

## NOTICE TO READERS

Published in a very short print run of sixty copies at the most, Henri Oger's work is a rarity. Even in Vietnam only two copies have been located: the first, incomplete, in the National Library, Hanoi; the second in the General Science Library in Hồ Chí Minh City. And, given the latter's excellent state of conservation and our cordial relations with the institution holding it, it is this copy which we have used. Outside of Vietnam additional copies are available in university libraries including those of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore; Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; University of California, Berkeley; Cornell University on microfilm; the Art and Archeological Library, Paris IV, Sorbonne. In addition, notably, is the unique copy conserved in the Keio University Library, Minato-Ku, Japan, which includes 935 plates of which 235 do not exist elsewhere. Understandably, discovering the existence of this edition raised a number of questions. Our Vietnamese colleagues, through their Japanese counterparts, inform us that the library housing it acquired Henri Oger's personal archives in the 1950s and that the edition in their collection must have been augmented with unpublished drawings (below, Plate No 701).



In addition, it is worth noting that the corpus of plates created by Henri Oger has been the basis for a number of expositions and publications of which two were particularly noteworthy. The first is that of the Encyclopedic Institute (Viện Từ Điển Bách Khoa) of the Vietnam Social Sciences Committee (Ủy ban khoa học xã hội Việt Nam). It had planned to publish a series of booklets presenting a selection of drawings excerpted from Oger's book organized by subject. Only the first volume of October 1985 has come into our hands. Its brief introduction makes the point that it is difficult to identify those who collaborated with Henri Oger, the thirty draftsmen and engravers who produced the work. Some names have reached us: those of Nguyễn Văn Đàng, Nguyễn Văn Giai and of Phạm Văn Thiều, from the village of Thanh Liễu, of the Gia Lộc district in Hải Dương Province; as well as, Phạm (Trọng) Hải from the village of Nhân Dục, of the Kim Đông district in Hưng Yên province. It seems that the most talented among these was Nguyễn Văn Đàng (1874-1956).<sup>1</sup>



The second noteworthy publication, produced in 1989 by M. Nguyễn Mạnh Hùng, is a selection of Henri Oger's drawings, of which a number were colored, accompanied by an informal bilingual (Vietnamese, English) commentary on each of the selected illustrations. The same author defended a Master's Thesis in 1966 devoted to an analysis of Vietnamese society of the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century based on the work of Henri Oger.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bách Khoa thư bằng tranh, Việt Nam đầu thế kỷ 20*. Viện Từ Điển Bách Khoa – Ủy ban khoa học xã hội Việt Nam, 1985, 32p.

<sup>2</sup> Nguyễn Mạnh Hùng, 1989, *Ký Họa Việt Nam đầu thế kỷ 20 – Vietnamese woodcuts at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ, TP Hồ Chí Minh, 203 p. Nguyễn Mạnh Hùng, 1996, *Xã hội Việt Nam cuối thế kỷ 19 đầu thế kỷ 20 qua bộ tư liệu kỹ thuật người An Nam của Henri Oger*, Luận Án Phó Tiến Sĩ Khoa Học Lịch Sử, Trường Đại Học Khoa Học Xã Hội và Nhân Văn, Hà Nội, 179 p

The introductory work contains numerous imperfections: for instance, the analytical tables are missing plate No 455. When possible we remedied this kind of defect, just as we have corrected a number of typographical errors. Nevertheless, we have restrained ourselves from modifying the text itself, even though it harbors a number a glaring errors. Thus, Oger considers *nước mắm*, Vietnam's famous fish sauce, to be “a preparation based on fermented rice” (the chapter on “the *trương merchant*”); a “type of door from a religious building” (the notice to Plate No 28) is in reality the door of a communal house; his unspecified “implement” (notice to Plate No 373) is a firecracker, and the “improvised crib” (notice to Plate No129) avoids mentioning that the child has been abandoned at a market. There are many examples. The translation of texts written in characters into Vietnamese has sometimes allowed us to give a wording that is closer to reality.

The notices drawn together in the author's analytical table are therefore a free description of the corpus of drawings and do not always match the explanations provided by the captions in characters featuring on the border of the illustrations themselves. There is little point in looking for strict correlations between the two sources of information which should rather be seen as separate and complementary perspectives on a single subject.

Finally, as the reader will see, a certain number of drawings feature more than once in the volume of plates.

### **Introduction to the new edition (EFEO, 2009)**

This new edition follows the two-volume structure of the original work.

The introductory volume presents a trilingual version (Vietnamese, French and English) of the “General Introduction to the Study of the Mechanics and Crafts of the Annamites” divided into five sections: i) “Introduction”; ii) “Some overall insights into the indigenous industries of the country of Annam”; iii); “Bibliography” (not translated); iv) “Index of illustrations”; v) “Synthesizing tables”.

This introduction is augmented with several writings that furnish the reader with complementary information about the author and about the environment in which he conducted his studies:

- A biography of 1970 written by Pierre Huard: “The Pioneer of Vietnamese Technology, Henri Oger (1885-1936 ?)” ;
- A piece by the translator Nguyễn Văn Nguyên “Some Remarks on the Character Script employed in the Present Volume”;

- A preface by Philippe Le Failler and Olivier Tessier outlining the historical background and scientific context in which Henri Oger's work took shape and the relevance of the latter to Vietnamese studies both historical and contemporary.

In the volume of plates and drawings, the 700 plates numbered by the author are reproduced in full. Each has been digitized and reworked to remove the inevitable marks of time: creases and tears, library stamps from the Bibliothèque de la Cochinchine, now the General Sciences Library, in Hồ Chí Minh City, and the penciled notes left by inconsiderate readers, have all been removed.



A key added value of this new edition compared with the original publication is the incorporation of a version in the

Romanized Vietnamese alphabet (*quốc ngữ*) of all titles, headings and annotations originally in Chinese (Hán) or demotic (Nôm) characters. Translations and transliterations feature in a shaded panel at the bottom of each plate so as to respect the original document's integrity.

Lastly, alongside the 2000 printed new edition copies, a digital version of the two volumes has been produced in DVD format (1000 copies). It has been designed using a navigational tool embedded within the image so that readers, when clicking on a drawing, can see a « bubble » (dialog box) appear containing Henri Oger's notice (analytical table) in three languages. To view the captions (Nôm and Hán) in Romanized Vietnamese, a similar system is used.

Philippe Le Failler & Olivier Tessier