

## **SOME FEATURES ON INDOCHINA INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN STUDIES (1937 – 1944)**

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**S**eventy years ago, a knowledge association between social sciences and humanity of ethnologic researchers of l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient and anthropology and anatomy of Hanoi University of Medicine gave birth to the Indochina Institute for Human Studies. The Institute was a scientific organization with legal status and financial self-control. During its not long process of operation (from late 1937 to 1944), the Institute announced scientific research works related to human beings in Indochina and other countries in Far Eastern region. Up to the present, many works of the Institute still have been of great value in science, especially in medicine, anthropology, ethnology, folk culture, archeology, history, statistics and more. Many members of the Institute were Vietnamese, and many of them later became leading scientists and were awarded Ho Chi Minh Prize by the State, such as Professors Nguyễn Văn Huyền, Trần Văn Giáp, Đỗ Xuân Hợp, Tôn Thất Tùng, Nguyễn Xuân Nguyên. Based on six volumes of the Journal published by Indochina Institute for

Human Studies from 1939 to 1944 (which are being kept at the library of Institute of Social Sciences Information, notation 4o 2107), this article would like to introduce the forming process, organization, and works of Indochina Institute for Human Studies (most of them were written by Vietnamese scientists and about Vietnam).

In order to satisfy the desire to cooperate spontaneously of ethnological researchers of l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient and members of Hanoi Institute of Anatomy which belonged to Hanoi University of Medicine, on 4 November 1937, there took place a meeting at the head office of Institute of Anatomy, which included George Coedès, Victor Goloubew, Jean-Yves Clayer, Louis Bezacier, Paul Lévy, Nguyễn Văn Tố, Trần Văn Giáp, Nguyễn Văn Khoan and Nguyễn Văn Huyền of l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient (EFEO) and doctors Pièrre Huard, A. Bigot, Đỗ Xuân Hợp, Tôn Thất Tùng, Đào Huy Hách and Nguyễn Xuân. They decided to establish Indochina Institute for Human Studies and drew up the Institute's regulations with operational principles adapted from the Regulations

of France's Institute of Anthropology (established in 1911). At the meeting, the members elected a provisional board which included G. Coedès, director of EFEO, as chairman, full professor of University of Medicine, director of Institute of Anatomy and P. Lévy, manager of ethnographic department of EFEO as vice chairmen, doctor A. Bigot as secretary and J-Y Clayers, Nguyễn Văn Huyền and Nguyễn Xuân Nguyên as advisory members.

On 15 November, Indochina Steering Committee of Political Affairs, Service of Legislation and Administration considered and adopted the regulations of the Institute. Governor-general of Indochina J. Brévié signed the Decree No 619 on 3 February 1938 about the establishment of the Institute and approval of the regulations.

Immediately after that, all members in the board of the Institute were re-elected officially.

The first article of the regulations wrote that the target of Indochina Institute for Human Studies was to strengthen understanding about human beings (in physical and social aspects) in the Far Eastern region. Operational period of the Institute was not limited, and its head office was located in the area of Indochina University in Hanoi. In 1940, the Institute's office was moved to l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient at 26 Carreau Avenue (present-day head office of Institute of Social Sciences Information, 26 Lý Thường Kiệt street, Hanoi).

Hanoi Institute of Anatomy, the anthropology faculty of Hanoi University of Medicine and l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient created

necessary conditions (such as head office, museum, library, equipment) for the Institute to do research works of anthropology and ethnology.

The operational vehicle of the Institute was scientific journals, dissertations, publications of the Institute and of l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient and other scientific institutes which were related to human studies, works of members of the Institute, and of conferences.

The Institute had four titles: honorary members, founder members, full members and corresponding members. The titles of honorary members and corresponding members were recognized by the Board, full members must have at least one dissertation concerning human studies and were recommended by two members of the Institute. The founder members were official full members. The regulations in 1943 added benefactor members.

The institute was managed by the Board that included a chairman (director of l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient), two deputy chairmen (a full professor of anatomy of Hanoi University of Medicine and a manager of ethnographic department of l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient and four advisory members elected in the annual congress (later advisory members increased to 6). The congress appointed a secretary. The congress's term was one year and could be re-elected.

Seminars were held at 6 pm on the first Tuesday of month at the Institute of Anatomy in the precinct of Indochina University (from 1940, seminars were held twice a month, except for summer vacation). All members could participate

in the seminars which revolved around scientific matters, presented and studied scientific works entrusted to the Institute.

The board met once a month or had unscheduled meetings according to requirement of the Chairman. All meetings had minutes with signatures of the chairman and the secretary. The reports of annual activities and the minutes of the meetings were published in the journals of the Institute.

The congress of the Institute was held annually with the participation of full members who came to listen to report of the Institute's activities.

The Institute was a scientific organization and had financial self-control. The Institute's source of income came from the sale of journals, publications of the Institute, contribution of honorary and benefactor members and financial assistance of the Indochina government (accounting for about one third of the Institute's income). This source of income was used to print the publications, spend on activities, rewards for individuals and prizes of the Institute.

In the inauguration of the Institute on 5 April 1938, Chairman G. Coedès said that: "This is a comprehensive program that only can be carried out with the cooperation of specialists of various fields: anatomy, physiology, ethnography, sociology, history and more." He also highly appreciated the role of Vietnamese scientists and doctors: "In Indochina, the cooperation of European specialists only can be successful thanks to the collaboration of Indochina colleagues: Vietnamese, Cambodian and Lao people. Fortunately,

in Hanoi, there is a group of trained Vietnamese scientists who have methods and observing ability to help our research and observation. This work is difficult for our European to do."

In terms of organization, the institute had the following members:

- Founder members: 21 people (arranged according to ABC)

l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient: L. Bezacier, J.Y. Claves, G. Coedes (Director of l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient), E. Colani, M. Colani, P. Dupont, V. Goloubew, P. Levy, Nguyễn Văn Huyền, Nguyễn Văn Khoan, Nguyễn Văn Tố, Trần Văn Giáp.

University of Medicine and Pharmacy and hospitals: A. Bigot, Đào Huy Hách, Đỗ Xuân Hợp, H. Galliard (Professor, Director of University of Medicine and Pharmacy), P. Huard (Director of Institute of Anatomy), V. Labernadie, E. Lerice, Nguyễn Xuân Nguyên, Tôn Thất Tùng.

- Honorary members: most of them were dignitaries of the Indochina government, leaders of scientific research organizations, Museums of Human Beings in France, Belgium and Vietnamese dignitaries, such as Hoàng Trọng Phu, Vi Văn Định, Phạm Quỳnh, Phạm Lê Bông. The governor-general of Indochina (J. Brevie, and later, J. Decoux) was honorary chairman and director of the Academy was honorary deputy chairman.

- Corresponding members: most of them were scientists in the fields concerning human studies in research institutes, universities, museums in Indochina, France and other countries, including Sweden, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, China, and more.

- Full members: about 30 to 40 people who were researchers of l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient, professors, doctors of Hanoi University of Medicine and Pharmacy and others universities, research institutes in Indochina. A number of noted French scientists were official members of the Institute, such as M. Colani, L. Bezacier, J.E. Clayers, G. Coedes, Goloubew, P. Levy, P. Mus, H. Galliard, P. Huard, E. M. Castagnol, etc... Official Vietnamese members were doctors Đỗ Xuân Hợp, Tôn Thất Tùng, Nguyễn Xuân Nguyên, Đào Huy Hách, Vũ Thanh, Nguyễn Văn Huyền, Nguyễn Văn Khoan, Văn Tích Viên, Ngô Quý Sơn, Nguyễn Thiện Lâu, Ngô Đình Nhu. There was no official members from Cambodia and Laos.

- The board: the chairman was G. Coedes, director of l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient (this position was sometimes replaced by Paul Mus, acting director of l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient). Deputy chairmen were doctor P. Huard, director of Institute of Anatomy and Paul Levy, manager of ethnographic department of l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient. The board's secretary was doctor A. Bigot, and later, was Paul Guilleminet, a member of l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient. At first, there were four advisory members, and then, were six who were full members of the Institute. Vietnamese advisory members were doctors Nguyễn Văn Huyền, Nguyễn Xuân Nguyên, Đỗ Xuân Hợp and Nguyễn Văn Tổ.

The purely scientific seminars were presented according to scientific subjects, such as anthropology, ethnology, philosophy, political economics, social geography, folk

culture, chemistry used in archeology, etc... At the first seminar held on 14 December 1937, there was a cooperation between doctor A. Bigot and Tran Van Giap in the research work of Man Tien ethnic group in Cao Bang and Bac Can Provinces. The reports in the seminars were printed in the journals of Indochina Institute for Human Studies and the journals of Institute of Anatomy.

Also, in this period, Museum of Human Beings opened for the public to see the collections of utensils and decorative objects of the ethnic groups in Central Highlands (Tây Nguyên), jewelries and wedding costume of Vietnamese, Cambodian and Lao people and the ethnic minority people in the mountainous area of North Vietnam, and the collections of photos of M. Manikus and Đình Văn Nội.

One of the main activities of the Institute were to publish the journal. The Institute published six volumes in six years from 1938 to 1943. Each volume was printed in two issues. Each issue had 500 copies. The Institute's publication was sold widely and also had a lot of advertisements. At that time, the Second World War II broke out, many of members of the Institute had to come back to France to participate in the army. Therefore, the publishing schedule was affected considerably. The Institute also had planned to publish the works of 1944, but because French colonialism was collapsed in Vietnam in 1945, these works could not come to readers. The authors of the research works printed in the journal were French and Vietnamese researchers and lecturers who worked at l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient, Institute of Anatomy and doctors,

administrative officials at localities, especially doctors in mountainous areas. The works were written in French and illustrated with numerous pictures, photos, graphs, and maps. About 170 works were printed in six volumes of the journal with more than 100 articles about Vietnam and more than 40 articles of Vietnamese authors. The following are a number of works about Vietnam printed in the journal:

With regard to demography: *Source of demographic studies in Vietnamese villages* (Une source d'étude démographique des communes annamistes du Tonkin) by Nguyễn Văn Huyền; a series of articles about population of regions, ethnic groups by Nguyễn Thiệu Lâu, including *Does the population of Cham in the south of Central Vietnam increase?* (La population cham du sud Annam s'accroît-elle?), *Fertility, mortality and population growth in the north of Nghe An Province* (Natalité, mortalité et accroissement de la population dans le Nord de la plaine de Nghe An), *Introduction about demographic studies in the coastal area of Vietnam* (Introduction à l'étude démographique des plaines maritimes de l'Annam), and *Is too populous in Tonkin?* (Le Tonkin se dépeuple-t-il?) by T. Smolsky, *The notes of population in Hai Phong* (Constatations démographiques à Haiphong) by doctor Delage, *A problem of people of mixed blood* (A propos des métis) by P. Huard, and more.

With regard to anthropology: *When did we have the notion of yellow race?* (Depuis quand avons-nous la notion d'une race jaune?) by P. Huard, *Rudiments of anthropology of Mnong*

*Rlam?* (Rudiments de l'anthropologie des Mnongs du Lac) by A. Maurice, *Research on anthropology at Enfants de Troupe School in Dalat* by doctor Ravoux, etc...

With regard to ethnography: *Dry ponds in Muong Man region* (Les étangs desséchés de la région de Muong Man) by Nguyễn Thiệu Lâu, *Pictures carved on stone in Champa* (Quelques faits ethnologiques en relation avec les gravures rupestres de Champa) by Paul Lévy, *The notes of the ethnic people in Quang Tri* (Note sur les Moi du Quang Tri) by Cadière L., *Sculptures on stone at grave sites of Vietnamese people* (Sculptures en pierre des sites funéraires annamites) by Ed. Castagnol, and a research work of Mnong people in Indochina Plateau (Les Mnong du Plateau Central Indochinois) by Paul Huard and A. Maurice with 120 pages and numerous pictures, photos, illustrations.

With regard to archeology: *Prehistoric research of Ha Long Bay* (Recherches préhistoriques dans les parages de la baie d'Along) by M. Colani, *The notes of the grave of a bonze in Phat Tich* (Note sur un tombeau de bonze à Phat Tich) by Louis Bezacier, *Study on two fragments of jaw-bone of prehistoric man in Indochina* (étude de deux fragments de maxillaires préhistoriques indochinois) by E. Leriche, and more.

With regard to social institutions: a series of articles by Nguyễn Văn Huyền, including *Institutions of estate in villages of Vietnamese people* (De l'institution des castes dans la commune annamistes), *Hierarchy of names in the royal families in Vietnam* (Attribution du nom dans la famille impériale

d'Annam), *History of foundation of a village in Vietnam* (Histoire de la fondation d'une commune annamite au Tonkin) and *The practice of changing names of Vietnamese people* (La pratique du changement de nom chez les Annamites) by Nguyễn Văn Tổ.

There were many articles about customs, habits, beliefs of the regions in Vietnam, including a series of articles by Nguyễn Văn Khoan about *Beliefs of Tonkin people in protection of children* (Croyances tonkinoises relatives à la protection de l'enfance), *About disposition of tutelary gods in Bac Ninh province* (A propos d'une carte de répartition des génies tutélaires dans la province de Bac Ninh) by Nguyễn Văn Huyền; *Studies on deities of Vietnamese people* (Contribution à la démonologie annamite) by Ngô Quý Sơn; *The festival of beginning spring in Hanoi under the Posterior Le Dynasty* (La fête de l'Ouverture du Printemps à Hanoi sous les Le postérieurs) by Ngô Đình Nhu; *Vestiges of cult of sun in Indochina* (Vestiges d'un culte du soleil en Indochine) by M. Colani, *Researches on beliefs of tribes in the Central Highlands, Bana ethnic people in Kong tum and neighbouring regions, and magicians* (Recherches sur les croyances des tribus du Haut-pays d'Annam, les Bahnar du Kontum et leurs voisins, les magiciens) and a series of articles about tattoos on human bodies, *About tattoos* (A propos des tatouages) by P. Huard and Nguyễn Xuân Nguyên, *Tattoos of Vietnamese people* (Du tatouage chez les anamites) by Doctor P. Veyre, *Notes of tattoos of Katu people in Quang Nam* (Note sur quelques tatouages des Moi 'Ka-tu', province de Quang Nam,

Annam) by Louis Bezacier..., the articles on burial customs and architecture of graves, such as *Burial at evil hours in belief of Viet people* (L'enterrement de l'heure néfaste dans la croyance annamite) by Nguyễn Văn Huyền, *Stone sculptures in grave sites of Vietnamese people* (Sculptures en pierre des sites funéraires annamites<sup>9</sup> by Ed. Castagnol, the articles about feng-shui (geomancy): *The measure of geomancy for doors* (Une réglette géomantique pour la mensuration des portes) by Trần Văn Giáp, *The system of divination to find lucky hours and unlucky hours in the tradition of Vietnamese people: Picking up chopsticks in one's hands* (Un système divinatoire pour la recherche des moments fastes et néfastes dans la tradition populaire de l'Annam: La divination par baguettes) by Trần Văn Giáp.

With regard to folk culture: *The singing of Vietnamese fishermen* (Les chants de pêcheurs en Annam) by Jean Yves Claeys, *A poem of humans who understand language of animals* (Une version annamite du conte de l'homme qui comprenait le langage des animaux) by Nguyễn Văn Tổ. Especially, studies on games of children: *Activities of Vietnamese children in Tonkin* (Activités de la société enfantine annamite du Tonkin) by Ngô Quý Sơn, introduction by Paul Lévy, *Note on a song of Vietnamese children* (Note à propos d'une chanson enfantine annamite) by Nguyễn Văn Huyền, *About children's play* (A propos de chants et de jeux d'enfant annamites) by Nguyễn Văn Tổ, *Notes on classification of Vietnamese children's games* (Notes

relative au classement des jeux d'enfants) by A Bois,...

And there were many articles on medicine and statistics, such as *Cause and frequency of cataract in Tonkin* (Etiologie et fréquence de la cataracte au Tonkin d'après 58,922 observations) by doctor Nguyễn Xuân Nguyên, *Research on the brains of Tonkin people* (Recherches sur 159 cerveau des Tonkinois) by Huard and Nguyễn Xuân Nguyên, *Indexes and forms of aperture superior of ilia of Vietnamese women* (Indice et forme du détroit supérieur dans les bassins osseux des femmes annamites) by Đỗ Xuân Hợp, *Studies on anatomy and anthropology of omoplate*

*of Vietnamese people* (étude anatomique et anthropologique de l'omoplate chez les Annamites) by Đỗ Xuân Hợp and Phạm Biểu Tâm, *Research on the feet of Vietnamese people* (Reserches sur le pied des annamites) by Đỗ Xuân Hợp, *The suprarenal gland of Vietnamese people* (Les glandes surrénales chez les Annamites) by Đỗ Xuân Hợp and Nguyễn Bình Nghiê, *The blood groups in North Indochina* (Les groupes sanguins en Indochine du Nord) by H. Marneffe, L. Bezacier, Contribution to studies on body of people in mountainous regions: measurements of Tho, Man, Nung, Meo people) by Veyre...



Photo: Head office of Indochina Institute for Human Studies at l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient (present-day head office of Institute of Social Sciences Information)

Photo taken in 1935 (to be stored at the Library of Social Sciences)