Trung Kỳ 中圻) and *Pingyong* (*iu*) 平陽 (corresponding to Bắc Kỳ 北圻) is quite curious [For one explanation, see translator's note 74 below.] We wonder if an inversion has not taken place in the manuscript: *Pingyong* [Binh Dương] should refer to the south and not the north, judging by the evidence of other Chinese travellers. In the 1860s Binh Dương 平陽 was a *huyện* 縣 depending on the province of Gia Định; see *Wanqing haiwai bijixuan* 晚清海外笔记选 (Beijing: Haiyang chubanshe, 1983), pp. 1, 3, 27 (where it vaguely refers to an area), and *Atlas historique des six provinces du sud du Vietnam du milieu du XIXe au début du XXe siècle*, ed. Philippe Langlet and Quach Thanh Tâm (Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2001), pp. 24-25, 54-67, etc. It is worth noting that, when he writes *Kỳ*, our author does not use the usual character 圻, which literally means "a territory extending for a thousand miles in every direction, the emperor's personal domain", but rather its homophone 旗 that means "flag". We thank Tâm Langlet for helping us to identify some place names.

66. Long Hồ was an early eighteenth century military administrative division (*dinh* 營), which covered a vast area. Gradually reduced in size as Nguyễn rule strengthened, in the 1832 provincial reorganisation it became the province of Vĩnh Long. For fuller information about late imperial and early colonial provinces and sub-provincial administrative units, see Langlet and Quach, *Atlas historique*, with Vĩnh Long at pp. 121-42.

67. Mỹ Tho was a centre of Chinese settlement from the late seventeenth century. In 1832 it formed part of Định Tường Province when the French subdivided in 1889 into Gò Công, Sa Đéc, and Mỹ Tho. For more detail, see *Ibid.*, pp. 115-19.

68. We think Lộc Nại has been written in place of Đồng Nai, another name for Biên Hòa, itself a very early area of Chinese settlement. For more detail, see *Ibid.*, pp. 87-106.

69. We think *Loc Sui Yen* stands for the district of Long Xuyên, which corresponded to the Cà Mau 金甌 peninsula in Hà Tiên Province, settled since the eighteenth century. This name should not be confused with another Long Xuyên, in An Giang Province, which seems to be an abbreviation of Chợ Long Xuyên. This name still exists; however, the former Long Xuyên was changed to Cà Mau in the early colonial era. For more detail, see *Ibid.*, pp. 173-87.

70. "Ka Lok Bin" could be a mutilated combination of a part of Châu Đốc 朱篤, transcribed Tra Loc, and of Tù Biên 綏邊, its provincial seat, represented here by the last syllable only (*Bien* or *Bin*). Châu Đốc province changed its name to An Giang in 1859.

71. Nam Kỳ comprised the 6 far southern provinces, "Lục Tỉnh 六省". Its use here is obviously a slip of the brush for "Trung Kỳ", although the named provinces only formed the southern part of nineteenth-century Trung Kỳ.

72. This probably means Quy Nhơn 歸仁 (or Bình Định 平定). See Chingho A. Chen, *Historical Notes on Hôi-An (Faifo)* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University, 1974), p. 9.

73. This is the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century name for the northern region of the breakaway Nguyễn realm. In context, it means the province of Thừa Thiên 承天, where the capital was located.

74. [The list of provinces given here for "*Pingpoa*" corresponds precisely to a geographical distinction made by Vietnamese from the sixteenth century that reflected the contrasting characteristics of the northern and southern regions of Đại Việt: "Đàng Ngoài" (the outer region or "*Pingyong*" 平陽 here) and "Đàng Trong" (the inner region or "*Pingpoa*" 平判 here) were colloquial names that contrasted the sense of openness of the Red River plains with the increasing sense of inwardness, of being hemmed in by mountains and sea, that occurred when travelling

The emperor has his capital in the centre where, on one side, it draws support from the mountains and on the other gives onto the sea. *Pingyong(iu)* 平阳 is divided into eight provinces that form Bắc Kỳ 北旗: they are Ninh Bình 宁平, Nam Định 南定, Hưng Yên 恒安, Hải Dương 海洋, and Quảng Yên 广安, which runs to the frontier of Guangdong 广东, and Hà Nội 河内, Bắc Ninh 北宁, and Sơn Tây 山西, which borders the province of Quangxi 广西. These eight *Pingyong* provinces comprise millions of *qing* 顷 of rice fields that extend far away, so it produces a considerable quantity of rice. There are also five provinces inhabited by long haired people (*changfa ren* 长发人);⁷⁵ they are Bác Khê 白几,⁷⁶ *Kuiyong* 桂阳, Bảo Thịnh 宝盛 (Lào Kai 老街),⁷⁷ a mineral producing region and hence its name,⁷⁸ Hưng Hóa 兴化, and Lai Châu 离州, which borders on Yunnan 云南.

From this we can see that the Viet territory was not that of a small country. Because of bad administration and the decayed state of its military forces the inhabitants finally fell into servitude. This is truly regrettable. Since the flight of the former king,⁷⁹ eight years have passed and they have changed the sovereign seven times.⁸⁰ The French keep the political sovereignty in their hands while the mandarins compete for the honour of serving them because they are handsomely paid.⁸¹ The French have given them positions so that they have become their henchmen; as for the former, they exercise their tyranny while filling their pockets with gold and silver. The Vietnamese proudly show their unlimited contentment. At the moment, they only know France and no longer know that there was a Vietnam.⁸² In such circumstances, who would seek to know the name of their king and to what people they belonged.

from Thanh Hóa south. By the eighteenth century this older usage was largely superseded by a new politically-based one (probably of mainly southern usage) that contrasted the Lê-Trịnh northern state (Đàng Ngoài), now including the three provinces of Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An, and Hà Tĩnh, with the breakaway southern state Đàng Trong. The Thanh-Nghệ-Tĩnh sub-region, which contained distant Nguyễn ancestral tombs, was only incorporated into "*Pingpoa*" in the 1820s, to form part of the new central region (Trung Kỳ). See K. W. Taylor, "Surface Orientations in Vietnam: Beyond Histories of Nation and Region," *Journal of Asian Studies* 57 (1998): 958–59 and Nola Cooke, "Regionalism and Nature of Nguyen Rule in Seventeenth-Century Dang Trong (Cochinchina)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 29 (1998): 137–38. [Translator's note.]
75. That is to say, Vietnamese, since none ever willingly cut their hair until the twentieth century, as a mark of filial respect.

76. The transcription *Bajji* is taken to mean Bác Khê Bảo 北溪堡. This is a fort located 53 leagues south of Thạch An 石安 District in Cao Bằng 高平 Province, near the Chinese frontier, according to the Nguyễn imperial gazetteer, *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* (Hanoi: NXB Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1971), vol. 4, p. 400.

77. See an anonymous travelogue from northern Vietnam, in 1896, partially reproduced in *Wanqing haiwai bijixuan* 晚清海外笔记选, p. 48. In it the character *sheng* 盛 (or Bảo Thịnh in Sino-Vietnamese) is written with a Chinese homophone 胜 that means "to defeat" (and which is pronounced as *thang* in Sino-Vietnamese). According to *Ibid*, p. 309, this frontier post was situated in the main seat of the *châu* of Thủy Vĩ 水尾, in Hưng Hóa 兴化 Province.

78. There were indeed mines in the White Thai region to the southeast of Lào Kai.

79. This refers to the teenage king Hàm Nghi 咸宜, who fled the capital in July 1885 following a Vietnamese armed reaction against an ultimatum issued by General de Courcy. His flight triggered a large-scale and desperate anti-colonial revolt of literati, mainly in central Vietnam, known as the "Cần vương 勤王" or "Defend the King" rising. Captured in November 1888, Hàm Nghi was later exiled to Algeria. The gap was thus 5 years from when he fled the capital, not 8 as given by our author.

80. Yes and no. No, if we count from the flight of Hàm Nghi; yes, if we go back to 1883, when the long reigning Tự Đức 嗣德 died. Between July 1883 and the accession of Hàm Nghi in August 1884 there were 3 short-lived kings, and another 2 after Hàm Nghi's flight, although his immediate successor, the pro-French Đồng Khánh 同庆, died of natural causes in January 1888. For the chronology, see Bui Quang Tung, "Tables synoptiques de chronologie vietnamienne," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* 51 (1963): 59.

81. A senior French colonial official, E. Bonhoure, shared this view in his book *L'Indochine* (Paris: A. Challamel, 1900), pp. 235–36, 247–48.

82. Although there were a lot of Vietnamese who physically resisted colonialism or rejected it in their patriotic writings, it is still true that there were also some early intellectuals who rallied to the French cause (among them persecuted Catholics like the famous intellectual Pétrus Ký). One significant expression of this intellectual current comes at the end of a poem about the Franco-Vietnamese war which was translated by Michel D. Chaigneau,

When I arrived in Annam it was the dry season. Every morning was unbearably hot. In the middle of the day the air felt like scorching fire; this is why the Westerners who live in the country rest or stop work, for that heat is hard to endure. They wait for the mid-afternoon when the strength of the heat diminishes and a soft breeze arrives, then they begin again until the early evening when they stop. This is why one goes out only between five and seven, in the morning or in the evening. At the start of the third month, the heat becomes even worse and local people of all ages and both sexes contract fevers. They have to take more medications than usual. Seeing that, I was alarmed but could not avoid falling ill. At five in the morning I was very hot then cold. By seven my whole body was on fire, and my extraordinarily painful joints only allowed me to sit and not to lie down. [...]

On the morning of the 7th day (25 April) the emissary went to Jinta 金塔.⁸³ On that day I felt so sick that I could not accompany him. On the tenth day, in the early hours of the morning, a sudden shower of rain occurred and everywhere became cool. The illness suddenly regressed and I was able to eat a bowl of rice. My recovery began on the 11th day (29 April). On the 14th day (2 May) the emissary returned to Saigon. On the 17th day (5 May), in the mid-afternoon I accompanied him to embark on a ship of the French Company, the *Guanghe* 广和, to return to Batavia via Singapore [...]

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Tho Nam Ky ou Lettre cochinchinoise sur les événements de la guerre franco-chinoise (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1876), bilingual ed. We thank Nguyễn Thế Anh for this reference.

83. Jinta 金塔, which literally means “golden tower”, was used as early as the thirteenth century by Zhou Daguan 周达观 in his famous *Zhenla fengtu ji* 真腊风土记 (Memoir on the customs of Cambodia) to refer to Angkor. It was also used in the same way by Wang Dayuan 汪大渊 in his *Daoyi zhilüe* 岛夷志略, ed. Su Jiqing 苏继贻 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 274, and it is still so. But here it seems that it rather refers to Phnom Penh (where presumably the emissary intended to investigate the opium farms), which in Chinese aside from the official name Jinbian 金边, has been known under different transcriptions and names, such as Bainangben 百囊奔, Fengbing 风丙, Jinben 金奔, Jincheng 金城, and Jinta 金塔; cf. *Directory of S.E. Asian Towns / 东南亚地名街名录* (Singapore: The Nantao Publishing House, 1st ed. 1952, reprint of 1967), p. 98.