

The Library of The French School of the Far East (EFEO)

NGÔ THẾ LONG, *Thư viện Học viện Viễn Đông Bác cổ, Tạp chí Thông tin Khoa học xã hội*, No.7, 2016.

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Translated by **Cindy A. Nguyễn**

Abstract: *The French School of the Far East (École française d'Extrême-Orient - EFEO) formerly the permanent archaeological mission in Indochina (Mission archéologique permanents en Indochine) was founded in 1898. The decree by the French President on the official foundation of the EFEO indicated the objectives of the EFEO: 1/ To carry out research on the archaeological and philological exploration of the Indochinese Peninsula, and to contribute, by every means possible, to the understanding of its history, its monuments, and its languages. 2/ To contribute toward the study of the neighbouring regions and civilizations: India, China, Japan, the Malay world, etc. And to archive the above mention objectives, the article 3 of this decree stated the tasks of the EFEO: to maintain and develop libraries and museums of the EFEO. Thus, together with conducting the scientific activities, the EFEO has built the library since the very beginning of its foundation and regarded the library development as the main mission of the EFEO. The article describes the library of the EFEO and briefly introduces its valuable documents and collections.*

Keywords: Indochina, EFEO, The Library of The French School of the Far East

1. In the beginning, the center and the library of the The French School of the Far East (École française d'Extrême-Orient, henceforth referred to as the EFEO) was located at 140 Pellerin, Saigon (now Pasteur Street, Ho Chi Minh City). In 1903 the headquarters of the EFEO was transferred to Hanoi, at 3 Teinturiers (now Thợ Nhuộm street) and 60 Boulevard Gambetta (now Trần Hưng Đạo Street). In 1905 the colonial government issued a new headquarters for the center and library of the EFEO at 26 Avenue Carreau

(now Lý Thường Kiệt Street). The library moved to this new location by mid-1905 (*Rapport sur la Situation de l'école d'Extrême-Orient française*, 1905). The EFEO headquarters at 26 Avenue Carreau has constantly been developed and expanded: in 1906 the EFEO built two more buildings for the director and the members, and according to the 17/03/1923 Decree of Governor General of Indochina, the director of the EFEO was granted the right to purchase a piece of land and two buildings at 23, 25 Đồng Khánh Avenue (now Hàng Bài Street). By 1943, the 5-story building of the library was completed (The building is now the collections of the Social Sciences Library and the National Agency for Science and Technology Information).

2. In a report by the Director C.E. Maitre sent to the Governor General of Indochina on the work of the EFEO from 1902 to 1907, it states the following: The EFEO library is a specialized library. Its goal is to collect the books related to Indochina and the Far East written in both local and European languages. The collections were diversified with the addition of the following: books on the Far East transferred from Paris, especially from the Royal Academy of Inscriptions and Literature (*Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*); publications by the EFEO; Far East books collected by the members of the EFEO originating from Southeast Asia, China, Japan, India,

Russia,... paid for by government allocation; books exchanged between libraries, universities, and scientific institutions in the world; and a significant amount of books from donations. Another important source for the development of the EFEO collections was from the legal deposit of books from publishers in Indochina. On 03/07/1900, the Governor General of Indochina, Paul Doumer, required agencies, publishers and local authorities to send two copies of publications published within Indochina to the EFEO (*Décret et Arrêtés concernant l'Ecole française d'Extrême Orient*, 1902). In the case if the publication was sold out, the publisher must provide the library index of that publication to the EFEO.

The books of most value in the EFEO library are those written by hand. The EFEO has collected a significant number of hand-written documents in almost all of the languages of the Far East. These documents are written on paper, palm leaves, or even engraved on metal foil. With perseverance and no small expense, the EFEO made copies of the material in the Cabinet from the Nguyễn Dynasty Emperor Minh Mạng, Thiệu Trị, Tự Đức, and woodblock printed documents from the embassy; the EFEO collected and transcribed unpublished Confucian texts and poetry as well as oral works of folklore, the Buddhist and Taoist books, the materials on the temples, villages and family and local records...

(N. Peri, 192 [?]). These books are mostly written in Hán, while some are written in Nôm. There is also the inscriptions from Indochina, mainly from Vietnam.

Ever since the founding of the EFEO, the Governor General of Indochina donated to the library of the EFEO the collection 欽定大南會典事例 (Khâm định Đại Nam hội điển sự lệ) which includes 97 volumes and 262 books. The Council of the Hue Court, through the French Resident Superior of Central Vietnam, also donated three sets of books edited by the resident: 大南前編列傳 (Đại Nam tiền biên liệt truyện), 大南正編傳初集 (Đại Nam chính biên truyện, sơ tập), 明命政要 (Minh Mạng chính yếu). According to the request of the French Resident Superior of Central Vietnam, the Council of the Hue Court also sent to the library of the EFEO the set of books 欽定越史通鑑綱目 (Khâm định Việt sử thông giám cương mục). This book was translated by Abel des Michel into French and published in Paris into 3 volumes from 1889 to 1894 (Bulletin de l'école française d'Extrême-Orient, Tome I - 1901: 99, 283). In 1907, in addition to the publications printed that year, the members of the EFEO also collected many rare materials, such as some texts in Hán, Tibetan books; a history of the Mongols that M. Huber brought back from China; many handwritten documents on the history of Burma; a hand-written encyclopaedia of

Vietnam (at the time considered to have been lost); a series of ancient documents of Vietnam and the Cham about the last kings of the Champa country; a beautiful hand-written manuscript on painted metal foil from Burma which was a present of Petithuguenin; and also the valuable set of annual publications of the Emperors Thiệu Trị và Vua Tự Đức that the Council of the Huế Court of the Nguyễn dynasty reprinted at the request of the EFEO. In regards to the engraved and inscription works, the library of the EFEO has the following: the Cham epitaphs from the Phong Nha Cave, which up to this time has not been able to be read; the ancient engraved stone blocks discovered in Bàn Cùn, Nghệ An, which has been regarded as the oldest inscriptions of Vietnam; and also the inscriptions of Burma and Pégouanes (Bulletin de l'école française d'Extrême-Orient, Tome VII, 1907: 465).

An even more rare and valuable part of the collections of the library of the EFEO are the photographs. These photographs were taken initially using glass methods and by 1870 to 1957, were taken using film negatives. This collection emerged from the contributions of both administrative authorities and individuals. However, the majority of the collection developed from "the photographs taken by the members of the EFEO. They were historians, architects, archaeologists, museum curators, bibliographers", and

for that reason “the themes of the photographs are often connected to their research speciality”. (Philippe Le Failler, 2005: 47-49). A large number of this photography collection are postcards (carte postale). This collection has become a valuable piece of heritage for historical researchers, the nation, the people, culture, religion, and architecture.

Another special part of the collection of the EFEO is the ancient regional maps of Vietnam, Indochina, and other types of maps collected by the EFEO. There are even some maps published from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Currently, Social Sciences Library maintains this ancient map repository, including a 1831 map of Hanoi, 190cm x 235cm in size.

In addition, the library of the EFEO also holds other materials such as music records, posters...

3. To understand the capabilities of the library of the EFEO today, we would like to introduce the document, (brochure format) *La Bibliothèque de l'école française d'Extrême-Orient* (The Library of the French School of the Far East) produced by the EFEO in 1945 (P8o B7.133, Octo 21891) after the EFEO built the 5-story library building. Here are some of the details recorded in this document:

The new library of EFEO in Hanoi was expected to be built since 1935, and was realized in 1943 by the decision of the Vice Admiral Jean Decoux,

Governor General of Indochina. This new library was built next to the old building of the EFEO on 26 Avenue Carreau. J.Y. Claeys, a member of the EFEO was the project founder. After a review of the project from the Department of Civil Engineering, the Marseille Construction Company implemented this project.

The new library includes a building made of concrete, reinforced on four stories^(*), with the dimensions of 29 meters long, 15.6 meters wide, and 16 meters high. The building was placed on a concrete foundation 7 meters deep and the frame is made of pillars reinforced by concrete. There are two staircases on both sides of the building to go up and down floors. There are 5-meter wooden shelves placed along the width of the room and in the center aisle.

The library, the main instrument of the EFEO, is divided into 7 sections.

- *European Collection*: includes the works in European languages, Eastern languages published in Western formats, and Romanized Vietnamese. This collection comprises approximately 15,000 works (40,000 volumes) related to Asia, including 350 books published before the nineteenth century placed in special collections (la Réserve). In the two card catalog cabinets, there are about 100,000 cards sorted by author and by subject.

^(*) According to Vietnamese and English convention, this implies that the building was five stories tall.

- *Chinese Collection*: collected through the research activities and trips of the members of the EFEO: Paul Pelliot, Edouard Huber, Henri Maspero, Léonard Aurousseau, and P. Demiéville. This collection has nearly 4,000 hand-written or printed works, in total 27,000 volumes. There are about 25,000 cards in the catalog for this collection. The inventory comprises 12 volumes, of which 5 have been printed (from A to LU).

- *Hán - Nôm Collection (Vietnamese Collection)*: includes the copied versions from the original documents or that which the Annals office in Hue (Bureau des Annales) woodblock printed. This collection includes hand-written documents written in classical Chinese (3,124 works, in total 4,512 volumes), in Nôm (logographic Vietnamese) (630 documents, in total 674 volumes) and works printed in classical Chinese in Vietnam (695 documents, in total 1,065 volumes): In total are 4,449 documents in 6,251 volumes. There is also 2,575 works of village regulations and titles. There are 9,000 cards in the catalog.

- *Japanese Collection*: collected from research activities in Japan by Cl. Maitre, N. Per, and E. Gaspardone. In total the collection comprises 2,096 documents in 11,307 volumes and 5,000 cards in the catalog.

- *Maps and Surveys*: This collection has the maps of the Indochina Geography department, regional maps,

and provincial maps, regional maps of the ethnic groups in the north, Laos, and Cambodia, and also the maps of the ancient cities in the North, Central, and South of Vietnam.

- *Handwritten Documents Collection*: This collection was primarily placed in archival storage. It comprises handwritten documents except for those written in Classical Chinese and logographic Vietnamese (Hán - Nôm):

+ Cambodia Collections^(*): on palm leaves: 366, on paper: 126.

+ Laos Collection: on palm leaves: 670, on paper: 30.

+ Thailand Collection: on palm leaves: 133, on paper: 8.

+ Thai language (Vietnam) Collection: 351.

+ Cham Collection: 65.

+ Burma Collection: on palm leaves: 16, on paper: 13.

+ Mon Collection: on palm leaves: 86, on paper: 25.

+ Lolo Collection: 13.

+ Batak Collection: 2.

+ Tibet Collection: 2.

+ Na-shi or Mosso Collection: 46.

+ Other: 6.

+ European Language Collection: 240.

^(*) This collection is described as "les olles" in French, which literally means that the documents are not paper.

The European Collection includes 430 documents written by hand (Indochina materials from archive of The Hague and the dictionaries of dialects in Indochina). This collection also received an additional 9,2000 research documents of the patron saint spiritualities in the North, Central and Southern regions of Vietnam, 6,000 documents on the customs of Vietnamese villages, 6,000 documents on the legends of the village, 7,000 documents on the families and clans in Nghệ An. The library has received these four types of documents through the surveys and research conducted by the EFEO to study the population, social organization and religion of all three regions of Vietnam.

- **Printing Blocks:** This collection has 20,338 classical Chinese printing blocks from the provinces in the North and Central regions; 1,555 originating from the research delegation of Chavannes and Pelliot in China, and 2,096 printing blocks from Cambodia and Laos.

The new building is arranged as follows:

- *Ground floor:* includes the preservation and book binding room. Newspapers and inscriptions were temporarily stored here.

- *Floor One:* reserved for works published by the EFEO and the European collection (quartos and folios).

- *Floor Two:* includes materials of the European Collection (octavos) as well as newspapers and surveys.

- *Floor Three and Four:* reserved for Hán - Nôm Collection, China Collection, and Japan Collection. Hand-written documents and the special collections archive of each collection were stored in designated cabinets on each floor and a machine was used to preserve materials periodically.

A series of rooms in the old and new building were used as rooms for librarians and the old building was used as a reading room, an office, and a personnel room for the EFEO.

These are the details regarding the library of the EFEO in the document “La Bibliothèque de l'école française d'Extrême-Orient (The Library of the EFEO)”. In addition, the library also has a building for the director, offices for members EFEO, and a separate building for film, photographs, and microfilm.

According to Professor Noël Peri, the library of the EFEO can be seen as the “leading research library of the Far East”, the value and number of books in the China and Japan Collections are “incredibly important and can be comparable to the libraries in China and Japan”. In those two collections are the three volumes 永樂大典 (*Vĩnh lạc đại điển*) and a lot of works from the dynastic feudal period in Vietnam. (N. Peri, 192[?]).

4. According to regulations (since 1907), the library of the EFEO is a public library. The library's reading room is open from 8:30 AM to 11:00 AM and from 2:30 PM to 5 PM, except Sundays and holidays. Library materials can be consulted in the library. To borrow materials, one had to be a Hanoi resident and approved by the Director. Materials such as dictionaries, grammar books, maps, journals (not yet compiled into volumes), and rare documents can only be read within the library. The borrowed materials cannot be brought out of Hanoi and the maximum loan term is 15 days. If borrowed beyond this period, the librarian will send a request to return the materials. In the case of lost materials, damages, or overdue materials, one would have to compensate for the materials and would lose the right to borrow materials (Louis Malleret, 1953).

Additionally, in regards to scientific research, the EFEO built a phonetic transcription system of Chinese characters for use in libraries and publishing. This system is similar to the transcription system of Wade-Giles for English and the Hanyu Pinyin system for Chinese today.

A very important contribution of the library of the EFEO to library sciences is bibliographic documentation - the regular introduction of recently published books relating to the Far East. Almost all members of the EFEO, depending on their specialty and language, have introduced a

lot of books for research in the Bibliography of the Journal of the EFEO. Some introduction of works were as long as a dozen pages. One of the members who introduced the most works in the bibliography was Nguyễn Văn Tố. These bibliographies were often compiled by the library. For example, the library produced bibliographies on rare and valuable books about the state, history, literature, mythology, Confucianism, Buddhism... in Vietnam, such as the work of Emile Gaspardone published in the Journal of EFEO in 1934.

5. In the speech by Louis Malleret (Director of the EFEO from 7/1950 to 7/1956) on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the EFEO, he reported the EFEO library collection numbers to be as follows: 85,000 books on the Far East; 25,000 Cham, Khmer, Laos, Vietnamese, and Chinese printing blocks; 5,700 handwritten documents, of which 3,500 are Vietnamese documents and 516 originate from the West; 132 national canons; 18,000 writing notes, copies or research regarding the local customs, about 25,000 films, photos and documents of the history and culture of Indochina (Louis Malleret, 1953).

However, between 1949 and 1950, when the colonial regime was nearly over in Indochina, the French government had signed with the Vietnamese government (Government of Emperor Bảo Đại), Cambodia, and Laos, a four-party agreement on changes in the organization and

function of the EFEO: the EFEO no longer belonged only to France, but it belonged to all four of the countries. The agreement created a legal basis for the division of the EFEO property and collections during this period. In 1954, the headquarters moved to Saigon. EFEO, the periodicals and collections was divided between Hanoi, Saigon, Vientiane, and Phnom Penh; The Hán - Nôm, China, and Japan Collections collected by the EFEO members were left in the EFEO library in Hanoi; the European Collection was moved to Saigon and Phnom Penh, and then afterwards to France (with 318 book crates sent to Phnom Penh and later sent the EFEO Center in Pondicherry, India - and from there moved to France. This collection comprised tens of thousands of books and manuscripts in European languages, the Tibetan collection, the rare special collections, inscriptions, and hand-written documents in Southeast Asian languages..., today these works are kept in the library of the EFEO in Paris). From the EFEO Library in Hanoi, nearly 500 crates of books, including the collections of Cambodia and Laos, were transferred to Phnom Penh and Vientiane, and the new EFEO headquarters in Saigon. Also in Hanoi, the EFEO also produced a microfilm copy of the EFEO collections, particularly of the hand-written Vietnamese documents for use in the other centers and the headquarters in Paris (Louis Malleret, 1953).

After the Geneva Accords were signed 10/1954, the Resistance Government of Vietnam began to take charge of Hanoi; yet there was still an active EFEO center in Hanoi. During this time, besides the books that Vietnam and the EFEO published, the library collected books in French from socialist countries such as the Soviet Union, China, Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc... and was cataloged under the existing system of the library of the EFEO such as 40, 80, Plo... Towards the end of 1957, the French members of the EFEO Center in Hanoi directed by Maurice Durand and Léon Vandermeersch discussed handing over the exhibits in the Louis Finot Museum, books, documents, and other materials at the library of EFEO to the political administration of Vietnam (<http://www.efeo.fr/biographies...>)^(*).

When the State Committee for Science was established in 1958, Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng issued Decision Number 040-TTg dated 06/02/1960 on the establishment of the Central Scientific Library of the State Committee for Science to incorporate the library of the EFEO.

According to the book *Un siècle pour l'Asie: L'école française d'Extrême-Orient, 1898-2000* (A Century in Asia: The French School of the Far East, 1898-2000) by Catherine Clémentin-Ojha and Pierre-Yves Manguin,

^(*) EFEO worked at 60 Trần Hưng Đạo street, Hà Nội until 1959, moved to Sài Gòn after that.

published in 2001, the amount of works handed over to the political administration of Vietnam included 36,000 works in European languages, more than 1,000 works in Vietnamese; 2,000 maps and over 70,000 photographs; handwritten documents including 33,000 in classical Chinese, 4,000 in Nom, and 10,000 in Japanese; 25,000 inscriptions; nearly 9,000 works in Vietnamese and classical Chinese; and serials published since the beginning of the nineteenth century throughout Indochina.

Most of these books have been kept in the Social Sciences Library except for a number of the Hán - Nôm books were handed over to the Hán - Nôm Institute. The Hán - Nôm materials were transferred from the Social Sciences Library to the Hán - Nôm Institute in 2/1982. This includes 11,167 books: those with code A include 3,231 works, AB 652 works, AC 700 works, AD (aspects) 454 works, AE (legends) 556 works, AF (customs) 748 works, AG (land registers) 500 works, AH (commune resolutions) 200 works, AJ (ancient resolutions) 252 works; and 20,979 printing blocks (Mai Ngọc Hồng, 1984).

6. After handing over the headquarters of the EFEO in Hanoi to the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the EFEO headquarters moved to Saigon, then to France. Currently, the EFEO headquarters are located in the Maison de l'Asie (Asia House), Avenue

Président Wilson 22, District 16, Paris. At the headquarters, the EFEO also has a library and an archive to store photographs. The library in Paris has about 83,000 titles, over 1,000 journal titles (including 700 ongoing journal publications), along with thousands of inscriptions. The photo archive room contains 50,000 photos on the fields of archeology, architecture, art objects, paintings, inscriptions, ethnography, museums... of the countries of Cambodia (approximately 30,000 images), Vietnam (7,000 images), China (3,000 images), Laos (3,000 images), and Thailand (2,000 images),... Many photographs have been digitized (<http://www.efeo.fr...>).

In addition to its headquarters in Paris, the EFEO also has 18 centers in 12 countries and territories such as Phnom Penh, Siem Reap (Cambodia), Seoul (South Korea), Pondicherry, Pune (India), Jakarta (Indonesia), Kyoto, Tokyo (Japan), Vientiane (Laos), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Rangoon (Myanmar), Beijing, Hong Kong (China), Taipei (Taiwan), Bangkok, Chiang Mai (Thailand), Hanoi and Hồ Chí Minh City (Vietnam).

On 02/10/1993, an agreement on the establishment of a branch office of the EFEO in Hanoi was signed by Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyễn Dy Niên, on behalf of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and by Catherine Tasca, the Minister Delegate of the Foreign Affairs for the Francophonie and the Ministry of

Culture, on behalf of the Government of the French Republic. The EFEO returned to Hanoi and is currently based in 5 Hà Hôi. Today the EFEO center in Hanoi carries out their activities under the framework of the agreed upon terms. In 2013, EFEO opened another branch office at 113 Hai Bà Trưng Street, District 1, Hồ Chí Minh City, with the main task of research activities in the Mekong Delta provinces. At the EFEO office in Hanoi is also a small library comprising of around 6,000 Vietnamese, French, and English works, mainly on humanities topics related to Vietnam and countries in the region (Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand) □

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